

THE SCULPTURE PROJECT

PASSAGE OF WIND & WATER

Essential Question for this lesson:

How do Oceti Sakowin kinship systems help people live well together in a community?

The Sculpture Project: Passage of Wind and Water brings people in our community together. In the literal sense, people come to watch the sculptures being carved; in a figurative sense, the project brings our community together around shared values. The sculptor's overarching theme for the project is transformation and the idea that all beings in nature aspire to be in balance. People in our community of all ages and cultures can work together to achieve balance and to shape our future together in positive ways.

In South Dakota and beyond, *Oceti Sakowin* (Oh-chay-tea Shaw-ko-ween) culture is significant and enriching. Oceti Sakowin means "the people of the Seven Council Fires." This includes Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people. In Oceti Sakowin culture, kinship systems provide a framework for both individual and group behavior. The unwritten rules of Oceti Sakowin kinship systems promote harmony, compromise, a sense of order, and group cohesion.¹ Oceti Sakowin kinship systems involve both responsibilities and benefits.

Kinship systems are illuminated in the novel *Waterlily* by Ella Cara Deloria. Deloria was a brilliant ethnologist—a scientist who studies human cultures—who mainly wrote scholarly texts about her own Oceti Sakowin culture. She was born to a Dakota family, and she was raised among Lakota people on the Standing Rock Reservation where her father worked. *Waterlily* gives readers an understanding of kinship systems in an appealing and elegant way. Through the experiences of the main character, a woman named Waterlily, readers can learn about the many responsibilities and benefits of Oceti Sakowin kinship systems. We are using excerpts from *Waterlily* here as a way to think about how people can work together to achieve balance and harmony.

In this excerpt from the book, Blue Bird, her infant daughter Waterlily, and her grandmother have just returned to their original camp circle. Over the past four years, they have endured grief, hardship, and illness—now they have finally been reunited with their relatives. This excerpt, from pages 20 and 21, shows some of the reasoning behind kinship systems.

¹ South Dakota Office of Indian Education. "Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards." 2013. <http://indianeducation.sd.gov/documents/OcetiSakowinEUS.pdf>. 17.

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Any family could maintain itself adequately as long as the father was a good hunter and the mother an industrious woman. But socially that was not enough; ideally it must be part of a larger family, constituted of related households, called a *tiyospaye* ("group of tipis"). In the camp circle such groups placed their tipis side by side where they would be within easy reach for cooperative living. In their closeness lay such strength and social importance as no single family, however able, could or wished to achieve entirely by its own efforts.

In the atmosphere of that larger group, all adults were responsible for the safety and happiness of their collective children. The effect on the growing child was a feeling of security and self-assurance, and that was all to the good. Almost from the beginning everyone could declare, "I am not afraid; I have relatives." To be cast out from one's relatives was literally to be lost. To return to them was to recover one's rightful haven.

It was to such a haven that Blue Bird finally came back. It was where she belonged, and where her child belonged. It was important for her daughter to grow up with backing, in informal association with the girls—her cousins and sisters—and in a respect relationship with her brothers and male cousins, who would stand back of her, ready if she should need help...

Later in the novel, Waterlily has grown into a strong, capable woman. She has married an excellent man, Sacred Horse, and has gone with him to live with the people of his camp circle. Everyone is friendly and respectful to her. Waterlily must get acquainted with all of these new relatives and behave formally with them, in accordance with the expectations of society. In Oceti Sakowin kinship systems, people are taught to show their in-laws "avoidance respect." This excerpt, from page 175 and 176, shows Waterlily realizing why she is feeling somewhat lonely in her new home.

Suddenly she had the answer. It was that she lacked home-people, relatives of birth. Everyone here was a relative of marriage. They were *his* home-people; *he* was free to be himself in their presence in a way that she was not. This was to be expected, of course. All her life she had seen avoidance respect and thought it entirely proper.

...She needed an environment charged with parental affection, where she could indulge her moods and could be herself without constraint. Parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents humored you, even spoiled you a little. Before them, you could be outspoken, impudent, and perhaps say or do silly things, with the assurance that they would understand. Waterlily needed her menfolk, too, her brothers and cousins ready at all times to protect her and give her social backing...

