

***Circles of Hope* Mini-Unit Plan**

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Designer:

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Mini-Unit Introduction:

This mini unit is designed for a second grade class in a small rural public elementary school.

Student goals: Exposure to new and diverse cultures and experiences; to understand how children/people around the globe are similar and different from them.

Teacher goals: To expose my students to global cultures/traditions and experiences through the use of children's literature.

- How can I use children's literature to broaden the global experiences my students are exposed to?
- What connections can we make using quality multicultural children's literature between my student's lives and experiences with those of children from other races, cultures, genders, etc.?

Contextual Information:

Circles of Hope: Karen Lynn Williams is the author and the illustrator is Linda Saport.

Publisher: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2005

Summary: Young Facile wants to plant a tree in honor of his new baby sister but he faces many obstacles. A goat eats the first seed, the second seed is washed away in a storm, and another is burnt by scrub fire. This story of determination, faith and love introduces the reader to the realities of rural life in the mountains of Haiti.

Genre: Realistic fiction picture book

Media: charcoal and pastel

Geographical region: mountains of Haiti, present day

Cultural themes: Family traditions, symbolism of trees and circles, hope in adversity, perseverance, and importance of agriculture

Author background: Karen Lynn Williams was born in Connecticut and received her master's degree in deaf education. She has lived in Africa and in Haiti.

Sources of inspiration for the author: While living in Haiti, Karen Lynn Williams took a walk with a friend. As they climbed higher into the mountains, they saw several stone structures in the distance made of sun-bleached stone. As they guessed what the round structures might be, this gave Williams the idea for *Circles of Hope*.

Illustrator background: Linda Saport lives in Boulder, Colorado.

Contextual Information References:

Williams, K.L. (2013). *Biography of Karen Lynn Williams*. Retrieved from <http://www.karenlynnwilliams.com/>

Scholastic. (2015). *Biography of Linda Saport*. Retrieved from <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/contributor/linda-saport>

Learning Experiences:

My students come predominately from a low socio-economic, small, rural, agricultural community. They have very limited global knowledge and/or experiences from which to build a knowledge base and appreciation of children and people from other cultures. Having grown up in a rich, agricultural community, they do have a very broad knowledge base of agriculture and the importance of sustainability. Many of my students' families live off of the land on which they live. The book *Circles of Hope* lends itself beautifully to making connections between their lives and other children's lives and experiences in Haiti. This book has so many possible avenues from which to draw from and I am choosing to capture them all under the "umbrella" of the theme of "connections":

Connections to:

- planting and agriculture
- family traditions
- absent parents
- feeling of protection and security
- the global spirit of hope.

This book is also a wonderful mentor text to teach/discuss the following literary elements:

- prediction
- cause and effect
- inferring

Learning Experience 1: CONNECTIONS: Planting/trees/agriculture: 2-3 days

To introduce the story, begin by creating an anchor chart entitled "What Do Trees (and plants) Need to Grow?" Brainstorm with the children and list all of their ideas. Discuss what would happen if some of the criteria they contribute was not available? For example, what if there was no rich soil? No water? Etc.

Next, create another anchor chart entitled "The Importance of Trees (and plants)" Brainstorm with the children and list all of their ideas.

"Today we are going to read a story that is set in the country of Haiti."

Show them a map of Haiti and discuss where it is located; paying attention to its proximity to the equator and what that means for its growing climate.



Read the first paragraph of the Author's Note at the end of the story and discuss the geography of Haiti as the "land of many mountains" and share this photo:



Have the children think about, share and discuss what planting might be like in such a region. Show the front matter of the book: these two pages foreshadow the difficulty Facile will face when planting in the mountainous terrain.

Visual Thinking Strategies: Introduce the title page of "Circles of Hope" to the children:

- What is going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- From that, what more can you find/see?

Vocabulary: Although there is a glossary at the end of the book that explains the meanings of the Haitian Creole words (combining elements of several African languages and French) many of the words peppered throughout the story can be learned through the use of context clues. Key words to include in discussion:

- *Espere*-hope
- *Kandelab*-a type of cactus used in Haiti to make fences
- *Tikado*- a small gift
- *Timoun*-child

- *Tonton*-uncle or grandfather

Read the story to the students. Then read the last two paragraphs of the Author's Notes and discuss with children within the context of the story.

- Why are trees important?
- Why is Facile so determined to plant the mango tree for his sister?
- What hardships does he face in trying to do so?

Connections:

- How is Facile's life similar to your own?
- Has anything that happened to Facile ever happened to you?
- What would you have decided to do after each set back?

Critical Thinking:

- What advice would you give to Facile for him to be successful?
- Brainstorm with a partner or in a small group. Be prepared to share your ideas.

