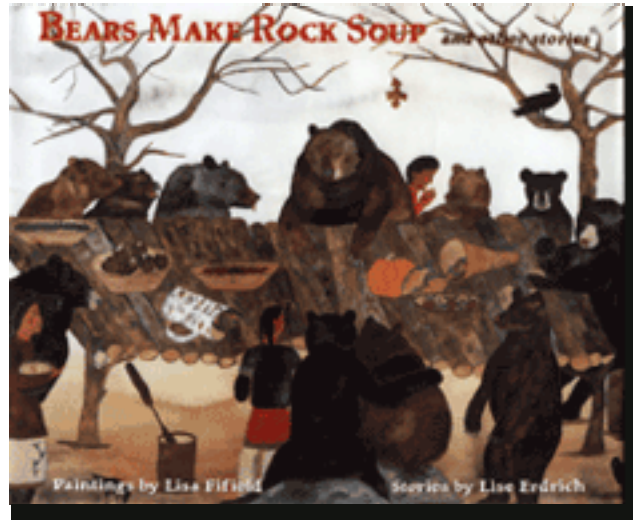


READING COMMUNITIES: CBP TEACHER'S GUIDES

Bears Make Rock Soup and other stories

Stories by **Lise Erdrich**
Paintings by **Lisa Fifield**



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

In *Bears Make Rock Soup*, Lise Erdrich and Lisa Fifield draw from Native American traditions to offer new stories and paintings. Each two-page spread features one of Fifield's stunning watercolor paintings and an original story by Erdrich based on the images in the painting. In one, women tell stories to lull cranky bears to sleep. In another, crows warn a tribe as soldiers near. Each pair of paintings and stories works to tell fables of the Plains and Woodlands animals and tribespeople. Together, they depict a world from the Native American past, when animals and people helped each other. Lisa Fifield's innovative use of color and design honors the traditional images of Native America, while Lise Erdrich's words carry the simple rhythms of a story told out loud. Artist and author alike use familiar Native American symbols in new ways. Words and images in this book vividly illustrate the interdependence of humans and animals, and they honor the cultural heritage from which they are drawn.

Bears Make Rock Soup is an invaluable classroom resource that can be used across the curriculum in thematic units that encompass Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science. As students explore the book, they will appreciate the vision it presents of a world in which animals and humans live in harmony, depending on their natural environment for survival. The stories provide excellent models for genre studies; the human characters invite discussions of Native American culture and societies; and the animal characters bring the natural world to the classroom. The book is satisfying in its own right, and it will also leave students full of questions and wishing to learn more.

COMMUNITY: Native American

THEMATIC UNITS

Native American Cultures and Traditions: History of the Plains and Woodlands tribes; Native American worldviews; tribes, clans, and leadership

Relationships between People and Nature: Human–animal interdependence; seasonal change; life cycles; habitats

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Lisa Fifield is a renowned artist of Native American and German descent. Lisa grew up in Washington state and in San Jose, California before moving to Minnesota as a teenager, where she received her art education from the Atelier LeSuer School of Art. Her paintings in watercolor and other mediums are represented in national and international galleries around the world. For ***Bears Make Rock Soup***, Lisa Fifield drew from her collection of paintings entitled “Totem Clanswomen,” which explores the tradition of Indian women as clan mothers and balancers of life. Her interest in Native Americans’ beliefs and unique relationship to animals and the earth is the catalyst for her work. She writes: that their “way of life has been one of a natural relationship. It was an intimate one that associated the Indian as a partner with the animals, the season, and the earth. Therefore, since they have always lived as one with nature, they came to act as nature did.” Lisa Fifield now resides in Minnetonka, Minnesota and is enrolled as a member of the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, in the Black Bear Clan.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lise Erdrich is a writer, counselor and health educator of Native American and German descent and is enrolled in the Turtle Mountain Band of Plains Ojibway. She earned her BA in English from the University of North Dakota and an MS in Health Sciences from Minnesota State University. Her award-winning fiction and non-fiction has appeared in many literary anthologies and magazines. Her first inspiration for the stories in *Bears Make Rock Soup* was Lisa Fifield's paintings. In writing the stories, she drew on "everything I knew from my own experiences and reading about birds and animals, family stories . . . legends and creation stories I had heard." She hopes that the book helps children "to get an idea of the relatedness of everything, people and creatures and all that is happening in the world, and to grow up to respect the earth and all living things." In addition to being a writer, Lise Erdrich is a certified health education and prevention specialist. She lives and works in Wahpeton, North Dakota, at the Indian boarding school where her parents also worked and where she grew up with her six siblings.