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The environment of the family of marriage obligated one to play an adult, responsible role at all times without slack. The kinship laws so ordered it. Life in the *tiyospaye* of Sacred Horse was, for Waterlily, like wearing ceremonial dress all the time, and how she longed for the homely, easy clothes in which to drop her dignity now and then!...."If only I had one person in this camp circle that was a family relative, so I could relax in her presence just once! Among all these people," Waterlily sighed, "everyone is an in-law to me."

As if in answer, unbelievable as it seemed to her, a man and his wife came one day to visit Waterlily, calling her "daughter." The woman embraced her with motherly tenderness. "My daughter," she explained, "we learned only last night, on our return home, who it was that has become the wife of Sacred Horse. You are in good hands, daughter, for this is an able and upright family where you will always be treated well. And indeed they should be proud of you. I am sure they are." The woman had brought Waterlily courtesy food and gifts.

Waterlily is here experiencing benefits of Oceti Sakowin kinship systems. Waterlily has this new social mother and social father because they are the parents of her brother's *kola*. Her brother had long ago entered into an important bond with another boy; these two had chosen each other as brothers. Although the boys had been young at the time for such a serious decision, they and their families "had taken the matter seriously and approved it so much that there had been an exchange of presents."² Now Waterlily is glad: "here it was working out to her advantage, for here were people she could call father and mother."³ Soon Waterlily is fulfilling her kinship obligations to these relatives, as we see in this excerpt from pages 185 and 186.

It was several days after this that Sacred Horse came in one afternoon and found Waterlily all ready to go someplace. Her hair was oiled to a gloss and neatly braided, and a fresh line of vermilion marked the part. Some of the red was over her face, too. She was wearing a pretty gown, one of several that her talented aunt, Dream Woman, had made for her. Outside the entrance were three kettles of food hot off the open-air fire.

"Well, what's all this for?" Sacred Horse asked genially, sitting down outside the tipi to eat. "Are we giving a feast?"

² Deloria, Ella C. *Waterlily*. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press), 1988, 177.

³ Ibid.

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"No," Waterlily said, "it is only something I prepared for our mother across the circle. She is giving a feast for the new grandchild's ear piercing tomorrow."

"I don't know how to get these kettles over there," she added. "I thought you might think of some way."

He said nothing. But after watering his horses, he brought back a strong pole of ash and ran it through the bails of the kettles. When Waterlily was ready, she grasped one end and he the other, and thus they walked along, sharing the weight evenly, the kettles hanging between them on the pole.

The mother was delighted; even though there was plenty of food already, part of which had come from their local relatives, this that Waterlily had done was so right, socially, that it made the mother very proud. In the shrill, high voice in which women exulted, she exclaimed in cries of delighted surprise, "*Hinun! Hinun! Hinun!* Do come and see what my daughter has done! She honors the grandchild to be named tomorrow!" Then she ran to the tipi a few paces off where the infant lay asleep, and looked in at the entrance, informing it for the benefit of the adults within hearing. "See what your grandmother has done for you! She brings food for your feast! Oh, you lucky baby, to have such a pretty young grandmother who cares so much for you!"

Everyone was impressed with Waterlily's gesture. "How well she does in kinship, for one so young!" they said. "Fortunate is the man whose wife does things well!"

And indeed, Waterlily's initiating a deed like this so early was remarkable. Yet it was the sort of thing her people did and she knew nothing else. Blue Bird, for instance, was forever carrying courtesy food to this or that one, or inviting visitors to eat at her tipi, or helping friends and kinsmen about to give a feast, by contributing food and other gifts, or comforting the bereaved with a meal and words of condolence—every act a kinship responsibility but also a social pleasure. The daughter had only done what she knew her mother would do in her place, and it was admirably right.

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Thinking About the Project

Please write your thoughts about the questions below. We are looking for your **original thinking**: what actually comes into your mind as you carefully read the questions. Your answers may be clear bullet points or clear, complete sentences.

