

Island of the Blue Dolphins, Chapter 22
Saying *Miyiiha* (Hello) to the Lone Woman

Grade Level

Upper Elementary: Third Grade through Fifth Grade

Subject

Literacy and Language Arts, Social Studies

Common Core Standards

4.SL.1, 5.SL.1, 4.RL.1, 5.RL.1

Background Information

The story of the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island inspired author Scott O'Dell to create the character of Karana. Anthropologists describe the historical Lone Woman as an “Island Gabrielino” because her people, the Nicoleños, shared cultural practices and belief systems with the Gabrielino people who lived on the mainland, both during the nineteenth century and today.

Linguists believe that the Nicoleños spoke a language that is part of the Uto-Aztecan family. The mainland Gabrielino also spoke a language from this linguistic family. Island and mainland Gabrielino did not speak the same language in the early nineteenth century, but they would likely have been able to understand each other at least in part. That is definitely the case for the Gabrielino living on Santa Catalina Island—they could understand Gabrielino speakers on the mainland—and it *may* have been the case for Gabrielinos living on nearby San Nicolas Island.

The term “Gabrielino” comes from the name of the Spanish Mission San Gabriel, where many Gabrielino people lived during the period when California was part of the Spanish Empire. Today, some Gabrielino people prefer to call themselves, and their language, *Tongva*. This is a native name.

The Lone Woman is most accurately described as a Nicoleño, rather than an Island Gabrielino, because that term is more specific—it ties her to the place where she lived. The name Nicoleño comes from the Spanish term for the most remote of the California Channel Islands, San Nicolas Island, or what the author Scott O'Dell called in his novel the *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Nicoleño is a more specific term than Gabrielino or Tongva. For example, you might say that you are an “American” (general) or that you are a “Californian” (more specific).

In chapter 22, Karana and her new friend Tutok are talking with one another. In spite of the fact that they do not share a language, they are able to communicate. For Karana, hearing the sound of human language, even one she does not understand, is a joy.

This lesson is designed to introduce students to some of the sounds of the Tongva language so that they can hear what Karana *might* have sounded like when she spoke.

It also gives students the opportunity to try to speak some Tongva words in an exercise meant to encourage them to find creative ways to communicate across a language barrier.

Note: the languages Karana and Tutok speak in Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* are not actual Native California or Alaska languages. O'Dell likely invented the words he included in the novel. For more information about these inventions, see the introduction and notes to *Island of the Blue Dolphins: The Complete Reader's Edition* (University of California Press, 2016).

Think-Pair-Share: This learning strategy positions the teacher as a facilitator and allows students to learn through peer collaboration. First, the teacher asks the class a question and gives the students a set time to think about how they would answer that question. Then, the students talk about their answers with a partner. Once students have concluded their one-on-one conversations, they participate in a whole-class discussion about the questions raised.

Materials

- Copy of pronunciation guide for each pair (provided)
- Copy of activity sheet for each student (provided)
- Class set of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*
- Crayons or colored pencils

Procedure

Activity One

1. Give each student a copy of the activity sheet.
2. Assign each student a partner. Give each pair a copy of the pronunciation guide.
3. If needed, explain the steps of Think-Pair-Share to students and tell them how much time they have to think about and discuss each question. Encourage students to refer to the text as they think and talk about the questions.
4. Pose the following questions: In what way is this chapter different from others in the book? How do Tutok and Karana communicate?
5. Give students one to two minutes to think.
6. Give students three to five minutes to discuss their thoughts with their partners.
7. Regroup for whole-class discussion. Invite students to share their ideas.

Activity Two

1. Introduce the students to Tongva using the pronunciation guide.
2. Tell students they will first learn the word for "hello." Ask students to talk with their partner about how they would pronounce *miyiiha* if they were reading it in a story. Now show them how it's pronounced in the Tongva language, referring to the pronunciation guide (*my-ee-ha*). Ask them how close their pronunciation was to yours.
3. Ask students to go through chapter 22 and find examples of Karana's language. They should find the following words: *win-tai*, *Won-a-pa-lei*, and *pah-say-no*.
4. Explain to students that these words were likely Scott O'Dell's invention. They

are not Tongva, nor are they Aleut (for more information, see *Island of the Blue Dolphins: The Complete Reader's Edition*). However, you can practice speaking Karana's words as *if* they were really Tongva. Work together as a class to pronounce Karana's words according to the pronunciation guide activity sheet.

Activity Three

1. Complete activity three as if playing Charades.
2. This activity could be in small groups or with the whole class.
3. Explain to students that volunteers will be given an opportunity to give the rest of the group/class simple drawing directions in Tongva for the rest of the students to follow.
4. Each direction is to include a number, color, and shape. Students must use the Tongva words for the number and color and then use hand gestures to indicate the shape, such as a circle, square, or triangle. Some may want to use a more complex shape, such as a tree, house, or flower.
5. Give students time to prepare. Then select students to stand and give their directions.
6. Other students can use crayons or colored pencils to follow the given directions in the blank space at the bottom of their activity sheets.
7. Check the results as a group.