GETTING THE CLASSROOM READY

Bringing the Outside World in



Butcher paper or newsprint; cardboard; scissors; paint or markers; masking tape

- Bring the animals from *Bears Make Rock Soup* into your classroom! Using Lisa Fifield's painting as a model, you can easily make art that brings the book, and the animals inside it, to life. Designate a part of your room to decorate.
- Photocopy and then enlarge one of the crows flying on the side of page 26 of *Bears Make Rock Soup* to fill an 8.5" by 11" piece of paper. Cut out the bird and paste the outline to a piece of cardboard, creating a stencil. Now make a line of flying crows by stenciling across a band of butcher paper. Put the paper high on the walls to have crows flying across your classroom.
- Copy the outline of the bear on page 9 onto a large piece of butcher paper, using brown paint or markers. Cut the bear out and put it up, below the border of the birds. If you wish, repeat the same process with the deer on page 29.
- Using pieces of cardboard or brown construction paper, recreate the moose tracks crossing page 17. Using masking tape, place the tracks on the floor so they lead up to your *Bears Make Rock Soup* area.

GETTING READY FOR READING

The Changing Seasons

Through a discussion of seasonal changes in the natural environment, students begin to consider their own relationships to nature.



20 minutes



large group

1. Much of *Bears Make Rock Soup* focuses on people's interactions with nature: their responses to the changing seasons and their relationships with the animals. Before reading the book with your students, get them thinking about their own responses to these themes. Begin by asking your classes what weather characterizes each season in your area.
2. Next, ask your class what they do in different seasons. How do they know that fall is coming? What makes winter special? What does spring mean to them? Why is summer important? Help students think not only about seasonal events, such as the holidays or summer vacation, but also about their responses to weather changes and the natural environment. Do they wear different foods? Do their outdoor activities change? How?
3. Guide students to consider that where they live may have an impact on their responses to the seasons. How do people respond in another part of the country or the world? What do they know about how people in the Plains and Woodlands adapt to the seasons?
4. Ask students to think about how animals adapt to the changing seasons. Prompt them for examples of seasonal events such as birds migrating, bears hibernating, or animal babies being born.

EXPLORING THE BOOK

Diving In



30 minutes



whole class

Introduce the book to students in a large or small group. The focus of this first reading should be reading for pleasure—encouraging students to enjoy the beauty of the book and the story it tells. In order to foster this enjoyment, try some of the following activities:

- Discuss the cover, the title, and the illustrations. Look at the structure of the book—how it is set up in two-page spreads made up of paintings and stories. Explain that each two-page spread tells a different story, but that all the stories are connected.
- Encourage the class to explore the book by taking a “picture walk” through the book, thinking about the story as it is told in the illustrations. Tell students to pair up with a neighbor sitting next to them and discuss what they see in the illustrations as you turn the pages of the book in front of them. At the end of the picture walk, ask the students to share one thing that they observed in the illustrations.
- Once they’ve shared their observations about the illustrations, ask students what they think the book is about. List these predictions and ask students to check them after the reading is complete.
- Read sections aloud to the large group, or have students read the book on their own, in pairs, or in small groups. As students read, encourage them to stop occasionally to check their predictions and to make new ones. Once the reading is complete, return to the list of predictions and alter it as necessary.

FIRST TIME AROUND: VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Animal Words

Students practice strategies for identifying and defining difficult words, using vocabulary related to the animals in the story.



30 minutes



whole class

CA Reading Standard 1.6 and 1.7: Students use sentence and word context to find the meaning of unknown words. Students use a dictionary to learn the meaning and other features of unknown words.



Flipchart and markers or blackboard and colored chalk; dictionaries

1. Explain to the class that they are going to find special words in the book. On a flipchart or the blackboard, make a table of three columns with the following headings: *animals*, *what they do*, and *what they're like*. Ask students if they know other names for these different kinds of words: *nouns*, *verbs*, and *adjectives*.
2. Ask the class to help you fill the three columns with words they remember reading in the book. Then, have students look in the book for more words. If students do not know the meaning of a word, ask them which column they would guess it belongs to.. Encourage students to use the context of the sentence to figure out what part of speech it is. Write unfamiliar words in a different color to mark them.
3. Using a new color, make lines connecting animals with their actions and adjectives. Refer to the book to make sure the connections are correct. Now return to the unknown words, and ask students if they can figure out what they mean, based on the stories in which they appear or the animals, actions, or descriptors with which they are paired.
4. If students cannot use context clues to deduce the meaning of the new words, have them refer to the dictionary for definitions. You can also have students use the dictionary to check the deductions they did make. Examples of some words students might find difficult are included below.

