



**Understanding how Politics has Shaped the Environmental Structures
within Malawi, Africa, and the Connection to *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind***

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Northridge Middle School

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Middle School English Language Arts Teachers (6-8)
Middle School Science Teachers (6-8)
Middle School Social Studies Teachers (6-8)

Keywords: Wind Energy, Environmental Science, Sustainability, Economic Crisis, Famine

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: Middle school students are naturally curious about everything that is happening around them, and through my unit, I plan to help spark that curiosity in my students. I am a middle school exceptional children's inclusion teacher, and my English Language Arts (ELA) classes are responsible for helping students learn and understand various cultures and how past events have impacted various countries centuries later. With this curriculum unit, I plan to help my students gain a wealth of knowledge about how human choices have impacted the social, economic and geographical wealth in various African countries. Through this unit, I will make a connection between the history of Africa and the social impact and economic impacts that are having an everlasting impression on various African countries today. With this curriculum unit, I plan to help my students gain a wealth of knowledge about the human impact on our environment and to make the connection between economic power, politics and scientific developments within the African country of Malawi. I will make a connection between the book *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* and the impact that scientific developments have had on Malawi. To accomplish this goal, I will use a variety of teaching strategies that will engage students through hands-on activities.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 12 students in a self-contained middle school language arts classroom.

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Understanding how Politics has Shaped the Environmental Structures within Malawi, Africa, and the Connection to *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*

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Introduction

In recent years, educators and curriculum developers have realized that social studies and language arts are very similar disciplines and should be taught simultaneously to better prepare our students for life's diversity and a variety of life experiences. As teachers, we must involve students in great ideas and books. The world is full of people who understand the notions of morality but take the expedient way out to follow the crowd. With the development of character education programs in classroom settings and a changing global society, it is imperative that students understand that stereotyping is unacceptable and that every culture has something wonderful to offer. Learning about the various countries in Africa is a very unique concept, because many people don't realize that Africa is a continent and not an entire country. In many educational settings, the only information students learn about Africa is related to the Atlantic slave trade.

Middle school students are naturally curious about everything that is happening around them, and through my unit, I plan to help spark that curiosity in my students. I am a middle school exceptional children's inclusion teacher, and my English Language Arts (ELA) classes are responsible for helping students learn and understand various cultures and how past events have affected various countries centuries later. With this curriculum unit, I plan to help my students gain a wealth of knowledge about how human choices have affected the social, economic and geographical wealth in various African countries. Through this unit, I will make a connection between the history of Africa and the social impact and economic impacts that are having an everlasting impression on various African countries today. With this curriculum unit, I plan to help my students gain a wealth of knowledge about the human impact on our environment and to make the connection between economic power, politics and scientific developments within the African country of Malawi. I will make a connection between the book *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* and the impact that scientific developments have had on Malawi¹. To accomplish this goal, I will use a variety of teaching strategies that will engage students through hands-on activities.

Teacher Background

When I became a special education teacher, I wanted to become the type of teacher that provided opportunities for all students to learn. Becoming a teacher was exciting. Thinking of all the good teachers I had when in school and all of the not so good experiences as well, I think of a teacher that helped me gain a vast knowledge of science and another teacher that gave me a love for reading that I still have today. But most of all, my teachers gave me the love to become a lifelong learner. Wanting to give my students that same passion, tenacity, and capability to become

¹ Kamkwamba, William, Bryan Mealer, and Anna Hymas. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. Young Readers Edition. New York: Puffin Books, 2019.

lifelong learners, I strive to engage my students by utilizing hands-on and meaningful activities. Students' learning patterns are very different today, but I still want my students to develop a true sense of how learning takes place. In science, my goal is to provide students with many hands-on activities, guided notes, and scaffolding learning groups.

School Background

I have been working in the Special Education field since 2007 and teaching in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System for about thirteen years. I teach a self-contained classroom at a school located in the inner city of Charlotte, NC. All of my students have some form of a disability, ranging from autism to severe depression. Many of my students suffer from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) so it is very hard for them to stay engaged for long periods of time.

My school is Northridge Middle School in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, a large urban school district in North Carolina. Northridge Middle School is a Computer Coding Magnet school, located on the east side of Charlotte. Our school embraces the philosophy that all students can learn new behaviors, obtain new coping skills, and master the North Carolina Common Core State Standards. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of teaching techniques and strategies while meeting students' individual needs. We have the freedom to modify the content and the delivery of the content based on our ability to recognize our students' individual readiness for the material that we are exploring. The school has approximately 978 students consisting of several different subgroups, including 58% African American, 33% Hispanic, 3% Multi-Racial, 1% Native American, and 10% White; 47% Female and 53% Male; economically disadvantaged, and non-economically disadvantaged.

Character Education

Moral character is difficult to teach because it involves attitudes and behavior that result from stages of growth, distinctive qualities of personality, and experiences. Moral character entails helping people, exploring their differences, accepting their weaknesses, and seeing the best in everyone. Being willing to build upon other people's strengths is what makes moral education such an important part of education. Moral character cannot be taught by one teacher; rather, it involves the leadership of the principal and takes a concerted effort by the entire school, cooperation among a critical mass of supervisors and teachers within the school and nurturing of children and youths over many years.

School District Learning Requirements

Within the North Carolina Common Core English Language Arts Standards, students are asked to compare various texts and make clear claims in an argumentation essay while citing textual evidence. ELA and social studies standards will be used to teach this curriculum unit.

