

**"Even when naked and tied to a stick there is always a way out." (page 46)**

**"They adapt to it--that's what humans do. Adapt." (page 101)**

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## TRIBES

### ACTIVITIES: Pre-Reading

Before you begin reading Tribes, help the students to become interested in the novel by asking the following questions and completing the activities

The title of the story is Tribes and is set in a Saskatoon high school. How do you think the title will tie into the story?

Examine the cover the novel. What topics do you think will arise in the novel based on the cover illustration by Joel Nakamura (who did the cover Illo) ?

What other stories have you read by [Arthur Slade](#)? What elements

from other novels do you think the author may include in this novel?

What are some of the problems that you would expect Percy, the narrator and main character, to face in this novel about high school?

Have you ever been on an archaeological dig? If so, describe the experience. If not, what do you think the experience would be like?

Do you like to read about...

stories set in high school?

realistic situations that deal with teenage difficulties?

stories about single parent families?

stories that refer to Darwin's theories?

discussions referring to archaeology?

In groups, discuss the following:

On the back of the novel Slade chose the quote "numerous tribes exist in friction at our school" to introduce the types of cliques that coexist in the school. What "tribes" or cliques are present in your school?

Would you ever treat someone differently because they belonged to a different group, race, or religion?

Describe a situation in which you or someone you know have experienced bullying or being shunned by society?

What is your opinion about the beginning of mankind. Have humans emerged from a process of evolution, were they created by a supreme being, or by some other means? Or is it a combination?

### **ACTIVITIES: Prologue-Chapter 3**

#### **Funeral Customs:**

When Percival Montmount Jr.'s father died in the Congo he was buried standing up facing the sunrise. This was the custom of the pygmies. Discuss other funeral customs of the world. Click [here](#) for maps of the Congo Region to use as a mapping activity.

#### **The Naming of Towns, Cities, etc.**

Percy describes a tribe venturing westward toward the barren Canadian prairie. One such tribe named a town after the tasty purple berry that was found by the river. It was a Cree word Missask-quah-toomina. This name lent itself to the current city called Saskatoon. Research the origin of your town or city's name.

## **Social Customs**

Percy describes different tribes present in his high school (Jock Tribe, Busybody Tribe, Logo Tribe, Digerati Tribe, Lipstick/Hairspray Tribe, Gee-the-Seventies-Were-Great-Even-Though-I-Wasn't-Born-Yet Tribe, Hockey Tribe, Smile Tribe, Born-Again Tribe, Denture Tribe, Smoker Tribe, Skateboarder Tribe, Teacher Tribe, Highway Tribe, Necking Tribe, Cool and Detached Tribe, and the Quasi-omniscient Observers). We sometimes refer to these as "cliques". What are some of the different tribes or groups present in your school? What are the dangers of stereotyping people into these groups?

## **Darwinism**

"The gifted are often shunned by lesser intellects". Percy uses this quotation as a reflection of his own situation and how Darwin must have also felt. Research Charles Darwin and what he meant by the expression, "Survival of the fittest".

## **Anecdotes**

An anecdote is a short account of an interesting or humorous incident. Percy mentioned that Elissa's mind was filled with societal fallacy anecdotes. Share one of your own anecdotes with your classmates either orally, in written form, or those

representation.

## **Culture Assimilation**

Assimilation is the process whereby a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture. Give an example of how cultures have been assimilated in Canada.

## **Nonviolent Protest / Passive Resistance**

Gandhi believed in **passive resistance**. This meant he believed in nonviolence to solve problems. Karmina recognized Gandhi's beliefs when discussing fighting with Percy, "nonviolence is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction." Research Gandhi's beliefs.

## **ACTIVITIES: Chapters 4-7**

## **Traditions**

One of the traditions that is celebrated in many families at Thanksgiving and Christmas is the "breaking of the wishbone" of the turkey. By gripping the bone with the baby finger two people challenge each other to see who is the winner. This is a tradition alluded to by Percy. This tradition was passed on from the Etruscans, through the Romans, the British, and onto us to pass on. What other traditions do you celebrate with your family and what is the origin of these traditions.

## **Sweat Lodges**

Percy's family believes in cleansing their body and soul in sweat lodges. Saunas vary in different cultures such as Mediterranean, Roman, Native American, Finnish, and Russian. Research the history of sweat lodges and see how they differ. If you feel adventurous have students try to build their own. Invite a native elder to discuss the importance of the sweat lodge to their community and culture. Visit a sweat lodge for a field trip.