Enrichment Activities

1. Find a video segment in a language unfamiliar to all your students (from YouTube or another approved resource). You may want to consider videos in the Tongva, Aleut, or Alutiiq languages. Ask students to address these writing prompts: How did you feel as you were listening? How would you feel if you could not change the words to something you could understand?
2. A song now called the "Toki Toki song" was reportedly sung by the Lone Woman when she was brought from San Nicolas Island to Santa Barbara, California, in 1853. We don't have a recording of the Lone Woman singing the song herself. But many years after her death, a Chumash man who had heard her sing the Toki Toki song decades earlier sang it from memory for an American anthropologist named J.P. Harrington, who recorded the song using early twentieth-century technology. You can listen to the Chumash man, Fernando Librado (his native name is *Kitsepawit*), sing the Toki Toki song, and you can see a picture of Harrington making recordings of another California Indian language on a wax cylinder.
 - [Toki Toki song](#)
 - [J.P. Harrington photo](#)
3. In 1964, Universal Pictures made a film adaption of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. You may be able to find a copy of the film to watch in your classroom. Examine the scene in which Karana and Tutok communicate. The actress playing Karana speaks in English, but the actress playing Tutok speaks in Aleut, without subtitles! Can you figure out what Tutok is saying? The screenwriters consulted two Aleut vocabularies to write the script. You can access the books they consulted here:

- Charles A. Lee, “[Aleutian Indian & English Dictionary](#),” 1896
- R. H. Geoghegan, “[The Aleut Language](#),” U.S. Department of the Interior, 1944

Note: Teachers might remind students that the historical Native Alaskans who visited San Nicolas Island likely spoke the Alutiiq language, not Aleut, as many were from the Kodiak Islands rather than the nearby Aleutian Island chain. If the class is interested in listening to—or speaking—some Alutiiq words, explore the phenomenal resources available on the [Liicugtuk Alutiiq website](#).

Resources

Julia Bogany et al., *Now You’re Speaking Our Language* (Pamela Munro and the Gabrielino/Tongva Language Committee, 2012). Available via [Lulu Publishing](#).

Victor Golla, *California Indian Languages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

Native Village of Afognak, “[Liicugtuk Alutiiq](#).”

Sara L. Schwebel, ed. *Island of the Blue Dolphins: The Complete Reader’s Edition* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

Island of the Blue Dolphins, Chapter 22
Saying *Miyiiha* (Hello) to the Lone Woman:
Short Language Pronunciation Guide for Students

Gabrielino (Tongva) Vowels

Symbol	Gabrielino (Tongva) pronunciation
a	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> or the <i>a</i> in <i>sofa</i>
aa	Like <i>a</i> , only held longer
e	Like the <i>e</i> in <i>red</i>
ee	Like <i>e</i> , only held longer (Note: Not like the <i>ee</i> in <i>keep</i>)
i	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>rid</i>
ii	Like the <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , held longer than <i>i</i>
o	Like the <i>o</i> in <i>note</i>
oo	Like <i>o</i> , only held longer (Note: Not like the <i>oo</i> in <i>coop</i>)
u	Like the <i>u</i> in <i>flute</i>
uu	Like <i>u</i> , only held longer

Gabrielino (Tongva) Consonants

Symbol	Gabrielino (Tongva) pronunciation:
ch	Like <i>ch</i> in <i>child</i>
h	Like <i>h</i> in <i>hay</i>
k	Like <i>k</i> in <i>king</i>
kw	Like <i>qu</i> in <i>queen</i>
l	Like <i>l</i> in <i>light</i>
m	Like <i>m</i> in <i>moon</i>
n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i>
ng	Like <i>ng</i> in <i>sing</i>
p	Like <i>p</i> in <i>pine</i>
r	Like the <i>r</i> in Spanish <i>pero</i>
s	Like <i>s</i> in <i>see</i>
sh	Like <i>sh</i> in <i>shell</i>
t	Like <i>t</i> in <i>time</i>
v	Like <i>v</i> in <i>vine</i>
w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i>
x	Similar to <i>h</i> , like the <i>j</i> in Spanish <i>jalapeño</i> or the <i>ch</i> in German <i>Bach</i> or Scottish <i>loch</i>
y	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i>
'	Like the little pop in the middle of the word “uh-oh”

Language chart above made in consultation with Pamela Munro, author of *Hyaare Shiraaw'ax 'Eyooshiraaw'a: Now We Are Speaking Our Language*.

Name _____

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**Saying *Miyiiha* (Hello) to the Lone Woman:
Gabrielino (Tongva) Vocabulary Activity**

Numbers

One	Pokuu'
Two	Wehee'
Three	Paahe'
Four	Wachaa'
Five	Mahaar

Colors

Black	Yopiixa'
Red	Kwahooxa'
Yellow	Payuuhowe'
Green/Blue (distinction between these colors may not have been made by Tongva speakers)	Takaape'
White	Raawro'

Activity Directions

Your goal, without speaking any English, is to give simple drawing directions to the rest of the class. Your directions must include a number, color, and shape. Use the Tongva words above for numbers and colors. Then use hand gestures to indicate the shape, such as a circle, square, or triangle.

When another student gives drawing directions, use the space below and on the back of this page to follow them.