Malawian History

From the late 15th century, the area now known as Malawi was part of the larger Maravi Empire, but change came to the area in the 19th century and was intensively destructive. History marks this change with the capture of Mombasa in the year 1824 by Sultan Said of Muscat². This event effectively ended the Portuguese influence in the area north of present-day Mozambique. While Europe and America were moving to abolish the slave trade, Omani rule increased to horrific proportions. By 1839, over 40,000 slaves were being sold through the Zanzibar slave market. Some estimates conclude that as many as five times that number died in the brutal village raiding parties and in the long march to the sea.³

The trading centers of Kronga, Nkhotakota, and Salima on Lake Malawi became infamous as slave trading centers. Thousands were said to have died in the night raids by the Omani raiders, while still countless multitudes died on the forced march that often took as long as three months to reach the sea.⁴ The tragic path finally reached the edge of the Indian Ocean and the hapless slaves were put aboard ships destined for Zanzibar. Here the conditions were so cruel that records show where a cargo of 300 could easily be reduced to only 20 or 30 reaching port.⁵

Adding to the problem of the disastrous slave trade was the entrance of the Yao tribes into the southern part of present-day Malawi. The Yao had been converted to Islam by the Arabs and were well-armed and able to offer a rich prize for the slaves they sought to capture. Settling in the region near the southern end of the lake, the Yao were a dagger in the underbelly of the northern tribes.⁶ The marauding Yao moved north killing and capturing the local Chewa and Maganja by the hundreds. What had been a refuge from the killing, disease and conflict of the region of the Congo had now become a killing field again for the ill-fated Chewa.

The next few years saw the stampede by European nations to gobble up Africa. Germany laid claim to a large portion of East Africa, as did the French, the British, and to a lesser degree, the Portuguese. The area that would eventually become Malawi fell under the official rule of the British in 1907.⁷ The governing entity was called the British Central African Protectorate. The area of jurisdiction included parts of present-day Malawi and Zambia. Through the entire time of colonial rule, strong links existed between Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Malawi was heavily populated and the least developed of the three countries.⁸ Only a few Europeans settled it, and at no time did they control more than 15% of the land.

² Kadzamira, Zimani David, and Kenneth Ingham. "Malawi since 1994." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., January 20, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Malawi/Malawi-since-1994>.

³ *History Alive! World Connections* (Rancho Cordova, CA: Teachers Curriculum Institute, 2013).

⁴ A Conroy, *Poverty, Aids and Hunger: Breaking the Poverty Trap in Malawi* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "The World Factbook: Malawi," Central Intelligence Agency (Central Intelligence Agency, February 1, 2018), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html>.

⁸ A Conroy, *Poverty, Aids and Hunger: Breaking the Poverty Trap in Malawi* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

During World War II, Africans were conscripted into armies in order to fight for freedom in other parts of the world, only to return home to find themselves as restricted as ever. After a number of riots in 1948 on the gold coast of Africa in the city of Accra, the British permitted a degree of self-rule in 1953, then granted full independence to the nation of Ghana in 1957.⁹ The same year Ghana joined Ethiopia and Liberia as the only three nations in Africa with black rule. But the pendulum was swinging to opposite ends of the spectrum and in just 10 years there would only be three African nations still under white colonial rule: South Africa, Southwest Africa, and Rhodesia.

A snowball rolling down a long hill can eventually gain so much momentum that nothing can stop it. The same thing was true of independence and Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Kamuzu means a “tiny root or herb,” and much of the medicine in Africa comes from the tiny roots or herbs. Banda proved to be just the medicine that Nyasaland needed, and in January 1962, he became Minister of Natural Resources and Local Government in the national government that was headed by colonial Governor Glynn Jones.¹⁰ In November of that same year, the British agreed to a plan for self-government and on December 19, 1962, the House of Commons agreed for Nyasaland to withdraw from the Federation. Banda became the Prime Minister of Nyasaland on February 1, 1963, and the last day of the year marked the formal end to the Federation. Nyasaland was granted full independence July 6, 1964, and the nation of Malawi was born.¹¹

Malawi stretches about 520 miles (840 km) from north to south and varies in width from 5 to 100 miles (10 to 160 km). It is bordered by Tanzania to the north, Lake Malawi to the east, Mozambique to the east and south, and Zambia to the west. Malawi has two main seasons.¹² The dry season lasts from May to October with temperatures ranging from 75 degrees Fahrenheit to 90 degrees Fahrenheit. The wet season runs from November through April with temperatures ranging from 40 degrees Fahrenheit to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. On the Nyika Plateau and on the upper levels of the Mulanje massif, frosts are not uncommon in July. Annual precipitation levels are highest over parts of the northern highlands and on the Sapitwa peak of the Mulanje massif, where they are about 90 inches (2,300 mm); they are lowest in the lower Shire valley, where they range from 25 to 35 inches (650 to 900 mm).¹³

Most of Malawi’s population engages in cash-crop and subsistence agriculture. The country’s exports consist of the produce of both small landholdings and large tea and tobacco estates. Malawi has received a significant amount of foreign capital in the form of development aid, which has contributed greatly toward the exploitation of its natural resources and has allowed Malawi to at times produce a food surplus.¹⁴ Even with additional support and resources, its population has suffered from chronic malnutrition, high rates of infant mortality, and grinding poverty—a paradox often attributed to an agricultural system that has favored large estate owners. Most Malawians reside in rural areas though there are two major urban areas: Lilongwe, the capital, and Blantyre, where all of the judiciary processes take place.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “History,” Malawi Project, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://www.malawiproject.org/zzz/history/>.

¹¹ “Nyasaland Becomes Malawi, 37th Free African Country; New Name Helps Mark Shift of Control From Whites to Black Majority,” *The New York Times* (July 6, 1964).

¹² *History Alive! World Connections* (Rancho Cordova, CA: Teachers Curriculum Institute, 2013).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

A new constitution, officially promulgated in 1995, provided the structure for transforming Malawi into a democratic society.¹⁵ Bakili Muluzi's first term in office brought the country greater democracy and freedoms of speech, assembly, and association—a stark contrast to life under Banda's regime. Muluzi's administration also promised to root out government corruption and reduce poverty and food shortages in the country, although this campaign met with limited success. Muluzi pursued good relations with a number of Arab countries, toward most of which Banda had been particularly cool; he also sought to play a more active role in African affairs than his predecessor.¹⁶ Muluzi was reelected in 1999, but his opponent, Gwandaguluwe Chakuamba, challenged the results. The aftermath of the disputed election included demonstrations, violence, and looting. During Muluzi's second term, he drew domestic and international criticism for some of his actions, which were viewed as increasingly autocratic.

