Integrating Culturally Relevant Text to Reach English Language Learners in the ELA Classroom

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Integrating Culturally Relevant Text to Reach English Language Learners in the ELA Classroom

By: Anna Sova

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Abstract

The majority of the texts in the ELA curriculum are focused through a mostly white literary canon and our student population is ever-changing. Students struggle with understanding the perspectives presented in the texts. Our students’ experiences are vastly different than those of the authors we include in our ELA curriculum. With the increasing number of immigrants coming into the United States education systems, we need to be able to meet these students through the curriculum we teach because they are learning a new language alongside new content. By providing culturally relevant text in our curriculum for our ELL students, they will see themselves in the texts they read and will feel that they are part of the whole picture even in a new country and become more engaged as they are able to focus more on skills they are learning instead of struggling with the context of the text and the skills.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement: ELA curriculums lack culturally relevant texts that can engage ELL students struggling to make connections to the literature they are expected to read.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there has been a “dramatic growth in the Latino population and a decline in the white population, and, to a lesser degree, by a steady rise in the number of Asian-Americans. African-American growth has been mostly flat” (Maxwell, 2014). These changes have presented many challenges within the classrooms because we have students who are “living in poverty, more who will require English-language instruction, and more whose life experiences will differ from those of their teachers, who remain overwhelmingly white” (Maxwell, 2014). According to the U.S. Census Bureau projections, the majority of the people in America will be nonwhite in as short as 20-25 years. “Perhaps the most dramatic transformation to public schooling, however, has been the rise in students whose first language is not English” (Maxwell, 2014). This calls for a focus shift for educators. We need to shift our curriculum and gear it towards students from various ethnic and language backgrounds.

Most of the texts in our curriculums are focused on the white canon. Previously, when the majority of the students in schools were white, it made sense to provide texts for the majority group. The minority groups are becoming the majority population, so we now need to be able to provide the appropriate curriculum for the upcoming majority group. One way that would make the most impact on the students and that would engage students would be to incorporate culturally relevant texts into the curriculum. According to Hillsboro School District superintendent, Mike Scott, "our biggest challenge within the district is making sure our instruction matches the needs of our students" (Maxwell, 2014). Students need to be able to see
themselves in the stories they read. Students need to be able to see that there were and are
different perspectives of world events based on which groups are involved. Many of the events
are told from the white male perspective and it turns students off because the current curriculum
does not allow students from diverse ethnic backgrounds to see themselves in a positive light.
They are often stuck with a single story of their people. “Students are empowered when
information is presented in such a way that they can walk out of the classroom feeling that they
are a part of the information” (Asante, 1991-1992). By incorporating culturally relevant texts
into our ELA curriculum, we will foster engagement among our students.

Currently, we also have a fast-paced growing population of “students who speak dozens
of different home languages. Some students have had no schooling for years; others come with a
solid educational experience that puts them ahead of their American peers in the content areas,
even though they lack English” (Maxwell, 2014). We must be able to reach these students as
well through the various texts they read in ELA. Incorporating culturally relevant texts will open
avenues for student connection and engagement to the texts. Students will also be able to use the
texts as a vehicle to learn about and discuss the ever-changing world around them, from social
and traditional customs to human rights and showing perseverance despite the challenges they all
face. In “understanding the ideas of cultural differences as being a factor in education and in
connecting with students” (Maxwell, 2014), we will build bridges that will engage students in
their learning.

Significance of the Problem:

In a day and age where teachers are working hard to bridge learning gaps for students
with the most modern technologies and programs available, we still continue to have a low
number of engaged students when it comes to reading. So what is the issue for students when it
comes to reading? Why is student engagement so low? Why are they struggling to read independently? The answer to these questions lies in what kinds of texts the students are presented with and what viewpoint they are asked to take on in order to understand the world around them.

Many of the texts that are in the required curriculums are written by white, male authors. Their texts reflect the world these authors lived in. Today, classrooms are filled with so many different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. The world our students live in is so different from the world the authors create in their writing. This means that we do not all view the world with the same perspective, as many of the texts ask their readers to do. Our various experiences shape how we see the world around us and one way to help bridge the lack of engagement for all students is to teach with culturally relevant texts.

Seeing oneself represented in a text helps the reader connect to the message of the text. They are also better able to understand what they are reading because they have the schema for the topics discussed in the text. This is especially true for ELL students who are balancing learning a new language along with new concepts. For example, if we want students to discuss gender equality, we would need to hook the students by asking what is expected of men and women within their cultures. We would further ask if men and women are treated the same about specific things like hanging out with the opposite gender, attending school, and workloads. It is better to present new concepts within their schema in order to help them expand their learning. Students can also make better connections to the text if they can relate to the experiences the characters in the texts are going through, like the examples of gender role expectations or cultural beliefs. By having a vested personal connection to the
text, students will be able to analyze whether the characters of specific gender are being treated fairly. Students would be better able to defend their answers because they have a personal opinion as to what they believe is fair. This would also allow students to think about their own cultures further, and decide if and what traditions they should choose for their own future from both their own and the American cultures.

**Purpose:**

In order to foster the need for culturally relevant texts in a curriculum, I will be providing lesson plans of how to incorporate culturally relevant texts into a teaching unit that explores different aspects of cultural traditions. Students will decide if traditional values should continue to the next generations or be moved on from so that new traditions can develop.

This unit is initially planned to be taught to a middle school English Language Learner (ELL) population that is at the Transitioning and Expanding levels based on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) performance levels. There will still be many supports within the ELA components but students have enough language proficiency to be able to discuss the traditions within their personal cultures and deeply analyze what the text says about the traditions that the character experiences in their culture.

This unit will be introduced with the short story “The Lottery” and incorporate the novel *Homeless Bird* by Gloria Whelan as the main text. Through these two texts, students will be able to expand their knowledge about other cultures and make comparisons between their culture, the American culture (which is relatively new to all of the students), and the Indian culture presented
within the text. My hope is that students learn from each other and be able to discuss whether traditions are important to keep with all the changes they are experiencing.

**Rationale:**

This project is important because many ELL students are struggling to make a connection to the texts they are expected to read in ELA. They would rather read about something they care about. Incorporating a unit with culturally relevant texts that enhances a student’s learning and engagement in the classroom. Students would also be better able to grasp and connect ELA content within culturally relevant texts because they can easily follow what is happening in the plotline as they can personally relate to the experience the characters face in the story.

This unit is especially timely for ELL students because they are quickly adapting to the American culture. This unit will allow students to explore traditions from the perspective of why they are necessary and valued to whether or not they are necessary to follow with the freedoms allowed in the American culture.

Students will be able to share traditions they follow within their cultures and discuss their opinions of the traditions. I believe students will be able to see that many different cultures have similar traditions. They will also be able to see the differences with the cultures and decide for themselves what aspects they value for their own futures. Because these students are living in a new country and balancing on the precipice between two cultures, I believe this is an important time for them to be able to think about and discuss what is important to them as individuals as it is a very relevant topic to them.
Definition of Terms:

**Culturally relevant texts** - texts that include characters that are experiencing similar experiences as the reader (challenges, environmental factors, social events, etc.)

**Curriculum** - a collection of units that are taught over the course of a school year

**ELA** - English Language Arts

**ELLs** - English Language Learners

**Immigrant**: a person who moves to another country by choice

**Literacy** - the ability to read and write with comprehension

**NYSESLAT** - New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test

Proficiency levels:

- **Transitioning**: A student at the Transitioning level shows some independence in advancing his or her academic language skills. As measured by the NYSESLAT, a student at this level has yet to meet the linguistic demands necessary to demonstrate proficiency in a variety of academic contexts within this grade level. (NYSESLAT Handbook)

- **Expanding**: A student at the Expanding level shows great independence in advancing his or her academic language skills. As measured by the NYSESLAT, a student at this level is approaching the linguistic demands necessary to demonstrate proficiency in a variety of academic contexts within this grade level. (NYSESLAT Handbook)

**Refugee**: a person who is forced to leave their country because of unsafe conditions such as war or natural disaster
**Summary Statement:**

In conclusion, many students are struggling to engage with texts in ELA. The obstacle for this problem lies within the texts that students are offered in the curriculum. Students struggle making connections to the texts because they are not culturally relevant. In order to combat this obstacle, teachers should use culturally relevant texts to teach and reach all students. This is especially critical for ELL students who are facing many challenges beyond learning a new language. In order to help them think about their new environment, we can include cultural texts with discussions of social topics. Students can find their identities within the various changes they are experiencing through culturally relevant texts.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

**Values of Reading:**

Two different speakers have shared the value of literature through their experiences with it. Bu (2013) shares, “books have given me a magic portal to connect with people of the past and the present.” Bu’s experiences have been limited as many books are banned in China. Upon arriving in the United States, she went straight to reading the “books banned in China, of course” (Bu, 2013). The banning of certain kinds of literatures in different countries around the world leaves its citizens with only one perspective, the one of the government entity. “Encountering a new culture also started my habit of comparative reading” (Bu, 2013). Comparative reading allows the reader to explore what perspectives the translated and adapted versions of similar stories asks the readers to take. The reader can also gain insight specifically to the vocabulary used and how meanings change in texts that are translated. Bu (2013) gave an example that the American word bride that
is used for a newly married woman translates as a new mother in Chinese. Kuo (2018) states, “reading is a form of thinking, that's why it's difficult to read because we have to think” but at the same time, “reading can give us a shareable world of powerful human connection... [and] gives us a quiet universe that we can share together, that we can share in equally.” Morgan (2015) also believes in “the power books have to connect us across political, geographical, cultural, social, religious divides. It's the tale of the potential human beings have to work together.” Morgan believes that literature connects humans across the differences that usually separate us. To Kuo, reading is the gateway for literacy to take growth and allow readers to find words and their voice to share their thoughts. She shared an example of working with a prisoner who was trying to write a letter to his daughter but ended up having little to say (Kuo, 2018). She worked on expanding his world and vocabulary through literature and eventually, “reading gave him a language for what he had lost… reading taught him his own courage… reading gave him a language to speak to his daughter” (Kuo, 2018).

The Challenges & A Proposed Solution:

In a day and age where teachers are working hard to bridge learning gaps for students with the most modern technologies and programs available, we still continue to have a low number of engaged students when it comes to reading. So what is the issue for students when it comes to reading? Why is student engagement so low? Why are they struggling to read independently? The answer to these questions lies in what kinds of texts the students are presented with and what viewpoint they are asked to take on in order to understand the world around them.

