



The Legend of the Bluebonnet

by Tomie DePaola

Teacher's Guide

Written By Kathy Sammis



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Synopsis

In this solemn, simply told story, Tomie dePaola retells a Comanche legend that explains the origin of the bluebonnet, a wild lupine that is the state flower of Texas and that blankets portions of the state in a sea of blue in the springtime. As the story begins, the People call on the Great Spirits to end the drought that has been killing them and their land. We see a line of subdued dancers under a stark sun, the land brown, a tree leafless, the dry white sky dominating the landscape. Watching the dancers is a young girl, She-Who-Is-Alone, holding her much-loved warrior doll. The doll is her cherished (and only) possession, made for her by her parents, who died in the drought-induced famine.

The People have asked the Great Spirits to let them know what they have done to anger the Spirits and what they must do so the Spirits will send them rain. Now the shaman returns from a nearby hill with the Great Spirits' answer. The People have been selfish, taking from the Earth for years without returning anything. They must make a burnt offering of the most valued possession among them and scatter its ashes to the winds. Then the rain will return. The people receive this message somberly and retire to their tipis to reluctantly mull it over.

She-Who-Is-Alone, however, knows what possession the Great Spirits want: "You," she says looking at her warrior doll, cradled in her arms. That night, she creeps out of the tipi where she sleeps and runs to the hill where the Great Spirits spoke to the shaman. Two poignant, close-up illustrations show She-Who-Is-Alone, illuminated by

an orange-red fire and framed by a cobalt blue night sky, holding out her warrior doll as she verbally offers it to the Great Spirits and then thrusting the doll in- to the flames as she thinks of her lost family. When the fire dies out, She-Who-Is-Alone scatters the doll's ashes to the four winds and then falls asleep on the hill. When she awakens the next morning, the hilltop is covered with beautiful blue flowers, a sure sign of forgiveness from the Great Spirits. As the People dance their thanks, a warm rain begins to fall, and the once- brown hills turn green. From that day on, the little girl is known by her new name—One-Who-Dearly-Loved-Her-People. And every spring since then, the Great Spirits remember the little girl's sacrifice by filling the hills and valleys of the land now called Texas with the beautiful blue flowers.

An Author's Note at the end of the book gives readers some information about the bluebonnet and tells how and why the author retold this legend.



Timeline

Several years ago	The drought began, followed by famine.
During the drought	The little girl's grandparents died, and then her parents.
Present time	The People dance for three days, asking the Great Spirits to tell them what they must do to have the drought end.
Evening of the third day	The shaman delivers the Great Spirits' message about sacrificing the most valued possession.
That night	She-Who-Is-Alone sacrifices her warrior doll and scatters its ashes.

Next morning

The hills are blanketed in blue bonnet flowers, the rains come, and the little girl earns her new name.

Ever since then

The bluebonnets bloom in Texas every spring.

Author Sketch

Tomie dePaola (pronounced *tommy de-POW-la*) is one of the most popular and most prolific creators of books for young and middle-grade readers. He is the author/illustrator and illustrator of more than two hundred books, as well as a professional artist, an art teacher, a designer, and children's theater professional. His self-illustrated books include autobiographical picture books, stories, and chapter books; retellings and variants of legends, folktales, and fairy tales, some drawn from religious and Native American sources; informational books that blend fiction and fact laced with humor; fantasies featuring animals; anthologies; and board, pop-up, and wordless books.



DePaola was born in Meriden, Connecticut, in 1934. One of four siblings, he grew up in a lively, loving Italian-Irish and Roman Catholic family, a background that is reflected in many of his books. He absorbed a love of books from his mother at a very early age, and his artistic talent also quickly became apparent. At the age of four, he accurately announced that he was going to grow up to write and draw children's books. Always involved in artistic and theatrical activities during his school years, dePaola earned his Bachelor's of Fine Arts from the Pratt Institute in New York City in 1956, after which he spent six months in a Benedictine monastery in Vermont. He then free-lanced in a variety of artistic endeavors, was married briefly, and moved back to New York, where he continued free-lancing and also taught college art. In 1964, he illustrated his first children's book, *Sound*, and acquired an agent. His writing/illustrating career soon soared.

In 1967, dePaola moved to San Francisco, where he taught at Lone Mountain College and earned his Master's of Fine Arts from the California College of Arts and Crafts (1969) and a doctoral equivalency at Lone Mountain (1970). In 1971, he moved back East, to New Hampshire, where he continues to live, in the small town of New London. There, he continues to write and illustrate children's books while also teaching art and

becoming deeply involved in children's theater. His home, where he loves to entertain visitors, is full of artwork and folk art, and his large barn serves as his "dream studio." DePaola frequently travels, speaking to audiences of his readers, who are enchanted with this ebullient, warm, humorous creator of some of their favorite literary treasures.