Malawi's international standing was bolstered in 2000, when the country's small air force responded quickly to the flooding crisis in the neighboring country of Mozambique, rescuing upward of 1,000 people. However, the country was not as quick to respond to a severe food shortage at home, first noted in the latter half of 2001.¹⁷ By February 2002, a famine had been declared, and the government was scurrying to find enough food for its citizens. Unfortunately, much international aid was slow to arrive in the country—or was withheld entirely—because of the belief that government mismanagement and corruption contributed to the food shortage. In particular, some government officials were accused of selling grain from the country's reserves at a profit to themselves prior to the onset of the famine.¹⁸

Muluzi was limited to two terms as president, despite his efforts to amend the constitution to allow further terms. In 2004, his handpicked successor, Bingu wa Mutharika of the United Democratic Front (UDF), was declared the winner of an election tainted by irregularity and criticized as unfair. Mutharika's administration quickly set out to improve government operations by eliminating corruption and streamlining spending. To that end, Mutharika dramatically reduced the number of ministerial positions in the cabinet and initiated an investigation of several prominent UDF party officials accused of corruption, leading to several arrests. His actions impressed international donors, who resumed the flow of foreign aid previously withheld in protest of the financial mismanagement and corruption of Muluzi's administration.¹⁹

By that time, the country had been negatively affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis and the lack of such requisites as economically viable resources, an accessible and well-utilized educational system, and an adequate infrastructure—issues that continued to hamper economic and social progress.²⁰ However, Mutharika's administration showed potential for leading Malawi

¹⁵ Lisa Gilman, *The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance, and Democratization in Malawi* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011).

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¹⁷ *History Alive! World Connections* (Rancho Cordova, CA: Teachers Curriculum Institute, 2013).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ A Conroy, *Poverty, Aids and Hunger: Breaking the Poverty Trap in Malawi* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

on a path of meaningful political reform, which in turn promised to further attract much-needed foreign aid.

As his term progressed, Mutharika faced a number of political challenges, including conflicts with his predecessor and the UDF. In February 2005, Mutharika left the UDF, of which Muluzi was chairman, and announced shortly thereafter his intention to form a new party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). In June 2005, the UDF brought an impeachment motion against Mutharika before the National Assembly, which in October voted to begin proceedings against him; although appeals to Mutharika's opponents by donor countries and neighboring leaders asking that they reconsider were largely unsuccessful, the motion was finally withdrawn in early 2006. In July of that year, Muluzi was arrested on charges of corruption, although the charges were soon dropped because of lack of evidence. He was again arrested in mid-2008, in connection with an alleged plot to overthrow Mutharika, and again in February 2009, when he was accused of embezzling millions of dollars' worth of donor funding. Muluzi denied the charges and claimed they were part of a political conspiracy against him as well as an attempt to keep him from standing in the upcoming presidential election.²¹

In the presidential and parliamentary elections held on May 19, 2009, Mutharika soundly defeated the other candidates, but many people, including Tembo, alleged that voting irregularities were widespread. International monitors stated that Mutharika had an unfair advantage leading up to the election, noting that the state-controlled media did not provide fair and balanced coverage of all candidates.²² Still, it was clear that Mutharika had the support of much of the population, who were satisfied with the great strides that the country had made under his administration. Economic growth had been steady, the agricultural sector had improved, and the food insecurity had been reduced.

The progress that Malawi experienced under Mutharika began to erode during his second term as his rule grew increasingly autocratic and the country faced new economic challenges. Some officials who expressed disagreement with Mutharika were dismissed from high-ranking positions, including Vice President Joyce Banda, who was expelled from Mutharika's DPP in December 2010, although she was able to retain her position as vice president of the country. The dismissals came amid rumors that Mutharika was grooming his brother, Peter, to succeed him as the DPP presidential candidate in elections scheduled for 2014.²³

Nationwide protests fueled by discontent with the country's political and economic situation were held on July 20, 2011, which the army dealt with harshly: 19 demonstrators were killed, and hundreds more were wounded. International donors grew dissatisfied with the way that Mutharika was handling the country's economic problems and were concerned about the administration's apparent dwindling respect for upholding human rights.²⁴ As a result, the country lost millions of dollars of much-needed aid, including a considerable amount from Great Britain after the two countries engaged in a high-profile diplomatic spat. Against the backdrop of simmering political discontent, rising food prices, fuel shortages, and a power crisis, news that

²¹ *History Alive! World Connections* (Rancho Cordova, CA: Teachers Curriculum Institute, 2013).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ A Conroy, *Poverty, Aids and Hunger: Breaking the Poverty Trap in Malawi* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Mutharika had suffered a heart attack on April 5, 2012—and the subsequent reports of his death—left the country in a state of uncertainty.²⁵ Official confirmation of Mutharika’s death was delayed, leading to well-founded concerns of a succession struggle between Banda, who had a constitutionally mandated right to take over as president, and members of Mutharika’s clique, who wanted to block her from serving in the position. The government did not officially confirm Mutharika’s death until April 7, and, with strong domestic and international support to counter Mutharika’s small circle of key supporters, Banda was sworn in as acting president that same day.²⁶

Banda moved quickly to counter the policies of Mutharika’s administration. During her first few months in office, she restored diplomatic relations with Great Britain and normalized relations with donors. Banda also focused on restoring democratic practices, repairing the economy, and eliminating government corruption. One of her first economic decisions as president was to devalue the country’s currency, an act that was backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and donors but criticized at home and followed by a jump in the inflation rate. Her policies were somewhat effective, as donors resumed a flow of funding to Malawi, the inflation rate eventually began to fall, and the country’s economic growth rate more than doubled during her first two years as president. Still, much of the country remained at or below the poverty level.