## Commercialism in Schools

Elissa raises the issue of inequity of child labour and of name brand use in schools, "did you know a guy in Arizona was kicked out of school for wearing a Pepsis shirt on Coke day?... (page 32) Meanwhile students toddle around in shoes made by Third World children enslaved in factories and no one makes a peep. There's no logic to the educational system." It is often debated that name brands and commercialism have no place in schools. We see advertising on score clocks donated by soda companies for sole use of their product in the school. We also see schools opting for school uniforms to eliminate name brand wars and bullying over clothing. What are your thoughts on these issues. Examine literature on the internet and in magazines that discuss this issue.

## Rituals

Rituals can be defined as set or expected routines or "A ceremonial act or a series of such acts" ([dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)). Percy describes Graduation as a ritual and lists some of the specifics involved in this ritual. Describe the graduation rituals in your school. What other "rituals" go on in your school or community?

## **Teen suicide** (page 34-5)

Percy and Elissa discuss the anniversary of Willard's death (page 34-35) and how he committed suicide. Willard committed suicide because of unrequited love. His self-esteem could not handle the rejection of not having the chance of being with the girl he liked. Have students discuss the following issues in groups, as a whole-class discussion, or as individual journal assignments:

What would you do if you feared your friend was contemplating suicide?

How do we improve student self-esteem?

What are some contacts to seek if you or your friend were thinking about suicide?

What are some reasons students think about, try to commit, or succeed in suicide?

## **Lowering Flags to Half Mast**

Percy said Principal Michaels was considering flying the school flag at half mast out of respect for Willard (page 35). In 1612 the first half-mast flag in Canada was flown. Why are flags flown at half-mast? Consider other symbolic ways flags are flown such as upside down, lower than others, etc. Research other pertinent information about your country or another country's flag.

## ACTIVITIES: Chapters 8-11

### How People Select Settlements

Geographers study where people live, why they settled in that area, and how they use the resources around them. When city planners develop a new subdivision or area they study how people adapt to their environment. Most settlements in Canada occurred near the railway line or near water: two important factors for settlers. The game SimCity (computer game) can be used to show how Commercial, Industrial, and Residential Areas need to be considered when developing a city. Students can choose any of the following to research.

Study the area you live in and consider why it was settled.  
Examine the new areas being developed in your town or city.

Research the Hudson Bay Settlement

Research the areas around the CPR

Discuss how you set up your bedroom and why

How are shopping malls designed?

What is the layout of your house?

Where are the parks in your town?

Where is the city dump located?

How do farmers set up their farms?

Where are bathrooms located on campgrounds?

What businesses surround hockey rinks, schools, hospitals, malls?

## **!Kung, Tribes, and other Anthropological Adventures** (page 61)

Percy's father had many anthropological adventures. Research one of the following areas or cultures that Percy Montmount Sr. visited: Pygmies, the Congo, !Kung, Galapagos Islands, Machu Pichu, Namibia, and the Ndebele Tribe.

## **Self-Mutilation** (page 63)

What is the practice of self-mutilation called? Why do some people choose to scar, tattoo, or pierce themselves? What is the difference between self-mutilation and fashion? Are some forms of self-mutilation culture specific? When is tattooing, piercing, and

scarring acceptable? When is it unacceptable?

## **Carbondating** (page 71)

What is carbondating and what is it used for? Find examples of carbondating.

### **ACTIVITIES: Chapters 12-15**

## **Graduation Week**

Percy describes his reason for missing his appointment with the school counselor due to the craziness of Grad Week. Choose a purpose, viewpoint, a writing style, and an audience to compose your thoughts about Grad Week craziness in your school.

**Viewpoint**

**Purpose**

**Writing Style**

**Audience**

self

to tell

narration

poem

family

parent

to describe

description

outline

best friend

escort

to explain

exposition

instructions

teacher

family

to persuade

T-chart

recipe

classmates

teacher

to entertain

timeline

report

myself

counselor

to inform

Venn Diagram

journal

other adults

community member

editorial

paragraph

younger children

tux or dress salesperson

story

sentence

wider audience

school board

list

summary

song

commercial

note

letter

essay

explanation

script

## **Put Yourself in Their Shoes**

Percy is growing up in a single parent household. What are some

of the struggles of being raised by only one parent.

