

# FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER

A TEACHER'S  
GUIDE TO

FOR USE  
WITH COMMON CORE  
STATE STANDARDS

## About the Book

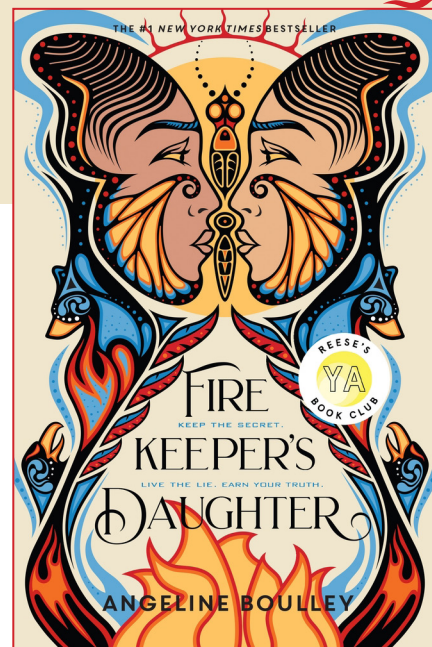
An instant #1 *New York Times* bestseller, Angeline Boulley's debut novel, *Firekeeper's Daughter*, is a groundbreaking YA thriller about a Native teen who must root out the corruption in her community, perfect for readers of Angie Thomas and Tommy Orange.

Eighteen-year-old Daunis Fontaine has never quite fit in, both in her hometown and on the nearby Ojibwe reservation. She dreams of a fresh start at college, but when family tragedy strikes, Daunis puts her future on hold to look after her fragile mother. The only bright spot is meeting Jamie, the charming new recruit on her brother Levi's hockey team.

Yet even as Daunis falls for Jamie, she senses the dashing hockey star is hiding something. Everything comes to light when Daunis witnesses a shocking murder, thrusting her into an FBI investigation of a lethal new drug.

Reluctantly, Daunis agrees to go undercover, drawing on her knowledge of chemistry and Ojibwe traditional medicine to track down the source. But the search for truth is more complicated than Daunis imagined, exposing secrets and old scars. At the same time, she grows concerned with an investigation that seems more focused on punishing the offenders than protecting the victims.

Now, as the deceptions—and deaths—keep growing, Daunis must learn what it means to be a strong Anishinaabe kwe (Ojibwe woman) and how far she'll go for her community, even if it tears apart the only world she's ever known.



## About the Author



**ANGELINE BOULLEY**, an enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, is a storyteller who writes about her Ojibwe community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. She is a former Director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. Angeline lives in southwest Michigan, but her home will always be on Sugar Island. *Firekeeper's Daughter* is her debut novel.

This guide is intended to support your classroom instruction. The standards listed throughout are aligned with the Common Core State Standards for grades nine and ten, but the activities and questions can be applied to multiple grade levels. Please adapt the activities and questions to meet the needs of your students. You know your students better than anyone else.

# Pre-Reading Activities

## Tribal Land and Displacement Maps

Have students research major tribal lands and displacement of large groups. Using a blank map, students can color-code areas of tribal origin and track displacement. They will also learn about the laws and European-colonial government interference that created the problem.

CCSS: RI.9-10.7: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (for example: a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

## Social Issues Discussion

Discuss issues facing highly marginalized populations in the United States, with an emphasis on Indigenous populations. Focus on issues such as access to health care, inequitable legal systems, and poverty. Have students analyze informative and narrative texts to reflect on the systems that perpetuate these issues.

CCSS: RI.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

# During Reading Discussion Questions

## Part I: Waabinong (East)

1. “My Zhaaganaash and Anishinaabe grandmothers could not have been more different. . . . Their push and pull on me has been a tug-of-war my entire life.” (pages 10-11) What is the full extent that this type of conflict would have on an individual? What conscious and subconscious impacts might it have?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

2. “When someone dies, everything about them becomes past tense. Except for the grief. Grief stays in the present.” (page 24) What other things change or stay the same in grief? What lasting impacts can grief have?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. “It’s hard when being Native means different things depending on who’s asking and why.” (page 55) What are the different meanings “being Native” could have? Why would it change “depending on who’s asking and why”?

