

TEACHER GUIDE FOR

# LITTLE MOONS

Learning about MMIWG2S and Responding to the Calls for Justice in Grade 7–12 Classrooms

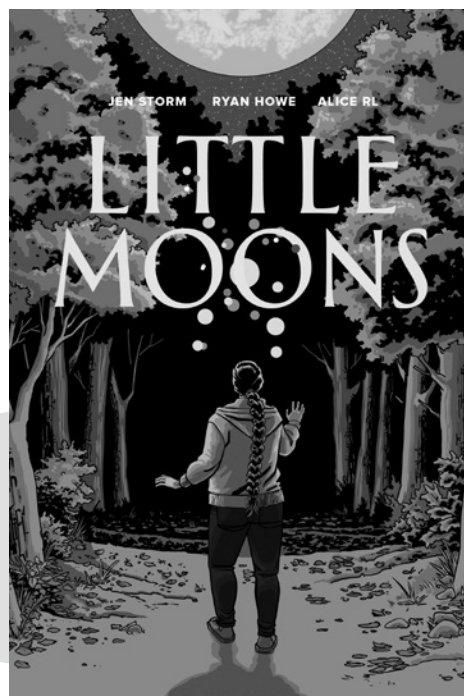


JERICA FRASER

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Treaty 1 Territory and homeland of the Métis Nation

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## INTRODUCTION

In this moving graphic novel, 13-year-old Reanna grieves the loss of her older sister. It's been a year since Reanna's sister, Chelsea, went missing on her way home from school. Without any idea of what happened, Reanna and her family struggle to find closure. Driven from their home by memories, Reanna's mom moves to the big city. Left behind in her First Nations community, Reanna and her little brother go to live with their dad. Reanna is hurt and angry that her mom has run away. She feels lonely and abandoned...but she is not alone. Lights turn on in empty rooms, and objects move without being touched. There are little moons everywhere.

*Little Moons* is a poignant graphic novel that introduces students to the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples in Canada and encourages conversations about the systemic issues impacting Indigenous communities. Through exploring Reanna's story, students will learn about how Indigenous families experience trauma, loss, and grief, while also learning about the strength, healing, love, and resilience that exist within their experiences.

## KEY CONNECTIONS AND BIG IDEAS

- Aspects of Indigenous Cultures
- Grief and Loss
- Intergenerational Love and Healing
- MMIWG2S
- Prejudice and Racism
- Social Justice
- Social Emotional Learning
- Resilience

## BEFORE READING: CONSIDERATIONS

### Exploring Authentic and Diverse Indigenous Stories Through Graphic Novels

It is important to provide opportunities for students to read stories that reflect diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experiences throughout what is now commonly referred to as Canada. By encountering diverse and varied stories in your classroom, students will come to understand that Indigenous stories are multi-dimensional and extend beyond stories of trauma. *Little Moons* explores Indigenous identity, pride, healing, strength, and resilience alongside characters learning to cope when their sister, daughter, and granddaughter goes missing. This text also provides students with an authentic depiction of First Nations characters, the issues affecting Indigenous families and communities, and how grief and loss can be experienced and expressed in a multitude of ways following the disappearance of a loved one.

### Using Choice Texts in Classrooms

When students are empowered to choose their own texts, it helps them build their self-efficacy, engagement, and confidence, and in turn further develop their literacy skills. As an educator, it is important to acknowledge that not every text might be suitable for all students in your classroom. Some students in your class may be experiencing loss and grief or have lived experience with a family member going missing or having been murdered. Providing students with a content warning, noting that this text covers such topics as Missing and Murdered Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S), loss and grief, and stereotypes, can help students make an informed decision when selecting a text.

Become familiar with the texts offered in your classrooms to ensure you can support student wonderings and discussions throughout their reading. The learning activities provided in this guide have been designed for individual or small-group instruction that uses *Little Moons* as a choice text. Please note that in this text, the author also includes specific Anishinaabe cultural practices pertaining to mourning and loss. Model respect by not asking students to further research these cultural practices. Accept what the author has shared with the reader. If you would like students to learn more about Anishinaabe cultural practices, connect with the Indigenous Education Department in your school board to arrange for an Elder or Knowledge Keeper to visit your classroom.

