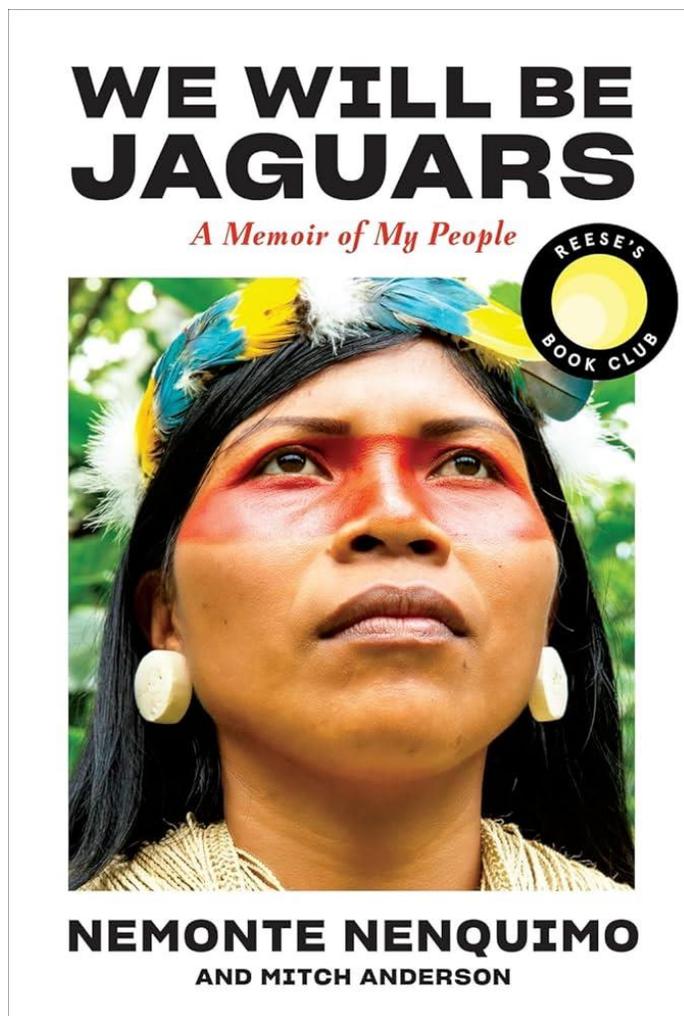


TEACHING & LEARNING GUIDE



We can all be transformed - and can, perhaps, transform others - by what we read and how we participate in our community.

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About 1 Book/1 Project/2 Transform



1 Book/1 Project/2 Transform (1B/1P/2T) is a recurring series that brings MSU Denver students, staff, and faculty together through a carefully selected topic and book. In an effort to enhance knowledge, 1B/1P/2T offers book discussions and collective interaction through social events, an author keynote, and volunteer activities (when possible). The main idea is that **we can all be transformed—and can perhaps**

transform our communities—by what we read and how we participate with others.

Books for the series are selected on the basis of their connection to a chosen theme and on their ability to inspire action and community engagement. Past selections have focused on identity, genocide, homelessness, immigration, human trafficking, poverty, crime, and life choices, food insecurity/food justice, foster care reform, race/criminal justice reform, global warming/earth care, and mental health/intergenerational trauma/Indigenous identity.

Through 1B/1P/2T, we can create a culture of engagement wherein students, faculty, and administrators become more mindful of and more involved in the community that surrounds us. We hope that participation in this program—and the links forged across disciplines and roles and organizations—builds lasting bridges of connection.

Join us in celebrating 15 years of academic programming!

Book Summary and Review of *We Will Be Jaguars* by Nemonte Nenquimo

Born into the Waorani tribe of Ecuador's Amazon rainforest—one of the last to be contacted by missionaries in the 1950s—Nemonte Nenquimo had a singular upbringing. She was taught about plant medicines, foraging, oral storytelling, and shamanism by her elders. She played barefoot in the forest and didn't walk on pavement, or see a car, until she was a teenager and left to study with an evangelical missionary group in the city. But after Nemonte's ancestors began appearing in her dreams, pleading with her to return and embrace her own culture, she listened.

Nemonte returned to the forest and traditional ways of life and became one of the most forceful voices in climate change activism. She spearheaded an alliance of Indigenous nations across the Upper Amazon and led her people to landmark victory against Big Oil, protecting over a half million acres of primary rainforest.

We Will Be Jaguars is an astonishing memoir by an equally astonishing woman. Nemonte digs into generations of oral history, uprooting centuries of conquest, and hacking away at racist notions of Indigenous peoples. Ultimately, she reveals a life story as rich, harsh, and vital as the Amazon rainforest herself.

"Full of wisdom, sadness, flourishes of joy and more than a few psychedelic visions, *We Will Not be Saved* is testament not only to Nenquimo's resilience but also her deep spiritual connection to her land and ancestors... [It] plant[s] readers right in the heart of the rainforest, immersing them in its sounds, smells and kaleidoscopic landscapes. Many are the memoirs that profess to tell untold stories, but here that it watertight."

~ The Guardian

"An unforgettable memoir about fighting for your home and your heart."

~ Resse Witherspoon (Reese's Book Club November '24 Pick)

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"Eye-opening...indispensable testimony to Nenquimo's people, their history, and their homelands that continues the unceasing fight for Indigenous rights and environmental protection across the Americas...readers will find themselves heart broken, infuriated, and elated." ~ Booklist

"A young woman's life among her people in the Ecuadorian rainforest, battling the onslaught of bulldozers and oil wells.