Learning Experience 1 References:

World Atlas. (2015). *Haiti*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/caribb/ht.htm>

National Geographic. (2015). *Trailblazing Haiti: Scouting the country's first pro-mountain biking race – part 3*. Retrieved from <http://adventureblog.nationalgeographic.com/2012/06/29/trailblazing-haiti-scouting-the-countrys-first-pro-mountain-biking-race-part-3/>

Learning Experience 2: CONNECTIONS: The Symbolic Meaning of the Tree and Circle: 2-3 days

In the story, the father tells Facile that "a strong tree protects its *timoun* (child)." In Haitian culture, it is tradition that when a child is born, the child's umbilical cord is planted in the earth with the seed from a fruit tree. When the tree grows, the tree was seen as a guardian of the child.

The circle is seen as a representation of unity, wholeness and infinity. It is seen as a protective symbol, keeping safe that which is contained inside.

This book is rich and full of the circular symbol of protection and guardianship both in the obvious story line of Facile placing the circles of "protection and hope" around his sister's mango tree, but also in the illustrations throughout the story.

Discuss the concept of the "circle" in the story. Why might they be considered representations of protection and guardianship? Hope?

Look critically throughout the book at the illustrations. Highlight the use of circles, arcs and arches. Notice how the illustrator used gentle, muted lines and curves in the illustrations.

- Why do you think the illustrator used that style to create the illustrations? Do the children notice the sun/moon circle on every page?
- Do they notice the gentle lines and slopes that the illustrator used to create the characters?
- What feelings do the circles and arcs give you in/for the story?

Story Theatre: Warm Up by encouraging children to use their bodies to make/become circles, individually, with partners and as a group. These can be big circles, small circles, skinny circles, fat circles, oblong circles, etc. Next, divide the story into 3-4 page sections and group the children. Have children dramatize *Circles of Hope*.

Learning Experience 3: CONNECTIONS: Family Traditions and feelings of hope, protection and security: 1 day

Discuss the images of the tree as protection for children in Haiti, the stones as protection and "circles of hope".

- What is it that the people/children of Haiti hope for? Why?
- What do you hope for?
- What is important for you to protect or to be protected by someone?

Have the children design a mural with several trees indigenous to the geographical area in which they live. Give each child several construction paper cut out "stones" and have them write their answers to the above questions on them. Surround the trees on the mural with these protective stones.

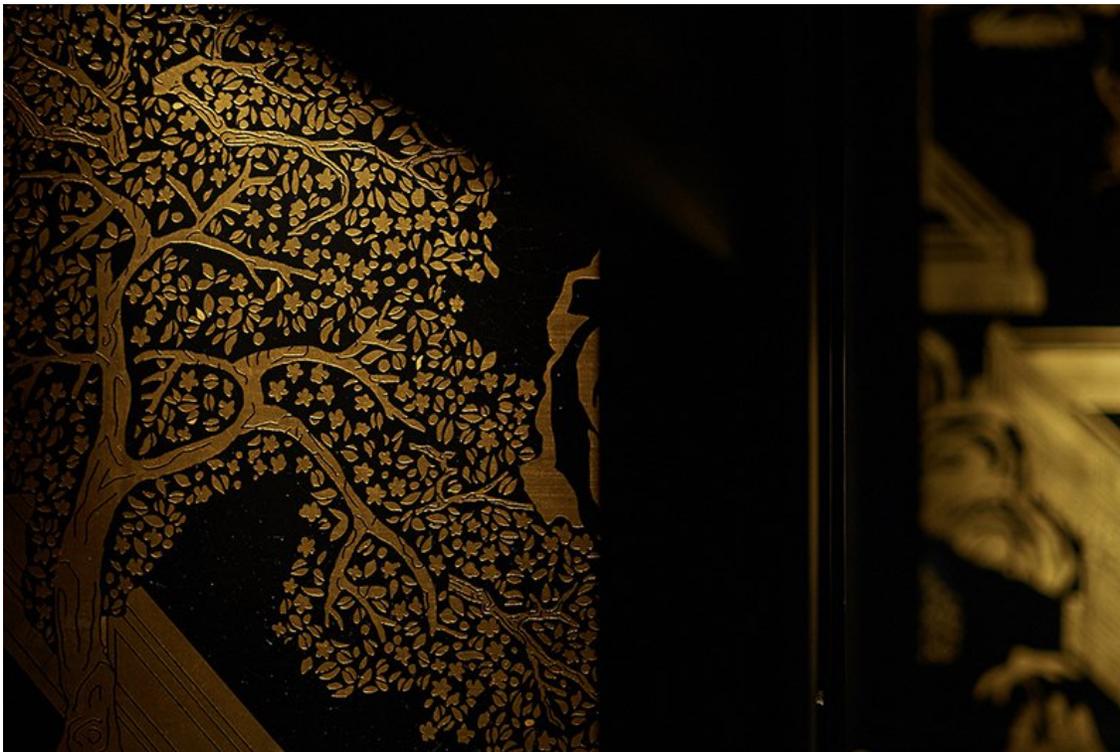
Writing Extension: Children write about what they wrote on their stones and why they chose those words/ideas.

