

Culture, Trauma and Teaching English Language Learners

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Rationale

Last school year, I met a new kindergarten student who had recently arrived to the United States from Korea. On the morning of the first day of school, he ran away. He made it all the way to the busy street outside of the school before the principal could catch up with him and bring him back. He was trying to run home. I have since had the pleasure of teaching this amazing, intelligent child and I often think of that first day when he ran away. He felt terrified and alone. I can only imagine how intimidated and overwhelmed I would feel if I were a kindergartener new to the country. A new place where everyone speaks a foreign language, teachers are presenting expectations, and I am away from the comfort of my parents. I would feel scared and anxious trying to comprehend and function through the day. This particular student was able to adapt very quickly in the nurturing environment of our warm and supportive school. Worrying, feeling alone, and not sure where you belong in a new place can have a tremendous impact on a student's ability to learn. For many students, school can be a place to find support, a place that can feel like home.

I was inspired to write this unit after listening to Richard Blanco read poetry from his book, *A City of a Hundred Fires*¹. He begins by asking what he calls a universal question "What is home?" He follows by indicating there may not be a final answer, but it led him on a journey as he tried to negotiate an identity between his Cuban roots and American cultural influences. This led me to think about all of the ELLs who come through our schools. Do they wonder what or where is home? How many ELL students struggle with finding a place where they belong, and like Blanco, are negotiating their identity between cultures? Another figure we discussed during our seminar who stood out to me was Mary Prince and the unfathomable trauma she endured as she tells her story in her autobiography *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*.² Mary Prince was also a person in search of a home as she spent all of her life as a slave passed around to different places never knowing where she belonged, or allowed to have her own identity. We also analyzed Liv McNeil's video *Numb*.³ Liv McNeil is a fifteen-year-old student who produced a short video showing the emotional trauma she experienced while doing remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Liv McNeil's video, she screams, but we cannot hear her. How many of our ELL students are screaming inside because of their own trauma and we do not hear them? Trauma has a negative impact on ELL students' learning. "Childhood traumatic experiences may challenge maturing mechanisms of emotional regulation. Developmentally appropriate emotional regulation is critical to family, peer, and school functioning." The intent of my research is to give

teachers a way to improve the learning curve of ELLs who are negatively impacted by trauma of which they may or may not be aware. A way to do this is to study fictional characters in literature who have experienced similar cultural and socioeconomic traumas or who have the same cultural identities as the reader. ELL teachers can use this unit as an opportunity to help children recognize and share their traumas and/or cultural values while also learning the four domains of the English language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

This unit is written for small groups of third grade ELLs at Heritage Elementary School, but could be adapted to teach other grade levels or larger groups. Heritage Elementary is located in Wilmington, Delaware. About 525 students attend this kindergarten through fifth grade school. Heritage Elementary has a slightly diverse student population with an ethnic makeup of 1.72% Asian, 17% Hispanic, 8.41% African American, 70% Caucasian, and 3.25% multi-racial. About 19% of the students at Heritage qualify as low income, 11% are students with disabilities, and 7.5% are English Learners. Heritage Elementary School's mission is to deliver a quality education in a safe and secure learning environment where instructional services, strategies, and programs meet the needs of our diverse population. The curriculum at Heritage Elementary aligns with the Common Core State Standards for all subject areas and grade levels. Reading instruction is comprised of comprehension strategies, vocabulary, phonics and fluency skills depending on students' areas of need. English Language instruction is a combination of a pull out and push program model divided into 30-minute sessions. Each student's minutes per week depend on his or her language proficiency level according to the student's ACCESS test scores from the previous spring. Heritage is becoming a trauma informed school. Teachers and staff have attended multiple professional development meetings to develop skills to help our students become healthy both socially and emotionally. All grade levels in our school are taught the Second Step Social Emotional Learning Curriculum. Second Step is a research based, teacher informed, and classroom tested program used to promote the social-emotional development, safety, and well-being of children. The different topics covered are finding ways to play, understanding feelings, ways to calm down, empathy, and ways for learning and getting along with others. The units in Second Step build upon each other through grade levels. "Students' posttraumatic stress symptoms significantly decreased during a school year when school educational and support staff participated in ongoing trauma-informed training."¹²