Critics' Corner

Critics and children respond enthusiastically to Tomie dePaola's characteristic humor, empathy, and obvious affection for his audience. DePaola's recognizable art style springs from his attraction to Romanesque and folk art. His illustrations emphasize line and outline, solid figures, strong design, stage-like settings, and folk-art stylization, usually executed with ink/pencil lines filled in with watercolor and additional inks. DePaola's work has been exhibited in many shows and has won many awards, including a Caldecott Honor for *Strega Nona*. While many of dePaola's books are light-hearted, he also has treated serious subjects deftly, as in *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs*, about the bond between the young Tomie and his grandmothers, and his reaction to their deaths. His other autobiographical stories are warm and also humorous, and dePaola began a well-received chapter-book series about his childhood with *26 Fairmount Avenue*. His anthologies are greatly admired; critics call his *Mother Goose* a "classic." Perhaps readers' favorite dePaola characters are *Strega Nona*, the Grandmother Witch, and her hapless helper, Big Anthony, whose mishaps in their long-ago Italian village delight readers.

In reviewing *The Legend of the Bluebonnet*, critics cited the effective match of text and artwork, "grave prose that is appropriate for the dignity of the tale" (*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*). *Publishers Weekly* admired dePaola's "incomparable paintings in lovely hues and beguiling details." *Book World* noted that dePaola's "balanced hand allowed him to use many of the brilliant hues of the region without interfering with the somber tone of the tale." *School Library Journal* added that "the concept of an unselfish parting with a prized possession is one to which children will readily relate." *The Junior Bookshelf* concluded, "The text is masterly in its directness and brevity, the pictures exquisitely drawn, gravely formal—as befits the theme—and richly atmospheric. This quiet book approaches perfection."

Selected Works by Tomie dePaola

Author/Illustrator

(AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL)

Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs (1973, republished with new full-color illustrations, 1998)
Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Your Soup (1974)
Oliver Button Is a Sissy (1979)
Now One Foot, Now the Other (1981)
The Art Lesson (1989)
Tom (1993)
The Baby Sister (1996)
26 Fairmount Avenue: A Chapter Book (1999)
Here We All Are (chapter book, 2000)
On My Way (chapter book, 2001)

(OTHER)

The Wonderful Dragon of Timlin (1966)
Andy, That's My Name (1973)
Charlie Needs a Cloak (1973)
Strega Nona (1975, and sequels)
The Cloud Book (1975)
When Everyone Was Fast Asleep (1976)
Helga's Dowry: A Troll Love Story (1977)
The Quicksand Book (1977)
The Clown of God: An Old Story (1978)
Bill and Pete (1978, and sequels)
Pancakes for Breakfast (1978)
The Popcorn Book (1978)
The Knight and the Dragon (1980)
The Lady of Guadalupe (1980)
The Legend of Old Befana (1980)
The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog (1981)
Fin M'Coul, the Giant of Knockmany Hill (1981)
Francis, the Poor Man of Assisi (1982)
Giorgio's Village: A Pop-up Book (1982)
The Legend of the Bluebonnet (1983)
Marianna May and Nursey (1983)
The Story of the Three Wise Kings (1983)
The Mysterious Giant of Barletta (1984)
Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose (1985)
Kitten Kids series (1986 and later)
Tomie dePaola's Favorite Nursery Tales (1986)
Tomie dePaola's Book of Christmas Carols (1987)
The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush (1988)
Haircuts for the Woolseys (1989)
Tomie dePaola's Book of Bible Stories (1990)
Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato (1992, and sequels)
The Legend of the Poinsettia (1994)
Days of the Blackbird (1997)
Meet the Barkers: Morgan and Moffat Go to School (2001)

Illustrator

Sound, by Lisa Miller (1965)
The Morning Glory, by Robert Bly (1969)
Hold Everything, by Sam and Beryl Epstein (1973, and other Epstein titles)
This Is the Ambulance Leaving the Zoo, by Norma Farber (1975)
Can't You Make Them Behave, King George? by Jean Fritz (1977, and other Fritz titles)
Once Upon a Dinkelsbuehl, by Patricia Lee Gauch (1977)
The Giants' Farm, by Jane Yolen (1977, and other Yolen titles)
Four Scary Stories, by Tony Johnston (1978, and other Johnston titles)
The Cat on the Dovrefell: A Christmas Tale, by George Webbe Dasent, trans. (1979)
Moon, Stars, Frogs, and Friends, by Patricia MacLachlan (1980)
The Night Before Christmas, by Clement Clarke Moore (1980)
The Wuggie Norple Story, by Daniel M. Pinkwater (1980)
Mary Had a Little Lamb, by Sarah Josepha Hale (1984)
The Mountains of Quilt, by Nancy Willard (1987)