It has long been an anthropological desideratum to describe the world from "the native's point of view." Nenquimo, a member of the Waorani people of Amazonian Ecuador, does far more: her memoir reveals her world directly through her eyes, albeit as rendered into English by her American husband while taking pains to assure readers that "these are her memories." Some of those memories are terrible; much of what she has seen, brutal. Her earliest encounter with non-Waorani people is with the earthly representatives of "Wengongi, the white man's big spirit in the sky," Christians whom Waorani warriors would once have speared to death but who now accuse the village's teenage boys of "being influenced by the communists" simply because they are skeptical about an oil company drilling on Waorani land. Against these values are posed a Waorani elder's assurance that Nenquimo's ailing brother would grow up to be a brave hunter, acting as an intermediary between the human world and the world of the deceased ancestors, who "roam in these woods" as spirit jaguars. A stint in a missionary school in Quito—"You're here to become God's servant. Not another pregnant jungle girl"—doesn't rid her of carefully guarded beliefs in the old ways. On returning to discover that her village is being besieged by invaders—foresters, cattlemen, and especially all-destructive oil companies—she becomes a fierce defender of her people, taking their arguments against dispossession up a steep legal ladder to victory: "We had protected a half-million acres of our rainforest. And we had opened a legal pathway, a bright trail, that other Indigenous nations could follow to protect their territories as well."

An essential memoir of Indigenous resistance to economic subjugation and cultural extinction."

[~Kirkus Reviews](#)

About the Author



Nemonte Nenquimo, a Waorani leader, was born in Ecuador's Amazon, one of the most bio-diverse and threatened rainforests on the planet. She is the co-founder of both the Indigenous-led nonprofit Ceibo Alliance and its partner organization, Amazon Frontlines. Nemonte led her people in an historic legal victory, protecting half a million

acres of rainforest from oil and setting a precedent for Indigenous rights across the region. Her leadership has been widely recognized; in 2020, she won the Goldman Environmental Prize for Central and South America and the United Nations Champions of the Earth Award. Nemonte was also named in the BBC's 100 Women list, the TIME list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World, the TIME 100 Climate list, and is an honoree of the 2024 TIME Earth Awards. She is the co-author of her acclaimed memoir *We Will Not Be Saved (UK)/We Will Be Jaguars (US)*, written with her partner and Amazon Frontlines co-founder Mitch Anderson, and published by Wildfire in the UK and Abrams Books in the USA.

"I buried these stories my entire life until I began writing my story. I decided to include some of these in the book as a way of healing myself," ~ Nemonte Nenquimo

"The Earth does not expect you to save her, she expects you to respect her. And we as Indigenous people, expect the same." ~ Nemonte Nenquimo

"For us, stories have never been written down. That's why they're always changing – and that's how we know that they are alive." ~ Nemonte Nenquimo

Maps



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Check out the interactive maps on the [Amazon Frontlines](#) website!

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How To Use *We Will Be Jaguars*

We encourage faculty and staff to consider adopting *We Will Be Jaguars* as a required or supplemental text for your course or program. Some benefits of adopting this common reading include a shared learning experience for students, connection to service and the community, links between disciplinary work and case studies, faculty/staff collaboration for discussions and events, and the opportunity to meet and talk with the author during her campus visit. Book adoption entails integrating *We Will Be Jaguars* as an essential feature of your course or program.

Free Books for Your Students

If you are able to integrate *We Will Be Jaguars* into your course or program, free copies of the book will be given to you and your students. We encourage you to make book adoption requests as early as possible so that we may get copies of the book to your students during the first week of class.

Teaching & Learning Guide

This document is a reference guide to *We Will Be Jaguars*. This guide includes summaries of each of the chapters, discussion prompts, activities, and a resource section specific to topics addressed in the book. This guide is designed to highlight the relevance of the book to students and their personal lives as well as to multiple academic disciplines (e.g., gender & women's studies, political science, psychology, social work).

Service Opportunities

The *project* in 1Book/1Project/2 Transform is intended to be a community-based service experience. There will be several opportunities associated with *We Will Be Jaguars*. More details will follow, and we encourage you to add these to your syllabi or program structure and to involve students in reflection related to their service experiences.

Author Visit!

Nemonte Nenquimo will visit our campus on Wednesday, April 14th and 15th. There will be a community panel and dinner reception at the Denver Botanic Gardens from 3pm to 7pm on April 14th. The author's keynote will begin Nov 15th at 11:00 am in Tivoli Turnhalle with Q & A and a book signing to follow. More details to come, visit MSUDenver.edu/1book for more information.

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**Chapter Summaries,
Discussion Questions,
Activities,
& Additional Resources**

Themes:

Indigenous Identity, protest,
family relationships, resiliency of culture, environmental justice

Chapter Summaries

Part 1

Chapter 1: (pp. 5 - 22)

Nemonte Nenquimo is a Waorani woman growing up with her tribe in the Amazon rainforest. Missionaries from other countries frequently fly in, offering gifts. Although Nemonte is instructed by her mother not to interact with the *cowori*, she curiously does it anyway. Her brother falls ill afterward, and Nemonte and her mother search for a cure.