CCSS: RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, as tribal sovereign nations are considered, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

4. “It feels disloyal to say anything more. I’d be revealing the worst parts about someone I love.” (pages 76–77) Where should the line be between revealing unsavory things about those you love and finding healing from the pain that the loved one may have caused?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.



5. “Anger flashes through me as I think about how it’s Travis’s second day as well. He will be unable to move on until he accounts for the harm that he is responsible for. Including taking Lily from us.” (page 101) Does committing a crime make people any less deserving of grief and remembrance after death?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

6. “I believed the worst. My uncle didn’t fail me. I failed him.” (page 109) It is impossible to understand anyone fully, and learning things about them after they are gone can reveal incredible pain. Discuss Daunis’s immediate instinct to assume the worst about someone whom she loved and admired so much, and her realization of being wrong about Uncle David.

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

7. “Does closure come from forgiving others and being forgiven for our failures? Do we resist temptation from evil by believing in righteous justice?” (page 115) Discuss these questions. What is revealed here about Daunis’s motivation to replace her uncle as the confidential informant?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

## Part II: Zhaawanong (South)

1. “There is power in what I am going through; it’s my responsibility to observe the protocols and protect others during this traditional grieving period.” (page 140) Explain and describe the power there is in grief and the healing process. What specific responsibilities does Daunis have with this power?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

2. “Visible physical effects of meth. But what about the damage on the inside? The toll on them and their loved ones?” (page 155) Discuss these questions. How does Daunis’s personal connection to this case on multiple levels, from her misunderstanding of Uncle David’s situation to her conflict surrounding the loss of Lily and Travis, influence her ability to participate?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

3. “What if it’s a strength to love and care for someone you don’t always like?” (page 180) Daunis frequently grapples with herself and close loved ones not being fully accepted or seen. Discuss the resonance of this question on the experiences of rejection and self-denial throughout the book so far.

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

4. “When you love someone, but don’t like parts of them, it complicates your memories of them when they’re gone.” (page 205) It is clear Daunis feels immense guilt and blame for her uncle’s death, particularly after learning the truth of his involvement with the FBI. What healing can be found after the fact in Daunis seeking the truth and finding a solution to the larger issue?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

5. “I know what you’re here to do. But these are good people. . . . It’s like . . . you haven’t earned our stories.” (page 217) What power is there in stories? Why is it important for them to be earned?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.



6. “Maybe it’s even more important for me to be part of the investigation because I’m the only one thinking seven generations ahead.” (page 238) How does this connect to Daunis’s motives in being a confidential informant? How is this reflected in her actions?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

7. “When Lily and I were on Tribal Youth Council, we all played a game called Bigotry Bingo. When we heard a comment that fed into stereotypes, we’d call it out.” (page 210) What does this reaction reflect about the views and biases placed on marginalized populations?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

8. “I need to be part of the investigation. The community needs to be part of the solution.” (page 289) What significance does this hold? What added value is there in the solution coming from within the community?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

9. “I turn the notebook over to start where he started. In the Before. I need to earn Uncle David’s story.” (page 313) Daunis expresses the sentiment of stories needing to be earned a few times throughout the book. Why is it significant that she earn Uncle David’s story, when she was so close with him in life?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

10. “The Little People found the kids in the woods and scolded them.” (page 322) What role and purpose do the Little People serve in the story as a narrative, as well as in tradition?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

11. “Not every Elder is a cultural teacher, and not all cultural teachers are Elders. . . . Trust yourself to know the difference.” (page 329) What does Aunt Teddie mean by this? What can be inferred from this? Is it advice or is it a warning?

CCSS:RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (for example: how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

12. “As long as the FBI continues their wild goose chase in search of a hallucinogenic mushroom, they will leave our other medicines alone.” (page 332) What does Daunis fear would be the repercussions of the FBI meddling in the traditional medicines?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

13. “If he’s new best buds with your brother, then he’s bad news.” (page 367) Daunis already suspects Levi of being involved in something. Why is it so hard for her to acknowledge fault in him, unlike how she assumed fault toward Uncle David?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.