Bibliography

Abrahamson, Richard F., and Marilyn Colvin, "Tomie dePaola: Children's Choice," *Reading Teacher*, December 1979, pp. 164-69.
Andersen, Dennis, "Tomie dePaola: Tough and Tender Storyteller" (interview), *Instructor*, March 1980, pp. 32-38.
Berg, Julie. *Tomie dePaola*. Edina, Minn.: Abdo & Daughters, 1993.
Berger, Laura Standley, ed. *Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*, 4th ed. Detroit: St. James Press, 1995.
Booklist, June 1, 1983, pp. 1273-74.
Book World, May 8, 1983, p. 21.
Boyson, Phyllis, "Interview with Tomie dePaola," *The New Era*, May-June 1981, pp. 76-80.
The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, July 1983, p. 208.
Children's Literature Review, Vol. 24. Detroit: Gale, 1991.
Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Vol. 37. Detroit: Gale, 1992.
dePaola, Tomie, "Involved with Dreams," *Books for Your Children*, Summer 1980, pp. 2-3.
Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 61. Detroit: Gale, 1987.
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_____. *Tomie dePaola: His Art & His Stories*. NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1999.

Hepler, Susan Ingrid, "Profile: Tomie dePaola: A Gift to Children," *Language Arts*, March 1979, pp. 296-301.
Holtze, Sally Holmes, ed. *Fifth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators*. NY: H.W. Wilson, 1983.
Horn Book, August 1983, p. 430.
Interracial Books for Children, 1984, pp. 17-18.
The Junior Bookshelf, October 1983, p. 197.
Lodge, Sally, "Tomie dePaola Mines His Childhood Memories," *Publishers Weekly*, March 15, 1999, p. 26.
Publishers Weekly, April 8, 1983, p. 59.
School Library Journal, September 1983, p. 104.
Silvey, Anita, ed. *Children's Books and Their Creators*. Boston/NY: Houghton Muffin, 1995.
Something about the Author, Vol. 108. Detroit: Gale, 2000.
Something about the Author Autobiography Series, Vol. 15. Detroit: Gale, 1993.

Internet

"The Official Website of Tomie dePaola," <www.tomie.com>
"Tomie dePaola biography," <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomie_dePaola>
"DePaola's Wonderful World," <<http://www.csmonitor.com/1997/0826/082697.home.home.1.html>>

General Objectives

1. To use discussion questions to recall details, interpret characters and events, read or listen critically, and respond creatively to the story and its illustrations
2. To expand vocabulary through context clues and word study
3. To expand responses to the book by completing a variety of related activities, some in other areas of the curriculum
4. To exercise artistic, craft, and dramatic skills to help interpret reading

Specific Objectives

1. To understand specific terms relating to Plains Indian life used in the story
2. To comprehend She-Who-Is-Alone's family background and why the girl so cherishes her warrior doll
3. To understand the message from the Great Spirits, why it compels She-Who-Is-Alone to bum her warrior doll, and the results of that action
4. To recognize the meaning of both of the girl's names
5. To identify elements of the landscape as expressed in the book's illustrations
6. To identify characteristics of the People as shown in

the book's illustrations

7. To name elements of the author's artistic style displayed in this book
8. To recognize characteristics and emotions of She-Who-Is-Alone as shown by her facial expressions

The Importance of Setting

The story is set in the Comanche homeland, among the hills of Texas. A years-long drought has withered the land, as emphasized by the brown-yellow hues of the illustrations, the huge yellow sun in the stark-white sky, and the absence of vegetation on tree or ground. The cluster of earth-tone tipis, with only a few muted lines of colored decoration, seems forlorn in the barren landscape. The people of the village, too, are muted, with somber expressions and earth-colored clothing; only the shaman wears a bright robe. As evening descends with word from the Great Spirits, the sky begins to take on color and warmth, and the tipis begin to take on warmer colors as well.

In the night scenes, She-Who-Is-Alone steals out of the village and runs up to the nearby hill; these scenes are dramatic, with the girl beautifully illuminated by the orange-red fire stick she carries and the fire she builds, her figure standing out clearly against the vivid cobalt blue sky studded with stars. When the girl wakes up on the hill the next morning, the setting is transformed—the hill-top is covered with beautiful blue flowers; its sides are green. As the rains come, the landscape begins to transform from the brown-yellow earth tones to the soft green of new vegetation. The final scene shows a landscape of gentle hills whose green grass is interrupted by blankets of lovely blue flowers.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Native American Folklore