## **The Beauty of Cultures**

When Percy saw Delmar Brass playing the bagpipes he was amazed how two distinct cultures were present in one person. He told himself there was a lesson in this beauty: "never make assumptions. Rely on observation, then make a conclusion." Describe a situation where you assumed something about a person based on their religion, culture, age, or gender. How were you amazed?

## **Unattainable Love**

Research great love stories in history (such as Antony and Cleopatra; Homer and Marge Simpson, Romeo and Juliet, etc.). Do any of them deal with unattainable love. What is your definition of unattainable love. Willard Spokes was in love with Marcia Grady and he felt he couldn't live without her. Is it ever healthy to be infatuated with someone?

Research movies that deal with unattainable love or with love that seemed to be unattainable but in the end the characters ended up together. How many movies can you think of in your classroom?

## **Lucy**

"Lucy and her relatives were likely the first to walk upright" (page 38). When writing this quote in his field journal Percy is again referring to anthropological issues. Who was Lucy and what was significant about her discovery?

## **History's Mistakes?**

When Mr. Verplaz asked Percy "what's the worst thing that's ever happened", Percy responded "Hiroshima". How would you respond and what would be your reasoning?

### **ACTIVITIES: Chapters 16-End**

#### **Shaolin Kung Fu Fighters** (page 118)

When Justin saw Percy at Grad he said, "You look like one of them Shaolin kung fu fighters." What is a Shaolin kung fu fighter? Describe them physically and their traits.

#### **Significant World Events** (page 122)

When on stage Percy pictures many world events he thought significant (such as the earth forming, dinosaurs, burning of Carthage, Auschwitz, etc.) just before he fainted. What world events do you consider significant from the beginning of time?

#### **Graduation Speeches**

Investigate and write some mock (or real if applicable) grad speeches and toasts.

#### **Journal Writing**

Percy used his journal as a healing experience to record his feelings, thoughts, and observations. Do you use a diary or journal? Why

do you (or don't you) journal?

**ACTIVITIES: Various**

Percy enjoyed recording his thoughts in his field notes. Field notes are a record of all events observed. Write a sample of field notes Percy may have taken after any event in the story. How would field notes differ from a diary entry or could they be the same style of writing?

Make a poster advertising the book

Draw a panorama showing the main event of the story (approximately six pictures in sequence).

In what ways has Percy changed by the end of the novel.

List references Percy makes to animals throughout the story.

Write a play based on one of the chapters in this book. Present this as a radio play to the class.

## **STORY SYNOPSIS**

**(from the back cover of tribes by HarperTrophy Canada)**

Percy Montmount, Jr., along with his friend Elissa, have classified themselves as certified Observers of their grade 12 graduating class at Saskatoon's Groverly High. Ever since the death of his father--a renowned anthropologist who Percy believes died in the jungle from a bite of a tsetse fly--Percy has taken on his dad's

eyes, and his occupation, to chronicle the often inexplicable and ritualistic behaviors of his peers. Armed with his field study notebook, Percy tries to remain detached, but his own feelings keep threatening to blow his cover, especially his increasingly not-so-scientific interest in Elissa. And it's becoming harder for Percy to be his father, a man who was hardly ever there anyway.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Africa Resources**

[Downloadable African Puzzle](#)

[Image Map of Africa](#)

[Clickable Map of Africa](#)

### **Anthropology Sites**

[Basic Anthropology Information](#)

### **Commercialism in Schools**

## Introductory Research Article

### **Charles Darwin sites**

<http://www.bartleby.com/11/4003.html>

<http://65.107.211.206/victorian/darwin/darwin5.html>

<http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/2000/08/03/text/p1s4.html>

### **English Sites**

**Dictionary of Lit Terms**

**A Glossary of Lit Terms**

**Glossary of Literary Terms**

**Glossary of Poetic Terms**

**Handbook of Rhetorical Terms**

**Literary Terms**

**Rhetoric and Composition**

**Rhetorical Figures**

## **What does that Mean? (Glossary of Lit Terms )**

### **Words of Art**

### **Funeral Customs**

History of Funeral Customs

### **Funeral Customs of the World**

### **Gandhi**

<http://www.kamat.com/mmgandhi/gandhi.htm>

<http://keirse.com/gandhi.html>

<http://www.engagedpage.com/gan1.html>

### **Half-Mast Flags**

Origin of the Tradition

### **Flag Symbolism**

## **Leadership**

<http://www.cwf.ca/abcalcwf/events.nsf/Events/ByDate/EE16C0FBFFE8CFA487256BCE0076A57F>

## **Lucy**

Was Lucy a Man?

