

“Frenchie’s Coming-to Story”:

An Excerpt from
The Marrow Thieves Novel

Grade 9 English — ENL1W

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A Note to Educators



Welcome to the Métis Nation of Ontario's Grade 9 English Cherie Dimaline Study Guide! We recognize that this may be new learning for many educators. Our goal is to provide a series of resources that support educators and learners as they explore and learn about the Métis Nation and its people.

This study guide was created to provide teachers and students with three entry points to explore the works of Métis author and Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) citizen Cherie Dimaline. We invite you to use this resource to explore approaches to various topics and to help guide your reading of Dimaline's works. This resource has also outlined an analysis of key sections from the texts for educators to use in their literature units. This resource connects to the novels *The Marrow Thieves* and *Hunting By Stars*, as well as a Podcast Interview and Lesson Plan with author Cherie Dimaline.

These resources are simple-to-use tools for teachers and students. Educators can use the contents to bring authentic Métis voices into the classroom. The resources provide students and educators with an opportunity to use the Métis experience to connect with themes and learning goals in the Grade 9 De-streamed English course.

Author Letter to Students

Dear Students,

Everything is a story, and everyone is a storyteller. When you have a conversation, when you post online, when you dress in a way that puts your personality on display – these are all stories being told. These are your stories, and every one of them is important.

When we remember that the world is made up of stories, we are more observant, better listeners, and less likely to absorb information without critical thought. Keeping in mind that all information is being delivered through a point of view reminds us to consider the source of the information and to be thoughtful in our response. This is a great way to bring solutions, compassion, and understanding to an issue.

Stories are the building blocks that create our societies, and you are the storytellers that determine what is built next, what should be dismantled, and how we should move forward. It's a lot of responsibility, but it's also powerful. Better yet, it puts power back where it belongs – with you.

As an author, I think about story all the time – whether or not I am creating new ones. But as a human, it's something that we should all be aware of. A picture is a story, and so is a choreographed dance or a comment. Every moment that we are alive adds to the collective story is 'us'. I think it's a beautiful gift to be able to tell our own stories and to live in a world made more complex and remarkable because of them.

One of the best gifts I was given as a child was to be raised by Elder women who decided I needed the stories of my community, the land, our history, and what we collectively learned along the way. Being given such a

colourful recounting of my community meant that no matter where I lived, I was able to bring my home with me. It also meant that when I started to write books, I was able to return to that specific place, to those specific people, and bring them forward with me – to even send them beyond me. It's how I know, that no matter what changes in the way of geography or politics, my community will survive.

My advice is always to read voraciously, diversely, and often. Even if we don't agree with what we are reading, we at least are broadening the ability to respond and perhaps even create our own tales to counter. We need narratives from as many perspectives as we can get. Every great thinker and leader I have met in my life has been a consumer of story – whether or not they came from books and articles or people and art. Having a good understanding of different narratives allowed them to create their own from a place of being informed and empowered.

A story is not just a way into the world; it is also a way out – an escape. It is a hidden door, a secret garden, a portal to another time and place. And we all need to escape now and then. We need to exist in a story that ponders what things would be like without colonization or to drop us into an apocalyptic landscape so we can imagine the version of ourselves that would make heroic decisions and change everything.

When the day-to-day effort of living gets heavy, and anxiety starts to creep in around the edges, I remember that we are just a story that the universe is telling. In response, I want to tell stories back to the universe. And the closest thing I know to being able to whisper into the ear of the universe is to create stories for you – for readers who are on their way to a heroic place. So, bring yourselves into the books you read, bring your dreams and your troubles, bring your hearts and your voices. These stories are for you, always.

And in return, I hope you tell your own because everything is a story, and everyone is a storyteller. The world is counting on it.

Move and think, act and create with all the best parts of yourself, bringing all the dark corners you are shining a light into. Your ability to tell your own truth is an incredible thing. These are your stories, and every one of them is important.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in a cursive, flowing style, rendered in a light gray color. The signature appears to read 'CDL'.

Cherie Dimaline

About this Resource

Welcome to the Métis Nation of Ontario's ***Frenchie's Coming-to Story: A Short Story Excerpt from Cherie Dimaline's The Marrow Thieves*** for Grade 9 educators and students! Thank you for taking the necessary steps to include Métis voices, culture, and stories in your classroom!

