

Saint Isaac Jogues

Book Title: Saint Isaac Jogues: With Burning Heart

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Yikes! It's that feeling you get when you hand a child a book about a martyr and hope that it's not too gruesome. Our Encounter book on the life of Saint Isaac Jogues is a bit on the violent side. He is captured by the Iroquois, tortured, and eventually murdered. I felt the willies shiver up my spine a couple of times while reading it. Little boys are sure to love it.

If you are worried about the violence, read it yourself and then prepare your child for it. Have a discussion about the complex relations that the settlers had with the native Americans. Talk about what it means to be a martyr. Once you get past the violence, this story is a rich teaching tool that aligns perfectly with upper grade social studies standards. Not only does it address the differences between different Native American tribes living in the same region, but it also opens the door to a deeper discussion about cultural differences that can be applied to our modern society.

Discussion/Written Response Questions

1. Isaac traveled to New France without knowing the Native American languages. Have you ever been in a situation where you didn't speak the same language as someone else? How did you communicate with them?
2. Identify the misunderstandings that led to the murder of René and later, Isaac. Think about these events from the Iroquois perspective. What was really happening and what did the Iroquois believe was happening.?
3. Why did Isaac return to New France after he had escaped?
4. What does Jesus's teaching, "Love your enemies" mean to you? What do you think it meant to Isaac?

History Connection

This book goes PERFECTLY with the 5th grade CA content standard: Students describe the cooperation and conflict that existed among the American Indians and between the Indian Nations and the new settlers.

Before reading, have half of the students research the Hurons and the other half research the Iroquois. Where did they live? What was the geography/climate like there? What did they eat? What did they wear? What was their shelter like? What were their religious beliefs? Students should gain an in depth knowledge about their assigned tribe.

As a class, combine expertise by creating a T-chart to catalogue what they know about the Hurons and the Iroquois. Discuss similarities and key differences. After reading, add anything new they've learned to the chart.

Music Connection

Sing "Huron Carol" written by Jesuit missionary, friend of Isaac, and North American martyr, Jean de Brébeuf. What parts of the traditional Christmas story stayed the same? What parts were changed? Why do you think the story was modified?

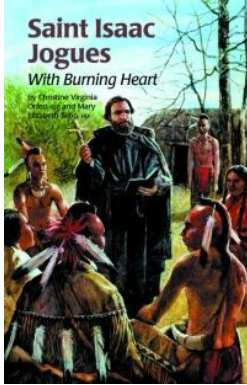
Pretend you are a missionary to a group of modern people who have never heard the Christmas story. Rewrite the lyrics of "Huron Carol" to retell the Christmas story to a modern audience.

(Teachers note: Small groups could be assigned a portion of the Christmas story and each group could compose one verse. Put them all together and sing them as a class.)

Drama Connection

There was a language barrier between the missionaries and the Native Americans. This activity will help the students learn to communicate through gesture and action (4th grade standard). Each student selects a slip of paper with a small lesson that they must communicate to the class through gestures. One at a time the students get a set amount of time (30 secs?) to act out their assignment without talking. At the end of the time limit, the audience gets a few moments to discuss and guess what they think the lesson was. If they do not guess, the actor tells them and then someone else gets their turn. The lessons can be silly or real. Some examples are:

- Jumping rope is good for your heart
- As you grow, you will need to get bigger shoes
- Hats prevent your face from getting sunburned



St. Isaac Jogues was born at Orleans, France on January 10, 1607 and was ordained to the priesthood, July 2, 1636, as a member of the Society of Jesus. In 1636 he was sent to Quebec, Canada, the fulfillment of his great desire to be a missionary to the Huron Indians. He traveled and worked among the native populations in North America, explaining to them the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was tortured and imprisoned by the Iroquois. After his rescue and a short return to France he returned to Quebec on a peace mission. On September 24, 1646, en route to Ossernenon (Auriesville, New York) Isaac was captured by a Mohawk war party. On October 18, 1646 he was martyred by his captors.

Isaac Jogues is one of the North American Martyrs and his feast day is October 19th.

This action packed story is full of suspense and will keep kids both interested and in awe of the courage of Isaac Jogues who chose this dangerous mission in order to tell others about Jesus and to work for peace among the native peoples of North America. Kids will discover that they too can share their faith with others. Sometimes they will need great courage to do so, just like Isaac Jogues.

Ages 8 – 12

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