14. “Levi swore he’d be so grateful if I said it was me. . . . He was supposed to be the best of us.” (page 381) Does the revelation of the depth of Levi’s manipulation redeem Travis’s actions in any way? Is he any more or less culpable for his actions?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

15. “Wisdom is not bestowed. In its raw state, it is the heartbreak of knowing things you wish you didn’t.” (page 393) To what extent was this wisdom and understanding on Daunis’s part willful ignorance or truly being shielded from the truth?

CCSS: RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (for example: those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

## Part III: Ningaabii’an (West)

1. “What would you do, if you could get away with anything? If you grew up getting special treatment? If you had a friend like Travis to take the fall for a big mistake?” (page 418) Discuss the full consequences of Levi not only never having faced consequences but also using Travis as a scapegoat for a truly egregious crime. What is the full extent of the harm? Why was this allowed and tolerated for so long?

CCSS:RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (for example: parallel plots), and manipulate time (for example: pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

2. “I love you, Levi. Enough to do this.” (page 446) Levi had already threatened and betrayed Daunis multiple times leading up to this final moment. Recall Daunis thinking about the strength it takes to love someone you do not like parts of. What strength is Daunis exhibiting? Is she fully justified, or can it be argued that she, too, is betraying her loved ones?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. “I’m reminded that our Elders are our greatest resource, embodying our culture and community.” (page 453) Reflect on Aunt Teddie’s warning that not every Elder is a culture teacher and vice versa. What other resources do our Elders provide, outside of embodying culture and community?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

## Part IV: Kewaadin (North)

1. “Stormy Nodin hasn’t spoken a single word since I led him from that trailer.” (page 470) Why would Stormy help Jamie in the first place? What motivation did he have to turn against Levi and Mike, and then also to not defend himself?

CCSS:RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (for example: parallel plots), and manipulate time (for example: pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

2. “I love you and I want you to be healthy. . . . You gotta do your work and I gotta do mine.” (page 477) This is reminiscent of both Lily’s plea to Travis before he killed them both, as well as Aunt Teddie explaining her early relationship with Art. Discuss the power and strength behind choosing to express love in this way. What other ways has love been expressed in this novel? What strength or harm was created in those methods of expression?

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.



3. “I am overcome with a mixture of emotions. Sad that their innocent eyes are open to the trauma that still impacts our community today. Angry they must learn these truths in order to be strong Anishinaabek in a world where Indians are thought of only in the past tense. Proud that they—smart, sturdy, and loved—are the greatest wish our ancestors had, for our nation to survive and flourish.” (page 485) Discuss the significance of what Daunis realizes about her cousins’ understanding of their transgenerational trauma.

CCSS: RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

## Extension Activities

### Disrupting Injustices and Inequities

“Levi and Stormy are gonna sit in jail, while Mike gets away with everything.” . . . “When a crime takes place on Indian land and the victim is a tribal member, the feds decide whether to press charges.” (page 471-472)

Daunis is sexually assaulted and raped by Mike and his father, Grant. Both men exhibit aggression toward and entitlement over Daunis. However, neither receive any reprimand for their actions, due to different forms of legal evasion, and Daunis does not receive adequate justice or reparation for these violent acts committed against her. It is revealed near the end of the novel that Daunis’s situation is far from uncommon. Design a research project to address the following: What are other acts of injustices or inequities disenfranchised and underrepresented populations face? What actionable steps can be taken to disrupt them?

CCSS: W.9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

### Role of Helpers

“He [Gaagaagi] had spent so much time flying around, watching his friends using their gifts, that he had come to know their strengths and how they might help one another in their time of need.” (page 191)

Helpers are discussed and revealed throughout the novel, and they are not exclusive to Daunis and her efforts to save her community. In an essay, discuss the various helpers seen throughout the novel, and the vital roles they serve in creating a solution to the issue of meth in the community. Cite specific examples and analyze the purpose and benefits of these helpers.