Malawi’s battle with corruption came to the fore again in 2013, after Paul Mphwiyo, the Ministry of Finance official heading up efforts to investigate and eliminate government corruption, was the target of an assassination attempt in September. The subsequent investigation into the attack quickly exposed the “cash-gate” scandal, a massive fraud and corruption operation that allegedly involved senior-level government officials, including some cabinet ministers in Banda’s administration.²⁷ On October 10, Banda dissolved her entire cabinet to ensure that the officials under suspicion did not interfere with the investigation. Trials for those accused in the scandal began in January 2014. The next month, an independent audit report presented evidence that more than \$30 million had been stolen from the government during a six-month period in 2013. The monetary total was expected to increase as the investigations continued, with estimates ranging from \$100 million to \$250 million.²⁸

The cash-gate scandal was one of the issues that figured prominently in campaigns for the May 2014 presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections, with Banda citing it as evidence that she was tackling corruption while opposition candidates pointed out that it happened under her watch; some even claimed that she was complicit in the scandal and had benefited from the misappropriated funds.²⁹ By the time the elections were held on May 20, Banda appeared to be in a tight race with 3 of the other 11 presidential candidates, including Peter Mutharika, DDP leader and brother of the former president. Voting did not go smoothly, and polls were kept open a second and third day in areas that had experienced significant problems or delays. Additional problems surfaced, with Banda and some opposition parties

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ A Conroy, *Poverty, Aids and Hunger: Breaking the Poverty Trap in Malawi* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

²⁷ *History Alive! World Connections* (Rancho Cordova, CA: Teachers Curriculum Institute, 2013).

²⁸ A Conroy, *Poverty, Aids and Hunger: Breaking the Poverty Trap in Malawi* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

²⁹ *History Alive! World Connections* (Rancho Cordova, CA: Teachers Curriculum Institute, 2013).

complaining of voting irregularities and alleging that vote rigging had occurred, and there were delays with the tallying of the votes.³⁰ Still, the consensus of international observers was that the elections, despite some problems, were generally credible. Peter Mutharika, DDP leader and brother of the former president, was elected president in 2014 and reelected in 2019.

Teaching Strategies

Cornell Note Taking

Cornell note taking is a system that was designed by Walter Paulk, a professor at Cornell University. Cornell notes are divided into three sections. The first section is the questions section, which is located on the left-hand side of a sheet of notebook paper. The second section is the notes section, where students write any notes that they have taken. Last but not least is the third section, titled the summary section. The summary section is used as a tool for students to summarize the entire day’s lesson. This is the time for students to focus on key ideas that were presented during the lesson. Students will use the Cornell Notes Handout.

<u>Topic</u>	Name: _____
<u>QUESTION/Main Ideas</u> Thoughts	Hour: _____
	Date: _____
	Notes
<u>SUMMARY</u>	
Explains the meaning of the passage or article using students own words.	

³⁰ A Conroy, *Poverty, Aids and Hunger: Breaking the Poverty Trap in Malawi* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Foldables

Foldables are 3-D interactive graphic tools that help teachers and students organize and master complex information. They are a fun and engaging way for students to create a learning tool for themselves. Paper is folded, stapled or cut in a certain way and information is written inside or outside so that topics can be practiced and learned as the paper is manipulated.

Kinesthetic learners enjoy using foldables because they involve hands-on activity, as opposed to worksheets or pencil-to-paper drills. Students can review, study and take the foldables with them in their backpacks. Visual learners are intrigued as well, usually with graphs and diagrams they draw when creating foldables.

Lesson Plans/Activities

Pre-reading Activities

A. Predicting: Considering the Title of the Book

The title of the book is *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*.

1. What achievement is referred to in the title?
2. What does that achievement mean to you?
3. What is the result of this achievement?
4. How can electricity generate hope?
5. Can children really have an everlasting impact on their communities?

Write a paragraph in response to these questions and share what you have written with a partner.

As a class show students the following clips:

1. William Kamkwamba: How I Built a Windmill/Video on TED.com (January 17, 2009)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QkNxt7MpWM&disable_polymer=true
2. Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYt41QKmxus> (August 29, 2016)

Have students discuss with a partner how what you see in these interviews adds to your understanding of the title. Consider these questions:

What did William build in his backyard?

Where did the TED.com interview take place? How was William's English then?

What did William tell the Dartmouth interviewer? What is his status at this college? When will he graduate? How is his English now?

B. Mapping the Action

William comes from the country of Malawi, which is located in East Africa. He spent his childhood near the city of Kasungu, where he lived with his family on a farm.

1. Using the key, find Malawi on this map of Africa. Do some research and report to the class on the following:

- What countries Malawi shares its borders with?
- What the topography of Malawi is like
- What kind of economy does Malawi have?
- How large is Malawi's population?
- What are Malawi's main challenges?



Chapter One

A. Comprehension Questions

Find out as you read:

- Why was William afraid the witch doctor would do something bad to him? How did his father save him? How did his father react when he told William not to worry anymore?
- What story did his father tell William about Chief Mwase and the Battle of Kasungu? What did the Ngoni fail to appreciate about the Chewa? What was the moral to the story?
- What happened to William's Grandpa's grandmother when his Grandpa was a little boy? What was done soon after to assure the people's safety?
- How did William learn to respect the wizards but to believe in God? Who made sure William understood the lesson he had learned?
- How did William and his friends Geoffrey and Gilbert play with each other when they were boys? How did they manage to play these games when they were without money and "spent [their] afternoons in hunger and dreams" (21)?