Chapter 2: (pp. 23 - 37)

Nemonte wants to understand the relationship between her tribe and the missionaries. She crawls into a missionary's house to overhear their plans of bringing oil companies to the Amazon. When the oil companies arrived, Nemonte's father told his family of the time he worked for the oil company.

Chapter 3: (pp.39-50)

Nemonte's dad is recruited to work for the oil company, leaving Nemonte to the responsibility of her mother. Nemonte searches for answers until she winds up in some trouble. Nemonte and her mother both experience a disconnect between them until her father returns.

Chapter 4: (pp.51-65)

Nemonte's father prepares to leave the village. When more members of the oil companies arrive, the Waorani tribe is asked to greet them. Angrily, the Waorani women protest the arrival of these new companies and their impact on Waorani culture.

Chapter 5: (pp.67-77)

Finally, Nemonte's family finds a new village. They trade animals for tools and other goods to use while building a new home. Nemonte learns about the tools and technology, which she discovers are from western 'civilization'.

Chapter 6: (pp. 79-91)

The new village is booming with tourists, technology, and culture. Nemonte wonders how the *cowori* learned to create so many things without knowing the traditions of the forest. Eventually, Nemonte attends a *cowori* event where she discovers the women singing and dancing the Waorani traditional dances.

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Chapter 7: (pp. 93-101)

Nemonte meets the missionary Steve and quickly finds herself immersed in the *cowori* lifestyle. Her mother gives birth to a daughter, who is almost adopted by Steve's family. She makes friends with Steve's daughter and gets gifts from the family until the family returns home.

Chapter 8: (pp. 103-112)

Nemonte visits her aunt at the oil well where she has her first encounter with an interested man. At nighttime, she overhears a discussion between her father and her aunt about the oil company and the Waorani relatives. Struggling to sleep with the noise from the oil well, Nemonte says a prayer for her ancestors.

Chapter 9: (pp. 113-125)

While Nemonte grows increasingly interested in *cowori*, her family grows worried about her. One day, Nemonte meets a boy who tells her about Damoıntaro. She considers joining the missionaries there but was hopeful about Steve's return with her friends.

Chapter 10: (pp. 127-143) **SA Warning, non-graphic but implied**

When Nemonte finds out that her friends won't be returning with Steve, she sets out to find Damoıntaro. When she arrives, she meets Alfredo and Rosalina. Initially, Nemonte was excited about joining a mission. However, she finds herself confused and fearful when Alfredo begins visiting her at night.

Chapter 11: (pp.145-157)

Despite reluctance, Nemonte stays with Alfredo and Rosalina. She learns the Bible and her new role before she's introduced to a community of missionaries. When she arrives at the mission, she conforms to strict rules and values.

Chapter 12: (pp. 159-171)

The missionaries send Nemonte back to her village to spread word of their faith. While there, she remembers the forest and misses it. After, Nemonte finally reaches her breaking point, confessing Alfredo's abuse to Rosalina and fleeing the mission.

Part 2

Chapter 13: (pp. 175-190)

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Seven years after fleeing the mission, Nemonte returns to her parents' home with her brother, Opi. There, she visits an elder named Watora. While they visit, Opi documents the conversation on a recording device.

Chapter 14: (pp. 191-207)

As the oil companies continue to grow, Nemonte and Opi grow worried. Together, they brainstorm ways to intervene. They attend a protest, and Nemonte is moved to begin actively protecting their land.

Chapter 15: (pp. 207-215)

The Taromenane tribe and the Waorani tribe break into war as their tribes continue to be impacted by oil companies. Two Taromenane girls are taken as captives. Nemonte sees one of the girls in a vision and sets out to find them.

Chapter 16: (pp. 217-234)

During Nemonte's search for the missing girls, she discovers that Waorani women are standing outside a village fence, asking for water. Their freshwater rivers are contaminated by oil companies. Nemonte sparks a conversation about clean water with American activist, Michi.

Chapter 17: (pp. 235-247)

Michi and Nemonte grew closer as they created a rainwater system to return clean water to the native tribes. After creating many entrapments, they explore a recent oil spill. Nemonte wrestles with her feelings about Michi.

Chapter 18: (pp. 249-261)

Nemonte and Michi attend a Siekpai ceremony where they consume a powerful drink. Nemonte has visions of a jaguar that guides her through self-reflection. During her vision, she revisits her time as a missionary. Michi finds Nemonte sick and takes her to a Siekpai elder to help her recover.

Chapter 19: (pp. 263-277)

After her reflection, Nemonte feels restored. She visits her family with Michi and tells them her mission to create an alliance between the tribes. Her family welcomes Michi and supports Nemonte's plan.

Chapter 20: (pp. 279-288)

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Nemonte works to bring the Ceibo Alliance together. She and Michi assemble a team to start their work. They decide to travel to every village to hear the stories of each one.

Chapter 21: (pp. 289-304)

Nemonte discovers she is carrying Michi's child, and they navigate the pregnancy while travelling. The elders gather to exchange stories and strengthen their alliance. Nemonte takes them to see an oil devastation to unite the tribes over the cause.

Chapter 22: (pp. 305-310)

Nemonte is ready to give birth, so her mother and Michi prepare. The family welcomes a baby, and Nemonte educates Michi about how her culture takes care of their newborns.

