

# Stone River Crossing

written by Tim Tingle

cover illustration by Julie Flett

## About the Book

**Genre:** Magical Realism/Historical Fiction

**Format:** Hardcover, \$20.95  
336 pages, 5" x 7-1/2"

**ISBN:** 978-1-62014-823-5

**Reading Level:** Grade\_\_

**Interest Level:** Grades 3-7

**Guided Reading Level:** W

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
N/A

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** African/African American Interest, Community, Courage, Diversity, Empathy/Compassion, Fiction, Friendship, Geography, History, Identity/Self Esteem/Confidence, Imagination, Middle Grade, Native American Interest, Overcoming Obstacles, Slavery, Traditions

### Resources on the web:

[leeandlow.com/books/stone-river-crossing](http://leeandlow.com/books/stone-river-crossing)

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

## SYNOPSIS

Martha Tom knows better than to cross the Bok Chitto River to pick blackberries. The Bok Chitto is the only border between her town in the Choctaw Nation and the slave-owning plantation in Mississippi territory. The slave owners could catch her, too. What was she thinking? But crossing the river brings a surprise friendship with Lil Mo, a boy who is enslaved on the other side. Then Lil Mo discovers that his mother is about to be sold and the rest of his family left behind. But Martha Tom has the answer: cross the Bok Chitto and become free.

Crossing to freedom with his family seems impossible with slave catchers roaming, but then there is a miracle—a magical night where things become unseen and souls walk on water. By morning, Lil Mo discovers he has entered a completely new world of tradition, community, and . . . a little magic. But as Lil Mo's family adjusts to their new life, danger waits just around the corner.

In an expansion of his award-winning picture book *Crossing Bok Chitto*, acclaimed Choctaw storyteller Tim Tingle offers a story that reminds readers that the strongest bridge between cultures is friendship.

## BACKGROUND

### Note about Terminology

When using this Guide, teachers are encouraged to incorporate local Indigenous histories into the discussions. We acknowledge that terms may vary by region when discussing Indigenous communities. For example, discussions may include a specific tribe's name and/or may use more general terms such as Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, or First Nations that are neither intended to minimize nor elevate any one tribe. Furthermore, the term Native is used to identify Indigenous people, as this is a commonly-used term in some Indigenous communities. Teachers are encouraged to speak about Native Americans in present tense and acknowledge that all Native Americans carry rich cultures and traditions. A Native American's identity is not tied to the United States of America's recognition as people.

**Choctaw:** It is important to note that a tribe may have multiple bands, each with potentially distinct cultures and traditions. *Stone River Crossing* is specific to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. There are three federally-recognized Choctaw bands: Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, and Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. It should not be assumed that all three are exactly the same. Teachers are encouraged to visit the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian's website to learn more information about the tribe's history, culture, traditions, current events, and many other elements that make up their community at <https://www.choctaw.org/index.html>.

### Native American Storytelling

Oral storytelling is a way people from a variety of backgrounds may share traditional stories and songs across generations. Prior to colonization in the present-day United States of America, storytelling existed. Oral storytelling remains a way that Native American communities share wisdom and preserve rich cultures and traditions. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians indicate that many of the stories they share are folktales (known as Shokka annopa). Animal characters are noted in many of the stories. The aim of some stories was to teach a lesson. (<https://www.choctaw.org/culture/ihinoshi.html>)

Thomas King's book *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* is an additional reference when thinking about the role of storytelling in our daily lives. Although King's book is not necessarily appropriate for students in grades 3 to 7, it is a recommended book for teachers to gain a deeper understanding about storytelling from a Native American perspective. (<https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/the-truth-about-stories>)

### Owls

In *Stone River Crossing*, there is a witch owl man. The witch owl man plays an integral role to the storyline and connects to Choctaw storytelling regarding an animal as a character. The role and meaning of an owl character are important. Tribes may vary on their particular perspective about owls, in general or specific to a certain owl. Teachers are strongly encouraged to read and discuss the role and meaning of owls in the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and to explore owls as they relate to their local tribe(s). More information about owls and differing perspectives among tribes can be found at <https://www.powwows.com/concerning-owls/>.

According to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian's Office of Public Information, an owl (in general) means that death is coming. The owl might have different meanings between enrolled citizens, but the essence is that owls do not represent favorable experiences.