6. What was the moral of William's father's story about the Lion and the Leopard? Why does his father make sure the children understand the story's lesson?

Small Group Activity

Discuss these questions in small groups.

1. While explaining how he, Geoffrey, and Gilbert played with each other when they were children, William says, "Children everywhere have similar ways of entertaining themselves. If you look at it this way, the world isn't so big" (19). Do you agree with William's conclusion? Why or why not?
2. William explains further that he and his friends had to build the trucks they played with from "wire and empty cartons of booze" (19) while children in America bought their toys ready-made and fully assembled in the shopping malls. Which children do you think are more fortunate? The children who create the toys they play with or the children whose parents buy for them the toys they play with? Why?
3. The folktales William's father told him and his sisters all had a moral to them, but most of the protagonists were animals: The Lion and the Leopard, the Snake and the Guinea Fowl, etc. Why do stories about animals make such an impact on children? Why does the moral in the Lion and the Leopard have such an impact on William? Would it have had the same impact on you? Why or why not?

Chapter Two

A. Comprehension Questions

Find out as you read:

1. What kind of life do most Malawians lead "like a law passed down from Moses" (25)? What was the alternative lifestyle that William's father (Trywell) first chose?
2. What dictator ruled Malawi for more than 30 years. What public sign of affection between couples in love were banned by this dictator?
3. What missionary helped end slavery in Malawi? What group had arrived in Malawi from Mozambique more than a hundred years before to take control and enslave the Chewas?
4. From what country did Malawi win its independence? What is the date of Malawian independence?
5. Why did William's father fight 12 men and win at an Independence Day concert? What famous reggae star was performing?
6. How did William's father meet his mother (Agnes)? What event made him change his lifestyle and turn to God?
7. Why did William's father follow his brother John's advice and become a farmer? When did William's "childhood" begin?
8. What do farmers in Malawi grow? What is the main crop that their lives depend on mostly?
9. Why did William treasure his bedroom? How many other children were there in his family?

10. How did William's father save James's life? How did William think of magic as a result?
11. What did Phiri's nephew Shabani try to do for William? What did William learn from this incident?

B. Small Group Activity

Discuss these questions in small groups.

1. In this chapter, Trywell, William's father, saves his employee James from the potentially mortal blows of Phiri, another employee. In what way did William's father show not only his physical strength but also his good character? Do you believe he was a good employer? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe in magic? Why or why not? Shabani gave William a magic potion that would increase his physical strength. Only a few days after he started taking the magic potion, William picked a fight with a boy twice his size and was badly beaten. What lesson did William learn about magic and "bad medicine" (48) as a result? How do you think the ideas he has about magic will start to change from that point on as he learns more and more about science?

C. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on this topic.

Did you ever want to change something about yourself that you didn't like? What didn't you like about yourself, and what did you try to do to change it? Did you succeed? Why or why not?

Chapter Three

A. Comprehension Questions

Find out as you read:

1. What sad event occurred in William's life in January 1997? Why was it difficult for William to show his cousin Geoffrey his respect?
2. What is different about Malawian graves? What does William say this distinguishing characteristic is like?
3. Why did the dictator Banda care about the farmers and the land? Why was the district in which William grew up especially important to Banda?
4. How did Bakili Muluzi, the new president, differ from Banda? What effect did this different approach have on farming in Malawi?
5. How did the dog Khamba become William's pet? What did Khamba enjoy doing with William?
6. What happened to Charity when he climbed the nkhaze tree? How did William's mother help him, and what did he promise her after the next hunt?
7. What did William learn while hunting with his cousins? Why was it so important to learn the virtues of patience and silence?

8. What did William invent as part of his hunt? How was he successful?

B. Small Group Activity

Discuss these questions in small groups.

1. In this chapter, William talks about how difficult it was for him to cry when Uncle John, his father's brother, died. He also explains how ashamed he was when he saw his father cry for the first time. In many cultures around the world, men who cry are considered weak. What is the prevailing attitude in your culture? What is your attitude? Is it a sign of strength or weakness when a man cries?

2. We see how Khamba becomes William's pet in this chapter: William said to Socrates, "I'm no friend to a dog," and Socrates replied, "Tell that to him" (57). In many instances, the dog becomes the master. Why do you believe this happens when an individual has a pet?

C. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on one of these topics.

We live by the motto, "A dog is man's best friend." If you have a dog as a pet, describe your relationship with your dog. Do you agree with the motto? Why or why not? If you have never had a dog as a pet, would you agree with this motto based on your observations of the relationships between friends and family members and their dogs? Why or why not? If you have other animals as pets (e.g. cats, horses, goats, sheep, rabbits, birds, snakes), would you be able to replace the word "dog" in the motto with name of your pet's species (e.g. "A cat/horse/goat/sheep/rabbit/bird/snake is man's best friend")? Why or why not?

Chapter Four

A. Comprehension Questions

True or False?

Work with a partner. Write T if the sentence is true and F if it is false. If it is false, rewrite the sentence to make it true.

_____ 1. When he turned 13, William started to hunt more and more and stopped hanging out at the trading center.

_____ 2. William found that he was quite competitive in the game of bawo.

_____ 3. In this age of television, Malawians don't care too much about their radios.

_____ 4. Trial and error was the way in which William learned about the source of white noise.

_____ 5. William and Geoffrey had all the traditional tools they needed to work with radios.

_____ 6. In order to gain knowledge about radios, William and Geoffrey ruined a lot of radios.

_____ 7. No one in their community recognized William and Geoffrey for the knowledge they had acquired.

- _____ 8. William’s desire to become a scientist came from his work on radios.
- _____ 9. Maize is the biggest crop in Malawi.
- _____ 10. May through September is wintertime in Malawi.
- _____ 11. 2008 was an especially wonderful season for farmers in Malawi.

B. Small Group Activity

Discuss these questions in small groups.

