



Extra, Extra, read all about it! Children Advocating for Freedom and Equality in Mississippi and Honduras

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**This curriculum unit is recommended for:
2nd Grade**

Keywords: advocate, resistance, oppression,

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

Synopsis: In this unit, students will discover how children in America’s South and children in Honduras advocate for freedom and equality. First, students will start by exploring what is fair and unfair treatment with an anticipation set. They will explore “I wonder” questions and “I notice” statements based on this activity. Next, students will analyze *The Song of the Trees* ⁽¹⁾ characters as well as their character traits, setting, problem, solution, and the story’s central message. What is most important for students to understand is how the main character with the help of her family solved a major issue of theft, disrespect, oppression, and inequality. Then, students will do the same thing for the *Good Garden, How One Family Went from Hunger to Having Enough* ⁽²⁾. In this book, the main character must solve the problem of hunger, oppression, and inequality. The main character’s teacher, community, and family have developed some independence from the one character who is the oppressor called the Coyote (overseer). After that, students will compare both story’s character traits and the central message. Finally, students will use Flipgrid to discuss how they would advocate for an issue. Then students respond to each other on the board.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 21 students in 2nd Grade.

I give permission for Charlotte Teachers Institute to publish my curriculum unit in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

Introduction:

Rationale

In my nineteen years of teaching, I recently noticed that most children must be explicitly told how to solve problems. At the opening of the school year, I received a few phone calls from parents who stated that their child was bullied. I have had students who were on the other end of the spectrum. They were the tormentor because someone said something that was not pleasing to them. Children are moving away from analyzing and solving problems on their own. In the case of the latter situation, I must teach how to solve problems when someone says something to them that is unkind. When they are the oppressed or the abused, I must teach those children how to advocate for themselves, i.e., say stop and tell the teacher.

I want students to learn that it is not acceptable to be maltreated or a tormentor. They must learn how to communicate their feelings of distress. Also, I want to teach them to enjoy reading or listening to books where the main characters are children who take the lead in advocating for change. I want them to see their selves or others in the text and connect with the character's method of solving a problem. Most of all, I want them to be independent readers who use Southern Children's Literature to understand the past and connect the events to the present.

For this reason, I decided to use a Social Studies standard to teach kids how to advocate for themselves for freedom and equality. Then, I will integrate three literature standards, ask and answer questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text, recount stories from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, and describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. I will use two books that will show how families overcome oppression. One book is Southern Children's Literature based in the South in North America and the other is Honduran Literature based in Central America.

Demographics

I am a second-grade teacher at Starmount Academy of Excellence. Starmount Academy of Excellence is a small school that consists of a total of four hundred thirty-five students. Three hundred thirty-nine students are Hispanics, which makes up about 77.95% of the student body. Seventy-six students are African Americans, and they make up 17.5 % of the student population. Twelve students are White, and they make up 2.8% percent of the student population. Eight are in the other category and they make up 1.85% of the student population. The total number of girls to boys is about even with 216 girls and 219 boys. Starmount has thirty-eight students with disabilities which make up 18.7 % of the population. Five students were identified as Academically Intellectually Gifted children. Unfortunately, twelve students are considered McKinney Vento or homeless. We have one-hundred eighty-seven student who is English Learners. Three students have a 504. So far, there are zero student suspensions this school year.

Here is a breakdown of grade levels.

Grade Level	Number of students	Percentage
PK	24	5.5%
K	70	16.1%
1	80	18.1%
2	71	16.3%
3	64	14.7%
4	81	18.6%
5	45	10.3%

Our numbers have grown since this report came out. I started with 17 students in my class, now I have 21 students. One is African American, three of them are from Honduras, and out of the three, two of them recently came into the country and are going to school for the first time and are Non-English speakers. Our average daily membership is four-hundred one and our daily average attendance is 90.2%. Thirty-eight percent of our student population is chronically absent ⁽³⁾.

Because Starmount has such a high number of Hispanic students and a large amount of them are from Honduras, I chose to compare literature that would relate to the traditions and culture of the Latino communities in Central America to literature based in the South in North America.

Unit Goals

In this curriculum unit, I will use one short novel and a picture book to show how people of color advocate for themselves and others for freedom and equality. This unit curriculum will take two and a half weeks to complete with a culminating performance-based activity. It will take three days to read one short novel and identify the characters, setting, problem, and solution. Then, it will take two more days to illustrate and describe how the main character responds to problems using the characters' actions, feelings, and thoughts. We will take two days to explore characters' traits and identify the central message. For two days, we will read the picture book aloud. It is a book based in Honduras. Students will identify its characters, setting, problem, solution. Another day to illustrate and describe how the character responds to the problem. Another day to identify the character traits and central message. We will also compare what actions the characters took to resist oppression and the central messages. On the last day, I will provide a performance-based activity that will give the students a deeper understanding of how people respond to oppression.

