



The Scream of the Hawk

Nancy Belgue

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Consider the following question as you read *The Scream of the Hawk*:
How can a secret become a deadly weapon?

Story

“Over here.” Otis had moved away. He crouched in the corner, his yellow slicker puddling around his small body.

Lissa felt her way toward him.

A loud screech stopped her in her tracks. A big bird was hunched in a wire cage in the corner of the boathouse.

Moving to Ontario has been hard on Lissa, especially now that she has to baby-sit a strange boy who keeps a hawk captive. Lissa knows that keeping Otis's secret may turn out to be a mistake, but she has no idea how serious the consequences will be.

Author

Nancy Belgue went to six different schools before beginning the eighth grade. Her mother's favorite line when she was growing up was “adversity builds character,” usually delivered along with the news of another move. When Nancy's younger son had to start grade six in a new town, she remembered how hard it was to be the new kid and *The Scream of the Hawk* was begun. The plot thickened when she realized that she lives in one of the prime paths taken by migrating hawks. *The Scream of the Hawk* is her first novel. Her second novel, *Summer on the Run*, is set in southern Ontario during the Depression.

Curricular Integration

Language Arts

- Lissa is not happy about moving across Canada to a new home. In groups brainstorm all the reasons why she is not happy. Then look at each reason

and write a positive way of looking at it or a way that she might be able to deal with it. For example: Lissa will be far away from her father. She could write letters or email to him to keep in touch.

- Choose one of the characters from *The Scream of the Hawk* to write a newspaper article about. The article should reflect what you have learned about the character. For example: Otis keeps a red-tailed hawk captive so his article may contain facts about hawks. John Striker is researching information for a book so his article may be about his life as an author. Scarlett is captive in a cage.
- Each of these similes refers to Otis in *The Scream of the Hawk*: “dripping like a rainspout,” “like a wet, yellow banana” and “appeared at her side like a bee.” Have students illustrate each one and then write a brief explanation connecting their illustration with the meaning of the simile.
- Otis and Lissa go for a ride on the Ferris wheel and see things from a different perspective. Read pages 27 and 28 of *The Scream of the Hawk* to the class and have them visualize what they might see if they were at the top of the Ferris wheel ride. Then have them write about what they saw and how they felt about the ride.
- Circular poetry. Have students choose the Ferris wheel or roller coaster from the fair and write a poem about it. Then have them create a poem picture, using the words to make the shape of the poem topic. This is described in *Poetry Goes to School* (p. 55-56).
- A description of the lake where the boathouse sits is given on p.71. Using that information, have students draw the scene in detail. The boathouse is not described in much detail, but there is a bit more information on p. 74. Using this information, have students add the boathouse to their scene. Once completed, use the drawing as a basis for a poem or paragraph on descriptive writing.
- Mr. Striker is doing research for a new book he is writing. Brainstorm possible topics and create a short outline for the book.

Social Studies

- Ojibway culture: The Ojibway, Ojibwe, Ojibwa and Chippewa are all the same group of people, though the spelling of their names can indicate the area of North America in which they live. Have students read about their history and prepare a short oral report on the information in the style of the Ojibway oral tradition. An example of an oral tradition can be found on the Turtle Island site listed below.
- On a map of Canada draw the route that you think Lissa and her mother took to get to their new home, as they traveled from British Columbia to Ontario. Include locations where hawks and the Ojibway live. Label major cities and water bodies.
- Otis believes the hawk he has in a cage was sent to look after him. Many cultures believe certain animals to have special powers. In small groups, have students find out about some of these animals and create an informational poster of their findings.

Science

- Otis keeps a red-tailed hawk in a cage. Research hawks in general and red-tailed hawks in particular.
- Bird vocabulary: create a picture dictionary type page to illustrate the meanings for the following words: talon, beak, wingspan, predator, Ornithology, bate, casting, eyry and pounces.
- The physics of roller coasters: Students will find out how kinetic and potential energy, velocity and friction help a roller coaster run. Choose a site to use as your source of information such as Britannica online and have students read about how physics and roller coasters are connected.
- Anatomy of Flight: How do birds fly? How are their wings structured? In the lesson “How big are your wings?” listed below, students get a chance to explore the answers to these questions and more. While this lesson does not refer to hawks specifically, once your students have done their research on hawks, their information can be used to adapt this lesson.

