

Multiethnic Literature: The Sharing of Cultures in a Multicultural Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

This unit will elaborate on various themes that emphasize what it means to be an American. Since America is a diverse country with more than 200 million Americans who come from various backgrounds, different philosophies and opposing beliefs, it is very important to understand that to be an American means that one is devoted to the values of liberty, equality, justice, and opportunity. Some themes that will be discussed in this unit are freedom, friendship and kindness, change, community or compassion, equality, and justice.

The student body at Bellfort Academy is approximately 73 percent Hispanic, 25 percent African-American, and about 2 percent Asian American. Bellfort Academy is an inner city school for grades four and five.

I teach in a self-contained classroom of students with special needs. The students in my classroom are diagnosed as autistic, mildly mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, and other health impairments. Subjects discussed and taught in my classroom are reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. My students have not had the opportunity to learn about other diverse cultures and ethnicities that exist in the Houston area. To provide literature of other cultures and ethnicities would broaden my students' knowledge base of people. Now that my Special Education students are able to read, they are delighted to see students that resemble themselves in their literature books. My students were not reading in August at the beginning of the school year.

Multicultural education is a process that affects school practices, policies, and management of educational institutions that provide the highest level of academic achievement for all students. It assists students in learning about their histories, cultures, and contributions to society in a diverse environment. Educational institutions develop curricula that foster knowledge about topics in racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, ablism, ageism, heterosexism, and religion intolerance (NAME).

OBJECTIVES

TEKS: English Language Arts Grade 4

The unit will satisfy several important objectives for listening and reading. One critical objective is ELA.4.121, designed to help student to recognize and analyze story plot, setting, problem resolution, and explain their importance in the story. Students will also be expected to identify narrative text structure in order to deepen comprehension. In objective ELA.4.10G, students also paraphrase and summarize texts to recall, inform, and organize ideas; they are to identify the best summary. According to objective ELA.4.6C, students are to locate the meanings (definitions), pronunciations, and derivations of unfamiliar words using dictionaries, glossaries, and other sources. Expectations for writing consist of developing and revising writing through elaboration and extensions of ideas, as well as communicating through using effective transitions. Students are expected to choose specific words to enhance or clarify meaning. Students are expected to identify, differentiate and use different parts of speech correctly. Lastly, objective ELA.4.10B

makes students establish and adjust purposes for reading to find out, understand, interpret, enjoy, and solve problems.

RATIONALE

Many people come to America to obtain freedom, and one of the themes that I would like to teach through literature is that freedom is not without a cost. There are several obligations in order to obtain it. Students need to be aware that there are many challenges that people encounter when they move to another country or environment. Several texts will reveal survival strategies that people use in order to live in their environments. Being able to use the power to make change is another theme that I will require my students to master from a list of compiled stories that they will be responsible for reading and comprehending. The power to make a change can enhance communication among people. Additionally, building friendship and building diversity are themes that will play a significant role in helping children develop the ability to maintain and sustain friendship. Children can learn to build on basic social skills that make lasting connections. Students will learn to build friendship by reading books with the theme of friendship. Diversity helps in shaping the social environment of the classroom. Teaching diversity enables students to live in a pluralistic society whereby they understand and value the many dimensions of diversity. Diversity enables an individual to cultivate a commitment to equality and justice in the real world. When diversity strategies are implemented in students' environment, students learn how to treat others who are perceived as different or threatening, or those who make them feel uncomfortable.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Asian American Identity

Today, many Americans forget that we are a nation of many cultures, ethnicities, religions, and customs. We also lack a basic understanding of our democracy. In order to maintain our freedom in this country, it is important not to forget our institutions, our representative democracy, and our responsibilities to those people before us, and what we each must do to maintain our liberty. Yes, freedom has a price that must be paid by people who benefit from it. Therefore, I would like to introduce my students to books that focus on what it means to be free. The text, *Hannah Is My Name*, written by Belle Yang, a Chinese American writer, is about freedom. In the story, Hannah and her family are so excited to emigrate from Taiwan to the United States, where they will become Americans and enjoy freedom. Hannah's native name is Na-Li, but when she arrives in the United States, it is changed to Hannah.

