



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

Touching Spirit Bear

based on the book by

Ben Mikaelson

Written by

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Ben Mikaelson

Ben Mikaelson was born in Bolivia, South America, in 1952. Because his skin color was different from that of his South American peers, he was teased and bullied as a child. This ostracism led him to withdraw, and he began to put his feelings on paper, where he felt they were safe. By age ten, he was writing credible poetry. Mikaelson grew to love writing. He said, "Writing is storytelling, and all of us are authors, not just of words but of reality." He tells students that they are the authors of their lives; so, he encourages them to get out and experience life and then write about it.

Mikaelson lives near Bozeman, Montana, with a 750-pound black bear named Buffy, that he adopted twenty-five years ago. *Touching Spirit Bear* is dedicated to Buffy, whom Mikaelson claims taught him, ironically, to be gentle.

Mikaelson believes in the Japanese Proverb "Fall seven times, stand up eight." His writing reflects his personal courage, love of adventure, and gentleness. He is an avid spokesman for preserving the habitat of the Spirit Bear.

More information can be found about this interesting author and his works at [www.benmikaelson.com](http://www.benmikaelson.com).

### Major Works

Mikaelson has written several award-winning novels. Some of these include:

*Rescue Josh McGuire*, 1991

*Petey*, 1998

*Sparrow Hawk Red*, 1993

*Stranded*, 1995

*Countdown*, 1996

*Touching Spirit Bear*, 2001

*Red Midnight*, 2002

*Tree Girl*, 2004

### Awards

Mikaelson has received many awards, medals, and prizes for his novels, including:

*Rescue Josh McGuire*: International Reading Association Award (1992 and 1993)

*Sparrow Hawk Red*: California Young Reader Medal (1997)

*Stranded*: Maryland Children's Book Award (1999)

*Petey*: ALA Notable Book Award, YALSA best Book for Young Adults, ALA

*Touching Spirit Bear*: YALSA best Book for Young Adults, ALA (2002)

*Red Midnight*: IRA Notable Book for a Global Society (2003), IRA Book List Selection (2004)

*Tree Girl*: International Reading Association Teacher Choice List (2005)

Mikaelson has appeared on national television, Jack Hanna's Animal Adventures, and on German National Television.

## INTRODUCTION - *Touching Spirit Bear*

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, speaking, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *Touching Spirit Bear* by Ben Mikaelson. It includes twenty lessons supported by resource materials.

In the **introductory lesson**, students learn background information about Tlingit Indians and are given materials for use during this unit of study.

The **reading assignments** are approximately 25 pages in length; some are shorter while some are a few pages longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work, which includes vocabulary and a look at the study questions, prior to each reading assignment.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions within the assigned reading text. These study questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple-choice. The best use of these materials is to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides (since answers will be more complete) and the multiple-choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for several vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues. Students are to write what they think the word means based on the word's usage. Part II emphasizes the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions and having them match the words to the correct definitions based on contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they encounter them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the **study guide questions**. Discussion of these questions serves as a review of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

A full class period is devoted to the **extra discussion questions**. These questions focus on the abstract, calling for interpretation, critical analysis, and personal response.

There are **vocabulary review activities** to help students review the vocabulary words they have studied throughout the unit.

There are two **projects**. The first project is related to **ancestors**. Students will interview elderly family members (also, recording and photographing, if permitted) and then form that information into two-minute presentations, which they will share with the class. The second project is to choose five symbols representing important things in their lives and then create **totems** using those images.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or expressing personal opinions. In the first writing assignment, students write a newspaper account of Cole's attack on Peter. For the second writing assignment, students write what they would say at the Circle Hearing to either persuade the members to accept Cole as a candidate or persuade them not to accept him into the program. In the third writing assignment, students write an essay in which they evaluate their experiences with the totem project. They will describe the difficulties they encountered while completing the project, the things they encountered that were satisfying, and they will provide an explanation of each item chosen for their totem.

In addition, there is a **non-fiction reading requirement**. Students will choose a non-fiction topic related to *Touching Spirit Bear*, and read an article or two associated with that. They will take notes as they read and be prepared to give an oral presentation, sharing with classmates the information they found.

The **review lesson** pulls together all aspects of the novel. The teacher is given several choices of activities or games to use, which all serve the function of reviewing information presented in the unit.

The **Unit Tests** come in two formats: short answer or multiple-choice. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test, which is more challenging.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **unit and vocabulary resource materials sections** include suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas**, which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **more activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his or her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his or her students in-class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes, and test. If teachers have other ideas or activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

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## UNIT OBJECTIVES - *Touching Spirit Bear*

1. Students will be introduced to the Tlingit tribe of Native Americans: their customs, beliefs, tales, and legends.
2. Students will study vocabulary from the text to better understand the story and expand their own vocabularies.
3. Students will study the structure of the story, particularly the use of flashback in the early chapters.
4. Students will study the character of Cole, a troubled teen, and determine the causes and effects of his anger.
5. Students will consider the pros and cons of Circle Justice and more traditional methods of handling juvenile delinquents.
6. Students will learn about bullying: causes and effects, ways to cope with it, and why it should stop.
7. Students will study figurative language presented in the context of the novel.
8. Students will consider the effects of alcoholism and abuse as presented in the novel and draw conclusions relevant to the larger society.
9. Students will study the motifs of coming to terms with anger, the natural cycle of life, punishment versus rehabilitation, trust, responsibility, and healing/forgiving.
10. Students will explore their own ancestries through interviews with elderly family members and make brief presentations to the class to share some of that information.
11. Students will create dances to explore some aspects of their own lives.
12. Students will study images and symbols in the story, especially the Spirit Bear.
13. Students will consider important events, people, and things in their lives and choose five symbols to represent them. Students will use these symbols as figures in creating their own totems.
14. Students will examine quotations from the novel to further explore important events and ideas.
15. Students will explore a non-fiction topic related to this novel and share the information they find in a short oral presentation.
16. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. In addition, they will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. They will also demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas.
17. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and ideas in *Touching Spirit Bear* relative to the author's theme development.
18. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical, and personal.