Chapter 23: (pp. 311-323)

Nemonte and Michi return to the city. They continue their work with the Ceibo Alliance on educating their community about technology and the legal system. The Ceibo Alliance starts to create a map of their homes to educate others around the world. While visiting places to find the coordinates, they stop by the grave of Nemonte's brother, Victor.

Chapter 24: (pp. 325-336)

Nemonte, Michi, and Opi watch as their fears become reality, and their lands in the south-central Amazon are scheduled to be auctioned off. Nemonte gathers the alliance and her people to fight against it. Together, Nemonte and her tribes travel to the courthouse.

Chapter 25: (pp. 337-349)

Nemonte, Michi, the Ceibo Alliance, and the elders arrive at the courthouse, where they present their lawsuit. During the lawsuit, Nemonte and the elders broke out in song. The proceedings take days, and the group awaits the results.

Chapter 26: (pp. 351-353)

Nemonte and Michi finally return home to live, where Nemonte reminisces about the lawsuit.

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Waorani/English Translations

*These translations are not direct translations. They are included for easier interpretation and navigation of this learning guide. *

achiote: like red paint or lipstick, used as face and body paint

aucas: derogatory word meaning “savages.”

Ceibo Alliance: the alliance created by Nemonte

chicha: like beer, made from manioc

cowori: Waorani slang phrase for outsiders

Damoıntaro: a village where Nemonte moves

ebo: plane

kongiwe: shrimp

oko: longhouse

oleoducto: a pipeline

pozo: an oil well

Toñampare: the village Nemonte is from

Wa kevi: thank you

Wao Teo, Kichwa, Siekopai, Kofan, Siona, Taromenane : neighboring tribes

Wengongi: waorani for the missionaries

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Historical Timelines

To help contextualize the time period of the stories in Nemonte's book, we have created a list of significant events from the 1950s, the 90s, to more recent years. What was happening around the world at the same time Nemonte's story was unfolding?

Colonial Context:

- **1500s** - European arrival to the continent brought disease, religious missions, forced resettlement, and territorial dispossession.
- **1875 to 1955**– [The rubber boom](#): extractive labor regimes lead to the enslavement, displacement, and violence against Indigenous communities in the Amazon Basin.

1950s:

- In *Hernandez v. State of Texas*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that Mexican Americans have equal protection under the law
 - May 3rd, 1954
- *Brown v. Board of Education* is decided by the Supreme Court
 - May 17th, 1954
- President Dwight D. Eisenhower institutes "Operation Wetback," a controversial mass deportation using a racial slur, in which the government rounds up more than 1 million people
 - June 9th, 1954
- Emmet Till, a 14-year-old boy from Chicago is brutally murdered for allegedly flirting with a white woman.
 - August 28th, 1955
- Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, sparking a year-long Montgomery bus boycott
 - December 1st, 1955
- [First outside contact of Waorani people](#) – five American missionaries were killed by the Waorani.

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- January 1956
- Eisenhower signs the Civil Rights Act of 1957 into law to help protect voter rights
 - September 9th, 1957
- First peaceful outside contact of the Waorani People – This group included Rachel Saint.
 - October 1958
- NASA is created
 - July 29th, 1958

1980s and 1990s:

- The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador was founded
 - November 16th, 1986
- Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega surrenders to U.S.
 - January 3rd, 1990
- Sandinistas are defeated in Nicaraguan elections after more than a decade of U.S. efforts to unseat the Sandinista government
 - February 26th, 1990
- East and West Germany reunite after 45 years
 - October 3rd, 1990
- Crown Prince Akihito, the 125th Japanese monarch is enthroned as emperor of Japan two years after the death of his father
 - November 12th, 1990
- Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister in British history, announces her resignation after 11 years
 - November 22nd, 1990
- Lech Walesa elected president of Poland, becoming the first directly elected Polish leader
 - December 9th, 1990

Recent Years:

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- The Waorani people of Pastaza won a historic ruling in Ecuadorian court protecting half a million acres of territory in the Amazon rainforest from being earmarked for oil drilling
 - April 26th, 2019
- The Waorani Organization of Pastaza (OWAP) arrives in Quito to demand that the CCE guarantee their right to decide on the territories, with a letter signed by more than 80 prominent figures, calling on the CCE to issue an urgent ruling that respects collective rights and stops the advancement of the new oil auction promoted by the government.
 - May 13th, 2025
- The Inter-American court protects peoples living in voluntary isolation in Ecuador
 - March 13th, 2025

To view all dates of interest from 1958, 90s, & Recent Years Go To-> [1Book Resources Doc](#)

Political Context of the Region

We Will Be Jaguars is grounded in the lived experiences of Nemonte Nenquimo and her community in the Ecuadorian Amazon. To meaningfully engage students with the text, it is essential to understand the political, historical, and cultural contexts that shaped Nenquimo's activism. This section will provide key background knowledge and integrative teaching ideas that can be used across disciplines.

Historical Context: Indigenous Peoples and the Amazon

The Amazon Basin is home to more than 400 Indigenous groups, many of whom have lived in the region since time in memorial. The Waorani have historically occupied an expansive territory stretching across the Pastaza and Napo provinces of Ecuador. Their way of life has long been based on reciprocal relationships with the forest, kinship networks and oral traditions that transmit history, ecological knowledge, and cosmology.

Politics of Land, Oil, and Extraction in Ecuador

The Amazon is one of the world's most biodiverse regions and one of the most politically contested. Ecuador's economy has relied heavily on oil since the 1970's, positioning Indigenous territories at the center of national economic strategy and international energy markets.

