

Teacher's Guide for Tracey Lindberg's *Birdie*

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Table of Contents

Curricular Connections	3
Summary of Novel	3
A note to students and parents	3
A sample letter to parents	4
Planning for Learning Goals and Outcomes of Novel Study	4
Prepare Students, Parents, & Supporter	5
<i>A sample statement to parents</i>	6
Reading Trauma Literature	6
Learning Goals and Outcomes of Novel Study	7
Before Reading	8
Class Discussion	8
Access Students' Prior Knowledge	8
Metacognition of Reading Profile	8
Think / Share / Pair Activity	9
Differentiating for Students who need support and guidance.	11
Vocabulary	13
During Reading	13
Differentiating for students who need support and guidance	14
Names	14
Places	15
Vocabulary Development	15
Creative Language	15
Language Awareness	17
Thinking like a writer	18
Guided Reading Symbols	19
Language Study of Rhetorical and Poetic Devices	21
Time to Talk	22
Socratic Circles	22
Jigsaw groups	22
After Reading	243
General and Specific Discussion Questions maybe be used as journal prompts, class discussions, essay questions.	24
The Novel as Illustrative of Relationships	23
Contextualizing Responsibility	23
Instructor-led Writing Assignments	25
Additional Questions / Journal / Writing Assignments	27
Discussion and Writing Prompts	29
References	30

Curricular Connections

Birdie could fit well in the grades 10 and 11 English Curriculum. It is particularly well suited to schools that address Identity, Relationships with Family and Others, Social Responsibility, Societal Change, Indigenous Peoples and ideas and models of **Social** Responsibility, Social Action (agency), Culture and Society and Politics, Governance and Anti-colonial History. Of course, Canadian and Indigenous Literature are natural fits for the work.

With respect to grade 12 English Curriculum, the novel allows Educators and Students to engage with Social Responsibility, Perspectives, History, Political Movements, Social and Cultural Theory and Practices, and Social Action (agency). *Birdie* can of course be taught in English classes, but it also possesses potentiality for teaching Canadian history, law and politics.

For students in grades 7 – 9, *Birdie* should be taught carefully with age appropriate discussion and assignments developed by Educators.

For educational institutions working on implementing to Calls to Action as framed by the Truth and Reconciliation, this work can serve to anchor some of the development and dialogue anticipated by that document.

Summary of Novel

The novel begins with Bernice lying in bed in her rented room above a bakery in Gibson's, British Columbia. The plot is driven by Bernice's recalling memories and travelling through dream to places she has lived in the past. The reader gradually gains an understanding that the story is Bernice's healing journey from childhood sexual assault and incest to wholeness and well-being. A chronological timeline of Bernice's life follows the years from her birth in Loon Lake

Introducing the novel

A note to students and parents

Prior to novel study, the teacher should tell students that the novel deals with the topic of sexual violence. Depending on the policy of the school district with respect to trigger and content warnings, and with the discretion of the teacher and principal a letter may be sent home, to inform parents and/or to ask for their consent for their son or daughter to read the novel. In schools with elementary aged children, the librarian may require a permission form for parents to sign before a child may borrow books from the section for young fiction and fiction with mature content.

A sample letter to parents:

Students in [class] will be reading [or will have the option to read] the novel “Birdie.” It is a story of healing from sexual violence. Some students may feel upset when they read about the topic. The teacher will help the students protect themselves by warning them ahead of time so students may choose not to read some sections and they may excuse themselves from discussions they find disturbing. Students’ grades will not be based on sections of the text marked with a trigger warning.

Students and parents should be aware that when survivors of sexual assault read or hear details of violence they may experience strong emotional responses, including but not only depression and nightmares. Emotional support workers [guidance counselors and/or elders] are aware that students in our class are reading the novel.

Please fill out the form to let [the teacher] know that you are aware that your daughter and/or son will be reading the book. Contact the teacher if you have any concerns.

Planning for Learning Goals and Outcomes of Novel Study

Teachers may develop a unit plan around a broad learning goal to answer such questions such as:

- How do people recover from trauma?
- How does the concept of reconciliation relate to the healing journey of victims of sexual assault and incest?
- How can family and community members play a role in the prevention of sexual abuse of children, and in the healing of trauma?
- In the unit study teachers may design learning activities to develop the following understanding, knowledge and skills
- What are the links between colonization, residential, domestic violence, sexual assault, mental illness, substance abuse and other social dysfunctions named or explored in the novel?
- How is the understanding of “home” complicated by colonization?

UNDERSTANDING

Students will develop

- a compassionate interpretation of survivors’ responses to trauma.
- a comprehension of the individual and cultural paths to healing.
- an awareness of resources and supports for sexual assault victims in their own community.
- a sensitivity to the layering of colonial experiences and their impacts on Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

KNOWLEDGE

Students will know

- facts of the historical context of First Nations, Non-status Indians, and Métis poverty that developed in the decades following the signing of the numbered treaties.
- statistics of the rate of sexual assault against Canadian children and against Indigenous children in Canada.
- the stages of recovery from trauma as they are presented in a fictional narrative.
- a Cree view of health and well-being, and how to restore wholeness and wellness.
- how novel plot structure may be developed through orientation and relationship to place.
- Cree vocabulary and language structures as they appear in the novel.
- the distinction between author, narrator, and protagonist.