Educators can use this resource to teach multiple themes outlined in the Grade 9 De-streamed English course. We recommend 6-7 class periods to complete this short story assignment. This resource focuses on *Frenchie's Coming-To Story* on pages 1-17 in the novel.

Supporting resources include: a peer editing checklist, a rubric, student consolidation activities, and recommended additional resources and references.

Background Information

Who are the Métis?

The Métis are a distinct Indigenous people with a unique history, culture, language, and way of life. The Métis Nation is comprised of descendants of people born of relations between First Nations women and European men. The offspring of these unions were of mixed ancestry. Over time, a new Indigenous people called the Métis resulted from the subsequent intermarriage of these individuals. This *ethnogenesis* of distinct Métis communities, along the waterways and around the Great Lakes region of present-day Ontario, occurred as these new people were no longer seen as extensions of their maternal (First Nations) or paternal (European) relations and they began to identify as a separate group. Distinct Métis settlements emerged as an outgrowth of the fur trade along freighting waterways and watersheds. In Ontario, these settlements were part of larger regional communities, interconnected by the highly mobile lifestyle of the Métis, the fur trade network, seasonal rounds, extensive kinship connections, and a shared collective history and identity.

There are many Métis communities throughout Canada. However, in Ontario, the Métis derive from seven historical communities throughout the province.¹

Métis Storytelling

Storytelling is woven into all cultures. It can convey teachings, history, family, and community memories and provide social entertainment and life lessons. Métis stories are intergenerational, passed down from the elders and knowledge holders to the young. Storytelling could occur around a campfire, at family and community gatherings during harvest, or on cold winter nights. Like many Indigenous nations, Métis stories have been passed down orally for generations and, more recently, have become written stories in the form of novels, poetry, art, and film.

Métis stories do not have to be linear nor require a beginning, middle, and end format. "Some Métis suggest that recounting the lineage of a story

¹ Métis Nation of Ontario | Culture and Heritage | Métis of Ontario (metisnation.org)

before telling it is vital to the cultural practice of Métis storytelling, whereas others prefer to maintain anonymity, thus allowing the story to take a life of its own, void of any temporal or labeled title."²

A skilled storyteller has an elaborate tone, engages the listeners, and sometimes even involves them in the story's development. Such is a skill of the past that is being reclaimed. In the spirit of cultural appreciation (and not appropriation), it is essential that the teller of a story has permission to share from the author, or that credit is given to the author, the community, or the nation to which it belongs.

Coming of Age Theme

The Meriam-Webster definition for coming of age is “the attainment of prominence, respectability, recognition, or maturity.” This is an important time for young people of all cultures and can be marked by important life lessons, teachings and sometimes challenges. In this lesson, students will share examples of what it means to mature, how one would recognize such development in an adolescent and relate to their own or a family member's “coming of age” event.³

The Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- Identify similarities and differences in how Métis and other cultures utilize storytelling to convey knowledge and ideas such as “coming of age”
- Use the writing process to demonstrate their understanding of how the author has used literary devices (flashback, etc.) to convey important information about themes and characters
- Respond to, appreciate, and create a full range of texts in various forms, genres, modes, and media, including digital and media texts
- Make connections to their lived experiences and to those of others

² *Voices of Métis: Métis* – Library and Archives Canada Our Voices.

³ “Coming-of-age.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster.

Success Criteria

- Students will explore Métis knowledge holding or identity (oral storytelling and the theme of coming of age) through the inquiry process, drawing parallels between the Métis lived experience and their own.
- Students will use various transferable skills (critical thinking, global citizenship, sustainability, communication, and collaboration) to clearly communicate their ideas, arguments, and/or conclusions on Métis issues of culture and identity (storytelling and “coming of age”).
- Students will write a series of paragraphs comparing a character’s “coming of age” story to the author’s stated purpose and to their own lived experience.

Curriculum Connections:

Overall Expectation(s): A3., B3., C1., C2., C3., D1

Specific Expectation(s): A3.3, B3.1 C1.5, C1.6, C1.7, C2.4, C2.5, C3.1, D1.2

Assessment

Before students begin to investigate storytelling and coming of age with issues of culture and identity, we encourage educators to provide *Minds On (Assessment for Learning)* prompts on page 8 to assess previous student knowledge.

