Title: Ta-Na-E-Ka

Suggested Time 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.6.1, RL.6.3, RL.6.5, RL.6.10; W.6.1, W.6.2, W.6.4, W.6.7, W.6.8, W.6.9, W.6.10; SL.6.1, SL.6.6; L.6.1, L.6.2

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings:

The Kaw, like all Native American tribes, struggled to maintain culture, heritage, and traditions while being assimilated into the “white man’s” culture.

Synopsis:

Mary Whitebird is about to turn eleven and take part in the Sioux coming of age tradition of Ta-Na-E-Ka. Literally translated as, “flowering of adulthood,” Ta-Na-E-Ka is a test of survival where participants are sent into the wilderness to survive for five days. Mary and her cousin Roger are both resistant to this rites of passage ritual. Roger uses the traditional survival techniques taught to them by their grandfather, Roger Deer Leg where he successfully completes Ta-Na-E-Ka, but returns bloody and underfed. Mary survives the ritual as well but at a diner eating hamburger and milkshakes and returns clean and radiantly healthy.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| Describe what Mary’s attitude towards Ta-Na-E-Ka is like at the beginning of the story. | Mary doesn’t think the ritual is fair or important to her future. ‘None of the other tribes make girls go through the endurance ritual,’ I complained to my mother.” “Heritage, indeed! I had no intention of living on a reservation for the rest of my life.” |
| How does Grandfather, Amos Deer Leg, maintain his family’s cultural heritage with the challenges of a changing time?  Cultural heritage means the things that are taken from the past, preserved in the present, and passed on to future generations. How does Grandfather, Amos Deer Leg, maintain his family’s cultural heritage with the challenges of a changing time? | Grandfather speaks English with white men and Sioux with his family so that he preserves his native tongue and is able to pass it on to future generations.  But my grandfather Amos Deer Leg, was devoted to tradition…He could speak English, but he spoke it only with white men. With his family he used a Sioux dialect.” “It was the time of Ta-Na-E-Ka, the flowering of adulthood. It was the age, my grandfather informed us hundreds of times, when a boy could prove himself to be a warrior and girl took the first steps to womanhood.” |
| According to Mary, what is the purpose of Ta-Na- E- Ka? | Overall, Ta-Na-E-Ka is a rite of passage ritual where boys and girls prove themselves worthy of being a part of their tribe.  “It was the time of Ta-Na-E-Ka, the ‘flowering of adulthood.’” It was the age, my grandfather informed us hundreds of times, when a boy could prove himself to be a warrior and girl took the first steps to womanhood.” “The actual ceremony varied from tribe to tribe, but since the Indians’ life on the plains was dedicated to survival, Ta-Na-E-Ka was a test of survival.” |
| The children had to endure which means to tolerate tough conditions during the ritual. According to Grandfather, which qualities do the children who return from Ta-Na-E-Ka possess? | The children returned stronger and with endurance.  “Many didn’t return,” grandfather said. “Only the strongest and shrewdest.” “‘Endurance is the loftiest virtue of the Indian,’ Grandfather explained. ‘To survive, we must endure.’” |
| Grandfather describes his Ta-Na-E-Ka experience. What were some of the traditional customs carried out during Ta-Na-E-Ka when Grandfather was a boy? | When Grandfather was a boy he was sent into the wilderness for about 18 days naked and had to survive off the land. “We were painted white with the juice of a sacred herb and sent naked into the wilderness without so much as a knife. We couldn’t return until the white had worn off. It wouldn’t wash off. It took almost eighteen days, and during that time we had to stay alive, trapping food, eating insects and roots and berries, and watching out for enemies.” |
| How were Mary and Roger expected to complete the ritual? | They were expected to survive off the land as Grandfather did when he was a boy.  “We were to be sent, barefoot and in bathing suits, into the woods. Even our very traditional parents put their foot down when Grandfather suggest we go naked. For five days we’d have to live off the land, keeping warm as best we could, getting food where we could.” |