Content Objectives

Childhood Trauma

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration⁴, "psychological trauma is damage to the mind that occurs as a result of a distressing event. Trauma is often the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds one's ability

to cope, or integrate the emotions involved with that experience. Trauma may result from a single distressing experience or recurring events of being overwhelmed that can be precipitated in weeks, years, or even decades as the person struggles to cope with the immediate circumstances, eventually leading to serious, long-term negative consequences.” Trauma can be especially detrimental to developing children. The repercussions of childhood trauma are complex because the developmental stage at the time trauma occurs can determine how the brain processes and reacts. The nature of the trauma and the stage of development can, “skew expectations about the world, the safety and security of interpersonal life, and the child’s sense of personal integrity...shape concepts of self and others, and lead to forecasts about the future that can have a profound influence on current and future behavior.”⁹ The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) website says, “Some children are at greater risk than others. ACEs and associated conditions, such as living in under-resourced or racially segregated neighborhoods, frequently moving, and experiencing food insecurity, can cause toxic stress (extended or prolonged stress). Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect such things as attention, decision-making, learning, and response to stress.”⁵ Many ELL students fall into these categories. Ruptures in families can also occur as consequences of trauma in the form of secondary stressors. For example, the death of a parent can effect financial stability, cause a family to relocate forcing children to attend a new school and leave friends behind, or forcing the living parent to take on more work leaving the child with another caregiver. Other examples of secondary adversaries are immigration, stress from answering questions from peers about a traumatic event, or medical needs because of a traumatic injury. Traumatic reminders are things that occur that remind a child of the trauma they endured and can evoke feelings equally as upsetting as the initial traumatic event.⁹ Teachers can help children deal with secondary stressors and traumatic reminders. “Therapeutic attention to secondary adversaries includes assisting the child in identifying the sources of secondary stresses, addressing the resulting internal emotional conflicts, and enhancing coping skills. Socioenvironmental interventions to minimize adversaries and secondary stresses often require a child advocate role.”⁶ While a teacher is not a psychologist or professional therapist, she can take on this child advocate role. Teachers are the only adult support children can turn to in some cases. It is imperative for English language teachers to understand what trauma is, which students are affected, show students how to recognize their suffering and triggers, and show them where and who to reach out to for help.

Culture and Trauma

Culture plays a significant role in how a person heals from trauma. Culture provides a set of values, traditions, and rituals that bring people together in times of crisis and provide support and guidance in the mist of tragedy. Culture can give people hope through religion and history. People are more likely to recover from traumatic experiences if they have a strong cultural support system, and that support will vary depending on cultural

philosophies, “Cultures differ in their religious systems and social organizations; therefore, each provides its own particular interpretation of the causes and the experiences of physical and emotional suffering and trauma.”⁷ DeVries goes on to say that massive upheavals can cause a culture to become incapable of providing a framework of support making it harder to recover from trauma.⁷ A great example of this is the story of John Bul Dau, a refugee from Sudan, Africa. He fled his village at the age of twelve with only a neighbor because of civil war and genocide, and began a terrifying journey through the wilderness of Africa where he encountered unimaginable violence, disease, and famine. He lost his family and community. There was no longer a cultural infrastructure to help him recover. It is vital that teachers allow ELL students, especially new immigrants, to maintain their cultural beliefs and build social connections to ensure a sense of acceptance. Customs and rituals serve as an enduring support system and can play a central part in the healing process. Present a rich cultural curriculum relative to your students, and become knowledgeable about how your students’ cultures view different traumatic situations. Two immigrant students arrived to the United States fleeing violence in their native country of Venezuela and attended Heritage two days later. They left their grandparents and father behind and they spoke very little English. They come from a collectivistic culture and leaving family members behind was hard to do for them. Our ELL curriculum provided these two students a way to find comfort in stories that were relative to their family and cultural dynamic, like *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach* by Carmen Deedy. I saw that it gave my students a feeling of security and comfort to hear stories that include as little as words in their native language.

