

# QALUPALIK

Duration: 5 min 34 s



## LESSON PLAN

## OBJECTIVES

To help students appreciate the narrative form of a legend, based on the animated film *Qalupalik*. To introduce students to Inuit traditions.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

Students in grades 3 to 6.

## SUBJECT AREAS

- ◆ First Nations
- ◆ English
- ◆ Fine Arts

## DESCRIPTION

This lesson plan aims to increase students' knowledge of Inuit folktales and awaken them to the film's symbolism and evocation of animism. *Qalupalik*, a fearsome sea creature on the lookout for disobedient children, incarnates the dangers of the sea. The proposed activities are designed to introduce students to the concept of metaphor as represented through animation.

## START AND PREPARATORY ACTIVITY: MYSTERIOUS SIGNPOSTS

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

To start the activity, show the students a few images of inukshuks (stone landmarks built by the Inuit), without specifying what they are. (The Nunavut flag or a simple sketch on the board can serve as images.) Ask students if they are familiar with the object depicted and can explain what it represents. What does its shape bring to mind? Once the class has discussed the inukshuk's visual aspects, say its name in Inuktitut (the Inuit language). Inukshuk means "resembling a real person," since the shape of the piled stones suggests a human with open arms. Explain that these structures may be variously used as:

- ◆ Hunting beacons (marking the route taken by the moose)
- ◆ Signage or signals (since the inukshuk's "arms" point in a given direction)
- ◆ Warnings (to indicate the depth of the snow or a crevasse)

Above all, explain that inukshuks were endowed with invisible powers. Inukshuks had great symbolic strength, imperceptible to the naked eye but highly significant to those who knew to recognize it. Today, part of their significance remains unknown, forgotten over time or hidden by those who built them.

After the introduction, invite students to transpose various inukshuk characteristics into their own lives, guided by the following questions:

- ◆ Is there a difference between an inukshuk and a traffic light?
- ◆ How does the traffic light work as a beacon? A signal? A warning?
- ◆ How did you learn how to interpret a traffic light? The meaning of each colour and form? What would happen if people suddenly decided that traffic lights had no meaning and began ignoring them?

Invite students to change the form of the traffic light — a near-universal signal — using their imaginations and inventiveness. Have students form small groups to answer the following questions (be sure to specify that there are no right or wrong answers):

- ◆ Can you think of another meaning to give to traffic lights? A mysterious or unusual meaning, perhaps unrelated to pedestrians or drivers?
- ◆ Can you give a new meaning to the colours red, yellow and green?
- ◆ What meaning could you give to a new traffic light colour — blue, for instance?

Ask each group to visually represent their new symbol and show it to the class.

## ACTIVITY: THE CREATURE OF SEAWEED AND CARELESSNESS

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

### STEP 1

Before watching *Qalupalik* with your students, inform them that the film is based on an Inuit legend, and animated using bits of leather. *Qalupalik* tells the tale of a disobedient child who fails to heed the warnings about the danger of the shore and the power of the sea. Students can see how the metaphor of danger is translated through animation. If they're paying attention, they'll also spot an inukshuk.

### STEP 2

Watch the first few minutes of the film with your students, up to the point where the characters reach the shoreline (stop before the drama starts). Ask them to describe the qualities of the ocean and its great wealth. Also ask them about the warnings normally given to children about venturing too close to the water. What precautions can you take to avoid this danger? Lastly, ask them what they think *Qalupalik*, the creature mentioned by the narrator, might look like.

**STEP 3**

Continue watching the film to the end. Ask students to return to the same groups as in the preparatory activity. Help them broaden their understanding, guided by the following questions:

- ◆ What is this legend warning against?
- ◆ How is it a metaphor (both positive and negative) for the sea?
- ◆ Does the story have a happy ending?
- ◆ Does Qalupalik really exist?

**STEP 4**

Gather the students to finish discussing the film. Students will share their group's thoughts and ideas with the rest of the class. You can end the activity by explaining that the Inuit once believed everything had a soul: man, animals, plants and objects. Qalupalik represents the sea's dual nature: its generosity to the alert hunter, and its dangers for the imprudent child.

**RECAP**

Duration: 45 minutes

Ask your students to imagine that an inukshuk had suddenly appeared in the schoolyard. Have them form small groups and instruct them to give the inukshuk a specific character, based on the ideas explored in the activity. What could it represent? To what (or to whom) is it pointing? Is it a warning to be careful? Or does it incite carelessness? What colour is it? Does it have any special powers? Have each group make a visual representation of the curious pillar, then share their ideas with the rest of the class.

**REFLECTIVE SHARING**

To conclude the activity, have students consider the wisdom of ancient Aboriginal beliefs and the richness of diverse viewpoints.