- We find out on p. 39 that Otis's mother was killed in an avalanche. Research avalanches and find out how, when and where they occur. Both Canada and the United States have an avalanche warning system. Find out how it works in your area.

Art

- On the front cover of *The Scream of the Hawk* is a picture of a red-tailed hawk. Have students create two lists of word that describe the picture, one set a subjective list and the other objective. The objective words are literally what the students see. The subjective list is one where the students interpret, assume and think about the picture incorporating their feelings. Using the information from one of these lists, have students draw a picture which best reflects the words on their list.
- A red-tailed hawk painting by Michael Collins looks similar to the front cover of *The Scream of the Hawk*. Look for other paintings and sculptures of hawks. Once you have looked at a variety of pictures and sculptures of birds, create an abstract drawing or painting of a hawk. Try to capture the essence of the hawk in your work.
- Using this picture and others found in books or online, have students draw the eyes of several different birds.
- Drums play an important role in many world cultures, including the Ojibway. Find examples of symbols that are important to the Ojibway and incorporate them onto the top of a drum. Use a round piece of manila tag or construction paper as the top.
- John James Audubon and Robert Bateman are examples of wildlife artists. Explore their work with birds and find out about their lives as artists.
- The First Nations Group of Seven artists are Woodlands/ Ojibway artists. They are Jackson Beardy, Benjamin Chee Chee, Eddie Cobiness, Norval Morrisseau, Daphne Odjik, Clemence Wescoupe and Roy Thomas. Choose one of these artists to research, then create a painting in their style.

Drama

- Put your students into groups. Choose two characters from *The Scream of the Hawk* and using the technique “Try to see it my Way” (The New Dramathemes. p. 106) for example have students explore situations in *The Scream of the Hawk* from different perspectives. They might look at how Otis may have reacted differently instead of running away, or how things would have turned out if Lissa had told his secret.
- Have students perform improv skits using scenes from *The Scream of the Hawk* as a guide. Suggest they add a character that does not exist in the book, but one that may add to the situation. For example: p. 24— “Lissa turned around. There stood Otis, his big goggly glasses balanced on the tip of his nose, his crazy magician’s cape dragging on the ground behind him.” or p. 80— “All these things somersaulted through Lissa’s mind as she sat in Otis’s room, pondering his question.”

Selected Resources

Fiction

Avi. *Poppy, Poppy and Rye.*

Bradford, Karleen. *You Can’t Rush a Cat.*

Casanova, Mary. *Moose Tracks.*

Citra, Becky. *Dog Days.* (making new friends).

Daher, Anita. *Flight From Big Tangle, Flight From Bear Canyon.*

Ghent, Natale. *Piper.* (moving).

Hrdlitschka, Shelley. *Beans on Toast.* (making friends).

Lawson, Robert. *The Great Wheel.* (history of the Ferris wheel).

Little, Jean. *Lost and Found* (moving, making new friends), *Birdie for Now..*

McFarlane, Sheryl. *Going to the Fair.*

Nielson-Fernlund, Susin. *Mormor Moves In.*

Peck, Richard. *A Long Way from Chicago.*

Reynolds, Marilyn. *Goodbye to Griffith Street*. (moving).

Ryan, Pam Munoz. *A Box of Friends*.

Vaughn, Richard Lee. *Eagle Boy: A Pacific Northwest Native Tale*.

Wishinsky, Frieda. *Each One Special*.

Nonfiction

(Dewey Decimal Classification numbers appear in parentheses where applicable.)

Barton, Bob and David Booth. *Poetry Goes to School*. (372.64).

Coatsworth, Emerson and David Coatsworth (comp.). *The Adventures of Nanabush: Ojibway Indian Stories*. (398.2).