### Treaties

Treaties are a controversial issue in what is known as Indian Country. In *Stone River Crossing*, Bledsoe tells other characters how a plantation owner will take possession of new land. Bledsoe mentions that "You can always find someone to sign the treaty. Especially if they are surrounded by guns" (see page 302). The discussion of treaties and subsequent treaty rights deserves attention in understanding the political nature of being Native American, sovereignty rights, and agreements between two sovereign nations (in this case, the United States of America and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians). It is suggested that primary-source treaty documents are shared with students to better understand the intentions and implications of treaties on Native American people. The following website is a resource for primary-source treaty documents <https://americanindian.si.edu/nationtonation/>.

### Mississippi Choctaws and the Dawes Roll

In Chapter 26 of *Stone River Crossing*, the concept of being adopted into a tribe is mentioned. In the chapter, the tribal council met and agreed to have a character be identified as "You are Choctaw now" (see page 142). Two important points are necessary to clarify why this is a historically important scenario. First, adoption does not necessarily result in tribal citizenry. Choctaw freedmen have a history regarding tribal enrollment. Teachers are encouraged to search for literature on Choctaw freedmen when having a discussion about adoption into the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Second, teachers are encouraged to view information about the Dawes Roll (see <https://www.okhistory.org/research/mschoctaw.php>) to gain a better understanding about historical challenges with tribal enrollment and recognition from the government outside of the tribe's sovereign government. It is strongly encouraged for teachers to emphasize that adoption of an individual may or may not constitute being a citizen of a tribe. Each tribe has their own government which may include information on being recognized as a tribal citizen.

According to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian's Office of Public Information, tribal enrollment is based on the 1940 Bureau of Indian Affairs Roll and not off the Dawes Roll like the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. This is important to note, as the concept of adoption may have been handled differently between the different bands of Choctaw.

### Colonization

The ongoing impact of colonization throughout Indian Country is real. *Stone River Crossing* takes place in the year 1808. The effect of colonization is illuminated in multiple touchpoints in the book. Chapter 48 of the book is an example of colonization when the character Reverend Bob is introduced (see page 295). The book includes a discussion about marriage practices, but then introduces Reverend Bob into the narrative. This introduction is important because it articulates the merging of Native American traditions with colonization. It is strongly advised that teachers discuss colonization with students and what that might mean as they read the book. It is recommended that teachers interested in the effect of colonization to read the Lee & Low Books title *The People Shall Continue* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue>) as a supplement to *Stone River Crossing*. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act might be a helpful springboard

for further classroom discussions about colonization and its effects on preserving, restoring, and honoring cultures and traditions that trace back centuries.

It is necessary to elaborate a bit more regarding colonization and its early history with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to fully understand colonization as it is presented in *Stone River Crossing*. According to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Office of Public Information, Hernando de Soto (a Spanish conquistador) arrived in Choctaw territory with a Spanish priest. This arrival is noted as this particular tribe's first contact with colonization and Christianity. At some point (perhaps circa 1675), explorers were warned not to travel west. In 1699, however, a French explorer arrived in Choctaw territory and invested time in understanding the Choctaw. Thus, in *Stone River Crossing*, the tribal pastor (Reverend Bob) is a character in whom colonization is clearly integrated into traditional ways. The integration of traditional and colonized ways dates back to at least two hundred years before the 1808 setting of the book.

### Slavery

Consult Teaching Tolerance's "Tongue-Tied" guide (<https://historyexplorer.si.edu/sites/default/files/PrimarySources.pdf>) and "Teaching Hard History: A Framework for Teaching American Slavery" (<https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/TT-Teaching-Hard-History-FrameworkWEB-February2018.pdf>) for terminology, key concepts, objectives, and appropriate timelines for teaching about slavery correctly, honestly, and accurately.

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What do you know about Native American history? What have you learned about Native people?
- What tribes' land do students currently occupy? Why is this important to acknowledge and know about?
- Read aloud and discuss the "Glossary and Pronunciation Guide" (pages 317 to 319) as a class.
- Encourage students to share a family story where they learned a lesson.
- How does storytelling help you learn about the world?
- How does colonization impact Native American cultures and traditions? What do you know about colonialism? How might colonialism be connected to this book?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- Talk about the title of the book. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author's dedications, Mississippi Territory map (found right after the author's dedication page), glossary and pronunciation guide (pages 317 to 319), author's note (see pages 320 to 322), and acknowledgments (pages 323 to 325).
- Point out that this book is bilingual as it uses the Choctaw language. Ask students why a book might be written this way. Why does it matter what language an author uses? How does a language change how a story is told or who hears it?