Taiwan, once called Formosa, is located on the north of East China Sea, and on the East by the Philippine Sea that is a section of the Pacific Ocean. It is south by the South China Sea. This island is considered a province of The People's Republic of China that includes the island P'enghu Island or Pescadores, the small Quemoy islands off mainland city of Xiamen. In addition to the island location, the landform of Taiwan consists of a forested mountain range, hilly land and broad, fertile plain slope ("Taiwan," *Funk and Wagnalls*).

Taiwan once was inhabited by aborigines of Malayan descent when the Chinese from the area that is named Fukien and Kwangtung started to settle in this area in the seventh century. In 1590, the Portuguese explored this island and they renamed it "the Beautiful" (Formosa). The Dutch organized forts in the south in 1624 and the Spanish established forts in the north of the island. Suddenly in 1641, the Dutch demanded the Spanish to leave the island, and they controlled it until 1661. Then, the Chinese General Koxinga took over the island and established an independent kingdom. The Manchus seized the island in 1683 and held it until 1895, when it passed to Japan after the first Sino-Japanese War. Japan developed and exploited Formosa. ("Taiwan," *Funk and Wagnalls*).

This island became the target of the American bombing during World War II, and at the end of the war the island was reinstated to China (“Taiwan,” *Information Please*).

Having a rich and versatile culture, Taiwan has many ethnic groups of people that consist of Aborigines, the Dutch, the Spanish, the Japanese, the Han-Chinese (bringing traditions from Mainland China and creating their own in Taiwan), and the Americans. Taiwan is extremely multicultural, and people who once lived on this island left many cultural remnants that exist in Taiwan to this day. There is a rich history of traditional architecture, relics of past civilizations, folk art, and traditions (“Taiwan,” *Information Please*).

The Chinese culinary culture has had a long history, and Chinese cooking is enjoyed by many people. Several Taiwan cuisines are prepared in various regions in China. In Taiwan, people literally work to eat. There are snacks shops and restaurants every three to five steps apart from each other. These eating facilities prepare and serve a variety of Chinese dishes that consist of the roast duck, lamb hotpot, fish in wine sauce, smoked chicken, beef with green peppers, salty fried chicken with spices, scallop and turnips balls of north to the camphor-tea duck, spicy bean curd of the south, honey ham, stir-fried shrimp, and dry fried eggplant (“Taiwan,” Tourism Bureau).

Since the island’s economy has improved over the years, its culinary culture has grown from traditional Chinese food to Chinese fast-food chains, therefore providing multiple choices of eateries to the food establishments in Taiwan. Foreign foods worldwide are served in Taiwan, and the island prepares foods such as American hamburgers, Italian pizza, Japanese sashimi, German pig's knuckles, Swiss fondue, and many other dishes. Such varieties of food choices make Taiwan a food haven. Taiwan's own native cuisine has become world-wide known (“Taiwan,” Tourism Bureau).

From the story, *Hannah is My Name*, the family work diligently to obtain their green card, though, the card was blue in color.

Hannah’s father’s Joseph Yang came to America in the 1960s on a visa for obtaining an education but not for work. Joseph Yang gets undocumented work and he is on a constant lookout for the immigration inspectors. While Joseph Yang is waiting for a green card, Hannah is in the process of completing the first grade, and she starts the second grade. In the process of patiently waiting for a visa, Hannah loses her best friend, Janie, whose family returns to Hong Kong because her father got caught working without a green card. During the family’s strife, Hannah learns the song, “This Land is Your Land.” During this same time, Dr. Martin Luther King is murdered (Brabander 704)

Belle Yang conveys a parallel between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream of freedom and Hannah’s family’s pursuit of equal opportunity in the work world. To be an American means one has freedom and liberty. Freedom comes with obligation and liberty. Dr. King conveys this idea with his “I Have a Dream” speech. This is the name of the famous speech that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave in 1963. Dr. King was an African-American leader in the Civil Rights Era. He gave a speech to an audience of 250,000 black and white Americans in Washington, D.C. They marched on Washington to support civil rights. Dr. King’s speech was about his dream of a better America. In his dream, everyone is treated fairly, everyone cooperates with one another, and everyone is free (Madden).