Culture can help students come to terms with trauma. “Cultural stories, rituals, and legends highlighting the mastery of communal trauma, the relationship to the spiritual realm, and religion itself are important mechanisms that allow individuals to reorganize their often catastrophic reactions to losses. Culture as a source of knowledge and information, locates experience in a historical context and forces continuity on discontinuous events.”¹⁵ ELL students, who may or may not have experienced trauma, can sometimes fear losing their culture when they learn a new language. In each lesson, incorporate familiar cultural aspects of the students in your class especially for ELLs carrying the weight of traumatic experiences. There are Individuals can come to terms with trauma by, according to Van Der Kolk, McFarlane, and Van der Hart, “sorting out exactly what happened and sharing their reactions with others can make a great deal of difference in victims’ eventual adaptation.”⁸ Although they go on to say that “talking about the trauma is rarely if ever enough: trauma survivors need to take some action that symbolizes triumph over helplessness and despair.”⁸ For example, John Bul Dau eventually made his way to the United States. After he reestablished his life in the U.S., he returned to Sudan to build hospitals and provide relief for struggling people. He is now a global scholar and, “teaches responsible citizenship and values- honesty, integrity, creativity, respect, and hard work and empathy – through African folktales.”⁹ He took action to help others who were suffering as he was, and made a career teaching his

culture through literature. A teacher may not have the means to provide extensive therapy for her students, but she can be an important influence to help students make the connection between their culture and a new home a positive experience.

Cultural Competence

In relation to education, The National Education Association describes cultural competence as “having an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about differences, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families.”¹⁸ A teacher’s role in creating cultural competence in the school or classroom is a meaningful step towards understanding ELL students’ trauma because it fosters that sense of acceptance for children. When students feel accepted, they are likely to open up and reveal their experiences. When a teacher learns their past circumstances, she can choose literature and develop lessons that foster connections. Three things stood out to me while researching cultural competence and the role it plays in schools. First, really take a good look at your own cultural assumptions and scrutinize any stereotypes or misconceptions you may have about other cultures. Become self-aware about your cultural views. This is an important step to becoming culturally competent. Second, teachers and students should use intercultural communication skills. This can inform learning and support serious reflection. “Effective communication with others who are linguistically and culturally different includes the use of techniques like active listening, elaboration, paraphrasing, and restatement.”¹⁰ Consider using these techniques when planning your lessons. Another point to consider is the differences within a broader cultural category. For example, students may identify as Hispanic, yet there are various cultural groups within this broader category such as Cuban, Dominican, Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc., and each has differing cultural characteristics. It is important for teacher to be sensitive to this when giving generalized instructions in lessons. Heritage students share aspects of their lives and have a mutual respect for one another. Third, keeping cultural competence in mind when teaching is great, but to do so on a school wide scale takes more than just a few culturally competent teachers. In our school, we usually set aside a time to celebrate multicultural day or week in a school year, but wouldn’t it be better for administration, teachers and students to have an overarching culturally diverse school day every day? “School staff should also establish routines that reinforce cultural competence. When these practices are integrated into school staff routines, cultural competence becomes more than simply a notion, making school as welcoming to traumatized youths from marginalized populations as it is to their non-traumatized counterparts.”¹¹

Trauma Informed Teaching

Schools, teachers, and peers have a direct impact on whether students find a successful path and the self-confidence to travel that path. According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), trauma informed teaching occurs,

“when teachers are proactive and responsive to the needs of students suffering from traumatic stress and make small changes in the classroom that foster a feeling of safety, it makes a huge difference in their ability to learn.”¹² Teachers can help by becoming trauma informed, and then use this knowledge to create, plan, and structure their classrooms and lessons. Knowing the background of each student and taking the time to research students' available history is a starting point to success. There are numerous websites and professional development opportunities to acquaint teachers with strategies for trauma informed teaching, and most of these strategies relate to classroom management and procedures. “It is in school that immigrant children learn, socialize, and expand their understanding of their new country. In school, they have opportunities to form friendships, practice new skills, including English, and continue their developmental trajectories.”¹³ As teachers, we have to be aware of the specific obstacles students face and show empathy, allowing students to feel comfortable enough to trust and develop new relationships. A level of anxiety accompanies anyone who is learning a new language, but for children who are already dealing with trauma, trying to meet grade level expectations and language proficiency goals can be a daunting task. The language teacher can play a significant role in reducing this anxiety by simply making the classroom a safe and comfortable community. This is one strategy of trauma informed teaching. Community and building connections build trust within a group. Once trust is established, students are more likely to open up about past traumas along with a willingness to learn a new language. “Integrating language instruction with self-expression and exploration of social relationships creates a safe environment and supportive community in which all learners thrive and the trauma-affected among them learn to trust others and regain self-efficacy. Incorporating content-based language instruction related to conflict transformation and forgiveness can fortify students' resilience while facilitating language learning.”¹⁵ Choosing appropriate content to teach depends on the level of trauma students have experienced and at what stage of acceptance and healing students have achieved, which brings me back to my previous point: a teacher should know her students. “Learning should be conducted with an acknowledgement of the needs of those who have experienced trauma, and these needs must be acknowledged as normal. Healing and learning can be connected.”¹⁵ A teacher can then choose and present relative content activities. Co-creating these activities is also a way to promote an interactive classroom community. Carefully choose the literature for your lessons. Base your decisions on the level of comfort for your particular student population as not to cause an adverse effect and trigger a student to shut down or become upset by reliving a part of their past that they are not ready to heal from yet. “ELT professionals working among trauma-affected populations must learn to strike a balance between language learning goals and sensitivity to the learners' environment and their emergent needs. . . artful acts of instruction in themselves can be therapeutic and build resilience in all language learners.”¹⁵ The more we know about how stress can affect a child's ability to learn, the better chance we have of helping that child heal. Trauma responses can manifest themselves in many ways in the classroom. Students are easily

