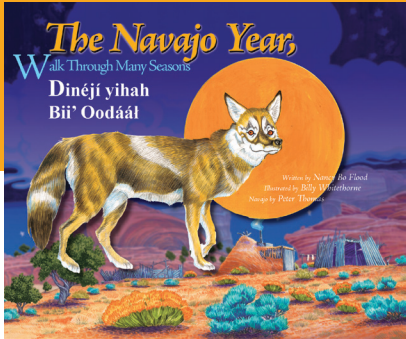


**Teacher's Guide *The Navajo Year, Walk Through Many Seasons*
*Dinéjį yihah Bii' Oodááł***

Written by Nancy Bo Flood

Illustrated by Billy Whitethorne

Translated by Peter Thomas



\$14.95

978-1-960830-11-1

About the Book

The *Navajo Year: Walk Through Many Seasons* introduces students to the Navajo calendar, showing how time is marked through the changes of seasons, ceremonies, and natural cycles. For Navajo children, the book reflects familiar landscapes, family activities, and cultural traditions, helping them see their own lives represented in literature. The poetic text encourages listening, prediction, and discussion, while the illustrations extend meaning and spark connections to students' lived experiences.

The illustrations by Billy Whitethorne are particularly powerful. His paintings provide visual cues that support comprehension for early readers. Animals, plants, and landscapes mirror the words on the page and give children entry points into the text. For Navajo students, these images also affirm cultural identity: sheep butchering, planting corn, playing string games, and gathering for ceremonies are represented with dignity and beauty.

This book is well-suited for read-alouds with pauses for discussion. Pairing text with Navajo oral language, family connections, and art will make this resource a rich cultural and literacy experience.

Readability:

- Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: ~3.7
- Flesch Reading Ease Score: ~82.8 (Easy; suitable for younger readers)
- Common Core Grade Band: Grades 2–3

Discussion Questions:

Use these after each read-aloud session to spark dialogue:

1. Illustrations as Clues
 - Look at the picture. What season do you think it is? What do you see that tells you this?
2. Connecting to Experience
 - Have you ever played string games, gathered snow for water, or helped with planting? What do you notice in the picture that reminds you of those activities?
3. Nature and Change
 - How do the animals and plants change in the pictures? Why do you think the author included those details?
4. Storytelling Through Art
 - What story does the picture tell that the words don't?

Classroom Activities

1. Illustration Walk
 - Do a picture walk before reading. Ask students to predict what will happen in each month by looking closely at the illustrations.
2. Navajo Seasons Chart
 - Create a classroom chart with the Navajo months, pictures from the book, and student drawings of what they see in each season.
3. String Game Practice
 - Provide yarn for students to try simple string figures after reading about winter play. Connect literacy with hands-on cultural practice.
4. Family Stories Connection
 - Invite students to share family traditions tied to planting, harvesting, or winter ceremonies, inspired by the book's images.
5. Art Response
 - Have students draw their own seasonal picture of an activity they do with family. Pair with a sentence in Navajo or English.

Standards Alignment

- Arizona ELA Standards (Grades 1–3):
 - Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
 - Use illustrations and details to describe characters, setting, or events.
 - Identify words and phrases in stories that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.
- Arizona Social Studies Standards (Grades 1–3):
 - Recognize that Native communities, including the Navajo Nation, have unique traditions and cultural practices.
 - Explore how people depend on the environment and adapt to seasonal changes.
- Arizona ELD Standards (Grades 1–3):
 - Develop oral language through discussions connected to illustrations.
 - Use content vocabulary in context.

5-Day Grades 1-3 ELD Unit Plan: The Navajo Year: Walk Through Many Seasons

Day 1 – Introduction to Months & Seasons

AZ ELD Standards:

- 1.SL.1 / 2.SL.1 / 3.SL.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults.
- ELP Standard 6: An English learner can analyze and produce language in response to grade-level texts.

Objective (SWBAT):

Students will identify the months of the year and connect them to Navajo names for months.

Vocabulary:

- month
- season
- calendar

Read-Aloud Prompt:

Pause while reading the opening pages and ask: 'What do you notice about the circle of seasons in the picture?'

Paired Reading Prompt:

With a partner, practice saying one month in Navajo and then in English. Take turns pointing to the illustrations that match the month.

