



EDUCATOR GUIDE

Swift Fox All Along

by Rebecca Thomas • illustrated by Maya McKibbin

Lesson plan by Kareena Butler

GENRE: picture book, children's fiction

THEMES: identity, culture, community, feelings and emotions, self-esteem

SUITABLE FOR: Pre-K–2, Ages 4–7

GUIDED READING LEVEL: Fountas and Pinnell K

LEXILE: AD510L

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: CCSS.ELA-Literacy Strand-Reading literature: RL.2.1,2,3,4,5,6,7
W.2.1,3,5,6,8

SL.2.1,1a,1b,1c,2,3,4,5,6

GENERAL CURRICULUM L.2.1,1a,1b,1c,2,,2a,2c,2d,2e,3,4,4a,4c,4d,4e,5,5a,5b,6

CONNECTIONS: Kindergarten: Belonging and Contributing

Grade 1: Community

Grade 2: Family, Traditions

SUMMARY:

When Swift Fox's father picks her up to go visit her aunties, uncles, and cousins for the first time, her belly is already full of butterflies. And when he tells her that today is the day that she'll learn how to be Mi'kmaq, the butterflies grow even bigger. Though her father reassures her that Mi'kmaq is who she is from her eyes to her toes, Swift Fox doesn't understand what that means. Her family welcomes her with smiles and hugs, but when it's time to smudge and everyone else knows how, Swift Fox feels even more like she doesn't belong.

When Swift Fox meets her cousin Sully, she realizes that she's not the only one who's unsure—and she may even be the one to teach him something about what being Mi'kmaq means.

Please remember that the suggested questions and activities within this educator guide are meant to serve as a starting point. Educators are encouraged to select items from each part of the guided inquiry process that work best for their style of teaching and will help them meet their goals when covering the topics in this book. Activities and prompts should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.

BEFORE READING THE BOOK

These activities build the context, introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

Introduce the author, Rebecca Thomas, who is Mi'kmaq (pronounced "meeg mah") and illustrator Maya McKibbin (Yaqui, Ojibwe, and Irish). Both are members of different First Nations that are Indigenous to Turtle Island (North America).

Ask students:

- What does Indigenous mean?
- What do you know about Indigenous people and about Indigenous history and cultures?

Look at the images on the cover of the book *Swift Fox All Along*. Ask students:

- What part of the country is this story taking place? (Some clues the students might see: crab, buoy and rope, basket/trap, sticker of a fish in the truck window).
- Can you tell where the characters are going? Does the main character look excited? How can you tell?

Show students a map of the world.

- Locate your city or town on the map and share which traditional territory your community occupies and which nations the land belongs to.
- Locate the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq on the map.



WHILE READING THE BOOK

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

“SWIFT FOX’S BELLY FILLS WITH BUTTERFLIES.”

Swift Fox is the main character of the story. The first time we see her, she has a belly full of butterflies when she finds out she is meeting her aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Ask students:

- What does it mean to have a belly full of butterflies?
- What emotions or what feelings do you have when your belly is full of butterflies?
- When have you had a belly full of butterflies? What can you do to calm them down?

Activities:

- Help students to create movement or a dance to demonstrate a belly full of butterflies.
- Guide students to practice deep breathing exercises to calm the butterflies.
- Ask students to create a booklet or journal entry with the following statements:

I am _____;

I love _____;

I feel _____;

I am proud of _____.

Students can add throughout the week or each time you revisit the story.

“TODAY YOU’RE GOING TO LEARN HOW TO BE MI’KMAQ.” (pronounced “meeg mah”)

Many Indigenous people are still healing from the impact of the residential school system, which ran from the 1870s to the 1990s. The residential school system was set up by the Canadian government and run by churches. Indigenous children were separated from their families and taken to distant schools where they were forced to speak English and to dress, talk, and behave like white children. This led directly to the loss of culture, of language, and of traditional ways of life for many Indigenous people. When the children who had been taken to residential schools grew up, they didn’t know their original language or culture and couldn’t share it with their own children.

