

A Learning Guide for:



Enchanted Runner

by Kimberley Griffiths Little

Synopsis



Kendall believes in magic. He can feel it when he runs. And since his mother's death a year ago, the urge has become too big to explain. During her illness, Kendall ran to save her. Now he runs to retrieve the memory of her face. Sometimes, too, he imagines himself running like the warriors in Mom's stories, Acoma Runners returning to his mother's native pueblo tribe, to the cliffs of Acoma...Sky City...a place she promised to visit together when he turned twelve.

As Kendall prepares for a summer-long adventure crossing the states in his dad's semi, a letter arrives from his mother's grandfather, beckoning him to Acoma. He feels cheated, until it occurs to him his mom might somehow be there, in Sky City. He's twelve, after all, and his mother always keeps her promises.

Drawn into his great-grandfather's world of secrets and sacred ceremony, Kendall discovers that the magic he feels when he runs is a proud legacy, one linked to a way of life as ancient and mysterious as the earth itself. In the process of trying to recover his mother, Kendall reclaims his worldly and spiritual heritage, in a moving story about one boy's search for identity and belonging.

"Using fluid language brimming with evocative images, Little takes readers on a journey of discovery and reclamation . . . [Enchanted Runner] will touch a bittersweet chord for those biracial children who feel caught between two cultures."

-VOYA

"As Kendall is tested physically and spiritually in a rite of passage, the story becomes even more meaningful."

-KLIATT starred review

"A fine coming-of-age story, enhanced with a lot of insight."

-Kirkus Reviews

Curriculum Connections

- Enchanted Runner is directed toward a reading level from fifth grade to eighth grade, but it is an enjoyable book for adults as well.
- The author addresses social concerns of cultural diversity, family heritage and relationships, death, self-discipline and dreams.
- Enchanted Runner fits well into a Native American Social Studies Unit, exposing students to life at a pueblo as well as the traditions and symbolism of many tribes throughout the country.
- Enchanted Runner stirs the imagination and provides Language Arts teachers with a springboard for a unit on poetry or creative writing.
- Intriguing descriptions of Native American pottery and ceremonial objects provides a unique approach to art projects.

Southwest
Book
Award Winner

Land of
Enchantment
Award,
2001-2002

Battle of
the Books
Choice
2001-2002



Group Discussion/Journal Questions

Chapter 1: How do you think Kendall felt when his dad told him he'd be going to Acoma instead of on-the-road with him?

Chapter 2: What do you think of Kendall's father? What is their relationship like?

Chapter 3: Have you ever visited relatives you didn't know? How did it make you feel? Why do you think Kendall thought he would find his mother at Acoma? Why do you think Kendall ran to Enchanted Mesa?

Chapter 4: How do you think Kendall felt meeting his grandfather for the first time?

Chapter 5: What do you think about Trina? What two things do Kendall and Trina argue about? Why does Kendall feel like an outsider? Have you ever felt this way?

Chapter 6: How do you think Kendall felt when he found the pictures of his grandfather? What do you think is the significance of the running?

Chapter 7: What significant things happened between Kendall and his great-grandfather in this chapter? How do you think Kendall felt when his great-grandfather said "No Whites are allowed to see the gods"?

Chapter 8: In what way is Armando Abeyta's opinion of Kendall is changing? Where do you think the place is that "has all the answers"? Why?

Chapter 9: Why do you think Kendall was fascinated by the wild horses? What do you think Rasmiyah represents in his life?

Chapter 10: Kendall describes that loving his parents feels like "straddling a thin line"? Why do you think this is so? Have you ever felt this way? What is it like for you?

Chapter 11: Kendall's great-grandfather gave him a sacred bundle to carry when he ran? How do you think these things helped him? What would you carry in your "sacred bundle"? Why?

Chapter 12: Why do you think Rasmiyah let Kendall touch her? What does this event represent in Kendall's growth?

Chapter 13: How does Kendall feel when he reads the letter from his father? How would he have felt reading it a few weeks earlier? What has changed?

Chapter 14: When Armando Abeyta said "All dreams have messages. Listen closely for yours," what was he referring to? Have you ever received a message through a dream?

Chapter 15: Do you think Kendall's mother fell in love with the wrong man? Why or why not? Why do you think his great-grandfather did not return?

Chapter 16: Why did Kendall feel that "today he was Acoma"? What was the significance of the snake? Did the experience help him or hurt him? Why?

Chapter 17: How do you think Kendall found his great-grandfather? How has Trina's opinion of Kendall changed?

Chapter 18: What is the significance of Kendall's father being allowed onto the reservation at the end of the story? Do you think the Snake Dance is gone forever? Why or why not?



