

Response Journal #7 – The Secret Path

<http://secretpath.ca/>

Gord Downie began *Secret Path* as ten poems inspired by the story of Chanie Wenjack, a twelve year-old boy who died fifty years ago on October 22, 1966, in flight from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School near Kenora, Ontario, walking home to the family he was taken away from over 400 miles away. Gord was introduced to Chanie Wenjack (miscalled 'Charlie' by his teachers) by Mike Downie, his brother, who shared with him Ian Adams' Maclean's story from February 6, 1967, 'The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack.'



Secret Path acknowledges a dark part of Canada's history – the long-surpressed mistreatment of Indigenous children and families by the residential school system with the hope of starting our country on a road to reconciliation.

Questions to consider:

- Discuss 'storytelling' within the scope of *Secret Path*. How is the telling of it different from other stories we have reviewed as a class (or in your own experience) and how is it different?
- This is an animated film adaptation of Downie's 'concept album' and Jeff Lemire's graphic novel. Would you consider this an effective form of storytelling? Explain and support your ideas.
- Discuss the imagery in *Secret Path*. How does the imagery convey emotion?
- Discuss the songs in *Secret Path* and how they convey emotion (and the kinds of emotion). What stories are these songs trying to tell? What images do they evoke?
- The theme of 'returning home,' or 'coming home' is prevalent throughout this story. Discuss.
- What themes does *Secret Path* share with that of *Three Day Road*? What differences exist?
- What is the message Downie is trying to send to Canadians by this unique work?