**English First Peoples 10** **Allusion in Poetry: History Lesson**

**Poets Background:** Born on the Penticton Indian Reservation, Jeanette Christine Armstrong is a fluent speaker of the Okanagan (Nsyilxcen) language and a student of her community’s traditional teaching. She holds a Phd and teaches Indigenous Studies at UBCo campus.

“The Native people of this land developed a lifestyle through a unique worldview…I believe its underlying values and structures are important contributions to the pool of knowledge and critical factors in reversing and reshaping a worldview whose values foster an attitude of self-destruction.”

In this poem, the literary device of allusion (A reference in one piece of literature to something from another piece of literature) allows the poet to express a deeply powerful and controversial viewpoint on 500 years of European contact in North America.

**Step** 1: Read the poem as a class. Read the poem on your own. Read the poem

**Step 2:** Annotate or dissect the poem. Highlight examples of allusion. There are 10 in total.

**Step 3**: Allusions in History Lesson: copy and paste from above

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| --- | --- |
| Insert allusions here | Explain what it alludes to (hint look at the title) |
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**Step 4:** Once we’ve gone over the allusions, you and a partner will be given 15 minutes to research the full story behind these events and present your findings to the class. You should connect these findings with these questions.

1. How has this event affected Aboriginal people?

2. What ideas and emotions are compressed into this allusion? (think of themes, mood, and principle of learning).

3. Do the ideas contained in this allusion change or subvert (overturn the European perspective) from the the mainstream view of history?

Step 5: Learning Journal #6: Is this poem a fair and accurate depiction of North American history from 1492 to present day?

**History Lesson**

Out of the belly of Christopher’s ship

a mob bursts

Running in all directions

Pulling furs off animals

Shooting buffalo

Shooting each other

left and right

Father mean well

waves his makeshift wand

forgives saucer-eyed Indians

Red coated knights

gallop across the prairie

to get their men

and to build a new world

Pioneers and traders

bring gifts

Smallpox, Seagrams

and rice krispies

Civilization has reached

the promised land

Between the snap crackle pop

of smoke stacks

and multicoloured rivers

swelling with flower powered zee

are farmers sowing skulls and bones

and miners

pulling from gaping holes

green paper faces

of a smiling English lady

The colossi

in which they trust

while burying

breathing forests and fields

beneath concrete and steel

stand shaking fists

waiting to mutilate

whole civilizations

ten generations at a blow

Somewhere among the remains

of skinless animals

is the termination

to a long journey

and unholy search

for the power

glimpsed in a garden

forever closed

forever lost

-Jeannette Armstrong

**Oral Presentation Rubric:**

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| Scale | Content | Delivery | Listening |
| 4 | Explains the allusion thoroughly and insightfully | Clear expressive voice and confident presence | Full attention to the speakers during presentations |
| 3 | Good explanation. One  question may be unclear  or unanswered.  occur. | Adequate volume and  expression. Some  nervous or careless  gestures | Few lapses in  attention and no  interruptions during  presentations |
| 2 | Superficial explanation.  More research or depth  of thought required. | Speaking skills barely  adequate. Nervousness  or lack of preparation  impedes clarity. | Student needs  reminders to show  respect for the  speakers. |
| 1 | Minimal attempt made  to explain the allusion.  Missed the point or  lacked effort. | Disrespect to audience  in body language.  Words are mumbled or  inaudible. | Minimal attention  and respect for  speakers. |
| 0 | No attempt made to  explain the allusion. | Refusal to give  presentation. | Student is rude and  disruptive. May need  to leave for speakers  to continue. |