Immigration & Acceptance of Cultural Differences

Literature Based Lesson-Onion Tears by Diana Kidd

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Rationale: Students gain an understanding of the affects of immigration and the responsibility of us, as citizens, to value other cultures and traditions. Most Social Studies textbooks now more accurately describe America as a "tossed salad" and not a "melting pot". We are one, but immigrants can still practice the traditions and cultures of their homelands. Many sociologists feel that acceptance is the number one social need in all people. We, as teachers, must teach acceptance and tolerance or social injustice against groups of people will continue.

Grade Level: 3rd-5th grade

Summary: Many Vietnamese families were torn apart during the Vietnam War. The main character of this book, Nam-Huong, is a little girl whose parents were taken away by soldiers. She was sent to live with a foster family in Australia. Her foster mother, who she calls Auntie, owns a Vietnamese Restaurant and Nam-Huong is expected to help out in the kitchen, hence the title Onion Tears. Nam-Huong wishes that she could express her feeling more effectively and cry real tears. This book vividly tells the difficulties of living in a new country with many different cultures. Nam-Huong finds herself expressing her feeling through letters that she writes to birds and animals instead of her classmates who often tease her because of her differences. She longs to be reunited with her family in Vietnam.
Objectives:
- Students gain a new perspective about the obstacles that immigrants face when leaving their home countries.
- Students realize that accepting differences and valuing other cultures makes a better society for everyone.
- Students take on the responsibility for standing up (being up-standers) to others that are committing social injustices against others based on cultural differences, age, race, religion, socioeconomic status, etc.

Topic/Subject: Confronting change; evaluate customs and values of groups in conflict, recognize and resist prejudice and mistreatment of others.

Mandated Social Studies subjects: Students understand the causes and effects of immigration and social injustice. Look at obstacles and how people overcome them to create communities. Identify the conflicting pressures placed on the character in trying to adapt to a new lifestyle and compare these with pressures children in your classroom may be dealing with in their lives. Inform students of current political pressures that are causing refugees to flee their homelands.

Sunshine State Standards:
S.S.A.1.2.1; S.S.A.1.2.2; S.S.A.1.2.3; S.S.A.6.2.1; S.S.B.1.2.4; S.S.B.2.2.2; S.S.B.2.2.4; S.S.C.1.1.2; S.S.C.2.2.2; S.S.C.2.2.5; S.S.D.1.2.2

Time Frame:
This lesson should take about five-45 min. sessions. However, there are 5 other books listed that go along with this theme, so a teacher could use all 5 books in this theme. (See Resources)

Materials Needed: For this lesson you will need:
Onion Tears, by Diana Kidd: Birch Tree Books, 1989 A set of 5 books is in the teaching trunk-FL Holocaust Museum
Vocabulary Mix-and-Match cards-laminated & cut-out (provided in this lesson)
Bubble Map (provided in this lesson) Make a transparency to use whole group
Double Bubble Map (provided in this lesson) Make a transparency to use whole group
Purpose Questions written on chart paper/Student journals or theme folders

Concepts Covered:
- Change: how people adapt to changing environments
- Conflict: how groups behave when they are unable to resolve issues or problems
- Culture: comparing customs and values of different cultures to create community
- Interdependence: social relationships of people in communities
- Perspective: how people view events and react to situations based on personal values
- Responsibility: how rules and laws affect the way people live and behave
- Social Injustice: the mistreatment of an individual of group based on race, religion, age, cultural differences, socioeconomic status, etc.
- Immigrant: person who moves from his/her homeland to live in another country
- By-stander: person who sees or hears mistreatment of others and does not take a stand against it
- Up-stander: person who sees or hears mistreatment of others and does take a stand against it

Anticipatory Set: Whole group (about 15-20 minutes)
Ask students if they have ever felt isolated or left out of a game or a group. Then fill in a Bubble Map (whole group-overhead transparency) as students express how this mistreatment or isolation made them feel. Guide students in the discussion about why it is wrong to exclude
individuals based on their age, race, gender, cultural differences, socioeconomic status or religious beliefs. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “I dream of a day when my children will be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin.” Discuss what that quote means to students.

After anticipatory set, read aloud or let students go to Literacy Center to read *Onion Tears*. If you order the 3rd-4th grade Teaching Trunk from the Florida Holocaust Museum (see Resources) there is a set of 5 *Onion Tears* books. Give students four-35-45 minute periods to go to the Literacy Center to read and write answers to Purpose Questions. On the fifth day, teacher calls groups back to table to go over and discuss answers to Purpose Questions and discuss the story.