Students should already know and understand how to identify the story elements in a fictional story i.e., character, setting, problem, and solution. They should also already know and understand how characters feel and how feelings can change. Students should determine how characters respond to challenges in the story. This is a skill that must be reviewed repeatedly in second grade and even in the latter grades to get a greater understanding. Also, students will use major events in the story and the actions of the characters to determine the messages or lessons the author is trying to convey. This is another skill second graders will need to review consistently to master. After that, we will compare the traits and central messages in both books. We will then wrap up the unit by providing interview questions students will answer using Flipgrid.

Content Research:

What is Southern Children's Literature?

Southern children's literature is about the traditions and culture of family, food, and hard work. It is set in the American south, in the Jim Crow era, and connects directly with southern history, culture, and traditions. It uses visual imagery to create a story. The visuals that Southern Children's Literature creates help students to understand what they are reading on a deeper level. The author writes with a certain dialect to bring the characters to life. Southern Children's literature, in my opinion, immerses the reader into the setting and promotes strong emotions from the character to the reader. It also includes the importance of family, setting, and a strong sense of the past. (4)

Southern Children's literature seems to be a genre of its own. It teaches from a historical point of view. Family most times is the cause or the effect of why the main character acts in a certain way. The characters usually experience some type of oppression in such a way that families either conform or resist injustice. The subject of the story is family values, race, social class, and Christianity. Mildred Taylor has taken all these subjects based on her family's storytelling to create a series of books. (5)

How can Southern Children's literature be used to teach children?

Southern Children's literature is intended to have a moralistic approach to teach readers about historical events. It allows students to respond to the challenges of characters living in the deep south and how they overcame them. It helps the reader to learn how different cultures of people respond to each other. Thus, reading about children who advocate for change can give the reader a sense of self-awareness and dignity.

Southern Children's Literature can be used to promote Social Justice and equity. Mildred Taylor uses literature to tell the historical truths about America in the south. One writer state that Mildred Taylor is a master of historical fiction. Her truths are based around American history, and the Civil Rights Movements. Although the movement took place some time ago, her writing

is enduring and relevant to the present time. She explicitly shows her readers the strength and unity of one Black Family. Mildred Taylors series begins during the Great Depression and moves through time. Although the family is subjected to poverty and injustices, they fight to overcome them. The main character throughout her series is resourceful in solving the most challenging problems. (7)

How can we engage students using Southern Children's literature?

Literature plays an important role in forming good reading habits. Reading aloud helps to promote I notice... conversations and I wonder.... questions in young students. Conversations are even better when drama is added to the equation according to the book *Teaching Children's Literature* by Christine H. Leland, Mitzi Lewison, Jerome C. Haste. Southern Children's literature provides the reader with the drama of the past set in the deep south. Literature, especially literature that deals with injustice and resistance, can promote rich conversations. Picture books, and books with repeated words or predictable text where students can join in on the reading, are also a good way to engage younger students. By reading aloud and acting out the events of literature, students in crisis may be able to connect with characters' feelings of injustice and oppression. Thereby, engaging in deep conversations and teaching how to advocate about injustices. (8)

Why is it important to teach second graders about social justice?

By reading and discussing Southern Literature with a focus on social justice, students will develop an awareness of their past and how it can help them survive today. They would learn that there were many resisters in the past of many races and cultures as well as in the present. They can develop some empathy for oppressed people and why it is important to stand up for injustice. I hope that students will be motivated and ready to talk about other books 'concerning injustice and how they can be an advocate for change. They would be able to develop some critical thinking skills while examining the topic of social justice.

What can students learn about stories of resistance?

After reading, *Teaching our Kids about Resistance to Oppression*, I feel more empowered to be able to give students what they need. (9) This article tells me to teach kids about the freedom fighters that were enslaved. Not everyone was submissive! The article mentions that we teach kids that Harriet Tubman was the only abolitionist. Also, we tend to talk about the peaceful demonstrations conducted by Martin Luther King, but the truth is King was a radical resister to oppression. Resisters were many and constant freedom fighters. Here are a couple of books that teachers can read in the classroom. *Henry Box Brown* by Ellen Levine, (10) *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* by Stephanie Camp, (11) *Elijah of Buxton* by Curtis Paul, (12) and *March 1, March 2, and March 3* by John Lewis. (13)

In the Jewish nation, students learn that people were held in concentration camps, and many thought as I did, that Jews did not fight back. (14) There was much resistance. Teachers can

read *I Survived the Nazis invasion 1944* to understand the actions of resisters. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Even Native Americans resisted and helped African Americans escape Slavery. A book to read is *Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale of Friendship and Freedom* by Tim Tingle and Jeanne Rorex Bridges. ⁽¹⁶⁾ *The People Shall Continue* by Simon Ortiz and Sharon Graves. ⁽¹⁷⁾

Southern Literature in the past vs. present

When I was in elementary school, books about African Americans were few and far apart. Many books depicted African Americans in a negative viewpoint, and it was very depressing to read. Even movies gave an unflattering and derogatory view of African American life. According to Donald Yokovone, in *How Textbooks Taught White Supremacy*, published in the Harvard Gazette, states that “We are not teaching students the true American History because African History is American History.”⁽¹⁸⁾ It is so stimulating to know that there are many historical fiction texts written today about people of color that give value to African American lives. Given the racial tone in America today, it is not enough historical fiction books that are accurate. Mildred Taylor is one author who wrote children’s literature from an accurate historical point of view.