Olaf Baker, *Where the Buffaloes Begin*
Joseph Bruchac, *Native Plant Stories*
Carol L. Cohen, *The Mud Pony*
Tomie dePaola, *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush*
Paul Goble, *The Gift of the Sacred Dog* and *The Return of the Buffaloes*
Antonio Hernandez, *Erandi's Braids*
Edward Leavitt and Robert E. McDowell, *Nihancan's Feast of Beaver: Animal Tales of the North American Indians*
Chief Lelooska, *Echoes of the Elders*
Ekkehart Malotki, *The Magic Hummingbird*
Chief Jake Swamp, *Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message*
Nancy Van Laan, *Buffalo Dance: A Blackfoot Legend* and

In a Circle Long Ago: A Treasury of Native Lore from North America

Books About Native Americans

Cary Ashrose, *The Very First Americans*
Russell Freedman, *Buffalo Hunt*
Albert Marrin, *Plains Warrior: Chief Quannah Parker and the Comanches*
Martin Mooney, *The Comanche Indians*
Rollings, Willard H., *The Comanche*
William R. Sanford, *Quannah Parker: Comanche Warrior*
Sally Sheppard, *Indians of the Plains*
True Book series about Native Americans (Children's Press)
M.J. Wheeler, *First Came the Indians*

Books about Buffalo

Emilie U. Lepthien, *Buffalo*
Tiffany Midge, *Buffalo*

Books about Flowers

Karen Bryant-Mole, *Flowers*
Flowers (First Discovery Series)
Allan Fowler, *What's Your Favorite Flower?*

Books about Texas

Dennis B. Fradin, *Texas (From Sea to Shining Sea Series)*
Ann Heinrichs, *Texas (America the Beautiful Series)*
Robyn Montana Turner, *Texas Traditions: The Culture of the Lone Star State*

CD-ROM

Blue's Reading Time Activities and Blue's Treasure Hunt (Humongus Entertainment)
500 Nations (Microsoft)
Jumpstart Artist (Knowledge Adventure)
Jumpstart Reading series (Knowledge Adventure)
Learn About Life Science: Plants (Sunburst)
Native Americans: Peoples of the Plains (Rainbow Educational Media)
Reading Blaster: Ages 4-6 and Reading Blaster: Ages 5-7 (Knowledge Adventure)
The Storyteller (Star Express)

Internet

"Tomie dePaola Writes of Family and Faith," <http://kids-point.org/columns2.asp?column_id=607&column_type=author>
"The Legend of the Bluebonnet" (comments by fourth-grade students):
<www.ed.un.edu/GilbeftS.Thluebw.html>
"The Legend of the Bluebonnet: Vocabulary Games":

<www.quia.com/jg/81985.html>
"Tomie dePaola Biography," <<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/contributor.jsp?id=3126>>
"Tomie de Paola Teacher Resource File," <falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/depaola.htm>
"Tomie dePaola Resources," <www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/depaola.html>
"Author study: Tomie dePaola," <www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00001182.shtml>
"Settlements in North America: Native American Shelters," <www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/settlements/regions/plains.html>
"Texas Hill Country Wildflower Drawings" (a drawing of a Texas bluebonnet to print out and color):
<www.nps.gov/plants/color/txhill/5.htm>
"The Texas State Flower: Bluebonnet":
<www.lsjunction.com/flower.htm>
"Collaborative Thematic Unit—Native Americans":
<www.shambles.net/pages/learning/primary/american/>
"Native American Thematic Unit,"
<<http://ted.coe.wayne.edu/sse/units/native.htm>>
"Lone Star Junction": <www.lsjunction.com/>
"Native American Indian Resources":
<www.kstrom.net/isk/mainmenu.html#mainmenutop>
"Native Tech: Native American Technology and Art":
<www.nativetech.org/>

Video/DVD

Clouds: Nature's Sprinklers (Storyline Pictures/Film Ideas)
Clouds, Weather and Life (Centre Prods./AGC-United Learning)
The Importance of Water (Educational Video)
The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush (Great Plains National Institute)
Native American Folktales (Colman Communications/Rainbow Educational Media)
Plant Life for Children (Stone House Prods./New York Botanical Garden)
Plants: A First Look (Cochran Communications/Rainbow Educational Media)
The Storyteller (Cinema Guild)
Student Workshop: Responsible Me (Sunburst)
The Third Ear: Native American Tales
Weather: A First Look (Cochran Communications/Rainbow Educational Media)

Tomie dePaola Videos

The Tomie dePaola Library (four stories, Weston Woods/Scholastic)
Tomie dePaola Live in Concert (Seapoint)

Productions/Whitebird)
A Visit with Tomie dePaola (Red Eft Productions/
Whitebird)

Themes and Motifs

In discussing the book, help students understand that the story deals with these main issues and situations.

