

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO WARRIOR GIRL UNEARTHED

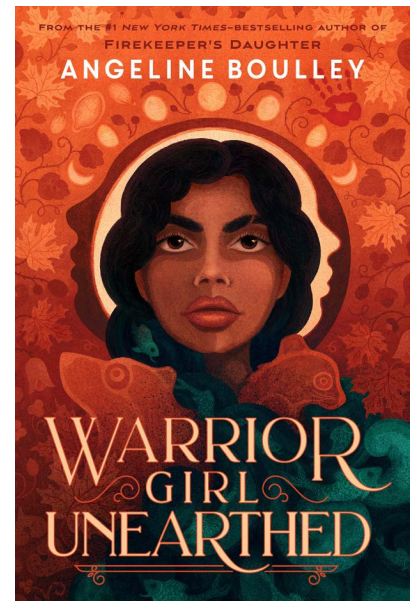
ABOUT THE BOOK

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Firekeeper's Daughter*
Angeline Bouley takes us back to Sugar Island in this high-stakes thriller about the power of discovering your stolen history.

Perry Firekeeper-Birch has always known who she is - the laidback twin, the troublemaker, the best fisher on Sugar Island. Her aspirations won't ever take her far from home, and she wouldn't have it any other way. But as the rising number of missing Indigenous women starts circling closer to home, as her family becomes embroiled in a high-profile murder investigation, and as greedy grave robbers seek to profit off of what belongs to her Anishinaabe tribe, Perry begins to question everything.

In order to reclaim this inheritance for her people, Perry has no choice but to take matters into her own hands. She can only count on her friends and allies, including her overachieving twin and a charming new boy in town with unwavering morals. Old rivalries, sister secrets, and botched heists cannot—will not—stop her from uncovering the mystery before the ancestors and missing women are lost forever.

Sometimes, the truth shouldn't stay buried.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angeline Bouley, 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. She is the author of the 2022 Printz and Morris Medal Winner *Firekeeper's Daughter* and the 2023 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Winner *Warrior Girl Unearthed*.



Photo by Marcella Hadden



NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This teachers' guide for Angeline Boulley's *Warrior Girl Unearthed* is aligned with the 11th/12th grade English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) bracket, specifically concerning the standards 'Reading for Literature', and writing and research production. Due to the topics and themes concerning inter- and intra-community and cultural interactions and tensions, critical social engagement and activism, intersectionality, and contended ethics this guide is designed for upper-level or advanced ELA classes at the secondary-level. Furthermore, this guide is designed with the assumption that students would have previous instruction on United States History and Literature reinforcing the opportunity for 11th/12th grade students to push against previous understandings with new perspectives and considerations. This teachers' guide encouraged to be used as an outline or template for a socratic approach to this novel through research-based questions and responses. Opportunities for scaffolding activities and questions for younger students will be suggested throughout this teachers' guide.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. A central topic throughout *Warrior Girl Unearthed* is the intricacies of the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), officially ratified on November 16, 1990. This novel takes place in 2014, the same year the National Park Services, under the direction of the U.S. Department of the Interior and Indigenous tribal leaders and elders, reviewed the national progress of the rightful recovery and repatriation of remains, culturally significant (and often sacred) instruments, tools, and items, and other artifacts stolen by white institutions of power.

Have students conduct a research project on the NAGPRA in which students analyze the social and cultural impacts on tribal members and the continued fight for equity and recognition. Students may consider:

- The actual progress of restoration and repatriation of Indigenous remains as a result of NAGPRA
 - » *Scaffolding: consider having students work in groups to create a visual graph of the progress, using resources provided by U.S. Indigenous tribes' and the Bureau of the Interior.*
- How the narratives on the realities of repatriation told by representatives of Native American tribes contradicts what is represented by museums and federal organizations
 - » *Scaffolding: consider having students research and notate how the U.S. government has historically treated marginalized populations, and analyze for patterns and contradictions for further discussion.*



2. Another central topic of this novel concerns the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW, a.k.a. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives) movement. While this movement is in response to an incredibly exigent issue, it is woefully under-discussed.

Have students research the MMIW movement. Facilitate exploration into specific subjects such as the extent and reach of this issue throughout the nation's indigenous communities and the consequences of the various social and legal responses.

- *Scaffolding: consider having students work as a class to create a list of questions for/about the novel in response to their research of one or both topics (NAGPRA and MMIW). Have students use these questions to discuss and make notes about their predictions and assumptions about these topics and the novel. Students will then use these notes as they read to document their new understandings and insights into their initial questions.*

DURING READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *Scaffolding: Using a specific note-taking/journaling procedure, have students return, reconsider, and readdress these questions after each section. Have students track how their prior knowledge and understandings are supported, challenged, or extended as they read and reflect.*
1. On page 62, Perry imagines what an authentic history of the vest she finds on eBay might be. How does the counter-narrative she creates support, challenge, and extend your understanding of cultural repatriation?
 2. Consider the barriers to the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). A significant one in this narrative is that it only applies to public institutions in the United States.
 - a. What connections can you make to your prior knowledge and experiences with museums and exhibits displaying cultural artifacts?
 3. What consequences are appearing as a result of Perry's impulsiveness?
 - a. How does she adapt and change throughout as a result of these actions and consequences?
 4. How far is too far to go for what you believe is right?
 - a. What are the consequences of going too far? Or not far enough?