SKILLS

Students will be able to

- read trauma literature and seek a pattern of behaviours, strategies and stages of healing.
- build reading stamina.
- recognize and interpret Cree symbols, metaphors, simile, imagery in fiction.
- recognize the author's innovation of novel genre.
- recognize and interpret author's creation of new words to communicate precise meaning.
- recognize and reproduce a range of at least 3 registers of English language that is appropriate to different audiences.
- identify Cree language structures.
- compose character descriptions based on their actions, spoken words, thoughts, what the narrator and other characters say about them and what they say about them selves.
- chart the development and change in the main character.
- explore complex issues relating personal experiences and knowledge to references in fiction.

Prepare Students, Parents, & Support

Prior to novel study, the teacher should tell students that the novel deals with colonial violence and that this includes the topic of sexual violence. With the discretion of the teacher and principal, a letter may be sent home, to inform parents and/or to ask for their consent for their son or daughter to read the novel. In schools with elementary aged children, the librarian may require a permission form for parents to sign before a child may borrow books from the section for young fiction and fiction with mature content.

A sample statement to parents:

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Students and parents should be aware that when survivors of sexual assault read or hear details of violence they may experience depression and nightmares. Emotional support workers [guidance counselors and/or elders] are aware that students in our class are reading the novel.

Please fill out the form to let [the teacher] know that you are aware that your daughter and/or son will be reading the book. Please contact the teacher if you have any concerns.

Reading Trauma Literature

Teachers may read and share with students Kate Daily’s article about three models of reading trauma literature. Then, as a reading journal assignment, the students identify the main characters’ steps toward and significant points in her restoration of well-being and wholeness. This may relate to the topics for discussion and essay.

1. Carol Christ’s model of reading trauma literature focuses on the character’s movement to awareness in the four stages; nothingness, awakening, insight, new naming. Christ (1986) writes,

“Women need a literature that names their pain and allows them to use the emptiness in their lives as an occasion for insight rather than as one more indicator of their wholeness” (p. 17). She asserts that literature that reflects a reader’s own experience of trauma can contribute to lifting that reader up out of a victimized place to a place of fullness and “wholeness.” Her model, then, is a useful tool for reading trauma literature (from Daily, 2009; 2).

2. Judith Lewis Herman’s model of reading the narrative of victims of sexual assault identifies three stages the character in the story moves through: first the establishment of (physical and a sense of) safety in one’s life, or at least a belief in the possibility of safety; second, a stage of remembering the story of the violence and mourning, and third, a stage of reconnecting to everyday life.

3. Joy Erlichman Miller identifies two coping mechanisms: “problem-focused coping” and “emotional focused coping”, each with particular strategies. When something concrete can be accomplished then “problem-focused coping” is used

and “doing” strategies like stealing blankets, or extra rations of food can help the victim cope. When there is nothing that can be done, then “emotion-focused coping” is used and “thinking” strategies like “numbing,” “fantasy,” “relationship with others”, and “humor” and ways the victim can protect themselves. (Paraphrased from Daily, 2009: 5).

Teachers may choose to guide students’ reading by giving a journal assignment on a reading of which the students identify the main character’s steps and significant points in her restoration of well-being and wholeness.

After reading (chapters or the book as a whole), students may use graphic organizers to represent the stages and strategies of coping and stages of recovery they perceive in the novel.

Learning Goals and Outcomes of Novel Study

Teachers may develop a unit plan around a broad learning goal so students may apply their learning from *Birdie* to answer such questions as:

- How does childhood trauma affect a person’s well-being in later stages of life?
- How do people recover from trauma?
- How does the concept of “reconciliation” relate to the healing journey of victims of sexual assault and incest?
- How can family and community members play a role in the prevention of sexual abuse of children, and in the healing of trauma?
- What is the value of reading trauma literature? Should adolescent readers be prevented from reading narratives of survivors of sexual assault?
- What is home and how does a person create or recreate it in adulthood?

Teachers may also develop their lesson plan to address the following:

- Language is often more expressive than the limitations of print and rules of grammar permit. What are some examples of this in the novel? In other works they have read?
- Looking at the three levels of meaning in Cree words is a doorway to discover connections with the philosophy of life, and with practices and relationships that promote well-being. What lessons does the novel provide about the impact of not following / knowing that philosophy?
- How can a *metaphorical* reading deepen a reader’s understanding of this novel?

Before Reading

Class Discussion

Ask students what their opinion is about banning young adult fiction that deals with violence or disturbing content? Read Sherman Alexie's article "Why the Best Kids' Books are Written in Blood" in response to Meghan Cox Gurdon's "Darkness too visible: Contemporary fiction for teens are rife with explicit abuse, violence and depravity. Why is this considered a good idea?" Hold a discussion or debate. Teacher may direct students to talk about how to discuss/debate fairly and respectfully, how to protect oneself, and how to maintain feeling safe in adversarial or conflicting positioning / discussion. Teacher may ask for volunteers to speak to the issues raised by both or either pieces.

Access Students' Prior Knowledge

A Reading Journal is a way to support young adults' literacy and self-knowledge development. It is a place where they may record their observations of their own learning (metacognition). Teachers may choose to have students select a symbol or a theme to follow throughout the text and reflect on this periodically in their Journal. This can be the substance of group discussions or written compositions.