Political Stakeholders and Frameworks:

- **Oil Companies:** The Ecuadorian government often sells oil blocks to foreign companies without consulting Indigenous communities. Oil extraction has led to pollution, deforestation, cultural disruption, and health crises. International demand for oil, minerals, and timber drives much of the pressure on the region, tying local struggles to global economic systems.
- **Legal Framework:**
 - The 2008 Constitution of Ecuador recognizes Indigenous territorial rights and the Right of Nature, yet implementation remains inconsistent.

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- Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is legally required, but often ignored.

Chapter Discussion Questions (In Progress)

Chapter 1:

- How does Nemonte describe her relationship with the forest?
- Identify a key image in this chapter. What are some possible meanings?
- What could Nemonte's language about the Cowori say about her experience?

Chapter 2:

- What might the Jaguar symbolize?
- How does Nemonte describe her parents? Her brothers? What do these descriptions say about the role of family in Waorani culture?
- Is the rainforest a passive or active character in this chapter? What evidence can be highlighted to support this?

Chapter 3:

- How do Western goods reshape the culture of the Waorani people?
- In what ways does Rachel Saint rely on fear as influence? What does this accomplish?
- What objects did Nemonte describe throughout the chapter, and why were they important?

Chapter 4:

- What is Amo's dream and death foreshadowing?
- How does Nemonte describe her experience with Rachel Saint? How does she describe her experience after?
- Why might the Waorani people react to Rachel Saint's death with laughter?

Chapter 5:

- How does Nemonte's reaction to the animals being sold reflect the dynamic between Western and Waorani culture?
- What is the significance of Nemonte's mom forgetting about the presence of the money?
- Explain the differences in the role of technology for Western people compared to the Waorani people. Why are these differences significant?

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Chapter 6:

- Why might the Westerners have felt as though they were bringing civilization, and how did Nemonte's perspective challenge this idea?
- What kinds of conflicting messages does Nemonte receive from the people around her? How might this shape her perspective?
- Describe the role of religion throughout this chapter.

Chapter 7:

- What might motivate Steve and Ginny to offer to help Manuela?
- Based on their reaction to Manuela's concern, how do the cultural expectations of women change according to each society?
- Why does Nemonte frequently reference prayer?

Chapter 8:

- Are there any moments that illustrate Nemonte's understanding of the world shifting? What are they?
- Why does Nemonte's dad describe oil as the blood of their ancestors?
- How does this compare to Western values about resources?

Theme-Related Discussion Questions

Indigenous Discussion Questions:

- What knowledge systems do Indigenous communities preserve that Western disciplines often overlook?

Water

- Nemonte, as a child, describes how she knows and can read the water. "The river was low and we didn't need a canoe because we could read the ripples on the water, could see the contours of the sandbanks glistening in the late morning as we crossed to the opposite beach" (p. 9). Have you ever noticed water's behavior? What did you notice? What were the circumstances surrounding this memory?
- Much of Nemonte's story centers water. The Waorani use the water to navigate, as a food source to catch fish and grow gardens. Imagine what a day in your life would look like if you centered water in this way. Discuss your daily routine, your meals, and your route to campus.

Latin America Politics and Social Justice

- In what ways have colonial histories shaped current political tensions in the region?
- How do national economic interests conflict with Indigenous sovereignty?

Feminism – SA/Childbirth Traditional Birthing/Midwife - Post partum

- Nemonte's mother said, "we women are the voices of the forest...If we don't speak for our mother, no one will" (p. 201). Discuss the various roles that women played throughout this book. Who were leaders? How did they influence others? Discuss instances of power and powerlessness.
-

Environmentalism

- How did the construction of oil wells, roads, and oil company towns impact the ecology of the forest?

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- The book discusses the towns of Shell and Texaco, oil towns named after the American companies that were drilling there. Discuss the environmental and economic impacts of oil drilling abroad for consumption in the United States.

Exploration of roots and identity

- "Alicia lived along the Shiripuno River at the end of the Auca oil road. This was the very first road that the American oil company Texaco gouged into our lands before I was born, a road that bulldozed over our memories and our ancestors' fruit orchards. A road that Texaco named after us: the aucas, the savages" (p. 201). Reflect on what it means for Indigenous groups who are told that mascots and derogatory place names are said to honor them. [resource article example: <https://www.kunc.org/news/2021-09-17/colorado-panel-recommends-tribal-name-change-for-mountain-west-of-denver>]

Theme/Topic Ideas & Resources

Waorani Culture & Language

Preparation

- Getting the students oriented with the cultural aspects of the Waorani is a key piece to understanding the text. Even a short overview or lecture would be useful.
- Having the students engage with any of the activities below will allow them to, collectively, discuss the culture; each activity could be connected to the cultural and language elements in the first few chapters.

Activities

- Assign students a comparative analysis of Waorani history with another Indigenous community they have studied.
- Students choose one topic related to the culture (foodways, music, art, etc.) and present a brief overview to the class. This would be a great way to start the text and set the foundation for the larger themes.
- Students track the use of the Waorani language throughout the novel or in a specific chapter, making notes of where the language is used and why. This exercise could be used to address the uses of mixed language as a textual strategy as well as the larger themes of “code-switching” and language politics.
- Have students listen to a few songs of the Waorani people and discuss how music can be both a form of expression and a form of protest. Have students research other protest songs.

