

# Silver River Shadow

## The Ghost Supper



### The Ghost Supper – an alternative to Halloween

In 'Silver River Shadow', Lizzie and Bobby travel into the depths of the Canadian wilderness to meet a group of Native Americans. The Ghost Supper is a tradition among Native Americans and is held around the same time as Halloween. Whereas Halloween has negative links with ghosts, the Ghost Supper – or 'Spirit Feast' – is very positive.

People gather together in a large circle around a fire. Everyone brings a particular dish that someone who has died used to love eating. Taking it in turns, each person puts the tiniest portion of their food onto a square piece of birch bark: the birch tree represents guidance and protection and is an important element of the ceremony. The square of bark, with its food, is then placed in the fire so it can be sent to the spirits.

Everyone sits and talks about those who have died and honours their memory. The Ghost Supper is an opportunity to reconnect with the dead, to feed them their favourite foods, and to remember them among friends and family.

### Lesson Plan:

- ask students to name everything they associate with Halloween (pumpkins, bats, ghosts etc). Discuss with them the origins of Halloween, and how there are negative links to ghosts
- now ask students if they have any positive ideas about ghosts
- read aloud the paragraph starting on page 158, 'Lizzie's father looked across...'. Do any of the students have special things that only they and their friends or family do together? This could be something passed down through the generations – 'my grandmother always gives us fairy cakes on a Sunday' – or something that they have created with a friend – 'we have a special handshake that only we know'. Discuss the importance of having something shared and how it creates a bond
- Now ask students to imagine having that taken away from them because a government tells them it is no longer allowed: imagine how they would feel. Explain that this is what happened to the Ojibway, and that they are having to fight to keep any of their traditions alive, any connections with their past world

# Silver River Shadow

## The Ghost Supper



### The Ghost Supper – an alternative to Halloween, p2

- read aloud the paragraph starting on page 164, 'They made plans to see each other again...'. Ask them how the paragraph makes them feel: what does it mean to have something 'slipping through their fingers'? What does it mean to have something 'taken away, inch by inch'?
- this is an opportunity to share a discussion about any traditions students have learned about other cultures, and to have a conversation about why it is so important traditions are not lost

### Writing opportunities

- create a postcard as if you've been to a Ghost Supper. Draw a scene on the front, and write a message on the back to a friend
- write a letter to the school principal persuading them to either hold a Ghost Supper or Halloween event

*This lesson is appropriate for upper KS2 students. Since it references death and families, it is important to be aware of students who may be suffering a recent bereavement. This lesson could be an opportunity to sensitively engage the class in a relevant, appropriate manner. Students may benefit from pairing this with 'Jolly Ollie and his Australian Adventure' - available from [www.jolly-ollie.com](http://www.jolly-ollie.com) - since it is a gentle introduction to thinking of death in a positive manner in line with the Japanese concept of 'mono no aware'. That is, things can be more beautiful because they are transient and brief.*