Themes

- sacrifice
- personal loss and grief
- selfishness
- community spirit
- courage
- religious belief

Motifs

- warrior doll
- drought and famine
- Comanche culture
- bluebonnet
- night sky
- fire

Meaning Study

Discuss with students the meaning of the boldfaced words from the story in the following sentences.

1. *The Legend of the Bluebonnet*

(A legend is a story passed down through the years that is not entirely true or fact-based yet is believed by many people. Legends are parts of most cultures and frequently explain the origins of natural phenomena or express something about a culture's religious beliefs. The legend that this book retells is a Comanche explanation of the blooming of the bluebonnet each spring in Texas. As the author explains in his note, the bluebonnet is a form of wild lupine known by several other names.)

2. "Great Spirits, the land is dying."

(The Great Spirits are the forces that the Comanche People pray to, that have power over their earthly home and their lives. As the author explains in his note, he uses the term "Great Spirits" to collectively refer to all the spirits the Comanches pray to.)

3. "End this drought."

(A drought is a prolonged period of time when very little or no rain falls. The People in the book have suf-

fered through several years of drought, during which She-Who-Is-Alone's parents have died, along with many other members of the group.)

4. the People called Comanche

(The Comanche dominated a large portion of the southern Plains for nearly 200 years, an area that includes present-day central and west Texas, eastern New Mexico, southeastern Colorado, southwestern Kansas, and western Oklahoma. The Comanche in the past had no written language; they passed on their history orally to new generations. They referred to themselves as the Real People; the Spanish called them Comanche, from a Ute word for them.)

5. In her lap was a doll made from buckskin—a warrior doll. ... It wore beaded leggings.

(Buckskin is a strong, soft, yellowish-brown leather made from the skins of deer. Many Native Americans made their clothing out of buckskin. She-Who-Is-Alone's doll is a figure of a warrior—a male of the tribal group who would fight in battles against enemies. The doll also wears leggings—leather leg coverings—decorated with beadwork.)

6. "Soon the shaman will go off alone to the top of the hill."

(A shaman is a person who acts as both priest and doctor working with the supernatural, invoking and communicating with the spirits. The People's shaman will soon return with the Great Spirits' answers to the People's prayers.)

7. It seemed long ago that they had died from the famine.

(A famine is an extreme lack of food in an area; it may kill many people. The People of this book have suffered through several years of famine, which has killed the girl's parents and others of the People as well.)

8. "The Great Spirits say the People must sacrifice. We must make a burnt offering of the most valued possession among us."

(A sacrifice is a ceremony of offering something to a deity as a form of worship. In this case, the Great Spirits say the People must burn the most valued possession—something owned by one of the People—among them as their offering to the Spirits, and then scatter the ashes of this offering to the winds. Note that the sacrifice cannot be just any valuable item; it must be the possession valued more

by its owner than any other possessions are valued by their owners.)

9. Everyone went to their tipis.
(The tipi, or teepee, was the form of shelter commonly used by nomadic Plains Indians. It is a cone-shaped structure made of animal skins stretched over tall poles, entered through a flap.)

Comprehension Study

Discuss the following questions with your students. You could ask students in higher grades to write their answers to the questions in their own words.

1. Look at the pictures in the book, without reading the story. Write or tell a few sentences about one or more of the pictures. Describe 1) what the person or people in the picture is/are feeling or doing at that moment, 2) what is happening in the picture, and 3) what is important in this particular picture. As you read or listen to the story, see if what you wrote or told about the picture(s) was accurate.
 2. Look at the cover picture of the girl. What character traits do you think this picture expresses? What does the picture tell you about the girl's way of life?
(Answers will vary. The picture suggests strength, a willingness to confront things head-on and independently, a certain seriousness, and an attachment to the warrior doll. She is clearly Native American, a member of a nomadic hunting group that follows the buffalo—as shown by the tipis—in a hilly, somewhat bare landscape.)
 3. What happened to She-Who-Is-Alone's parents and grandparents?
(They all died from the famine, so long ago that the girl never knew her grandparents and remembers her parents only from "distant days" in her past.)
 4. Why is the warrior doll so very special to She-Who-Is-Alone?
(It is her only possession, made by her mother and adorned with blue feathers brought by her father. It is the only thing left from the girl's life with her family; it is her only tangible link with them.)
 5. Why does She-Who-Is-Alone burn her cherished doll? What is the result of that action?
(The shaman reports that the Great Spirits say the
- People must make a burnt offering of the most valued possession among the People. She-Who-Is-Alone immediately realizes that her warrior doll is this most valued possession that the Great Spirits want as an offering. So, for love of her departed family and of her living People, the girl bravely burns her doll. The result is as the Great Spirits promised—the drought ends as the rains come, and bluebonnets cover the hilltops.)*
6. Why do the People give She-Who-Is-Alone a new name?
(The People give the girl a new name that recognizes and honors—in a culture that supremely honors personal sacrifice for the good of the community—her selfless offering of the cherished doll: One-Who-Dearly-Loved-Her-People.)
 7. Describe the land of the People as shown in the first several illustrations of the book.
(The gently hilly land is dry, brown, and barren, with no signs of vegetation. The sun is huge in the sky, beating down on the sad, somber People. The sky is vast and bleached of color by the heat and dryness.)
 8. Describe how the sky changes from the time the shaman comes down from the hill until She-Who-Is-Alone makes the burnt offering.
(While the shaman addresses the People, the sky begins to show the colors of early evening, a soft pinkish-orange. As the People turn toward their tipis a bit later the sky glows with the colors of late twilight, a warm pink-lavender topped by the fresh blue of early night, with the first evening stars showing. When She-Who-Is-Alone goes up to the hill, it is full nighttime; the sky is a bright, deep blue filled with sparkling white stars.)
 9. What sense do you get about the People from the illustrations?
(They are solemn and subdued, beaten down in spirit by the years of drought and famine and the many deaths these conditions have caused. They have a strong feeling of community and shared religious beliefs, praying and dancing together. They respect their shaman and listen attentively to the words he brings from the Great Spirits.)
 10. What reactions do the People have to the message from the Great Spirits as delivered by the shaman? Describe reactions shown both by illustrations and by text.

