

The Shaman's Apprentice

by Zacharias Kunuk • Illustrated by Megan Kyak-Monteith

EDUCATOR'S
RESOURCE



The Shaman's Apprentice

About the Book

Inspired by award-winning Inuk director Zacharias Kunuk's short film of the same name, *The Shaman's Apprentice* tells the story of a young shaman in training who must face her first test—a trip to the underground to visit Kannaaluk, The One Below, who holds the answers to why a community member has become ill.

Facing dark spirits and physical challenges, the young shaman must learn to stifle her fear and listen to what Kannaaluk has to tell her.

About the Author

Born in 1957 in a sod house on Baffin Island, Zacharias Kunuk was a carver in 1981 when he sold three sculptures in Montreal to buy a home video camera and 27-inch TV to bring back to Igloolik, a settlement of 500 Inuit who had voted twice to refuse access to outside television. After working for six years for the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation as producer and station manager, Kunuk co-founded Igloolik Isuma Productions Inc. in 1990 with Paul Apak Angilirq, Pauloosie Qulitalik, and Norman Cohn, and Kunuk Cohn Productions Inc. in 2004 with Norman Cohn. In 2001, Kunuk's first feature, *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, won the Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and was shown around the world. Kunuk has directed more than thirty films and videos that have screened in film festivals and theatres, museums and art galleries, and on TV. He has honorary doctorates from Trent University and Wilfrid Laurier University, and is the winner of the Cannes Camera d'Or, three Genie Awards (including Best Director and Best Picture), a National Arts Award, the National Aboriginal Achievement Award, and the 2017 Technicolor Clyde Gilmour Award from the Toronto Film Critics Association. Zacharias Kunuk was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2002.

About the Illustrator

Megan Kyak-Monteith is an Inuk illustrator and painter born in Pond Inlet, Nunavut. She is currently living in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and studied interdisciplinary arts at NSCAD University with a focus on painting. When she is not working on illustrations, she can be found watching movies with her friends, shopping, or working in her studio on her large-scale oil paintings.

Note to Educators

This educator's resource is geared toward students in Grades 4 to 6, and contains pre-reading activities, discussion questions, learning activities, and extension activities focused on the book *The Shaman's Apprentice*. The activities may be modified to suit the learning needs of your students. Students will participate in reading, writing, comprehension, and reflection activities to analyze and respond to the story. The activities encourage text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections. This guide is intended for use with a class set of *The Shaman's Apprentice*.

Pre-Reading Discussion Questions

- Ask your students to look at the cover of *The Shaman's Apprentice*. Read the title out loud and ensure that all of your students can see the illustration. Ask students to predict what they think the story is about, based on the title and the illustration. Encourage students to support their predictions with evidence from the cover. Record students' predictions and revisit them after they have finished reading.
- *The Shaman's Apprentice* contains many words and phrases in Inuktitut. Depending on your students' familiarity with Inuktitut, you may wish to review these words and phrases before your students begin to read the story. There is a glossary of all Inuktitut terms used in the story on pages 30. With students, review each word and its meaning. Practise pronouncing each word with your students. If your students are familiar with Inuktitut, you may wish to review vocabulary from the story that may be challenging for your students.

During and Post-Reading Discussion Questions

The following questions and discussion points can be used during and after reading *The Shaman's Apprentice*. Provide students with the chance to voice their own opinions, share their experiences, ask questions, or point out anything else they may notice about the book.



Pages 2–10

- What is the relationship between Supijaq and Qunguliq?
(They are granddaughter and grandmother.)
- Qunguliq and Supijaq did not notice that the *qurvik* fell off the *qamutiik*. What do you think will happen when they arrive at the village and realize the *qurvik* is missing?
(Answers will vary.)
- What happens when Supijaq goes to fetch the *qurvik* from the *qamutiik*? How is this possible?
(At first, the *qurvik* is missing. When Supijaq goes to check again, the *qurvik* is there.)

Pages 11–16

- How does Qunguliq try to help the sick man? Does it work?
(She smears urine on the sick man. It does not work.)
- Qunguliq warns Supijaq that it is dangerous to go underground, but Supijaq enters the dark hole anyway. What words would you use to describe Supijaq in this moment?
(Brave, courageous, fearless, curious.)

Pages 17–22

- Who is the woman inside the *iglu*? What does Qunguliq explain that the woman will do?
(The woman is Kannaaluk, The One Below. She will tell Qunguliq and Supijaq how to heal the sick man.)

Pages 23–29

- What happens when Kannaaluk pulls out the polar bear tongue?
(Supijaq and Qunguliq have a vision.)
- Why did the man become sick?
(He broke an ancient taboo. He did not share the polar bear tongue with others.)
- Why do you think the man had to admit what he had done before he could be healed?
(He may have had to admit that he did something wrong to be healed.)
- When Supijaq and Qunguliq return to their *qarmaq*, Qunguliq calls Supijaq her apprentice. What do you think the word “apprentice” means?
(An apprentice is a person who learns a skill from someone with a lot of experience.)

Learning Activities

- After the class has finished reading *The Shaman’s Apprentice*, facilitate a discussion with students about the story using comprehension questions. You may use the following questions to guide the discussion. You are encouraged to replicate these questions on chart paper or the whiteboard for students to see during the discussion. Record students’ responses to the questions throughout the discussion.
 - o What is the setting of the story? How do you know?
(Answers will vary.)

