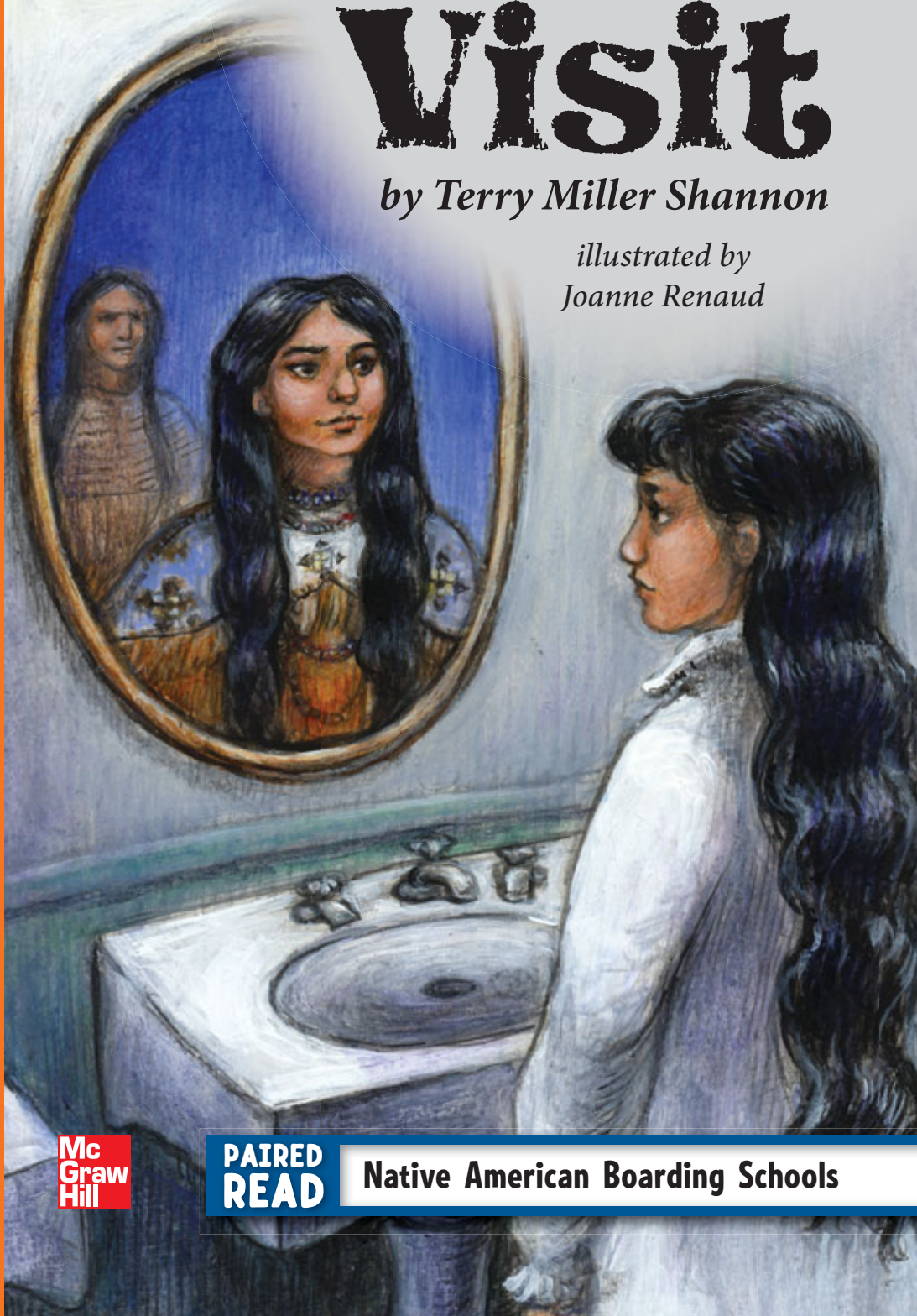


Historical
Fiction

The Visit

by Terry Miller Shannon

illustrated by
Joanne Renaud



Mc
Graw
Hill

PAIRED
READ

Native American Boarding Schools

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Reread

Skill: Theme

Vocabulary Strategy

Connotation and Denotation

Vocabulary

ancestors, despised, endurance,
forfeit, honor, intensity,
irritating, retreat

Content Standards

Social Studies

History

Word Count: 1,322**

**The total word count is based on words in the running text and headings only. Numerals and words in captions, labels, diagrams, charts, and sidebars are not included.