Metacognition of Reading Profile

Before distributing the novel ask students to think about and share answers to these questions. Use Think /Share /Pair as a means of Formative Assessment.

1. What details or information persuade you to consider reading a novel?
2. What clues tell you that you might enjoy reading it?
3. How do you begin to read a novel? What do you spend the first 3-5 minutes looking at and reading?
4. What is your purpose in reading a novel?
5. What kind of questions would you like the novel to answer?
6. Are you interested in people? Ideas? New places? Shared or different experiences?

Reading Journal Entry #1

Initial Thoughts

Guide students to read the clues in the novel's "packaging/presentation": survey the details of the presentation of the book, including cover, art, back cover, book mark flaps, "praise for *Birdie*," dedication, "Contents", map, and "Bernice's journey.

Have students record their initial thoughts about the book, questions, the predictions, and expectations.

Reading Journal Entry #2 Towards Mapping Your Discovery of the Story

Ask students to answer some/all of the following in their journal:

“Are you a reader who likes to know the timeline, pattern or map of the story before and while you are reading it? The author gives you clues of what to expect by giving you three layouts:

1. “Contents” is a list of the chapters with English titles, Cree word concepts with English translation;
2. A geographical map; and
3. Bernice’s Journey marked by a list of six places.

If you are a reader who likes to know the timeline, pattern or map of the story you may be challenged to find the chronological timeline in the telling of the story of Bernice’s journey.”

Here is a mapping activity for Students’ Reading Journals:

“After the prologue, the story begins in the present time with Bernice at Gibson’s Landing north of Vancouver, in British Columbia. The story progress as it loops back through time to significant places in Bernice’s life experience. Your understanding of Bernice and her journey of healing is attached to those places. In your own mapping of the story to make it make sense in your own mind prepare to make visual notes of the journey. You may make a graphic of the key places of the journey and record the significant events, learning and healing associated with them. You may choose to visually connect events through time and add a layer of detail of Bernice’s understanding that comes when she revisits those places and events in her healing.”

Think / Share / Pair Activity

Students will keep a Reading Journal to record their observations of themselves as readers. The first entry will be a benchmark to measure growth and development as a reader.

Instructions: Write the date, and the title “Entry #1 “Introduction to *Birdie*, a novel”

Take 5 minutes to write down your thoughts at the beginning of our novel study.

1. What are your thoughts about the novel?
2. What words on the book cover, and flap, and pages of “Praise for the reader” create suspense for you?
3. What details really jump out at you? What thoughts and feelings do these details call up for you?

4. What suggests that this story will describe people's real experiences? What makes you think so?
5. The cover material is written in formal language. In a sentence or two translate some of the message to the familiar language of teenagers.

When students are finished the first entry of their journal, they turn and share with the person beside them to hear what they think so far.

Then as pair they join another pair to compare responses.

As a class have the groups of four students name some common and some unique responses they heard in their group.

TEACHER LEADS / READ ALOUD

Before starting:

Give students sticky notes or book marks for them to write notes without writing in the book.

Talk about reading strategically.

We don't read everything in the same way, Depending on the format and genre of the material, our purpose, and familiarity with the topic and vocabulary we read with different levels of attention and speed. We have different questions for different materials and find the answers and clues in the text in different language patterns and conventions.

In reading a novel, what are the kinds of things we pay attention to: (a possibility is to have this as an anchor chart and keep it posted on the wall during the unit)?

Differentiating

For the Readers who are independent and self-directed, they may be directed to read the novel at their own pace and keep journal entries and notes and do an independent research study on one of the topics listed under the heading "After Reading."

Differentiating for Students who need support and guidance

Strategies for Reading a Novel

Character – how readers get information about characters.

Readers' knowledge may come from what the narrator says, other characters say, what they themselves say and how they act, and what their inner thoughts and dreams are.

Time relationships – how individuals and groups relate their experience and understanding of time.

How do you understand and interpret the characters' relationship with time? In this case, how would you describe Bernice's relationship with time?

It is difficult for some to understand that people have differing relationships with time. Ever notice that when you spend time with a good friend that time flies, or that when you have to do something you don't enjoy, that time drags? You situate your relationship to time, in this example, with your enjoyment/experience of it.

There are many ways to think about time and our relationship with it. Bernice has a relationship with time that allows her to go to a specific place and time in her mind – and then backwards or forwards in time, depending on the place she is visiting in her mind/spirit/memory.

What cues tell you that there is a shift backward or forward in time?

Plot – the main events or sequence of events.

For us to understand and interpret *plot* we need to be aware of action events that happen and drive towards new developments or understanding.

What are some (three – four) major plot events that take place in this novel? Are they compelling / do they drive the novel forward?

Language clues – prose, speech and other means of expression can provide us with understanding of the novel with signals and cues.

Identify and describe the language clues you can pick up from this novel as you read them. Perhaps label a page for each of these and return to it when you have found a language clue: words, verb tense, pictures, symbols, imagery, footnotes, repetition, and/or parallels.

Graphics and visual images – can provide us with clues or can inform our interpretation of the novel.

What do the front cover images, photos, maps, illustrations, charts, spaces, font, italics, and spaces in text (for example) tell us about the novel?

