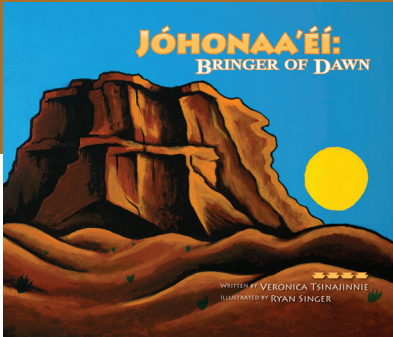


Teacher's Guide *Jóhonaa' Éi: Bringer Of Dawn*

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About the Book

Bringer of Dawn (*Jóhonaa' éi*) tells the journey of the sun, *Jóhonaa' éi*, as he rises over the mesas and awakens life across the Navajo homeland. His gentle rays touch plants, animals, and people—warming sagebrush, waking mice and rabbits, stirring a tired coyote, and nudging sheep from sleep. Finally, *Jóhonaa' éi* visits a Navajo family in their hogan. Together, the family steps outside at dawn, offers white corn to the morning spirits, and gives thanks to Mother Earth and the Bringer of Dawn. The story closes with a reminder of the Blessing Way prayers, honoring balance, beauty, and gratitude. This bilingual story, told in both English and Navajo, beautifully reflects daily cycles of life on the land, reminding children that each sunrise connects them to animals, family, and sacred traditions.

For Navajo emergent readers, culturally grounded and bilingual stories affirm identity, belonging, and the beauty of Diné lifeways while also building foundational literacy. When children hear their own language in books and see hogans, sheep, and desert landscapes, they recognize themselves in the story world, building confidence and pride in being Diné. Reading in both Navajo and English strengthens vocabulary, phonemic awareness, and comprehension across languages, while the side-by-side text helps children connect sounds, words, and meanings. The Navajo text honors the oral storytelling tradition while showing students that their language belongs in print, validating it as a tool for learning. Bilingual books also provide equity and access, ensuring that emergent readers can engage with content whether they are stronger in Navajo, English, or both, supporting diverse language backgrounds in the classroom.

The illustrations by Ryan Singer expand the story beyond words and enrich the bilingual reading experience. Vivid images of mesas, sagebrush, mice, rabbits, sheep, and the hogan provide visual anchors that help children link vocabulary to concrete images in both Navajo and English. The expressions of animals, such as the sleepy coyote or yawning lamb, encourage prediction and empathy, deepening comprehension. Cultural details such as the hogan door, the sheep corral, and the morning corn offering root the story in familiar lifeways, making the bilingual text come alive for children. Teachers can pause during read-alouds to ask questions like, “How do we say this animal in Navajo?” or “Where have you seen this before?” in order to invite children into dialogue that blends cultural knowledge with language practice. The combination of bilingual text and culturally rich illustrations creates a shared reading experience that honors Diné heritage while strengthening early literacy.

Readability:

Because the book's syntax is rhythmic and repetitive and supported by illustrations and Navajo translation, it functions well as a read-aloud for ages 5–9.

Younger students can follow visual cues and sound patterns, while older students (Grades 2–3) can engage in vocabulary, science, and cultural discussions about sunlight, animals, and morning routines.

Vocabulary

- Jóhonaa'éí – Sun, Bringer of Dawn
- Ts'ah – Sagebrush
- Na'ats'qqsí – Field mouse
- Gah – Rabbit
- Ma'ii – Coyote
- Dibé – Sheep
- Dibé yázhí – Lamb
- Hogan – Traditional Navajo home
- Shí má – Mother
- Shí zhé'é – Father
- Naadáá' – Corn (used in offering)
- Nahasdzáán – Mother Earth
- Sí'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hózhó – "I shall be Harmony, walk in Beauty, and live in Happiness with all things that exist"

5-Day Grades 1-3 Science Unit: “Animals and Habitats in Bringer of Dawn” AZ Science Standards Alignment

Grade	Standard Code	Description
1	1.L2U1.7	Observe and describe how animals use their body parts and senses to survive and grow.
2	2.L2U1.6	Plan and carry out an investigation to determine how animals depend on their environment for food, water, shelter, and space.
3	3.L1U1.5	Develop and use models to describe that organisms have unique structures that help them survive in specific habitats.
3	3.L2U1.8	Construct an argument from evidence about how environmental changes affect living things.

Unit Overview

Through *Jóhonaa’éei: Bringer of Dawn*, students explore how animals awaken to the sun, learning how habitats provide for the needs of rabbits, coyotes, mice, and sheep in Navajo lands. Each day includes Navajo vocabulary, science connections, and storytelling integration.

Day 1 – The Sun Rises: Introducing Jóhonaa’éei

SWBAT: Describe Jóhonaa’éei (the Sun) as the bringer of light and warmth that affects life on Earth.

Activities:

- Read the first pages aloud (sun over red mesas and sagebrush).
- Discuss: How does the sun change the land and animals at dawn?
- Navajo vocabulary: Jóhonaa’éei (Sun), Ts’ah (sagebrush), Nahasdzáán (Earth).
- Science connection: The sun gives energy to plants and animals.

Assessment: Draw and label what happens when the sun rises on the Navajo land.

Materials: Chart paper, crayons, word cards.

Day 2 – Desert Plants and Mice Homes

SWBAT: Identify plants and small animal habitats found on the Navajo Reservation.

Focus Text: Pages describing the field mice and sagebrush.