1. To learn about radios, William and Geoffrey started taking old ones apart in order to see “how they worked” (67). After experimenting by trial and error and ruining a lot of radios along the way, he and Geoffrey became specialists and started a small business fixing people’s radios. How were both William and Geoffrey following the scientific method while acquiring knowledge about radios? In addition, why did William’s questions to drivers about how cars work and how trucks move take him one step above these drivers who never posed these questions but were merely content that the vehicles provided the transport they needed? Did William, who was interested and able to “solv[e] these mysteries” (71), have the mind of a scientist?

C. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on this topic.

William’s father was evidently very distressed about the situation he and his family would probably soon encounter. Have you or your parents ever been in a similar situation involving the welfare of your family – not knowing where the next meal would come from or how you would be able to pay the rent? What did you do in order to prevent the situation from escalating? Did you resort to prayer? Did you end up speaking to objects?

Chapter Five

A. General Understanding

True or False?

Work with a partner. Write T if the sentence is true and F if it is false. If it is false, rewrite the sentence to make it true.

- _____ 1. William learns that most people don’t care about how things work, as long as they work.
- _____ 2. Working with the bicycle dynamo William learned a lot about electricity.
- _____ 3. Most Malawians go to bed at 7 every evening because electricity is too expensive.
- _____ 4. Deforestation has nothing to do with the energy problem in Malawi.
- _____ 5. Going to high school would be an important rite of passage for William.
- _____ 6. Gilbert’s father did nothing to help the people who came to him for food.
- _____ 7. The Malawi government and the international community were in large part responsible for the lack of surplus grain.
- _____ 8. William’s father sold the family’s goats in order to have money to buy maize.

_____ 9. President Muluzi understood his countrymen's needs.

_____ 10. Chief Wimbe's constructive criticism of the government's efforts was well received by the President's men.

B. Small Group

Discuss this question in small groups.

1. In this chapter, William talks about two energy problems Malawians have with electricity and deforestation. How are these energy problems interrelated? Do you know of other regions in the world that have the same problems? What is being done to address them?

C. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on one of these topics.

1. Because of the drought, William's father had to round up the family goats – including Mankhalala, William's favorite one – and sell them at the market. How would you feel if an animal you loved had to be sold or possibly slaughtered so that you could have food to eat? Have you ever been faced with such a situation?

2. Chief Wimbe is beaten after he gently criticizes the president. Have you ever witnessed the beating of an adult you adore, someone who in fact was your protector? How was that beating a violation of you as well?

Chapter Six

A. Comprehension Activity

True or False?

Work with a partner. Write T if the sentence is true and F if it is false. If it is false, rewrite the sentence to make it true.

_____ 1. The drought changed the eating habits of William's family.

_____ 2. A lot of hope was reflected in the newborn baby's name.

_____ 3. William's father and mother knew nothing about starting a new business.

_____ 4. William's sister Annie had a traditional marriage.

_____ 5. Although Annie was missed, in her absence there was one less mouth to feed in William's family.

_____ 6. The drought made people more corrupt.

_____ 7. On Christmas during the drought Charity and William feasted on goat's skin.

B. Open to Discussion

Discuss these questions in small groups.

1. According to Chewa customs, daughters do not eat with their fathers and sons do not eat with their mothers. In fact, they eat in separate rooms. In addition, daughters never hug their fathers and sons never hug their mothers. Such behavior would be considered immoral. Nevertheless, because of the famine and the need to save kerosene and make the most of the little food that was available, the whole family ate together for the first time. Can you think of any changes of customs that your family had to implement in order to respond to an economic or political condition? Do you think that once these changes are made – even as temporary measures – they may end up being permanent changes?

C. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on this topic.

William's sister's elopement could have resulted in her shame and her family's shame. Have you ever done anything that could have brought such shame to your family that living with them again would be out of the question? How would you feel if that were the case – if your breach of a family custom resulted in your not ever being able to live under the same roof as your parents and siblings again? How would you cope with this situation of no longer being allowed to enjoy the intimacy of the first people who had loved and nurtured you in your life journey?

Chapter Seven

A. General Understanding

Find out as you read:

1. Which boarding schools did William want to attend? Why couldn't he attend those schools?
2. Why wasn't Mr. Mangochi giving the farmers the prices they were used to getting?
3. How was William able to convince Mr. Phiri, the headmaster of Kachokolo, that he should be able to wear sandals (not the proper footwear) for the time being?
4. What subjects did William and his classmates study during the first semester?
5. What subject did William like the most, and why did he like it?
6. Why did William have to drop out of school?
7. How many students, according to Gilbert, remained enrolled in school after the grace period was over?
8. How did William's father react to the president's denial in the radio interview of the situation in Malawi?

B. Open to Discussion: Working with Quotations

Read the quotations and discuss the questions in small groups.

1. “‘Here at Kachokolo,’ he said, ‘you’ll be given the knowledge to help your country and make it proud.’ We certainly were a fine bunch, all of us eager to learn and squirming with excitement. At that moment, I was certain I was experiencing the greatest day of my life. I couldn’t stop smiling” (129).

How does William’s joy on the first day of high school reflect the value he places on education?

2. “My own problems didn’t seem so important; the hunger belonged to the entire country. I decided to put faith in my father’s word, that once we made it through the hunger, everything would be okay. But first we had to make it through the hunger. And as Geoffrey had said, it was hard enough just worrying about tomorrow” (134).

How does hunger take on a major role in William’s thinking? Have you ever been hungry? Do you believe that only people who have been hungry can understand what hunger is? Why or why not?

C. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on one of these topics.

1. William’s failure to get into the secondary school of his choice is a great disappointment to him. Nevertheless, he faces this failure with an optimistic spirit. Have you ever been disappointed by a failure? What was this failure and how did you face it – positively or negatively?