Organization – allows us to think about the form of the novel, the experience of sensation (touch, sound, smell, hearing), movement between places and times, movement between people and stories.

What are some of the repeated forms, dreams, stories within the story, chapters as units, paragraphs, dialogue, poetry, dreams, and narrative devices you see within this work? What purpose do they serve in the work?

Teacher reads aloud Prologue and Chapter 1

Stop and think out loud the questions that the story prompts.

No need to try to answer but this gives the students a chance to mark on their sticky notes or bookmarks, and locate it in the text so that they may return later to find a pattern.

Ten minutes before class ends, stop reading and have students write in the journal a summary of 3 most important details in their own words and a sentence predicting what they think will happen next.

Vocabulary

Have students read the back cover, the cover flaps, and “Praise for the Author” and fill in the left side of the chart with synonyms in their familiar register of language.

Familiar variety of language (talking between friends)	Semi-informal variety of language (talking to a respected adult, or professional)	Formal variety of language (a formal essay, letter or news report, literature)
	Painful	harrowing
	fascinating	intriguing
	main character	protagonist
	present day	contemporary
	first	debut
	includes	incorporates
	a community’s or a group’s traditional story that is usually told, not read	folklore
	expressive and emotional	lyrical
	violent	brutal
	keeps your attention	gripping
	shows deep understanding	insightful
	determined; won’t change	uncompromising
	ceremony to know of one’s own power, spiritual helpers, identity,	Vision quest
	traditional knowledge usually shared in a story form	lore
	describes a story that makes fun of a serious or horrible topic	darkly comic
	heartwarming, emotional,	moving
	shared by everyone in the world; common	universal
	an event that causes suffering	tragedy
	brave, bold, tough	gritty
	clear and powerful meaning	articulate

During Reading

Progress in the development of the story

Differentiating for Students who need support and guidance

It will be useful to prepare some readers with cues to recognize the non-linear order and coherence of the story. Initially, guide them to the page facing the title page. The list with the heading “Bernice’s Journey” is a chronology of the places Bernice lived from birth to the present. The story begins in the present and revisits those places in a non-linear order. Guide the students to be aware of present tense verb form that detail what is happening with Bernice in Gibson’s, and of the past tense verb form that describes her memory of and travel to the past places. It is a wonderful tool for them and allows them to begin to think of the work as containing a code that not every reader knows about.

Some readers will enjoy the discovery of the novel as the author prepared it for them and they may prefer not to have the following guide to help them anticipate and interpret the narrative. But for those readers who lose track of the sequence, and need help to build reading stamina, the following information may help them keep their perspective and orientation to the story.

Names

The characters are known by other names depending on their relationship to others. Students might be interested to know that in many Indigenous communities and families, relationships are found in the naming, and vice versa. For Bernice, there is another level of identification: some of her other names indicate her self-awareness, her healing, her relationship and awareness of herself in dreams and visions. In this way, Bernice is self-defining and self-determining.

<i>Bernice Meetos</i> -	littlebigwomandaughter/mother, her girl, Birdie, She, sistercousin, Bird Bernice, sheBernice, Birdshe, daughterniece, The Kid, Birdgirl, BigHer, bigdaughter
<i>Maggie</i> -	Bernice’s mother, AKA her mom, Bernice’s momma, Valene’s sister
<i>Auntie Val</i> -	Maggie’s sister. AKA Valene, Auntie, bigwomansisterlittlemother, little mother, <i>kee-kuh-wee-sis</i>
<i>Uncle Larry</i> -	Maggie and Auntie Val’s brother. AKA as uncle, Larry, a wolf
<i>Freda</i> -	Bernice’s cousin. AKA Skinny Freda, Freddy, Cousin Freda, sistercousin

Places

- Loon Lake* - (Bernice's childhood home) aka Little Loon, Loon
- Christly School* - (located in Grandetowne) aka The Academy, Christ's Academy, the Jesus Christly School
- Pecker Palace* - (located in Grandetowne) aka Aunt Val's apartment
- Care* - aka the Ingelson's foster home, the Ingelson family
- Edmonton* - (street life) aka the city, under the bridge next to the Kinsman Centre, dumpster behind Lebanese restaurant on Whyte Ave.
- The San* - (the psychiatric hospital in Edmonton)
- Gibson's* - (where Lola's shop is and Bernice lives) aka the ocean

Vocabulary Development

Direct students to build vocabulary in a semi-formal register. They may use the bookmark to record words, and page numbers as reference. Teachers and students may set goals for vocabulary learning. Possible learning activities such as a personal lexicon in the reading journal, or games of jeopardy using an app such as Jeopardy rocks at <https://www.jeopardy.rocks/>

Creative Language

Make a list of the blended or compound words that the author creates to communicate a precise concept or meaning. To explore and explain how you interpret what it means put it in the Column Chart: "Word It is.... and It isn't"

Then in the columns, have students / teacher write words that you associate with the meaning of the word. For example

WORD	It is.....	It isn't.....
Cousinsister (p.135)	Protection, comfort, loyal, closest friends	A once a year visit, connections in name or blood only,
Birdself (p. 138)	Feeling free, safe, aware and knowing, can see herself as a pure being, a natural being, connected to	Just a physical bird, not just an outward symbol disconnected from other

	the narrator, connected to the other animals	metaphoric, spiritual or cultural meanings
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Sistercousin	Indicating a relationship that does not exist in English where blood relations differ from actual relations. Shows the intensity, multi-faceted and deep nature of relations in this Cree family.	Not genetically a sister or a cousin. Not a nuclear family – a cousin. A sister.
thoughtwords	A space within Bernice's brain where her thoughts form and give themselves life. The quiet or silent creation of words that are not said.	Imagination, silence, or

Language Awareness

Formal register of language

Students may be directed to build their own list of words belonging to the formal register that they learn through reading the book. Teachers may assign some from the list.