Activities:

1. Read-Aloud: Teacher introduces the book, showing cover and illustrations of the circle of seasons.
2. Discussion: Compare English months vs. Navajo month names (use pronunciation guide).
3. Anchor Chart: Create a large 'Circle of Months' with both English and Navajo names.
4. Illustration Study: Students point out seasonal cues in the pictures (snow, corn, animals).

Exit Ticket:

Each student says one month in English and one in Navajo.

Day 2 – Winter Months & Activities

AZ ELD Standards:

- 1.RI.7 / 2.RI.7 / 3.RI.7: Use illustrations to understand key ideas.
- ELP Standard 1: An English learner can construct meaning from oral presentations and literary texts.

Objective (SWBAT):

Students will describe winter activities and connect them to family and cultural practices.

Vocabulary:

- wind
- snow
- string games
- stories

Read-Aloud Prompt:

After reading about winter winds, ask: 'How does the picture show that it is cold and windy?'

Paired Reading Prompt:

In pairs, reread one winter page together. One student reads the English sentence, the other repeats it in Navajo (if possible).

Activities:

5. Read-Aloud: Pages on October (Gháájí'), November (Níłch'ih Ts'ósí), December (Níłch'ih Tsoh), and January (Yas Niłt'ees).
6. Vocabulary: Review and practice words like 'wind,' 'snow,' 'string games,' 'stories.'
7. Partner Talk: 'What do you see in the picture that shows winter?'
8. Hands-On: Practice one simple string figure or draw a family winter activity.

Exit Ticket:

Name one winter month in Navajo and say an activity from that season.

Day 3 – Spring Months & Planting

AZ ELD Standards:

- 1.W.8 / 2.W.8 / 3.W.8: Recall information from experiences or texts.
- ELP Standard 4: An English learner can construct claims and support them with reasoning and evidence.

Objective (SWBAT):

Students will identify spring planting activities and explain their importance.

Vocabulary:

- rain
- thunder
- seeds
- planting

Read-Aloud Prompt:

Pause after the planting section and ask: 'What tools are the people using in this picture? What are they planting?'

Paired Reading Prompt:

In pairs, choose one spring page. Read it together and underline or highlight words about plants or rain.

Activities:

9. Read-Aloud: February ('Atsá Biyáázh), March (Wóózhch'íí'd), April (T'áá Chil).
10. Discussion: What changes happen in spring? What plants appear?
11. Illustration Study: Focus on rain, thunder, seeds, planting sticks.
12. Activity: Create 'seed packet' drawings—students draw corn/beans and label in English/Navajo.

Exit Ticket:

Draw one plant or animal from the spring pages and label it.

Day 4 – Summer Months & Growing Season

AZ ELD Standards:

- 1.L.6 / 2.L.6 / 3.L.6: Use acquired words and phrases to describe.
- ELP Standard 7: An English learner can adapt language choices to purpose, task, and audience.

Objective (SWBAT):

Students will describe summer months and identify seasonal celebrations.

Vocabulary:

- corn
- sheep
- dance
- rain

Read-Aloud Prompt:

When reading about powwows and rodeos, ask: 'What celebrations do you see in the illustration?'

Paired Reading Prompt:

In pairs, reread the summer section. Each partner finds and reads one sentence about corn or sheep.

Activities:

13. Read-Aloud: May (T'áá Tsoh), June (Ya'iishjáásh Chilé), July (Ya'iishjáásh Tsoh).
14. Vocabulary: Review and practice words like 'corn,' 'sheep,' 'dance,' 'rain.'
15. Illustration Study: Look for powwow/rodeo images, monsoon clouds, green corn fields.
16. Group Activity: Create a class mural of a summer scene (each student adds an animal, plant, or person).

Exit Ticket:

Share one word that describes summer in English and Navajo.

Day 5 – Fall & The Circle of the Year

AZ ELD Standards:

- 1.RI.2 / 2.RI.2 / 3.RI.2: Identify the main topic and retell key details.
- ELP Standard 2: An English learner can participate in grade-appropriate oral exchanges of information.

Objective (SWBAT):

Students will explain how the year ends and begins again, and recall activities from all four seasons.

Vocabulary:

- harvest
- corn
- celebration
- new year

Read-Aloud Prompt:

As you read about harvest, ask: 'What foods or animals do you see in the picture? How do we know it is fall?'

Paired Reading Prompt:

In pairs, reread the harvest page. Take turns reading one sentence each, then tell your partner your favorite harvest activity.

