

DAVID A. ROBERTSON

THE MISEWA SAGA



THE WORLD'S END

6

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



DAVID A. ROBERTSON

is the author of numerous books for young readers including Governor General's Literary Award winners *On the Trapline* and *When We Were Alone*. *The Barren Grounds*, Book 1 of The Misewa Saga series, was a *Kirkus*, *NPR*, and *Quill & Quire* best middle-grade book of 2020, as well as a *USBBY* and *Texas Lone Star* selection. Winner of the Writers' Union of Canada's Freedom to Read Award, as well as the 2021 *Globe and Mail* Children's Storyteller of the Year recipient, Dave is a member of Norway House Cree Nation and currently lives in Winnipeg, Canada.

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THE MiSEWA SAGA

Eli must embrace his unique heritage and make an impossible decision about his future, and the future of Misewa, in this thrilling last adventure in the award-winning, Narnia-inspired Indigenous middle-grade fantasy series.

Eli, Morgan and Emily manage to free themselves from captivity as the battle between the humans, animal beings and Bird Warriors rages on. But there's another, more personal battle, as Eli and an unlikely ally fight to save Mahihkan's life through a previously forbidden portal. When the Sleeping Giant rumbles to life, the stakes hit an all-time high, and Eli has to reach deep within himself to summon the power so that he can protect Misewa against the dangers of colonization . . . forever.

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House

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. On page 29, Eli opens a portal to Katie and Morgan's Kókum. How do they react? What do they do to help Eli? How does Katie react to what she sees?
2. What is Eli's knowledge of the health care system in Cross Lake (page 49)? How different or similar is medical care there from any experiences you have had where you live?
3. Eli comes up with the idea of opening a portal to James so that he can help save Mahihkan. How does James react to suddenly seeing Eli and Morgan with a wolf? How would you react if you were James?
4. As Eli, Morgan and Emily rescue the animal beings from the zoo, Eli notices that people are recording their mission. "Every last one of the zoo visitors had a phone raised. They all seemed far more interested in filming than helping." (page 76) How does Eli feel about that? Have you seen a similar situation, where people were more interested in recording than helping? How would you feel and what would you do if you witnessed the zoo rescue yourself?
5. How do the Bird Warriors support Eli, Morgan and Emily? What happens to Tack? What do you think Pip means when he tells Tack that "you earned your place back in the flock"? (page 79) How do you think it makes Tack feel?
6. How does the group react when they see the Sleeping Giant wake up? What does the Giant look like initially? What transformation takes place? How does the being interact with the group?
7. Throughout the book Eli continues to deal with panic attacks. What makes him worry even more as he's experiencing them? How does he cope with them?
8. Eli, Morgan, Emily and the animal beings have to deal with the loss of Muskwa. How do the different characters process and cope with that loss? Why do you think that Muskwa had such an impact on all the characters? What do death ceremonies look like in Misewa?
9. Eli remembers something that his Moshom used to say to him when they were out on the land: "Nósisim, now listen with your three ears." (page 129) Why did his Moshom say that to him? What do you think he meant by saying that? Have you ever heard something similar?
10. "Eli couldn't help but think of something he'd learned in school, about Pando. It was the largest single organism on earth, a one-tree aspen forest in Utah made up of over forty thousand trees and millions of leaves, all connected through one root system." (p.133) How does Eli compare Pando to the governance system of Misewa?
11. On page 209 we get introduced to the Ghosts of the Mountain. Describe what they look like. How do they behave? Why do you think they're there? How does Eli finally get past them?
12. Eli arrives in Sky World. What is it like there? What does Eli look like there? Who is there waiting for him? What do they share with him?
13. At the end Eli needs to make a tough decision about where he will live before he closes all of the portals for good. What decision does he make? Why do you think he made that decision? If you were in Eli's shoes, where would you decide to live and why?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. David Robertson has used the Cree language often throughout all six books in The Misewa Saga series. Have students choose a Cree word that is meaningful and interesting to them (e.g., *"tansi,"* *"muskwa"*). Ensure students know how to pronounce the words correctly (using audio, video, or inviting a Cree language speaker if possible). Ask students to choose how they want to represent the word, through art, writing, drama/movement, or musically. Display the words in a school hallway, library, or digital class blog. Create a “Cree Word Wall” for your classroom or school where each new word learned is added with visuals. Have students share a “Cree Word of the Month” on morning announcements for the school community to learn.
2. Once the Sleeping Giant wakes up, we get to know Wisahkécáhk in a bit more detail. What kind of a character/being are they? How does David Robertson describe them? Following proper protocols, invite a Cree Elder or Knowledge Keeper who carries Wisahkécáhk stories into your classroom. How does David’s representation of Wisahkécáhk differ from the traditional stories? How does Wisahkécáhk remind you of characters in other books, movies, or cultures? Have students creatively explore Wisahkécáhk:
 - Modern Twist Skit – Act out a short scene imagining how Wisahkécáhk might behave in today’s world (e.g., what trouble would they cause at school, on social media, or in a city?)
 - Art Representation – Draw/paint Wisahkécáhk in one of their adventures or show the lesson they are teaching.
 - Story Circle – Work in groups to orally tell a brand-new Wisahkécáhk tale with a moral or lesson for modern times.
3. Eli observes that traditional medicine has helped Ashék recover from his injuries. “Medicine from the land seemed far more effective, in some cases, than medicine one might buy at a pharmacy on earth.” (page 121)

James, who is a doctor of Western medicine, talks about how he respects the animal beings’ own medicine as it’s similar to Indigenous medicines (page 159).

Invite an Elder or Knowledge Keeper from a local Indigenous community into your classroom. Ask them if they would be willing to share their teachings and knowledge around traditional medicines. Be sure to follow proper protocols when inviting them in. Have students investigate a traditional Indigenous medicine and compare it to a Western medicine with similar uses.

Ask students to imagine they are helping a community where both systems of medicine are respected. Design a poster, comic strip, or short skit that shows how Indigenous medicine and Western medicine could work together to support health.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

4. *The World's End* explores the topic of loss and grief, with the deaths of Tack and Muskwa. We learn more about traditional practices around death, and the idea of the Happy Hunting Grounds. Begin with a short reading, video clip, or visit from an Elder or Knowledge Keeper (if possible) that shares an Indigenous perspective on grief and loss. For example, the importance of ceremony, storytelling, song, drumming, feasts, or creating memory bundles. Highlight key ideas that connect to the story: grief as a communal process, connection to ancestors, honoring the spirit, and the importance of carrying stories forward. In a talking circle, invite students to share something general (not too personal) about what helps people cope with grief (e.g., “being with family,” “listening to music,” “telling stories”). How does this compare to what you already know about grieving in your own family or culture? Why do you think ceremony and community are important during loss?
5. David Robertson gives very detailed descriptions of The Gate and Sky World. Give students some prompts to think about and discuss, such as “Describe The Gate or Sky World in three words”, “What does it look/smell/feel like?”, “How does the setting affect Eli?” Have students choose one of these creative options to represent the setting:
 - Artistic Map – Using traditional art supplies or digital tools, create an image of either The Gate or Sky World with key landmarks, paths, and important locations.
 - 3D Model – Build The Gate or Sky World using craft supplies, LEGO, or recycled materials.
 - Mood Collage – Create a collage (digital or paper) with colors, textures, and images that capture the mood of The Gate or Sky World.
 - Dramatic Tableau – In groups, students “freeze” in a position that shows The Gate or Sky World and its atmosphere.
 - Have students display their work around the classroom and engage in a gallery walk.