



NOVEL STUDY AND
TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

Spirit Quest

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CLASSROOM USES

Spirit Quest may be enjoyed as a novel study, but may also be used as an introduction to the study of First Nations cultures, particularly those on the northern coast of British Columbia. Students will find Coast Salish mythology fascinating and will be captivated by the unusual characteristics of the landscape and wildlife described in the novel. This guide particularly focuses on unique varieties of B.C. fish: the Pacific Viperfish, whose fanglike teeth on the lower jaw extend beyond its eyes when the mouth is closed; the Shinning Loose Jaw, which has large luminous organs and long, sharp teeth; the Dragonfish, with its long barbel underneath its body and lacy pectoral fins; the Barreleye, whose transparent head leaves the brain clearly visible; and the Ratfish, whose features resemble those of a rabbit, hence its Latin name *Hydrolagus Colliei* ("Water rabbit").

FIRST NATIONS/SOCIAL STUDIES

A map showing the First Nations Tribal Divisions in British Columbia is included in this guide for instructor/student reference. The novel provides a good foundation with which to study these groups, as many of the images and symbols are relatively constant across other cultures. For example, the mythological double-headed sea serpent described in Chapter Four can be compared with "dragon" stories from other cultures. See the *Resources* section for additional sources of information on First Nations culture, including curriculum supplements and multimedia resources.

The following significant First Nations figures and symbols appear in *Spirit Quest*:

Cedar (Western Red Cedar)

The cedar tree grows to an enormous size and is big enough to make a canoe that will hold forty people. First Nations people make more than two dozen products from the tree: baskets, whistles, floats, clothing, capes, hats, canoes, houses and diapers, to name a few.

Double-Headed Sea Serpent

The double-headed sea serpent (or "dragon" as it is known in other cultures) is known to the Salish people as *Sinulhkey* or *Aix*. The serpent has a large mouth with an extended tongue, a curled snout and horns on its head. The *Sinulhkey* is a symbol of power and wealth. It can transform itself at will and travel across land, sea and sky. A glance from the serpent can kill or petrify the unwary.

Eagle

The eagle is a symbol of power and strength and is highly esteemed in First Nations culture. Eagle down is used at special occasions such as the First Salmon ceremony, where the down is sprinkled to acknowledge the solemnity of the occasion. People of high rank wore the *Swaihwe* mask at special dances or potlaches because the crown of the mask held eagle feathers. Young girls of high ranking would dance with a head dress of eagle feathers after coming out of seclusion. As they danced, moving their heads from side to side, eagle down would fall from the head dress and scatter on the ground.

First Nations

The major nations on the west coast of B.C. are the Coast Salish, Tlingit, Nishga, Gitksan, Tsimshian, Haisla, Haihais, Heitsuk, Nuxalk, Oowekeeno, Nuu chah nulth, Nuxalk, Tsimshian, Haida and Kwakwaka'wakw.



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