| Mary explains that Grandfather is in charge of training. How is he helping Mary and Roger train for the ritual? | He showed them techniques on how to trap and eat bugs for food. “One day he caught a grasshopper and demonstrated how to pull its legs and wings off in one flick of the fingers and how to swallow it.” |
| During the first day of Ta-Na-E-Ka, Mary uses her knowledge of current times to help her survive. How does Mary do this? | Mary borrows $5.00 from her teacher and uses the money to help her survive. She buys food with it and sleeps in the Ernie’s restaurant. “A hamburger and a milkshake,” I said, holding the five dollar bill in my hand so he’d know I had money.” “While I was eating, I had a grand idea. Why not sleep in the restaurant? I went to the ladies’ room and made sure the window was unlocked.”  “I ate everything I wanted – insisting that Ernie take all my money for the food.” |
| Ernie finds that Mary slept in the diner, and Mary tells him about the ritual of Ta-Na-E-Ka. How does this conversation with Ernie change her opinions about her cultural heritage? | “I’ve lived by the reservation all my life. I never heard of this test before. Pretty silly thing to do to a kid,” he said. “That was just what I’d been thinking for months, but when Ernie said it, I became angry. ‘No, it isn’t silly. It’s a custom of the Kaw. We’ve been doing this for hundreds of years. My mother and my grandfather and everybody in my family went through this ceremony. It’s why the Kaw are great warriors.’” “And I told Ernie all about the legends of the Kaw. I hadn’t realized I knew so much about my people.” |
| Mary said that she had found a new friend in Ernie. What are some of the things Mary learns about the white man’s ways from her friend Ernie? | Ernie teaches Mary about the daily life of running a restaurant such as gathering flowers for the tables, types of foods to make, and about the lost and found closet. She also ate as much food as she wanted. |
| Based on her time spent with Ernie, what does Mary learn about herself? | Mary learns that she enjoys the responsibility of working in the restaurant and is sad to see this time with Ernie end, “I was sorry when the five days were over. I enjoyed every minute of it.” Mary also discovers that she knows a great deal more about her people and culture then she realized. She was able to defend the Kaw tradition of Ta-Na-E-Ka and their many traditions to Ernie during the course of their time together. |
| When Mary returns, why does her family look at her with hostility? | They expected her to be in similar conditions as Roger was when he returned. “…I saw my cousin Roger sprawled on the couch. His eyes were red and swollen. He’d lost weight. His feet were an unsightly mass of blood and blisters, and he was moaning…” “I was clean, obviously well fed, and radiantly healthy.” |
| By the end of the story does Grandfather believe that Mary accomplished Ta-Na-E-Ka? | Grandfather thinks that Mary should have followed the traditions of the Kaw, but is pleased that she was innovative in her thinking. “You should have done what your cousin did. But I think you are more alert to what is happening to our people today than we are. I think you would have passed the test under any circumstances, in any time. Somehow, you know how to exist in a world that wasn’t made for Indians. I don’t think you’re going to have any trouble surviving.” |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | customs  dialect  horrendous  marina | heritage  tribal  equated  dejectedly  hostility |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | reservation  endurance  ritual  women’s liberation movement  tribal  prospective  sacred  hospitality | acculturated  shrewdest  loftiest  virtue  grimaced  audacity |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt
  + *Mary and Roger both survive the tradition of Ta-Na-E-Ka, but they each achieve success in very different ways. Roger was successful in the ways of the ancient Natives whereas Mary uses the ways of the “White Man”. How does Mary demonstrate that she is able to preserve her Native American traditions as well as assimilate in a changing world?*
* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should guide students in gathering and using any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions earlier. Some students will need a good deal of help gathering this evidence, especially when this process is new and/or the text is challenging!