distracted, agitated, show inappropriate behaviors, have trouble remembering, and lack impulse control and social skills. The opposite can occur and they shut down, refuse to participate, can be generally quiet and withdrawn, or simply blend-in not wanting to complain or draw attention to themselves. Some teachers may mistake these behaviors for signs of ADHD or non-compliant behaviors when in actuality they are very real reactions to trauma. In addition, according to Pynoos, Steinberg, and Goenjian, children are prone to sleep disturbances after experiencing trauma and this leads to more daytime irritability, difficulties concentrating and paying attention, which affects family and peer relationships and academic learning.⁹

ELL Instructional Models

To help ELL students make academic progress, schools can offer a wide variety of instructional models. Pull Out and Push In are two frequently used teacher models. ELL teachers push into classrooms to assist with what the classroom teacher is teaching and supporting the ELL. Students who are pulled out of their homerooms for about thirty minutes of each day receive engaging instruction in a small group of children with similar language proficiency goals. This gives teachers a chance to build upon what students already know and support them so they can reach their academic potential. This also provides an intimate setting lowering a student's affective filter making it easier for them to participate and learn. According to Lev Vygotsky, learning can occur at its best when students are being highly challenged in a supportive classroom, and this challenges the teacher to maintain high expectations and scaffold instruction so the student can reach their zone of proximal development.¹⁴ The zone of proximal development refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner.¹⁵ The push-in component allows students to receive extra support in the mainstream classroom while maintaining those high expectations. Many schools and language teachers opt to provide both push-in and pull-out instruction. For those language teachers pushing into classrooms, it is best to co-plan with the classroom teacher to optimize the time with a student. From my own teaching experiences, I have noticed that if a classroom teacher is providing direct instruction and the language teacher is standing nearby or sitting next to an ELL student, it can make that student feel uncomfortable around their peers because it draws attention to the fact they then need extra help. It can make them feel different from their peers. I find this to be more common in the third, fourth, fifth grade classrooms. One way to avoid this is to work with a group of students while pushing in that are not necessarily all ELLs, rather than unintentionally singling out a student.

Teaching Strategies

As previously stated, it is important to remember the goal of classroom community. Keeping students' comfort levels in mind is key to participation. Building trust is crucial when planning teaching strategies for ELLs, "Integrating language instruction with self-

expression and exploration of social relationships addresses three issues important for trauma healing to take place: creating a safe environment, building trust among class members, and acknowledging traumas so that they can be properly mourned. The self-exploration piece also focuses learners' attention on recovering meaning in their lives. How language teachers deliver such lessons is as important as the content focus."¹⁵ Below are a few activities to consider when planning lessons for ELL students. The specific literature that you chose for your students can lend itself to help ELL students who have experienced trauma.