Essential Question

How do traditions connect people?

The Visit

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READ**

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Chapter 1

Excitement

The moment the bell rings and wakes me, I remember this is a special day. The intensity of my joy makes me smile. My parents are visiting today!

I climb out of bed and line up with all the other girls. We march into the bathroom. Side by side, we brush our teeth and wash our faces. Today I don't mind the cold water.

We dress quickly. Then the bell rings again, and we march into the dining room. I am so excited I can barely swallow my oatmeal. After breakfast we march out into the freezing yard to do our despised exercises. The teacher shouts, and we jump up and down as usual, but today it's almost fun.

“I wish my parents were coming,” my friend Virginia whispers to me when the teacher isn’t looking. “But I’m happy for you!” she adds.

Virginia blinks back tears. We all miss our families and our homes. For a moment, I feel the weight of sadness, but I let the feeling float away. I will see my mother and father soon!





Before our lessons, we have to work in the laundry. The piles of ironing never seem to get smaller. I keep daydreaming about my parents. How will they look now? How will I seem to them?

The school has tried to make me look and act and speak as if I were a white person. But I am still the same inside. I hope my parents will be able to see that.

The school rules test my endurance. They say we must forfeit the ways of our people to make our way in the white world. But why do they think the white way is better than our way?

It helps to talk with the other girls at night. We wait until the teacher's footsteps retreat. Then we whisper to one another.

We love to talk about our homes and our families. The girls come from many different places, so we all talk about what it is like where we are from. Although we do many things differently, so much is the same. We all cherish our land and the birds and animals that belong to it. We all respect our ancestors. And we all wish we could go home.

I expect I'll have lots to talk about tonight. My friends will want me to tell them everything my parents tell me about home. This will make their homes seem less far away. It's easy to feel confused here about who you are. But one thing I know: When I see my parents, I'll remember exactly who I am.



STOP AND CHECK

Why is the narrator excited?

Chapter 2

My Parents

At last my parents are here! The longing is over, and we are hugging each other, my tears mingling with theirs.

My parents stand back to look at me. My mother touches my heavy skirt and stiff blouse. My father starts to speak to me, but the teacher calls out, “English only, please.”

My father doesn’t understand, and I have to tell him. “We must speak in English,” I say. “It’s a rule.”

He frowns and falls silent. My parents don’t speak much English. How can they talk to me if they can’t speak in their own language? How can I explain that I still honor our ways in my heart, even if I look different?

We sit silently as the clock ticks away.



I decide to start talking. English is better than silence. I hope they will understand some of what I'm trying to say, even if they don't understand all the words.

"I am learning to write and read English," I say. My parents' faces are blank. I can't tell if they understand, but I keep talking.

"They teach us to cook and to sew clothes. I can do the laundry and the ironing too."

The minute hand on the clock is moving fast. My parents will have to leave soon. My stomach knots at the thought.



I don't know when I will see my parents again. I must keep talking to them while I have the chance.

"Sometimes we play games," I say brightly. I pretend to throw a ball.



They understand that and laugh softly. My mother reaches for my hand, holding it tightly.

"The best part is meeting the other students," I say. "Now I know people from other places. I would never have met them if I'd stayed at home."

Home. The word makes me want to cry.