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “The actual ceremony varied from tribe to tribe, but since the Indians’ life on the plains was dedicated to survival, Ta-Na-E-Ka was a test of survival.” | The purpose of Ta-Na-E-Ka is to survive and demonstrate survival skills. Mary kept herself fed, warm, and safe without her family’s assistance. |
| “Many didn’t return,” grandfather said. “Only the strongest and shrewdest.” | Mary demonstrates strength and shrewdness through thought-out planning and innovation. |
| “I stood up. ‘Grandfather, I learned that Ta-Na-E-Ka is important. I didn’t think so during training. I was scared stiff of it. I handled it my way. And I learned I had nothing to be afraid of. There’s no reason in 1947 to eat grasshoppers when you can eat a hamburger.’” | Mary shows strength by standing up to her grandfather and standing behind her own opinion. She demonstrates that she understands the value of Ta-Na-E-Ka and her culture through her new-found appreciation for it. |
| “You should have done what your cousin did. But I think you are more alert to what is happening to our people today than we are. I think you would have passed the test under any circumstances, in any time. Somehow, you know how to exist in a world that wasn’t made for Indians. I don’t think you’re going to have any trouble surviving.” | Mary has adapted traditional methods of survival to fit the modern time in which she lives. She cunningly used resources available to her. She enjoyed her experience whereas her cousin did not. Her Grandfather specifically reaffirms that achieved the purpose of Ta-Na-E-Ka which is survival. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* **Sample Answer**

In her autobiographical narrative, Mary Whitebird narrates the story of when she took part in a traditional coming of age ceremony called “Ta-Na-E-Ka.” As members of the Sioux nation, Mary and her cousin Roger, on their eleventh birthdays, are expected to go into the wilderness and survive for five days without any help. Both Roger and Mary take very different approaches in order to accomplish this task. Roger takes a very traditional approach and spends five days in the wilderness living off of the land much like his ancestors would have done. Mary, however, devises a plan to borrow money from her teacher, smuggle it on her trip, and use that money to help make sure she is well fed. She also makes friends with Ernie, a man who runs a diner by the marina, which results in her having the shelter of the restaurant throughout her test. While what she does is different from the original expectations for this test, Mary still achieves the essence of this ancient and important tradition.

Mary demonstrates that she was successful because she attained the ultimate purpose of Ta-Na-E-Ka which is survival. Mary’s Grandfather, who valued maintaining the traditions of his cultural heritage, described this tradition to her. “The actual ceremony varied from tribe to tribe, but since the Indians’ life on the plains was dedicated to survival, Ta-Na-E-Ka was a test of survival.” This tradition was carried out differently in every tribe. However, if a person was able to return to the tribe having survived the ordeal, they were considered successful. Mary is successful as she returns not only safely but also well-fed and comfortable to her tribe.

Mary also demonstrated the qualities that those who complete Ta-Na-E-Ka must have. “‘Many didn’t return,’ grandfather said, ‘Only the strongest and shrewdest.’” Through-out the many years this tradition has been held, the individuals who survive are those who exhibited strength in their endeavors and shrewdness in the face of challenges. Mary’s plan to borrow money from her teacher and use it to help her survive demonstrates her cunning shrewdness in this adventure. She also demonstrated strength in that she carried out her plan. Mary had to stand up to the years of tradition and strict expectations placed on this event. She had to be strong to follow her own opinions of what was best instead.

Mary’s grandfather even confirms for himself that she achieved the true point of Ta-Na-E-Ka when he describes how she adapted the traditional ritual to fit her modern world. “You should have done what your cousin did. But I think you are more alert to what is happening to our people today than we are. I think you would have passed the test under any circumstances, in any time. Somehow, you know how to exist in a world that wasn’t made for Indians. I don’t think you’re going to have any trouble surviving.” Mary’s grandfather acknowledges that while she didn’t follow the traditional means of successfully completing Ta-Na-E-Ka, she adapted her strategies to fit the time she was in. This made Mary’s experiences possibly even more effective than that of her cousin Roger as she addresses the concepts behind the tradition but in a way that is more useful for the time in which she lives.

Mary successfully achieved Ta-Na-E-Ka in a time when many of the young Sioux members were struggling to find balance in their identity as both a member of the Sioux nation and that as a member of a modernizing world. Although Mary hated the idea of Ta-Na-E-Ka at first, this ceremony helped Mary to find peace between the two cultures she is a part of.