READING ASSIGNMENTS - *Touching Spirit Bear*

Date Assigned	Assignment	Completion Date
	<i>Assignment #1</i> Chapters 1-2	
	<i>Assignment #2</i> Chapters 3-6	
	<i>Assignment #3</i> Chapters 7-9	
	<i>Assignment #4</i> Chapters 10-13	
	<i>Assignment #5</i> Chapters 14-16	
	<i>Assignment #6</i> Chapters 17-19	
	<i>Assignment #7</i> Chapters 20-23	
	<i>Assignment #8</i> Chapters 24-25	
	<i>Assignment #9</i> Chapters 26-28	

UNIT OUTLINE - *Touching Spirit Bear*

<b>1</b> Introduction PVR 1-2	<b>2</b> ?s 1-2 Flashback Writing #1 PVR 3-6	<b>3</b> ?s 3-6 Character PVR 7-9	<b>4</b> ?s 7-9 Writing #2 PVR 10-13	<b>5</b> ?s 10-13 Bullying PVR 14-16
<b>6</b> ?s 14-16 Figurative Language PVR 17-19	<b>7</b> ?s 17-19 Alcoholism PVR 20-23	<b>8</b> ?s 20-23 Motifs PVR 24-25	<b>9</b> ?s 24-25 Ancestors PVR 26-28	<b>10</b> ?s 26-28 Fire Dances
<b>11</b> Discussion Questions	<b>12</b> Vocab Review Spirit Bear Totems	<b>13</b> Totems	<b>14</b> Writing #3	<b>15</b> Non-fiction Research
<b>16</b> Vocab Review Quotes	<b>17</b> Vocab Review Non-fiction Presentations	<b>18</b> Ancestor Presentations	<b>19</b> Unit Review	<b>20</b> Unit Test

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R = Read



## LESSON ONE

### Objectives:

1. To introduce the *Touching Spirit Bear* unit
2. To distribute books, study questions, and other related materials
3. To preview the vocabulary and study questions for Chapters 1-2
4. To read Chapters 1-2

### Activity 1:

Explain to students a little about the Tlingit Indians. Information can be found on the Internet. At the time of publication, this website page had good basic information: [http://www.bigorin.org/tlingit\\_kids.htm](http://www.bigorin.org/tlingit_kids.htm)

A good way to introduce this unit of study would be to share with your students a few Tlingit Indian legends. There are several books available, or a search online for Tlingit legends will provide ample resources. One good online source at the time of this publication is <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/nw/tmt/index.htm>.

If your class has access to the Internet, there are enough legends that each student could read one independently. Then, students could share the legends they have read.

If your class does not have Internet access, you could print out one legend for each student to read. Then, students could share the legends they have read.

If your class needs a more instructor-based activity, choose a few of the legends to read aloud to your students.

After the legends are read and shared, discuss their common features, including the importance of animals.

**Transition:** Advise students that the book they are about to read, *Touching Spirit Bear*, is about a teenager who has a choice between going to jail or participating in a Tlingit custom called Circle Justice, which involves being banished to an island in Alaska for a year. Ask students what they think it would be like to be banished on an island in Alaska for a year. Conduct a short discussion.

### Activity 2:

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

**Study Guides:** Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test. Review the study questions for Chapters 1-2 while you're looking at the study guides.

**Vocabulary:** Prior to reading a reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the book they are about to read. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test. Do the vocabulary worksheet for Chapter 1-2 together orally to show students how to complete the vocabulary worksheets.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *Touching Spirit Bear*

### **Prompt:**

The account of Cole's beating up Peter in Chapter 1 contains editorial comments. For example, "Still, no one ratted on Cole Matthews without paying the price." A newspaper account gives only the facts. Here is an example:

### **Restraining Order Insufficient to Prevent Injury**

On Friday, April 13th, at 3:30 p.m., Jared Smith (age 16) attacked Bobby Delson (age 13) in the school parking lot. Jared had threatened Bobby on several occasions. A restraining order had been issued on the 11th, demanding that Jared not have any physical contact with Bobby. Bobby is hospitalized with a concussion, a broken left arm, and three broken ribs. As of this morning, his condition has been upgraded from "serious" to "fair." Jared has been apprehended and turned over to authorities. When asked why he attacked Bobby, Jared refused to comment.

Your assignment is to re-read the account of Cole's beating up Peter, and write a newspaper report about the incident. This is not an editorial; it is a hard news report.

### **Pre-writing:**

A newspaper report usually answers the questions Who, What, When, Where, and Why. Any additional important information is also included. On the left side of a piece of paper, list the words Who, What, When, Where, and Why. At the bottom of the list, write Additional Information. Next to each word, write the appropriate facts of the story.

### **Drafting:**

Using the fact sheet you have just developed, write the first draft of your newspaper report of this incident. Use the model above to help you. The account should not take any more than one well-written paragraph.

### **Prompt:**

Read your account draft to make sure you have all the important facts with no editorial comments. Correct any problems you find. When you are happy with your report, ask a student whose opinion you trust to read it. He or she should tell you what is best about your work and which parts could be improved. Re-read your report considering your classmate's comments, and make the changes you feel are necessary.

### **Proofreading:**

Do a final proofreading of your paper, double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and facts.