

I Can Make This Promise

CLASS
ACTIVITIES

4TH GRADE



LITERACY



MINDSET

Essential questions encourage fresh thinking, inquiry, and engagement, as well as long-term recall of important features of a story. These activities are organized by essential questions, which you will see in **red**.

What was the impact of colonialism on Indigenous tribes like the Suquamish and Duwamish?

As Edie learns more about Edith Graham, she also learns about the painful history of colonialism. She discovers that racism has torn many families apart, including her own.

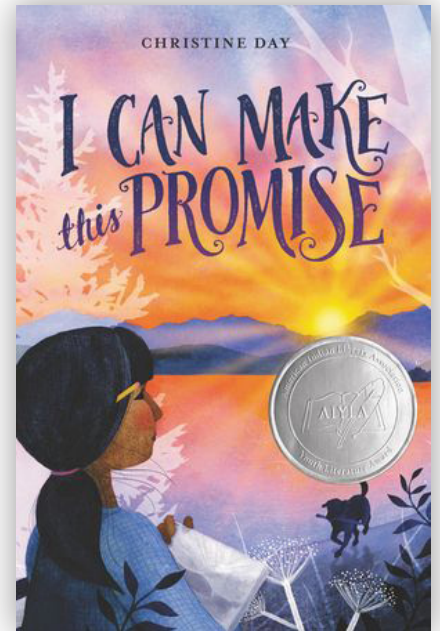
1. PARTICIPATE IN A SOCRATIC SEMINAR (2 HOURS)

Play the music video below for students, which features a song by Suquamish singer Calina Lawrence. The song is sung in Lushootseed, a language spoken by several tribes in the Pacific Northwest. Then give each student a copy of this quote:

“There’s this interesting irony of people in this country, people who are demanding immigrants specifically native to the Americas to learn English, but the counter to that is actually: ‘No. What are people doing to learn the languages of each particular landscape that they live within, languages that have existed long before the United States?’ It’s there and it’s accessible... Where do people sit in that discomfort of not knowing what I say in my lyrics?”—Calina Lawrence

After playing the song and explaining the quote to students, have them write a response to the following questions:

- Can you enjoy music without being able to understand the words?
- How does this song honor Calina’s heritage?
- What is Calina trying to say by not offering a translation?
- In *I Can Make This Promise*, we read about how Edie’s mom was taken from her parents by the U.S. government. The government did this to try to make Indigenous children more like white children. How does this connect to Calina’s reasons for not offering an English translation for her song?



SPEAKING, WRITING, AND LISTENING

These activities give students opportunities to practice speaking, listening, and writing skills.

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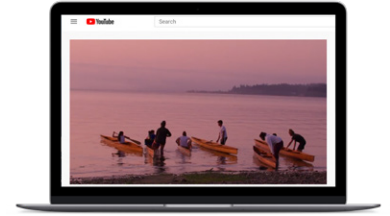
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1. PARTICIPATE IN A SOCRATIC SEMINAR *continued*

Give students adequate time to consider and answer the questions on their own. Then hold a Socratic Seminar, using the above questions as a basis for discussion. Refer to the website below for guidelines on conducting a Socratic Seminar.

VIDEO: Calina Lawrence—*ᑦᐱᓂᐱᑦ? ᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ* <https://bit.ly/2MX6rTe>

WEBSITE: Facing History and Ourselves—Socratic Seminar <https://bit.ly/2XXE7qs>



2. ANALYZE A TEXT (15 MINUTES)

Have students do a quickwrite on the following topic:

What does Edie’s name mean to her at the beginning of the book? What does her name mean to her at the end of the book? What causes the meaning to change?

Instruct students to use evidence from the book to support their answer.

3. EVALUATE A CLAIM (30 MINUTES)

Joy Harjo, a poet and member of the Mvskoke Nation, once wrote, “The literature of the aboriginal people of North America defines America. It is not exotic. The concerns are particular, yet often universal.” Help students understand this quote. Then, have students write a paragraph explaining how Edith Graham’s story fits this description.