Chapters :

Prologue. satiation, p. 1

1. absent p. 8, perplexed, p. 10
2. notional, p. 16, tributary, p. 18
3. insinuating, p. 32
4. angst p. 63
5. dissonance, estranged, p. 75; cardinal, cacophonous p. 82, notional, p. 91,
6. oblivious, p. 97
7. girthily, p. 122, inverted, p. 124, betray, p. 137
8. epicenter, p. 140, intones, p. 144, white noise, p. 150, cognizance, p. 154, insolent, p. 157
9. fastidiousness, p. 169
10. complicit, p. 181
11. reconcile p. 205
12. mélange p 228
13. resolve, p 234
14. Frugal p. 238
15. leech, p. 250

Epilogue. cordially, p. 255, presumes, p. 256

Cree Language Awareness

Students can be encouraged to record, define and use Cree terminology from the novel. The language discussion can be taught with access to a map indicating where Cree speakers reside and allows educators to address linguistic groupings, tribal affiliation, Nationhood, communities and self-identification.

There are numerous online resources that will allow students to address pronunciation if there is not a Cree language speaker available. See: www.creedictionary.com, <http://nehiyawewin.ca/cree-language-videos/>, <http://www.allanadam.com>

Some of the introductory and commonly used words and phrases can be taught and discussed in the context of the relationship to the land that Indigenous peoples have with the land under the school students attend. They could also be taught in social studies, health, and wellness courses.

- *kohkom*
- *moshom*
- *pimatisewin*
- *pawatamowin*
- *acimowin*
- *iskwesis*
- *kee kuh wee sis*

Thinking like a writer

Students can be encouraged to expand their writing and reading skills through prompts and teacher-led reading samples within which they are asked to observe and/or experience the following and then describe the same:

1. Pay attention to the shifts in place and consciousness.
2. How does the author cue you that Bernice is remembering back?
3. How does the author cue you that Bernice's awareness of herself is changing?
4. What cues the reader to notice Bernice is gradually regaining well-being?
5. How does the author create suspense? What are the unanswered questions about Freddy, Maggie, Bernice, *kohkom* and her sons, the uncles, the Then?
6. What happened to make everything change?
7. How does the author bend the rules about sentences and words to achieve a purpose or effect for the reader?
8. What does breaking the novel into *pawatamowin*, *acimowin* and defined chapters achieve, in terms of telling the story?

Guided Reading Symbols

Studying the use of the repeated image and symbols in the text can be a way for students to apply their metaphorical, creative and analytic thinking. Students may choose or be assigned a symbol or theme to follow and highlight, interpret, and report to the group.

Straight ahead questions could be:

1. What does sleep symbolize in this novel?
2. What does the Owl represent to Bernice's family, on your reading?
Metaphorically, what does the Owl represent?
3. Birds appear often in this novel. What are some of the things they symbolize in the work?
4. Obesity is mentioned in the novel a few times. It seems to represent more than one thing. What do you think weight and obesity are metaphors for in this novel?
5. Metaphorically, the tree seems to have important symbolism. What does the tree represent to you in *Birdie*?

Students could also guide their analysis by finishing the sentence prompts:

- The repeated image or symbol is
- The words that describe it are
- It could be representing the idea of
- There is pattern in the presentation of [image or symbol] that is repeated on page numbers [x and x]. Like on page [x] the [image or symbol] described as.... on page [x] it is also
- The pattern is changed or developed. Whereas on page [] the [image or symbol] is described as, on page [] it is described as
- The images and symbol of the [] is a way for the author to get the reader to think using our creative and critical thinking, and to feel something with our sensitive caring or sense of right and wrong. For example....

Images and Symbols

absence –	pp. 47, 128, 182, 228
anger –	pp. 61, 62, 63, 81,188
Birdie -	pp. 143-144, 152, 170-171
birds –	pp. , 3, 15, 16, 63, 64, 79, 90, 92-93, 120, 138, 149, 178-9, 185, 198, 205, 225-9, 233, 249
breath –	pp. 12, 13, 44, 47, 58
ceremony –	pp. 45, 54, 55, 99, 135, 158, 172, 180,183,196, 200,203, 218, 224, 226, 240-250, 251, 256
change – (aka shape shifting, travelling)	pp. 4, 5, 47, 57, 66-69, 75, 83, 84, 89-90, 95-96, 232-3, 157, 147, 135, 243