Much of the texts that are in the required curriculums are written by white, male authors. Their texts reflect the world these authors lived in. Today, classrooms are filled with so many
different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. The world our students live in is so different from the
world the authors create in their writing. Olan and Richmond (2017) state that “our experiences
are shaped through our differing subject positionalities” (p. 6). This means that we do not all
view the world with the same perspective, as many of the texts ask their readers to do. Our
various experiences shape how we see the world around us. “As our society and public school
classrooms grow more diverse, we believe that preservice teachers and their middle-grade
students need many opportunities to read and write about diverse individuals and the array of
experiences they face as they encounter the challenges of life” (Jetton and Savage-Davis, 2005,
p. 36). Hunsberger (2007) states that there also is an “absence in our literacy instruction of a
clear, deliberate, and intentional focus upon “connectedness” between the reader and the text” (p.
421). The students are struggling to make any connection to the text, and herein lies their
struggle for understanding the text and engaging with it. “If students aren’t able to tell educators
what they understand and how they connect to texts, those teachers are not addressing pedagogy
in a culturally responsive manner” (Olan & Richmond, 2017, p. 19). According to Olan and
Richmond (2017),

we posit that English teachers should expose secondary students to YAL that provides
insight into diverse cultural and personal realities as well as social conditions that shape
our world and offers viewpoints that do not solely reflect White, Eurocentric, privileged,
heterosexual, able-bodied perspectives that are portrayed in the literary canon (p. 3-4).

This opens opportunities so “teachers can strategically position YAL to supplement, enrich, and
disrupt the dominant narrative to better inform their students’ understanding of canonical texts”
(Olan and Richmond, 2017, p. 23). Once students are exposed to texts that they can relate to on a
more personal level, they will have a higher rate of comprehension and be more engaged with
the texts they read. “If you empower students to share their passions, perceptions, and progress in a deeply meaningful and personal way, your lessons become more creative and imaginative, and give students an opportunity to lead their learning” (Grafwallner, 2017).

What is Cultural Relevance?

Grafwallner (2017) states, “our students are reading all day long—text messages on their phones, emailed directions about homework, apps from advertisers. They read what interests them and what helps make their world a more real, relevant, and relatable place to live.” One way to help bridge this learning gap is to teach with culturally relevant texts. One study by Olan and Richmond (2017), shows that “newer teachers often struggle with balancing their professional identities with their positions as novice teachers in an environment of mandates, standards and regulations” (p. 14). In this study, new teachers were encouraged to use Young Adult Literature (YAL) to bridge the gap students face when reading required texts as

YAL can help beginning teachers create culturally responsive connections with their students, which provides relief from the dominant narrative… YAL can serve as a conduit for cultural and intellectual inquiry…, YAL can also humanize the curriculum, which meets the goals of social justice (Olan & Richmond, 2017, p. 21).

Through the inclusion of Young Adult Literature (YAL), students are better able to connect with the text they read while also learning and practicing new skills that the curriculum expects. The curriculum becomes less of a large unknown task, and instead is seen as more accessible. Ann E. Ebe (2012) shares that
teachers often struggle with defining cultural relevance and identifying culturally relevant texts for their students. There is more to determining cultural relevance than simply considering the ethnicity of the characters in a book. Culturally relevant books are not the same as *multicultural* books, which focus on a particular cultural heritage.

So, what does it mean for a text to be culturally relevant? There have been very “few studies [that] have specifically defined cultural relevance to help educators understand how to identify texts that are culturally relevant” (Ebe, 2012). One tool offered to have a better understanding and to gauge if a text is culturally relevant is by using the cultural relevance rubric (Ebe, 2012).

The cultural relevance rubric invites teachers and students to consider eight aspects of cultural relevance through a series of questions (see Figure 1). These aspects are (a) the ethnicity of the characters, (b) the setting, (c) the year in which the story takes place, the (d) age and (e) gender of the characters, (f) the language or dialect used in the story, (g) the genre and exposure to this type of text, and finally (h) the reader's background experiences. Teachers or readers can rate each question on the rubric using a 4-point scale. Possible responses range from 1 (indicating no connection) to 4 (showing a very close connection to the particular aspect of culture).
Cultural relevance has to do with incorporating texts with topics that students have a high interest in, along with characters which the students can see themselves in. In one study, according to Olan and Richmond (2017), a teacher shared that her students, especially the male students in grades nine and ten, did not identify easily with the characters in the literature they had been asked to read, even though those characters were often of the same ethnic background. She noted that her students
responded more fully to books whose characters and plots “resonate[d]” with students and their life experiences (p 14).

Cultural relevance is the key to student engagement and helping students have an understanding of what the text is about. It takes a teacher thinking of a student beyond their classroom (Olan & Richmond, 2017) to find ways to incorporate culturally relevant texts to engage their students. Culturally relevant texts help “readers [to be] more successful in making sense of culturally relevant text because the parallel or personal text they create as they read matches the author's intended message more closely[and] because readers are more successful in making sense of culturally relevant text, they build proficiency for their reading of subsequent texts” (Ebe, 2012).

Hwang (2018) shared about her battle with finding a way to belong in society. Being Korean but growing up in Argentina, she battles for belonging among each culture. Throughout this process, she realized that it is not about being one or the other and shared that “now, today my identity quest is no longer to find my tribe. It's more about allowing myself to embrace all of the possible permutations of myself and cultivating diversity within me and not just around me” (Hwang, 2018). Our students are often battling the same issue of finding a place to belong. When students are exposed to Young Adult Literature, they are “provided… with a communal identity, with membership in a group seldom discussed in the literature they had been accustomed to reading. Students were given a view of their autobiographical registers that included attributes of courage, resilience, and nobility—attributes seldom associated with circumstances of poverty. It was a great lesson, and not one that left students asking, “Where am I in this story?” (Hunsberger, 2007, P. 423). Students do not usually see themselves and their experiences in a book at the same time. When they come across a text that does both, they are highly motivated to be more engaged with the text as it resonates with them on a personal level. “For the children of a specific ethnic
minority, reading positive stories about their own ethnic group can increase their self-esteem and make them feel a part of a larger society” (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005, p. 31). At the same time, it provides an opportunity for “learners of the “majority” group, stories about other cultures can increase their sensitivity to and knowledge about those who are different from them and help them realize that although people have many differences, they also share many similarities.” (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005, p. 31). Hwang (2018) also hopes for her children’s future to be instead of feeling anxious and worried that they don’t fit in that one box or that their identity will become irrelevant someday, that they can feel free to experiment and to take control of their personal narrative and identity…I also hope that they will use their unique combination of values and languages and cultures and skills to help create a world where identities are no longer used to alienate what looks different, but rather, to bring together people (Hwang, 2018).

Exposure and reading of YAL will help students gain these perspectives and create a world of belonging to the human part in all of us, instead of looking for ways to stay separated by our different physical attributes.

Even when looking at the books in our classroom libraries, we can find that “between 70 and 80 percent of characters in children’s books are white. Less than 10 percent are African American, less than 2.5 percent are Latinx, and less than 1 percent are Native American” (Edlund, 2018). As culturally relevant educators, we need to analyze the texts we present to our students to read and do an inventory to be more inclusive. Edlund (2018) gives us some questions to reflect on as we inventory our classroom libraries:
How many of your books: feature people of color as the central character, rather than a sidekick? feature LGBTQ and gender expansive characters? feature Native Americans? feature characters with intellectual disabilities? feature characters who are not lanky, scrappy, skinny, or small? treat incarcerated characters with dignity? are written by an author of color? challenge harmful social norms?

These questions should challenge us to consider what perspectives are asking our students to take in their reading of the world through the books we provide and if we are promoting cultural relevance in our classrooms.

A classroom library should also be a place where all students can readily find books that reflect their own families, cultures, and experiences. In this way, intentionally curating a diverse classroom library is an essential and meaningful step teachers can take to be inclusive (Edlund, 2018).

Inclusion for ELLs:

English Language Learners (ELLs) face a larger challenge with understanding the texts they read because they are also focused on learning the nuances of a new language and a new culture. They struggle understanding concepts in stories mostly because they do not understand the cultural perspective from which the text was written. It is not what they know, so they struggle making any kind of connection to the text. “Research with ELLs supports the importance of engaging ELLs with texts that connect with their lives” (Ebe, 2012). One way to do this is “to draw on students’ backgrounds, including their experiences, cultures, and languages [by incorporating] culturally relevant texts [that will] draw on the schemas that ELLs bring to reading” (Ebe, 2012). Ferger (2006) shares that ELL “students were hungry for reading that supported their
bilingual/bicultural identities” (p. 18). As educators we need to “provide an opportunity for… students to explore their bilingual/bicultural identities and accept the challenges of reading culturally relevant literature and non-fiction” (p.18). Ferger (2006) shares one way educators can support their ELL students is to have a large selection of non-fiction texts as non-fiction “ranks as one of the most important features of effective reading instruction for second language learners” (p. 19). In one study, a new teacher went beyond the curriculum to engage her English Language Learners. “Kathy’s knowledge of her students’ needs and understanding of their specific struggles (especially those for whom English is a second language) motivated her to identify resources better attuned to their learning interests, cultural identities, and language experiences” (Olan & Richmond, 2017, p. 15).

“Readers come from diverse backgrounds with different ideas about the world” (Ebe, 2012). When English Language Learners are presented with culturally relevant texts, they “can draw on their background knowledge and experiences to make meaning of text that is culturally relevant” (Ebe, 2012). Wong (2018) also adds,

When children read books that are relevant to their lived experiences, they become more motivated to read and to use their background knowledge to better comprehend texts. It is therefore important for educators to incorporate culturally relevant books in their classrooms, so that all children can see positive representations of themselves in books.

Seeing oneself represented in a text helps the reader connect to the message of the text. They are also better able to understand what they are reading because they have the schema for the topics discussed in the text. “In addition to helping build reading engagement, culturally relevant texts support students’ reading comprehension [as] students
became actively engaged in classroom reading and writing projects that in turn helped develop their literacy skills” (Ebe, 2012).

Using Culturally Relevant Texts to Connect with the World:

It is important for all students to be able to understand the world around them. “Through culturally relevant literature, children are given access to the customs and norms of other cultures, which helps cultivate principles of tolerance and acceptance” (Wong, 2018). One way they can explore and question their society safely is through literature. Once students are exposed to culturally relevant literature, they will have better comprehension and be able to explore the various topics about society within the text. It is key for students to have an understanding of society and the rules that run it in order to be well-rounded social members and be able to partake in the social culture.

Morgan (2015) shared her experience of connecting with the world through literature. As an adult, she looked at her bookshelf and realized how little the world was represented in the texts she read. In order to expand her limited perspective of the world, she took on a challenge to read books from different countries. As a result of this journey, she shares, “the books I read that year opened my eyes to many things” (Morgan, 2015). They “have an extraordinary power to take you out of yourself and into someone else's mindset, so that, for a while at least, you look at the world through different eyes” (Morgan, 2015). Having another perspective of the world can be enlightening to how different cultures work within the world, but they can also challenge your perspective.

