

The Echo People

written by SD Youngwolf

illustrated by Shonto Begay

About the Book

Genre: Fiction

Format: Hardcover, 32 pages
10 x 9

ISBN: 9781643792019

Reading Level: Grade 4

Interest Level: Grades K-5

Guided Reading Level: Q

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Alaskan Native / Indigenous / First Nations / Native American, Conflict resolution, Empathy / Compassion, Fiction, Gratitude, Social & Emotional Learning / Wellness / Whole Child

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/the-echo-people

SYNOPSIS

In the early morning hours, two young children go on a journey of discovery with their grandfather, a great chief. After offering prayers to Creator, Grandfather leads Aiyanna and Little Wolf separately to the river gorge to meet The Echo People. There, surrounded by the beauty of Mother Earth, the children connect with The Echo People in a way that reveals something about themselves and learn a valuable lesson that will guide them throughout their lives.

Winner of Lee & Low's New Voices award, *The Echo People* gently teaches young readers that if we meet the world with love and kindness then that kindness is echoed back to us.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Author's Note from SD Youngwolf

"Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of art known to the world. The history of the people, the humor, the culture, and above all the values of myriad cultures have been passed down over time to teach successive generations how to live our best lives and discover the truths that inspired our ancestors.

I began telling stories to students in the classroom as an art teacher in a largely Native rural community in Oklahoma. I was surprised to find out that many of my Native students had never heard a traditional story from their tribal tradition. Henceforth I told stories every day, which not only provided entertainment and education but also cultural tradition and subject matter for different art projects. I then started to receive invitations to tell stories at tribal gatherings and events. Often elders would approach me afterward to express appreciation for carrying on a tradition that has been in danger of dying out in tribal nations. They told me they remembered elders from their childhood telling stories, and how much they missed it.

This eventually led to telling my own stories, based on traditional teachings and values. *The Echo People* is one of those stories."

American Indians in Children's Literature

American Indians in Children's Literature (AICL) provides critical perspectives and analysis of portrayals of Indigenous peoples in children's and young adult books, school curricula, popular culture, and society. It provides resources and suggestions for children's books featuring American Indians in addition to recommending language that should be used when discussing American Indians and other historical events. There are several best book lists about American Indians and First Nations that are wonderful additions to any classroom. (<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/p/best-books.html>)

National Indian Education Association

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was formed by Native educators in 1969 to encourage a national discourse on Native education. NIEA adheres to the organization's founding principles: to bring Native educators together to explore ways to improve schools and the education of Native children; to promote the maintenance and continued development of Native languages and cultures; and to develop and implement strategies for influencing local, state, and federal policy and policymakers. The National Indian Education Association also offers a Culture-Based Education Repository that houses curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Educators can browse the Repository and submit lessons (<http://www.niea-resourcepository.org>).

Teaching About Indigenous and Native American Peoples in Past and Present

The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian's curriculum, Native Knowledge 360, has lesson plans and materials for educators that provides educators and students with new perspectives on Indigenous and Native American history and cultures (<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/about.cshtml>). The Native American Heritage Programs has a page dedicated to Culturally Responsive Curriculum (<https://lenapeprograms.info/teacher-parent-resources/culturally-responsive-curriculum/>) as well as other pages, such as "10 Things You Don't Know About Native Americans" to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about contemporary Native people (<https://lenapeprograms.info/teacher-parent-resources/stereotypes-debunked/>).

Native American and Indigenous Peoples Oral Storytelling

Oral storytelling is a way people from a variety of backgrounds may share traditional stories and songs across generations. Prior to colonization in the present-day United States of America, storytelling existed. Oral storytelling remains a way that Indigenous and Native American communities share wisdom and preserve rich cultures and traditions.

Thomas King's book *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* is an additional reference when thinking about the role of storytelling in our daily lives. King's text is a recommended book for teachers to gain a deeper understanding about storytelling from a Native American perspective. (<https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/the-truth-about-stories>) Native Knowledge 360's "Celebrating Native Cultures Through Words: Storytelling and Oral Traditions" (<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/informational/storytelling-and-oral-traditions>) also provides additional context on the important role of Indigenous and Native American peoples and storytelling traditions.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Why do you think learning family stories is important? Have you ever asked your grandparents, aunts or uncles, parents, or other adults in your life about what it was like for them when they were kids? What did you learn?
- Ask students to think about their family and what family means to them. How is family important to you? What has your family taught you about life? What are some favorite memories of your family and/or family members? Why are these special or important to you? How do you show your family members that you care about them? What are some things that you do to help them? Why?