Additional Tasks

* Roger’s Ta-Na-E-Ka experiences were clearly more challenging than Mary’s. Pretend that you are Roger completing the rites of passage ritual. Write from his point of view describing his experiences during the 5 days.

Answer:

I was so afraid after Mary and I separated, she went toward the river and I ventured into the woods. As I watched Mary disappear towards the river, I had an overwhelming feeling of loneliness and despair. Although I wasn’t hungry yet, I thought it might be a good idea to look for the berries grandfather told us about. I walked aimlessly for miles. The sun was starting to set and I wasn’t able to find one single bush.

I decided I had better find some place warm and safe to sleep. I found a large overhanging rock, with a crawl space. I gather nearby leaves and bushes to sleep on. Its day one, and my feet are already beginning to blister. I cried myself to sleep still wondering how being alone, cold, and hungry is going to help me as an accountant.

When I woke up the next morning, my entire body was itching and my eyes were sore and swollen. I faintly heard the sound of running water and eventually stumbled into a small stream. I rinsed my eyes and drank as much water as my empty belly could hold. I scanned the stream for fish, but the stream was too shallow. Too my surprise, I spotted a bush with orange, fat, ripe berries. I ran over and threw a handful in my mouth. Just as fast as they went in, I spat them out not expecting the sour, bitter taste. I screamed at the top of my lungs, “Grandfather has deceived me!” and dropped to my knees in despair.

The next four days ran into each other and did not improve. I had to survive off of water and those disgusting berries. My feet were so cut and sore that making it back home was an exhausting and horrendous task. Although I had many obstacles, I was stronger and braver than I ever thought I could be.

* In Ta-Na-E-Ka, Mary states,” But I’ve always thought that the Kaw were the originators of the women’s liberation movement. No other Indian tribe and I have spent half a life time researching the subject -treated women more “equally” than the Kaw.” Research and describe a female figure that was important to the female liberation movement. <http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/wo/Women's_liberation>

Potential Answer: The woman that I chose to research is Susan B. Anthony. She was born February 15, 1820 in Adams, Massachusetts. In 1852 she organized the first woman's temperance society in America. After 1854 she devoted herself to women's rights, and became recognized as one of the most ambitious advocates for the equality of men and women. From 1868 to 1870 she was the owner of a weekly paper, *The Revolution*, published in New York City. She was vice-president of the National Woman's Suffrage Association from 1869 until 1892, when she became president. She asserted her Fourteenth Amendment right by voting in the presidential election. She was arrested and fined $100, but she never paid the fine. She worked with other women’s liberation leaders to publish *The History of Woman Suffrage*. She died in Rochester, New York, on March 13, 1906. Susan was an important person in the women’s liberation movement.

* Using evidence from the story to support your opinions, do you respect Mary or Roger more for their experiences and choices?

Potential Answers:

I respect Roger more because he followed tradition and showed endurance. “…I saw my cousin Roger sprawled on the couch. His eyes were red and swollen. He’d lost weight. His feet were an unsightly mass of blood and blisters, and he was moaning: ‘I made it, see. I made it. I’m a warrior. A warrior.”

I respect Mary more because she used her wits and modern comforts to survive while learning to value and appreciate her

culture at the same time. “I stood up. ‘Grandfather, I learned that Ta-Na-E-Ka is important. I didn’t think

so during the training. I was scared stiff of it. I handled it my way. And I learned I had nothing to be afraid of. There is no reason in

1947 to eat grasshoppers, when you can eat a hamburger.”

Note to Teacher

1. Prior to reading Ta-Na-E-Ka, teacher may want to show a map of the United Stated and the locations of the Kaw tribe (Along the Kansas River).
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2 (\*See Note to Teacher #1). During this step students may use metacognitive markers to track responses to text and use those responses as a point of departure for talking or writing about the text; cueing system: use (?) for questions, use (!) for reactions, and (\*) for comments.