That can be an uncomfortable experience, particularly if you're reading a book from a culture that may have quite different values to your own. But it can also be really enlightening.
Wrestling with unfamiliar ideas can help clarify your own thinking. And it can also show up blind spots in the way you might have been looking at the world (Morgan, 2015).

Exposure to different ideas through literature that invokes reflection for the reader helps us reflect on and broaden our views of the world. As readers of varied literature, we are able to gain a better understanding of humanity and cultures that surround us. While it’s not fair to say that one can “get a rounded picture of a country simply by reading one book [but reading at least one book from another culture can expose the reader] to the richness, diversity and complexity of our remarkable planet” (Morgan, 2015). Readers become exposed to the multiple stories of the world instead of having a single story which they use as a lens for the world. Adichie (2009) shares her experience of having a single story of the world. She grew up reading European literature with details she had no comprehension of, such as snow, ginger beer, and conversations about the weather (Adichie, 2009). She shares, “but the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are” (Adichie, 2009). She saw that literature had a larger variety than she had initially thought. Adichie (2009) shares how she had a single story of poverty surrounding a boy whom her family helped out, and experiencing the receiving end of a single story from her college roommate who could not see Adichie as a human equal. As a result, she suggests that many times, stories are powerful. Within their “power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person” (Adichie, 2009). When we have a single story, it creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story [which also] robs people of
dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are
different rather than how we are similar (Adichie, 2009).

Exposure and interaction with literature from various perspectives helps us break down stereotypes and
become more connected through our humanity. We can learn so much about each other by taking a
look that is deeper than the single story we have about a group of people based on our single
interpretation of who we think the person is.

“In an age where adolescents hear and see so much on television and the Internet that
shapes their thinking, it is critical for teachers to create safe spaces in their classrooms where this
meaningful dialogue and learning can take place” (Drossopoulos & King-Watkins, 2018, p. 37).

There are “ways educators might consider using YA literature featuring … characters from an
unfamiliar culture, to foster meaningful, engaging discussions about individual choices and
society as a whole.” (Drossopoulos & King-Watkins, 2018, p. 31). One such study incorporated
students learning about the Muslim culture through literature. While students shared that “this
experience required them to step outside their comfort zone and tackle new challenges with the
support of one another,” (Drossopoulos & King-Watkins, 2018, p. 36) they were able to grow
from this experience “by sharing their personal experiences, [and] students connected their lives
to the novels they were reading and were also able to identify with the characters when the
characters were unfairly judged based on their appearance or background” (Drossopoulos &
King-Watkins, 2018, p. 36). Students were able to discuss stereotyping and challenges cultural
groups experience because of the physical attributes of their cultures. They were able to take on
the perspective of a Muslim character and discuss how their personal behaviors and stereotypes
toward a group would affect a person from the group. “The aims of this unit were to provide
activities that scaffolded the steps to having productive, meaningful conversations about topics
and issues related to social justice and creating cultures of empathy and understanding” (Drossopoulos & King-Watkins, 2018, p. 37). The goals were achieved as students shared that they have “learned how to have respectful conversations about diversity, created personal connections to a text, and transferred their knowledge and understanding of an unfamiliar culture to real-world experiences” (Drossopoulos & King-Watkins, 2018, p. 36). This project was one that showed a successful example of “the power of YA texts, particularly when taught with accompanying activities that promote social justice and meaningful conversation around topics that are so relevant in our country and world today” (Drossopoulos & King-Watkins, 2018, p. 37). Students yearn for an experience to have meaningful discussions about current events that affect them and promoting such experiences allows students to gain a voice in taking on perspectives to stand for social justice issues as they become more engaged in society.

Another reason students would benefit from culturally relevant texts is because the world is changing so quickly around them. There are large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the country. These culturally rich groups will integrate and become part of the United States society. Our students need to be able to navigate their understanding of why certain groups are immigrating to the United States in large numbers (specifically refugees) and face misconceptions or stereotypes they may have about specific cultural groups. Media portrays many groups negatively, and the word immigrant leaves a sour taste in many mouths. Students need to be able to discern truth from propaganda. Incorporating culturally relevant texts from the perspectives of the immigrant groups will open doors for conversations among our students to discuss the challenges immigrants face. “These misconceptions and complex cultural issues are not just the inquiries of children. Adults don't know who immigrants are… So on these issues of education and policy and religion, a lot of things we presume about immigrants are incorrect” (Rain, 2017). If
students are able to analyze their thinking about cultural issues, there will be less adults living with misconceptions in the future. Our students can even go out and teach the world a thing or two. Everyone knows that being an immigrant, there are many challenges faced from learning a new language to cultural expectation. Not many think about the first generation from the immigrants. Rain (2017) shares that from his experiences as a first-generation child, “there's millions of people around the world who are juggling these different classifications… But what makes our stories and experiences different is that we were born and raised in a country different than our parents, and this can cause us to be misunderstood when being viewed through a narrow lens” (Rain, 2017). This group also faces challenges of balancing their ethnic culture and adapting to the American culture as well. The navigation to understand immigrants and their cultures is a large deficit in a country where immigration is the epicenter of our start. Current generations also need to “discover who immigrants actually are and see us apart from characterizations or limited media narratives or even who we might appear to be” (Rain, 2017).

Preservice educators were also able to partake and reflect on a similar experience. In a study to explore the various offerings that Young Adult Literature (YAL) provides in terms of discussing a social issue, preservice teachers were assigned YAL novels to read in a literature circles with their peers. According to Jetton and Savage-Davis (2005), YAL novels should include the following 7 characteristics in order to be assessed as quality texts:

- “the author must write through the eyes of an adolescent
- the adolescents in the literature have the power and freedom to take credit for their own accomplishments and come to terms with their own problems
- literature for adolescents must be fast-paced to mimic the way in which adolescents are participating with media
• adolescent literature encompasses a variety of genres, themes, and subjects
• adolescent literature must include stories about characters from a variety of ethnic and cultural groups
• adolescent literature involves characters who make worthy accomplishments in the face of challenges, pessimism, and life-defeating events
• adolescent literature focuses on emotions that are seen as critical and important to adolescents such as sex roles; understanding the changes in one’s body; and preparing for sex, marriage, and occupations” (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005, p. 32).

Upon randomly choosing a text and participating in a literature circle, the reports were that as readers, the teachers felt empathy for the characters who faced discrimination related to various dimensions of diversity. They also expressed that it was easier for them to begin or build on their thinking, feelings and beliefs about various diversity issues through the conflicts that the characters dealt with in the novels. Subsequently, they expressed being able to progress by extending their thoughts, emotions, and attitudes about these diversity issues that had occurred in their own lives (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005, p. 33).

By experiencing what students would experience when reading YAL novels, teachers were able to analyze the benefits of using YAL to explore difficult topics and make connections to their own lives. This enriched their reading experience.

By having to make personal decisions about the outcome of the conflicts in these novels, they would have to move out of their “comfort zones” in learning about diversity issues presented. By reconstructing the plot, they had to make personal decisions about how to convey their own values about diversity (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005, p. 34).
Teachers also had to reflect on their own values and beliefs within the diversities these novels presented. “By designing our curriculum to model culturally responsive teaching, we believe that preservice teachers and their students can become sensitive to issues that other individuals and groups in our society face” (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005, p. 36). This same analytical approach will help the students think about the cultures they have had intersecting experiences with and the ones they have never heard of, as well. These skills are critical for students who will grow up and one day become part of society and be expected to partake in the various elements that create culture. Students will need to be able to collaboratively participate in the diversity that makes up our world.

“Students are telling us that social justice matters to them and researchers are telling us that it helps students learn” (Chaffee, 2017). Social justice is about creating equal opportunities for all. Students see what is happening in the world around them and they want to be heard. Culturally relevant texts give students the voice to discuss equity and if the actions in the stories are just and fair. As educators,

our aim is to encourage students to articulate their own opinions, not to coerce them into agreeing with us… What matters is that we're helping students have those conversations with each other… We've got to help them learn how to have really tricky conversations, we have to expose them to different opinions, and we have to help them see how what they're learning in school connects to the world outside (Chaffee, 2017).

This ties back to students wanting to read literature in which characters face similar challenges. By analyzing how the characters work through their challenges with social justice, they can experiment partaking in a social stand without actual repercussions. “It's our responsibility to equip our students with the tools and the skills that they need to insist on a more equitable world -- and then
sometimes, to get out of their way, and let them apply those skills to things that they care about” (Chaffee, 2017). Students can explore taking a stand on current event issues such as global warming, climate change, or even laws that have gone into effect with different leaders (local or federal). Culturally relevant texts have a reach beyond the classroom and instill values that students will pass on to the next generation, as well.

Chapter 3: Application Draft

Unit: Exploring Cultures & Traditions

The following unit will address the issues of the lack of culturally relevant texts that engage English Language Learners (ELLs). The main text used for this unit is *Homeless Bird* by Gloria Whelan. This text is culturally relevant because students can see parts of their culture’s traditions infused throughout the text, even though it does not cover their culture specifically. The students are able to see parts of themselves and their cultures represented in the story. This text also addresses challenges students are facing in a new country such as trying to balance traditions and becoming part of the American culture. It also addresses the theme of showing perseverance when faced with challenges. Some of the challenges this group of students face are learning a new language, adapting to a new country and culture, finding where they belong in the social settings and within the melting pot of a country. By incorporating a culturally relevant text, I will be able to bridge student engagement with the text as it includes many opportunities in which students can use their schemas of things such as arranged marriage, gender roles, the value of educations, and the theme of perseverance in order to analyze the text and make text-to-self connections. This text also brings up a relevant hot topic for the students to discuss on whether or not traditions should be upheld no matter the cost, or if specific parts should be
adapted and modified in order to integrate and blend their own cultures with the American culture.

When we “provide an opportunity for… students to explore their bilingual/bicultural identities and accept the challenges of reading culturally relevant literature and non-fiction” (Ferger, 2006, pg. 18), they are more likely to reach an understanding of their identity while delving into higher-order thinking in order to support their points of view of various topics surrounding cultural traditions. The in-depth exploration that students will journey through as they progress through this unit will help them have a better appreciation for all the culture represented in the classroom, as well as a deeper understanding of what ties them all together on a human level. By incorporating a culturally relevant text for students to explore traditions within cultures also shows that we, as teachers, have a great understanding of who our students are. Finding points of interest along with connections will help us be successful in reaching the main goal of the unit, which is for all students to reflect on culture and traditions and show perseverance in the face of the many challenges they have and will continue to face. Both teachers and students will also be able to learn so much about each other by taking a look that is deeper than the single story we have about a group of people based on our single interpretation of who they think a person is.

Prior to teaching this unit, it is assumed students understand how to do close reading and annotation. It is also assumed students know what the TEAL writing strategy is and how to use it in writing.

NYS Standards:

- **7R1**: Cite textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences. (RI&RL)

- **7R2**: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; summarize a text. (RI&RL)

- **7R6**: In literary texts, analyze how an author develops and contrasts the point of view and the perspectives of different characters or narrators. (RL)

- **7SL1**: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

- **7SL4**: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear enunciation.

- **7SL5**: Include digital media and/or visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

- **7L4**: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- **7W2**: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- **7W3**: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details and clear sequencing.

- **7W4**: Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience.
• **7W6**: Conduct research to answer questions, including self-generated questions, drawing on multiple sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate. Generate additional related questions for further research and investigation.

• **7W7**: Gather relevant information from multiple sources; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others; avoid plagiarism and follow a standard format for citation.

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**Lesson 1: “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson**

**Timeline**: 5 days (45-minute class)

**Materials:**


Audio Text: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwhCf9D5gbg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwhCf9D5gbg)

Highlighters

Vocabulary graphic organizers (word/ definition/ picture/ example sentence)

Discussion questions (for each reading section- see worksheets for each day)

Timer

*The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the concepts of traditions and rituals within a cultural setting. Students will focus on vocabulary, sequence, and rituals that stayed the same and those that changed within a traditional act. Students will then analyze and discuss how the traditions affected the characters and their views on the tradition of the lottery. Students will also make a text-to-self connections on the topic of changing a tradition within their own culture.*

**Day 1:**

**Do Now**: Observe the cover of our next story. Write down 3 things you observe. Write down 2 questions you have. Write down 1 prediction you have about the story.

**Learning Target(s):**

I can describe the rituals of the lottery tradition.

I can use close reading and text evidence to support my answers.
Mini Lesson: Explicit vocabulary instruction (tradition, rituals, lottery, liberty, boisterous, raids, reluctantly, devote, paraphernalia, discarded, recital). Read aloud or listen to the first 2 pages of the story. Students annotate the text as they listen to the story.

Work Time: Students form groups of 4 to discuss and individually answer the text questions.

Discussion Questions:

- Describe the setting. How does this make the reader feel about the story they are about to read?
- How do the people of the village feel about the lottery tradition? Use text evidence to support your answers.
- Describe the rituals of the lottery tradition. In your text, circle the rituals of the past and underline the current rituals.

Exit Ticket: Students will independently write a summary of the story read so far (3-5 sentences)

Extensions: Students practice vocabulary words (see worksheet below)

Name: ___________________________  Date: _________________

HOMEWORK: Due tomorrow!

Please answer each question using complete sentences.

1. What is one tradition you love? List the rituals of this tradition.
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

2. What would you want to win in a lottery?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you think people who have more liberty are more boisterous? Why?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
4. When a thief **raids** a house, do they move quickly or **reluctantly**?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5. What kinds of **paraphernalia** would you **discard** after PE class?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. What is a school **recital** we do every day?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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**Day 2:**

**Do Now:** What is your favorite tradition from your culture? Write 3 rituals you do to participate in this tradition.

**Learning Target(s):** I can analyze different viewpoints on the lottery tradition.

**Mini Lesson:** Explicit vocabulary instruction (drawing, polite, disengage, fair). Read aloud or listen to pages 3-5 of the story. Students annotate the text as they listen to the story.

**Work Time:** Students form groups of 4 to discuss and individually answer the text questions.

**Discussion Questions:**

- Describe other rituals that are part of the lottery tradition.
- Discuss the different opinions the older and the younger generations have about the lottery. Why do you think the older generation wants to keep the tradition? **AND** Why do you think the younger generation wants to quit the tradition?
- Which side would you take? Why?
- Why do you think Mrs. Hutchinson is upset that her husband “won?”
- What do you think the prize is?

**Exit Ticket:** Students will independently write a summary of the story read so far (3-5 sentences)
Day 3:

Do Now: How would you feel if you won the lottery? Why?

Learning Target: I can discuss how traditions affect different groups in a community.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocabulary instruction (consult, regret, defiant, desperate). Listen to pages 6-end of the story. Students annotate the text as they listen to the story.

Work Time: Students form groups of 4 to discuss and individually answer the text questions.

Discussion Questions:

- Describe other rituals that are part of the lottery tradition.
- Why does Mrs. Hutchinson fight so hard against her family being the “winners?”
- What do you think Old Man Warner means when he says things are not the way they used to be?
- How do the villagers feel about the lottery tradition? Use text evidence to support your answer.
- What happened to Mrs. Hutchinson?
- Why do you think this village has this tradition?

Exit Ticket: Students will independently write a summary of events read so far (3-5 sentences)

Extensions: Students practice vocabulary words (see worksheet below)

Name: ____________________ Date: _______________

HOMEWORK: Due tomorrow!

Please answer each question using complete sentences.

1. Does a **defiant** person behave in a **polite** and respectful manner?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. What prizes would be **fair** to place in the **drawing**?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
3. What is one **regret** you are **desperate** to fix?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. Who would you **consult** for help with a problem?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. What can you do to **disengage** from a fight?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Day 4:

**Do Now:** Play a short ice breaker game. Have students stand in a circle facing each other but looking at the floor. Teacher says look up and students have to look at someone without both people making eye contact with each other (if you do, you are out). Teacher says look down, look up, etc. Continue until there are 2 students left standing.

**Learning Target(s):** I can participate in a literary circle discussion to reflect on the story “The Lottery.”

**Mini Lesson:** Use a soft talking piece (stuffed animal). Teacher is the facilitator for the discussion. Each student shares their response to each question the first round and adds a question/answers a peer’s question/ additional thoughts to the discussion the second round.

**Circle Guidelines**

1.) Only the person holding the Talking Piece may speak in the circle.
2.) Be respectful to everyone in the circle at all times.
3.) Listen respectfully to everyone in the circle at all times.
4.) You may pass if you don’t have anything to add the second round.

**Work Time:** In the middle of the circle, place artifacts from the story (a black box, stones, blank pieces of paper (1 having a dark circle or x in the middle)). These will be a focal point for students who need to refocus or don’t want to have eye contact with others when they share personal details in connection to the discussion questions.

“The Lottery” Literary Circle Discussion Questions
1. How do you feel about the ending of the story? Why?
2. What do you think was the reason for starting this kind of tradition?
3. Which ritual would you change or add to the story? Why?
4. Some people in the village wanted to quit the lottery—do you think it’s okay to stop following traditions you have been doing? Why?
5. Are there any traditions in your culture that you wish to change or end? What is it? Why?
6. Do you think the lottery will continue to happen or do you think it will stop? Why?

Exit Ticket: Another ice breaker game—teacher’s choice. It should be 2-3 minutes and ease students from the heavy discussion before they transition to the next class. (Examples: 2 truths and a lie, count up to 10 with random students speaking up the next number— if 2 students speak at the same time, the game restarts from 0)

Extension: Practice & study your vocabulary words on Quizlet. (quiz the next class day with you)

Day 5:

Do Now: Play Quizlet Live with the whole class to review all of the vocabulary words from “The Lottery”

Learning Target: I can demonstrate my comprehension of vocabulary words.

Mini Lesson: Explicit instruction of testing expectations: stay quiet until everyone is finished with the quiz, no cheating, try your best, raise your hand if you have a question, etc. (whatever other rules you may have). Explanation of what to do when students are finished with their quiz (independent reading or other assignment).

Work Time: Vocab Quiz (depending on the student’s level—format the quiz to any of the following: matching, multiple choice, fill in the blank, write out word or definition, create your own sentence)

Exit Ticket: Have students reflect on how they think they did on the assessment by showing thumbs up, to the side, or down. (Students will further reflect on their quiz during make-up day).

Lesson 2: Preview Homeless Bird

Timeline: 1 day

Materials:
- Timer
- Chart paper
- Sticky notes (5 per student)
• Writing utensils
• Vocabulary graphic organizer
• Index cards
• Access to technology (Google Classroom)

The purpose of this lesson is for students to make observations and predictions about a text. Students will also share out details about their cultures on the topics that will come up in Homeless Bird, such as gender roles, marriage, death, and education. Students will reflect on similarities and differences between the cultures represented in the classroom. By frontloading these details, students will be able to come back to the ideas they shared when they make text-to-self and text-to-world connections as they read the text. This text is culturally relevant because it discusses topics that are important to the students and the character faces many similar challenges. Students will be able to relate to the story because their cultures also include many similar traditions.

Do Now: Observe the cover of our new text. Make a prediction of what you think the story will be about. Think-Pair-Share out the answers.

Learning Target:

I can preview Homeless Bird by listening to the presentations and creating questions.

I can share details about my culture with my peers by participating in group discussions.

Mini Lesson: Explicit instruction of vocabulary (arranged marriage, widow, funeral). Read the synopsis of Homeless Bird to the students. Give some background on the author (name, awards, location, list other books). As students listen to the information, have them come up with 2 “I wonder” questions about the text or author.

Work Time: Students will be grouped randomly (count off by 4’s). Each topic will have 5 minutes to discuss and write a detail per cultural group represented in each group. Students will rotate around until everyone has shared a detail for all categories, ending on the category they started on. Students will summarize and share out the findings when comparing and contrasting cultures.

Work Time Assignment:

1. Write your name
2. Write your culture
3. Write 1 detail about your culture for each category.

Categories: 1 for each sticky note paper

> Role of Women
> Education (Is it important, who goes to school, describe school, etc.)
> Wedding Rituals (ceremony, clothing, dancing, do you choose the person you marry or do your parents choose, where do you get married, etc.)
> Funeral Rituals (what is the ceremony like, can you touch family members, do you have a celebration, what kind of clothes do you wear, what do you do with the body, etc.)
Exit Ticket: Students will write down 1 detail they found interesting about another culture on an index card.

Lesson 3: “Researching India”

Timeline: 5 days (45-minute class)

Materials: (it is assumed students understand how to use Google features)

- Access to internet (Chromebooks/ computer lab)
- Google Classroom
- Google Slides
- K-W-L charts (individual copies for each student)

The purpose of this lesson is for students to build background knowledge on the Indian culture with focus on the topics of marriage, death, gender roles, and education that will be represented in the text. Students will practice researching skills, MLA citation, presentation, and feedback skills.

Days 1-2:

Do Now: What do you know about India? What do you want to know about India? Students complete the K and W sections on a K-W-L chart. A map of India is projected for the students along with the country flag.

Learning Target(s): I can investigate India and its culture by engaging in a Web Quest Research project.

Mini Lesson: I have preselected 3 websites for each topic based on Lexile levels for each group. I have created separate folders with the links in Google Classroom and only shared the folders with the students each topic is assigned to (ex: Life in India- only Muhando, Ganaf, Hussein, Farouk, and Sidharth can see this material)

What is a WebQuest?
A quest is a journey to find something.
A webquest is when you have specific websites you go on to find more information.

What are we researching?
Each group will be assigned a specific topic on India to find more information about. You will all work together to learn things about your topic.
Why are we doing a research project?

We are doing a research project because we will have background knowledge to go back to as we read about Koly and her life. It will help us understand why certain events happen.

What is each person doing in your group?

Assignment ideas for group members:
- Find pictures for the slides
- Create the title and works cited slides
- Gather information from a specific website
- Check spelling and punctuation on all slides
- Make sure work is divided even so one person is not doing all the work for the group

Time to Investigate India

You will create a Google Slides with your group members to present the information you learn about your topic.

Make sure to share the slides with me!

Groups and Topics:

GROUP 1: Life in India
Muhando Gana
Hussein Fariouk
Sidharth

GROUP 2: Women's Roles
Abdulraheem Aya
Eh Lay Sey
Rahimmur Sa Fee Paw

GROUP 3: Geography
Eh Lay Kyaw
Eh Hla
Hiba
Jamison Pasang
Ankat

GROUP 4: Hinduism
Abduzhman Feza
Leh May Paw
Rwetsh

GROUP 5: Textiles
Amino Bled
Nina Paul
Sudip

Your slides must have:
- Name of topic and group member names
- At least 5 slides of information
- Pictures (4-6)
- Citation Slide

Each group has a folder with links on Google Classroom to go and investigate for information about your topic.

All members of the group are expected to work together on the research and presentation equally. Your group grade depends on this.

Work Time: Students will have 2 class days to complete their research and put together their presentations.
Exit Ticket: Look of the W part of the K-W-L chart. Did any question get answered during your research? Write the information you learned in the L section.

Day 3: (it is always helpful to bring in your school librarian for this lesson)

Do Now: Why do we need a works cited page for our research?

Learning Target(s): I can tell people where I found my information by writing an MLA citation. I can share my MLA citations by writing a Works Cited page.

Mini Lesson: Explain each component of an MLA citation to the students. Model where to find each component on a sample website.

Mini Lesson:

Today, we will work on MLA citations for website articles.

Last Name, First Name. "Article Name." Title of Web Magazine, Publisher, Publication Date, URL. Accessed Date You Looked at Article.

Keep the black punctuation and words. Find the information in color.

Mini Lesson:

Works Cited


Work Time: Make a MLA citation for the websites you used to get your information. When it is finished on the worksheet, copy and paste it on your Google slides presentations. It should be the last slide of your presentation.

Exit Ticket: Review and submit your presentations. You are presenting tomorrow.

Days 4-5: Student Presentations

Do Now: (think-pair-share) What does a good presenter do? What does a good audience do?

Learning Target(s): I can share my research about India by speaking with my classmates. I can learn about India by listening to my classmates’ presentations.

Mini Lesson:

- After each group presents, write what you learned about India from the presentation (complete L on K-W-L chart)
- The class will also give feedback to the presenters (Google Classroom)
- What the group did well
- What they can do better next time

Exit Ticket: What is one surprising detail you learned about India today?

Lesson 4: Homeless Bird Chapters 1-4

Timeline: 10 days (45-minute class)

Materials: (it is assumed students understand how to use Google features)
- Access to internet (Chromebooks/ computer lab)
- Individual copies of text Homeless Bird
- Highlighters
The purpose of this lesson is for students to build vocabulary and context of events in the text. This will prepare students to discuss the text in a future lesson. This lesson will focus on comprehension, vocabulary, and text-to-self connections. The focus of the first four chapters is on the rituals surrounding the traditions of arranged marriage, illness and death, religion, and gender roles. As the plot develops, students will analyze why it was important for the characters to follow the rituals that tradition required and if it benefitted the characters to follow traditions or to break away from it. During the discussion, students will also be able to share their thoughts on these topics and discuss their opinions with the main character as the center of focus. This will create a safe environment in which they can discuss challenging topics without judgement.

Day 1: Chapter 1

Do Now: How would you feel if you were told you have to marry someone you never met? Why?

Learning Target: I can compare and contrast wedding rituals between the text and my culture.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (dowry, measles, sari, lotus, embroider, astrologer, auspicious, caste, garland, defy); Read Ch. 1 together

Work Time: Annotate Ch. 1; Discuss wedding rituals in the text. Create a word web with “wedding rituals” in the middle and add examples of the rituals spanning off with text evidence

Exit Ticket: Complete a Venn diagram to compare & contrast wedding rituals between the text and your culture.

Homework: Complete Ch. 1 Comprehension Questions (see below)
Homeless Bird
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 1 Comprehension Questions:

1. Describe Koly’s family at the beginning of the novel. (How old is Koly? How old are her brothers? How many people in her family? Is the family rich or poor?)

2. How does Koly’s father do for a job?

3. How does Koly’s mom get money for the family? What goes into her work?

4. Explain the special meaning of the lotus flowers that Koly’s mother embroiders on her Sari.

5. What does Koly make for her own dowry? Why was this important for Koly?

6. What did Koly take with her to her marriage?

7. How do they decide the date and time of Koly’s wedding?

8. How does Koly describe the Mehta’s house?

9. How do Hari’s parents treat Koly and her parents? Why?

10. Why is Koly not able to meet her husband before the wedding?

11. Describe what Koly and Hari wear at the wedding.

12. Describe the rituals and food at the wedding.

13. What does Koly do with her silver earrings? Why?

14. How does Koly feel after her marriage? Why?
Day 2: Chapter 2

Do Now: Make a prediction: What do you think Koly’s life will be like, now that she’s married?

Learning Target: I can describe the roles of women in Indian culture.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (scoured, blossoms, funeral pyres, insult, tuberculosis); Read Ch. 2 together

Work Time: Annotate Ch. 2; Students placed in groups of 3-4 to discuss gender roles in the Mehta household; Students write their findings on a t-chart for each group with citations

Exit Ticket: Why do you think Mrs. Mehta treated Koly the way she did?

Homework: Chapter 2 Comprehension Questions (see below)

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Homeless Bird  
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 2 Comprehension Questions:

1. What does Mr. Mehta do for a living? What does Koly call him?

2. Describe the household jobs that Koly does every day.

3. What do people bring Hari while he is sick? Why?

4. Why is the family taking Hari to Varanasi? Why does Hari think he will be lucky if he dies there?

5. What does Chandra reveal about the family’s reasons for allowing Hari to marry even though he is sick?

6. Why does Koly worry about becoming a widow?

7. What does Hari want from Koly? How can she help him?
8. Explain why killing a cow is a terrible act in India.

9. Why does the healer (bhagat) sprinkle leaves of the neem tree on Hari?

**Day 3: Chapter 3**

**Do Now:** Why does Hari need to go to Varanasi?

**Learning Target:** I can describe the rituals of an Indian funeral.

**Mini Lesson:** Explicit vocab instruction (urn, alms, rickshaw, shrine, procession, cremation);
Read Ch. 3 together

**Work Time:** Annotate Ch. 3; Students placed in groups of 3-4 to discuss rituals of Hari’s funeral
(students write out rituals in order on a graphic organizer with an explanation for each ritual-
example: they bind the thumbs to show he can’t work anymore)

**Exit Ticket:** Why do you think Mrs. Mehta treated Koly the way she did throughout the chapter?

**Homework:** Chapter 3 Comprehension Questions (see below)

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**Homeless Bird**
By: Gloria Whelan

**Chapter 3 Comprehension Questions:**

1. Describe the train ride to Varanasi? (use 3 details)
2. Why does Koly think the many urns on the train were unlucky?
3. Why does Sassur give money to the beggars?
4. Why is the water they give Hari important?
5. What does Koly notice about the surroundings as they make their pilgrimage to the Golden temple? (describe 3 things)
6. What does Koly describe is happening along the water’s edge? What was the feeling of the people there?
7. How does Hari’s condition change after floating in the Ganges?
8. What does Sassur tell Koly after Hari’s death? Why?
9. Describe the funeral rituals (activities) after Hari’s death.
10. What do they believe the scattering of his ashes over the Ganges will do?
11. Why does Sass purchase a white cotton sari for Koly? How will her role change now?

Day 4: Chapter 4

Do Now: What do you do to remember someone who dies?
Learning Target: I can analyze how Koly adapts to her new life as a widow.
Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (mourn, monsoon); Read Ch. 4 together
Work Time: Annotate Ch. 4; Students placed in groups of 3-4 to compare Koly’s wishes and her reality.
Exit Ticket: What would you do to remember Hari in your culture? Think of the rituals of your culture.
Homework: Chapter 4 Comprehension Questions (see below)

Homeless Bird
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 4 Comprehension Questions:

1. How were things different at home after Hari’s death? What was Sass’ attitude towards Koly?

2. What does Koly begin to do in order to comfort herself? How does she explain it to Sass?

3. What was Holi? What do they do there?
4. How does Koly learn to read? Why does this need to be a secret?

5. Describe what Koly daydreams about.

6. What were some of the effects of the monsoons?

7. Who is Tagore?

8. What is Koly’s favorite poem about? Why is this her favorite?

9. How does Chandra describe her mother? Why?

Day 5: Vocab Review Day

Do Now: Why do we need to use many different strategies to practice our vocabulary words?

Learning Target: I can prepare for a vocabulary assessment. I can use different strategies to practice my vocabulary words.

Mini Lesson: Review what to do at each station (Bingo: definition is read out and students choose the matching word on their boards. Taboo: 2 teams, taking turns, students send a member at a time with their back to the board, a word appears on the board and the group needs to give their teammate clues without saying the word on the board, the team member has to call out the word on the board based on clues given, 1 minute rounds to get as many words correct as possible, 1 pt. per word correct. Quizlet: Students independently work through a series of tasks relating to the vocab words (listening, spelling, matching, flashcards, etc.). Practice writing sentences worksheet (students will be given a word - they need to use the word in a sentence. Modification- students are given a picture to go along with the word and use the picture to create a sentence with the word) Assign students into groups. Assign a group leader to lead review activities.

Work Time: Students rotate through stations to practice Ch. 1-4 vocabulary words (Bingo, Taboo, Quizlet, Sentence writing worksheet). Students rotate every 8 minutes. If you have a co-teacher, split up to lead different stations depending on student needs.

Exit Ticket: Which strategy helped you the most? Why?

Homework: Study your vocab words. Quiz tomorrow.
**Day 6: Vocab Quiz**

**Do Now:** Play Quizlet Live with the whole class to review all of the vocabulary words from Ch. 1-4

**Learning Target:** I can demonstrate my comprehension of vocabulary words.

**Mini Lesson:** Explicit instruction of testing expectations: stay quiet until everyone is finished with the quiz, no cheating, try your best, raise your hand if you have a question, etc. (whatever other rules you may have). Explanation of what to do when students are finished with their quiz (independent reading or draw your favorite part of the story so far and write a paragraph explaining why it’s your favorite).

**Work Time:** Vocab Quiz (depending on the student’s level- format the quiz to any of the following: matching, multiple choice, fill in the blank, write out word or definition, create your own sentences)

**Exit Ticket:** Have students reflect on how they think they did on the assessment by showing thumbs up, to the side, or down. (Students will further reflect on their quiz during make-up day).

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**Day 7: Ch. 1-4 Discussion**

**Do Now:** How does discussion help you understand things better?

**Learning Target:** I can discuss events in *Homeless Bird*. I can use accountable talk to build on other’s ideas.

**Mini Lesson:** Introduce accountable talk and model using sentence frames to build on each other’s responses. Provide each group with the following sentence frames:

![Accountable Talk Stems](https://www.google.com/search?safe=strict&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS834US834&q=accountable+talk+stems)

Work Time: Use Accountable Talk Sentence starters to discuss each question in your group:

• Do you think Koly should have followed tradition and married Hari? Why or why not?
• Are there any wedding rituals or traditions that are similar between the book and your culture? Share at least 1.
• What advice would you give Koly before she got married?
• In what ways are gender roles in your culture similar or different from those in the story?
• Do you think Sass is right in trying to protect Hari with everything she has?
• Based on the descriptions of Varanasi, how would you feel if you visited it for the first time?
• How would you feel if you were Koly and suddenly became a widow 3 days after you married?
• What would you say to Koly to encourage her after Hari dies?
• How are widows treated in your culture?
• If you were Koly, would you continue to stay with the Mehtas or would you break tradition and go back home? Why?
• Why is it important for Koly to follow tradition?

Exit Ticket: How has today’s discussion helped you understand the story better?

Homework: Independent Reading for 1 hour

Day 8: What is Characterization?

Do Now: What do you think characterization means?

Learning Target: I can use characterization to describe what characters think, feel, and do.

Mini Lesson: Explicit instruction of characterization (it is how the author describes the character by what they think, feel, and do). Model with an example of a student’s actions: this student loves to play soccer, volleyball, and run track. This student wakes up at 5am to exercise and stays after school to run drills with the team. (The student is an athlete). Practice 1: provide a list of character traits, ask students to choose one that describes them and list what they do, think, or feel that proves this word describes them. Practice 2: Class is broken into 4 groups. Each group is assigned a Chapter (1-4). For their chapter, they must list all the characters in it and choose a character trait word that would describe each one. Students need to use text evidence with citation to support their character trait for each character in the assigned chapter.
Work Time: Students complete Practice 1 verbally with a partner. Students complete Practice 2 on chart paper (this will be posted so all students have access to characterization for all 4 chapters when it comes to the writing assignment).

Exit Ticket: Which character do you think you are most similar with? Why?

Homework: Independent reading for 1 hour

Day 9: Planning & Rough Draft

Do Now: What does TEAL stand for? Why do we use TEAL?

Learning Target: I can describe how the author uses characterization to develop a central idea by using the TEAL writing strategy.

Mini Lesson: Explicit instruction: What is a central idea? (It is the main message an author wants to tell the readers). Model an example of a central idea from Chapters 1-4 (sometimes following tradition can lead to oppression). Walk students through a sample analysis of how the author uses characterization to develop this central idea (model Koly’s arranged marriage and how her life is being more and more controlled). As a class come up with 3 more central ideas for the first 4 chapters.

Work Time: Choose a character from yesterday’s activity to write about for your analysis paragraph. Choose a central idea (from the mini lesson) that this character helps to develop. Complete your planning on the TEAL graphic organizer. Students must have 2 pieces of evidence in their response.

Exit Ticket: Write out your rough draft paragraph

Homework: Have a rough draft ready to go for tomorrow.

Day 10: Peer Review & Final Draft

Do Now: Why is peer review important?

Learning Target: I can provide and receive feedback on my TEAL paragraph. I can use reflection to improve my writing.

Mini Lesson: Pull up a sample TEAL paragraph and model how to give feedback. Make sure to model positive and negative feedback. Assign students in groups of 3 for peer review. You will give feedback to 2 classmates.
Work Time: Have students trade rough draft samples. As they read each other’s work, they need to complete and index card with feedback (peer’s name, your name, one thing you did really well is ____, some things you can improve on are ____). Students will hold on to the index cards for the peers they give feedback to, until after the other peer also gives feedback. Students then will go around and share feedback with each other (one person at a time receiving feedback from both peers).

Exit Ticket: What is one thing you learned about your writing that you will need to improve next time?

Homework: Use the feedback to make corrections. Final draft must be finished and turned in on Google Classroom by midnight today.

Lesson 5: Homeless Bird Chapters 5-8

Timeline: 10 days (45-minute class)

Materials: (it is assumed students understand how to use Google features)

- Access to internet (Chromebooks/ computer lab)
- Individual copies of text Homeless Bird
- Highlighters
- Vocabulary graphic organizers (word/definition/example)
- Chapter Question Guide
- Timer
- Quizlet
- Kahoot
- Socrative.com
- Chart paper/ markers

NOTE: All Do Now questions are posted in Google Classroom and all Exit Tickets are posted in Socrative, unless otherwise specified

The purpose of this lesson is for students to build vocabulary and context of events in the text. This will prepare students to discuss the text in a future lesson. This lesson will focus on comprehension, vocabulary, and text-to-self connections. The focus of chapters 5-8 is on the rituals surrounding the traditions of widowhood and fairness of traditions. As the plot develops, students will analyze why it was important for the characters to follow the rituals that tradition required and if it benefitted the characters to follow traditions or to break away from it. During the discussion, students will also be able to share their thoughts on these topics and discuss their opinions with the main character as the center of focus. This will create a safe environment in which they can discuss challenging topics without judgement.
Day 11: Chapter 5

Do Now: Think back to how Sass treats Koly- if you were Koly, would you stay with the Mehta’s or leave? Why?

Learning Target: I can compare and contrast Koly and Chandra’s wedding rituals.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (scandalize, pension, boulder, privilege, betray); Read Ch. 5 together

Work Time: Annotate Ch. 5; Write a letter to Koly to advise her about what she should do about the betrayal.

Exit Ticket: Complete a Venn Diagram with a partner to compare and contrast wedding rituals between the two girls

Homework: Complete Ch. 5 Comprehension Questions (see below)

Homeless Bird
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 5 Comprehension Questions:

1. What job does Chandra’s future husband have?

2. How does Chandra respond when Koly asks her if she loves her future husband?

3. Why does Koly refuse to loan her earrings to Chandra?

4. What is a widow’s pension? What was the family doing with Koly’s pension?

5. How does Chandra explain her family’s actions to Koly? What would you do?
6. What does Koly contribute to Chandra’s dowry?

7. Why is Koly kept from helping Chandra prepare for her wedding day?

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**Day 12: Chapter 6**

**Do Now:** What do you do when you feel sad?

**Learning Target:** I can make a text-to-self connection by writing a response to Koly’s problems after Chandra marries and moves out.

**Mini Lesson:** Explicit vocab instruction (resume, morsel, tame, timid, scarce); Read Ch. 6 together

**Work Time:** Annotate Ch. 6; Write a letter to Koly to help cheer her up (share what she can do to feel better)

**Exit Ticket:** Share your letter with a friend

**Homework:** Complete Ch. 6 Comprehension Questions (see below)

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**Homeless Bird**
By: Gloria Whelan

**Chapter 6 Comprehension Questions:**

1. List some of the daily chores that Koly does now that Hari and Chandra are gone.

2. What was wrong with Sassur?

3. How did the dog and the bandicoot help Koly?

4. What does Koly find out about her pension?
Day 13: Chapter 7

Do Now: What advice would you give to Sass about how she treats Koly?

Learning Target: I can compare and contrast funeral rituals between 2 characters.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (occupy, symptom, soiled, chameleon, shield, intimidated); Read Ch. 7 together

Work Time: Annotate Ch. 7; Refer back to Chapter 3 and compare with funeral rituals in Chapter 7. Complete a Venn diagram to compare and contrast funeral rituals

Exit Ticket: What surprised you the most about the differences between the funeral rituals? Why?

Homework: Complete Ch. 7 Comprehension Questions (see below)

Homeless Bird
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 7 Comprehension Questions:

1. How has Chandra changed?

2. Describe 3 of the funeral rituals for Sassur’s funeral.

3. What were some changes at the house after Sassur died?

4. Name the items Sass sold to the moneylender. Why did she sell these things?

5. What made Koly give up her silver earrings? Why is this so important?

6. Compare how Koly feels about leaving her “home” with how Sass feels leaving her home.

7. Why were there so many widows in Vrindivan?

8. What happened to Sass at the end of the chapter? What does this mean for Koly?
Day 14: Chapter 8

Do Now: What would you if you were left in new city and only had $50? List at least 6 things you would do.

Learning Target: I can analyze how Koly adapts to living on her own by describing what she does in order to survive.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (greed, irrigation, sophisticated, cruel, wages); Read Ch. 8 together

Work Time: Annotate Ch. 8; Compare and contrast your list from the Do Now and what Koly does to survive on a Venn diagram.

Exit Ticket: Share out 1 thing that is similar that you and Koly do to survivie. (round robin style)

Homework: Complete Ch. 8 Comprehension Questions (see below)

Homeless Bird
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 8 Comprehension Questions:

1. How does the old woman help Koly? What does Koly learn about the woman’s life?

2. Why is Koly still not able to get her pension?

3. What do many of the widows do all day?

4. Why does she fear the man in the red shirt? How does she deal with him?

5. What does the rickshaw boy (Raji) tell Koly about his life?

6. Who is Maa Kamala? What kind of house does she have? Where does she get the money? Who lives in the house?

7. Why does Koly feel like a snake?
Day 15: Vocab Review Day

Do Now: Which strategies do you use the most when you study vocabulary?

Learning Target: I can prepare for a vocabulary assessment. I can use different strategies to practice my vocabulary words.

Mini Lesson: Review what to do at each station (Bingo: definition is read out and students choose the matching word on their boards. Taboo: 2 teams, taking turns, students send a member at a time with their back to the board, a word appears on the board and the group needs to give their teammate clues without saying the word on the board, the team member has to call out the word on the board based on clues given, 1 minute rounds to get as many words correct as possible, 1 pt. per word correct. Quizlet: Students independently work through a series of tasks relating to the vocab words (listening, spelling, matching, flashcards, etc.). Practice writing sentences worksheet (students will be given a word- they need to use the word in a sentence. Modification- students are given a picture to go along with the word and use the picture to create a sentence with the word) Assign students into groups. Assign a group leader to lead review activities.