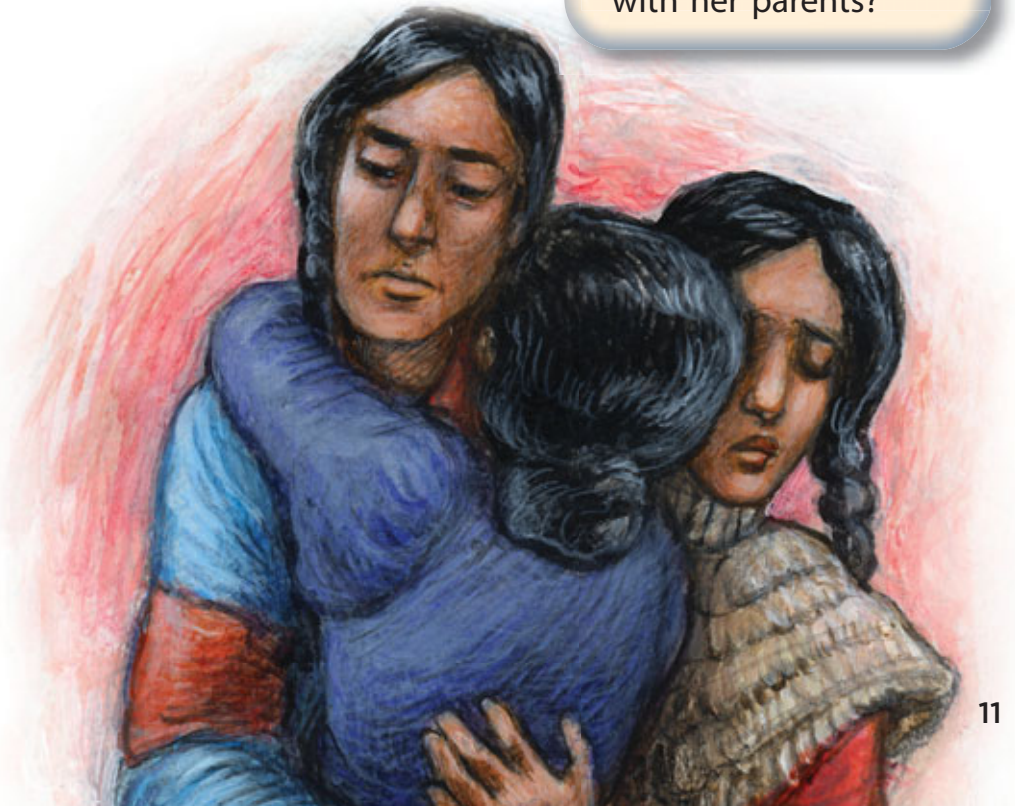
I swallow hard and keep talking. I talk quietly so the teacher can't hear, and I say a few things in our own language mixed with English. I tell them I love them and want to make them proud.

The time flies. The teacher announces that visiting time is over.

My parents and I hug and hug, but they have to leave.

STOP AND CHECK

Why is it hard for the girl to communicate with her parents?



Chapter 3

The Mirror



As I stare at
the empty doorway
where my parents
disappeared, the bell
rings for dinner.
I blink back tears.
I mustn't cry!

