

A LEARNING GUIDE FOR:

THE LAST SNAKE RUNNER

By
Kimberley Griffiths Little

Land of Enchantment Award List
New Mexico Battle of the Books List
Hot Off the Press Choice
DearReader.com Weekly Book Choice

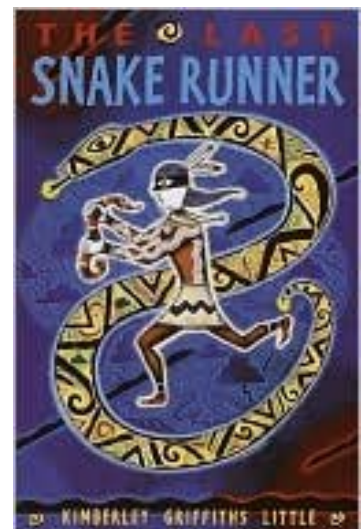
"A tale of wonder and awe, mystery and healing, this story transforms the meaning of a lesson in early American history."
~Urban Spectrum

"Little's strength is her depiction of daily life among the Acoma, especially the ceremonies performed by the now-extinct Snake Clan . . ."
~ Booklist

"Little paints friendships, landscapes, and traditions in memorable detail. . . . useful and beneficial in integrated middle school social studies/language arts curriculum."
~VOYA
(Voice of Youth Advocates)

Synopsis

Running is like breathing for members of the Snake Clan, so when Kendall learns that his new step-mother's ancestors wiped out his tribe four hundred years ago, he runs away from home to the desert to clear his head and be among the spirits of his mother and great-grandfather, the last surviving member of the Snake Clan. But this night will change Kendall's life forever: the spirits are calling him to slip away from his time and go back to a day when the Snake Clan was free. Only Kendall knows that the recently arrived conquistadors will bring death and destruction to his tribe and it is his duty to help his ancestors survive the invasion. But can Kendall himself survive? Can he give his people the hope they need to endure so that *he* can exist in the future?



Pre-Reading/Prediction Questions:

If you study the jacket art, what culture do you think this story will tell about?

What do you suppose a snake runner does?

Read the prologue. Why do you think the author begins the story describing this ritual?

"Perhaps he traveled to a place where time stands still," said the older man. What could this statement foreshadow?

Group Discussion/Journal Questions

Chapter 1: Kendall describes his passion for running as “he ran like other people breathed.” Where does this passion come from?

Chapter 2: Why is Kendall having such a hard time accepting Juanita? Give at least two reasons cited in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3: Describe, in your own words, how Kendall comes to be in ancient Sky City.

Chapter 4: What happens at the end of Chapter 4 that has Kendall surprised and confused? Name two things.

Chapter 5: Describe the differences Kendall notices about the Acoman warrior that tells Kendall something strange is happening. What do you think is happening?

Chapter 6: What clues are there than Jeneum trusts Kendall and will help him? Give three examples from the book.

Why do you think Kendall is nervous when the Spaniards say that Kendall is taller and his eyes are different than the others?

Chapter 7: Who is Tubaloth?

Describe Tubaloth’s appearance.

Who does Tubaloth say Kendall is?

Chapter 8: How do you think Kendall feels about Jeneum? How do you know?

How would marrying Jeneum affect the future of the Snake Clan?

Chapter 9: What does catching a rattlesnake without being bitten mean?

How do the other members of the Snake Clan feel about Kendall after he catches a rattlesnake?

Chapter 10: Describe in your own words the details of the Snake Ceremony.

From Jeneum’s reactions to Kendall, what do you think braiding each other’s hair means?

Chapter 11: Describe in your own words the pros and cons of Kendall going back in time.

What are the feelings of conflict Kendall is having by being there?

What does braiding each other’s hair mean?

What else does Kendall do to show Jeneum his affection for her?

What events in the future does Kendall know will happen, but is unsure of exactly when?

Chapter 12: If Kendall knows he can save the Acomans by sharing what he knows about the Spaniards and what they will do, why do you think he doesn’t tell them?

Chapter 13: Why does one woman’s death turn into a deadly battle so quickly?

Chapters 14 and 15: Make a list of the advantages in war each side has—the Acoma warriors and the Spaniards.

Predict how the war will end.

What do you think Kendall will decide to do? What would you do if you were him? Why?

Chapter 16: What are Kendall’s regrets in this chapter? Name at least two.