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- the culture and traditions of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
- the impact of colonization on traditions and ways of life
- the impact of slavery and the horrors that enslaved people endured
- the role of storytelling in honoring and sustaining cultures and traditions across generations

- how friendships are valued in different cultures

Encourage students to consider why the author, Tim Tingle, would want to share this story with young people.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

### Content Specific

achukma (good), hoke (good; okay in today's English), ilvppa ittibai foyuka (we are all in this together), yakoke (thank you), okla chukma (good people), lean-to, plantation, chi pisa la chike, Choctaw, kin, pashofa, thicket, Bohpoli, cypress, ofi okpulo, Owa Nahalo, pelts, blow-dart gun, nahullo, trading post, iskuli, saddlehorn, buzzards, embers, shilombish, yannash, amafo, tobi walhali, venomously, loblolly pine, banaha bread

### Academic

acknowledgments, announced, approached/approaching, authority, avoid/avoiding, cause, ceased, citizen, claim/claimed, convince, decade, declared, encouraged, exhausted/exhaustion, explain, expression, extends, glared, history, huddled, Indians, insisted, investigated, lean-to, plantation, recounting, thesis, tremble, unexpected, treaty, nuzzling, swatted, wriggled, scrambled, irritate, hollowed, stout, jutting, kinship, smoldering, shriveled, whirring, cultivated, unsheathed, trespasser

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

#### **Chapters 1-8**

1. What is Martha Tom responsible for collecting when she crossed the river?
2. Why is Martha Tom warned about living on the other side of the river?
3. Who does Martha Tom meet on the other side of the river?
4. What ceremony do Martha Tom and Lil Mo participate in together?
5. How does music play a role in Lil Mo's life?
6. What role has trust played in Martha Tom's and Lil Mo's families?
7. Who is responsible for taking Martha Tom back to the river when she is lost on the plantation side?
8. What is a slave trader?
9. What does Lil Mo suggest to his father after they find out about the sale of his mother?
10. What happens when Lil Mo and his family walk out the front door when they think Bledsoe and his guards are outside?

#### **Chapters 9-12**

11. What role does the owl play in the book?
12. Who does Lil Mo see at the river and who helps him?
13. Who is Koi Losa and what does he do?
14. Who is Joseph's best friend?

#### **Chapters 13-20**

15. Why is Mr. Porter put in jail?
16. What does Mr. Porter know about Joseph? What does he want Joseph to give Lil Mo?
17. In Chapter 15 (page 74), what did the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians sign which declared Choctaw laws are to be followed on one side of the river?

18. Who does Lil Mo see by the river? What does he think might happen?
19. What does Funi Man tell Lil Mo about owls?
20. What shape did the Choctaw women have on their sleeves during the special Miracle Night?
21. Who is Shonti?

**Chapters 21-31**

22. Lil Mo names his dog Ofijo. What does the name Ofijo mean?
23. Koi Losa says that Funi Man is the uncle of which character? Hint: Koi Losa mentions that "A Choctaw uncle can be your kin, but he doesn't have to be" (page 118).
24. Mrs. Porter offers Harold pumpkin bread (page 121) in attempt to distract him from what specific situation?
25. "Harold saw a hat and fired at it" (page 132). Why does Harold shoot at a hat?
26. Why is Mr. Porter released from jail?
27. Funi Man gives Lavester and Treda an old house. Who did the house belong to previously? How do Lavester and Treda react to the offer?
28. What did the Choctaw feast in Chapter 27 include?
29. Who does Lil Mo meet during the thunderstorm with Ofijo? What happens?
30. What are bone pickers?
31. How does Lil Mo describe life on the plantation to Martha Tom?

**Chapters 32-42**

32. What purpose does the witch owl man serve?
33. What animal do Choctaw people believe symbolize evil, perhaps death?
34. What secret does Lil Mo have that he keeps from Funi Man?
35. Who are the fish people? What do they try to do?
36. What is iskuli? What does Funi Man do to get it and what does he say about it?
37. Where do Funi Man and Koi Losa go together?
38. Funi Man told Koi Losa that he needed to do "exactly the opposite of what you want to do" (page 217). Who was Funi Man hoping Koi Losa would trick with this advice?
39. How does the witch owl man die?
40. In Chapter 42, the blue shawl woman is introduced as a character. What do you know at this point in the book about the blue shawl woman?