(The People are solemn and attentive when the shaman delivers the message to them. Afterward, some of the People sing a respectful song of thanks to the Great Spirits. However the People seem reluctant to give up any cherished possession. One man doesn't want to give up his bow, a woman doesn't want to part with her red blanket, and other people discuss and think about the message rather than immediately acting upon it, as She-Who-Is-Alone does.)

11. What adjectives would you use to describe this story?
(Answers will vary. Critics have called it moving, somber, simple, beautiful, dramatic, solemn, grave, reverent, emotional, sincere, direct.)
12. How would you describe the author's artistic style?
(Answers will vary. He uses folk motifs, flat figures, stylized elements, warm and rich colors, uncluttered design, and stage-like settings, all with a strong emphasis on line.)
13. How would you describe the expression on the girl's face on the page that begins, "Soon ..."? On the page that shows her thrusting her warrior doll into the flames? In the scene with the bluebonnet flower?
(In the scene with her warrior doll, a haunting sadness flows from her eyes and the sad set of her mouth, as she remembers her dead parents and grandparents. In the fire scene, she looks soulfully sad but determined. In the bluebonnet scene, she seems reverent and awed.)

Across the Curriculum

Art

1. Tomie dePaola has said that his artistic style is greatly influenced by Romanesque art and, especially, the artworks of Fra Angelico, Giotto, and Botticelli. Look at examples of these works of art and talk about what elements of dePaola's art style you see in them.
2. Create a class display of various examples of folk art from one particular culture. Point out typical elements of this folk art.
3. Create a class display of images of traditional Comanche artistic artifacts. Explain what elements of Comanche art and culture appear in *The Legend of the Bluebonnet*.

History and Social Studies

1. On a map of the United States, locate the areas of the southern Plains controlled by the Comanche before they were pushed out by white settlers. Then locate areas where groups of Comanches live today.
2. Research and report on the traditional Plains Comanche way of life before it was disrupted by white people. Include details about things such as shelter, food, clothing, and spiritual beliefs. Explain why rain was important to Plains Indians.
3. Find out about Native Americans who currently live, or lived in the past, in the area where you live.
4. In poster or model form, show how a tipi is constructed and the living arrangements within the tipi. Explain why this was/is an excellent shelter for Plains Indians.
5. On a map of Texas, show the state's different geographical areas and features and its natural resources.

Language Arts

1. Read or listen to other Tomie dePaola books. What common elements do you find among the books? Which are your favorites?
2. Write an original "legend" that explains the origin of some natural thing, such as "Why the cat has a long tail" or "Why the daisy is white."
3. Discuss with classmates other books you have read with a theme of sacrificing, or giving up, a valuable possession. What was the outcome of each sacrifice?
4. Read or listen to other legends about Native American children. Discuss the role children played in Indian life.

Science

1. Find some star constellations in the night sky, and tell the story of one of them.
2. Explain why we don't see the moon and stars in the sky during the day.
3. Demonstrate how to use a compass to find north, south, east, and west.