2. It is not easy to be a witness of people suffering from hunger – especially when the little that you have to eat is what still separates you from them. Although the United States is much wealthier than Malawi, there are many hungry people on the streets of our big cities. How have you dealt with people’s hunger? What do you do when you see a child begging for bread?

Chapter Eight

A. General Understanding

Completion Exercise

Work with a partner. Complete each sentence with its appropriate ending found in the box below.

1. When William saw his dog Khamba, it was like a “hammer in [his] stomach” (141) because _____.
2. When William saw Khamba dead, he said that _____.

_____.

3. William's sister Mayless almost died from _____.

4. During the famine, while the crop was growing, William's father was able to cut deals with the traders in town based on _____.

5. After almost five months of suffering in Malawi, the president _____.

6. William described the president as _____.

7. When healthy crops started growing, some of the men who had to leave their land in search of food for their families couldn't farm their own fields and ended up becoming _____.

B. Open to Discussion: Working with Quotations

Read the quotations and discuss the questions in small groups.

1. "No magic could save us now. Starving was a cruel kind of science ... My father must've been thinking about this, because he turned to my mother and said: 'My family is mine to look after. If we're supposed to die, then we die together. These are my principles. God is on my side'" (151-152).

The rivalry between science and magic comes to a head during the famine. If starving is a "cruel kind of science," what would you call a "kind" kind of science? William's father brings another value system into the discussion: religion. Where do you believe religion fits in the "continuum" that exists between magic and science?

2. "Meanwhile, out in the maize fields, the stalks were now as high as my father's chest. The first ears had begun to form, revealing traces of reddish silk on their heads. The deep green leaves had begun their fade to yellow, along with the stem. While men withered and died all around, our plants were looking fat and strong" (154).

Malawians were subject to this kind of irony when the crops started to grow. Where else in the world might this kind of irony have persisted in a similar situation?

3. "Should we kill them?" I asked. "Perhaps call the police?" My father shook his head.

"We're not killing anyone," he said. "Even if I called the police, those men would only starve to death in jail. Everyone has the same hunger, son. We must learn to forgive." (p.159)

How does William's father become his "moral compass" during his childhood? Do you agree with his principles and his way of living in the world? Why or why not?

C. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on this topic.

William's account of the death of Khamba has remained a secret until now. Have you ever kept a secret for such a long time that when you did reveal it, you revealed it first to a more "distant" public as, in this case, to a community of readers? What was the secret and what did telling it do for you? What reaction did you receive from the people you told it to? In your opinion, did William do "a terrible thing"?

Chapter Nine

A. Comprehension Activity

Find out as you read:

1. What does William say about reading?
2. What kinds of textbooks did William find in the library?
3. What kind of independent study course did William start to follow?
4. How did William learn about electricity?
5. How did William teach himself to read in English?
6. How did magnets contribute to William's understanding of electricity?
7. Where did William learn about windmills?
8. How would windmills and water pumps would make life much easier in Malawi?
9. How did William build his windmill and what did William do to find tools such as a drill, pliers, and a flathead screwdriver?

B. Open to Discussion: Working with Quotations

Read the quotations and discuss the questions in small groups.

1. No more skipping breakfast; no more dropping out of school. With a windmill, we'd finally release ourselves from the troubles of darkness and hunger. In Malawi, the wind was one of the few consistent things given to us by God, blowing in the treetops day and night. A windmill meant more than just power, it was freedom.

Standing there looking at this book (i.e. *Using Energy*), I decided I would build my own windmill. I'd never built anything like it before, but I knew if windmills existed on the cover of that book, it meant another person had built them. After looking at it that way, I felt confident that I could build one, too.

(p. 169)

It is through a book that William first gets the idea to build the windmill. William says the "windmill meant more than just power, it was freedom." How was the book he read about it (*Using Energy*) the source of "power" and "freedom"? Would you define education that way, too? Why or why not?

Chapter Ten

A. Comprehension Questions

Answering the Questions

Work with a partner. Write complete sentences in response to these questions.

1. Why did William have to drop out of school again?
2. Why did William's father say, "Today, I'm a failure to my whole family" (183)?
3. Why did William not want to "end up just like [his father]" (183)?
4. When did William start to look for windmill pieces again?
5. How did William convince his father to give him his bicycle?
6. Why didn't William permit anyone from his family to come into his room?
7. How did William's father explain to his sisters that for the time being William did not have to work in the fields?
8. How did Gilbert help William get the important pieces he needed to build the windmill?

B. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on this topic.

"That's right," I said. "I'm lazy, misala, but I know what I'm doing, and soon all of you will see" (191)!

Have you ever been in William's situation – where others did not understand the importance of what you were doing (or even thinking) and thought that you were "lazy" and totally letting time pass by without really doing anything? Did you have as much courage as William had and were you able to say, "I know what I'm doing, and soon all of you will see"? Or, did you need William's or someone else's "support" in order to be able to say that? How did you resolve the issue and make yourself understood?

Chapter Eleven

A. Comprehension Activity

Work with a partner. What happened when William finally got the windmill ready for the job it was to do? Put the events and actions in the box in chronological order. Under the box, you will see that the sequence has been started for you.

1. Collected bottle caps (16) – another hour (bottle caps = washers to help secure the bolts)
2. Performed a test run
3. Built the tower
4. Arranged the fan, blades, bolts, and the dynamo in a neat row outside the house
5. Went through the process of heating, melting, and reheating (nearly 3 hours)
6. Experienced a power surge
7. Dug three holes three meters deep
8. Cut down trees to build a ladder
9. Nailed reinforcements like rungs in a ladder
10. Wrapped the bottom of the poles in black plastic jumbos to fend off the termites
11. People from the town gathered
12. Raised the machine
13. And there was electric light!
14. Held the reed and bulb in his hand
15. A gust of wind blew
16. Jerked bicycle spoke loose and blades began to turn

___ 4 ___ → ___ 5 ___ → _____ → _____ → _____ → ___ 3 ___ → _____ →
_____ → _____ → _____ → ___ 12 ___ → _____ → ___ 14 ___ → ___ 16 ___ →
_____ → ___ 13 ___

B. Open to Discussion: Working with Quotations

Read the quotations and discuss the questions in small groups.