Sections #1–5 include a variety of student questions that assist in developing an understanding of storytelling and coming-of-age themes to understand the author’s purpose and their own experiences. The teacher can use these for Assessment as Learning.

Section # 1

An Excerpt from *The Marrow Thieves* Novel **Frenchie's Coming-to-Chapter: Short Story Lesson Plan**

In the midst of this overwhelming grief and the destruction of his biological family, Frenchie must learn to value what semblance of family he does have: his chosen family of Miig and the others in the group. Accepting his situation for what it is and coming to terms with his identity in relation to his family are crucial elements of Frenchie's maturation throughout the story. As he develops and begins to come of age, the novel suggests that a young person makes the final leaps toward adulthood as they begin to value and fit themselves in with their family—chosen or otherwise.⁴

Minds On Lesson Opener: 15 minutes

As a class, watch the Ted Talk ["An Exploration of Coming of Age Rituals & Rites of Passage in a Modern Era | Ron Fritz | TEDxBend"](#).

Have students generate and share their examples of coming of age moments and how one would recognize such developments in partners or small groups onto sticky notes or online thought-sharing apps (Jamboard, etc.) on their device.

Guiding Questions:

1. What is a "coming of age" event?
2. Think of a moment when you felt like you grew up, changed, or saw the world differently. What happened, and how did it change you?
3. Who did/would you want to share your thoughts and feelings with about this important time?

⁴ Zoe Brock, LitCharts.

Have students turn to a partner and share their or a family member's "moments they grew up". This can also be shared on an online sharing app on their devices or on the whiteboard.

Materials Needed: sticky notes or devices, an online thought-sharing app to share with the whole class (Jamboard, etc.)

Section # 2

Lesson Activity: 60-75 minutes

Read the first chapter of *The Marrow Thieves*, "Frenchie's Coming-to Story," to the class and have students follow along. Students are encouraged to answer the following questions and jot notes down to write a series of paragraphs.

Frenchie's Coming-to-Story Questions

1. What is the defining moment of Frenchie's "coming of age"? How can you prove that this event defined the moment that Frenchie came of age? What evidence do you know that supports this?
2. Can you relate to Frenchie's defining moment when he comes of age? What do you find similar in one of the previous examples discussed in class? What are the differences? Do you think Frenchie's culture is related in any way?
3. If you were in Frenchie's shoes, would you have done something differently? What would a parent/guardian/grandparent's advice be to you before this moment?

Extension/Modification

- Teachers may choose to compare other dystopian novels or movies with "coming of age" themes with students. Example: *Hunger Games*.

Materials Needed: *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline, Class definition of "coming of age", the Compare/Contrast Graphic Organizer (Appendix B), Author quotations (Appendix A)

Section #3

Lesson Consolidation: 5x 75-minute blocks

1. Have students read “Wab’s Coming-To Story” on page 80 of the novel.
2. Students will write a series of paragraphs comparing and contrasting “Frenchie’s Coming-to Story” to “Wab’s Coming-to Story”. Students will provide proof from the text to support their writing.
3. Using Frenchie’s “Coming-to Story”, students will respond to Dimaline’s quotes (*Appendix A*). Have students consider previously learned literary devices and their importance in storytelling used in the excerpt:

- A. Flashback
- B. Repetition
- C. Diction
- D. Setting
- E. Foreshadowing

How does Frenchie’s story relate to what Dimaline states? Is there significance in the chapter title?

Guiding Questions:

- What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about coming of age after reading, learning, and discussing the importance of Métis storytelling and the passing on of the “coming of age” teaching? What makes you say that?
- What would you like the adults in your life—caregivers, teachers, elders, knowledge holders, coaches, mentors, employers, community members—to know about what it’s like to “coming of age” during this time?