Extension: Instead of working the mural and stones on paper, create them on fabric and design a quilt showing the children's circles of hope.

Extension: Continue the theme of tree-related cultural traditions by introducing the Chinese New Year Wishing Tree Tradition:

The Chinese New Year Lam Tsuen Wishing Trees tradition

(www.hakkasan.com)



Chinese New Year is one of the most significant and important festivals in the Chinese calendar. Celebrations traditionally run from the last day of

the last month (known as Chinese New Year's Eve) to the Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the first month.

Within China, traditions and customs vary widely depending on region. Typically, most people begin festivities on the Chinese New Year's Eve with a family-oriented dinner, often bringing together family members who work away from home for a reunion. It is also customary for families to thoroughly clean the house, sweeping away ill-fortune and bad luck to make way for incoming good luck.

The Chinese New Year tradition of the wishing tree arguably began hundreds of years ago in Lam Tsuen, Hong Kong. During Chinese New Year, villagers would travel for miles to visit the sacred Lam Tsuen Wishing Trees, two ancient banyan trees situated near the Tin Hau Temple in Fong Ma Po village, one of the 23 traditional Chinese villages that make up Lam Tsuen.

It is believed that the wishing custom originated from fishermen who would throw paper josses made from bamboo into every Tai Pak Kung (earth god) tree on their way into the New Territories of Hong Kong to bring them good luck and protection.

Historically, people would burn joss sticks before writing their wishes down, tying it to a small orange or kumquat, and then throwing the wish up to hang in the branches of the trees. It was believed that if the wish successfully hung onto one of the branches, the person's wish would come true. The higher the branch the wish landed on, the more likely it would be for the person's hopes to be fulfilled.

Although people are now discouraged from throwing their wishes up into the trees, tourists and locals still make the journey to the small village every year to tie their wishes onto wooden support beams, imitation trees or racks that surround the original wishing trees.

Interdisciplinary Opportunities:

- Science: Planting, agriculture, sustainability, erosion, indigenous plants/trees
- Writing: Compare/contrast
- Theatre/drama: Story interpretation

- Social Studies: Maps, countries

Related Picture Books:

Gonzalez, M.C. (2014). *Call me tree / Llamame arbol*. New York: Children's Book Press.

Cherry, L. (1990) *The Great Kapok tree: A tale of the Amazon rain forest*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Seuss. (1971). *The Lorax*. New York: Random House Books for Young Readers.

Thong, R. (2006). *The Wishing tree*. New York: Shen's Books.

Learning Experience 3 References:

Mama Lisa's World. (n.d.) *Kid songs and rhymes of Haiti*. Retrieved from <http://www.mamalisa.com/?p=768&t=ec&c=114>

Hakkasan. (2015). *Chinese new year wishing trees tradition*. Retrieved from <http://hakkasan.com/blog/chinese-new-year-lam-tsuen-wishing-trees-tradition/>

Summative Learning Experience: CONNECTION: Agriculture and Sustainability: 1 – 2 days

Share the Haitian Tree Project with students. Have the children research fruit trees that are indigenous to their own area. Find seeds from their findings and plant in large pots (or outside if feasible). Children can search for stones outside to create circles of hope around their seeds. Encourage children to bring their fruit trees home once seedlings have started growing.

Doors to the World: Global Children's Literature for Critical Multicultural Literacies
Summer Institute, July 2015 / www.doors2world.umass.edu

Using a Venn diagram, brainstorm with the children ways in which Facile and his life are the same and different from theirs. Children can then use that information to write compare/contrast paragraphs.

Summative Learning Experience References:

United Press International. (2012). *Deforestation forces Haitians to reprioritize palm tree traditions*. Retrieved from http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2012/06/26/Deforestation-forces-Haitians-to-reprioritize-palm-tree-traditions/5171340744906/

The Haiti Tree Project. (n.d.) *The Haiti tree project*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehaititreeproject.org/>

Standards:

Common Core ELA:

Reading and Literature: RL.2.1 - 2.5, R.L.2.7, R.L.2.10

Writing: W.2.4, W.2.7

Speaking and Listening: S.L.2.1, S.L. 2.2, S.L.2.4

Language: L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.3, L.2.4

Science:

Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems

Earth's Surface System