### Understanding the Impacts of Colonialism in Canada

When supporting students in their reading of *Little Moons*, contextualize for students that colonialism is not only historical; rather, it is ongoing in Canada and throughout the world. Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA Peoples have been, and are, disproportionately impacted by violence that stems from colonization. Understanding these complex and inextricable links is helpful when supporting students throughout their reading. Review

*Reclaiming Power and Place*, the final report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples, with a focus on the Calls for Justice. An educator guide, *Their Voices Will Guide Us*, provides ways to incorporate and highlight the vital roles that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples have in families and communities for K–12 classrooms and beyond. *Little Moons* supports these initiatives and raises students’ awareness about ongoing oppression, racism, and colonial violence, and highlights how everyone has a role to play in addressing and eliminating this epidemic of violence and genocide in this country.

## **DURING READING: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS**

As students read through *Little Moons*, the following questions can guide their learning and help them make deeper connections within the text individually or in their small groups.

- What can you infer about the title of the book and its meaning? What predictions can you make about the text?
- Have you read a graphic novel before? In what ways is this book similar or different?
- As you explore the text, think about how the illustrator might highlight settings, topics, and/or character developments in ways that are significant or meaningful. Record any examples that you find where an illustration might be important to the story, and provide your reasoning for this selection.
- Examine the illustrations in the beginning of the text that provide a window into Reanna’s family life. What might these images reveal or foreshadow about the plot or the characters?
- On page 5, Reanna’s mom, Andrea, teaches her how to bead. What art forms are important in your culture? Can you think of a skill that you learned from your parents or grandparents? How does this help with cultural continuity in families?
- How does the illustrator show the passage of time throughout the text? What techniques do they use?
- As you read, identify the different ways each character responds to, and works through, Chelsea’s disappearance throughout the text. Create a graphic organizer (e.g., a table, a T-chart) to organize your ideas.
- What knowledge does Koko share with Reanna throughout the text? How does Koko act as a support and a guide for Reanna and her experiences of grief?
- In what ways does Tom’s prejudice assist the reader in understanding some of the issues facing Indigenous Peoples, specifically Indigenous women, and the stereotyping they



experience? What might this reveal about Indigenous Peoples' relationship with Canada and Canadians as a whole?

- What differences did Reanna experience being in the city versus being in her community? What feelings have you experienced being in a new place or a bigger city that were different than what you're used to? Consider how these experiences might be different for different people based on their race, class, gender, etc. In what ways might these experiences be different? How might they be different for Indigenous Peoples specifically?
- Refer to your graphic organizer of the different characters' experiences throughout the text. How did each character work through their grief to find acceptance and healing? Why do you think their paths are so different? Why might this be important for young readers to see?
- What do the little moons represent? How do the little moons support Reanna in her healing? Why do you think the author named the text *Little Moons* rather than another title?
- Read the author's note at the end of the text. In what ways does this inclusion change your understanding of the story and the characters after reading the text?
- What might happen if someone from outside of the Indigenous community wrote about these experiences? What issues might this present in the text and for you, the reader?

## **AFTER READING: SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING AND EXTENSIONS**

After students have read through *Little Moons*, the following activities and actions can guide them towards action-based responses to the text.

- Research more about MMIWG2S. Considering the information you collected, how might you raise awareness in your school and/or community about the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA Peoples in Canada? How might you hold government representatives accountable? What projects might you and/or your peers create to make your school or community a safer environment for everyone?
- Read the Calls for Justice located in *Reclaiming Power and Place*, with a specific focus on the "Calls for All Canadians." What are some of the calls you can commit to personally? How might your school and/or community commit to also being part of fulfilling the Calls for Justice?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jerica Fraser** is a Rotinonhsión:ni (Kanien'kehá:ka) educator. Throughout her career, she has focused on anti-racism and anti-oppressive education not only in her classroom, but in the education system as a whole. She writes and collaborates on Indigenous-focused curriculum and workshops as well as courses for educators. She has her Master's in Education with a focus on social justice and Indigenous health studies. Jerica is passionate about learning and reclaiming the languages of her grandparents and recently graduated from the Mohawk Language and Culture program at Tsi Tyónneht Onkwawén:na and Queen's University. She looks forward to continuing her learning and teaching Kanien'kéha in the future.

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*Little Moons*, a poignant graphic novel, introduces students to the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA Peoples in Canada, fostering conversations about the systemic issues impacting Indigenous communities.

Use this guide alongside *Little Moons* to explore themes of authentic and diverse Indigenous narratives through graphic novels, understand the impacts of colonialism in Canada, and learn about MMIWG2S and the Calls for Justice outlined in *Reclaiming Power and Place*, the final report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA Peoples.

Written by Rotinonhsión:ni (Kanien'kehá:ka) educator Jerica Fraser, the activities in this teacher guide are approachable, engaging, and suitable for grades 7–12. This guide can be used across various subject areas, including social studies, history, and language arts.