Materials Needed: Author quotations (*Appendix A*), Peer Editing Review Checklist (*Appendix C*), Rubric (*Appendix D*), *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline

Section # 4

Appendix A - Author Cherie Dimaline's Quotations

"I wanted Indigenous readers to feel strong and powerful. I wanted them to see a narrative that actually is reminiscent of my own understanding of being an Indigenous person: That no matter what happens, you always belong to our land, we're always going to belong to each other, and we'll seek each other out. I wanted to break down some of the isolation that Indigenous youth might feel. To feel like they belong. To know that they belong to a larger community and they're loved.

I wanted to reach non-Indigenous readers at an age where the book could change their view of Indigenous people. We're often seen as either this primitive society or this trauma narrative. Those are two very specific, isolated pieces of who we are, who we can be or who we have been. I wanted them to see an ongoing Indigenous identity. I set it in the future so that those barriers of guilt weren't thrown up, and instead, they can say, 'Well, this can't happen. We need to make sure it doesn't happen.

When we're talking about appropriation, it's not just about Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It's even within our own communities. There are so many nations and languages and protocols and cultures within the Indigenous community; we're not one lumped group. And we need to respect each others' stories. Because even when I'm telling a story that involves the Cree narrative, or even a Métis community outside of my territory, I reach out to those people, and I talk to people. You have to get it right.

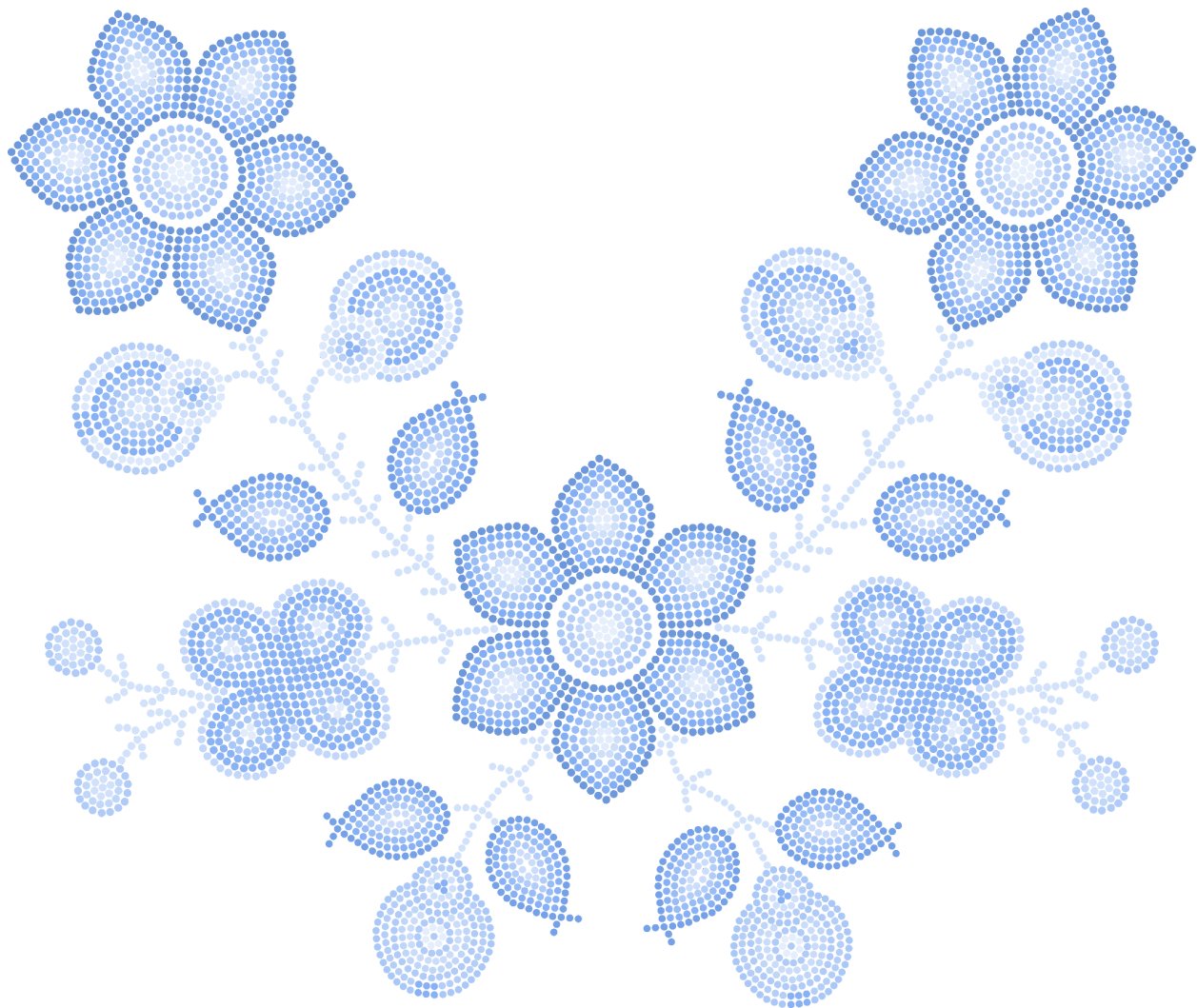
I can only tell things from the perspective that I've been gifted with. So I'm always really cautious about people assuming that one Indigenous author can give you the narrative for all of us. We can't. Not only are we not allowed to, but it's impossible to write every culture and every community."