1. What benefits do you think Waterlily gains from kinship? Please use examples from the text in your answer.
2. One idea behind *The Sculpture Project: Passage of Wind and Water* is that all beings aspire to live in balance. From the text, how do you notice kinship systems helping people live in balance?
3. Waterlily not only enjoys benefits from kinship, she also fulfills responsibilities of kinship. Write about two examples you noticed of Waterlily fulfilling kinship responsibilities in the text.
4. The book *Waterlily* shows many examples of people working together to achieve balance & harmony. As you think about *The Sculpture Project: Passage of Wind and Water*, what are some ways that you imagine that people have worked together to make the project possible? Please name all the different talents you can think of that people have contributed to the project.
5. In any community, the past helps shape the present and the future. What does the **future** of your community look like to you?
6. What are a few ways that you can imagine people working together to create balance in your community?

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Notes for Teachers

The lessons connected with *The Sculpture Project: Passage of Wind and Water* are designed to be used with students in many grade levels. You may need to provide scaffolding in order to help your students access the text. To help with this, we have included this vocabulary bank. This bank can be easily used with the existing word study procedures you use with students.

- literal
- figurative
- overarching theme
- transformation
- aspire
- achieve
- *Oceti Sakowin*
- significant
- enriching
- cohesion
- responsibilities
- benefits
- illuminated
- ethnologist
- scholarly texts
- appealing
- elegant
- grief
- reunited
- excerpt
- reasoning
- adequately
- industrious
- *tiyospaye*
- cooperative

- self-assurance
- haven
- capable
- respectful
- acquainted
- behave
- accordance
- expectations
- proper
- affection
- constraint
- humored
- impudent
- assurance
- ceremonial
- dignity
- courtesy
- advantage
- vermilion
- bails
- exulted
- kinsmen
- bereaved
- condolence
- admirably

CCSS Language Arts Anchor Standards Addressed:

R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

R10: Read and comprehend complex informational and literary texts independently and proficiently.

W9: Draw evidence from informational and literary texts to support analysis, reflection, & research.

SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly & persuasively.

L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown & multiple-meaning words & phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, & consulting reference materials as appropriate.

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L6: Acquire & use accurately a range of general academic & domain-specific words & phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, & listening at the college & career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge.

South Dakota Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings & Standards Addressed:

EU 1.2: Analyze interrelationships of Oceti Sakowin people, places, and environments.

EU 4.1: Analyze the importance of Oceti Sakowin kinship family structure & extended family.

EU 4.2: Analyze the Oceti Sakowin social etiquette, proper behavior, and values.

EU 5.1: Analyze Oceti Sakowin culture through oral tradition and unbiased information.

Note: Deloria's scholarly work and her stature in the American scientific community underpin Waterlily and lend to it the highest credibility. Her extensive fieldwork and personal cultural experience cause most educators to regard the novel as unbiased information; it is a work of fiction used to illustrate serious scientific findings.

More Notes on the Standards and Student Work

The South Dakota Department of Education adopted the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards in 2011. The document is available on the SD DOE website under "Oceti Sakowin Project." All South Dakota teachers should be employing these standards across the curriculum. These standards represent essential learning for all South Dakotans.

We have included here the reference numbers and a basic description of each Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding and Standard that this lesson addresses. For full articulations of all of these cultural standards, please consult the official state document:

<http://indianeducation.sd.gov/documents/OcetiSakowinEUS.pdf>

The text of this article and the accompanying critical thinking questions are considered informational texts. They are real-world texts about a current local project. The questions are designed to elicit high-level thinking and need no answer key. If students are showing their original thinking, engaging with the topic and the ways in which they perceive the project, then they are doing good work.

Teachers will have success when they encourage students to show and explain their thinking. Great student discussions can follow! The next page contains a graphic organizer that can help thinkers prepare for their discussions. This process of preparing for & engaging in peer discussions addresses the CCSS Speaking and Listening Standard SL.1!

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Discussion: Benefits and responsibilities of kinship

(Brainstorm for five minutes, then discuss!)

Brainstorm many benefits of kinship:

Brainstorm many responsibilities of kinship:

Name:

Date of discussion: