“The Story of the Arrowmaker”

by N. Scott Momaday

*The Way to Rainy Mountain* (2001)

A Kiowa legend…

If an arrow is well made, it will have tooth marks upon it. That is how you know. The Kiowas made fine arrows and straightened them in their teeth. Then they drew them to the bow to see if they were straight.

Once there was a man and his wife. They were alone at night in their tepee. By the light of a fire the man was making arrows. After a while he caught sight of something. There was a small opening in the tepee where two hides had been sewn together. Someone was there on the outside, looking in. The man went on with his work, but he said to his wife, “Someone is standing outside. Do not be afraid. Let us talk easily, as of ordinary things.” He took up an arrow and straightened it in his teeth; then, as it was right for him to do, he drew the bow and took aim, first in this direction and then in that. And all the while he was talking, as if to his wife. But this is how he spoke: “I know that you are there on the outside, for I can feel your eyes upon me. If you are Kiowa, you will understand what I am saying, and you will speak your name.” But there was no answer, and the man went on in the same way, pointing the arrow all around. At last his aim fell upon the place where his enemy stood, and he let go of the string. The arrow went straight to the enemy’s heart.

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1. What lessons can we learn from this story?
2. How does this story apply to a classroom setting?

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