An excellent way to teach young children the concept of freedom and equal opportunity is to use a table. The instructor would write Hannah’s family on one side of the table and on the other side of the table write Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s name on the table heading. The teacher would write three to five incidents that display Hannah’s family’s circumstances of securing legal status and work. On the other side of the table, display Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s struggle for

freedom for people in general. Afterwards, the teacher should demonstrate the similarities of both persons' struggle for equality. Hopefully, students will grasp the similarities of struggles of both persons. Many people have no earthly idea how some people literally struggle to earn their citizenship in this country.

The unit will teach the historical and cultural context of China. This country has a long history as a nation and a culture that dates back before the birth of Christ. In China, people place great value on family. Children frequently live with their grandparents, aunts, uncles, and their cousins. One's family is more important than one's friend. Asian immigrants came to America because of the demand of cheap labor to build the industrial and agricultural infrastructure of the West Coast (Alba 77). Asian Americans have made significant socioeconomic gains that have changed societal perceptions of Asian Americans (Sowell 136). *Hannah Is My Name* depicts how Hannah and her family work diligently to become American citizens and become free. This family has to be patient in order to get a green card, so they can stay legally in San Francisco. This family struggles to survive in America while awaiting their citizenship. Hannah's parents work various jobs to support their family.

After my students have had the opportunity to read *Hannah is My Name*, students will be expected to use a story map to organize their ideas about the story. They will write the title of the story, the author's name, and the illustrator of the book. Students will identify the characters and their roles in the story. This will be done on graphic organizers that consist of identifying the characters, problems, and solutions in the story. Since the story takes place in San Francisco, it has skylines, bridges, hilly streets, and a Chinatown. The unit will underscore that these features are elements of Chinese culture. The instructor should make the students cognizant of the elements that may enable immigrants to adapt to the new changes that they encounter. Students will be encouraged to draw pictures of places in San Francisco, California and compare them with pictures of similar scenery in Taiwan. These pictures may be accessed by using the Internet in order to stimulate student's visual intellect. Students will be able to compare and contrast their visual images of San Francisco and Taiwan with their own drawings.

China has almost every kind of landscape: frozen deserts, hot, sandy deserts, the highest mountain in the world, and the second-lowest dry land in the world, tropical forests and 9,000 miles of coastline. Hopefully, students' drawings will depict these features in their pictures. They will identify the various landforms of Taiwan from their drawings.

American Indian Identity

Indian Shoes by Cynthia Leitich Smith is a story that depicts the struggle and challenges of daily life for survival that a young boy and his grampa Halfmoon face. The author uses love and humor in the collection of short stories set in Chicago and rural Oklahoma. They are confronted with homesickness, a mystery, bad hair cuts, and a wedding without the proper attire (Smith 12).

Muscogee Indians lived in North America before the Europeans came to this continent. According to historical records, these Indians originally lived in the southwest portion of the United States. They migrated to the Southeast area that is now Georgia and Alabama. Muscogee Indians built huge mound buildings. Even though the Muscogee tribes' architecture, dwellings, and ceremonial grounds of the Indians have changed, their ancestors' buildings are greatly respected (Libal 3).

Among the recurrent themes in American Indian Literature are love, separation, loss and continuance. Grampa really wants the Seminole Moccasins because it reminds him of his life as a Cherokee, Seminole lifestyle in Oklahoma. Grampa was revealing signs of homesickness, separation and love for his former family. Since the author of *Indian Shoes* is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, I would have my students do research on this native Indian tribe. After

students complete their research on this, they will make a chart that depicts their lifestyle of these Indians. This chart would include the name of the Indian tribe, their homeland, type of shelter, tools, clothing, customs, occupations, and their contributions to society. When students complete their charts on the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, they will make a story map on the story *Indian Shoes*. Students will use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the Indian tribe's lifestyle in America as compared to the lifestyle in their native homeland.

The Creek are an American Indian people from the southeastern United States. Today they identify themselves as the Muscogee (or Muskogee). Modern Muscogee live mainly in Oklahoma, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. Their language, Mvskoke, is a member of the Creek branch of the Muskogean language family. The Seminole are close kin to the Muscogee and speak a Creek language as well. The Creeks are one of the Five Civilized Tribes (Alabama, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Coushatta, and Seminole) (Sequoyah Research Center).