Activities:

17. Read-Aloud: August (Bini' Anit'áá Ts'ósí), September (Bini' Anit'áá Tsoh), October (Gháájí').
18. Discussion: What happens at harvest? How do people prepare for the new year?
19. Illustration Study: Identify harvest foods and animals in the pictures.
20. Assessment Activity: Students complete a 'Seasons Wheel' (circle divided into 4 parts, label with months, draw one activity/illustration for each).

Exit Ticket:

Each student shares their favorite month and activity, using English and Navajo words.

Resources for Teachers (Grades 1–3)

- Aliki. (1990). *The year around holiday book*. HarperCollins.
Presents holidays and seasonal celebrations throughout the year. Great resource for discussing cultural traditions across months.
- Baker, K. (2016). *Hap-Pea all year*. Little Simon.
Peas celebrate each month with rhymes and colorful illustrations. Useful for emergent readers to learn months and seasonal patterns.
- Clark, A. (1942). *Little herder in autumn*. Illustrated by H. Denetsosie. Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art.
Follows a young Navajo girl and herding life in autumn. Highlights sheep care, food preparation, and seasonal cycles of Diné life.
- Clark, A. (1942). *Little herder in spring*. Illustrated by H. Denetsosie. Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art.
Portrays springtime activities of sheep herding, planting, and renewal. Good for comparing traditional and modern seasonal practices.
- Clark, A. (1942). *Little herder in summer*. Illustrated by H. Denetsosie. Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art.
Describes summer life in the high country, with herding, weaving, and family responsibilities. Strong connections to Navajo seasonal migration patterns.
- Clark, A. (1942). *Little herder in winter*. Illustrated by H. Denetsosie. Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art.
Centers on wintertime activities such as storytelling, wool work, and ceremonies. Provides a cultural lens on winter in Navajo homelands.
- Flood, N. B. (2006). *The Navajo year: Walk through many seasons*. Salina Bookshelf.
Follows the Navajo calendar, highlighting months, ceremonies, and natural cycles. Illustrations emphasize Diné traditions.
- Katz, K. (2000). *Twelve hats for Lena: A book of months*. Margaret K. McElderry Books.
Each hat represents a month and its cultural or seasonal event. Inspires students to design their own “month hat” based on Navajo or family traditions.
- Lin, G. (2010). *Thanking the moon: Celebrating the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival*. Alfred A. Knopf.
Introduces a Chinese American family’s seasonal celebration, the Mid-Autumn Festival. Supports discussion of multicultural seasonal observances.
- Lionni, L. (1990). *A busy year*. Alfred A. Knopf.
Two mice observe a tree through the twelve months. Excellent for science-literacy integration and teaching seasonal cycles.

- Martin, B., Jr. (1998). *The turning of the year*. Holt.
Brief poetic text highlights each month with illustrations that cue seasonal changes.
Good for paired reading and sequencing.
- Reedy, M. K. (2016). *Crystal Shear and the months of the year*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing.
A holiday-themed multicultural story where Crystal finds something to celebrate every month. Teachers can adapt activities to local or Navajo community celebrations.
- Say, A. (1999). *Grandfather's journey*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
Highlights seasonal migration and family traditions, making connections to celebrations tied to place and time.
- Sidman, J. (2009). *Red sings from treetops: A year in colors*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
Uses poetry and vibrant illustrations to explore seasonal changes. Award-winning multicultural text that blends art and science.
- Siddals, M. M. (1997). *Month by month a year goes round*. Dutton Children's Books.
Rhyming text introduces children's activities in each month. Supports comparing Navajo and English month names in class discussion.
- Singer, M. (1989). *Turtle in July*. Macmillan.
Poetic text follows animals' seasonal activities. Strong link to Indigenous ecological knowledge.
- Tudor, T. (1957). *Around the year*. Henry Z. Walck.
Classic picture book pairing poetry with illustrations of children's seasonal activities.
Good for shared read-alouds.
- Updike, J. (1999). *A child's calendar*. Holiday House.
Features twelve poems (one for each month) with illustrations by Trina Schart Hyman.
Enriches vocabulary and supports poetry-writing activities.
- Van Fleet, M. (2020). *Oscar the octopus: A book about the months of the year*. Little Simon.
An interactive, textured book that introduces the twelve months. Especially engaging for tactile learners.
- Wong, J. S. (2001). *Apple pie 4th of July*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
A Chinese American girl feels conflicted about celebrating July 4th with Chinese food, blending American holiday traditions with cultural heritage.