Resources

- Introduction to Waorani Culture: [“Waorani: Short Film”](#)
- Code Switching Article: [“Code Switching: Definition, Types, and Examples”](#)
- TED Talk: [Code Switching: Understanding Other Cultures to Preserve Our Own](#)
- Language Readings: Gloria Anzaldua’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Chapter 5 “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” and Cresci’s article, [“How to Translate a “Wild Tongue”: A New Perspective on Gloria Anzaldua’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.](#)
- Waorani Music Examples: [Nemonte Nenquimo: Waorani Song on Earth Day, 2023](#); [Indigenous Waorani Protest Through Song](#); [Waorani Song](#).

Colonialism/Decolonialism & Missionary Influences

Overview

"I spit onto the road, spit on the long finer of the white man's world curling and curving and cutting into our forests. Spit on the boa's tongue of civilization that turned my people from hunters and harvesters and shamans into barefoot beggars in our own lands" (p. 220).

Preparation

✓ tt

Activities

- Student

Resources

★ tt

Environmentalism: Political & Legal Battles

Activities

- Explore traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) as a scientific knowledge system. Have them explore the uses and consequences of rubber tree farming, coffee farming, or deforestation of the Amazon for farmlands.
- Map the structure of the Ecuadorian state and analyze where Indigenous governance intersects with national policy. Run a mock consultation process in class, assigning roles (Indigenous leaders, environmentalists/NGOs, govt officials, oil companies)
- **Activities based on a Case Study: Waorani Legal Victory in 2019**
 - Nenquimo and the Waorani won a landmark lawsuit against the Ecuadorian government, which prevented the auctioning of 500,000 acres of their forest. The court ruled in favor of the Waorani, stating that the state failed to obtain meaningful consultation, setting a precedent for Indigenous rights and environmental protection worldwide.
 - Political Science:
 - Map the structure of the Ecuadorian state and analyze where Indigenous governance intersects with national policy

Water Rights & Connections

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Activities

- **Water Connections:** The Waorani, and many other Indigenous cultures, believe that water is life and water is a living being. Reflect on the idea that water has consciousness and holds memory. How has water been a memory keeper for you? Discuss a time you felt a connection to water.
- **Water Rights: Here and There:** Students will investigate local and state cases of water rights and prepare an overview of the case, drawing comparisons to the text. This can be used for an in-class discussion activity or for support for a larger writing assignment such as a letter to the editor or research project.
- **Poetry and the Law:** Students will examine legal frameworks through an examination of the University of Denver Water Law Review: Poetry website to discuss how creative expressions connect to and can be used as activism and advocacy. Students then research additional poetry examples (textual and/or spoken word) for class discussion on creative activism and advocacy.
- **Where does your water come from?:** This activity is for students to learn about where their drinking water is sourced from (the watershed, the utilities that deliver it), learn about the issues impacting their drinking water, and find campaigns in their area that are working to find solutions.
- **Find Your Water Footprint-** Learn how your daily habits translate to water use. Have students examine the "Water Footprints 101" then find your water footprint. Discuss ways to reduce water consumption and how to save water on a daily basis.

Resources

- ★ [Colorado Judicial Branch: Water Courts](#)
- ★ [CSU Water Knowledge](#) (includes pages on Colorado Water History, Water Rights, and Water Usage)
- ★ [University of Denver Water Law Review: Poetry](#)
- ★ [Article: "Where Does Your Drinking Water Come From?"](#)
- ★ [DWMAPS website:](#) online interactive map on protecting drinking water sources
- ★ [EPA Safe Drinking Water Information System & Federal Reporting Services:](#) Search your zip code and read about the water sources in your area.

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- ★ Use the filters at the bottom to learn about potential sources of contamination, where facilities discharge into surface water, and projects and source water collaboratives. [Example: in the 2 mi² around Auraria Campus, there are 517 potential sources of contamination]
- ★ Use the Projects & Source Water Collaboratives filter to find a campaign in your area that directly impacts your drinking water.
- ★ [Water Footprint Website](#)

Mother Meanings: Mother Earth, Mother Relationships & Motherhood as Activism

Mother Earth

Overview: The text connects the often used phrase “Mother Earth” beyond the typical ideas and links more to connections with the land and spirituality.

Mother Relationships

Overview: The relationship between Nenquimo and her mother, Manuela, is a key piece to the text; the connections they have, the lessons learned from her mother, and the ways these relationships (mother and ancestors) shape the journey she takes.

Motherhood as Political Activism

Overview Motherhood can be very political – both here in the US and in the text. Motherhood becomes a direct link to the activism to protect the land and resistance of the Waorani people to losing their traditions and culture.

Writing Prompts

Memoir Writing & Literary Activities

Preparation

- Address what is the difference between a “memoir” and “autobiography”

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- Discuss "creative non-fiction" - address what this term means and the ways fictional elements are used in the text; when is it appropriate or important to fictionalize pieces of your personal story and what other elements, such as tone, voice, metaphors, descriptive languages can enhance a personal narrative.
- This text is considered an "activist memoir". Discuss what this term means, generally, and what are some of the elements within this subgenre.
- Look for different moments in the text; how does Nenquimo balance the telling of her personal story and culture with the larger goal of inspiring environmental activism and justice?