- What does it mean to give back to the Earth? How do you respect nature and the world around you?
- Have students think about why it's important to take care of the Earth and the world around us. How do they make sure that they're caring for their community?
- What do you think nature and the world around us can teach us about life? Why is it important to acknowledge our environment and how it impacts us?
- What does "the moral of the story" mean? How do you think picture books can teach us about important life lessons? What are some books that have taught you lessons about life?
- What does it mean to be kind? How do you show kindness to others? How does it make you feel when people are kind to you? Why is kindness important?
- Have you heard of the principle: "treat others as one would like others to treat them?" What do you think that means?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *The Echo People*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Read SD Youngwolf's author biography: Why do you think SD Youngwolf decided to write this book about a young girl and boy and their interpretations of The Echo People?

Read Shonto Begay's illustrator biography: What did you learn about the illustrator that made you think differently about his artwork? What kind of artwork does Shonto Begay specialize in? Has he illustrated any other children's books?

Encourage students to stop and jot down notes in their reading notebooks during the read aloud when they: learn new information; see a powerful image; have an emotional reaction or an idea; have a question; or hear new words.

Have students quickly write their feelings in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down those feelings and have them write journal entries about them.

Ask students to make a prediction: Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues are given that help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- who the grandfather is and what he means to Aiyanna, Little Wolf, and the whole village
- why the grandfather brings Aiyanna and Little Wolf to the bluff
- why it's important to respect your elders and grown-ups in your life
- who the Echo People are
- what Aiyanna and Little Wolf say to the Echo People
- how the Echo People respond to Aiyanna and Little Wolf
- how Aiyanna and Little Wolf's personalities affect their relationship with the Echo People
- what the grandfather teaches Aiyanna and Little Wolf about the Echo People
- why it's important to be kind and treat others how you would yourself
- what it means to give back to the Earth
- what it means to live in community with others and nature
- the lesson that the Echo People taught Aiyanna and Little Wolf at the end of the story
- how the grandfather relays the Echo People's message to Aiyanna and Little Wolf

Encourage students to consider why the author, SD Youngwolf, would want to write this story.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

buckskin, cornmeal mush, lodge, village chief, breechcloth, bean bread, sacred pipe, Creator, cedar, hand drum, blessing song, Echo People, river gorge, mountain laurel, bluff

Academic

filtered, upward, fanning, purification, irritated, foolish, gestured, impulsive, impatient, intently, whirled, serene, melodiously

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How does the story begin?
2. Where does Aiyanna need to go?
3. Who is Little Wolf? What does he need to do?
4. What does the grandfather do at the lodge? What kinds of rituals does he perform?
5. What does the grandfather tell Aiyanna and Little Wolf that they're going to do? Who does the grandfather tell them that they're going to meet?
6. Where do they go to meet the Echo People? Where does Aiyanna go? Where does the grandfather take Little Wolf?
7. What does Aiyanna say to the Echo People? What about Little Wolf?
8. How do Aiyanna and Little Wolf react to the Echo People's responses?
9. What does Little Wolf tell the grandfather about the Echo People?
10. What happens when Little Wolf and the grandfather arrive to Aiyanna's spot? What does she say about the Echo People?
11. How are Aiyanna's and Little Wolf's experiences different?
12. What does the grandfather tell Aiyanna and Little Wolf about the Echo People?
13. Where do the grandfather, Aiyanna, and Little Wolf go at the end of the story?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What role do the illustrations play in *The Echo People*? How does the artwork demonstrate the story's message and themes? How does the illustrator, Shonto Begay, show emotion and feeling through his artwork?
2. How does the grandfather in the story teach Aiyanna and Little Wolf about life lessons? What are different ways that he explains how the Earth provides us our life? What does he teach them about their actions and how they're reciprocated in the world?

