

BOOKTALK

The Rough-Face Girl

by Rafe Martin / illustrated by David Shannon

The dark and mysterious book cover of *The Rough-Face Girl* is enough by itself to create interest in this Algonquin Native American Indian tale. David Shannon shows a young girl whose face is hidden behind bandaged hands and whose one eye sends a message of pain. Her ragged clothing and the feather behind her hair give clues to a story that needs to be told. Caldecott-winner David Shannon's interest in Native Americans is obvious and his illustrations are haunting in their beauty. Professional storyteller Rafe Martin unfolds this story of goodness rewarded in a way that reinforces the universal values revealed by the tale.

As usual the central character of this tale is a young girl who is mistreated, but this time it is by her own two sisters. While her mother is absent and probably dead, her father is alive, but ignores the cruelties inflicted by her sisters. In this Algonquin village there is a huge wigwam occupied by an Invisible Being and his sister. The Invisible Being is said to be wealthy and handsome but he will marry only a young woman who is able to see him. The Algonquin Cinderella character has been named Rough-Face by her sisters because not only her arms, hands, clothes, and hair have been damaged by sparks from the hearth-fire she must continually tend, but her face has also been scarred. Her haughty and proud sisters are sure they will be able to earn the privilege of marrying the Invisible Being but they fail the test of honesty by lying when asked for details about his appearance. The Rough-Face girl obtains some worn-out articles of clothing from her father and then makes other things for herself and sets off with courage and faith to test herself and see the Invisible Being. Her appreciation of the beauty of nature allows her to see the Invisible Being as his sister questions the Rough-Face girl about what his bow and sled runner are made from.

Both the sister and her brother recognize her inner beauty and before the marriage, she is given beautiful clothing and bathes in a lake that magically restores her natural beauty. The story ends with the point that the Invisible Being and his sister saw her inner goodness before her outward beauty could be seen.

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MOTIFS AND IDEAS

- 📖 The Rough-Face Girl is from an Algonquin Indian Cinderella tale
- 📖 the central character has two cruel sisters rather than stepsisters
- 📖 unlike other Cinderella stories, she's beautiful only on the inside
- 📖 her sisters call her Rough-Face because her face is scarred
- 📖 her sisters try to see the Invisible Being but fail
- 📖 the Rough-Face girl sees things as they are
- 📖 the helper is the Invisible One's sister
- 📖 ends with marriage and happiness

CONNECTIONS

Using atlases, encyclopedias, and/or Internet websites, research the following:

- ★ where the Algonquins lived
- ★ clothing of Algonquins
- ★ importance of nature symbols
- ★ way of life (food, housing)

VOCABULARY WORDS

| | | | |
|----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| ashamed | desperately | leggings | sigh(ed) |
| awesome | glossy | moccasins | stammer(ed) |
| buckskin | hard-hearted | quiver | vanished |
| charred | haughtily | runner | wigwam |

Choose the word that completes the sentence:

1. After the fire, the wood on the outside of the house wasand black.
2. If something has disappeared, it has
3. Often Native Americans wore made out of
4. In Cinderella stories the sisters or stepsisters are often proud and act
5. The young brave put arrows into his before leaving to hunt.

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SYNONYM — a word that means almost the same thing as another word.

ANTONYM — a word that means the opposite of another word.

THESAURUS — a reference book that lists groups of words with similar meanings

Most dictionaries also include synonyms and antonyms for many of the entry words. Often these synonyms and antonyms are shown in capital letters.

Listed below are some words used in *The Rough-Face Girl*. Write at least one synonym beside each of the words. Use a dictionary or thesaurus if you have trouble thinking of a word. Remember that a synonym is one word, not a phrase or group of words.

- 1. wigwam
- 2. huge
- 3. pictures
- 4. rich
- 5. marry
- 6. powerful
- 7. see
- 8. painted
- 9. swift
- 10. cruel

Find an antonym for each of the following words from *The Rough-Face Girl*.

- 11. morning
- 12. cruel
- 13. sister
- 14. handsome
- 15. visible

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Each arm of the star shown below is labeled with different parts of speech. Sort the words listed below by putting each of them into or around the arm where the word belongs.

- | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| marry | women | rich | village | Invisible Being |
| sister | dress | hair | gently | stars |
| bow | stepped | black | kind | see |
| wise | gladness | wigwam | lakeshore | sled |
| beautiful | proud | necklaces | father | haughtily |
| insisted | swift | strong | lightning | huge |
| handsome | sweet | ugly | glossy | Rough-Face Girl |
| entrance | heard | lake | Milky Way | water's edge |