Activities

- Write a Moment of Your Life: Throughout the novel, Nenquimo uses descriptive language to place the reader in the moment as she experienced it. Think about a moment of your life (as personal or not as you would like). Using the Friedman article as a guide, write a few sentences as it was and then again with additional details, creative language, etc. Discuss how the additional language and descriptions impact the moment.
- Six Word Memoir: Use the idea of the 'six-word memoir' to get students thinking about snapshots of their lives. This exercise is very useful to allow students to start telling their stories, use them in conjunction with specific chapter topics, or use this idea with larger themes of the text.
- Illustrated Six Word Memoir: The illustrated version of the six-word memoir could be used as a variation to a textual assignment; image ideas for this iteration include using an outline of a face or body; different styles of water images such as a glass of water, ocean, river, or other environmental outlines. The students can use this to put visual and textual ideas around theme and specific chapter topics.
- Symbolism & Advocacy: The Spear, The Map, and the Jaguar are the primary symbols in the text. Have students examine different spaces in the text where the symbols occur and address the symbolic meanings.
 - The Spear symbolizes
 - The Map symbolizes
 - The Jaguar symbolizes

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- Personal Narrative Essay:
 - Stories are the major way through which humans have communicated throughout history. We use stories to inform, persuade, create a sense of community, define morals, and live vicariously through others, among other things. Good stories are entertaining, informative, lively, and believable; they will mean something to those who write them as well as to those who read them.

Though you are writing a personal story, rather than a fictional one, it still needs to be creative and contain all of the elements of narration you find in short stories, novels, films, etc. For example, your narrative should have all of the following: a character (who?) to whom something happens (what?), in some place (where?), at some time (when?), for some reason (why?), told from a particular perspective (how?).

- **Narrative provides human interest, spark our curiosity, and draw us close to the storyteller. In addition, narratives can do the following:**
 - Create a sense of shared history, linking people together.
 - Provide entertainment. Most people enjoy a thrilling movie or an intriguing book.
 - Provide psychological healing. Reading or listening to the narrative of someone who faced a life crisis similar to one you are experiencing can help you through the crisis. They can also help the writer deal with the crisis.

Provide insight. Narratives can help you discover values, explore options, and examine motives.

- **Characteristics of a narrative:**
 - Narratives make a point
 - Narratives convey action and details
 - Narratives present a conflict and create tension
 - Narratives sequence events
 - Narratives use dialogue
 - Narratives are told from a point of view
- **Using this book as a model, for this paper, you will need to have the following:**
 - **Characters:** In the personal essay, your main character is yourself, so try to give your readers a sense of who you are through your voice, actions, level of awareness, and description. The characters in a good story are believable and interesting; they come alive for the readers.

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- **Voice:** Language reveals who you are; choose your words to reflect your theme as well as yourself.
- **Actions:** Readers learn something about the kind of person you are through your actions.
- **Insight:** One of the best ways to reveal who you are is to show yourself becoming aware of something, gaining a new way of seeing the world, a new insight. While such awareness can occur for apparently unexplainable reasons, it most often happens when you encounter new ideas or have experiences that change you in some way. *This is not the same as a tacked on "moral."*
- **Telling Details:** Describe yourself and other participants in your story in such a way that the details and facts help tell your story. A telling detail or fact is one that advances your characterization of someone without your having to render an obvious opinion.
- **Setting:** Experiences happen in some place at some time, and good essays describe these settings. To describe a believable physical setting, you need to recreate on paper the sights, sounds, smells, and physical sensations that allow readers to experience it for themselves. In addition to telling the details that support your plot and/or character development, try to include evocative details, colorful details of setting and characters. The telling details of a setting can reveal something essential about your essay without your explaining them. After all, you can let your reader do a little work.
- **Sequence of Events:** In every narrative, events are ordered in some way. While you cannot alter the events that happened in your experience, as a writer, you need to decide which events to portray and in what order to present them. Remember, sequencing of events need not be chronological.

Resources

- ★ Article: Carspecken, "[Writing Strategies in Autoethnography and Memoir: Methodological legacies from three activist-scholars](#)"
- ★ Jane Friedman: "[The Activist Memoir: How to Write for Change](#)"
- ★ Overview of Six Word Memoir: [Six Word Memoirs.com](#)
- ★ TED Talk: "[Six Words Are the Way In](#)"
- ★ [Illustrated Six-Word Memoir Examples](#)

Creative & Research Based Assignments

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Ethnographic Research: Collect Oral History

Purpose: Nenquiomo brings her people to us through their stories, oral histories, and tribal traditions that is then transferred into written text. Oral histories matter and connecting to elders in their family or community networks reveals the importance of retaining histories, traditions, and record their stories.

Preparation:

- ✓ It may be helpful to begin with a lesson/lecture on how to collect and process oral histories then, as a class, decide on a main topic for the interview, then put students into pairs to brainstorm interview questions, conduct interviews of each other.

Assignment

- This assignment would be in three parts: Interview Preparation; Conducting the Interview; and Processing the Interview. The final submission could be a traditional research paper or a multimedia format. Use the resources below to plan an in-class or Canvas lesson on how to collect histories, develop questions for the interview, and how to process and analyze interview materials.

Resources:

- ★ Oral History Association (<https://oralhistory.org/>) has many resources for how to collect, preserve, and process oral histories.

Mapping Their Space & Ours

Purpose: The map in the text is a key piece to understanding both the space and the people. Using a mapping assignment will allow students to research the Waorani tribe and their space but also use it as a connection to their own.