Crossley-Holland, Kevin. *Once Upon a Poem*. (808).

Esbensen, Barbara Juster. *The Star Maiden*. (398.26).

Hindley, Judy. *The Wheeling and Whirling-Around Book* (531.8).

Osofsy, Audrey. *Dreamcatcher*. (398.2).

Preston, Charles R. *Red-tailed Hawk*. (598.9).

Reid, Mary E. *Owls and other Birds of Prey*. (598.9).

Schwartz, Larry. *The New Dramathemes*. (372.66).

Waboose, Jan Bourdeau. *SkySisters*. (813.54).

Whetung, James. *The Vision Seeker*. (299.75).

Online

“Britannica Online—Roller coaster physics” searcheb.com/coasters/ride.html

“Amusement Park Physics” www.learner.org/exhibits/parkphysics/

“Animal Fact Sheets—Red-tailed Hawk”

www.zoo.org/educate/fact_sheets/raptors/redtail.htm

“Robert Bateman” www.robertbateman.ca

- “Worldwide Nature Artists Group” www.natureartists.com
- “How Big are your Wings?” www.wfu.edu/albatross/activity/howbig.htm
- “Physics of Roller Coasters”
www.thetech.org/learning/challenge/design/dcOnline_pdf/physicsROllercoasters.pdf
- “Roller Coaster History” www.ultimaterollercoaster.com/coasters/history/
- “Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area—Red-tailed Hawk”
www.birdsofprey.blm.gov/redtail.htm
- “An Introduction to Ojibway: Culture and History”
www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/5579/ojibwa.html
- “Aninashinabe- Ojibwe -Chippawa Cultue of an Indian Nation”
edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=369
- “Turtle Island Productions” www.turtle-island.com/traditions.html
- “Ojibway Culture” www.chalkandwire.com/ridley/Report2.pdf-21 Jan 2005
- “First Nations and the Inuit of Canada”
www.swlauriersb.lc.ca/schools/pet/firstnations/

A Few Words from the Author

Dear Readers:

Three things sparked the idea for *The Scream of the Hawk*.

The first was moving to a new town when my younger son was about to enter grade six. Watching him experience the challenges of establishing himself in a new community brought back all the memories associated with moving—something I had done a lot of while I was growing up! I attended six schools before eighth grade, and each time we moved I went through the trauma of making new friends, finding my way around a new school and getting used to different teachers. No one knew who I was, and I had to reinvent myself over and over. In my adult life, I'd forgotten a lot of those emotions, but seeing my son adjust brought it all back. It's hard being the new kid. I wanted to write about that.

Then, as I explored my new town, especially my new street, my imagination was captured by a great, big, white, spooky house a few doors down from where I live. As I walked my dog past this house day after day, something about it reached out to me. Maybe it was the white turret or the gingerbread trim on the eaves. Maybe it was the storm cellar, its doors anchored by nothing more than a large rock. Or maybe it was the hawk that lived in the giant tree in the backyard!

The hawk was the third element of the story, and she was beautiful! There really was a hawk living behind the big, big, spooky house! She would soar overhead, swoop low to the ground along the street and could even be seen in the field behind my house. I began to feel she was a special bird, sent to give me a message.

That's how it all started. These three ideas came together, and I started writing. I poured all my remembered feelings of loneliness and awkwardness into Lissa. Then I discovered Otis. I realized that you don't have to be the "new" kid to be sad and lonely and friendless. In writing this book, I did a lot of research about hawks and native beliefs. I spoke to the director of Turtle Island, at the University of Windsor who helped me understand some important things about Ojibway traditions. I took these ideas and made the hawk into a spirit guide for a lonely child who is trying to come to terms with the death of his beloved mother and the emotional distance of his father. The hawk brings comfort to a sad child in a time of need. And she helps Lissa learn about friendship.

There's something magical and healing about friendship—and sometimes you find it in the most unexpected places. That, really, is the idea behind *The Scream of the Hawk*.

Nancy Belgue