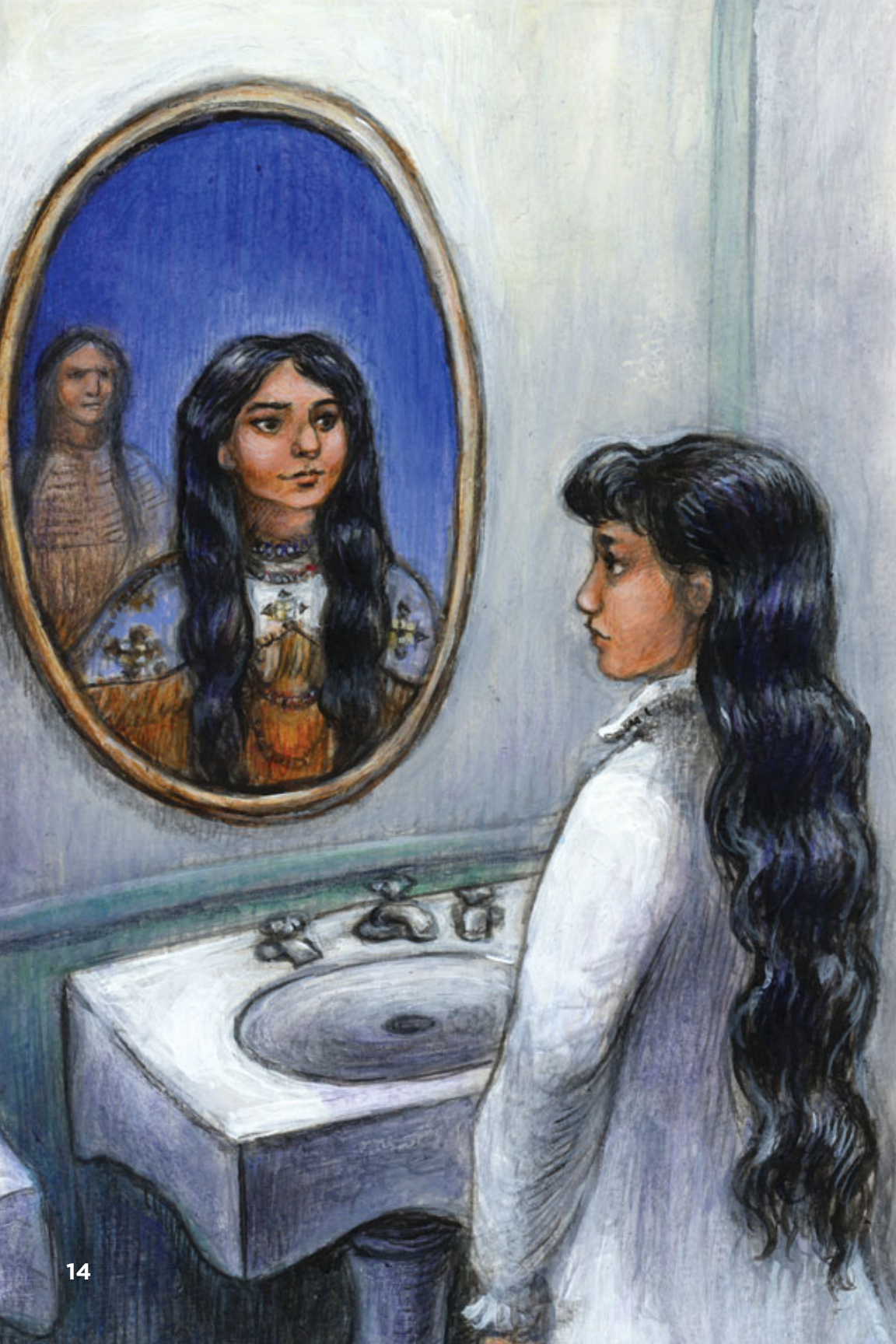
I line up with
the other girls. We
aren't allowed to
talk, but from their
looks and smiles, I know they want to hear my
parents' news.

I have to remind myself that I'm lucky—
many of the others haven't seen their parents in
a long time. I force myself to smile back. Why
make them feel worse than they already do?
I will make up some news from home out of
my memories.

We march into the dormitory and get ready for bed. I pull the pins from my hair. It feels so much better free. Next I take off my shoes and get undressed. Then I pull on my white cotton nightgown.



The irritating bell rings again. It's time to march to the bathroom. Some teachers let us chatter, but tonight the teacher expects us to be quiet. We wash our faces and brush our teeth in silence.



I stare into the mirror, trying to see the person my parents saw. When I left them, my hair was loose and I wore a buckskin tunic and beads. The girl in the mirror, like those around me, looks almost like a white girl.

I look again into my own eyes. Who do I see? I am not the white girl the teachers want me to be. But I am not the same girl I once was. Where do I fit?