Work Time: Students rotate through stations to practice Ch. 5-8 vocabulary words (Bingo, Taboo, Quizlet, Sentence writing worksheet). Students rotate every 8 minutes. If you have a co-teacher, split up to lead different stations depending on student needs.

Exit Ticket: Which strategy helped you the most? Why?

Homework: Study your vocab words. Quiz tomorrow.

Day 16: Vocab Quiz

Do Now: Play Quizlet Live with the whole class to review all of the vocabulary words from Ch. 5-8

Learning Target: I can demonstrate my comprehension of vocabulary words.

Mini Lesson: Explicit instruction of testing expectations: stay quiet until everyone is finished with the quiz, no cheating, try your best, raise your hand if you have a question, etc. (whatever other rules you may have). Explanation of what to do when students are finished with their quiz (independent reading or draw your favorite part of the story so far and write a paragraph explaining why it’s your favorite).

Work Time: Vocab Quiz (depending on the student’s level- format the quiz to any of the following: matching, multiple choice, fill in the blank, write out word or definition, create your own sentences)
**Exit Ticket:** Have students reflect on how they think they did on the assessment by showing thumbs up, to the side, or down. (Students will further reflect on their quiz during make-up day).

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**Day 17: Ch. 5-8 Discussion**

**Do Now:** What is one burning question you have about what has happened in the story so far?

**Learning Target:** I can discuss events in *Homeless Bird*. I can use accountable talk to build on other’s ideas.

**Mini Lesson:** Review accountable talk and model using sentence frames to build on each other’s responses. Provide each group with the following sentence frames:

![Accountable Talk Stems](https://www.google.com/search?sa=0&ei=s9xjX9iKSJkhu8Gv7b25Cw&ved=0ahUKEwjinbL7t_TlAhUPqlkKHQBdCaAQsAR6BAgHEAE&biw=1366&bih=625#imgrc=06AXjgu4nRztgM)

**Work Time:** Use Accountable Talk Sentence starters to discuss each question in your group:

- Have you ever been betrayed before? How did you respond to it?
- How do you think the story would be different if Koly was more like Sass?
- Why do you think Sass refuses to connect with Koly when they are both widows?
- What is one tradition you would change in the story, so far, to make Koly’s life better?
- Do you believe Koly should still continue to follow tradition when it only seems to have negative experiences for her? Why or why not?

**Exit Ticket:** Share out and discuss your burning question from the do now

**Homework:** Independent Reading for 1 hour
Day 18: What is juxtaposition?

Do Now: Why do you compare and contrast things in your life?

Learning Target: I can identify 2 moments of juxtaposition in Homeless Bird.

Mini Lesson: Explicit instruction of juxtaposition (Juxtaposition means placing contrasting elements next to one another in order to emphasize one or both, including words, scenes, or themes). Model a real life example: winning a championship game and realizing your teammate broke their leg in the last play, your parents are finally letting you have a birthday party but your best friend tells you they can’t go, your teacher is passing back a test that you don’t think you did well on and seeing 100% on top…

Work Time: In pairs, find 2 traditions that the author juxtaposed. How were the rituals different? Why did the author juxtapose these characters? (Students should cite juxtaposition between Koly and Chandra’s weddings and Hari and Sassur’s funerals). Students will cite at least 3 pieces of evidence of juxtaposition for both traditions.

Exit Ticket: Why do you think the author included these example of juxtaposition in the story?

Homework: Independent reading for 1 hour

Day 19: Planning & Rough Draft

Do Now: What is a central idea?

Learning Target: I can describe how the author uses juxtaposition to develop a central idea by using the TEAL writing strategy.

Mini Lesson: Review: What is a central idea? What is TEAL? Model an example of a central idea from Chapters 5-8 (the rituals of traditions change based on circumstances). Walk students through a sample analysis of how the author uses juxtaposition to develop this central idea (model juxtaposition of funeral rituals for Hari and Sassur because of poverty). As a class come up with 3 more central ideas for the chapters 5-8.

Work Time: Choose a juxtaposing scene from yesterday’s activity to write about for your analysis paragraph. Choose a central idea (from the mini lesson) that develops with the juxtaposition. Complete your planning on the TEAL graphic organizer. Students must have 2 pieces of evidence in their response.

Exit Ticket: Write out your rough draft paragraph

Homework: Have a rough draft ready to go for tomorrow.
Day 20: Peer Review & Final Draft

Do Now: Why is peer review important?

Learning Target: I can provide and receive feedback on my TEAL paragraph. I can use reflection to improve my writing.

Mini Lesson: Pull up a sample TEAL paragraph and model how to give feedback. Make sure to model positive and negative feedback. Assign students in groups of 3 for peer review. You will give feedback to 2 classmates.

Work Time: Have students trade rough draft samples. As they read each other’s work, they need to complete and index card with feedback (peer’s name, your name, one thing you did really well is ___, some things you can improve on are ___). Students will hold on to the index cards for the peers they give feedback to, until after the other peer also gives feedback. Students then will go around and share feedback with each other (one person at a time receiving feedback from both peers).

Exit Ticket: What is one thing you learned about your writing that you will need to improve next time?

Homework: Use the feedback to make corrections. Final draft must be finished and turned in on Google Classroom by midnight today.

Lesson 6: Homeless Bird Chapters 9-11

Timeline: 10 days (45-minute class)

Materials: (it is assumed students understand how to use Google features)

- Access to internet (Chromebooks/ computer lab)
- Individual copies of text Homeless Bird
- Highlighters
- Vocabulary graphic organizers (word/definition/example)
- Chapter Question Guide
- Timer
- Quizlet
- Kahoot
- Socrative.com
- Chart paper/ markers

NOTE: All Do Now questions are posted in Google Classroom and all Exit Tickets are posted in Socrative, unless otherwise specified

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The purpose of this lesson is for students to build vocabulary and context of events in the text. This will prepare students to discuss the text in a future lesson. This lesson will focus on comprehension, vocabulary, and text-to-self connections. The focus of chapters 9-11 is on breaking away from traditions and making one’s own way in the world, freedom, and finding a place in society without stigmas. As the plot develops, students will analyze why it was important for the characters to break away from the traditions that have held them restrained to a life that was out of their control. During the discussion, students will also be able to share their thoughts on these topics and discuss their opinions with the main character as the center of focus. This will create a safe environment in which they can discuss challenging topics without judgement. Students will also reflect on how this text changed/strengthened their understanding of what tradition offers.

Day 21: Chapter 9

Do Now: What job do you wish to have in the future? Why?

Learning Target: I can discuss how Koly’s life changes when she is not thought of as a widow.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (clumsy, admire, envious, eager); Read Ch. 9 together

Work Time: Annotate Ch. 9; Identify 3 examples of positive change in Koly’s life when she is not thought of as a widow (make sure to cite your evidence)

Exit Ticket: What job do you think would be a perfect job for Koly to do? Why?

Homework: Complete Ch. 9 Comprehension Questions (see below)

Homeless Bird
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 9 Comprehension Questions:

1. How does Koly get a job? What is it?

2. Why is Mr. Govind upset when jasmine flowers are delivered? How does Koly solve this problem?

3. How do Tamu and Koly get their own bangles? How does Koly feel about her work?

4. Why can’t Raji read? How does Koly help him?
5. How does Raji feel about the city?

6. Why is the temple called the “Hill of Govardham?”

7. How does the wealthy woman who visits treat the girls? Why is this important?

8. Why does Koly’s embroidery skills come up again? How will it help her?

Day 22: Chapter 10

Do Now: Why do you think the rich lady really wants to help Koly get the embroidery job?

Learning Target:
I can analyze how having a talent can open doors by discussing new opportunities Koly gets because of her skills.

I can analyze the importance of rules and freedom by comparing and contrasting how each one helps a person survive.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (proprietor, heron, confide, cinema, malicious, will-noun); Read Ch. 10 together

Work Time: Annotate Ch. 10; compare and contrast Koly’s life when she has to follow rules (Maa Kamala’s house) and when she has freedom (going to Mala’s house). Discuss how Koly’s talent opened opportunities for her (how does her life change with these opportunities?).

Exit Ticket: Which do you think is more important—having rules or total freedom? Why?

Homework: Complete Ch. 10 Comprehension Questions (see below)

Homeless Bird
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 10 Comprehension Questions:
1. What new experiences does Koly have while traveling with Mrs. Devi?
2. Describe how Mrs. Devi became in charge of a widow house?

3. Why does Koly decide to stitch a heron? What other things does she stitch?

4. Why does Maa Kamala tell Koly she cannot go to Mala’s house? How does Koly arrange to go?

5. Why does Koly find Mala’s house exciting?

Day 23: Chapter 11

Do Now: What do you think has happened to Raji that he was missing for so long?

Learning Target: I can predict Koly’s future by comparing and contrasting the beginning and the end of the book.

Mini Lesson: Explicit vocab instruction (fertile, reeds, distressed, foreshadowing); Read Ch. 11 together

Work Time: Annotate Ch. 11; In small groups of 4, discuss: how does Chapter 1 foreshadow Koly’s life as it happened? How does Chapter 11 foreshadow Koly’s future? Cite at least 2 pieces of textual evidence for each answer.

Exit Ticket: Predict what Koly’s future life will be like using all of the information you know about the story.

Homework: Complete Ch. 11 Comprehension Questions (see below)

Homeless Bird
By: Gloria Whelan

Chapter 11 Comprehension Questions:
1. How has the city changed for Koly?

2. Why does Raji want to marry Koly? How does he picture his life with her?
3. Why does Koly believe she is an unworthy bride? Why is Koly torn between her life and a new life with Raji? What does she tell Raji when he asks her to marry him?

4. What kinds of things does Raji write to Koly about?

5. How does Koly feel as she moves out of Maa Kamala’s house? Why?

6. What happened to Mala? How did Koly feel about it?

7. What makes Koly agree to marry Raji?

8. What important things does Koly put on her fourth quilt?

9. Why does Koly plan to put a homeless bird on her sari for Mrs. Devi? How does the homeless bird relate to Koly’s life?

Day 24: Vocab Review Day

Do Now: What new review strategy do you want to use today?

Learning Target: I can prepare for a vocabulary assessment. I can use different strategies to practice my vocabulary words.

Mini Lesson: Review what to do at each station (Bingo: definition is read out and students choose the matching word on their boards. Taboo: 2 teams, taking turns, students send a member at a time with their back to the board, a word appears on the board and the group needs to give their teammate clues without saying the word on the board, the team member has to call out the word on the board based on clues given, 1 minute rounds to get as many words correct as possible, 1 pt. per word correct. Quizlet: Students independently work through a series of tasks relating to the vocab words (listening, spelling, matching, flashcards, etc.). Practice writing sentences worksheet (students will be given a word- they need to use the word in a sentence. Modification- students are given a picture to go along with the word and use the picture to create a sentence with the word) Assign students into groups. Assign a group leader to lead review activities.