Swift Fox doesn’t know what it means to be Mi’kmaq. She hasn’t been exposed to her culture. Even though her father reassures her that Mi’kmaq is who she is, from her eyes to her toes, and that her Mi’kmaq roots are inside her, the butterflies in Swift Fox’s belly get bigger.

Ask students:

- What does “the butterflies in her belly get bigger” mean? How is Swift Fox feeling?
- When you are asked to try something new or to meet new people, how do you feel?
- What is culture? (language, traditional food, clothing, stories, songs, and dances)

Activities:

- Ask students to draw an activity that they love to do with their family and/or an activity they would like to try with their family.
- Ask students to draw pictures or cut photos from magazines, or bring in pictures of items that represent them and their family's culture.
- Watch a video of a traditional Indigenous song or dance. Ask students how listening to the song or watching the dance made them feel. Do not teach the song or dance unless you have permission. You can also invite a community partner in to speak about First Nations, Inuit, or Métis culture.

A PLACE TO REFLECT

As the family begins to smudge, Swift Fox's butterflies turn into birds because she does not know how to smudge. She runs away to find a quiet place to be alone.

Ask students:

- What does "the butterflies in her tummy grow into birds" mean? How is Swift Fox feeling?
- Swift Fox found a quiet place to reflect. Where is your favorite place to be alone to think and feel your emotions?
- What does being brave mean? What does being brave look like, feel like, or sound like? How is Swift Fox brave? Where do you find bravery (courage) inside you?
- When you are asked to do something you do not know how to do, how can you ask for help?

Activities:

- Ask students to draw or describe the place they feel safe to be alone to think, reflect, and feel their emotions.
- Find a video to describe smudging and the medicines used. *Not all First Nations, Inuit, or Métis smudge and this reflects the diversity of Indigenous peoples.
- Ask students to add words or images to their booklets or journals to correspond to the earlier statements:

I am _____;

I love _____;

I feel _____;

I am proud of _____.

Students can add throughout the week or each time you revisit the story.

- Ask students to draw their ideas of what being brave looks like. What color is it, what shape or sound might it have?



LISTEN TO YOUR FEELINGS

As Swift Fox sat under the porch, she started to listen to the wind and was reminded of how she felt with her father. The wind also brought the smell of fry bread, something Swift Fox loves.

Ask students:

- How can you use your five senses to shift your mood/feelings?
- How does listening to your feelings help you?
- What do the white images represent in the pictures?
- How can you use memories to shift the butterflies (or birds) in your belly to be brave?
- What is a familiar smell, sound, or activity that makes you happy or joyful?
- How can you encourage others to be brave?

Activities:

- Ask students to draw their favorite memory. This could be with their family or friends.
- Ask students what sounds they find calming. Ask them to create a soundscape for the images in the book. The sounds could reflect the emotions that are expressed in the images.

AFTER READING THE BOOK

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this text, and stimulate further extensions.

- Now that you know what traditional territory your school and community is built on, share more information with students about the history of the Indigenous Peoples whose land you occupy.
- Help students to research Indigenous plants and animals in your territory. Throughout the story we see images of animals. Ask students if they have seen similar animals in your neighborhood or town.
- Teach students the words for “hello” and “welcome” in Indigenous languages of your territory. Create a poster for the classroom door. (The author uses a few Mi’kmaq words: “Nsim”= niece and “Kwe”= hello.)
- Read the Author’s Note and discuss the impact of residential schools on Indigenous communities. Explain that many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people did not learn their language, culture, and traditional ways of knowing. Focus on the re-connection to culture and the learning that is taking place. If possible, share some specific examples with students.
- Create a mural with chosen student work from their booklets or journals with the following statements:

I am _____;
I love _____;
I feel _____;
I am proud of _____.