4. Create an illustrated entry for a wildflower field guide about the Texas bluebonnet. Be sure to include information on Latin and other common names, habitat and range, and characteristics.
5. With classmates, find out why animals and plants need lots of water to survive. Explain and draw the rain cycle.
6. With classmates, create a report on drought—its causes, its effects, ways to cope with it, and places in the world currently experiencing drought.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Tell about a time when you had to give up a prized possession to someone else. How did you feel about this, before and after? Share stories with classmates.
2. Give yourself a Native American-style name, one that describes a particular quality of yours or something that you do well, such as “She-Who-Runs-Fast” or “He-Who-Laugh-Loud.” Can classmates guess to whom each name belongs?
3. Bring in to class some wild lupine flowers and compare them with pictures of bluebonnets, if bluebonnets do not grow where you live.
4. Find out what kinds of resources are available in your area in case of a natural disaster, like a drought or a flood. If your community needed help, what help would be available?
5. List or draw a picture of two of your most prized possessions. Explain why each one is so special to you. Under what circumstances would you be willing to give these away? How would your life be different without these possessions?
6. Retell a story you have read or heard to a group of younger children. Practice first, and try to be lively and entertaining in your storytelling.
7. In the book, the Great Spirits say that for years, the People have taken from the earth without giving anything back. With classmates, identify things we take and use from nature, and talk about ways we could “give back” for taking each specific thing.

Alternate Assessment

1. Write a physical and character description of She-Who-Is-Alone.
2. Explain in what ways you think the artwork and the story are (or are not) in harmony with one another.
3. Explain why there is a drought in the story, how it has affected the People, what the shaman says the People must do about this and why, and how the small girl saves her people.
4. Explain what the story expresses about selfishness and personal sacrifice

Vocabulary Test

Read each sentence. Below the sentence, find the answer that could be used in place of the word in boldface (dark) type. Write the letter of the answer in the blank in front of the sentence.

_____ 1. Even though the hard winter was over, no **healing** rains came.

- (a) beating down
- (b) making sick
- (c) making well

_____ 2. On the doll's head were **brilliant** blue feathers.

- (a) very bright
- (b) scratchy
- (c) dull

_____ 3. The doll was the only thing she had left from those **distant** days.

- (a) nearby
- (b) far away
- (c) forgotten

_____ 4. "The People have become **selfish**."

- (a) helping others
- (b) silly
- (c) thinking only of themselves

_____ 5. She started a fire with the **glowing** firestick.

- (a) bubbling
- (b) shining
- (c) crashing

_____ 6. She-Who-Is-Alone **scattered** the ashes to the Home of the Winds.

- (a) spread or thrown about here and there
- (b) put all in one spot
- (c) chopped up

_____ 7. The ground was covered with flowers—**beautiful** flowers.

- (a) very lovely to look at
- (b) full of blueness
- (c) drooping

_____ 8. From that day on, the little girl was known by another name—"One-Who-**Dearly**-Loved-Her-People."

- (a) very little
- (b) strangely
- (c) very much

_____ 9. In her lap was a doll made from **buckskin**—a warrior doll.

- (a) the skin of a snake
- (b) leather made from the skin of a deer
- (c) the shell of a nut

_____ 10. It seemed long ago that they had died from the **famine**.

- (a) lack of food
- (b) too much water
- (c) illness

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (10 points)

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| _____ 1. The only person in the tribe who wears a colorful robe. | a. She-Who-Is-Alone |
| _____ 2. "Person" who burns up in a fire. | b. Great Spirits |
| _____ 3. Girl who knows exactly what the Great Spirits want. | c. warrior doll |
| _____ 4. Name for those who live in the tipi village. | d. shaman |
| _____ 5. Name for those who control the drought. | e. the People |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you chose in the space in front of each sentence.

- _____ 1. The bluebonnet is a
(a) hat. (b) flower. (c) bird.
- _____ 2. In a drought, the earth has almost no
(a) rain. (b) sunshine. (c) heat.
- _____ 3. The People wrap themselves in
(a) buffalo hides. (b) feathers. (c) blankets.
- _____ 4. She-Who-Is-Alone's doll wears these on its head:
(a) beaded leggings. (b) blue feathers. (c) moccasins.
- _____ 5. The person who hears the words of the Great Spirits is
(a) the girl's mother. (b) the shaman. (c) She-Who-Is-Alone.
- _____ 6. The Great Spirits say that the People have been
(a) selfish. (b) cowardly. (c) mean to the children.
- _____ 7. When she creeps alone out of the tipi and into the night, the girl brings along
(a) a magic charm. (b) her father's vest. (c) a firestick.
- _____ 8. This story is set in the U.S. state of
(a) Colorado. (b) Texas. (c) Oklahoma.
- _____ 9. The People realize the blue flowers are a sign from the Great Spirits of
(a) forgiveness. (b) anger. (c) sadness.
- _____ 10. The drought ends when this begins to fall:
(a) hail. (b) snow. (c) rain.

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark each sentence with a **T** if it is true or an **F** if any part of it is false.