Work Time: Students rotate through stations to practice Ch. 9-11 vocabulary words (Bingo, Taboo, Quizlet, Sentence writing worksheet). Students rotate every 8 minutes. If you have a co-teacher, split up to lead different stations depending on student needs.

Exit Ticket: Which strategy helped you the most? Why?
**Homework:** Study your vocab words. Quiz tomorrow.

**Day 25: Vocab Quiz**

**Do Now:** Play Quizlet Live with the whole class to review all of the vocabulary words from Ch. 9-11

**Learning Target:** I can demonstrate my comprehension of vocabulary words.

**Mini Lesson:** Explicit instruction of testing expectations: stay quiet until everyone is finished with the quiz, no cheating, try your best, raise your hand if you have a question, etc. (whatever other rules you may have). Explanation of what to do when students are finished with their quiz (independent reading or draw your favorite part of the story so far and write a paragraph explaining why it’s your favorite).

**Work Time:** Vocab Quiz (depending on the student’s level- format the quiz to any of the following: matching, multiple choice, fill in the blank, write out word or definition, create your own sentences)

**Exit Ticket:** Have students reflect on how they think they did on the assessment by showing thumbs up, to the side, or down. (Students will further reflect on their quiz during make-up day).

**Day 26: Ch. 9-11 Discussion**

**Do Now:** Think-Pair-Share: Discuss how you feel about the ending of the story.

**Learning Target:** I can discuss events in *Homeless Bird*. I can use accountable talk to build on other’s ideas.

**Mini Lesson:** Review accountable talk and model using sentence frames to build on each other’s responses. Provide each group with the following sentence frames:

![Accountable Talk Stems](image)
Work Time: Use Accountable Talk Sentence starters to discuss each question in your group:

- How does tradition influence a society?
- Why is it important to follow tradition? Or is it?
- How have rules impacted Koly?
- How has freedom impacted Koly?
- Do you believe Koly needed to experience all the negative in her life in order to appreciate what would come later? Why or why not?
- Why does Koly still wish to follow some traditions even though her experience was not good?
- What new traditions has Koly created for her life? How will they impact her future?
- Have you or your family ever changed traditions? Give an example.

Exit Ticket: What is one message you are taking away about traditions from learning about the Indian culture and being able to compare it with your own/ your peer’s cultures?

Homework: Independent Reading for 1 hour

Day 27: What is perseverance?

Do Now: Turn and Talk: Share with a partner about a time when you reached a goal. Describe what you did to reach this goal.

Learning Target:

I can describe do Koly shows perseverance in the city of widows.

I can analyze how showing perseverance helps Koly reach her goals.

Mini Lesson: Explicit instruction: what is perseverance (when you don’t give up, even when you are facing a difficult time). Model examples of how students have shown perseverance in the classroom. As a class, discuss and write on the board- what were Koly’s goals in life after she was left in the city of widows.

Work Time: Students work in pairs to find 3 examples of when Koly showed perseverance. Students will analyze how these moments of perseverance helped Koly achieve her goals.

Exit Ticket: How has Koly inspired you?
Homework: Independent reading for 1 hour

Day 28: Planning & Rough Draft

Do Now: What is perseverance?

Learning Target: I can describe how the author uses characterization to develop a central idea of perseverance by using the TEAL writing strategy.

Mini Lesson: Review the TEAL graphic organizer and what information will go in each box (example: where would the evidence come from? Where would the analysis come from? etc.)

Work Time: Students complete the TEAL graphic organizer. Students must have at least 2 pieces of evidence.

Exit Ticket: Write out your rough draft paragraph.

Homework: Rough draft must be complete for tomorrow!

Day 29: Peer Review & Final Draft

Do Now: How has peer review helped you so far?

Learning Target: I can provide and receive feedback on my TEAL paragraph. I can use reflection to improve my writing.

Mini Lesson: Pull up a sample TEAL paragraph and model how to give feedback. Make sure to model positive and negative feedback. Assign students in groups of 3 for peer review. You will give feedback to 2 classmates.

Work Time: Have students trade rough draft samples. As they read each other’s work, they need to complete and index card with feedback (peer’s name, your name, one thing you did really well is ___, some things you can improve on are ____). Students will hold on to the index cards for the peers they give feedback to, until after the other peer also gives feedback. Students then will go around and share feedback with each other (one person at a time receiving feedback from both peers).

Exit Ticket: What is one thing you learned about your writing that you will need to improve next time?

Homework: Use the feedback to make corrections. Final draft must be finished and turned in on Google Classroom by midnight today.
Day 30: Unit Reflection

Do Now: Why is it important to reflect?

Learning Target:

I can reflect on my learning for the unit.

I can provide feedback to my teacher on the lessons and experiences for this unit.

Mini Lesson: Model reflection (provide example of how I, as a teacher, reflect on my lessons). Explicitly go over reflection questions with the class.

Work Time: Students will reflect on their learning by answering the following questions:

- Something I learned about another culture is:
- Something I learned about my culture is:
- Something that surprised me during this unit is:
- This unit helped me to understand:
- One way I am a better person after this unit is:
- I learned I am very good at:
- I learned I need more support in:

Students will provide feedback to the teacher by answering the following questions:

- What activities did you find most interesting? Why?
- Which activities would you change? Why?
- My favorite part of the unit is:
- Ms. Sova helped me the most when:
- I wish Ms. Sova:
- I learned best when:

Exit Ticket: What advice would you give to a student who was going to learn this unit for the first time?
Name: ________________________________  Date: ______________

**Topic sentence:** This is your claim. It is what everything in your paragraph must prove.

1.) In ____________________________ by ________________________, the author uses

   (title) (author)

   __________________________ to develop the central idea of ____________________________.

**Evidence/Analysis:** Find two quotations (the words exactly from the text, in quotation marks, and cited with the author and page number) that develop the central idea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context (what is happening in the text? 1 sentence summary about life for girls before the change)</th>
<th>&quot;Evidence&quot; (Direct quote from text; include author’s last name, page #)</th>
<th>Analysis (How does this quote support your claim?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.)</td>
<td>3.)</td>
<td>4.)</td>
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</table>

5.) **Transition into evidence 2:** *Another example is _____*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context (what is happening in the text? 1 sentence summary about life for girls before the change)</th>
<th>&quot;Evidence&quot; (Direct quote from text; include author’s last name, page #)</th>
<th>Analysis (How does this quote support your claim?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>6.)</td>
<td>7.)</td>
<td>8.)</td>
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</table>

**Link:** This is like a conclusion. Summarize your writing and connect it back to your topic sentence.
Chapter 4: Conclusions & Recommendations

A great teacher will do anything to make sure his or her students reach their potential. A key to being successful in this area is to reach every student during the learning process. In an ever-changing world, the student population has shifted and changed over time, yet the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is still stuck in the past. “As our society and public school classrooms grow more diverse, we believe that preservice teachers and their middle-grade students need many opportunities to read and write about diverse individuals and the array of experiences they face as they encounter the challenges of life” (Jetton and Savage-Davis, 2005, p. 36). The mostly white literary canon of the texts we use in our curriculums does not engage the current population of English Language Learner (ELLs) students. They struggle with understanding the nuances and experiences presented by the characters in the texts because they have never experienced such things. We need to include more culturally relevant texts in our ELA curriculum in order to engage ELLs as students need to see themselves and their experiences presented in the texts they read.

ELL students are struggling to make a connection to the texts they are expected to read in ELA. They would rather read about something they care about and by incorporating a unit with culturally relevant texts that enhances a student’s learning and discussion in the classroom will demonstrate students who are invested in their learning. Students would also be better able to
grasp and connect ELA content within culturally relevant texts because they can easily follow what is happening in the plotline as they can personally relate to the experience the characters face in the story.

I have created a teaching unit that explores different aspects of cultural traditions. Over the course of this unit, students will decide if traditional values should continue to the next generations or be moved on from so that new traditions can develop. This topic was brought up by students debating among their cultural group as to whether one student is right for “breaking away from tradition.” I thought it would be a great teachable moment for students to be able to explore all sides of an argument and decide for themselves. “Research with ELLs supports the importance of engaging ELLs with texts that connect with their lives” (Ebe, 2012). One way to do this is “to draw on students’ backgrounds, including their experiences, cultures, and languages [by incorporating] culturally relevant texts [that will] draw on the schemas that ELLs bring to reading” (Ebe, 2012). Exposure to different ideas through literature that invokes reflection for the reader helps us reflect on and broaden our views of the world. My unit focuses on the text *Homeless Bird* by Gloria Whelan. This text explores a young girl who follows tradition but then breaks away from it. Students will be able to learn the events that surround the decision to break away from tradition and reflect on their own opinions as to whether original traditions should be followed or is it okay to break away and create new traditions.

This unit is especially timely for ELL students because they are being thrust into the challenges of learning in a new country with new cultural values that are vastly different from what they know. This unit will allow students to explore traditions from the perspective of why they are necessary and valued to whether or not they are necessary to follow with the freedoms allowed in the American culture. Morgan (2015) believes in “the power books have to connect us
across political, geographical, cultural, social, religious divides. It's the tale of the potential human beings have to work together.” In this way, we realize how much more connected we are rather than separate, as many groups tend to do.

Students will be able to share traditions they follow within their cultures and discuss their opinions of the traditions. I believe students will be able to see that many cultures have similar traditions. They will also be able to see the differences with the cultures and decide for themselves what aspects they value for their own futures. Because these students are living in a new country and balancing on the precipice between two cultures, I believe this is an important time for them to be able to think about and discuss what is important to them as individuals as it is a very relevant topic to them.

It is highly recommended that as educators, we “stressed the importance of literature that depicts cultural diversity in the present day, not just in historical contexts. [As one educator points out,] ”They know black people were slaves 150 years ago. That’s not what we need.” (Black, 2018). Students need to see many stories about their cultures instead of a singular story that marginalizes them. “English teachers agree that their classes should teach students to love reading and should provide them with the ability to understand experiences beyond their own… we must also remember to make room for marginalized voices as we reconsider what constitutes the American canon.” (Black, 2018). I recommend that we find ways to incorporate authors from many cultures that are included in the time periods we teach about. Culturally relevant texts should be taught parallel to the white canon texts that are required by the ELA curriculums. I would suggest that we look further into including texts on the topics of the following culture groups: Latinx, persons with disabilities, LGTBQ, ethnic, and characters breaking stereotypes.
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