**Chapters 43-47**

41. How many days does the dead witch owl man's body travel before arriving at Shonti's house?

42. What are the ways that Koi Losa saves Funi Man's life?
43. What does Shonti do with the witch owl man's remains?
44. What word does Jonah convince Lil Mo to tell Martha Tom? How does Martha Tom react?
45. What is the intended purpose of Shonti's herbal tea?
46. How is everyone acting before Shonti and Funi Man's wedding?
47. In a Choctaw wedding, what would cause the wedding to be called off?

### **Chapters 48-51**

48. What happens at the wedding with Martha Tom and Lil Mo?
49. What shape do Choctaw women sew into their nicest clothes?
50. What does Bledsoe want from the Choctaw people?
51. What is the name of the tribal pastor?
52. In Chapter 51, what is the agreement that Hattak Chula and Mr. Kendall come to?

### **Extension/Higher Level Thinking**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. In some communities, language is central. Why is Choctaw used in the book? Would eliminating the Choctaw language from the book change the story? If so, how?
2. The importance of place and community are emphasized throughout the book.
  - Identify different places and communities in the book.
  - How do places and communities in the book guide the storyline? Draw a graphic that shows your thoughts.
3. In *Stone River Crossing*, why did the author choose to have young people, Martha Tom and Lil Mo, as the main characters? How did that affect the way that you read the book?
4. How do the cultural celebrations and traditions in *Stone River Crossing* differ from your family's celebrations and/or traditions? If your family does not participate in celebrations, compare how you honor your ancestors to the traditions described in the book.
5. How might the wedding scene change if Bledsoe had arrived across the Bok Chitto River a few hours earlier?
6. How does the author, Tim Tingle, describe colonization to readers?
7. How does colonization impact the storyline and your understanding of Choctaw cultures and traditions?
8. Why is it important that Lil Mo describes what his life was like at the plantation to Martha Tom? How is this essential to the book?
9. Why did the author, Tim Tingle, include Ofijo in the book?

10. Would taking the character Ofijo out of the book change the story? If so, how?
11. How does Funi Man describe iskuli (money) to Koi Losa? How does Koi Losa respond? Do you agree with how Funi Man views iskuli?
12. Imagine that the story started with Martha Tom being captured on the plantation side of the Bok Chitto River instead of Lil Mo crossing to the Choctaw Nation side of the river. How might this change the direction of the story?
13. How does *Stone River Crossing* compare to other books or short stories you have read that include Native American characters in the past, present, or future?
14. In what ways do the characters' friendships in *Stone River Crossing* relate to your friendships? Why or why not?

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Select a character from the story. Describe the character, write about how the character is important to the story, and identify the different relationships that the character has. Why is this character critical to *Stone River Crossing*?
2. Compare and contrast two characters that you feel play similar roles (e.g., mothers). Note any cultural similarities and differences.
3. Pretend you are to write a letter to the local newspaper seeking advice on a current problem you identify in the book. Once you write your letter, have another student write a possible solution to the identified problem.
4. What do you think author Tim Tingle's message to the reader is? Read the Author's Note and think about the possible motivations behind Tingle's intentions to write a longer, chapter-book version of his picture book, *Crossing Bok Chitto*. What do you think he wanted to tell readers?
5. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What interesting customs have you learned by reading this novel? Cite examples from the text. Can you find any similarities to your own cultural or family customs?
6. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books or movies while you read *Stone River Crossing*? Why did you make those connections?
7. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Stone River Crossing* make you think of that?

### ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a character of their choosing from the book.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. Students can also refer to the Glossary in the back of the book.

### Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)  
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. In *Stone River Crossing*, the characters follow social rules. For instance, Martha Tom and Lil Mo are both told by elders where they can and cannot go and/or what they can and cannot do. If you were either Martha Tom or Lil Mo, what would be your best reason for not following the directions from your elders? Also, if you were either Martha Tom's or Lil Mo's parents, how would you react to their lack of following directions?
2. Why do you believe Mr. Porter thinks of others before himself in his actions, including protecting others before himself?
3. How do stereotypes, if at all, impact the feelings of characters in the book?
4. In Chapter 46, Shonti notices an empty bowl of her love potion. If you were Shonti, how would

you react to finding the love potion you created to be gone and why?