**Graphic of Lucy**

**History of Lucy**

## **Science vs. Religion Debate**

[http://www.religioustolerance.org/sci\\_rel.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/sci_rel.htm)

<http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/evolution98/>

<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~sjdando/>

<http://www.evcforum.net/>

<http://www.wasdarwinright.com/>

## **Sweat Lodges**

History of Sweat Lodges

**More History on Sweat Lodges**

**Building a Sweat Lodge**

## **Teen Suicide**

Signs of Suicide

**Warning Signs**

**Articles About Suicide**

**Teen Suicide Links**

**Kids Help Phone**

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Arthur Slade's Website**

## **VOCABULARY: Vocabulary List**

### **Prologue to Chapter 3**

adept

amalgamate

angst

anthropologist

ascended

the Congo

edifice

epicanthic

ethnographer

evoke

fecund

fronds

glower

harbinger

insightful

materialize

moniker

mutate

opposable

patriarchy

precursor

protocol

prudent

pugilist

pygmies

sanctum

transgress

## **Chapters 4-7**

affidavit

cornucopia

disgorged

emblazoned

fetish

forage

intone

invariably

jovial

motif

mutation

oblivion

palpitate

procure

subside

tome

turmoil

unexpurgated

voracious

## **Chapters 8-11**

affluent

agitation

arcane

ascertain

cavorting

copasetic

embark

emanated

ethereal

eureka

inevitable

inexorably

modicum

nonchalantly

proffered

tousled

vehemence

## **Chapters 12-15**

ascetic

attune

augmented

benevolent

cacophony

demeanor

elixir

gusto

infused

knoll

omniscient

potent

precariously

putrid

rapture

riled

tectonic

visage

## **Chapters 16-Epilogue**

antagonism

bequeathed

coagulated

conglomerate

effeminate

embrangled

expounded

intuition

lucid

malice

nomad

obelisk

obliterate

oration

placidity

primordial

pungent

sentient

succumb

supersede

transcend

tresses

vestige

zeppelin

For help with dictionary words use the [online dictionary resource](#)

### VOCABULARY: Vocabulary Activities

Create a class dictionary of words from a chapter section

Write a story using as many of the vocabulary words as you can

Play vocabulary bingo: call out the definitions and have students

cover the appropriate word on their card.

create search-a-word or crossword puzzles using the vocabulary

## THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

### Stereotyping

Percy describes different tribes present in his high school (Jock Tribe, Busybody Tribe, Logo Tribe, Digerati Tribe, Lipstick/Hairspray Tribe, Gee-the-Seventies-Were-Great-Even-Though-I-Wasn't-Born-Yet Tribe, Hockey Tribe, Smile Tribe, Born-Again Tribe, Denture Tribe, Smoker Tribe, Skateboarder Tribe, Teacher Tribe, Highway Tribe, Necking Tribe, Cool and Detached Tribe, and the Quasi-omniscient Observers). We sometimes refer to these as "cliques". What are some of the different tribes or groups present in your school? What are the dangers of stereotyping people into these groups?

### Science vs. Religion: Evolution vs. Creation

(throughout novel activity: begin at onset of novel)

Discuss the debate Percy had with the Born Again Tribe referring to the Science vs. Religion Theories of Mankind's development. Make a T-Chart to compare the two theories. Also, this activity can be done in a Venn Diagram to show the overlap in the theories.

### Leadership

The students at Saskatoon's Groverly High, according to Percy's perception, viewed Justin as a leader in their school. What makes a good leader? What qualities do leaders possess? Analyze the leaders in your school (staff, student representative council, community leaders). What kind of responsibilities are expected of leaders. Do role models share similar responsibilities? Is it fair to expect teachers, politicians, actors, singers to behave according to a moral code because they are considered role models?

## Figures of Speech

**Foreshadowing:** foreshadowing is a literary technique that hints at what will happen later in the story. The character or author gives clues to the reader that makes sense later. List examples of when the author foreshadowed the fact that Percy's father was not indeed deceased.

**Similes:** A simile is the comparison of two unlike things using **like**, **as**, or **as if**. Slade uses a number of similes throughout the story. Find examples of similes from the novel.