

# HERIZON



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

Notes for parents, grandparents, librarians, and teachers reading *Herizon* with children and students.



**SOUTH OF SUNRISE** CREATIVE

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*Herizon* is a wordless picture book with rich, colorful illustrations, memorable characters, and a powerful story that takes place on the Navajo Nation. Wordless books encourage children, youth, and adults to interpret each part of the story in a personal, individual way. When readers put their own words to the pictures they feel successful, happy, and enthusiastic about the story.

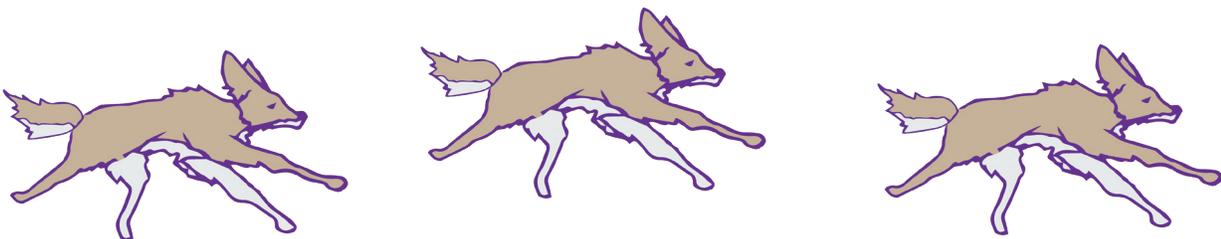
This can open dialogue and engage children and students to share experiences from their homes, their families, and their communities. It can also launch emergent readers into a love of books and reading, unlock their imaginations, and encourage the development of many reading comprehension skills that will benefit them as readers of books with text and not just pictures.

The use of wordless books allows children and students to share their own interpretations because there are no words and no biased language that could possibly interfere with the telling of each child's story. Teachers can get a glimpse into what the storyteller values, where they come from, what their family may be like, and how they interpret the world around them. This is how teachers meet students where they are and individualize instruction for each student, no matter what their prior experiences have been, or what their current abilities might be.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this discussion guide are to:

- 1. BUILD CONFIDENT, INDEPENDENT READERS** - Personal interpretation of pictures allows the storyteller to always be right. At first readers assign labels and words to pictures, building vocabulary and noticing characters, setting, problems, solutions, basic story structure, and theme. Later these skills transfer to books with text, helping readers decode unknown words using picture cues and context clues.
- 2. MAKE CULTURAL CONNECTIONS** - Readers and pre-readers of all ages can share knowledge of their culture, history, geography, family norms, and customs when they study the pictures in *Herizon*. They can then tell their own stories, rich in personal details from personal experiences.
- 3. BUILD BASIC LITERACY SKILLS** - Children and students have opportunities to practice listening, listening comprehension, speaking, storytelling, story retelling, building vocabulary, predicting, and inferring. Ultimately, this allows them to become competent, confident readers. *Herizon* lends itself to the development of both English and Navajo language vocabulary.
- 4. MASTER STORY ELEMENTS** - The story elements you will want to spend time on include Characters, Settings, Plot, Problems, Solutions; the Beginning, Middle and End of the Story; Story Theme; and having your readers make connections to self, to other texts, and to the world. Better understand *Herizon's* story elements by reviewing the questions on the next page.



## CHARACTERS

Main characters in the story include the girl, the grandma, the boys, and the animals. Subtle characters could be the scarf and some elements of the settings. Questions to ask about characters:

- Who are the characters? Do they remind you of anyone you know?
- What role does each character play in the story?
- What relationships do you recognize between characters?
- Can you tell what any characters are thinking? How do you know?
- Can you tell what any characters are feeling? How do you know?
- If they were speaking, what do you think they would be saying?
- Do any of the characters have goals? What goals do they have?
- How do or how will the characters achieve their goals?
- Do any of the characters make choices? Are they good choices? Bad choices?
- Could any of the characters have made different choices in this story? Like what?
- To which character do you relate the most? Why?
- Do you know anyone like the girl in this story? Who and why?
- Do you know anyone like the grandma in this story? Who and why?
- Do you know anyone like the boys under the tree? Who and why?
- Can you name the different animals in this story? What were their roles in the story?
- Do you think the scarf could be considered a character? Why or why not?