compassion, - pp 104,,173, 186, 219
 dirt – pp. 101, 255
 dream – pp. 3, 9, 16, 58, 117, 139, 150, 179, 213, 231
 earth – pp. 89, 255
 eyes - p. 51
 fat – pp. 65, 87, 121, 151, 217
 family – p. 129
 food – pp. 5, 26, 45, 48, 53, 73, 74, 143, 234
 grief – pp. 55, 56, 190-1
 home - pp. 6, 33, 68, 89, 90, 82-83, 87-90, 95, 142-143
 Jesse/Pat John – pp. 7, 10-11, 54, 172, 186-188, 216
 kinship – pp. 61-63
 lists – pp. 5, 94, 180, 193, 234-5, 239, 240
 look – p. 173
 men as wolves – p. 152
 medicine - pp. 117, 234-5, 239, 246, 253
 mental illness – pp. 96, 99, 207
 mirror – pp. 113, 185, 223
 notes – pp. 6, 83, 191
 Phil – pp. 132-136, 172, 192, 258
Pimatisewin – pp. 3, 24, 104, 125, 183, 213, 222, 223, 226, 230, 236-7, 241, 247, 243, 250, 266

 save yourself – pp. 198, 209
 scars – pp. 4, 116-117, 126
 secrets – pp. 12, 13, 16, 34, 37, 38, 58
 sex - pp. 49, 68, 87, 160
 sexual assault - pp. 107, 164-165, 172-176
 sexuality - pp. 191-195
 shoes – pp. 1, 4, 103, 172, 187, 210, 212
 silence – pp. 8, 16, 52, 55, 56, 62, 63, 78, 85-86, 107, 116, 118, 136, 145, 181, 223

 skin – pp. 4, 5, 61, 63, 84, 102, 112, 153, 160, 227
 snowflake - pp. 162, 171
 sweatlodge - pp. 60, 65, 85, 212, 238
 tree - pp. 64, 72, 138, 168, 177, 223
 tv – pp. 41, 117-118, 175
 violence – pp. 45, 51-54, 61, 107, 112-115, 116, 162, 193-95, 254, 264-5
 white man’s representation of Indians - pp. 9, 184

 wolf – pp. 166, 175, 178, 198, 225, 230
 women – pp. 9, 31, 70, 133, 195, 245
 writing - pp. 6

Language Study of Rhetorical and Poetic Devices

Comparison -	p. 75
Contrast –	pp. 5, 10, 30, 33, 80
Juxtaposition –	p. 98
Simile –	pp. 56, 57
Repetition –	pp. 3, 5, 9

Time to Talk

Groups of two or more can be organized to allow for multiple or self-selected speakers to represent ideas to the group.

Journal entries can also be flagged as questions that will be posed to the group, so students can elect to speak or read their response.

Classrooms can be organized into Socratic Circles to allow for discussion to develop.

Socratic Circles

Socratic Circle

Setup

Practice a Socratic Circle seminar discussion.

Explain it. Model it. Explain it. Practice it.

The Day before implementation, explain:

A Socratic Circle is a way to involve everyone in the class in a discussion about the text.

The way that we do it is everyone has an active role.

Remind students that there is active roles as listeners and as speakers and Socratic Circles challenge everyone to perform both roles.

1. Teacher, in planning stage, selects the text or the portion of the text to focus the discussion [page numbers or chapter or section].
2. Teacher crafts open ended questions, questions that seek exploration not a once and for all answer. The questions focus on the text but relate directly to the students' own lives, previous experience and prior knowledge. The discussion will be rooted in real experience.
3. Teacher, 1-2 days before, prepares the students for Socratic Circle class discussion by telling students to read the assigned pages and prepare their comments and prompts.

4. Students, the day before the discussion, read the assigned text, write their own comments and questions and responses noting how it relates to real world experiences.
5. Teacher and students on the day of, set up the desks or chairs with 1/3 of the chairs in an inner circle and 2/3 of the chairs in an outer circle.
6. Students will put themselves in groups of 3. They will take turns in roles of Speaker, Advisor and Note-taker. One student will start by being the Speaker in the inner circle and the other two students will be Advisors and a Note-taker in the outer circle. The Speaker students in the inner circle are the only ones who do the talking, and the Advisor students communicate to their Speaker students from their group by writing notes on pre-cut pieces of paper or sticky notes. The Note-taker students take notes to trace the direction and topic of discussion, and share this with the Advisor students who may frame new questions and comments to explore, question, explain, defend, support, make references to the text.
7. The Teacher moderates the discussion by keeping to a time frame, prompting students in their role of Speaker or Advisor, and Note-taker, offering questions to start, restart or redirect discussion as needed, rotating students in the Speaker and Advisor and Note-taker roles so every student has a turn in the inner circle as Speaker.
8. Following the discussion, students post or give the teacher their prepared questions and the prompts they gave their Speaker student. Teacher can use these for future planning, because it gives insight into the students' approach to the literature. Teacher can also use these prompts as a means to have students self assess their growth in learning.
9. A follow up assignment could be a reflection on what was learned from the discussion about the topic. Teacher can craft the writing prompt based on the pre-assessment of students' knowledge and skills at the beginning of the novel study.

Jigsaw groups

Form groups of 4 students. These will be their HOME groups. Have the students number themselves A, B, C, D, etc. They will then leave their HOME group and form EXPERT groups where they will discuss the topic assigned to the group. In their expert group they must work with their peers to talk about what they understand about the topic. Each member of the EXPERT group needs to take notes and be prepared to return to their HOME group to share what the EXPERT group talked about. After a period of 15-20 minutes students return to their home group and take turns listening and sharing information gained in the EXPERT groups.