3. What do the Echo People teach Aiyanna and Little Wolf? How are the lessons similar to what the grandfather teaches them?
4. How are Aiyanna and Little Wolf different? What are their personalities like? How do their personalities affect how they interact with the Echo People?
5. How do Aiyanna and Little Wolf show their grandfather respect? Why is listening to elders and grandparents important? What can they teach us about life?
6. What does *The Echo People* teach readers about the importance of family or community?
7. How does nature play a role in *The Echo People*? What does *The Echo People* teach readers about giving back to the Earth? How does the grandfather demonstrate respect to the Earth and nature around them?
8. Have you had a grandparent, a teacher, or an elder that has been impactful in your life? What did they teach you? How did you show them respect? What kind of stories did they tell you? How are they meaningful to you?
9. Read SD Youngwolf's "Author's Note" section in the back of the book. What does he tell young readers who engage with *The Echo People*? What did you learn from the story from his note? Why do you think it's important to read Author's Notes after the book? What can you learn from the book that you don't get from reading the actual story?
10. What are some of the things in *The Echo People* that you can apply to how you go about your day? What does this story teach you about what kind of energy you send out into the world?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about the message the grandfather tells Aiyanna and Little Wolf about the Echo People. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think SD Youngwolf's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations the author had for writing this book from both past and present perspectives. What do you think he wanted to share with readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make between the book and your own life? What scenes do you relate to and how did they make you think of your own childhood or growing up experiences?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books or poems while reading *The Echo People*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?

Multilingual Learners Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are multilingual learners (ML).

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with another classmate. Afterwards, students can create their own drawing to connect with the book's message.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading: 1) Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing. 2) Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how they connected to *The Echo People* and what they learned about the moral of the story.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose ML students to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. Consider consulting www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/ for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. How does *The Echo People* show positive relationships? What are the qualities of a positive relationship? How do Aiyanna and Little Wolf show respect to their grandfather? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that can be presented and accessible for the whole class. Alternatively, students can create a word cloud and see what qualities come up the most and are the largest (<https://www.wordclouds.com/>).

2. Aiyanna and Little Wolf's grandfather teaches them about the importance of being kind and respectful. What is a life lesson that you learned from a teacher, a friend, or a family member? What was it? How did it impact you? How can you pass on your knowledge to another friend?
3. Aiyanna and Little Wolf learn about the importance of connecting to nature from their grandfather. Why is it important to respect nature? How do you honor the environment around you?
4. What does *The Echo People* teach about consequences and the power of your actions? Why do you think we need to be aware of how we act in the world? Share an example from *The Echo People* about how you behave in the world is important.
5. The grandfather states: "Your actions, your words, even your thoughts all come back to you. If what you give to the world is unkindness, then that too will be returned to you. My little ones, always treat the world in a good way in all that you do." What do you think this means? Why do you think the grandfather told Aiyanna and Little Wolf this? How did you connect to these statements?
6. How did Aiyanna and Little Wolf's personalities affect their relationship with the Echo People? How does SD Youngwolf describe Little Wolf? How does he describe Aiyanna? Who did you identify with more and why? Have you ever felt like Little Wolf before? What about Aiyanna?
7. Which illustration in *The Echo People* do you think best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does the artist portray that emotion?
8. Choose an emotion such as happiness, fear, hope, sadness, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *The Echo People*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Students can write about a situation where they were kind or helped another person.** What was the situation? How did they know to help the other person? How did they demonstrate kindness in that moment? How did it make them feel? How did it make the other person feel? How did the situation connect to what they read about in *The Echo People*? Students can accompany their writing piece with artwork of their choosing and share with

a partner, small group, or whole class. Edutopia has articles and lesson plans dedicated to teaching about kindness and optimism in the classroom (<https://www.edutopia.org/article/culture-kindness-early-childhood-classrooms/>) (<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-kindness-the-kind-campaign-lisa-dabbs>).