**Lesson Procedures:**

**Option #1: Create a Literacy Center/Option #2: Teacher reads story aloud to students whole group** five-35-45 min. sessions/Display Purpose Questions on chart paper and go over them before reading/Literacy Center session begins. Also, tell students that there are Vietnamese names in this book, but not knowing how to pronounce these names does not affect the comprehension of the story.

**Directions for Literacy Center:**

**Day One:** 45 minutes
- Read pages 1-23, *Onion Tears*
- **Answer the 6 Purpose Questions** using complete sentences in your journals.
- You may discuss the answers quietly in your group and look up the answers in the book.

**Purpose Questions for pages 1-23.** (Write these questions on chart paper & display at center)

1. Name the two people with whom Nam-Huong lives?
2. Why do you think that Danny teased Nam-Huong and said “She hasn’t got a tongue”?
3. Nam-Huong writes letters to animals. In these letters, she tells of her escape from Vietnam. Which animal does she say is her best friend?
4. Nam-Huong says that her teacher, Miss Lily, is like her dad. Tell how Miss Lily is like Nam-Huong’s father.
5. Nam-Huong writes a letter to one of her animal friends on the back of her spelling book. Which animal does she address this letter to and why?
6. Why does the author, Diana Kidd, title this book *Onion Tears*?

**Day Two:** 35-45 minutes
- Read pages 24-33, *Onion Tears*
- **Answer the 5 Purpose Questions** using complete sentences in your journals.
- You may discuss the answers quietly in your group and look up the answers in the book.

**Purpose Questions for pages 24-33.** (Write these questions on chart paper & display at center)

1. What had Uncle Chu Minh found at the dump that brought him great joy?
2. What had Uncle Chu Minh found at the dump that he gave to Nam-Huong?
3. Who is Nam-Huong worried about because she is sick?
4. Tessa, one of Nam-Huong’s classmates, wrote a note about Nam-Huong at school. Why did Tessa write this note about her and what was its meaning?
5. What does Nam-Huong mean when she says-“I wish I were a bird-then I would go with you”?

**Day Three:** 35-45 minutes
- Read pages 34-46, *Onion Tears*
- **Answer the 6 Purpose Questions** using complete sentences in your journals.
- You may discuss the answers quietly in your group and look up the answers in the book.

**Purpose Questions for pages 34-46.** (Write these questions on chart paper & display at center)

1. Why is Nam-Huong excited about riding her bike to school?
2. Why do you think Nam-Huong thinks she hears ghosts everywhere?
3. Nam Huong compares the beauty of her bike to the beauty of a _____________.(pg 36 simile)
4. Similes are comparisons using the words **like** or **as**. **For example:** “The soup tastes like a salt mine!” (pg. 1) The banana leaves swayed back and forth like elephant ears. (pg. 13)
Find another example of a simile in this book or come up with one of your own.
5. What did Nam-Huong’s classmates say about her bike? Give two examples.
6. Who was a friend to Nam-Huong that helped her put her bike on the bike rack?

Day Four: 35-45 minutes
✓ Read pages 47-62, Onion Tears
✓ Answer the 7 Purpose Questions using complete sentences in your journals.
✓ You may discuss the answers quietly in your group and look up the answers in the book.