Related Art Projects

- Trina worked with her mother to make pottery. Have the students make the coil pots described in Chapter 15. Study Native American symbols and have the students paint designs on the surface. Display them in a mock art gallery on pedestals made of various sized boxes painted or covered with cloth.
- Have the students make water color paintings of their favorite scene in the story. Have them illustrate it as they saw it in their minds as they read the story. Display the paintings chronologically, to retell the story in pictures.
- Have students draw their interpretations of the mythical characters mentioned in the story: Flint Bird, Spider Boy, Badgers, Strongteeth, and Blue Water. This project would be effective on scratch board or in pen and ink. Matte final projects on blackboard and display around the classroom.
- Have students make "sacred bundles". Make simple draw-string bags out of brown felt. Have the students draw small pictures of things that are sacred or special in their lives. Have them cut out the objects and place them in the bags.

Writing Activities

- Have the students keep a journal during the reading of the story. Have them respond to the discussion questions in writing, or give a summary of the days reading.
- Many important events in Enchanted Runner occur through the writing of letters. Have the students write a letter to someone special in their life who has either died or who is difficult for them to talk to.
- Enchanted Runner is a story about a boy searching for his identity. Have the students write about Kendall's new identity. Does his new identity define him purely as Acoma, Anglo, or something else?
- Have the students write about which character in the story they feel they are the most like and why.
- Have the students write about a dream they have. How will this dream come true? How will the fulfillment of this dream change their life?
- Kendall's mother told him many of the Acoma legends that explained the history of her people. Have the students write a story that describes an event in nature explained through the actions of mythical characters that they create out of their imaginations. If time permits, have the students illustrate their stories and bind them into books.



INTEGRATION IDEA Physical Education

Choose a landmark to represent Enchanted Mesa. Have the students actually run to the destination. Make it more of a marathon, and not a race.

Have students write of their experience in their journal.

Go On A Web Quest!

<http://www.jewelsonclay.com/index.htm>
http://www.southwestartcollection.com/pottery_gallery.htm
 (modern day Acoma pottery)

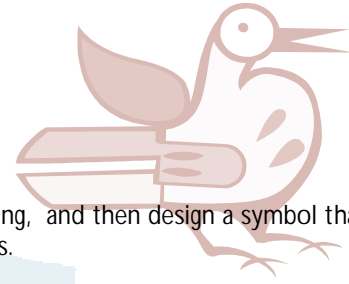
<http://www.indianpueblo.org/acoma.html>
 (history)

<http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/>
 (Virtual Library –American Indians)

<http://www.earthmeasure.com/>
 (Native American Geometry)

http://www.swparks.com/us/travel/newmexico/chaco/acoma_laguna_pueblo.html
 (info on Acoma and Photo of Pueblo)

<http://www.ginov.com/southwest/index.html>
 (photograph of Enchanted Mesa and Acoma Pueblo)



Cooperative Group Activity

Objective: The students will work cooperatively to develop a clan identity in writing, and then design a symbol that represents this idea visually. The activity will culminate in a presentation to the class.

Materials: Paper, pencil, art paper, art supplies, (colored pencils, paint, ink, scissors, glue, etc)

Time frame: 2 –3 days , 1-2 hour sessions (varies)

Background: The idea of “clans” is central to most Native American social structure. Armando Abeyta is the last member of the Snake Clan that knew the old ways. Kendall remembered his great-grandfather describing the reverence of the snake with words such as, “Snakes can move without aid of feet or limbs, They have the power of hypnosis over any man or beast, and it achieves immortality through its ability to shed its skin and live again. And the bite of the snake is deadly.”

Directions: For this activity, divide the students into groups of four and assign a “chief” in each group. Describe the different job descriptions listed below. Have the students each choose one of the jobs. The groups will then brainstorm together and decide on a “clan name” that they all feel represents them, as the Snake Clan represented Kendall and his great-grandfather.

Chief:

Responsible for leading the group. Chooses the positions for the other group members and makes sure all students are on task. Sets example of behavior for the rest of the group. Contributes ideas and helps make final decisions when needed.

Artist:

Designs the symbol for the clan. Listens to the ideas of others, but makes final decision on the design. Ultimately creates poster portraying clan symbol. Contributes ideas to the storyteller.

Acoma Runner:

Responsible to “run” to the teacher when questions need to be answered. Gets all supplies needed for the project. The only member of the group allowed out of his/her seat Contributes creative ideas and helps storyteller if necessary.

Storyteller:

Responsible for writing a description of clan beliefs and an explanation of why the clan chose the name that they did. Directs oral presentation, although all students are encouraged to participate. Contributes ideas to artist.

Conclusion: Have students continue working, monitoring them and assessing needs or modifications if needed. When the groups have completed the task have the Storyteller direct the presentation to the class. Display final Clan Symbols and descriptions around the classroom.

For More Information contact Kimberley Griffiths Little at: kglittle@msn.com

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