- **Conduct a figurative language study with students.** Have students go on a figurative language scavenger hunt in *The Echo People*. Refer to Read Write Think's "Figurative Language Resource Page" as a tool for students to use during their search (http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf). Ask students to keep track of what they find in a notebook or other written format.
- **Consult the "Selective Bibliography and Guide for 'I' is not for Indian: Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People" to read more about recommended titles, titles to avoid, and additional guidelines in choosing culturally responsive Native texts for students** (<https://ailanet.org/about/publications/i-is-not-for-indian/>). Read books that meet these criteria in the following categories:
 - Find books that feature Indigenous and Native American people. Examples of Lee & Low titles include *This Land is My Land* (leeandlow.com/books/this-land-is-my-land) by George Littlechild, *Kiki's Journey* (leeandlow.com/books/kiki-s-journey) by Kristy Orona-Ramirez, *When the Shadbush Blooms* (leeandlow.com/books/when-the-shadbush-blooms) by Carla Messinger, and *Saltypie* by Tim Tingle (leeandlow.com/books/saltypie)
 - Find books that present Native people accurately such as *The People Shall Continue* by Simon J. Ortiz (leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue), *Indian No More* by Charlene Willing McManis with Traci Sorell (leeandlow.com/books/Indian-no-more), *Crossing Bok Chitto* by Tim Tingle (leeandlow.com/books/crossing-bok-chitto), and *Nibi's Water Song* by Sunshine Tenasco (leeandlow.com/books/nibi-s-water-song)
 - Find biographies of Indigenous and Native American people, such as *Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story* by S.D. Nelson (leeandlow.com/books/quiet-hero) and *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* (leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path) by Joseph Bruchac
 - The Native American Heritage Programs website also has a list of recommended reading for children through adults (<https://lenapeprograms.info/book-list/>)
- **Read "How to Tell the Difference"** (https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/tribal-training/Resources4_OYATE_Book_Guide.pdf). Have students investigate books featuring Native American and Indigenous peoples in their classroom, abiding by the guidelines listed in the activity above. Students can make an inventory of the Native American and Indigenous Peoples books in their classroom, and work with their local and public librarian on continuing to add new, contemporary Native American and Indigenous Peoples titles to their libraries throughout the school year.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author SD Youngwolf.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did he come up with his idea to write *The Echo People*? Why did he want to write a book about the Echo People and their teachings?

- Learn about traditional Native American and Indigenous Peoples storytelling.** Consult Native Knowledge 360's "Celebrating Native Cultures through Words: Storytelling and Oral Traditions" (<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/informational/storytelling-and-oral-traditions>) for more information on the role of storytelling in Native American and Indigenous Peoples culture. Native American and Indigenous Peoples oral storytelling is critical to passing along knowledge about the Earth, family, food and more (https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/oral_traditions/). Conduct research online and with books from reputable Native American and Indigenous authors and organizations about oral storytelling and what it was and is continued to be used for (<http://blog.nativepartnership.org/storytelling-in-native-american-cultures/>). How does the grandfather use storytelling throughout *The Echo People*? How does he pass on his knowledge about the Earth and the message from the Echo People? Students can present their findings in a visual presentation format of their choosing.
- Have students answer the following guiding questions: why is oral storytelling important in Native American and Indigenous Peoples culture?** How do stories help us learn about different life lessons? What are other examples of Native American and Indigenous Peoples oral storytelling? Students can also read and refer to Lee & Low's *The People Shall Continue*, a traditional example of Native American and Indigenous Peoples oral storytelling by Simon J. Ortiz ([leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue)).
- Come up with ideas on how to show respect to one another.** The Echo People teach Aiyanna and Little Wolf about how we treat others. What responsibilities do we have as human beings today to interact with one another? How do we show respect and kindness to one another? How can we encourage others to do the same? Students can come up with a list of classroom rules and refer to them throughout the school year.
- Use *The Echo People* as a mentor text for a moral of the story unit.** What does "the moral of the story" mean? What is the moral of the story in *The Echo People*? How do the Echo People show Aiyanna and Little Wolf how to behave and present themselves in the world? What does it mean to have morals and what is right and wrong? Have students find other books that present morals of the story. How do these books connect to the messages in *The Echo People*? Students can write an essay about the moral of the story they learned in *The Echo People*.
- Compare Aiyanna and Little Wolf's experience with *The Echo People* and conduct a character analysis.** Record how Little Wolf and Aiyanna both speak to the Echo People. What do they say to the Echo People? How do the Echo People respond? What do you think their statements to the Echo People and the Echo People's responses say about their character? Who do you identify with? Students can use a graphic organizer with columns for "Aiyanna" and "Little Wolf" to gather their thoughts and then write a comparative essay about Aiyanna and Little Wolf's experiences in the story.
- Read additional Native American and Indigenous Peoples stories about showing thanks and gratitude to Nature.** Some Lee & Low titles include *Giving Thanks: A Native American Morning Message* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/giving-thanks/>), *All Around Us* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/all-around-us/>), *Where Wonder Grows* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/where-wonder-grows/>), *Nibi's Water Song* ([leeandlow.com/books/](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/)

nibi-s-water-song) and *When the Shadbush Blooms* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/when-the-shadbush-blooms/>). Have students answer the following guiding questions: what themes do these books have in common? How does each author present nature and the environment? What does nature mean to the characters in each of the books? Students can write a comparative essay and have a small group or whole class discussion detailing their findings.