A self-assessment of the listening and speaking exercise could be a student's co-constructed rubric with the criteria of verbal and aural communication behaviours, references to the text, critical and creative thinking.

Expert Groups Topics: Teacher may choose to select 4 topics to be discussed.

For possible topics, see the list of specific and general topics in the following section “After Reading.”

After Reading

General and Specific Discussion Questions maybe be used as journal prompts, class discussions, essay questions.

1. Define “reconciliation” in your own words.
2. Define “reconciliation” using a dictionary and / or after viewing a short video addressing Truth and Reconciliation (examples: First Nation Caring Society: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpYcczGu1Is>, The National: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKKLgwlosaw>, Operation Maple: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmjrVfsLRBE>).
3. What does the novel *Birdie* have to teach the reader about reconciliation? Reconcile can mean to re-establish a close relationship between two people or groups that were previously in opposition. Reconcile can also mean to make compatible, harmonious or consistent. How might these definitions of reconcile relate to the novel *Birdie*?
4. How is *Birdie* a story of reconciliation? What are the two things that Bernice must make harmonious and consistent with each other? What memories and realizations are steps toward that?
5. Listen to *Birdie* author Tracey Lindberg talk about reconciliation on CBC’s *Ideas*: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/reconciliation-before-reconciliation-with-dr-tracey-lindberg-1.3948075>
What does reconciliation mean, to the author? What examples of reconciliation does she provide in this lecture? What does this mean to you, as: a student, and/or an Indigenous person or a non-Indigenous person?

The Novel as Illustrative of Relationships

Contextualizing Responsibility

Students may use the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report (<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>) for a contextual understanding of reconciliation. Select passages that teacher may use to focus include the following:

Canada’s apology

June 11, 2008, was an important day for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, and for the country as a whole. It has come to be known as the “Day of the Apology,”

the day when Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and the leaders of all other federal political parties, formally apologized in the House of Commons for the harms caused by the residential school system. In their presentations to the TRC, many Survivors clearly recalled the day of the apology. They recalled where they were, who they were with, and, most importantly, how they felt. Many spoke of the intense emotions they had when they heard the prime minister acknowledge that it had been wrong for the government to have taken them away from their families for the purpose of “killing the Indian” in them. They talked of the tears that fell when they heard the words “We are sorry.”

Survivors and their families needed to hear those words. They had lived with pain, fear, and anger for most of their lives, resulting from the abrupt separation from their families and their experiences at residential schools, and they wanted desperately to begin their healing. They needed to have validated their sense that what had been done to them was wrong. They wanted to believe that things would begin to change—not the schools, which had long been closed, but the attitude and behaviours that lay behind the existence of the schools. They wanted to believe that the government that had so long controlled their lives and abused its relationship with them now “saw the light.” They wanted to believe that the future for their children and their grandchildren would be different from their own experiences; that their lives would be better. The apology gave them cause to think that their patience and perseverance through the trauma and negativity of their experiences in and beyond the residential schools had been worth the struggle. It gave them hope. (*Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report* [p 263 on line, p 211 in print]).

2. Teacher may also use the recorded broadcast of the Apology as the basis of a lesson on multimedia or visual literacy or listening strategies.

Read the transcript and compare it to the video. What additional information does the viewer gain? What is in the camera frame? What is background, foreground and out of frame? What decisions did the camera person make in guiding the viewer’s sight and connecting images to tell a story of the event? How is this information conveyed, and how is meaning made in the viewer’s mind? What inferences does the viewer make? How does this relate to the story of *Birdie*?

Instructor – led Writing Assignment(s)

1. Generally:

Upon completion of the novel and the graphic organizers comparing the models of fictional character’s recovery from trauma, students may work to write formal compositions to explain something that they have observed or learned from the novel. Teacher can provide review and instruction for formal writing using organization patterns of compare and contrast, or process, or generalizations and example, definitions and illustrations.

2. Indigenous Peoples and Colonial Violence

In the novel Val, Maggie and Bernice go missing. Relate their individual experiences to what is known about Murdered and Missing Indian Women (MMIW). Use references from news media, Amnesty International’s campaign “No More Stolen Sisters” and the Inquiry into MMIW and films such as *Highway of Tears*, and *Finding Dawn*.

3. Cree literacy

Choose one of the Cree words that is important to the story. Examples could be words that title a chapter in the book. For that word, put together a word bundle of other Cree words that you know or learn through resources of family, friends, teachers, language books, and online dictionaries. Make a visual representation of your word bundle. You may use a poster and word map format, but you may also use digital media to make a movie, photo collage, Powerpoint presentation, or use material things we can see and touch that help us to understand the relationships and individual meanings of the words.

For each word think about the deep meaning of the root word and the other parts (prefixes and suffixes) of the word that help make it very specific and precise. Build your word bundle from that. Choose between 7 and 10 words that relate to what is happening in the chapter with the main character and the development of the story. Present this information visually to be shared with the class and the community members who will visit the school. You have three purposes in doing this visual display of the language:

1. to relate Cree language concepts to your interpretation of the story;
2. to learn Cree language and perspectives if they are new or forgotten to you, or to pick them up if previous generations of your family left them behind for reasons of survival; and
3. to help keep Cree language alive in the community, school and people’s minds and hearts.