The answer comes from deep within me. Yes, I have changed and learned new ways. But I am still the person I was when I was born. No one can ever take away my heritage. I know I will forge my own path now—combining the ways of my people with the ways I am learning in this school.

I take a deep breath and turn toward my future.

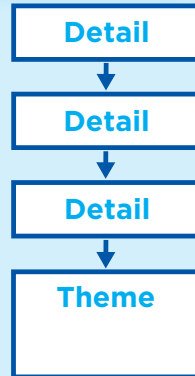
STOP AND CHECK

What did the girl decide when she was looking at herself in the mirror?

Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize the main events in *The Visit*. Details from your graphic organizer may help.



Text Evidence

1. How can you tell this story is historical fiction? **GENRE**
2. What is one way the girls stay connected to their homes and to each other, even though they are from different places? **THEME**
3. What does *chatter* on page 13 mean? What other word could the author have used instead of *chatter*? **CONNOTATION AND DENOTATION**
4. Write about what home and family mean to the narrator. Use details from the story in your answer. **WRITE ABOUT READING**

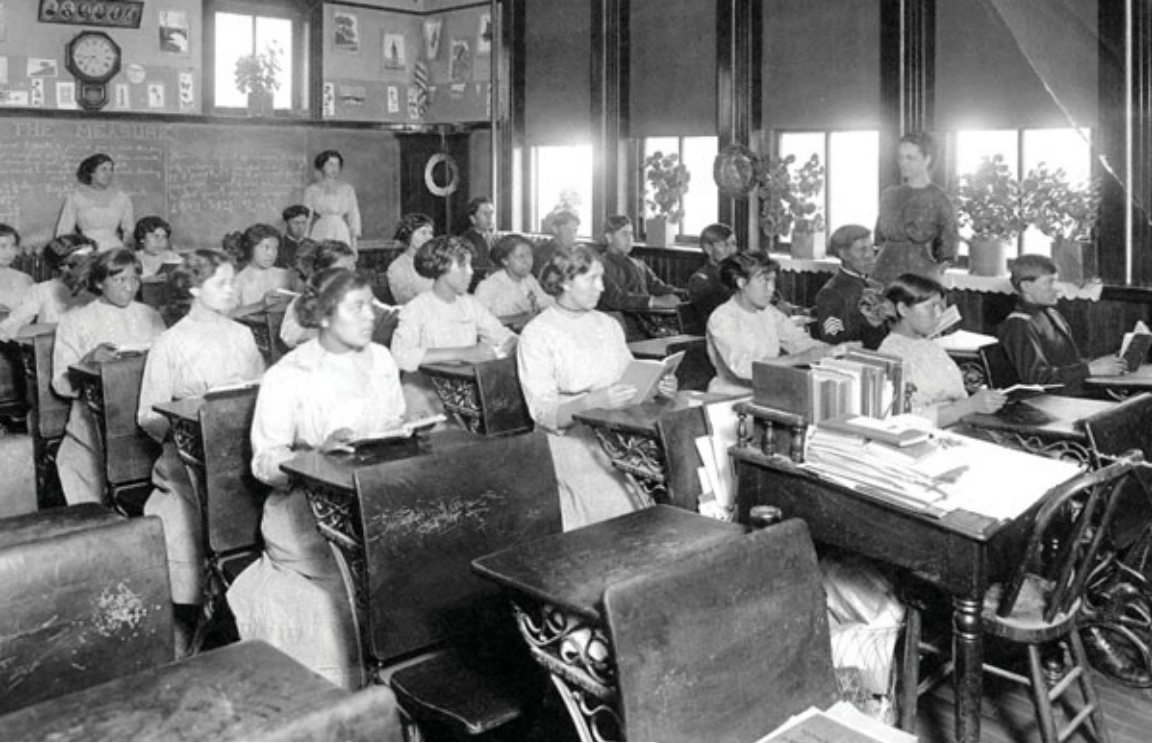
Compare Texts

Read about Native American boarding schools.

Native American Boarding Schools

During the 1800s, the government wanted Native Americans to learn the ways of white people. They wanted all citizens in the United States to look and act the same.