- **Review/Introduce Plot and Theme with students.** Create a T-chart that lists "Plot" on one side and "Theme" on the other side. According to *The Reading Strategies Book* (<http://www.heinemann.com/products/e07433.aspx>), explain to students that plot is "what happens in the book" and theme is the "big idea about the book." What is the plot in *The Echo People* and what are the themes that emerge from the plot? Have a group discussion and write both on chart paper.
- **Have students select a quote or a few sentences from the book to write about.** Why did they choose to write about that quote? What are their reactions to that statement? What did it make them think about? How did this quote make them feel? Students can write an essay about their quote and why they think SD Youngwolf included it in the book.
- **How has a family member or friend close impacted your life?** Aiyanna and Little Wolf's grandfather clearly has a positive impact on their lives, even in the short period that we get to see them in the story. Have you had a family member or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that person did that were significant to you? Students can write a poem, essay, or display their work in any other visual format that works best for their learning needs.
- **In an essay, poem, or other written format, have students share something about their environment that's important to them.** Is there something that they care about in the environment around them? What intrigues them about the natural world? What do they like to observe in the park, or on the playground? What makes them curious about the environment and the Earth?
- **Encourage students to write a poem or other type of writing piece about a childhood memory or something that is meaningful to them about their identities, cultures, or heritages.** Using inspiration from *The Echo People*, have students think about what they want to communicate about themselves, their families, and/or their favorite childhood experiences. What do they want to share and why did they pick that thing to write about? Students can share their work with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. Consider creating a class book with illustrations and have the book available to students in the classroom library.

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- Learn about the significance of offerings in Native American and Indigenous Peoples cultures.** In *The Echo People*, the grandfather smoked a pipe by a small fire. SD Youngwolf states, “The sacred pipe represents a traditional way of offering prayers to Creator.” The grandfather also offered cedar and sprinkled it on the coals and fanned the smoke to the four directions with an eagle feather, and then fanned the smoke over the children and himself for blessing and purification. Offerings are a way to show respect and gratitude (<https://carleton.ca/indigenous/policies-procedures/tobacco-offering-protocol/>) (<https://mushkiki.com/programs-services/the-four-sacred-medicines/>). Review the significance of offerings in Native American and Indigenous Peoples cultures. What is the importance of the offering in *The Echo People*? Why do you think the author chose to include this scene with the grandfather, Aiyanna, and Little Wolf?
- Research and investigate tribal nations in your school's area.** Students can conduct research through books or other materials on tribal nations that are indigenous to the local area. Ask them if the nations are still living in their area today. If not, ask students if the nations were moved elsewhere and why. Students can look for information on current tribal government information today.
- Encourage students to learn more and take action about how you can give back to your environment.** The grandfather in *The Echo People* states, “My little ones, always treat the world in a good way in all that you do.” How does this statement apply to what you can do within your school and community? Encourage students to think about this statement and how they can help their school and immediate neighborhood. *The New York Times* has a compilation of resources and lesson plans titled, “Making a Difference: Ideas for Giving, Service Learning and Social Action,” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/learning/lesson-plans/ideas-for-giving-service-learning-and-social-action.html>). Begin with brainstorming different ideas about how students can give back and translate those ideas into action. Students can work in small groups or with the whole class on one singular project. Afterwards, connect the experience back to the grandfather's statement. What did they learn from this process, and how did it make them feel? How did they return what they took from the Earth?

Science/STEM

(2-LS4-1 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity: Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats;

3-LS4-4 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity: Make a claim about the merit of a solution to a problem caused when the environment changes and the types of plants and animals that live there may change; MS-LS2-5 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics: Evaluate competing design solutions for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services).

- Learn about Bluffs** (<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/bluff/>), specifically focusing in Native American and Indigenous Peoples Culture. Different tribal nations have held ceremonies and rituals on bluffs and consider them sacred ground (<http://www.redwingmn.gov/345/History-and-Sacredness>). Have students answer the following questions:

what are bluffs? Where are they located in the United States? How are bluffs and gorges that are featured in *The Echo People* integral to Indigenous and Native American culture? Students can prepare a visual presentation with examples of bluffs from across the country.

