

STORY BY Alice B. McGinty

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Shonto Begay

THE Water Lady

How Darlene Arviso Helps a Thirsty Navajo Nation



Art © 2021 by Shonto Begay

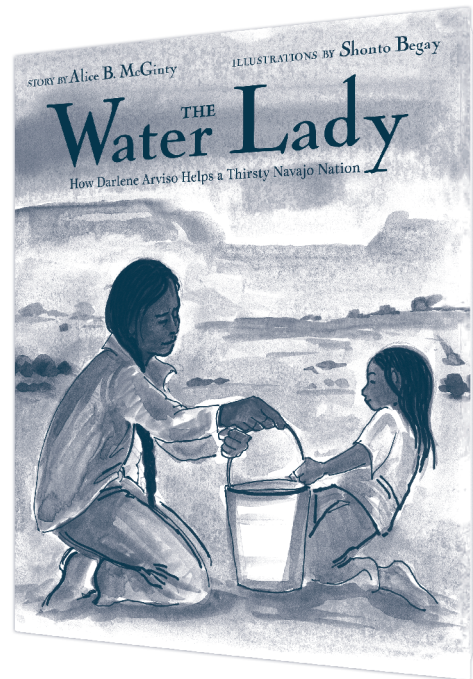
THE Water Lady

Classroom Activity Guide

About the Book

This inspiring picture book tells the true story of a woman who brings desperately needed water to families on the Navajo reservation every day.

Underneath the New Mexico sky, a Navajo boy named Cody finds that his family's barrels of water are empty. He checks the chicken coop—nothing. He walks down the road to the horses' watering hole. Dry. Meanwhile, a few miles away, Darlene Arviso drives a school bus and picks up students for school. After dropping them off, she heads to another job: she drives her big yellow tanker truck to the water tower, fills it with 3,000 gallons of water, and returns to the reservation, bringing water to Cody's family and many, many others. Here is the incredible and inspiring true story of a Native American woman who continuously gives back to her community and celebrates her people.



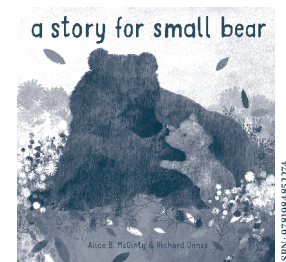
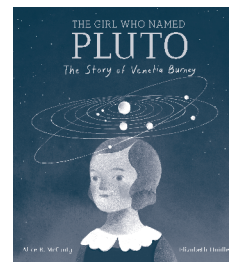
About the Author

Credit: Jon Dessen



Alice B. McGinty is the award-winning author of over forty books for children, including *A Story for Small Bear*, as well as *The Girl Who Named Pluto*, which was called “inspiring” in a starred review from *Kirkus Reviews*. She also wrote *Darwin*, an Orbis Pictus Honor Book and one of *Booklist's* Top 10 Biographies for Youth, which received three starred reviews. Another of her picture books, *Rabbi Benjamin's Buttons*, was named a Sydney Taylor Notable Book. She also runs a writing camp for kids, Words on Fire. Visit her at alicebmcginty.com or follow her on Twitter at @AliceBMcGinty.

Also by Alice McGinty



About the Illustrator

Credit: Dawn Kish



Shonto Begay is the illustrator of several picture books, including *The Mud Pony*, *The Magic of Spider Woman*, and *The Boy Who Dreamed of an Acorn*. He is the fifth child of sixteen born to a Navajo medicine man. Shonto attended federal boarding schools all over the Navajo Indian Reservation in his elementary school years. Later, he attended the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and received his associate of fine arts degree. He later earned a degree from the California College of the Arts. He resides in Arizona.



In the Classroom

Pre-Reading Activity

Lead a class discussion about water and make a list of the multiple purposes it serves in our everyday lives. Explain that water is livelihood for Native Americans and that this community faces extraordinary challenges to obtain water. Have students visit navajowaterproject.org, where they will learn more about these challenges, including the fact that Navajo are sixty-seven times more likely than other Americans to live without running water or a toilet. Have them take notes on the work of the Navajo Water Project whose mission is to bring hot and cold running water to homes without access to water or sewer lines.

Skip, Hop, and Jump

The narrative often conveys what Cody is doing using verbs. For example, he “skips down the wooden porch steps.” Compile a list of verbs in the story. What other verbs could the author have used? Discuss what the text would have been like if she had used less vivid verbs such as “walk” instead of “skip.” Make a list of verbs that convey other actions that an energetic boy like Cody might take.

Every Picture Tells a Story

What do you learn about Cody’s life and the world around him from the pictures? Meet in small groups and make a list of details about his home, his family, the countryside around him, the animals in his life, and so on. At the same time, discuss what else the pictures convey. Do they let you know how Cody is feeling? For example, what can you tell from the illustrations about the relationship between Cody and his grandmother? How is her story conveyed in the art? Notice also how color is used to convey beauty and to draw your eye to parts of the picture—the grandmother in her red shirt, for example. What other information can you learn from the illustrations? Discuss what makes the illustrations fit well with the text, and why the illustrator chose to depict certain lines from the text.

Prepared by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian who gives workshops on new children’s and young adult books. She chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and served on earlier Newbery and Caldecott Award Committees.

Life on the Navajo Reservation

Search for photographs of the Navajo Nation on the internet. How do different aspects of Cody’s life on the Navajo Nation compare to yours? Think about family, home, school, and transportation. Identify which parts are similar and which are different. If you could visit Cody, what would you talk to him about? What would you like to do together on the Navajo reservation? Now think about children across the United States. What features of life do you think most children share in this country? What about their lives is different? After considering this on your own, gather as a class to share your thoughts.

How Much Water Do You Use?

“While almost every other American will use around one hundred gallons of water today, many on the Navajo reservation will use only seven,” the story tells us. Think about how much water you use each week, and write down an estimate in gallons, with your teacher’s help if necessary. Then look at the information about water usage on the My Water Use activity sheet and see if you want to change your estimate. Fill out the table for a week and compare the results to your estimate. Meet in small groups and brainstorm ways you, your family, and your school can save water. Learn water-saving tips by playing the online game Tip Tank, created by a water conservation organization, at Wateruseitwisely.com/tip-tank-game.



Name _____

My Water Use

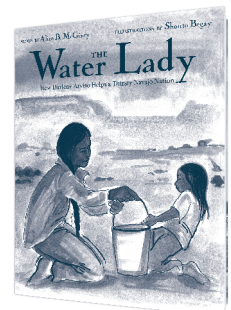
Keep track of your water use for a week by making marks for each use per category. Then multiply the total number of marks in a category by the number of gallons per use. (The “gallons per use” figures are from the University of Colorado and the EPA.)

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Number of Marks	Gallons Per Use	Total Gallons Used (Multiply total marks by gallons per use)
Washing Face or Hands									1 Gal	
5-Minute Shower									25 Gals	
Bath									40 Gals	
Teeth Brushing with Water Running (Hint: Turn off the water while you brush!)									2 Gals	
Toilet Flushing (low-flow toilet)									1.5 Gals	
Toilet Flushing (standard toilet)									5 Gals	
Total (Add up the totals in the righthand column.)										



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Name _____

Making a Difference

Darlene, the Water Lady, provides important help to others in her community. Do you know, or have you heard about, anyone else who helps their community? It could be a friend, family member, or community member. Answer the questions below, and share your Helpful Person Profile with your class.

The person's name: _____

How you know about the person: _____

Where the person lives or lived: _____

What the person has done: _____

Who the person's actions have helped: _____

How the person's actions have helped the community: _____

Why you admire the person: _____



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