Who is Mildred Taylor?

Mildred Taylor is well known for her book *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry*. This is the second book after *Song of the Trees*. The second book is a sequel to the Logan family drama. She wrote others like *Let the Circle Be Broken*, *The Friendship*, *The Gold Cadillac*, *The Road to Memphis*, *Mississippi Bridge*, *The Well*, *The Land*, and *All the Days Past, All the Days to Come*. Many of her books won the Coretta Scott King award. Taylor wrote this series of books in response to her family’s tradition of oral storytelling when she visited Mississippi to see her family every year. Taylor felt pride, love, and a sense of history during these visits. Her family shared accounts of proud, persevering, strong-willed ancestors.

In contrast, Taylor, like myself, felt like many books showed African Americans as docile and left out the many injustices her family had to endure. In 1973, she had the opportunity to correct and improve the content of textbooks. In that same year, she wrote the *Song of Trees* after entering a contest sponsored by the Council on Interracial Books for Children. She later found out that she was the winner of the African American category and it was published in 1975. *Song of the Trees* was named the book of the year by the “New York Times.” Taylor’s goal was to create and write stories that had an accurate account of life in the twentieth century and a depiction of a loving African American family. Still, to this day, there is not enough Southern Literature that depicts African American families as loving, strong, and resilient.⁽¹⁹⁾

Summary

In this unit curriculum, I will use the short Novel, *Song of the Trees* to show how characters advocate for freedom and equality. This book is based on a true story that happened to Mildred Taylor’s family on her father’s side. *Song of the Trees* is about an African American family named the Logans, who own their land in Mississippi. David Logan and Mary Logan have four children. Cassie, who is the main character, Stacey who is the oldest boy, Christopher-John who is the middle, and Little man is the youngest. They live with their mother, father, and grandmother. David the father is forced to go to work away from home because there is not enough money made from their crops to pay the mortgage on their land.

The problem in this text is that a character named Mr. Anderson tries to cut down the trees on the Logans' property to make money. He marks the trees before he asks permission from the landowners to cut them down. The Logan kids overhear the commotion in the forest and go home to warn their family but are beaten to the punch by the lumberman. Mr. Anderson strong-arms his will on the grandmother by offering sixty-five dollars for any number of trees he wants. Mary sends her eldest son to get his father. His father threatens to blow up the entire forest if the lumbermen do not leave. Somehow the forest mysteriously catches on fire and the whole town comes together to put out the blaze. The family fights for land and every living thing on it. The Logan family teaches us that self-respect for life is more important than money.

Story Elements of *Song of the Trees*

Characters

Story elements are the different parts of a fiction story. Characters are the most important part of a story element. A character is a person, animal, or creature who can think, feel, or act. A character can be fictional, or a character can be real. In the novel, *Song of the Trees*, the character Cassie is an eight-year-old protagonist in the story. Cassie feels a sense of peacefulness and safety in the forest. She relishes the very large trees as though they are her friends. She senses something very wrong in the forest and literary fights to save the trees on her grandmother's land. Stacey is the oldest child of the Logan's. He is twelve years old and tries to be the man of the house while his father is away. His leadership abilities help to keep the family's land in tact. Seven years old Christopher John reluctantly follows his brothers and sister and struggles to keep up with them. Little man is the youngest of the Logans. He is headstrong and very upfront with people. He is always ready to fight back. Mary, their mother who is a schoolteacher holds the family together. She is a strong-minded woman. David, their father is away from home working. He too is strong-willed and will do anything to protect his family. Their grandmother (Big Ma') is very wise and her strength precedes her, but she gets frightened when the lumberman threatens to harm her son. (20)

Setting

A setting is a time and place where a story occurs. The setting of a story takes place during The Great Depression. The Great Depression was known for its economic downfall. The story starts in the rural south, in Mississippi. Most people during that era experienced hunger, illness, debt, and homelessness. One-fourth of the land in Mississippi was auctioned for unpaid taxes. This problem was intensified by racism and Jim Crow laws for African Americans. Some African Americans had ownership of their land; however, it became difficult for landowners to successfully farm on their land. For this reason, the character David secured a railroad job in Louisiana.

Problem

A problem is something that goes wrong for one or more of the characters. Cassie and her brothers are sent to the forest to pick berries. In midst of Cassie's admiration for the trees, she

gets a sense of uneasiness. She senses that something is happening to the trees. A lumberman named Mr. Anderson had marked the trees to be cut down for lumber and the children overhear the lumberman telling his workers to go get more help to cut down the trees while he goes to speak to Big Ma. The Logan children try to beat him to their house to warn Big Ma, but Mr. Anderson was already there. He threatens Mary and Big Ma that if they do not give him the right to cut down as many trees as he wants, then something bad could happen to David. ⁽²⁰⁾

Solution

A solution is how the problem in the story gets fixed. It is the actions the character(s) took to fix the problem. Little man takes off into the forest where Mr. Anderson and his men were cutting down the trees. Cassie and Christopher John take off after him to stop him. Mr. Anderson orders the children to go back home. Cassie tells him that they are home and that he is the one intruding on their land. Mr. Anderson orders one of his lumbermen to take the kids back home and he pushes Little Man out of the way. Little Man pushes him back and Mr. Anderson pushes Little Man to the ground. Cassie tells Mr. Anderson that he does not have the right to push her brother. Claude the lumberman picked up the kids to get them out of the way. Little man comes back with a stick and hits Mr. Anderson on the leg. Mr. Anderson gets angry and decides to teach the kids a lesson. He swings to spank Cassie and just as the belt hits Cassie's leg, her father and Stacey show up on the scene. His father orders Mr. Anderson to put the belt away. David and Stacey had strategically planted sticks of dynamite in the forest and threatened to blow it up if Mr. Anderson and his crew does not leave. So, Mr. Anderson and his men left. ⁽²⁰⁾

The Central Message

The central message is the part of the theme that the author wants you to learn. It is the lesson or moral of the story. In the *Song of the Trees*, Cassie is conflicted with the idea that someone would cut down her family's trees. Although this story takes place in the great depression and they are lacking in money and food, Cassie thinks self-respect is more important than money. So, she and her brothers physically fought adult white men. They did not care about the consequences. I thought that they were very courageous to stand up for what they believed was right, especially given their age. Christopher-John was a concerned character who wanted to please his parents by following directions. He undermined those thoughts to fight for his family when they were in trouble. ⁽²¹⁾

Who is Katie Smith Milway?

In contrast to Mildred Taylor's book the *Song of the Trees*, the author, Katie Smith is the author of *The Good Garden*. She writes stories from a global perspective. Her main intent for writing *The Good Garden* was to address hunger around the world. Katie Smith is the winner of the Massachusetts Best Book for Children Award and Children's Africana's Book Award. Katie Smith has written many books that teach children about global issues, food security, and

microfinance. Although Katie Smith intended to address hunger in her book *The Good Garden*, *The Good Garden* lends itself to addressing the reasons for food insecurities, oppression. (22)

Summary

The Good Garden: How One Family Went from Hunger to Having Enough, is a realistic fiction story about a family with the surname, Duarte who lives in the hills of Honduras where they own a small plot of land. The problem in the story is that after many successful years of planting and growing good crops, their land became barren which resulted in an impoverished crop. A character they call Coyote is like an overseer in the American south. The Coyote or overseer watches over the performance of the crops and can estimate if the landowners' crops are performing well or not. The Coyote lends poor families' seeds and grains when crops are poor. In return, the Coyote lends the families more grains putting them into deeper debt, and charges them an astronomical interest rate to pay it back. If families' crops fail for a second time, the Coyote will take their land.

Daddy Duarte is faced with taking a job to feed his family and to keep their land. Maria, who is the main character, learns from her new teacher at school how to effectively farm. Maria took what she learned and applied the techniques to her family farm. In turn, she teaches others in her region, and they teach others outside of their region how to farm. Maria is hopeful that they will survive this obstacle. So, she and her family fight to keep what rightfully belongs to them, their land. The family challenges in this text and the family challenges in the *Songs of the Trees* by Mildred Taylor are very similar to each other yet very different.

Story Elements of The Good Garden

Character(s)

A character's behavior and attitude make up its personality. A character can be honest, courageous, shy, kind, loyal, trustworthy, or a leader. There are good characters and there are bad characters. Good characters have positive traits. On the other hand, a bad character has negative traits. You can ascertain the character trait of a character by the way the character acts, thinks, or what the character says. In the Good Garden, the protagonist named Maria is a good character. She is motivated by her teacher to save her family's crop. Her new teacher, Don Pedro teaches Maria how to feed the soil so that the seeds will be fertilized and grow. So, Maria's optimism helped her to persevere until her family's crops turned into cash crops. Maria shows her leadership abilities by teaching others in the region how to farm as well as being responsible for taking charge of her family farm.

Setting

This story takes place in the hills in Honduras. The Duarte's own a small plot of land on the hillside that grows just enough food for them to live off. One year, the crops were poor, and Maria's father feared the worse might happen, they would have to eat the seeds they bought to plant. The climate was very dry, and the air was very dusty. This is a recipe for a failed crop; however, Maria and her new teacher changed the outcome of the crops. They fed the crops with compost and made the soil rich enough for the crops to grow.