5. Identify one chapter in *Stone River Crossing* that makes you feel either anxious or hopeful. Describe what makes you feel this way in the selected chapter.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Compare and contrast the culture and traditions of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to your own.** Think of your cultures and traditions in your own home. Have students create visual presentations featuring the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, both from what they learn in the book and from other reputable resources, including [choctaw.org](http://choctaw.org).
- **Have students write an essay about the importance of the Bok Chitto River in *Stone River Crossing*.** What does the river represent? How is the river important to both Martha Tom and Lil Mo? What does the river symbolize? Students can share their findings with a partner, small group, or the whole class.
- **Review some of the food that is described during celebrations or ceremonies in *Stone River Crossing*.** Food might be considered part of a culture. Food also might have particular stories tied to it. Create a list of the foods in the book. Create a list of foods from other cultures used for celebrations and ceremonies and identify any similarities and/or differences. At home, have students create a food item that represents their cultural identity. Have students write a recipe card with a photo of the created food item to share with the class.
- **Consult the “Selective Bibliography and Guide for ‘I’ is not for Indian: Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People” to read more about recommended titles, titles to avoid, and additional guidelines in choosing culturally responsive Native texts for students.** (<http://www.nativeculturelinks.com/ailabib.htm>) Read books that meet these criteria in the following categories:
  - Find books that feature Native people in the present. LEE & LOW titles include *This Land is My Land* by George Littlechild (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/this-land-is-my-land>) and *Kiki’s Journey* by Kristy Orona-Ramirez (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/kiki-s-journey>).

- Find books that present Native people accurately such as *Buffalo Song* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/buffalo-song>), *Crazy Horse's Vision* by Joseph Bruchac (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/crazy-horse-s-vision>), and *Indian No More* by Charlene Willing McManis with Traci Sorrell (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/indian-no-more>).
- Find biographies of Native people, such as *Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story* by S.D. Nelson (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/quiet-hero>) and *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* by Joseph Bruchac (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path>).
- **After reading *Stone River Crossing*, read Tim Tingle's picture book, *Crossing Bok Chitto*.** In a graphic organizer, have students identify the similarities and differences between reading the picture book versus the novel. What was it like to see the illustrations in *Crossing Bok Chitto*? What more were they able to learn about the characters in *Stone River Crossing*? Students can elaborate on their findings in a critical essay. Lastly, students can think about a beloved picture book and think about how they would create a longer novel version. What would they write about? Why? What would they want to learn more about in a longer version of the picture book?
- **Have students discuss the elements of magical realism and fantasy in *Stone River Crossing*.** Students can generate their ideas in a graphic organizer about the different parts of the book that incorporate fantasy. How do the fantastical elements add to the book? What does it mean to require a "suspension of disbelief" from the reader? What about "magical realism"? How does it affect you as a reader?

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Language might be viewed as an element of culture. Think about the languages noticed in your classroom and discuss how the languages help us better understand the related culture.** Students can learn more about the Choctaw language from the Glossary and Pronunciation Guide in the back of the book as well as from online sources (<https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/language/about-choctaw-language>). Have students think about how language is helpful in their own lives and how it plays a huge role in *Stone River Crossing*. How does language connect (or hurt) people? Why?
- **Research the Choctaw wedding practices and compare these practices to your understanding of weddings.** In *Stone River Crossing*, there are ceremonies. The wedding is an example of a ceremony in the book. Consult different resources on Choctaw weddings and information gathered in the book (<https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/heritage-traditions/marriage>).
- **Research the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' stickball game.** Compare stickball to other games you play. The following YouTube video may help with your research: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhMeifgKZk>.

- **Explore different beliefs regarding death and dying from a variety of cultures.** Death and dying may be treated differently depending on the community. In *Stone River Crossing*, the reader is introduced to bone pickers as a part of burial ceremony.
- **The book includes an example of trade.** The characters learn about the value placed on paper money instead of valuing the traded goods. Discuss trading posts as a class. From the discussion, the teacher can guide a deeper dive into the effects of colonization on traditional ways of trade.
- **Research the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake and its importance to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.** The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians value the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake. They honor the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake in their regalia and basketry with diamond designs. After conducting research, relate your new understanding of the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians to the character Shonti in *Stone River Crossing* (<http://www.native-languages.org/legends-rattlesnake.htm>).
- **Research owls in Choctaw and Native American cultures.** What do owls typically represent? How are owls perceived in *Stone River Crossing*, and what is their role? Have students elaborate on the character of the witch owl man. What happens with the witch owl man in the story, and what kind of foreshadowing about owls takes place? Students can learn more about owls online and through other forms of literature (<http://www.native-languages.org/legends-owl.htm>).
- **Have students research the importance of rivers and bodies of water in cultures around the world.** How are rivers important to groups of people? Why are they critical in certain communities? Have students share their findings in a visual presentation format of their choosing with a partner, small group, or the whole class (<https://www.americanrivers.org/threats-solutions/protecting-rivers/the-value-of-wild-river/>).
- **Research and investigate tribal nations in your school's area.** Students can conduct research through books or other materials on tribal nations that are indigenous to the local area. Ask them if the nations are still living in their area today. If not, ask students if the nations were moved elsewhere and why. Students can look for information on current tribal government information today.
- **Encourage students to learn more about how some Native Americans, including Choctaws, helped enslaved people escape slavery.** Students can consult online resources and other texts to help them learn about how some Native Americans were critical in helping enslaved people into their territories where they would be free, resembling how Martha Tom helped Lil Mo and his family (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/an-ancestry-of-african-native-americans-7986049/>) (<https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/experience/responses/history2.html>).