WEEK ONE

1. Compare and contrast your experiences with Indigenous artifacts and the Tribal museum
 - a. What can you infer about the colleges collection?
 - b. Upon reflection, what are your views on your experiences, in light of Perry's observations and reactions to the display of her great-grandmother's basket?
2. Discuss the distinction between the "tribal members(hip) and tribal citizens(hip).
3. Respond to Perry's reflections on her intersecting identities of racial and cultural identities. From your observations thus far, what may be the impacts of her intersecting identities on how others choose to treat her and how she has learned to approach others and the world at large?

WEEK TWO

1. What does Perry's reaction to "meeting" the Warrior Girl reveal that grows your understanding of the exhibition of cultural artifacts and the repatriation of cultural artifacts?
2. Respond to the scene in Dr. Raquel Fentons office. What does her treatment of these artifacts and remains reveal and contribute to Perry's perspective on the issue of repatriation and protection?
3. Reflect on Cooper Turtles question, "You gonna give me your resignation or your word?" (p.58). Considering the events that led to that moment, what can you infer about Cooper's perspective on the matter of protection and repatriation of tribal artifacts and remains?
 - a. After talking about her paternal grandmother with her dad, Perry reflects on her intersectional racial and cultural identities. What does it reveal about Perry when she reflects "My skin color announces my blackness, but it's the part of my family I know the least about" (p. 70)? Considering she is 16 years old, what inferences can you make on how she is impacted by this as a young adult?

WEEK THREE

1. Reflect on Cooper's reminder to Perry that We need to know their perspective and be fluent in their language." (p. 102).
 - a. In the context of the quote, do you agree with Cooper's approach of careful and well-researched negotiation? What are the strengths and limitations of this approach?



- b. Is the power of knowledge strong enough in a negotiation when those who have the items do not understand or appreciate the other perspective?
2. What can you infer from the reactions from the tribal citizens to Rocky’s dance at the meeting with the College’s Board?
 - a. What does this reveal about the various perspectives within the tribe when it comes to finding the line between the honoring of culture of the exhibition of it?
 - b. Cooper’s response to Cheif Manitou ‘hijacking’ the meeting with Rocky’s hoop dance, he mentions “Tribal Council doesn’t let us in on the ‘big picture’ until their ready” (p.115). What does this reveal about the interactions of leadership and elders within their community? How might the political nature of the Tribal Council election process may impact their relationship with their community, especially regarding serious social concerns such as MMIWs?
3. When Perry confronts the Council Interns ‘ring-leader’ about his insensitive comment on missing Nish kwe, he responds by trying to convince Perry she misheard. What is your response to these comments and his justifications?

WEEK FOUR

1. What can you infer from Perry’s observation that not all Tribal Council members have the same knowledge of their language and origin story?
 - a. What does this reveal about some of the larger issues facing NAGPRA, such as institutional racism?
2. Granny June makes a comment regarding the Tribal Council not voting to lower the blood-quantum requirement to become a tribal citizen, because it doesn’t impact enough of their grandchildren yet (pg. 158) . In what ways do you see this notion of “pedigree” as a form of cultural preservation and or communal gate-keeping?
3. Considering the moments of deep pain, loss, and traum the Misfit Toys learn about when interviewing the tribal elders about the tradition and history of the ash baskets. Is it possible to ‘go too far’ when trying to heal centuries of wounds inflicted by colonialism?

WEEK FIVE

1. After learning of another missing young woman from a neighboring tribe, Perry says to Subcheif Tom Webster “Ask me how it feels to be an endangered species” (pg. 171). Later on, when discussing



repatriating cultural artifacts and remains, Perry assures Web that she “would do whatever it takes to reclaim every ancestor and object” (p. 173).

- a. Knowing the deep pain Perry is feeling to the MMIWs, how far do you think she *would* go, having already faced consequences for her past impulsiveness?
2. When Perry questions Frank Lockhart on his decision to not return the artifacts from his collection to the tribe, he bluntly tells her his decision had “nothing to do with the tribe” (page 194).
 - a. How is Lockhart’s apathy represented in current events regarding forms of reparation for historically oppressed communities?

WEEK SIX

1. In response to Perry’s apology for her outburst toward Dr. Fenton after Lockhart’s change of mind, Cooper reminds her and the audience that she is only 16 (pg. 207). How would you respond in such a fraught and emotionally significant conflict?
2. Compare and contrast Cooper’s approach of negotiation to Web’s encouragement of Perry to stop at nothing to achieve the end goal of bring their ancestors home.
 - a. What are the potential consequences or results of these approaches?
 - b. What does it mean to you when Cooper emphasizes to Perry to “consider the means and not just the ends” (pg. 208)?