Problem

The main problem in the story is that Maria's family does not have enough food or money to survive due to their farm's poor crops. Her father is forced to go to work away from home so they would not have to borrow seeds from the Cayote. The Cayote is the middleman. He buys the family's seeds for a very low price and charges high prices to sell them. If the family must borrow seeds from the Cayote, he will charge them three times more to repay him. If the family cannot pay him back, they will lose their land.

Solution

Maria went to school one day and was introduced to her new teacher, Don Pedro. After school, Senor Pedro went outside with his gardening tools. Maria inquired about his gardening. She suggested that his garden would not grow. That's when he recommended that they feed the soil to make it rich again. Instead of burning the leaves as her father has done in the past, they used them as compost and other left-over food for the soil. That technique made the seeds grow abundantly. Then, Senor Pedro also suggested that they should take their own vegetables to market to sell instead of selling them to Senor Lobo. Senor Lobo (Cayote) would price their food low and they would not have enough money to buy seeds. So, the Cayotes tries to persuade the Duarte's to sell, but they refused. They sold their goods for three times the amount they would have gotten from Senor Lobo. Papa also discovered that he could buy his seeds for a lot less than he would buy from Senor Lobo. Maria has learned much from Senor Pedro that she taught families in her region what she had learned and families in other regions. (23)

The Central Message

There are several messages in *The Good Garden*. *You should never give up when things are tough*. When Papa had to go away to work, Maria kept hope in her heart that their crops would flourish. *You should work hard to get what you want*. Maria and her neighbors worked their garden daily so it can produce a lot of fruit. They even sold their own vegetables in the market. *Have the courage to stand up for what's right*. The Coyotes tried to intimidate Maria's family including other families so they would not have the courage to sell their own goods and keep their profits. *You should fight for what belongs to you, advocate for change, and advocate for freedom and equality*. The fight was to overcome hunger and keep what rightfully belongs to them. The Duarte's outcome would not have changed if they did not break away from Senor Lobo. They went from hunger to having enough.

Comparative Analysis

The Good Garden and *Song of the Trees* will show my students that people of color are resilient and unyielding. My goal is to help young readers of literature to develop a love of knowing the truth of history, family, and community of the past and facilitate critical thinking about social justice.

General Teaching Strategies

In this unit, I will start with an anticipation activity to get students engaged and excited before reading our books. Next, I will ask them a series of questions from the activity to help them understand the word advocate and how to advocate for something. Following that, I will read the book all the way through stopping to ask Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? questions. Then, I will reread parts of the book to discuss characters' actions, thoughts, and feelings to describe how characters respond to challenges. After that, I will reread various parts of the book again to determine the character traits and central message of the book. Then I will do the same with the second book. After that, students will compare the character traits and the author's central message. Finally, I will provide various scenarios where students must describe how they will respond to a challenge using Flipgrid.

Lesson Implementation

Teaching Strategies

Anticipation Guide: The anticipation guide is used to engage and motivate students to inquire about the lesson. It is a strategy used before reading to activate student's prior knowledge. (23)

Inquiry groups- After the anticipation guide, the teacher will ask what do you notice? What questions do you have? I will use inquiry-based lessons to foster critical thinking and build some background knowledge about what it means to advocate for something.

Cooperative learning- the process of breaking a classroom of students into small groups so they can discover a new concept together and help each other learn.

Scaffold- I will scaffold using sentence starters such as I notice.... and I wonder.... Scaffolding will be necessary for other parts of the lesson.

Inside Outside Circle – Students will form two lines. There will be a large circle and a small circle. The small circle will stand inside the large circle. One circle will share their noticing and the other circle will share their wonderings.

“I do, “We do,” “They do” is a scaffolding strategy to help English Language learners to understand what they are supposed to do. I will read and discuss as I read to support students in understanding reading components.

Visualization: A picture of a map of the United States South and a map of Honduras will serve as a reference point.

Videos – I show a video at the beginning of the lesson of children from Birmingham Alabama who made a difference in the civil rights movement. I will also show a video about a young student advocating for schools. This will show students firsthand how it's done from a 9-year-old perspective and give them a sense of self-awareness to be able to advocate for a cause.

Mentor Text Read Aloud: *The Song of the Trees* and *The Good Garden* are two novels that will demonstrate how young characters fight for justice and advocate for change.

Compare/contrast: Students will compare the two mentor text character traits and the central message.

Performance Assessment: demonstrate what students know and can do by providing various scenarios where students must describe how they will respond to a challenge using Flipgrid. Use a rubric to grade assessment.

Lesson Activities

Introduction (one day)

Objective: explore and discuss issues related to fairness, and unfairness

Connect: Almost everyone has been treated fairly and unfairly at one point in their lives. Students connect with their feelings when fairly or unfairly.

Teaching point: Observe, identify and discuss terms that deal with discrimination.