The early historic Creeks were probably the descendants of the mound builders of the Mississippi culture along the Tennessee River in modern Tennessee and Alabama, and probably related to the Utinahia of southern Georgia. These Indians were more like a loose confederacy than a single tribe. The Muscogee lived in autonomous villages in river valleys throughout what are the states of Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama and consisted of many ethnic groups speaking several distinct languages such as Hitchiti, Alabama, and Coushatta ("Creek," *Wikipedia*).

The Seminole tribe was once an alliance between certain Creek, Misccosukee, Hitchiti, Oconee, and other Indians from northern Florida and southern Georgia. Some Creek affiliated with the Seminoles. The Creek were undecided about whose side to take in the American Revolutionary War. The "Upper Creek Indians" decided to ally themselves with the British, and the "Lower Creeks" chose to remain neutral (*Native American Tribes of the US and Canada*).

The Creek War started as a civil war among the different Creek tribes and later was involved with the War of 1812. The Creek War of 1813-1814 became known as the Red Stick War. The word "red sticks" was given to the Upper Creek Indians who fought to resist settlement by the whites. The Lower Creeks Indians became allies with the American settlers and fought violently against the Upper Creek Indians (*Native American Tribes of the US and Canada*).

In 1813 the Upper Creek Indians who fought against Americans killed their Indian brothers and the massacre ensued. The Red Sticks had killed nearly 250 people and took over the fort. In 1814 the Red Sticks were defeated by General Andrew Jackson's militia. Later, the Creeks were forced to sign a treaty which gave their land to the United States. Unfortunately, the Lower Creek Indians who had fought with Jackson were blamed for allowing their "brothers" to rise up against the United States (*Native American Tribes of the US and Canada*).

The Creeks were farming people, and Creek women did most of the farming. They harvested crops of corns, beans, and squash. Creek men did most of the hunting (shooting deer, wild turkeys, and small game) and fishing in the rivers and along the coast.

Creek dishes included cornbread, soups, and stews cooked on stone hearths (*Creek Indian Fact Sheet*). The Creek hunters basically used bows and arrows. Fishermen used fishing spears, nets, or hooks made of bone. Creek men combined their bows for war with tomahawks and war clubs. Creek warriors also used hide shields to defend themselves (*Creek Indian Fact Sheet*).

There were many traditional Creek legends and fairy tales. Storytelling is very important to the Creek Indian culture (*Creek Indian Fact Sheet*). The religious ceremonies centered on the celebration of the corn harvest. The cultivation of corn was one of their chief occupations, so Creek religious activities were highly concerned with this important product. The Creek people sing and dance around a fire seasonally for their sacred ceremonies. These people were known as Stomp Dancers (*Creek Indian Fact Sheet*). The native Creek beliefs were that all creations and

nearly all reasons for being alive were simply attributed to the "Master of Breath" or "Hesaketvmese." They believed a good life would be rewarded. They also had prophets who they believed conferred with the supernatural in diagnosing disease and predicting the future ("Creek Religion")

Students will use the information about the Creek Indians and make a chart that depicts their lifestyle. The chart will reveal the Creeks tribes and the places where these Indians reside. It will also reveal the languages, houses, clothing, farming and tools of the Creeks (Muscogee). Students will be allowed to write a small passage about what ancient skills and arts these Indians still practice. Students will use sequencing skills with organizing pictures of the Creek's history that show the wars they were involved in with other people during the civil war.

Hispanic American Identity

The story *The Emerald Lizard* written by Pleasant L. DeSpain (Latin American writer from Guatemala) reveals several themes such as helping others, empathy, the power to make a change, kindness, and repaying a debt or kindness. Students will be encouraged to research information about Guatemala. Such information will include where the country is located, its capitol, size of the country, its population, demographics, economy, major language and education. This information will aid them in comprehending the author's culture. Since American people are of various ethnic backgrounds and cultures, they have to learn how to interact and socialize with people of various ethnicities and cultures.