1. “I walked around the windmill, staring at it from every possible angle, as if it were a strange beast.

“It’s beautiful,” I said.

“Shall we?” he [Geoffrey] asked. “We shall.”

For two days the windmill remained on the pole, hidden behind the house and out of sight. In the meantime, Geoffrey, Gilbert, and I set out to build my tower. In the early morning, we met in front of my house, grabbed an ax and pangas, and walked into the blue gum grove behind Geoffrey’s house. This was the same forest where I’d been convinced I’d been bewitched by the bubblegum man, the same forest where I’d accepted magic and been defeated, and now I was back there to cut down trees to build a ladder to science and creation – something greater and more real than any magic in the land. (pp. 197-199)

C. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on this topic.

It is sometimes a sad moment in our lives when we learn that the “magic” of the childhood stories that put us to sleep no longer has any bearing in the more adult world of “science” and knowledge. How have you been able to reconcile the push and pull of the forces of magic and science in your own life? Have you found room for both? Why or why not? .

ANSWERS:

__4__ → __5__ → __1__ → __2__ → __6__ → __3__ → __8__ → __7__
→
__10__ → __9__ → __12__ → __11__ → __14__ → __16__ → __15__ → __13__

Chapter Twelve

A. Open to Discussion: Working with Quotations

Discuss the quotation in small groups. Then write the monologue described below.

“I’m now standing in the living room of the Honorable Papa Kam-kwamba,” I said, in a deep, serious voice. “Mister Kamkwamba, this room used to be so dark and sad at this hour. Now look at you, enjoying electricity like a city person!”

It was no use. Conquering darkness on the farm was hard enough, but a noisy chicken – that was impossible.

(Excerpted from pp. 214 – 222)

You are William’s father. Write a monologue that expresses the feelings you now have about your son’s success.

B. Journal Entry

Free-write in your journal on this topic.

William’s best friends Geoffrey and Gilbert support him totally throughout his project. They are always there for him no matter how much criticism he receives from others. Write about your best friends and in what ways they have been important to you.

Chapter Thirteen

A. Comprehension

Answering the Questions

Work with a partner. Write complete sentences in response to these questions.

1. Why was William afraid he would become like the other dropouts, “‘grooving’ through life, just living off small ganyu and having no real plan” (224)?
2. What did William do in order not to fall into the same kind of lifestyle as the other high school drop- outs?
3. How did the idea of building a radio station come to William?
4. What theory did he first want to test when he was figuring out how to build a transmitter?
5. Why did William believe he needed an amplifier? What was Geoffrey’s fear?
6. How did William try to address the country’s deforestation problem with goats’ poop?
7. What disease almost took William’s mother’s life after she returned from a visit to her family in Salima?
8. After Gilbert’s father, Chief Wimbe, died, what sound resonated throughout the whole village?
9. After President Muluzi stepped down, why did the plan of the new president (Bingu wa Mutharika) to subsidize fertilizer throughout Malawi fail?
10. In what form did people’s fear of more misfortunes sweep Malawi and William’s village?
11. How did people start to view William’s windmill before they knew that a new famine would be averted?
12. How did magic also get in the way of controlling the spread of HIV and AIDS?
13. How did William and some of his friends join together in the fight against AIDS?
14. What did the teachers at Wimbe Primary invite William to do?

B. Close Reading

Reread this passage closely with the members of your group. Then discuss the questions that follow.

I began to imagine what it would be like if all of those pinwheels had been real, if every home and shop in the trading center each had a spinning machine to catch the wind above the rooftops. At night, the entire valley would sparkle with light like a clear, starry sky. More and more, bringing electricity to my people no longer seemed like a madman's dream.
(pp. 248-249)

Track William's progress from teacher to educator to visionary. In what ways can an individual's vision sometimes drive him mad? Is there a fine line between a "madman's dream" and the dream of a visionary?

Chapter Fourteen

A. Open to Discussion: From Quotations to Point-of-View Writing

Discuss the quotations in small groups. Then prepare one of the role plays suggested here.

1. "Dr. Mchazime was an older man with gray hair and kind, gentle eyes. But when he spoke, his command of language was large and powerful. I'd never heard anyone speak such good Chichewa, and when he spoke English, it was simply inspiring" (250).

You are William. Explain in a monologue why perfect diction in whatever language one speaks is so important to you. How is speaking in such a way the mark of a truly accomplished person? Present your monologue to the class.

2. "I think this chap should be sent back to school," [Dr. Mchazime] said. "He needs to continue his education and develop his abilities. That way these inventions will be credible and people will respect what he's doing. Without education, he's limited" (255).

You are Dr. Mchazime. Write a monologue in which you continue his "argument" and you take his reasoning further. Then present it to the class.

Chapter Fifteen

A. General Understanding

Answering the Questions

Work with a partner. Write complete sentences in response to these questions.

1. When William arrived in Tanzania, what did he see that was the same as Malawi and what did he see that was different?
2. What did Tom Rielly suggest to William when he first arrived at the TED Conference?
3. What was William carrying around his neck that Tom copied onto his computer?
4. What did Tom first show William about the Internet? What word did William first do a search on?
5. What was the most amazing thing about TED for William?
6. Who were the Africans? Where were they from and what had they accomplished?
7. How did Erik Hersman sum up what was special about the Africans?
8. How did William feel for the first time after he gave his presentation?
9. What two goals did William tell Tom he had?
10. Who were William's first investors?

Appendix 1

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#)

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#)

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

Craft and Structure:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5](#)

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7](#)

Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9](#)

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.10](#)

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Resources/Bibliography

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