Active Engagement: Students will participate in an exercise. Students will be divided into two groups, one favored group, and an unfavored group. ([See student resource](#))

Ask the class what does it mean to be fair? Why is it important to be fair? Help students understand that fairness is the act of doing things that treat all people equally and with respect. Knowing what is fair or unfair is important in helping people get along with each other. The teacher will show a video of children who advocate for the Civil Rights Movement. ⁽²⁴⁾

Assessment: Students will discuss what they notice about their treatment and I wonder questions about how they are treated using the inside/outside circle. Students will write their noticing and wonderings on a graphic organizer. ([See student resources](#))

Mentor Text: *The Song of the Trees* (Three days)

Objective: Ask and answer questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Connect: Most of us can connect with our families in ways that will give us the courage to do and be anything we want. Families can be close, or families can be on the out with each other. The Logan's is a very closely-knit family who will do anything to protect each other.

Teaching point: Read and identify characters, setting, problem, and solution.

Active Engagement: Before reading, the teacher will show a map of the Southern United States. ([See Appendix 2](#)) Then the teacher will ask Why do you think the author named this book the Song of the Trees? The teacher will read *The Song of the Trees* over three days. The teacher will review the elements of a story map, character, setting, problem, and solution. Students will turn and talk about the story elements while reading. The teacher will show a map of the United States South.

Assessment: Story element graphic organizer ([See Appendix 3](#))

Read Excerpts of The Song of the Trees (one day)

Objective: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Connect: What would be your response to losing something valuable? How can we connect to how the main character is feeling?

Teaching point: Describe how Cassie responds to Mr. Anderson when he cut her family's trees.

Active Engagement: Review how characters respond to challenges. Say, characters respond to challenges by solving the problem or getting others to help. Re-read various parts of the text looking for major events and the main character's actions, thoughts, and feelings to describe how Cassie responds to Mr. Anderson's treatment of her family.

Assessment: The teacher will assess the character's response. I will use "I do" to model one box in a graphic organizer to show a major event and Cassie's action. Then "we do" to do one with my students. After that, "They do" all by themselves. ([See Appendix 3](#))

Read Excerpts of The Song of the Trees (two days)

Objective: Recount stories, from diverse cultures, and determine their central message

Connect: Students will understand that characters can be good or bad. How we act can be determined through our actions. The traits of a character will help students determine the central message.

Teaching point: Establish character traits to determine the central message

Active Engagement: Re-read various parts about the character to establish the character's traits. Review the character's actions, and thoughts to establish the traits of the main character. The teacher will model using another character in the story. Students will retell *The Song of the Trees*, describe the character's actions and thoughts to identify the traits of the main character.

The teacher will discuss the central message anchor chart. The teacher will tell students that the central message is the Big Idea of the story or it is the life lesson the author wants us to learn. The teacher will model the central message using previous text read aloud.

Assessment: The teacher and students will complete the author's message worksheet to determine the central message. students will write the central message on a sticky note to place on a parking lot chart. (see parking lot)

Mentor text: *The Good Garden: How One Family Went from Hunger to Having Enough* (two days)

Objective: Ask and answer questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Connect: text-to-self- What would you do if a family member asks you to do something that was challenging but important?

Teaching point: Read and identify characters, setting, problem, and solution.

Active Engagement: Before the teacher reads the Song of the Tree, the teacher will show a map of Honduras and ask What would you do if a family member asks you to do something that was challenging but important?

The teacher will read *The Song of the Trees* over two days. The teacher will review what is a story map and the elements of the map, character, setting, problem, and solution while reading. Students will turn and talk about the character, setting, problem, and solution. Then students will jot it down on their graphic organizer.

After reading, the teacher will ask students what did Maria do when asked to take care of the family garden?

Assessment: Story element graphic organizer ([See Appendix 2](#))

Read Excerpts of *The Good Garden* (one day)

Objective: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Connect: Text-to-self- how can we connect to how the main character is feeling?

Teaching point: Describe how Maria responds to hunger and the Coyote's demands on their crops.

Active Engagement: Review how characters respond to challenges. Say, characters respond to challenges by solving the problem or getting others to help. Re-read various parts of the text looking for major events and the main character's actions, thoughts, and feelings to describe how

Maria responds to hunger and the Coyote's demands on their family and other families in the region.

Assessment: I will use "I do" to model one box in a graphic organizer to show a major event and Maria's action. Then "we do" to do one with my students. After that, "They do" all by themselves. ([see Appendix 3](#))

Read Excerpts of *The Good Garden* (one day)

Objective: Recount stories, from diverse cultures, and determine their central message

Connect: test-to-the-world- Students will understand that characters can be good or bad. Many historical fiction books will have a central message.

Teaching point: Determine character traits to determine the central message

Active Engagement: Re-read various parts about the character to establish the character's traits. Review the character's actions, and thoughts to establish the traits of the main character. The teacher will model using another character in the story. Students will retell *The Good Garden* and describe the character's actions and thoughts to identify the traits of the main character.

The teacher will discuss the central message anchor chart. The teacher will tell students that the central message is the Big Idea of the story or it is the life lesson the author wants us to learn. The teacher will model the central message using previous text read aloud.