what they're like

animals

what they do

huge (p. 10)

warm (p. 10)

furry (p. 10)

awkward (p. 14)

moody (p. 14)

abandoned (p. 17)

happy (p. 17)

numerous (p. 17)

taunting (p. 21)

bear (p. 5)

moose (p. 14)

yearling (p. 14)

loon (p. 21)

hatchling (p. 30)

raccoon (p. 29)

yawn (p. 6)

snarl (p. 6)

roam (p. 10)

wander (p. 17)

leap (p. 18)

torment (p. 21)

SECOND TIME AROUND: READING COMPREHENSION

The Other Side of the Story

Students compare and contrast stories in the book and identify the key features of stories, deciding what makes the stories similar and different.



45 minutes



Whole class or small groups

CA Language Arts Standard 2.7: Students extract appropriate and significant information from the text.



flipchart and markers

1. Explain to students that they are going to compare several stories in the book to see what's the same and what's different. Encourage them to listen carefully for similarities and differences as you read "Black Bear Sleeping in a Tree" and "Bears Make Rock Soup" out loud.
2. On the blackboard or flipchart, list the two stories' similarities and differences. Help students think not only about the stories' events, but also about the settings, characters, and language. For example, students might say that the main characters of "Black Bear Sleeping in a Tree" and "Bears Make Rock Soup" are bears and people. Encourage them to think about the fact that in the first story, the people help the bears, while in the second, the bears help the people. The first story takes place in the autumn, while the second takes place in winter. Ask students why those different settings matter.
3. Break the class up into several small groups and have each group repeat this exercise with different stories. Good pairs of stories include: "The Naming Ceremony" and "Last Respects"; "The Abandoned Yearling" and "Grandfather Moose"; and "Keepers of the Sky" and "Crows Cawed a Warning." Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and markers so students can record their ideas.
4. When the groups have finished recording their comparisons, ask them to share what they found with the rest of the class. Ask students what similarities they see among all the stories in the book as a whole. Students might say, for example, that all the

stories feature animals, or that in many of the stories, the characters face a problem and receive help from somebody else.

AFTERWORDS: LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

What Makes a Folktale?

Students reach an understanding of the elements of genre by comparing the stories in *Bears Make Rock Soup* to familiar fables and folktales.



30 minutes



large group

CA Language Arts Standard 3.2: Students comprehend the basic plots of classic fairy tales, myths, folktales, legends, and fables from around the world



Blackboard and chalk

1. Ask the class to name some fables and folktales they know that feature animals. Good examples of children’s stories include *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and *The Three Little Pigs*, and familiar legends might feature Anansi the Spider or Coyote the Trickster. If students volunteer stories with which you or other members of the class are not familiar, ask for a (brief!) summary.
2. Lead a discussion with your class about what makes these stories fairy tales or folktales. What do all of these stories have in common? List these shared characteristics on the blackboard. Elements of the genre to mention include the following:
 - These stories have no one specific author; they are handed down through oral tradition.
 - In these stories, animals have many human characteristics, such as the ability to think and talk.
 - These stories don’t take place in a specific time or place; they come from an imagined past. (This is often indicated by the phrase “Once Upon a Time.”)
 - These stories often involve magic of some kind.
 - Characters in these stories sometimes represent good or evil—they’re not just individual people with personalities.
 - These stories are usually short enough to be told aloud in one sitting.

3. Now, ask your class whether they think the stories in *Bears Make Rock Soup* could be folktales. Do they share the elements of the genre? Why or why not? What do the plots and characters of *Bears Make Rock Soup* have in common with fables and folktales?

Other Reading Activities:

- Draw students' attention to the sentences in large print on the side of each story. Each of these sentences summarizes the story's events and is a quotation that captures a key moment in the story. They serve a purpose similar to that of a topic sentence in nonfiction. Ask students to find other quotations in the stories that they think could serve the same purpose, or to write alternative summary statements.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Bears Make More Soup

Using the writing process, students write their own tales that feature relationships between people and animals.



