Chantal Gibson

How to Read Your Book (or What Hegemony Looks Like)

Some lessons are taught, some lessons are imposed. *How to Read Your Book* is a series of large-scale reproductions from an old Canadian grade-school speller. These painted posters are referenced in my debut poetry collection *How She Read* (Caitlin Press, 2019). These are the stories my mother grew up reading as a Black girl in 1950s Halifax. I too remember reading about Pygmies in my 1970s Oshawa classroom. The content of the stories (myths, stereotypes, tropes) and the illustrations unpack the graphic colonial enterprise, highlighting the systemic racism in Canadian institutional texts. The black lines illuminate the silencing and erasure of BIPOC voices—while imagining the lessons learned by the young reader, in particular, what a Black girl, like my mom, might be thinking about herself after reading these texts (again and again).

Following pages:

Chantal Gibson Erasure poems from *The Canadian Vocabulary Speller 4th Grade*, Macmillan Canada, 1948 2019 printed canvas, black acrylic paint 61 x 91 cm

PUPIL'S NAME_

The Canadian PUPILS' OWN VOCABULARY SPELLER

TEXT-WORKBOOK EDITION



· ARTHUR I. GATES · · HENRY D. RINSLAND · INA C. SARTORIUS · CELESTE COMEGYS PEARDON ·

The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited

Pilgrims and Indians

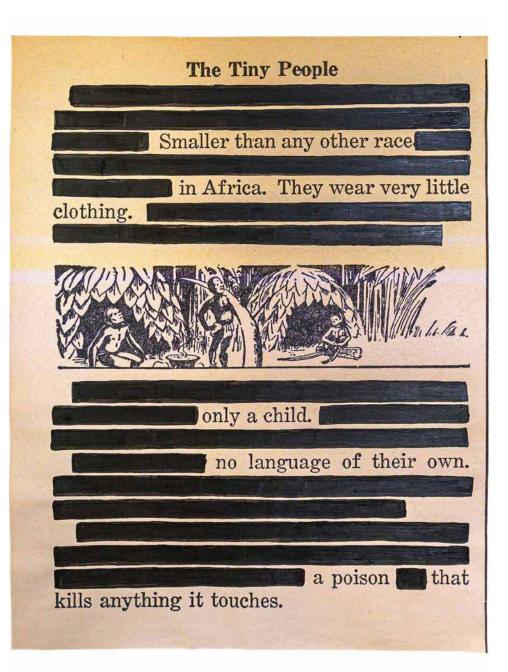
Although the Pilgrims landed on the famous rock as early as November, it was March before they became friendly with any Indians.

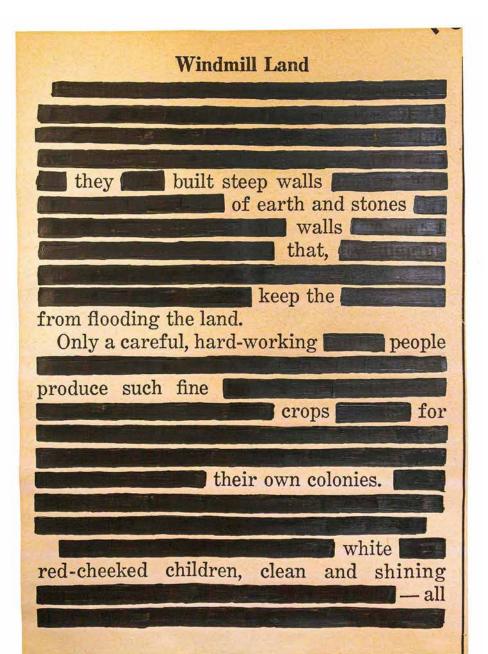
Can you imagine their surprise when suddenly one morning an Indian walked all alone up to the door of a house and began to address the Pilgrims in their own language? True, it was rather broken English. He said his name was Samoset and he was there only in order to fish.



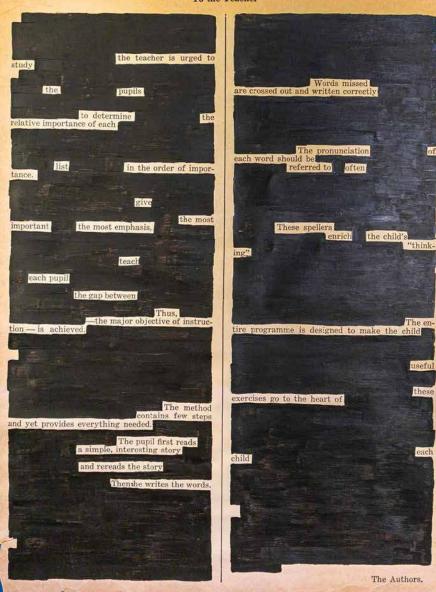
The Indian was hungry, and so the Pilgrims gave him plenty to eat. Since he did not want to leave, they let him spend the night there.

The next day Samoset told the Pilgrims about their neighbours to the south, who were angry with the English because some of the English had tricked them. Samoset finally went away, with presents in his arms. The Pilgrims must have been glad indeed to find one friendly Indian!





To the Teacher



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