Chapter 17: What are the two miracles from the Gods that happen in Chapter 17?

Kendall finds out his purpose for being in Acoma during this time. What is it?

Chapter 18: What is the fate of the remaining Acoman men, women, and children? Do you think this punishment by the Spaniards is fair? Why or why not?

Why does Kendall tell Akish that he must survive?

Why does Kendall feel his dad has betrayed him by marrying Juanita Lovato?

Chapter 19: Why does Kendall decide to go home? Give two reasons.

Chapter 20: What happened while Kendall was gone? What do you think Kendall will tell his family about where he has been and how will his family react?

What are some things that Kendall has learned about himself from this experience?

Read the Author’s Note then answer these concluding questions:

How do you think the Spanish justified the massacre and enslavement of the Acoma people?

Which view is more often depicted in historical texts? Why do you think this is so?

If this were your cultural heritage (Acoma or Spanish), how would you feel about the novel?

Teaching Tip:

“Have the students keep an ongoing journal where they can respond to the discussion questions or just write their thoughts as they read.”

Curriculum Connections

Teaching Tip:

“Have the students pick a curriculum connection idea that appeals to them as a culminating project after reading the book.”

Language Arts

- Read Native American poet, Joy Harjo’s poem “I Give You Back” (which is widely anthologized). How does this poem relate to the events in *The Last Snake Runner*? Which characters from the novel would you most likely hear repeating this poem? Write a journal response to the poem and the novel.
- *The Last Snake Runner* deals with a particularly grim period in the Americas. When you learn the truth about the atrocities that man has committed against each other (whether ancient, or more recent) how do you deal with the emotions it evokes? Write a journal on this topic.

Social Studies/Math

Write a timeline of the Americas. Make sure that the periods are given equal space. Compare the length of time between traditional cultures and the changes made by Europeans on it.

Art

Pottery and baskets remain an important part of the Native American tradition. How are the colors, textures, and design different from those made with European or Asian traditions? Pulling from your own cultural heritage, sculpt a useful object for your own home and use designs that reflect your own family history.

Music

<http://www.indianhouse.com/sndbts.html>

Check out the website listed above to hear Native music played. Then write a brief reaction to it. Also, explore your own musical heritage. Find a link to a site which features music your family likes. Compare the two by rhythm, instrumentation and beat.

Curriculum Connections Continued...



Physical Education

Endurance is a body's ability to perform over an extended period of time. Obviously, Kendall is in peak performance to be able to run such great distances. Choose an activity of your choice (swimming, biking, running, etc.) and work to build on your own endurance. Fill out the chart below of your progress, and be amazed at how your strength can grow exponentially! Write a short journal on the back about the results.

Activity:	Time:	Distance:
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Weekly Total:		

About the Author

Kimberley Griffiths Little is the recipient of the Southwest Book Award and the author of three children's novels which have received many accolades. She grew up reading a book a day and scribbling stories while dreaming of seeing her name in the card catalog one day. A native of San Francisco, Kimberley now lives in a solar adobe house along the banks of the Rio Grande with her husband, a robotics engineer, and their three sons.

www.kimberleygriffithslittle.com
Book News, Author Visits, Activity Pages

Group Activity

Many people have heard of the Cherokee, and the Sioux Tribes. Few have ever studied the Acoma, and the many other tribes of North America. Research a list of other tribes and then research aspects of their life in a group of no more than five. Find out about their music, architecture, traditional foods, art, and if possible, their religious beliefs. Be sure that sources come from Native Americans themselves so they are authentic. [Check out www.oyate.org for lists of books that depict Native peoples accurately.] Then, report your findings to your classmates.

Teaching Tip for Group Activity:

“Have each student take an aspect of the tribe to research and present. Each group can make a poster of illustrations or pictures showing the different part of the tribe's culture.”

Books by Kimberley Griffiths Little

Breakaway, Avon Books
Enchanted Runner, Avon Books
The Last Snake Runner, Knopf Books
The Healing Spell, July 1, 2010, Scholastic Press
The Traiteur's Daughter, Summer 2011, Scholastic Press
Secret Rites of the Goddess, Fall 2011, Scholastic Press

Teacher guide written by children's author Tracie Vaughn Zimmer.
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Visit her website at www.TracieVaughnZimmer.com.

Revised in 2009 by Kirsten J. Werk.