

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Read *Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say. Write a paragraph explaining how the two books are related and why you think the author wrote these books.
2. There are three alphabets in the Japanese language: "kanji," "katakana," and "hiragana." Research and find out how these three alphabets differ. Compare with the way we write words in English. (Keyword: Japanese language)
3. Write a letter from May to her parents explaining her decision to move to Osaka.

* Visit www.heartwoodethics.org and choose Teaching Heartwood, Culture Keys, for more on the history, culture, and geography of this book.

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Living in Japan in the mid-1900s, Allen Say's mother had to observe certain Japanese customs. Research Japanese customs concerning young women today. Find out which have changed and which have remained the same.*
2. Use brochures from a travel agency to plan an imaginary trip to Japan. Which places would you like to visit? Why? It is a Japanese custom to bring "omiyage" or small gifts to people you visit. What presents might you bring to Japan from America? What Japanese objects would you like to bring home? Why?

ART

1. Origami, or paper folding, is a unique Japanese art form. Use origami paper and pattern books to learn how to fold birds, flowers, and other items.*
2. Learn about Japanese flower arranging (Keyword: ikebana), writing Japanese letters and numbers using brush and ink (Keywords: Japanese calligraphy, shodo), and the intricacies of serving tea (Keyword: Japanese tea ceremony). If possible, have someone demonstrate one or more of these arts.*

Tea With Milk

Allen Say
1999
New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

CONCEPTS

Honesty
Respect
Love

SUMMARY

This true story about the author's parents expands on his own history as told in *Grandfather's Journey*. It tells of May's struggle to respect her parents and their Japanese values while being honest about her own needs and hopes. She learns to reconcile cultural differences and be true to herself. Allen Say's beautiful watercolors bring the cultures to life and portray May's and Joseph's journey "home" through the heart.

HONESTY

Japan
Historical Fiction
Reading Time: 12 minutes

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to define and discuss honesty, respect, and love as they apply to this story. The student will begin to develop appreciation for people whose heritage includes two or more cultures.

After the Story

Tea With Milk

DISCUSSION

1. How does May's early life in San Francisco combine Japanese and American cultures?
2. How does May feel about the move to Japan? What does she dislike most about it? Would being honest about her feelings have made any difference? Why or why not?
3. The Japanese word "giri" means duty or obligation. What does May do and learn out of "giri," or respect for her parents? How do these things serve her later?
4. Why does May decide to leave home to go to Osaka? How does she behave differently from a "traditional" Japanese woman? Where else in the story is May honest with herself in pursuing what she really wants?
5. The Japanese word "ninjyo" means to do things from the heart. Which decisions does May make based on "ninjyo" rather than "giri" (duty)? What does Joseph teach May about the meaning of "home"?
6. How do you think honesty, respect, and love contribute to Joseph and May's happiness?
7. Do you know anyone whose life includes two or more cultures? How do you think having two cultures might enrich their lives and the lives of their friends?

ACTIVITIES

1. Find San Francisco, California, and Osaka, Japan, on the world map.
2. With a partner talk about the phrase "Home is where the heart is." What do you think this means? Share with the class.
3. Invite a person from another country who is living in the United States to visit your class. Interview the person about the difficulties he or she faced moving to a new country.

HOME CONNECTION

1. Ask family members to tell about choices they made growing up that were different from the choices their parents wanted them to make. With permission, share with the class.
2. Ask family members if they have something from their parents or grandparents that relates to another country or culture. It might be an object, a food or recipe, a story or saying. Share with your class.

JOURNAL

1. Brainstorm other solutions May might have chosen to resolve her conflict. Choose one to write about.
2. Imagine what it would be like to move to another country. Write about where you might live, what you think would be exciting, and what you would miss most about your own country.

VOCABULARY

miso
crumpets
kimono

foreigner
calligraphy