Students will be shown how to do this by valuing the of families' culture through discussion, affirmation, and celebration. Examples of this can be found within books and other resources that depict all sorts of families. The teacher will display drawings of children's families and allow students to make scrapbooks that reveal events of interest in their families. As another activity, the teacher may encourage a discussion that permits students to elaborate on their feelings and experiences that make their family unique or special.

In brief summary, Guatemala and other Central American states obtained their independence from Spain in 1821. The Mayans were the majority of Central America from the fifth and the eighth century when their civilization declined and several other ethnic groups migrate to this area. Guatemala experienced periods of stability followed by times of upheaval under dictators who were satisfied to keep the country under a "quasi-feudal regime underpinned by a small clique of land-owning families" ("Guatemala History").

"The government of Colonel Arbenz Guzman attempted various land reforms in the 1950s, but was taken over by a US-backed invasion led by military opponents of Arbenz" ("Guatemala History"). A civil war broke out between series of right-wing military government and several leftist guerrilla movements. Former General Efraim Rios Montt, "a self-styled evangelist," served as army chief of staff and for a short period of time as a president during the '70s and '80s ("Guatemala History").

The culture of Mexican Americans began in Mexico and Spain and the Western civilization. Interestingly, their contemporary values and their lifestyle distinguish them from Americans. Racially, they are both of Spanish and Indian in ancestry, and to some extent, a multicolor population (Sowell 245). Guatemala City has many cultural attractions such as libraries, museums, including the National Archives, the National Library, and the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology. In the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, there are numerous collections of Mayan artifacts (*Guatemala: Culture*).

There is a large contrast between Guatemala marked by extremes in the daily affairs of living. In the capital city of Guatemala, families live much as they do in the metropolitan centers of Europe. Within an hour's time of driving in the capital, you will find Indians whose patterns of

daily life remain like people of the past. The pattern of culture is characterized by vivid contrast (*Guatemala: Culture*).

Guatemala has “a colorful and dynamic culture. Spanish colonists gave Guatemala its official language and many architectural and art treasures. Magnificent buildings of period remain at Anitgua Guatemala, the colonial capital” (*Guatemala: Culture*).

Crafts such as weaving, jewelry making, and ceramics combine “indigenous design and color patterns with Spanish technical skills” (*Guatemala: Culture*). Throughout the country, the marimba is the common Guatemalan musical instrument along with the “Mexican ranchera music and North American rock” (*Guatemala: Culture*).

The country is constantly bombarded by an infusion of foreign influences that affect their way of life. Various components of communication such as periodical news, the comics, soap operas, and film making are of foreign origin (*Guatemala: Culture*).

Empathy is a theme revealed in the story *The Emerald Lizard* when Brother Pedro wants to help Juan and his ill wife. The author, Pleasant L. DeSpain, uses the family as a source of comfort, safety, and value. This is a recurrent theme that occurs in Hispanic Literature. The power to make a change is another theme that occurs in the story when Brother Pedro gives his lizard away to Juan to help his sick wife. Brother Pedro is able to change the lives of others because of his attitude for helping people. Students can be taught this concept by having them retell important narrative events. They will be asked to make a retelling map. They will write all the important events that happened in their life. Then, students will draw a picture to go with each event.

The family is the center of the Latino/Mexican American culture. Warmth inside the family characterizes a Mexican family. Close friends complete a tight-knit circle of social activities relationships (Sowell 245). Machismo concepts give the family a male-dominated society. The Aztec civilization developed and spread across Central America prior to the European discovery of the Western Hemisphere. The warrior-like people conquered and ruled many other Indian tribes, including what would be later called Mexico (Sowell 245).

In Mexico, as in Latin America, the Spanish Conquerors arrived as expeditions that consisted of men, women, and children, as in the British colonies in North America. Marriage with the natives’ women produced mixed Spanish and Indian offspring. By the 1800s, mixed offspring called mestizos outnumbered the Spaniards born in Spain. An elaborate ranking of enormous racial mixture existed in Mexico and Latin America (Sowell 246).

From Mexico, explorers, adventurers, and religious missionaries spread northward into what is now the southwestern United States. During the late eighteenth century, Spain had small isolated settlements dispersed through California, New Mexico, and Texas. After the fall of the monarchy in Spain, the Napoleonic wars began. Mexico struggled toward independence in 1821 (Sowell 246).