- o What was the main problem in the story? How did Supijaq and Qunguliq try to solve the problem?
(Supijaq and Qunguliq try to heal a sick man. They try to solve the problem by visiting Kannaaluk, The One Below.)
- o Why do you think the author wrote this story?
(Answers will vary.)
- o What did you like about the story?
(Answers will vary.)
- o Are there any questions that you still have about the story?
(Answers will vary.)
- Tell students that they are going to write and present a book talk about *The Shaman's Apprentice*. Explain that a book talk is a short speech meant to convince someone to read a book. Tell students that a book talk shares a little bit of information about the story, without giving away any important details that may spoil the ending of the story. For this book talk, students will complete a fill-in-the-blanks paragraph using information from *The Shaman's Apprentice*. You may provide students with the paragraph below, or you may create your own.



My name is _____ and I would like to tell you about a book I

(student's name)

just read called _____ by _____.

(title of book)

(author)

It is a _____ book about _____

(fiction or non-fiction)

(characters, setting, problem)

I think you should read this book because _____

You may wish to replicate the above paragraph on a piece of chart paper, or type it and present each student with a book talk handout to complete. When all students have completed their book talk, ask them to take turns presenting their book talks to the rest of the class.

- Ask your students to pretend they are journalists who have an opportunity to interview the author of *The Shaman's Apprentice*, Zacharias Kunuk. Ask students to create five interview questions they would like to ask Zacharias during the interview. They may ask questions about the characters or events in the story, Inuit culture, the process of writing a book, or anything else they may be interested in learning. You may wish to conduct research with students about Zacharias Kunuk's life and career before they begin to create their interview questions. Encourage your students to ask open-ended questions that cannot simply be answered with "yes" or "no." Encourage students to write more than five questions if they have many ideas.

Extension Activities

The following section contains extension activities for *The Shaman's Apprentice* that can be incorporated into different subject areas.

Art

Ask students to look at the cover of *The Shaman's Apprentice* and share the details they notice about the cover, whether it's the illustrations, text, or something else. Ask students what they like about the cover. Record students' responses on a piece of chart paper. Tell students they will design a new book cover for *The Shaman's Apprentice*. The new book cover should be eye-catching and make someone want to read the book. Tell students that their book cover should contain the title and author's and illustrator's names, in addition to illustrations that depict some part of the story. Students may use the medium of their choosing for their book cover, such as paint, pencil crayons, pastels, and so on.

Drama

Ask students to think about the scene where Supijaq and Qunguliq encounter Kannaaluk. Remind students that during this scene, no words are exchanged between the three women. Tell students that they will transform this scene into a readers' theatre script. Explain that readers' theatre is similar to oral storytelling, and encourages students to read with expression. Tell students that readers' theatre often involves no props, no memorizing, and no costumes. Organize students into groups of three—one student will read for Supijaq, one for Qunguliq, and one for Kannaaluk. Then, students will work in their groups to transform the scene on pages 22–24 into a script. Students should consider what Kannaaluk might have said to Supijaq and Qunguliq, and how the two may have responded. When groups finish writing their readers' theatre scripts, they will take turns performing their scripts for the class.

Science

- Ask students to explain the difference between liquids and solids. Remind students that liquids can change shape depending on what container they're put in, and solids keep their shape. Have students share some examples of different liquids and solids. If possible, have examples of liquids and solids available to show students. Ask students to share some of the ways that solids turn into liquids. Remind students that heat can make some solids melt. Ask students to share some of the ways that liquids turn into solids. Remind students that cold temperatures can make some liquids freeze.
- Remind students that in *The Shaman's Apprentice*, Supijaq and Qunguliq travel underground to visit Kannaaluk. Ask students if they know what would happen if they tried to dig a hole underground in the Arctic where Supijaq and Qunguliq live. Tell students that in the Arctic, the ground is made up of permafrost, which is ground that is permanently frozen all year long. Explain that permafrost never melts, even in the summer when it is warm and sunny. Tell students that it would be very hard to dig a tunnel underground through permafrost.

- Organize students into groups of three or four. Fill two disposable cups for each group with soil and add a small amount of water to each cup. Ask students to describe the soil and water mixture. Ask students to predict what they think will happen to the soil and water mixture if it is put in the freezer. Record students' predictions on a piece of chart paper. Place one soil and water mixture from each group in the freezer overnight. Leave the other water and soil mixture at room temperature.
- The next day, remove the cups from the freezer. Ask students to describe the difference between the two mixtures. Encourage students to touch and smell the mixtures. Tell students to write down their observations and draw a picture of each mixture. Students should also write down if their prediction was correct or incorrect.

Health: Career Planning

Reread page 28 of *The Shaman's Apprentice* out loud to students. Remind students that an apprentice is a person who learns a skill from someone with a lot of experience. Tell students that today, an apprentice often refers to someone who learns a skilled trade from an experienced tradesperson. Explain that examples of skilled tradespeople include electricians, plumbers, chefs, and auto mechanics. Provide students with access to information about skilled trades. This may include Internet access and websites with information about skilled trades, or printed handouts with information about different careers in the skilled trades. Allow students to research a skilled trade they find interesting or would like to learn more about. Then, ask students to respond to the following questions:

- What do you find most interesting about this skilled trade?
- What surprised you the most about this skilled trade?
- What are three things that you learned about this skilled trade?
- If you met someone who works in this skilled trade, what would you ask them?

After students have had an opportunity to conduct research on a skilled trade, ask volunteers to share what they learned. If possible, invite a guest to come speak to your class about skilled trades and apprenticeships.