Pre-teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a critical part of the curriculum for ELLs, and there should be time set aside each day to teach vocabulary. Message abundance is a key factor to consider when teaching ELLs to learn new words. According to University of Delaware professor Dr. Prillaman¹⁶, ELLs need about 8-10 meaningful interactions to remember new words. Quiz, Quiz trade is a fun, motivational activity to get the students moving around and thinking about words they will become familiar with from the text. In this activity, students have a picture of the vocabulary word on one side and the definition on the back. They walk around and show the picture to classmates while the classmate defines the picture and then they trade cards. This provides lots of repetition that ELLs need to learn another language, and gives lots of exposure in a short amount of time. An activity students can participate in to cover vocabulary words is called *What Did You See?* Students look at objects or pictures of objects related to the stories in the unit. After a few moments, the pictures are covered with a cloth and students will talk together to see how many objects they remember. Another vocabulary activity is called *What's My Word*. Students will rate their knowledge of the vocabulary words by either filling out a graphic organizer checking boxes to show if they know the word well, know something about the word, do not know the word yet, and what they think it means. They will have time to discuss the word meaning and come up with a group definition. After we read the story, we will create a class definition and add it to our organizer. A third vocabulary activity that promotes listening and vocabulary development is a matching game. Students have several pictures labeled with a number. The teacher describes a picture labeled with a letter, and the students must match the picture with the description.¹⁴ These vocabulary activities all involve student collaboration, which provides ELLs with opportunities for language development. "It (group work) increases comprehension, provides opportunities for student output and peer scaffolding, and increases student's confidence." (Gibbons, 2015, p. 76). Another activity is a word sort. Students will have a stack of words from the text and time to discuss what they think is the relationship of the words. After discussing the definitions, students can go back and rearrange the sort. Next, we will use automaticity cards with the vocab words to create sentences. This scaffolding activity allows students to activate background knowledge, and see they may indeed know something about the topic, and remember new vocabulary.¹⁷ "The research on vocabulary

instruction for ELLs suggests that a rich, multifaceted approach works best. Exposure to new words, both oral and written, in a variety of contexts across the curriculum provides an important base for word learning. At the same time, direct systematic approach plays a useful role as well.”¹⁸ By implementing the activities listed above, students are exposed to new words in a fun, yet direct and appropriate way.

Reading to students

Reading to students has many benefits. It is a good model of oral reading, a pleasurable experience, and let’s student visualize without their decoding skills impeding comprehension. Having realia or pictures in books will help with comprehending.

Graphic Organizer

An objective of one of my classroom activities is students describe the characters, setting, and major events of the story. To help students understand the story elements, they will create a picture or graphic organizer together as a group and fill it in as they listen and discuss parts of the story. By using a graphic organizer, students have a visual of the key details that are happening that helps with the overall comprehension. Students will work together to decide how to design the layout of the story map, but the teacher will provide the key words and definitions *characters (who)*, *setting (where)*, *problem (what went wrong)*, *solution (how was the problem solved)*. Students can use the same markers/colored pencils to create the organizer to make it more exciting.

Questioning

Questioning is a way to get students to understand the details of what they are reading, and helps to put all of the pieces together to understand the overall message in the story. Students are expected to understand key details of this story by asking and answering such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how. While the teacher reads, she will pause at significant parts of the story and ask students what they think will happen or what they would do in that situation. The goal of making predictions is to engage the students in the process of making meaning. The teacher will also ask questions about the text as they listen. “To alert children to the hidden messages of text, as well as the underlying assumptions about reality made by the writer, teachers need to ask different kinds of questions associated with text comprehension.”¹⁴

Building Connections

There are many ways to build connections between the messages of the story to students’ lives. One way is to follow the reading with a discussion, in this case with the small group. By allowing time for a structured discussion, students can reflect and share their analyses of the message and how it can connect to experiences they have had, or what

they would do in those circumstances compared to the characters reactions. A discussion allows time to talk about our ideas and lead us to making meaning from the text that can also be transferred to our own lives, and this helps when ELLs are struggling with understanding the main message of a story. “When a discussion is well structured, it can reinforce the main points of the material thereby helping students who may have difficulty understanding some basics of the material.”¹⁹ Three different types of connections to consider using are text to self, text to text, and text to world.²⁰

Drama

What a fun way to retell the story elements of a text! Acting out the parts of a story helps ELLs and all students show that they understand the events. In an activity called *Freeze Frames* students take on the role of specific characters using simple props. The audience members close their eyes for about 10 seconds while the students prepare the first scene. The audience views the actions as a series of freeze frames. Students do not have to talk in the freeze frames so this takes away an anxiety an ELL may have about speaking in front of a group, but they do have to speak to each other when planning the scenes. There are other ways to get students actively involved like Reader’s Theater, and Hot Seat. According to Fitzgerald and Graves, “drama often gives ELLs a special boost in learning and participating in a class because ideas and concepts in the reading materials become more evident through facial expressions, gestures, and other movements.”¹⁹

Classroom Activities

In this unit, students will listen to three stories that relate to this specific group of learners’ cultures, and their comfort level exploring their experiences. There are three activities to use with each story organized as Before Reading, During Reading, and After Reading and will cover vocabulary study, book discussion, and an opportunity for students to produce something relative. I will teach these activities in 30-minute increments to a small, pullout group of ELs.