Kindness is another important theme revealed in *The Emerald Lizard*. Brother Pedro’s actions are selfless, not selfish. An excellent way to depict this concept will be to have student make a word web by writing the word kindness in the center or the web word and by filling in the bubbles of the other part of the web by writing small phrases that illustrate acts of kindness in the story.

The teacher will allow students to write in their journal about things other than money or expensive material goods that may enrich their lives. An extension of this activity would be to allow students to e-mail their peers, associates, and relatives a message that begins with “I am rich because I can make and keep very good friends” or “...because I have a caring family.”

Pleasant DeSpain, author of *The Emerald Lizard*, has been professionally telling stories for thirty years in Seattle, Washington and to live audiences on television in the United States and internationally (Willet 114). He obtains many of these ideas from myths, folktales, and legends that he learned from his travels in South and Central America and the Caribbean (Willet 114). Many of his works are from his research in published collections of pre-Columbian literature and folktales. Before DeSpain tells a story, he discusses the cultural history of the region and uses the remainder of the introduction to reveal his history of becoming a storyteller (Willet 115). DeSpain borrowed many tales from cultures other than his own. He gives credit for his storytelling by both oral and written recognition via brief notes collected at the end of each tale. In essence, DeSpain has done an excellent job of bringing stories to American children and adults from a group less represented by the English language stories and tales (Willet 115).

African American Identity

To be an American means to be friendly. In the story *The Other Side*, two girls, one white and one African-American, make friends in spite of a fence that separates them. According to L. Derman-Sparks, to have a friend and to be a friend are expectations of normal childhood growth and development (72). They are basic needs. Research reveals that friendship supports children's cognitive and emotional development. Children who interact with others in socially acceptable ways are admired and included in school-related activities (72).

Children develop various degrees of accomplishment at making and maintaining friends. This skill requires one to be able to have positive interactions that are easily obtained by some children and very difficult for other children to obtain. When teachers experience their students having a complicated time making friends, it is important for them to intervene and find possible solutions to solve the problems (Derman-Sparks 72). Do not confuse a child who does not possess social skills and child who is pointed out because of prejudice, bias, and discrimination by their peers (72)

Teachers can play a very important role in helping children develop and maintain friendly relationships with their peers. One of the best ways to assess a child's social competence is to observe their interactions with other children. Some activities that teachers can use are to draw pictures of themselves interacting with their friends in the cafeteria or playground. The teacher should place their work on the bulletin board.

Students can write in their journals what friendship means to them. Allow students to make scrapbooks, view CDs, and listen to music with friendship themes.

For three hundred years European colonists brought Africans to the New World as slaves. The slaves' role was to clear vast tracts of land for the cultivation of sugar, rice, cotton, and tobacco (Adams 1). Blacks were brought to this country in 1619 at Jamestown, Virginia. Approximately twenty Africans were traded for water and supplies by Dutch seamen who traveled from New York to Suriname, South America (Adams 1). Many historians are not sure if these immigrants were slaves or indentured servants. An indentured servant is a person who contracted to work for a specific period of time in exchange for voyage costs, food, and lodging (Adams 1).

A substantial amount of African American history is based on the struggle to achieve the equality and rights promised by the founders of a democratic government. According to Thomas Jefferson in 1776 in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Adams 2).

Work done by Fredrick Douglass, an ex-slave and the most prominent black abolitionist of the mid-1800s, challenged the notion of democracy. He stated that to the white community, "The

rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me” (Adams 2).

An antislavery movement helped bring on the United States Civil War (1861-1865). This war consisted of the free states in the North and the slave states in the South. Freedom for slaves was assured by the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution after the North won against the South. It was after the ratification of the 14th Amendment in 1868 that African Americans became citizens in the land where they were born. In 1870, the 15th Amendment provided the African American men the right to vote (Adams 3).

There is no doubt that slavery reinforced a false assumption that blacks were subordinate to whites. Even though emancipation and discrimination against blacks continued, African Americans had few legal rights in the 1900s. Basic privileges, such as the right to vote, buy housing, and other amenities for daily living were denied to blacks. Various laws were implemented to keep the races socially separate and politically unequal in society. Such problems caused the outbreak of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Many African Americans demanded their proper and equal place in society (Adams 3).