3 hours over one week



Individual and partner

CA Writing Standard 1.0: Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process.



blackboard and chalk or flipchart and markers; paper and pens or pencils

Plan

- Have a discussion with your class about the characteristics of the stories in *Bears Make Rock Soup*. Ask students what elements the stories have in common. Students may note the lack of names and the focus on relationships between people and animals. List these and other elements on the blackboard. (See the *What Makes a Folktale?* activity under *Literary Response and Analysis* for one way to structure this conversation.)
- Ask students to outline a story of their own, using these characteristics. Remind students that their stories should not take place in the present day, and that their characters should be similar to those in *Bears Make Rock Soup* (e.g., bears, deer, birds, Native American peoples).

Draft

- Tell students to work independently and use their outlines to write new stories. Encourage them to echo the language and voice used in the book. Have them refer back to the stories and to the list they developed as they write.

Revise

- Once they have completed their drafts, ask students to share their writing with their original partners. Remind students that at this stage in the writing process, they should focus on the clarity of the writing and the impact of specific words or events, rather than on spelling or grammar.

- Encourage students to revise their stories according to their partner’s feedback. Suggest that they reread their drafts to themselves and then read them out loud (quietly) to see if there are other changes they wish to make.

Edit

- Ask students to edit their second drafts for publication, and to check spelling and punctuation. Read through the drafts and mark errors. Encourage students to use a word wall, a dictionary, or other classroom reference tools as they correct their stories.

Publish

- Collect student stories and bind them into a book to accompany *Bears Make Rock Soup* in your classroom’s library. If you wish, see the *Art* activity for ideas about how to illustrate these stories.

OTHER WRITING ACTIVITIES

- *Rewriting the Story:* Ask students to take one of the stories from the book, such as “Black Bear Sleeping in a Tree,” and to retell it in modern terms. Who would the characters be? What problem would be presented and how would the characters resolve it? Encourage them to think about putting themselves in the story, if they think it would make sense. What would that situation be? What would the characters do? For example, a retelling of “Black Bear Sleeping in a Tree” might involve a cat that has climbed up a tree and won’t come down. How would the student convince the cat to descend?
- *Telling the Untold Story:* In “The Bears that Couldn’t Hibernate,” the women tell the sleepy bears the long, long story of the giant maple and all it had seen in one hundred years. What could that story be? As a group, have the class write that story, detailing the events the maple might have witnessed.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Traditional Ways

Students study and compare Native American groups, gaining a more complete understanding of their traditional cultures and social structures.



45 minutes a day
over several weeks



Small group and whole class

CA Social Studies Standard 3.2: Students describe the American Indian nations in their local region long ago and in their recent past.



Encyclopedias, reference books, and access to online information about Native American tribes (for recommended books and websites, see the list of *Resources*); butcher paper and markers

1. Remind the class that Native American traditions are not folktales—this book is written and illustrated by two Native Americans who continue to draw from their traditions today. Like all traditions, though, Native American traditions have changed with the passage of time. In this activity, the students are going to be studying the traditions of the different Indian tribes at the time that European people came to America. Many of these traditions have continued, but others have changed.
2. Break the class up into several small groups, each of which will study one tribe from a different region of the United States. Assign the tribes to the groups on the basis of available resources, but be sure to include either the Plains Ojibway or Oneida, the tribes of the author and artist of *Bears Make Rock Soup*. Other tribes recommended for available information include the Navajo, Haida, Cherokee, and the five tribes of the Iroquois nation.
3. Over the course of one or two weeks, allow the students to research their tribes' traditions. In the past, what did these tribes eat? What did they wear and where did they live? How did they organize themselves? What did they believe in? How did they see the world? Tell each group that they should complete a chart with information on the following topics: food; clothing; homes; tribal structure and leadership; religious traditions; and folklore.
4. Once groups have completed their charts, create a comparative chart on butcher paper for the class as a whole. Invite a representative from each group to fill in the boxes with the information and explain what they learned to the rest of the class. Once the

large chart is complete, ask your students what similarities and differences they see between Indian groups from diverse regions.

OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITIES

- *Comparing Traditions:* “The Naming Ceremony” describes one traditional ceremony to celebrate the birth and naming of a child. Each culture has its own way of marking these events with traditions and ceremonies. Ask students to share other traditional ways that they know about to celebrate births. Have them research naming traditions from other cultures. For example, Mexican babies are often named after their Saint’s Days, while Jewish children are traditionally named after a family member who has passed away, and Korean siblings traditionally share one syllable of their names.