Assignments

- In class Assignment: explore the Waorani Territory: Using the map from Amazon Frontlines, have student review the map, noting important pieces related to the text. Compare and Contrast Assignment: Compare and contrast the watershed in the text with well known watershed spaces in Colorado. Using maps and overviews of each, discuss the similarities and differences.

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- Creative Assignment: Have students research and create their own community maps, highlighting waterways and water sites.
- Research Assignment:

Resources:

- Waorani Watershed & Map: [Amazon Frontlines Maps](#)
- Overview South Platte River Basin
- South Platte River Basin Maps: [EPA Map of South Platte \(#1\) Watershed](#); [EPA Map of South Platte \(#2\) Watershed](#); [Overview & information on South Platte](#)
-

Environmental Justice & Advocacy

Purpose: Research environmental justice connections between the text and Colorado.

Preparation

- ✓ If you have not already, discuss and define environmental justice; the Southern Environmental Law Center has a great starting website with topics, texts to use and videos.

Assignments

- In class Assignment: Discuss different connections between our state and Ecuador; consider large topics such as contamination and pollution of water, water availabilities. Have students draw from the text and research news stories in Colorado
- Compare and Contrast Assignment: Compare and contrast the watershed in the text with well known watershed spaces in Colorado. Using maps and overviews of each, discuss the similarities and differences.
- Creative Assignment: Have students write an op-ed piece on one of the connections between Waorani and Colorado as a state or specific Indigenous communities.
- Research Assignment: Choose a specific environmental justice topic and conduct scholarly and popular space research; using social media sites could allow for critiques on different topics.
- **Op Ed Assignment:**

Resources:

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- ★ Environmental Justice Topics: [The Water Justice Toolkit](#) and [Southern Environmental Law Center: Environmental Justice](#)
- ★ Sample Op-Ed Piece: [“Op-Ed: The Climate Crisis is a Water Crisis”](#)

Write Your Own Memoir or Memoir Manifesto

Purpose: Using the elements of memoir writing and memoir activist writing, students will craft their own piece

Preparation

- ✓ If you have not already, review the resources under Memoir Writing & Literary Activities; using the six-word memoir or similar pre-writing assignments will be useful for a larger assignment

Assignments

- The Activist Memoir: Students will identify a current environmental issue of their choosing and write a 5-6 page essay that utilizes research on the topic, personal essay elements that connect them to the topic, explain the larger social and political context, and conclude with steps they will take to advocate for change or action.
- The “Creative” Activist Memoir: Similar to the repeated imagery of the spear, the map, and the jaguar in the text, students will create or find a unifying symbol as the foundation for their memoir. Students can create any form of artistic representation and provide an accompanying artist statement (similar to the essay above; 2-3 pages) and conclude with a statement on advocacy or action (1-2 pages).

Resources:

- ★ Please see Resources under Memoir Writing & Literary Activities

Multimedia/Film Connections

Below is a list of documentaries, TED Talks, author interviews, etc that could be useful resources

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- “Saving Your Relationship with Water” with One World One Water Center Co-Director, Jennifer Riley-Chetwynd [TEDxCherryCreek]
https://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer_riley_chetwynd_saving_your_relationship_with_water
- Suncor Sundown: <https://www.suncorsundown.org/>
 - Discusses the impact that Suncor Oil Refinery has had on Commerce City residents and the South Platte River. Short doc (10 min) is bilingual.

Service Opportunities

Below is a list of community-based projects, environmental action, Indigenous solidarity, and other groups.

- On Campus- Volunteer as an Eco-Rep with the Auraria Sustainable Campus Program: <https://www.sustainableauraria.org/ecoreps>

Additional Resources

Kristy, Shayla, Mia 2-3 pages

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Additional Resources

- **By Theme** (e.g., Indigenous Rights, Climate Change, Feminism, Land Back movements, Oral Histories).
 - We Will Be Jaguars website: <https://amazonfrontlines.org/book/>
 - Amazon Frontlines: <https://amazonfrontlines.org/>
 - Alianza Ceibo: <https://www.alianzaceibo.org/>
 - Environmentalism, Indigenous Rights, Feminist led Community activism

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- Cultivando: <https://www.cultivando.org/>
- River Sisters Congreso: <https://www.spiritofthesun.org/riversisters>
- **Campus & Local Resources** (student services, relevant departments, advocacy centers).
 - The One World One Water Center: <https://www.msudenver.edu/one-world-one-water/>
 - Professional Water Studies Certificate- Online certificate for community members: <https://www.msudenver.edu/innovative-lifelong-learning/professional-development/water/>
 - Auraria Sustainable Campus Program: <https://www.sustainableauraria.org/>
 - About Denver Water's Collection System (where our water comes from):
 - <https://www.denverwater.org/your-water/water-supply-and-planning/collection-system>
 - Map of Denver Collection System: <https://www.denverwater.org/sites/default/files/2017-05/map-collection-system.pdf>
- **Scholarly & Media Resources** (articles, books, organizations, podcasts).
 - Restoring the River is an Act of Justice: <https://corising.org/2025/10/26/platte-river-cleanup-2025/>
 - Really great map of oil and gas wells and oil and gas spills along the South Platte River.

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Authors of the Teaching & Learning Guide

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connected through the food her family cooks, the music they listen to, and the stories from her family about their time on the island.

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