African Americans were reminded that despite their optimism for hope and freedom, they would have to continue to struggle to obtain equal status in America according to James Weldon Johnson (Adams 3).

Cultural Aspect

The African American culture is rooted in Africa and is a mixture of sub-Saharan African and Sahelean cultures. Slavery hindered the ability of Africans in America to practice their cultural traditions, many practices, values and beliefs. Their culture has survived but it has been modified or assimilated with the European American culture.

Slave owners exercised control over their slaves by attempting to deny them the right to practice their African culture. Slave owners deliberately tried to repress political organization in order to handle slave rebellions that occurred in the southern United States, Brazil, Haiti, and the Dutch Guyans (“African American Culture”).

African American has a history of oral tradition. Because slaveowners did not allow slaves to be educated, slaves’ primary means of preserving history, morals, and other cultural information among their people was by storytelling. Many cultural elements were passed from generation to generation via storytelling. African American music and dance stem from the polyrhythmic music of ethnic groups of Africa, especially those in Western, Sahelen, and Sub-Saharan regions. African oral traditions nurtured in slavery spread the use of music to pass on history, teach lessons, ease suffering, and deliver messages (“African American Culture”).

An activity from the book *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson would help students comprehend how friendship is established by the two girls in the story with the aid of a story map. Two girls, Clover and Annie, had become friends in a small, segregated town. Both girls lived in close proximity to each other and wanted to play with one another, but they were afraid to because of racism. Despite their neighbors’ perceptions of their culture and ethnicity, both girls decided to become friends. They deliberately broke the barriers of racism and segregation by stepping over each other’s fence to play with one another. Jacqueline Woods believes that children believe in the ideas adults have about things, so they do what they can that will change the world. As a child, while in school, Ms. Woodson got in trouble for telling “stories.” Her teacher was upset with her and told her to write stories, and then they would become fiction and not lies. As an African American child, she never saw books about African American girls, deaf children, single family homes, and people in prison. This lack of diversity influenced her to write the way that she does today. Many of Ms. Woodson’s characters are portrayed as devalued

citizens because their experiences are not like those of the dominant culture. Students would be allowed to make a narrative and fill in the correct information from the story. In the map include the title and author of the book. Identify the setting where most of the story takes place. Students could draw a picture of the setting and describe what it looks like. In order to identify the characters, the student would make a character chart of three columns. In the first column, write the character's name. The physical appearance will be described in the second column. Personality traits will be listed in the third column. Allow students to draw and write about the main character(s).

LESSON PLANS

Lesson 1

Objective(s)

The student will develop a story map to enhance their comprehension of the story.

TEKS: ELA.4.121. Recognize and analyze story plot, setting, problems resolution and explain their importance in the story.

Materials

Items needed are the text, *Hannah is My Name*, journal book, pencil, and a globe. The objective of the story is to identify the struggle immigrants' face in order to become American citizens.

Concept Development

Common terms for students to master are *immigrant*, *green cards*, *citizenship*, *occupation*, and *patriotism*.

Introduction

Students will discuss from the story *Hannah is My Name* the setting, the place where the story is happening. Discussion of the plot, what happened in the story, will be mentioned. Students are expected to elaborate on the problem(s) in the story and how the problem is solved.

Student Practice

After students complete a story map, allow them the opportunity to write in their journal about their experiences of applying for one's citizenship in America. Ask them what it means to be an American. What challenges did they experience to remind them that freedom has a price and people should not take it for granted?

Assessment

Permit students to perform a skit on their experiences of becoming an American in this society. Was the experience what they anticipated? Would they do it again if they had to? Students will use a globe to locate China and research information about China's culture and lifestyle. Provide student a CD about the lifestyle of China. Allow students the opportunity to write about how they think life in China is like.

Lesson 2

Objective(s)

Students are expected to use their dictionaries to locate meanings of words in their required readings. ELA.4.6C, students are to locate the meanings (definitions), pronunciations, and derivations of unfamiliar words using dictionaries, glossaries, and other sources.

