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NEW FREE LESSON PLANS CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND MULTIMODAL MAGIC

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Exploring Cultural Traditions Through Storytelling - Picture Book Lesson Guide

Featured Book: Alex's Good Fortune by Benson Shum

Primary Subject: Social Studies / Language Arts

Grade Level Range: K-5 (with adaptations)

Estimated Time: 60 minutes (can be extended into multi-day project)

Materials Needed:

- Copy of Alex's Good Fortune
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Student notebooks or writing paper
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Printable zodiac animal templates (optional)
- Materials for making banners (construction paper, scissors, string, tape/glue)

Quick Overview

This activity helps students explore cultural and family traditions through storytelling, inspired by Benson Shum's Alex's Good Fortune. Students learn about Lunar New Year customs, compare them with their own traditions, and create personal narratives to share with classmates.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify and describe cultural traditions presented in the story.
- Compare and contrast personal traditions with those from the book.
- Develop narrative writing skills by sharing a tradition in story form.

Why it Works for Diverse Learners: The activity uses a universally relatable theme—family traditions—and invites all students to share and celebrate their own backgrounds. It combines visual, oral, and written expression, making it accessible to different learning styles.

At-a-Glance Standards

Primary Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3: Describe how characters respond to major events and challenges.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences.

Cross-Curricular Connections: Social Studies (cultural awareness), Art (banner-making), Speaking & Listening (oral sharing).

21st Century Skills: Cultural competence, collaboration, creative thinking.

Step-by-Step Implementation

Pre-Reading Preparation:

1. Set Up Your Space: Arrange seating to allow for group discussion. Prepare a display table with materials for post-reading activities.
2. Preview the Book: Skim for key cultural elements and note vocabulary to pre-teach (e.g., Lunar New Year, dumplings, zodiac).
3. Gather Materials: Ensure all art supplies are ready; print zodiac templates if using.
4. Prepare Students: Briefly introduce the Lunar New Year and explain that they will learn about another culture's traditions.

During Reading Activities:

1. Opening Hook: Ask students to share a tradition they enjoy with their family.
2. Interactive Reading: Pause to discuss illustrations and cultural details.
3. Student Participation: Invite predictions about what will happen next based on context clues.
4. Comprehension Checks: Ask "What tradition did Alex share?" and "How did her friend react?"

Post-Reading Extension:

1. Core Activity: Students choose a family tradition, write a short narrative explaining it, and illustrate their story.
2. Wrap-Up Discussion: Share stories in small groups or whole class.
3. Assessment Opportunities: Collect narratives and illustrations; assess for detail, structure, and effort.

Common Core Standards Alignment

Reading: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7

Writing: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.5

Speaking & Listening: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.4

Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.6

Cross-Curricular: NCSS Standards for Social Studies – Culture

Evidence of Standard Mastery: Students' narratives clearly explain a tradition, include descriptive details, and reflect cultural awareness.

Differentiation Strategies

For English Language Learners: Provide sentence stems, bilingual word banks, and visual aids.

For Students with Special Needs: Offer graphic organizers, reduce writing load by allowing dictation, and use adaptive tools.

For Advanced Learners: Encourage research into another culture's traditions and create comparative essays.

For Struggling Readers: Pair with a peer for reading support, offer audio versions of the book, and simplify writing expectations.

Leveling Guide

Scaling DOWN for Younger Students (K-2): Focus on oral storytelling with simple drawings; use fewer vocabulary terms.

Scaling UP for Older Students (3-5): Require multi-paragraph narratives with comparisons between cultures; add research component.

Extension Activities

Same-Day: Create a zodiac animal banner for the classroom.

Week-Long: Research and present another Lunar New Year tradition from a different country.

Cross-Curricular: In math, create a class graph of zodiac signs; in music, explore traditional Lunar New Year music.

Parent Involvement & Home Support

Take-Home Information: Send a note explaining that students are learning about traditions and will be sharing their own.

Home Extension: Families can cook a traditional dish together or create a family banner for display at home.

Assessment & Documentation

Formative: Observe participation and note comprehension during discussion.

Summative: Evaluate narratives for clarity, detail, and organization using a rubric.

Documentation: Photograph completed banners and compile into a digital class scrapbook.

Troubleshooting & Tips

Common Challenges: Some students may be unfamiliar with family traditions; allow flexibility for them to invent a tradition.

Adam's Pro Tips: Keep activities hands-on to maintain engagement; model sharing your own tradition first.

Resource Alternatives: If the book is unavailable, choose another picture book highlighting cultural traditions.

Multimodal Magic: Classroom Activities for Diverse Picture Books

This resource pack is designed to help elementary teachers, librarians, and homeschool parents integrate diverse picture books into multimodal, culturally rich lessons. These activities are inspired by author-illustrator Benson Shum's books and interview insights, and they connect literacy with research, art, music, and social-emotional learning.

1. Research Project Template

Use this template to guide students in fact-finding missions inspired by picture books like **Sloth Went**. Encourage them to validate story elements and discover new information.

Topic: _____

Book Title: _____

Research Focus Area (circle one): Habitat | Diet | Predators | Cultural Aspect | Other

What the Book Shows:

What My Research Found:

Sources Used:

Fun Fact Not in the Story:

2. Culture Quilt Instructions

After reading a culturally rich picture book like **Alex's Good Fortune**, invite students to share a personal or researched tradition.

Step-by-Step:

1. Give each student a square of paper (8x8 inches).
2. On the square, students draw or write about a tradition.
3. Compile all squares into a large 'quilt' on a bulletin board or wall.
4. Discuss similarities and differences between traditions.

Extension: Scan each square and create a digital version of the culture quilt for sharing with families.

3. Visual Literacy Prompt Cards

Use these cards to help students 'read' illustrations as deeply as they read text. These prompts are especially effective for English language learners.

Prompts:

- What is the character feeling? How can you tell?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What details tell you the time of day or year?
- Can you find something in the picture that the words don't mention?
- How might another character see this scene differently?

4. Perspective Flip Writing

Inspired by *Anzu the Great Kaiju*, this activity encourages empathy and creative thinking.

Instructions:

1. Choose a secondary character from the story.
2. Rewrite (or re-draw) the events from their point of view.
3. Share with the class and compare interpretations.

5. Lion Dance Teamwork Challenge

Inspired by *We Are Lion Dancers*, this challenge fosters collaboration, rhythm, and fun.

Instructions:

1. Pair students and give them a large blanket or fabric.
2. One student is the 'front' and one is the 'back' of the lion.
3. Move together across the classroom without letting go.
4. Add a rhythm (drum beat, clapping) for students to match as they move.
5. Reflect on what made the teamwork successful.

Created by Adam Lehrhaupt – For more creative, standards-aligned teaching resources, visit adamlehrhaupt.com