Additional research:

Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Toronto: McClelland Stewart, 1973).

Maria Campbell, *Stories of the Road Allowance People* (Penticton : Theytus Books, 1995).

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (online: <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx>).

United Nations, *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (online: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf).
[Additional Questions / Journal / Writing Assignments](#)

1. Lists: What is the meaning of the lists in the book?
2. Dreams: What meaning can be drawn from the dreams that appear as poems at the beginning of chapters?
3. Names: How is the main character known by herself and by others? What do the names they use to name, identify, and/or situate their relationship to Bernice tell us about Bernice at that stage of her story, about the speaker, and about their relationship to Bernice?
4. Women: What understanding about women and women's relationships are explored in the novel?
5. Men: What are the characteristics of good men and bad men in the book? How does the author inspire the readers' thoughts and feelings about the good and bad behaviours?
6. Shapeshifting: What does it mean to Bernice at different stages of her story and recovering her well-being?
7. Home: How does Bernice feel about the places she has lived? How does she find a way to feel comfortable and safe in each place?
8. Colonization: What in this section shows how colonization has impacted Indigenous peoples? The Cree of Loon Lake? Bernice's family? Bernice? Educators could use the work to illustrate and unpack the violence of colonization. Educators could focus on one of the following aspects of colonization / terms and define them using the novel as providing examples of:

racism, oppression, cultural genocide (on its own or as integral to Canadian education, and assimilation. In centering this discussion, Educators can talk about how the aspects of colonization violently impact Indigenous peoples and the well-being of the community and culture.

Does the author tell the reader straight out, or does she give enough information so that the reader can relate to their own lives and make an educated guess (to make an inference, or to infer) about what is the truth or fact of the matter?

9. *pimatisewin*?

What are the associations between the *pimatisewin* / the tree / Bernice at different stages in the novel?

Research the philosophical meaning of *Pimatisewin* as it is explained by Gross [2002]? How does the philosophy of *pimatisewin* help the read to understand Birdie's journey to reconciliation and wholeness? See also: Cora Weber-Pillwax's work "Orality in Northern Cree Indigenous worlds" in *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25(2), 149-165.

10. Silence:

How does silence figure in the story of Bernice's trauma and healing?

11. Food:

In the process of her survival and recovery, how does Bernice relate to food? What can we tell about the other women in the novel with respect to their relationships with food?

12. Ceremony:

The references to ceremony are throughout the novel. How does Bernice use it in her consciousness and her dream state?

13. Language:

In her novel *Birdie*, author Tracey Lindberg plays with language for various effects. Explain how she creates a precise perspective of the world and relationships through her creation of English words, use of Cree words, and different registers of language including regional dialect in the characters' dialogue, and formal language in the narrator's voice.

14. Word Bundles: Students build a word bundle of Cree words and related concepts.

Choose a Cree word from the novel that is repeated or holds a place of marked significance. Investigate the deep meaning of the word at its surface meaning (translated to English concepts), fundamental meaning (what the word parts individually add to the

sum of the meaning) and metaphorical level (what the word means in the context of Cree narrative traditions). Sources of information may be language speakers in your community, online dictionaries. Presentation of information may take the form of a poster, multimedia presentation, essay, material objects and associated oral storytelling.

For examples of how authors have written about the deep layered meaning of Anishinaabe and Nehiyawak (Cree) language and words see:

Gift of Language and Culture Project. *Institutional Curriculum Development Project Teaching Resource: Cree Language and Culture Project* (online: http://www.giftoflanguageandculture.ca/inst_curr-web/instruct.htm).

Maria Campbell's teaching about world bundles is referenced in Tasha Beeds' article in *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*. Beeds writes of Elder Campbell: "Maria uses this term [word bundles] to explain the power and sacred nature of words: each word carries with it a number of meanings and history; thus we must be very careful with what we say and how we say it" (2016: 138). See also: Mareike Neuhaus, "What's in a Frame? The Significance of Relational Word Bundles in Louise Bernice Halfe's *Blue Marrow*" in Gingell and Roy, *Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond: Interfaces of the Oral, Written and Visual* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2012).

15. Orality: Listen to author Tracey Lindberg speak about the novel and telling *Indigenous stories in an interview with Shelagh Rogers on The Next Chapter* on CBC radio. What insight do you gain from hearing the author speak about her work?
<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thenextchapter/tracey-lindberg-tom-jackson-and-mary-dalton-1.3422758/tracey-lindberg-on-telling-indigenous-stories-1.3422766>

Discussion and Writing Prompts

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the restoration of good relationships between two parties that have been in opposition or discord. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission demonstrates that the process of reconciliation includes speaking the truth, having others hear, witness and acknowledge the disclosure of survivors of trauma. To restore well-being and wholeness, compassion and respect are necessary for both parties. Based on this understanding of reconciliation explain how *Birdie* may be interpreted as a testimony of a survivor, with the readers as witnesses, and that is gives guidance about how community members can treat survivors with compassion and respect.

Healing Journey

At the beginning of the novel study we talked about 3 models of understanding healing experienced by characters in stories about surviving traumatic events. Looking at the notes gathered about the six places in the novel where Birdie progresses in her healing journey, describe what you think a Cree model of healing looks like, as represented in the novel. Discuss how to access Indigenous knowledge from books and identify other sources as well.

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