CCSS: W.9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### Transgenerational Traumas

“Could I even explain [to Gramma Pearl] that I’m helping law-enforcement officers from the same government that tried taking her to boarding school? . . . Would she know that I am trying to protect our community, and others, too?” (page 149)

Transgenerational traumas are those passed from generation to generation. Daunis remembers and recognizes instances of generational and ancestral trauma as a result of historical oppression, violence, and systemic racism. All marginalized populations in the United States experience similar traumas that can be traced back through generations. However, transgenerational traumas also lead to resiliency and strength. Legacies are fostered within marginalized populations, giving rise to advocacy, social change, and continued empowerment. Meet with a neighbor, friend, etc. who identifies with a marginalized population. Interview them on their experiences with transgenerational resiliency in the face of trauma, and how it has created an environment for continued solutions towards overcoming oppression, violence, and systemic racism. Maintaining focus on healing legacies, what growth does our society need to continue in order to fully come to terms with the context of our history?

CCSS: W.9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.



## Familial Connections

“I cannot fathom growing up without relatives. I have so many family members, not all blood-related, who have surrounded me my entire life.” (page 25)

“I’ve always been a Firekeeper. Auntie made it more than a name. She made me family.” (page 305)

Family is incredibly important for all of the characters in this novel. Most prominently, Daunis finds strength in Uncle David and Aunt Teddie, but ultimate betrayal in Levi. Jaime, on the other hand, has virtually no connection to family and faces personal struggles as a result. Create a visual representation of important or significant family connections, including those who aren’t related by blood, and what that connection means to you.

CCSS: W.9-10.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

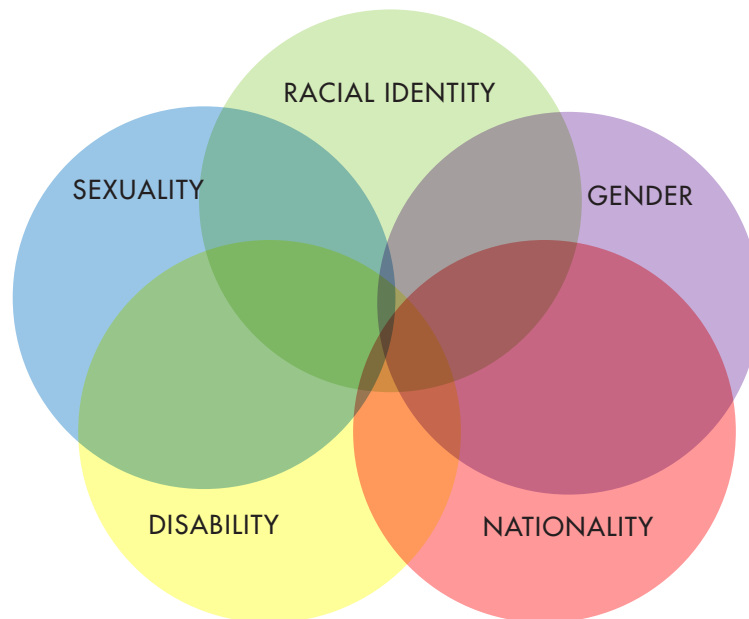
## Intersectional Identities

“Running is where all the different parts of me fit together perfectly, like a jigsaw puzzle. The zone is where I’m a step removed from the puzzle, so the lines fade, and I can see myself clearly.” (page 55)

“I’m thankful for you having those advantages. But I get mad and scared because my Black and Ojibwe daughters don’t.” (page 79)

Create a graphic, similar to the one below, to reflect on the many personal identities you hold and relate to. Then compare and contrast the benefits or disadvantages associated with each identity and how that impacts the way you interact with the world and others around you.

CCSS: W.9-10.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



**KIT MAGEE** is a high-school teacher in Colorado who identifies with the Cherokee Nation. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Secondary English Education from Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. She has experience teaching Language Arts to multilingual students at Fort Morgan High School, as well as teaching English Language Development at Aurora Central High School. Her research focuses on creating equitable and rigorous Language Arts instruction through accessible texts, primarily young adult literature.