WEEK SEVEN

1. From the statement “Perpetrators who don’t face consequences become predators” (pg. 241). How might this connect to the over arching theme of the balance between means and ends?
2. On pages 244-245, Pauline confides in Perry Chief Manitous grooming behavior. Discuss the impacts of power dynamics in the situation Pauline describes to her twin.
 - a. In context of the severity of MMIWs, what are the larger implications for tribal leadership to manipulate student interns in this way?
3. Perry teaches Web how museums use language such as “culturally unidentifiable” as a way to intentionally withhold cultural artifacts and remains, most notably those belonging to Indigenous communities. In what other ways, from history and your experiences, has language been used as the method for continued oppressions and inequalities?



WEEK EIGHT

1. What are the implications for the broader U.S. society for museums, as Perry's impression of Dr. Fenton and Dr. Hugo LeRoy's treatment of remains and artifacts elludes, to hoard and sensationalize cultures while disregarding the needs and desires of those cultures?
2. When planning her heist to reclaim the remains and items in Lockhart's silo, Perry acknowledges that it is illegal but she is justifying it to herself "in the big picture of righting wrongs" (pg. 276). This harkens back to the conflict between Cooper and Web perspectives on means and ends. What is your position on this conflict?
 - a. How should means and ends be prioritized and acted on?
 - b. What might be the reasoning behind valuing the ends over the means, and vice versa?

WEEK NINE

1. Reflect on the Franz Boas quote at the opening of this section (pg. 291). Discuss the underlying meaning and implications of this quote.
 - a. What would be reasonings in support or rejection of this notion?
 - b. Explain why the repatriation of Indigenous artifacts and remains so important to present communities?
2. How does Perry's wiindigoo story (pp. 305-307) mirror and/or contradict the MMIW narrative throughout the book?
 - a. How might this story relate to the various responses of characters in the novel to the litany of missing women and the factors that perpetuate the issue? For example, what are the implications of the cop being apathetic to Shense's disappearance (pg. 317) and Perry's retort, "If your daughter was the missing girl, what resources would you use to find her? Why should his daughter get treated differently?"
3. How does Perry's thought "No respect for Black and brown bodies when we're breathing. No justice for the living or the dead." (pg. 313) resonate and reflect current social issues in the U.S. today?



WEEK TEN

1. How does Captain TJ Kewadin's description of the Marten Clan being protectors reflect the Perry's journey with and as The Warrior Girl?
 - a. What does this reveal about how Perry has grown throughout the summer?
2. Reflect on LeRoy's obsession to collect and observe Indigenous culture. How is this reflected by museums and researchers today?
 - a. What are the implications and impacts on society of this continued withholding of cultural artifacts and remains?
3. This novel provides an extended counter-story of history of and injustices waged against Indigenous communities and cultures. Discuss the notion of healing through bringing and coming home and the legacies of ancestors.
 - a. What do you infer about the significance and meaning for the relatives of these ancestors?
 - b. How does this connect to interactions and relationships within the tribe and accessibility to cultural knowledge?

EXTENSION WRITING & DISCUSSION PROMPTS

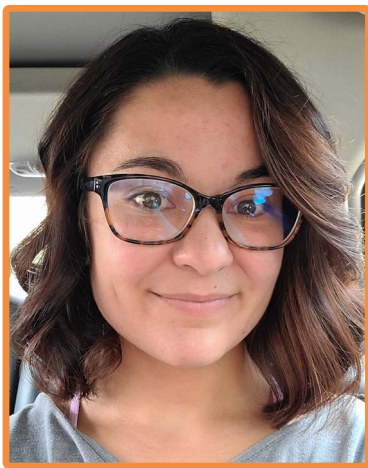
Set almost a decade before it was published, *Warrior Girl Unearthed* is reflective of the broader social attention from mainstream medias since the mid-2010s on matters of oppression, suppression, and discrimination against Indigenous communities. Consider the coverage of current events directly impacting Indigenous communities, such as rulings and decisions by the Supreme Court, representations through film, and news coverage on environmental and cultural stewardship.

1. How do these mainstream discussions compare to the narrative shared through Boulley's novel?
2. Who's perspectives and perceptions are elevated, and how does that impact the message dispersed to audiences?
3. What are the implications and consequences of certain voices being more valued over others, especially when concerning social issues such as systemic and institutional racism?
 - *Scaffolding: Consider providing specific examples of mainstream coverage for students to focus on. For example, resources on conflicts over pipeline construction on Native Lands, the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling*



to uphold the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), and the documentary Lakota Nation vs. United States (2022) can facilitate students synthesis of information.

4. Compare and contrast the paralleled conflicts of the novel; MMIWs and the processes around NAG-PRA and repatriation.
 - a. How are they reflective of one another? In what ways are they correlated?



Kit Robinson is an Indigenous woman and high school Language Arts teacher in Colorado. She is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in English Education, and is conducting research for her thesis on the impacts of trauma on teachers and their instruction. Kit is passionate about educational justice, and advocates for social change through her mentorship of emerging educators and fighting as a co-conspirator to address systemic and institutional racism that public education is permeated by.