4. CONDUCT RESEARCH (Multiple class periods)

The Suquamish and Duwalish tribes aren’t the only Indigenous tribes with a painful history of dealing with the United States government. Choose a few Indigenous tribes in the Pacific Northwest. Split students into groups. Assign each group a tribe and have them research the tribe’s history. Have them create a timeline showing key events in the history of the tribe.

What makes a good friend?

Edie was once Amelia’s friend, but she’s not anymore. At the end of the book, Edie feels even closer to Serenity than she did before.

5. REPORT ON AN EXPERIENCE (20 MINUTES)

Separate students into small groups and have them form small circles. Have groups discuss what makes Serenity a good friend. Then, give each group an object, like a ruler or a stapler, to indicate whose turn it is to talk. Have groups go around the circle and answer the following questions:

- What is one time someone has been a good friend to you?
- Does that friend share any characteristics with Serenity?



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6. WRITE A NARRATIVE (45 MINUTES)

I Can Make This Promise consists of a combination of letters, descriptions, dialogue, and text messages. Have students rewrite the first part of Chapter Eight (from the beginning of the chapter until Edie enters the kitchen) as if it happened before text messaging was invented. Ask them to consider the following questions for their rewrite:

- How would Edie and Amelia communicate? How would that change the scene?
- How would that change the scene?

7. EXPLAIN AN OPINION (30 MINUTES)

Amelia was there when Libby said mean things to Edie at Pike Place Market. However, since Libby is nice to Amelia, Amelia still thinks that Libby is a nice person in Chapter 21. Tell students to imagine that they have a friend who is nice to them but mean to other kids in their class.

Ask: Do you think your friend is a nice person? Why or why not? Have students write a response in which they explain their opinion.

8. IDENTIFY A SPEAKER'S OPINION AND EVIDENCE (20 MINUTES)

After students have completed Activity 7, have them read their opinion pieces aloud to a partner. Have each listener identify the speaker's opinion and evidence using an organizer such as the one below.

PRINTABLE: Persuasive Writers Remember Their Oreos <https://bit.ly/37nwYCT>

How does an author's choice of plot, setting, and voice affect a story?

The author of *I Can Make This Promise* makes use of text messages, letters, dialogue, and description to tell the story. Each of these forms of communication add to the story in a different way. She also has Edie visit places all over Seattle, wondering about her heritage. In the end, we realize that she was physically close to the answers all along.

9. SUMMARIZE A TEXT (25 MINUTES)

Read a chapter aloud as a class. Have each student read a paragraph or so. At the end of the chapter, ask students to:

- Give a brief summary of the chapter.
- Explain what they think the purpose of the chapter is in the book.
- Ask questions they have after reading the chapter.

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10. EVALUATE TONE AND VOICE (30 MINUTES)

Have students read the text messages Amelia sent Edie and the letter that Edith sent Theo, both in Chapter 20. Explain to students that tone is the attitude of the speaker toward the subject or the audience. Voice is the individual style in which a certain author writes. Have students write a response to each of the following questions:

- How are the tones of these two messages similar?
- How are the voices similar? How are they different?
- How do you write differently in text messages than in letters? Why?

Give students adequate time to write their responses, then reconvene as a class and call on individual students to share their answers.

11. WRITE AN EXPLANATORY TEXT (2 HOURS)

Assign each student one of the following topics:

- Golden Gardens
- Pike Place Market
- The Suquamish reservation
- The Duwalish reservation
- History of Indigenous people in Seattle

12. INCORPORATE MEDIA IN PRESENTATIONS (90 MINUTES)

After students have completed Activity 11, have them group together with other students who were assigned the same topic. Instruct each group create an informational presentation about their topic, including audio recordings and/or visual displays. Finally, have each group present their findings to the class.