



ON THE SHOULDER OF A
GIANT

AN INUIT FOLKTALE

EDUCATOR'S
RESOURCE



NEIL CHRISTOPHER • JIM NELSON

ON THE SHOULDER OF A GIANT

ABOUT THE BOOK

Inukpak was big, even for a giant. He loved to travel across the tundra, striding over the widest rivers and wading through the deepest lakes with ease. He could walk across the Arctic in just a few days. But being so big, and travelling so far, Inukpak was often alone. Until one day, when he came across a little hunter on the tundra. Thinking that the hunter was a little boy, alone on the land, Inukpak decided to adopt him as his son. And so, from the shoulder of one of the biggest giants to ever roam the Arctic, this hunter embarked on a series of adventures only a giant could enjoy!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Neil Christopher is an educator, author, and filmmaker. He first moved to the North many years ago to help start a high school program in Resolute Bay, Nunavut. It was those students who first introduced Neil to the mythical inhabitants from Inuit traditional stories. The time spent in Resolute Bay changed the course of Neil's life. Since that first experience in the Arctic, Nunavut has been the only place he has been able to call home. Neil has worked with many community members to record and preserve traditional Inuit stories. Together with his colleague, Louise Flaherty, and his brother, Danny Christopher, Neil started a small publishing company in Nunavut called Inhabit Media Inc., and has since been working to promote Northern stories and authors.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jim Nelson is a freelance artist based in Chicago, Illinois. He has a lifelong interest in myths, legends, and the fantastic.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This educator's resource is written for Kindergarten to Grade 3 classrooms. The suggested discussion questions and activities can be adapted for each class according to the experiences of students.

Teachers can use this book to teach about topics such as:

- Inuit legends and folklore
- Oral storytelling
- Giants
- The Arctic
- Land formations

PRE-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you already know about giants?
- What do you think the problem will be in this story?
- What do you think the man is thinking while he stands on the giant's shoulder?
- What differences can you think of between a human and a giant?
- What do you see in the cover illustration?

DURING AND POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions and discussion points can be used during and after reading *On the Shoulder of a Giant*. 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.

- Page 6: Look at the people boating. What do you think they are thinking when they see Inukpak and the whale?
- Page 7: Do you think the hunter will be scared of the giant, even though he is being friendly?
- Page 10: Why does Inukpak call the hunter a child?
- Page 11: Do you think Inukpak will harm the hunter? What might happen next?
- Page 18: Again, Inukpak is not seeing things as they really are because he is so big! How do you think Inukpak is feeling? Why do you think that?
- Page 21: What other kinds of Arctic animals do you know about that the two may encounter in their travels?



- How would the story have been different if the hunter had told Inukpak all of the things he wanted to tell him?
- Read the section entitled “More About Arctic Giants.” What questions do you still have about giants?
- Do you believe the giants are still sleeping and that is why we have mountains?
- Did you like this story? Why or why not? What other stories did it remind you of, if any?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

The following activities could be used to help strengthen students’ understanding of the story. Adapt these suggestions to the ability level of your students as necessary.

WRITING PROMPTS

- What would you do if you were a giant? Where would you go? What would you use your size and strength for?
- Begin on page 29. Write a new ending to the story. While the giant is sleeping, change the plot of the story.
- “If I could travel around the Arctic with Inukpak, I would love to see . . .”

TALKING CIRCLE

Sit in a circle on the floor or in chairs. Pass around a talking piece so each person has a turn to contribute. Allow students the right to pass if they do not wish to share. The following points can be used to guide your discussion:

- Would you like to meet a giant? Why or why not?
- What Arctic animals do you like the best?
- What do you think would be the best part of travelling with Inukpak?



ART

Draw a picture of what you think a giant looks like. Scale your drawing so items around the giant are extremely small.

WRITING/SPEAKING: FROM THE EYE OF A GIANT

Make a list of objects that you see in your everyday life (for example, school, tables, refrigerator, the sun). Now pretend you are looking at each of these things as if you were Inukpak. What would he think that each of these things is? Make some silly suggestions with your class!