The first Native American boarding school was started in Pennsylvania in 1879 by a soldier named Captain Richard Henry Pratt. He convinced the government that with proper education and training, Native American children would fit in better with white culture.



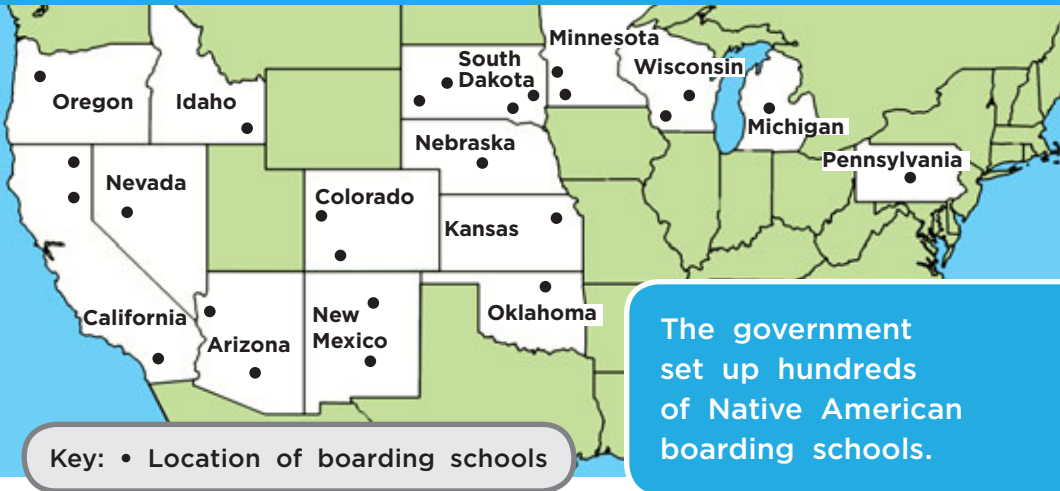
This classroom is at a Native American boarding school in Nebraska, which opened in 1884.

Thousands of Native American children were taken from their families by government officials and placed in boarding schools.

Girls learned how to cook, sew, and do laundry. Boys learned skills such as carpentry and shoe making.

Most of the children were unhappy because they were forced to give up their culture. The conditions in many schools were also poor. The boarding schools were crowded, the food wasn't very healthy, and the students often got sick.

Native American Boarding Schools in the United States



In the 1920s, the government changed its mind about the boarding schools. By the 1930s, many Native American children attended regular public schools near their homes.

Today the descendants of people who attended the Native American boarding schools teach their children to be proud of their traditions.



Make Connections

How did the boarding schools lead to Native American children losing their traditions and culture?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does *Native American Boarding Schools* help you understand more about the experiences the main character had in *The Visit*? **TEXT TO TEXT**

Focus on Genre

Historical Fiction Historical fiction tells a story that is set in the past. It often gives information about a real event and can show real people who were living at the time. Historical fiction gives the reader an understanding of life in the past.

Read and Find *The Visit* is based on real events when Native American children were sent to boarding schools. The characters in the story are made up, but the situation is based on fact. Compare facts you read about in *Native American Boarding Schools* with the experiences of the narrator and her family in *The Visit*.

Your Turn

Native Americans have a tradition of telling familiar stories aloud. The stories tell about the past and keep their culture alive. Choose a person or an event in your family that you could tell a story about. You can make up some details to add interest, but base your story on key facts. Have your family give feedback on the story. Practice telling your story until it sounds and feels right and then share it with others.

Literature Circles

Fiction

Thinkmark

Characters

How would you describe the narrator in *The Visit*?

Setting

Where did *The Visit* take place?

When did it take place?

Conclusions

What conclusions can you draw about the importance of shared traditions to Native Americans?

Author's Purpose

Why do you think the author wrote *The Visit*?

Make Connections

What connections can you make with other stories you've read or heard about people who had to leave their homes?