### Art, Media & Music

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students write a reaction to the power of music in *Stone River Crossing*.** When Martha Tom gets lost and discovers Lil Mo and his family, they are singing a song, “I Am Bound for the Promised Land.” When Lil Mo and his family crossed the Bok Chitto River, Martha Tom translates the song in Choctaw. How do these songs impact the characters? Why are they important to the book? Overall, how does music uplift people in times of need and distress?
- **Find different spirituals and analyze the meaning of the spirituals.** *Stone River Crossing* includes spirituals. Have students define spirituals. Some spirituals may have secret meanings. For example, the spiritual “Wade in the Water” (not included in *Stone River Crossing*) served a specific purpose for slaves attempting to escape. What spirituals are evident in *Stone River Crossing*, and how are spirituals meaningful to people in the book? The Library of Congress has more information about African American Spirituals for further learning (<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/>) (<http://www.pbs.org/mercy-street/blogs/mercy-street-revealed/songs-of-survival-and-songs-of-freedom-during-slavery/>).

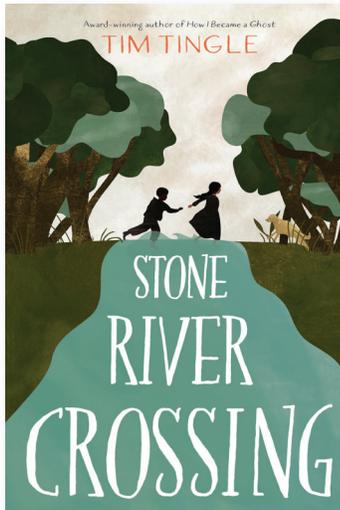
### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Interview a family member about family history.** Create a web that documents your family's physical moving. This may be moving within the same town/city or moving to different states or countries. What did students learn about their family?
- **Provide students and families with resources to learn more about the Mississippi Band of Choctaw.** Students and families can consult the Choctaw Nation Map (<https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/choctaw-nation-map>), learn about traditions (<https://www.choctaw.org/culture/traditions.html>), and more.
- **If possible, lend a copy of *Crossing Bok Chitto*** ([https://www.cincopuntos.com/products\\_detail.sstg?id=100](https://www.cincopuntos.com/products_detail.sstg?id=100)) **to families to read with their children.** Ask families for students to discuss the differences between the picture book and the novel they just read, *Stone River Crossing*. What was it like to read a novel version of a book that was originally in an illustrated format?



## Ordering Information

**General Order Information:**

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**By Mail:**

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,  
New York, NY 10016

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Tim Tingle** is an Oklahoma Choctaw and an award-winning author and storyteller of twenty books. In 1993, he retraced the Trail of Tears to Choctaw homelands in Mississippi and began recording stories of tribal elders. From talks with elder Archie Mingo emerged his picture book *Crossing Bok Chitto*, Tingle's first children's illustrated book. This history-based tale is the inspiration for *Stone River Crossing*.

### REVIEWS

"Richly descriptive and leavened with humor, Tingle's complex novel offers valuable insights into rarely told history." –*Publishers Weekly*, **starred review**

"The book soars, almost literally, when Lil Mo's soul is stolen by an Owl Man, a witch, whose dramatic machinations, along with those of other spirit-filled characters, give this an indelible glow." –*Booklist*, **starred review**

"This vital story will deepen readers' understanding of the nation's complex history." –*Kirkus Reviews*, **starred review**

"Throughout the tale—told with heart and much humor—runs the refrain "we are all in this together," a fine message for our current divisive times." –*The Horn Book*

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](https://leeandlow.com).