ART

Imagining Nature

Students create artwork that echoes the themes and style of *Bears Make Rock Soup*.



1 hour



Individual



Watercolor paints and paper; construction paper; scissors; gluesticks; paintbrushes

- Have students cut out construction paper silhouettes of animals like those in *Bears Make Rock Soup*. If students wish, they can trace the animals directly from the book, or they can draw the figures freehand.
- Ask students to experiment with where they want to place their animals on the paper, depending on the scene that they wish to illustrate. Once they have decided where they want the animals to go, tell students to use watercolors, the medium used by Lisa Fifield to create the paintings for the book, to paint the background of the scene on a separate sheet of paper.
- Encourage the class to study the techniques that Fifield uses and to try to replicate them, blending colors of different densities and creating patterns with their brushes.
- Finally, have students position the cutouts on top of the background scenes and glue them down.

OTHER ART ACTIVITIES

- *People and Animals*: Ask students to compare the depiction of people and animals in Lisa Fifield’s work with that of other artists. One good example for comparison is “The Life of a Hunter” by Currier and Ives. For this image and others, go to the “animals” page of the Barewalls.com site at <http://www.barewalls.com/animals.html>.

SCIENCE

Home on the Plains

Students study how animals live in the context of their habitats.



30 minutes a day
over several weeks



Individual

CA Science Standard 3b: Students know examples of diverse life forms in different environments, such as oceans, deserts, tundra, forests, grasslands, and wetlands.



Encyclopedias, reference books, and access to online information about animals and their habitats (for recommended books and websites, see the list of [Resources](#))

1. Read the story and look at the painting “Last Respects” (p. 29) with your class. As a group, make a list of the animals you see: bears, wolves, moose, deer, elk, antelope, eagles, geese, loons, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, and turkeys.
2. Point out the tipi in the painting and tell students that this is where the people in the book’s paintings live. Tipis are the traditional homes of the Plains Indians. What are the traditional homes of the students?”
3. A habitat is an animal’s homes—the place where an animal normally lives. What are the habitats of the animals in the book? Have students list what they know, using what they have learned in *Bears Make Rock Soup* and other outside knowledge. Make sure to include information about the vegetation and the climates of these habitats.
4. Have each student pick one animal and habitat to learn more about. Have students use encyclopedias, resource books (such as *Homes are for Living*, published by Hampton-Brown), and websites to answer the following questions:
 - What is the name of this animal’s habitat?
 - What is the climate of the animal’s habitat?
 - What kinds of plants grow in the habitat?
 - What other animals share this habitat?
 - How has the animal adapted to this habitat?
 - What makes this habitat a good place for the animal to live?

5. Have students write reports to share what they've learned, or ask them to work together in groups to create oral presentations.

RESOURCES

Children's Book Pressbooks from Native American communities:

Baby Rattlesnake. Story by Te Ata and pictures by Mira Reisberg.

Home to Medicine Mountain. Written by Chiori Santiago and illustrated by Judith Lowry.

A Man Called Raven. Story by Richard Van Camp and pictures by George Littlechild.

The People Shall Continue. Written by Simon Ortiz and illustrated by Sharol Graves.

This Land Is My Land. Written and illustrated by George Littlechild.

What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses? Story by Richard Van Camp and pictures by George Littlechild.

Websites:

- The website of the **National Museum of American Indian** includes an online resource reference page with a information on a range of Native American issues. Access it at <http://www.nmai.si.edu/links/content.html>
- For an excellent source of information on native groups' relationship to the natural world in four different regions, see the **North-South-East-West** exhibit at <http://www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmnh/exhibits/north-south-east-west/>
- To find links to information specific Native American tribes, go to the “**Native Americans**” category of **Yahooligans** at http://www.yahooligans.com/around_the_world/countries/united_states/cultures_and_traditions/native_american/tribes_nations_and_bands
- For information on some **animals and their habitats**, go to a student-generated thinkquest at <http://library.thinkquest.org/11234>
- For links to information on specific animals and their habitats, go to the “**Animals**” page of **Yahooligans** at http://www.yahooligans.com/Science_and_Nature/Living_Things/Animals/

TIPS FROM THE PROS

Please share your own ideas for how to use *Bears Make Rock Soup* in the classroom. We'll be pleased to post your work on the website for other teachers to use. We would also love to see any outstanding examples of student work resulting from these activities. Email us your lesson plans or student work samples at communityprograms@cbookpress.org.