Materials

Resources for this activity are the text, *The Emerald Lizard*, a dictionary, thesaurus, paper, graphic organizer, transparency, and pencil. Prepare a booklet for a vocabulary log.

Overview

The focus and guided practice will give an example of how to log new vocabulary into the vocabulary log. Students will be taught how to use the dictionary and thesaurus to define words that are new or hard for them to understand. Students will be given a dictionary and a thesaurus. Instruction will be given to them on how to use the dictionary and thesaurus.

Concept Development

Using their dictionaries, glossaries, and thesaurus, students will define *emerald, jewel, rich, merchant, debt, repay, priest, astonished, kindness, and lizard*.

Student Practice

Students are required to define the following words: emerald, jewel, rich, merchant, debt, repay, priest, astonished, kindness, and lizard. Instructions will be given on how to look up words alphabetically and how to use the guide words. Folders will be given to students to make a vocabulary log. Students will take their vocabulary list and write them in their folder. For each word, tell on what page it is found in your text, the sentence the word is in, the definition of the word, a picture illustrating the word, synonyms for the word, and what helped you to determine the meaning of the word. Allow students time to practice defining words from their stories using their dictionaries and thesaurus.

Assessment

To assess student's ability to define words, provide students with a new list of new words from another story. Encourage students to use their newly taught dictionary skills to define the new terms. An extension of this activity is to help the student to locate and identify the history of the word(s) they are defining. This may also be used as a closure for the lesson.

Lesson 3

Objective(s)

Students will select one chapter from the text, *Indian Shoes*, and summarize it. In objective ELA.4.10G, students are to paraphrase and summarize text to recall, inform, and organize ideas; they are to identify the best summary.

Materials

Supplies needed for this activity are the text, *Indian Shoes*, paper, pencil, transparency, dry erase marker and red crayon.

Overview

The instructor will prepare a transparency that will have an excerpt from the passage of a chapter of the text, *Indian Shoes*. The teacher will take the transparency and copy an excerpt from chapter one onto the transparency. Read the information on the transparency to identify the supporting details and underline these details in red dry erase marker. The supporting details should include, who, what, when, where, why and/or how. Students include all this information in a one sentence summary.

Student Practice

Provide students with another excerpt from another chapter in the book, *Indian Shoes*, and encourage students to locate the supporting details in the passage by underlining the sentences with their red crayon. All the supporting details should contain who, what, when, where, why,

and/ or how. The instructor should remind students to use the information to write a one sentence summary.

- Who is the story about? (The main characters in the story)
- What the story is about? (The plot in the story)
- When did the incident happen?
- Where did the incident take place?
- Why did things happen the way they did?
- How did things work out?

Concept Development

Terms to define are *Chicago, homesick, moccasins, scoreboard, Seminole Indian Tribe, and Oklahoma.*

Assessment

By making a teacher-made test on identifying summaries, students can be assessed on identifying the best summary for a passage. A closure and an extension activity of this lesson would be furnishing students with another excerpt from their text without the summary. Students will read the information given to them and be prepared to write the best summary for the passage by including who, what, when, where, why and/or how in a one summary sentence.

Lesson 4

Objective

The student will identify ways to interact with other people in a positive way despite of their differences.

TEKS: ELA.4.10B Establish and adjust purposes for reading to find out, understand, to interpret, to enjoy, and to solve problems.

Materials

Students will use paper, pencil, poster board, CD, markers, and book, *Other Side.*

Overview

The author of this book is Jacqueline Woodson. The objective of the story is to identify and discuss positive ways to socialize with people in various setting.

Concept Development

Concepts that are significant for students to develop from this story are *sharing, discrimination, prejudice, cooperation, social skills, and friendship.*

Student Practice

Students will make a list of what friends do or what friendship means. They will discuss how it feels when a playmate moves and relocate to another city and town. They will elaborate on how they welcome new students to their school.

Assessment

A semantic web will be used to enhance students' vocabulary. Students will write a new or unfamiliar word from the text they are reading in the center of the web. The teacher will have students brainstorm words and concepts that are in the same semantic (meaning) family as the word they wrote and they will add the words to the web. They may use their book, a dictionary, or a thesaurus for help.

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