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Encourage each student to create an illustration that represents her or his culture, identity, and/or heritage.** Students can study and mimic Shonto Begay's style from *The Echo People* as inspiration for their pieces or use a style that they're comfortable with. Afterward, students may share their artwork with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. What did students learn about themselves during this process? Why did they choose a particular artistic style and items to include in their artwork?
- **Research Native American and Indigenous Peoples morning blessing songs.** In *The Echo People*, SD Youngwolf writes, "The song was a morning blessing song, a way of giving thanks for a new day." Listen to the Cherokee morning song (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhcgX1VHsgkO>). How did it make you feel? Why are these songs important? Why do you think it's helpful to start the day with this kind of song?
- **Have students examine the collections, galleries, and exhibitions at Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) Museum of Contemporary Native Arts.** The IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts is the country's only museum for exhibiting, collecting, and interpreting the most progressive work of contemporary Native American and Indigenous Peoples artists (<https://iaia.edu/iaia-museum-of-contemporary-native-arts/museum-about/>). Have students look at different pieces of art featured on the website (or on a field trip if financially and geographically possible) and research an artist of their choosing.
- **Have students come up with questions for an interview with the book's illustrator, Shonto Begay.** What is the process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did he choose to create the illustrations and why? How does his work showcase the themes of the book? Visit Shonto's website for more information about him and his work (<https://shontobegay.net/>). How does his fine art compare to the illustrations in *The Echo People*?
- **Have students research Native American and Indigenous Peoples illustrators today.** If available, have students consult the librarian for help with researching and/or acquiring these books. Consider having the class generate a list of questions about the illustrator's work that they can send to the author or illustrator to encourage collaborative dialogue. Additionally, have students read Dr. Debbie Reese's blog posts about Native American and Indigenous Peoples authors and illustrators (<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2014/05/why-i-advocate-for-books-by-native.html>).

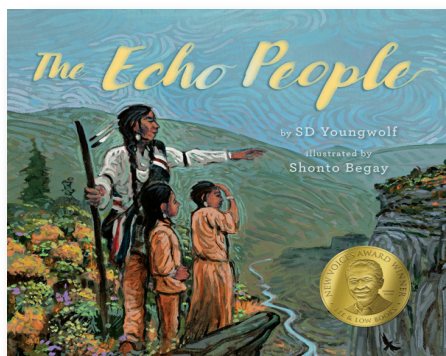
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Encourage students to interview family members about a favorite or impactful childhood memory.** How did that event influence the family member? How did it affect the person's life moving forward? Consider having students, if comfortable, share their findings with a partner, a small group, or whole class.
- **Have students bring home *The Echo People* and share the book with other family members.** Ask students to start a discussion about what their families learned from and connected with in the text.
- **Have students reflect on a family member or friend who has made a difference in their life.** Aiyanna and Little Wolf's grandfather is a positive influence on them and teaches them a lot about life lessons. Students and families can discuss how a family member or friend made an important impact on their life and why.
- **Ask students to ask their families to share what they love about being in nature.** What do their families like about being outside? How do they show that they appreciate their environment and community? What do they like best about being outside?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SD Youngwolf, an enrolled citizen of the Tsalagi Nvdaḡi Tribe, is an award-winning fine artist, mask maker, and storyteller. A former art educator in Oklahoma, Utah, and Arkansas, he is dedicated to the preservation and teaching of Indigenous cultural values. *The Echo People* was Lee & Low's New Voices winner and marks his debut as a children's book author. He lives in New Mexico. You can learn more about the author at theindigenousheart.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Shonto Begay is a citizen of the Navajo Nation, and an acclaimed writer, educator, and painter. His acrylic paintings are done in a series of small brush strokes that repeat like the words of a traditional Navajo blessing prayer. Begay's work has been exhibited in galleries and museums worldwide. He lives in Diné land. You can see more of his luminous work at shontobegay.net.

Reviews

"True to traditional Indigenous teachings, Grandfather shares his wisdom about life ("Your actions, your words, even your thoughts all come back to you") but lets his grandchildren make meaning from their experiences. . . . A visually appealing and carefully told tale that will linger." – *Kirkus Reviews*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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