Purpose Questions for pages 34-62. (Write these questions on chart paper & display at center)
1. Who is Samson?
2. Why is Nam-Huong asked to take care of Samson?
3. Nam-Huong finally writes about what happened to her and her grandpa on their way out of Vietnam in the letter to the canary on pages 51-53. What does she mean when she says grandpa’s hand was limp in mine?
4. On pages 54-55, Nam-Huong is thinking about her grandpa and what happened on the ship out of Vietnam. She is finally able to cry real tears. What simile does Nam-Huong use to describe her tears?
5. What is a monsoon? (Students may look it up in a dictionary.)
6. On page 58, Nam-Huong says that she wished the yellow canary was there singing with her. Why is Nam-Huong happy?
7. How do you know that Nam-Huong’s classmates are beginning to accept her? Name two things that they asked her that tell the reader. (pages 58-59)
Vocabulary Cards: Laminate & cut-out on lines. Play Mix/Match/Freeze
Copy Vocabulary cards on one color of paper or tag board. Copy Definition
cards on another color of paper or tag board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrant</th>
<th>Social Injustice or Prejudice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Up-stander</td>
<td>By-stander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nam-Huong’s homeland</td>
<td>Country where Nam-Huong was a Refugee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definition Cards: Laminate & cut-out on lines. Use a different color paper for answer cards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person who moves from his/her homeland to another country</th>
<th>mistreatment of an individual or group based on race, religion, age, cultural differences, socioeconomic status, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social relationships of people in communities</td>
<td>how people view events and react to situations based on personal values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person who sees or hears mistreatment of others and does NOT take a stand against it</td>
<td>A person who sees or hears mistreatment of others and does take a stand against it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Definition Cards-Laminate & cut-out on lines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>how groups behave when they are unable to resolve issues or problems</th>
<th>how rules and laws affect the way people live and behave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comparing customs and values of different cultures to create community</td>
<td>A person who has fled their homeland; usually because of war or persecution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instructions for play:** Hand-out one card to each student (24 cards-12 vocabulary cards & 12 definition cards). 24 students can play. Tell students that Definition Cards are Blue (or whatever color paper or tag board you choose to copy on) and Vocabulary Cards are Red (or whatever color paper or tag board you choose to copy on). Match the correct Vocabulary card with its meaning. (A Red with a Blue). Allow 10-15 minutes to play. Go over correct answers when every one has a match.
Answer Key for Purpose Questions:

Day One: Pages 1-23
1. Name the two people with whom Nam-Huong lives?
   
   Nam-Huong lives with Auntie (foster mother) and Chu Minh.

2. Why do you think that Danny teased Nam-Huong and said “She hasn’t got a tongue”? (pg. 5)
   
   Danny said this to Nam-Huong because she doesn’t talk much because she’s shy.

3. Nam-Huong writes letters to animals. In these letters, she tells of her escape from Vietnam. Which animal does she say is her best friend?
   
   Nam-Huong’s animal best friend is the little yellow canary.

4. Nam-Huong says that her teacher, Miss Lily, is like her dad. Tell how Miss Lily is like Nam-Huong’s father. (pg. 22)
   
   Miss Lily is like Nam-Huong’s dad because they both talk to animals.

5. Nam-Huong writes a letter to one of her animal friends on the back of her spelling book. Which animal does she address this letter to and why? (pg. 22-23)
   
   Nam-Huong writes a letter to Mr. Buffalo because her dad liked the buffalo best.

6. Why does the author, Diana Kidd, title this book *Onion Tears*?
   
   The author titled her book *Onion Tears* because the main character, Nam-Huong, has difficulties dealing with the lost of her parents and grandpa. So, the only tears she can cry are tears when she is slicing up the onions for her Auntie’s restaurant.

Day Two: Pages 24-33
1. What had Uncle Chu Minh found at the dump that brought him great joy? (pg. 26)
   
   Chu Minh found a radio at the dump and he fixed it so it would work.

2. What had Uncle Chu Minh found at the dump that he gave to Nam-Huong? (pg. 29)
   
   Chu Minh found a bicycle at the dump for Nam-Huong.

3. Who is Nam-Huong worried about because she is sick? (pg. 30)
   
   Nam-Huong is worried about her teacher, Miss Lily because she is sick.

4. Tessa, one of Nam-Huong’s classmates, wrote a note about Nam-Huong at school. Why did Tessa write this note about her and what was its meaning? (pg. 33)
   
   Tessa was making fun of the kind of food that Nam-Huong brings for lunch.

5. What does Nam-Huong mean when she says “I wish I were a bird-then I would go with you”? (pg. 33)
   
   She wants to escape the teasing of her classmates and she misses her family and homeland.

Day Three: Pages 34-46
1. Why is Nam-Huong excited about riding her bike to school? (pg. 34)
   
   Chu Minh helped her paint her bike with a butterfly on the fender and a little dragon on the handlebars.

2. Why do you think Nam-Huong thinks she hears ghosts everywhere? (pg. 34-35)
   
   Possible answers: She is still haunted by memories of the soldiers taking her parents away. She is afraid someone is going to take her away.

3. Nam Huong compares the beauty of her bike to the beauty of a poem. (pg 36 simile)
   
   Find another example of a simile in this book or come up with one of your own.