- Cherie Dimaline.⁵

⁵ Cherie Dimaline (CBC-Books, James Henley)

Section # 5

Tools to Support Student Thinking and Learning



Compare and Contrast

Name: _____

Class: _____

Write similarities and differences to compare and contrast each of the following concepts/ideas.



Similarities

Appendix C- Peer Editing: Series of Paragraphs Checklist

	Strengths	Needs	Next Steps
Introduction			
Clearly states topic			
Thesis clearly stated			
Argument contains sufficient supporting points			
Body/Supporting Paragraphs			
Paragraph properly structured			
Use of transition words			
Paragraph focuses on only one idea			
Specific examples includes elaboration to support thesis			
Incorporate quotes MLA style			
Anticipates alternative viewpoints & refutes with evidence			
Conclusion			
Reinforces argument and three supporting points			
Extends argument to facilitate thinking beyond the scope of the essay			
Communication			
Communication is clear (punctuation, sentence structure, etc.)			
Uses 3 rd person for expository writing			
Formal writing style (no contractions, slang, or lingo)			
Peer Edited by:			

Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

Categories	Level 1- 50-59%	Level 2- 60-69%	Level 3- 70-79%	Level 4- 80-100%
Knowledge and Understanding				
Knowledge and understanding of ideas and concepts	demonstrates limited knowledge of ideas and concepts	demonstrates some knowledge of ideas and concepts	demonstrates considerable knowledge of ideas and concepts	demonstrates thorough knowledge of ideas and concepts
Knowledge and understanding of the format of a series of paragraphs	demonstrates a limited understanding of the format of a series of paragraph	demonstrates some understanding of the format of a series of paragraph	demonstrates a considerable understanding of the format of a series of paragraph	demonstrates a thorough understanding of the format of a series of paragraph
Knowledge and understanding of stylistic devices	demonstrates limited knowledge of stylistic devices	demonstrates some knowledge of stylistic devices	demonstrates considerable knowledge of stylistic devices	demonstrates a thorough knowledge of stylistic devices
Thinking and Inquiry				
Support central ideas with information (e.g., facts, statistics, quotations, etc.)	demonstrates information that is irrelevant	demonstrates information that is relevant, but somewhat inaccurate or insufficient	demonstrates information that is relevant , accurate, and sufficient	demonstrates information that is relevant, accurate, sufficient, and compelling

Categories	Level 1- 50-59%	Level 2- 60-69%	Level 3- 70-79%	Level 4- 80-100%
Thinking and Inquiry				
Use of the central idea that is clear, insightful and focused	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Use of planning skills	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Recognizes alternate viewpoints	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Communication				
Organizes ideas and information in oral, visual, and/or written forms (use of graphic organizers)	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Communicates formal tone; appropriate diction, terminology, and style	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Uses conventions and vocabulary correctly	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Citations	with no sources cited	with some sources cited	with most sources cited	with all sources cited

Categories	Level 1- 50-59%	Level 2- 60-69%	Level 3- 70-79%	Level 4- 80-100%
Application				
Uses the writing process (Including drafting/rough work, and editing & revision)	with limited competence	with some competence	with considerable competence	with a high degree of competence
Makes connections within and between various contexts	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness

Additional Resources and References

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