Assessment: Partners will write the central message on a sticky note to place on a parking lot chart. ([see Appendix 4](#))

Read Excerpts of *The Good Garden* (one day)

Objective: Compare and contrast two stories with similar central messages.

Connect: About eighteen percent of my students are African American who lives in the South and about seventy-eight percent are Hispanic ([see demographics](#)). Comparing literature of the south with literature in Honduras will help my students to relate to the text. Thereby, helping to see themselves as agents of resistance and helping them to see that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Teaching point: Compare the character's traits and the central message of the *Song of the Trees* and *The Good Garden*

Active Engagement: Use the character trait graphic organizer from previous lessons to compare and contrast the central message in *Song of the Trees* and *The Good Garden*. The teacher will

model from the character trait graphic organizer the teacher used with other characters to fill out the Venn diagram.

Students will move their central message sticky notes from the parking lot to the Venn diagram that in the story matches that particular central message.

Assessment: Venn Diagram will be used to compare the main character's traits and the central message in both stories. ([see Appendix 3](#))

Performance Assessment: (Two days)

Objective: Reflect on what we can do to be agents against racism and bigotry

Connect: The Song of the Trees and The Good Garden provided examples through the actions of Cassie and her family, who lived in Mississippi, and Maria, her teacher, family, and community, who lived in Honduras.

Teaching point: Reflect and demonstrate how you can advocate changing the outcome of a problem that is unfair to a group of people.

Active Engagement: Show a video that teaches children how to fight for equality by talking, listening, and acting. Show a 9-year-old boy fighting for his school in Chicago. Students will discuss by identifying the problem and solution. How did the boy respond to the challenge? (25)

Performance Assessment: Students will design a plan of action to advocate for change by solving a problem using media. Pairs of students will be given a problem to solve. They will use their i-pads to research how other kids solve social problems. They will use a note catcher to jot down their ideas. Then they will create a poster with a theme and steps to solving their problem. After that, students will use their i-pads to activate Flipgrid. One partner will interview by asking the questions from [Appendix 6](#) and the other will discuss what they plan to do to solve this problem. The teacher will provide a rubric for interviews and discussions. ([See Appendix 7](#))

Teaching Standards:

Appendix 1:

2.C&G.1.4 Explain how various racial groups advocate for freedom and equality.

RL.2.1 Ask and answer questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

RL.2.2 Recount stories, from diverse cultures, and determine their central message.

RL.2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

RL.2.7

Use the information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

RL.2.9 Compare and contrast two stories with similar central messages.

Content Vocabulary

Advocate-one who acts or speaks in favor of something.

Resistance-the act or process of resisting.

Resilient- bouncing back after a difficult time

Persevere- not giving up

Oppression - to treat someone in a way that is not fair

Justice- upholding what is fair, right, and just

social justice- fair and equal relationships between individuals and society

pursuit of happiness- live life in a way that makes you happy ⁽²⁶⁾

Flipgrid- is a social learning platform that allows educators to post a question and then students respond with a video. Then students can respond to each other creating a “web” of discussions that can then be monitored by the educator. ⁽²⁷⁾

Vocabulary from the text

The South in the US- The South is known for its food home cooking, country, and blues music, and cotton. The Southern states, such as Louisiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, gained their wealth by farming – mostly tobacco and cotton. ⁽²⁸⁾

Central America- North and South America are joined together by a narrow strip of land known as Central America. It is technically part of North America. This strip of land contains seven countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize, Nicaragua, Panama, and Honduras.

Honduras- Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Central America. Farmers grow bananas, coffee, and sugar. Most of the land is owned by fruit companies or a few wealthy farmers. The families that work on the farms have little money and often go hungry. ⁽²⁹⁾

Boughs-branches in a tree

Elude-avoid

Mournful-sad after a great loss

Persisted- continue to do something

Dispute-to argue or disagree

Retreat- to move away from something or someone

Spectacle- an unusual, interesting sight.

Toddles- walks with short unsteady steps

Appendix 2 Maps

This is a link to show the United States South.

<https://wikitravel.org/upload/shared//c/c8/Map-USA-South01.png>

This is a map to show a Map of Honduras and how it is centrally located between South America and North America.

<https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/honduras>

Appendix 3 Graphic organizers

I notice... I Wonder... for the anticipated set at the beginning of the unit.

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Notice-and-Wonder-Graphic-Organizer-4234215>

This graphic organizer will be used to record the character traits and the evidence from the text. <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Character-Traits-FREEBIE-1170309?epik=dj0yJnU9TE1ob2hoQnU2ZHBmVERnaktzUWR1am1BMm9BMVlOb2kmcD0wJm49cmV1cHR1VmhuUUVhRTJfJdXhJMHNRSZ0PUFBQUFBR0dSV0xF>

You will need to make two copies of this Venn diagram: one to compare and contrast the character traits of The Song of the Trees and the Good Garden and the other to compare and contrast the Central Messages.

