



RedRover Readers and Early Ages Gathering to Learn Empathy Through Stories (EAGLES) Program

GIFT HORSE: A LAKOTA STORY

GRADE(S): 3-5 **SEL ALIGNMENT:** Self-awareness;
Responsible decision-making

Written and Illustrated by S.D. Nelson

TIME: 60 minutes (reading and discussion - 45; activity - 15)

MATERIALS: Gift Horse: A Lakota Story book, paper with horse outlines

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Growing up, becoming a Lakota Warrior, the importance of a name, not taking more from nature/animals than we need, gratitude, courage, roles in our community

Land acknowledgment: You may want to do a land acknowledgment before this reading and lesson to determine what land you are on. [Native-land.ca](https://native-land.ca) is an app to help map Indigenous territories, treaties, and languages.

BEFORE READING: As a group, discuss the following topics.

- Ask the students to predict what they think will happen in the story. Show the cover and ask: What do you think this book will be about?
- Ask: What does courage mean? (Courage is the ability to make good choices when faced with fear or obstacles, being brave.)
- Say: This is a story of a child on a journey to becoming a Lakota Warrior. Ask: What are some of the things you can do when you are grown up? What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you think you need to do to achieve your dreams?

DURING READING:

- On the page that says, "I could have killed him with one of my stone-tipped arrows but I only needed some of his quills." Ask: What choice did the person make here? Why do you think they made that choice? (They chose not to kill the porcupine, even though they could have. They chose to take only what was needed, showing they are growing up.) Say again: They only took what was needed. Ask: Why is it important to only take what is needed, and to be grateful for what we get from nature?
- On the page describing his vision: "All of the four-legged creatures like Deer, Coyote, and Buffalo are my brothers. I saw all of the winged creatures like Hawk and Hummingbird are my sisters. Even the creepy crawlies like Lizard and Spider are my relatives. I dreamed that along with all of these two-legged creatures we dance together in the circle of life." Ask: What do you think about this vision of being connected in the circle of life with animals? How do you think your ancestors are connected to the earth?
- On the page that starts, "Later I knelt down over my first buffalo." Ask: What is happening in this picture?" Wait for answers. Then ask: How do you think this person is feeling in this picture? (Possible answers may include proud, grateful, tired.) Why do you think that?



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DURING READING CONTINUED:

- On the last page, “And so with my Gift Horse...one thing I can’t forget is the horse with eagles tied into its mane.” Ask: Why do you think they won’t ever forget Storm? Do you have an animal in your life that you will never forget? Would you like to share about that animal with the rest of us?

AFTER READING:

- Ask: How was this story similar to others we have read together? (The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses is about horses and the girl also gets lost, shows ways of being.)
- Ask: What happened in this story? What did the character go through on their way to becoming a Lakota Warrior? (Training and playing with young friends, sweat log singing, vision quest, buffalo hunting and saving a man, asking Wakan Tanka to help make them a good person.)
- The main character prays for guidance to help them become a good and strong person. Ask: What does it mean to be a good and strong person? What lessons have you learned that are making you a good and strong person? Who is teaching you these lessons?
- There are many roles and jobs the people have in this story. Look back through the book and talk about the different roles the Lakota People are doing. Ask: What are the roles you see? What roles do you have in the community? What role would you like to play in your community?

AFTER READING ACTIVITY:

- Decorate your own horse. Pass out papers with horse shapes. Use markers, paints, or crayons to decorate their horse. Name their horse. Share their horses with the group and share why they chose the decorations and colors they did.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Animals in our life. The story begins with the father giving their child a gift horse and ends with the main character saying he won’t ever forget his Gift Horse. Ask: Have you ever had an important animal in your life? If so, tell us about them. Draw or write a story about an animal who has been important to you while you are growing up.
- The importance of a name. The horse is named Storm. The name Flying Cloud came from the dust that was kicked up. How did you get your name? Why is having a name significant? What would it be like if we didn’t have names? Do you have any other names or nicknames that you would be comfortable sharing?



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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED:

- **Courage.** Draw a large star on a piece of chart paper. Ask the students what courage means and when they have shown courage. When were they brave? Add each idea to the star.
- **Roles in our community.** Create a card for someone in your community. Think about the different roles that people have in your community (teacher, elder, sister, librarian, principal, grocery store clerk). Design a card for a person in your community and tell them why they are important to the community and how much they appreciate them. Ask: What role would you like to play in your community and why?

AT THE END OF THE LESSON: Ask students to reflect on these questions. Try this with the whole group, in a sharing circle or ask students to fill out index cards.

- How did you feel about today's book and discussion?
- Did today's book and discussion change how you think about anything in your life?
- What is one lesson from this book that you are taking home today?
- What is one thing from our time together that you can apply to your own life?
- What did you learn from today's book and discussion that you didn't know before?

DON'T FORGET TO REPORT YOUR READING:

RedRover.org/reportreadings