Activities:

- Review the illustration of the mice’s burrow and sage plants.
- Vocabulary: Na’ats’óósí (mouse), Ts’ah (sagebrush), Níłch’í (air).
- Discuss: Why do mice live underground? What plants do they eat?
- Build mini “burrows” with sand and small boxes.

Assessment: Students match animals (mice, rabbits, coyotes, sheep) to their habitat cards.

AZ Connection: 1.L2U1.7 – Body parts (whiskers, claws) for survival.

Day 3 – Rabbits, Coyotes, and the Circle of Life

SWBAT: Explain that animals depend on one another within their ecosystems.

Focus Text: Rabbit and coyote sections.

Activities:

- Read and compare how each animal greets the morning.
- Navajo vocabulary: Gah (rabbit), Ma’ii (coyote).
- Chart “Who eats what?”—introduce predator/prey.
- Discuss respect for all beings (Hózhó balance).

Assessment: Draw the rabbit and coyote habitats with food sources.

AZ Connection: 2.L2U1.6 – Animals depend on their environment.

Day 4 – Sheep and the Hogan: People and Animals Together

SWBAT: Describe how people and animals share habitats and rely on the same environment.

Focus Text: Sheep corral and family pages.

Activities:

- Read the section with the sheep and sleeping lamb.
- Navajo vocabulary: Dibé (sheep), Chaha’oh (shade), Hogan (home).
- Discuss: How do Navajo families care for animals?
- Build a “habitat map” showing hogan, corral, water source, and grazing land.

Assessment: Students label map features and animals’ needs (water, shade, grass).

AZ Connection: 3.L2U1.8 – Environmental care and change.

Day 5 – Morning Blessing and Reflection

SWBAT: Explain how animals, people, and the sun are connected in the Navajo worldview.

Focus Text: Final pages with morning prayer and offering of cornmeal.

Activities:

- Discuss the idea of gratitude for life and light.
- Navajo vocabulary: Hózhó (beauty, harmony), Tádídíín (corn pollen).
- Art: Students create a “Circle of Life” mural with sun, animals, plants, and people.
- Closing reflection: “How do we care for the animals around us?”

Assessment: Oral sharing or short writing on “My favorite animal and its home.”

AZ Connection: Integrates environmental ethics with observation of habitats.

Cultural Note

The story models Hózhó—balance and beauty in the natural world. Teachers can encourage students to reflect on daily routines that mirror those of the animals—rising with the sun, caring for the land, and respecting all life.

Resources for Teachers

- Arnosky, J. (2002). *Rabbits and raindrops*. HarperCollins.
Shows baby rabbits venturing into the meadow. Reinforces observation of daily and weather-based patterns in nature.
- Begay, S. (1995). *Ma'ii and cousin Horned Toad*. Northland Publishing.
A Navajo Coyote story about cleverness and humility; aligns with *Bringer of Dawn's* depiction of Ma'ii.
- Brett, J. (1991). *The mitten*. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
Folktale of animals sharing shelter. Supports study of body heat, cooperation, and habitats.
- George, K. (2000). *One day in the desert*. HarperCollins.
Follows desert animals through a single hot day. Ideal nonfiction for comparing desert habitats and survival traits.
- Gershator, D., & Gershator, P. (2004). *When the morning comes*. Henry Holt and Company.
Poetic celebration of dawn; pairs beautifully with morning routines in *Bringer of Dawn*.
- Llewellyn, C. (1998). *The field mouse and the dinosaur named Sue*. Scholastic.
Imaginative mouse adventure encouraging curiosity and exploration—supports empathy for small creatures.
- London, J. (2000). *Little mouse's trail tale*. Puffin Books.
Simple text about a mouse exploring its surroundings. Teaches mapping, observation, and spatial awareness.
- McDermott, G. (1994). *Coyote: A trickster tale from the American Southwest*. Harcourt.
Colorful retelling of the fire-theft story. Reinforces desert adaptations and cross-tribal storytelling.
- Morgan, S. R. (2007). *The day the Earth woke up*. Fulcrum Publishing.
Indigenous-inspired tales of balance and gratitude—extend classroom discussion of Hózhó.
- National Geographic Kids. (2017). *Desert animals*. National Geographic Children's Books.
Photo-rich nonfiction introducing desert species such as rabbits, coyotes, and mice—clear for emergent readers.

- Patent, D. H. (1995). *Cactus hotel*. HarperCollins.
Describes how animals share a cactus home. Excellent for modeling habitat interdependence.
- Sayre, A. P. (2008). *One is a snail, ten is a crab*. Candlewick Press.
Playful counting book integrating math and animal observation—adaptable for ELD and numeracy.
- Wade, M. (2008). *The water princess*. G. P. Putnam’s Sons.
Based on a true story of water gathering; reinforces environmental care and daily responsibility.

Web and Video Resources

- Navajo Nation Zoo & Botanical Park. (n.d.). <https://navajozoo.org>
Features Navajo-language animal profiles and habitat information for classroom exploration.
- PBS Kids. (2023). *Wild Kratts – Desert Animals* series. <https://pbskids.org/wildkratts>
Short videos on animal adaptations suitable for early elementary learners.
- Salina Bookshelf. (2022). *Author Talk: Veronica Tsinajinnie & Ryan Singer*.
<https://salinabookshelf.com>
Interviews and teaching guides connecting *Bringer of Dawn* to art, language, and desert ecology.