## SETTING

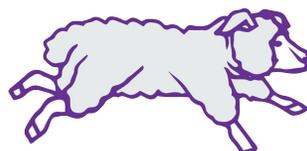
*Herizon* is a story that takes place in more than one setting. In fact, change in the setting helps the story develop and helps the plot evolve over time. Questions to ask about settings:

- What region or area is this story set in?
- In what season or time of year does this story take place? How do you know?
- Can you identify a culture in which this story is set?
- Do these settings help you feel the tone or the mood of the story?
- Can you tell what time of day it is? How do you know?
- Can you tell how much time passes from the beginning to the end of the story? How can you tell?
- Do the illustrations help you identify specific geographical locations?
- Does this look like your home? In what ways?
- Do these characters seem to fit, or to be at home in these settings?
- Would you fit, or feel at home in these settings?
- How can you tell when the author changes settings?
- Do you like the way the settings are drawn and colored by the illustrator? Why or why not?
- Do you want to know if any of these settings are real places?
- If you found out the settings were real places, would you want to visit them?

## PLOT

The plot consists of actions in stories that unfold in a predictable order and lead the reader to a satisfying outcome. Included in the plot are one or more Problems and their Solutions, with an identifiable Beginning, Middle, and End to the story. Parents, teachers, and librarians can determine if their children or students understand the elements of the plot when they ask them to tell the story they see in the pictures in their own words. Look for the identification of the problem or problems and the solution or solutions that students recognize. Once they tell, and even retell the story, you can ask them questions about what happened in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the story.

- If you wish to extend the reader's thinking about the story, you may ask them what might happen next? Ask them what they think might happen to the girl now? What might happen to the boys under the tree? How might the grandma treat any of the characters differently after today?
- Now it is time to make further connections. Ask them if they can relate to this story or to any one specific character and why? You are asking your child or student to make a **Text-to-Self Connection**. If they cannot relate to any of the characters, perhaps they can relate to the setting?
- Next you can help children make a **Text-to-Text Connection**. Choose one or more wordless books that seem to follow a similar theme as the one in *Herizon*. Follow the same routine with the new book as you did with *Herizon* and help the children find similarities between the two books.
- Finally, you can help children make a **Text-to-World Connection**. Revisit *Herizon* and ask students to make connections and find similarities between *Herizon*, its characters, setting, and plot and what they know about the world from their own personal experiences.



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## ADDITIONAL DIALOGUE



### RESPONSIBILITY

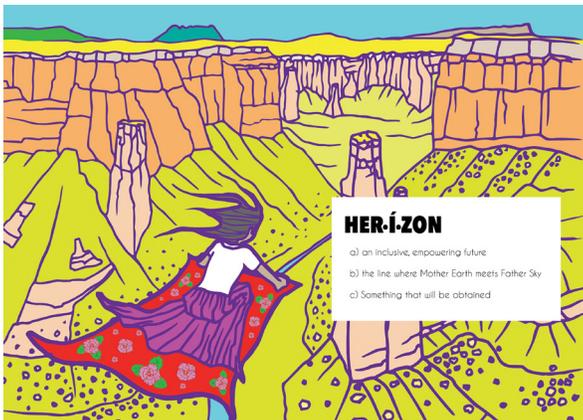
*Herizon* is a story in which each character has a responsibility. Before reading the book ask the following questions:

1. What is responsibility?
2. Is it important to be responsible? Why or why not?
3. What are your responsibilities at home?
4. What are your friend/family members' responsibilities?
5. How does being responsible feel?

Now read *Herizon*. When finished ask the questions below to assess comprehension:

1. What was each character's responsibility?
2. Who wasn't responsible? Why?
3. Whose responsibility changed in the story?  
How did it change?
4. Is being responsible easy? Why or why not?
5. How can you be more responsible?

### WORD PLAY



*Herizon* is a play on the word horizon. Each refers to the line where the earth meets the sky, but *Herizon* carries a more empowering meaning with "her" at the forefront. This slight alteration strengthens the word and gives it power. Rather than being something that might be obtained - as in exploring new horizons - it is a word of confidence. It is something that *will* be obtained.

Discuss word play and puns with your child or students. Give examples and ask students to come up with their own. Can word play be incorporated into *Herizon's* story? Develop a narrative for *Herizon* that involves puns and different forms of word play.

### WRITING

If your child or students are advanced enough to write, wordless picture books like *Herizon* are ideal for use as a writing prompt. Many students struggle with short, one sentence writing prompts. Using a wordless picture book gives a student more visual material about which they can write. Good storytellers become good writers. If they can tell the story of *Herizon*, they will probably be able to write the words to tell the story. They draw upon their own imaginations and their own prior personal experiences to write what they see, feel, and think.

**Have your child or students write a prequel to *Herizon*, or what happened before the story began.** Once the prequel is complete, have them change or expand the ending of the story to fit their narrative. Encourage the writer to add dialogue to bring the characters to life. The illustrations in *Herizon* should help writers with word choices and descriptive language. More advanced writers should be able to extend the story by focusing on one character and writing their back story, or an original future story for the character that would take place after the story *Herizon* ends. The creative possibilities are endless.