

Cover artist: Shonto Begay (Navajo)



# Healer of the Water Monster

by Brian Young

## About the book

Brian Young's (Navajo) debut novel, a contemporary Navajo hero's journey, features a seemingly ordinary boy who must save the life of a Water Monster—and help his uncle suffering from addiction—by discovering his own bravery and boundless love. An outstanding debut!

**Brian Young** is an author and filmmaker and an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. He grew up on the Navajo reservation in Arizona. Brian earned his BA in Film Studies at Yale University and his MFA in Creative Writing at Columbia University. Brian currently lives in Brooklyn, NY.

## Discussion questions

1. Family dynamics are always changing. What strengthened Nathan's relationship with his grandmother, Nali? What challenged Nathan's relationship with his father? His mother? Uncle Jet?
2. Recurring topics include the environment, family, and friendship. What do you discover about Water Monster's sickness? How do you know Nathan perceives Water Monster as a genuine friend?
3. Being selfless takes courage. When did you know Nathan was fully invested in helping Nali, Uncle Jet, and Pond? Explain Nathan's actions that helped you determine your answers.
4. How does Nathan change from the beginning of the story to the end of the story? In your opinion, did Nathan fulfill his promise to heal Water Monster? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think the author created two parallel journeys for Nathan? Explain how both paths relate to today's society.

**Curriculum Connections:** Navajo culture; sacrifice and family relationships; using Earth's gifts with respect; the importance of clean water and the Water is Life movement; traditional planting techniques vs. conventional planting techniques; human choices and consequences to the environment; uranium mining on the Navajo Nation in the 1950s and its effects; Native American veterans; overcoming struggles such as bullying, divorce, alcoholism, and depression; problem-solving with fortitude.