   Answers will vary. Some examples are: “I liked that bike of mine with its fat tires and its handlebars like buffalo horns.” (pg. 29) “Life is like a fleet-footed horse passing by a crevice.” (pg. 37) “He’s as skinny as bamboo, but as strong as a buffalo.” (pg. 39)

4. Similes are comparisons using the words like or as. For example: “The soup tastes like a salt mine!” (pg. 1) The banana leaves swayed back and forth like elephant ears. (pg. 13)
   
   Find another example of a simile in this book or come up with one of your own.

   Danny asked her where she got that old heap. Tessa said it looks like she found it at the dump.

5. What did Nam-Huong’s classmates say about her bike? Give two examples.
   
   Danny asked her where she got that old heap. Tessa said it looks like she found it at the dump.

6. Who was a friend to Nam-Huong that helped her put her bike on the bike rack?
   
   Mary was Nam-Huong’s friend despite the others laughing and teasing.
Day Four:  Pages 47-62
1.  Who is Samson?
   Samson is Miss Lily’s dog.
2.  Why is Nam-Huong asked to take care of Samson?
   Nam-Huong is asked to take care of Samson because Miss Lily is in the hospital.
3.  Nam-Huong finally writes about what happened to her and her grandpa on their way out of Vietnam in the letter to the canary on pages 51-53.  What does she mean when she says grandpa’s hand was limp in mine?
   She is telling the reader that her grandpa died on the ship.
4.  On pages 54-55, Nam-Huong is thinking about her grandpa and what happened on the ship out of Vietnam.  She is finally able to cry real tears. What simile does Nam-Huong use to describe her tears?
   “My tears poured out like monsoon rains.”
5.  What is a monsoon?  (Students may look it up in a dictionary.)
   A monsoon is a torrential (very heavy) rain.
6.  On page 58, Nam-Huong says that she wished the yellow canary was there singing with her.  Why is Nam-Huong happy?
   Nam-Huong had gotten Danny’s kite out of the tree and everyone cheered for her.
7.  How do you know that Nam-Huong’s classmates are beginning to accept her?  Name two things that they asked her that tell the reader.  (pages 58-59)
   Mary invited Nam-Huong to her house to paint bicycles; even Tessa and Danny wanted her to come.  Danny asked her to paint a green dragon across his handlebars.  Tessa asked Nam-Huong what her name means.  Miss Lily and nearly all the class came to eat lunch at her Auntie’s restaurant.  Miss Lily takes Nam, Tessa, Mary, and Danny camping and they all get along and have a good time.

Day Five:  Teacher calls groups to table to discuss answers to Purpose Questions and discuss the story.  This session may take more time; depending on how many students you have in your class.  5 students should be in each group, so if you have 5 groups (25 students total), then the teacher should allow about 30 minutes per group.  (3 hours).  If this is more time then you can send in one day, then call back 2 or 3 groups per day and extend an extra day or two because this Wrap-up and discussion is crucial to evaluate students’ comprehension of the story.  Also, allow students to correct or extend answers to questions that they answered incorrectly.

Extension:  Map & Globe Skills
Ask students why the swallows are flying north instead of south to look for summer.  Answer:  Australia is called the “land down under”; so it gets warmer as you go north.  Locate Australia on a map or globe to illustrate this point to students.  Also, you may want to trace the path that Nam-Huong and her grandpa might have taken by sea from Vietnam to Australia.

Extension:  Double Bubble Thinking Map Transparency (Venn diagram)
At the end of this unit, Compare and contrast the cultural differences and lifestyles of Nam-Huong with those of her classmates.  Go back through the text to locate information.  (different kinds of food, different family life, Nam-Huong talks to animals like her dad.  Her classmates have each other.  Nam-Huong is shy and doesn’t know how to express her feelings.  Her classmates tease her for this.)
Bubble Map
Double Bubble Map (Venn diagram)
Resources:


www.flholocaustmuseum.org

Go to Teaching Trunks to order. It will be delivered to your school-FREE of charge.

Other books that can be used in this Unit (all of these are included in the 3rd & 4th Grade Teaching Trunk from the Florida Holocaust Museum):

Grandfather’s Journey, by Allen Say

Making a Home in America, by Maxine Rosenberg

How My Parents Eat, by Ina Friedman.

An Ellis Island Christmas, by Maxine Rhea Leighton.

Hello, My Name is Scrambled Eggs, by Jamie Gilson.