Enduring Understanding: Culture and trauma can shape our sense of self and belonging.
Essential Questions: How does culture shape our sense of self and belonging? How can culture and family values help each other through hardships? What cultural aspects are significant in overcoming traumatic experiences?

Dear Primo A Letter to my Cousin by Duncan Tonatuih

Before Reading Activity

For this vocabulary activity, students will practice many Spanish and English words they will read in the book. Spanish Vocabulary Words: primo, maiz, burro, pollos, gallo, bicicleta, perros, nopal, futbol, tortillas, quesadillas, trompos, canicas, papalote, Mercado,

cohetes, mariachis, reatas, charros, caballos. English Vocabulary Words: skyscrapers, subway, dribble, stoop, fire hydrant, supermarket, break-dancers, tradition. To familiarize ourselves with the words, student will play a matching game. Students have several pictures labeled with a number. The teacher describes a picture labeled with a letter, and the students must match the picture of the word with the description.

During Reading Activity

Introduce and discuss the following questions: What is culture? What cultures do you identify with? What values and traditions do you practice?

Next, students will read the book and complete a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the cousins' lives living in different countries. Last, read aloud the author's note in the back of the book. Answer and discuss the following questions: Where did the author grow up? Where did the author move? What two cultures did he experience? What are two perspectives of the Mexican migration experience? Do you agree with the last sentence the author writes, "Despite the apparent differences between these two countries- the buildings, the food, the day-to-day routines, physical appearances, the politics- at the end of the day, we are more similar than different. People are people." Why?

After Reading Activity

Students will write a letter to a family member or friend explaining an aspect of their lives such as school, family, neighborhood, or friends similar to what the characters did in the book, and how they feel about it.

Amelia's Road by Linda Jacobs Altman

Before Reading Activity

As mentioned in the teaching strategies section, Quiz, Quiz trade is a fun, motivational activity to get the students moving around. In this activity, students have a picture of the vocabulary word on one side and the definition on the back. They walk around and show the picture to classmates while the classmate defines the picture and then they trade cards. This continues until they have traded with all students. Vocabulary words: *migrant, grim, shanty, los caminos, harvest, occasion, accidental, permanent, meadow, pretend*. Next, discuss what a migrant farm community looks like. Take a picture walk of the book to reference migrant farm communities. Make a list of predictions of what could happen in this story.

During Reading Activity

Students will listen to *Amelia's Road* by Linda Jacobs Altman. We will ask and answer questions to develop a deeper understanding of the main character, Amelia. Students will complete a graphic organizer to analyze the character's feelings and actions as we listen to the story and discuss the questions. Possible discussion questions: How does Amelia feel about roads? Why does she feel that way? What is troubling Amelia and what does she want? How does Amelia think differently than the rest of her family? What example can you find that shows how migrant workers remember important occasions of life? Why does this bother Amelia? How does Amelia's migrant culture give her foster a feeling of loneliness? Why is it important to her to feel that she belongs somewhere? What is the accidental road? How did she find it, why does she call it the accidental road and how does Amelia feel about it? How is the box she finds the answer to her problems? How has Amelia changed by the end of the story? Why does she feel this way? What can "home" mean for someone? How does Amelia create a sense of finding a home for herself? When she does this, how does it change her feelings about moving all of the time?