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/FREEBIE-Venn-Diagram-wlines-908461>

Appendix 4 Exit ticket parking lot used to post the central message.

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Post-It-Parking-Lot-4131304?st=0949ff568be335ccf4e0c1efb7dc7375>

Appendix 5 Anchor Chart




Character Trait Anchor Chart

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Character-Traits-Anchor-Chart-or-Poster-1330250>

Create an Anchor chart for the central message. See example:

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/537476536763493622/>

Appendix 6



Talking to Young Children About Race and Racism

There is no perfect way to talk to children about race and racism. These topics are complex issues that can be hard for younger children to grasp.

Use the suggested questions to guide discussion. Refer to the Glossary for help explaining common terms.

Discussion Questions

It's natural to notice race and recognize differences in race. What makes us different? What makes us the same?

Think about your family. What are three things that are the same or different about you and them?

Who are the heroes who have fought against racism in history and today?



Do you think racism might make it harder for Black people to become important leaders? Is that fair?

Share a story with your children about a time when you had to stand up for yourself because you were being treated unfairly. How did you feel?

When we see something unfair what are ways we can stand up for others?

What can we do to be an advocate? Talk with your students/child about speaking up, speaking out, and supporting others.

Find more games and activities at pbskids.org/parents



Made available by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

Appendix 7

FLIPGRID: presentational speaking rubric

Grading Rubric:

	4	3	2	1
Content & Completion	I provide detailed responses that meet prompt and time requirements	I respond to prompt, but may lack detail and depth; response may be slightly short	I do not respond entirely to prompt and/or lack much depth in responses; or short response	I do not respond to prompt and am lacking in many ideas/depth; or very short
Vocabulary	Accurate use of vocabulary and grammar	Several minor vocab errors; do not interfere w/ comprehension	Numerous errors in vocab interfere with comprehension	Major vocab errors
Pronunciation & Preparedness	I am well prepared; I have all of my notes. Excellent and correct pronunciation	I am well prepared; slight hesitations when reading notes s some errors in pronunciation	I am not well prepared, hesitations some notes Errors in pronunciation	I did not prepare well no notes Major pronunciation errors
Listener	I am a great listener. I always make eye contact with the speaker.	I am a good listener. I make eye contact with the speaker most of the time.	I am somewhat good listener. I make eye contact some of the time.	I am not a good listener. I do not make eye contact.

____ / 16 points

FLIPGRID

TIPS & TRICKS



Consider your Audience

- Who am I making this video for?
- What kind of voice & attitude should I use?

Microphone

- Make sure it's not being hit or covered.
- Speak loud enough that you can be heard.

HAVE FUN 😊



Camera Position



- Don't show ceiling
- center your image

Background



- Have a neutral background



Eye Contact

- Look at the camera. Position your script behind.

Stickers

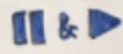


- You can use 2 stickers each time
- Do not cover your face.



Lighting

- Make sure the light is good & not behind you.



- Pause gently so it doesn't make noise.

Reactions

- Be polite in your feedback
- Be honest, but helpful. constructive criticism

Resources

Materials:

Teacher Computer
Projector
Graphic organizers
Student i-pads
Paper
Pencils
Anchor charts
Student resources
Teacher resources
Flipgrid App

Mentor Texts:

Song of the Trees
The Good Garden

Student Resources:

This is the anticipation activity to open up the lesson. It serves also as a pre-assessment.

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/whats-fair-0>

This is a graphic organizer to help students think and write.

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Notice-and-Wonder-Graphic-Organizer-4234215?st=01971f2de65a253279609b048592b743>

This is a video that teaches students how to talk, listen and act.

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism>

This is a template for a Venn Diagram. It will be used to compare the character's traits and the central message.

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/FREEBIE-Venn-Diagram-wlines-908461>

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/children-who-marched-for-equal-rights-inspire-a-new-generation>

This video will be shown right before the culminating activity. Its children from the civil rights era, fighting for equality.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpPmh3oNg3U>

This video will be shown after the equal rights video to show one child in the present advocating to keep schools in Chicago open.

https://auth.flipgrid.com/signin?redirect_url=https://my.flipgrid.com/me This is an application called Flipgrid. Flipgrid is a social learning platform that allows educators to post a question and then students respond with a video. Then students can respond to each other creating a “web” of discussions that can then be monitored by the educator.

Teacher Resources:

This is a great resource for identifying character traits for teachers.

<http://justmrsjones.blogspot.com/2018/10/inspiring-readers-with-character-traits.html>

PKTA Racism Discussion Guide

<https://cms-tc.pbskids.org/global/PKTA-Race-and-Racism-Discussion-Guide.pdf>

This is a source that gives directions on how to facilitate discussion questions.

This is a source that gives directions on how to use Flipgrid.

https://www.sctv.org/sites/default/files/documents/athomelearning/flexible_learning_with_flipgrid_5_ways_to_quickstart_6.pdf

A great resource for upper grades.

<https://bookunitteacher.com/wp/?p=7425>

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