- _____ 1. The author of this book also painted the book's pictures.
- _____ 2. She-Who-Is-Alone lives with her grandparents.
- _____ 3. The drought is killing people.
- _____ 4. The Native Americans featured in this retold legend are the Apaches.
- _____ 5. In most of this book's pictures, the land is green and blue.
- _____ 6. She-Who-Is-Alone's parents seem like shadows to the girl.
- _____ 7. The People's most valued possession is their sacred white buffalo robe.
- _____ 8. The People contact the Great Spirits through prayer, music, and dance.
- _____ 9. The Great Spirits appear to be very pleased with She-Who-Is-Alone's offering.
- _____ 10. The People are eager to give up their most valued possessions.

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Write or tell your answer to one of these questions to get extra points on your test.

1. What do the names She-Who-Is-Alone and One-Who-Dearly-Loved-Her-People say about the story's heroine?
2. How does the artwork add to the words of the story?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (10 points)

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| _____ 1. "Person" who wears beaded leggings and jay feathers. | a. She-Who-Is-Alone |
| _____ 2. People who have died. | b. shaman |
| _____ 3. Person who is one of the few children left alive. | c. the People |
| _____ 4. Those who pray and dance. | d. warrior doll |
| _____ 5. Person who delivers a message from the Great Spirits. | e. girl's parents |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you chose in the space in front of each sentence.

- _____ 1. A legend is a(n)
(a) spirit being. (b) Plains plant. (c) often-told story.
- _____ 2. The People pray to the Great Spirits for
(a) rain. (b) wheat. (c) children.
- _____ 3. She-Who-Is-Alone's doll wears
(a) a buffalo robe. (b) beaded leggings. (c) a shawl with a fringe.
- _____ 4. The girl's only possession is a
(a) red blanket. (b) doll. (c) medicine ball.
- _____ 5. The People live in
(a) tipis. (b) longhouses. (c) dugouts.
- _____ 6. The Great Spirits call for a
(a) human sacrifice. (b) special song. (c) burnt offering.
- _____ 7. She-Who-Is-Alone offers the Great Spirits her
(a) long hair. (b) warrior doll. (c) fur robe.
- _____ 8. She-Who-Is-Alone scatters these items to the four winds:
(a) beads. (b) flower petals. (c) ashes.
- _____ 9. When She-Who-Is-Alone wakes up, she sees the hilltop covered with
(a) blue flowers. (b) green vines. (c) wild rice.
- _____ 10. The young girl's new name is "One-Who-Dearly-Loved-Her-Doll."
(a) Doll." (b) People." (c) Horses."

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark each sentence with a T if it is true or an F if any part of it is false.

- _____ 1. The People desperately need rain.
- _____ 2. The Native Americans featured in this retold legend are the Comanche.
- _____ 3. The young girl's parents died just a little while ago.
- _____ 4. She-Who-Is-Alone's most valued possession is her warrior doll.
- _____ 5. The shaman tells She-Who-Is-Alone that she must make the sacrifice.
- _____ 6. The shaman announces that the Great Spirits want a burnt offering.
- _____ 7. The People watch as She-Who-Is-Alone makes her offering.
- _____ 8. On the night of She-Who-Is-Alone's offering, the sky is full of clouds.
- _____ 9. Wherever the ashes have fallen, blue flowers grow overnight.
- _____ 10. The blue flowers bloom for only one year after the little girl's sacrifice.

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Write or tell your answer to one of these questions to get extra points on your test.

1. Why does the young girl's offering of her doll have so much meaning?
2. Why has the life of the people been so difficult for the past few years? Why does this change?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. a |
| 2. a | 7. a |
| 3. b | 8. c |
| 4. c | 9. b |
| 5. b | 10. a |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. d | 4. e |
| 2. c | 5. b |
| 3. a | |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. a |
| 2. a | 7. c |
| 3. c | 8. b |
| 4. b | 9. a |
| 5. b | 10. c |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. T |
| 4. F | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. F |

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. d | 4. c |
| 2. e | 5. b |
| 3. a | |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

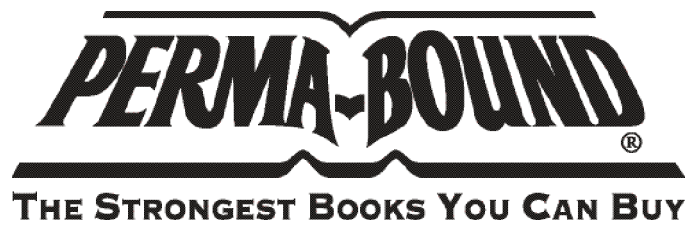
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. c |
| 2. a | 7. b |
| 3. b | 8. c |
| 4. b | 9. a |
| 5. a | 10. b |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. F |

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Answers will vary.



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