After Reading Activity

Students write a short narrative about a personal, cultural struggle. For example, when I was a child I wanted to dye Easter eggs different colors and not the traditional red for the game of cracking the Greek Easter eggs. We will share and list our experiences, or students can write their own in a journal if they are uncomfortable sharing out to the group. Then students will complete a graphic organizer using their own events and feelings. Next, students create a storyboard and draw one picture in each square in the sequence of events of their narrative. When the student's storyboards are complete, we will begin writing about each picture. We will have a sharing session when our narratives

are finished. At the end of the lesson, we will discuss the answer to the big question *How does culture shape our sense of self and belonging?*

How Many Days to America by Eve Bunting

Before Reading Activity

In this activity, students will infer the meaning of vocabulary words and phrases using context clues and their schemas. They will listen to the story and raise their hand each time they hear a word or phrase they do not know. I will add the words to a list on chart paper. We will read the words around the unknown word, talk about what we already know, and infer what we think the meaning of the word is and then confirm the meanings using a dictionary. Some possible words and phrases students may not know are *soldier, quay, garnet, harbor, chugged heavily, face twisted, knotting clothes together, huddled in the bow, barnacles, wings of foam, and papaya*. Introduce the definition of trauma. Make a list of events that could cause someone to experience trauma and discuss what behaviors and feeling someone can have after experiencing trauma.

During Reading Activity

Students will listen to the story a second time focusing on asking and answering questions about the book. Possible discussion questions: Who are the characters? Where are they? Why are they leaving and why in a hurry? What problems do the characters face throughout the story? What happens at the end of the story? Next, create a three column trauma chart listing traumatic events, characters reactions and feelings, and how they help each other.

Traumatic Occurrences	Character's Response/Actions	Character's Feelings	How they help each other
Leaving home and everything behind	Mother says, "Leave all my things..." The boy asks why they have to leave.	Scared, sad, confused	Father answers the children's questions. They stay together.
Walking silently down the secret streets in the middle of the night. Giving away their wedding rings	Mom does not speak,	Afraid, anxious	Dad comforts them children telling them not to be afraid.
Setting off into the open ocean in a small, overcrowded fishing boat in the dark night	Sister is asking questions <i>all</i> the time	Curious, anxious	Father answers sisters questions

Boat breaks down and can't be fixed and they are shot at from the cliffs	Mom's face twisted, women make a sail from their clothes,	Scared, brave	father holds them close, look at each other
They run out of food and water. Passengers are sick.	Mom, dad and kids huddle together. Father sings a song he sang at home. They sleep.	The children feel safe. "That was the only time I was not afraid."	Mom, dad and kids huddle together. Father sings a song he sang at home.
Remembers his favorite uncle who stayed behind.	He cries	Scared, worried, sad	His mom rocks him and holds him close
They see a huge whale	Mom yells to the whale to push them to America. "The whale does not hear"	Hopeful, desperate, hopeless	
Attacked by thieves with guns who robbed them of all they had left	They gave the men all of their things	"Fear moved like a bad wind between us."	All of the people huddle together. Two of them men stand protectively in front of the group.
The men swim to land but they are turned away by soldiers with rifles	Mother grips the boys hand, everyone is quiet, kids ask questions	Disappointed, confused	Father answers some of the questions
They sight land again	Mother clasps her hands and bends her head	"I was afraid to hope", the boy says	They cheer when they are pulled to shore.

After Reading Activity

Students look closely at the trauma chart from activity two, and then draw conclusions about the culture and family values of the characters based on their trauma responses and how they help each other cope. Next, we will participate in a collaborative writing activity and write continuation for this family including what we think they will do next as they make a life in America. What struggles or setbacks could happen and what positive opportunities can arise? How can their culture and family values help them persevere in this new country – America?

A suggestion for those who decide to teach this lesson is after you learn the background of your students choose appropriate books to support them. Other Book Possibilities are Grandfather's Journey by Alan Say, Mama's Nightingale A story of Immigration and

Separation by Edwidge Danticat, My Family Divided: One Girl's Journey of Home, Loss, and Hope by Diane Guerrero, One Green Apple by Eve Bunting, and The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi just to name a few.

Appendix A: Implementing District Standards

Based on the English Language Development Standards along with the WIDA performance indicators²¹, students will describe the characters, setting, and sequence of events of a story, ask and answer questions about a text citing the text as evidence. Students will gain an enduring understanding of how to identify how fictional characters deal with trauma by studying literature, and how students can learn to identify some of their own trauma, they may be experiencing. Students will make connections between the cultures they identify with and literary characters' cultures, and develop a sense of cultural competence. This unit covers the following standards: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events, and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language. It also covers the following English language standards: English Language Development Standard One: English language learners communicate for Social and Instructional purposes within the school setting and English Language Development Standard Two: English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts

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