

Hands Around the Library Mini-Unit Plan

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Designer:

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Mini-Unit Introduction:

This unit is designed for a mixed 2nd/3rd grade classroom at the Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School. The school's charter includes integrating arts in education, developing individual children's voices and creating an interactive community between families and school staff and the local community.

Student goals:

- To introduce students to an important occurrence in a country about which they know very little
- To use knowledge from the above as a stepping-stone to see some similarities and differences between their school/family culture and what they learn about Egypt
- To carefully read pictures as well as text to develop their comprehension skills
- To practice a process of "inquiry" to learn more about local resources (i.e. local libraries)
- To discover if there are any unfair practices in their school environment that they would like to see changed, and to figure out a way to communicate their ideas with others in the school.

Teacher goals:

- To learn how to use Visual Thinking Strategies
- To facilitate an "inquiry" process with students, the result of which will have immediate practical relevance in their lives.

Contextual Information:

Hands Around the Library: Susan Roth and Kathy Leggett Abouraya wrote the book and Susan Roth also illustrated.

Publisher: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2012

Summary: The book takes place in the library in Alexandria, Egypt. The library is a symbol of Egypt, as a leader in the acquisition of knowledge for millennia, and as a symbol of freedom of thought. It was built on the site of an ancient library that held much of the wisdom of the world 1500 years ago and earlier.

The narrator is a library worker who joins the protests of January 2011. She describes how a multitude of angry protestors approached the library. Dr. Ismail Serageldin, the library's director, steps outside the library to remind the protestors of the library's frailty and of its treasures. One by one, young people join him in creating a human chain around the building to protect it from some of the angry protestors. They unfurl a giant Egyptian flag on its steps and their joy is contagious.

Background material at the end of the book includes information about the artwork and graphic motifs in the book, the history of the library, protest-sign translations and photographs of the recent events in Egypt.

Hands Around the Library has been translated into Arabic and published in Arabic by the *Bibliotheca Alexandrina* (The Alexandria Library), Alexandria, Egypt.

Genre: Non-fiction

Geographical region: Egypt, January 2011

Contemporary regional context: Arab Spring came as a surprise to many people in the United States. In many countries of North Africa and the Middle East (known as "The Arab League"), there were a series of long-standing, repressive regimes. At the end of 2010, popular uprisings suddenly sprang up against many of the repressive regimes in the Arab League. The uprisings (both nonviolent and violent protests) were sparked in Tunisia, when a man, feeling hopeless, immolated himself (set himself on fire) in public.

The uprising was publicized using social media, and massive protests soon spread through Egypt, Libya, Yemen, (where the regimes were changed), Bahrain, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Sudan. Smaller protests occurred in other nearby countries. In Egypt in particular, Hosni Mubarak had been ruling for 30 years, with many allegations of corruption, and he was forced to leave power due to the public protests.

During Arab Spring, while there was consensus (agreement) about the problems in each country (i.e. repression of ideas, unemployment and poverty, corruption in government officials), there was not consensus on a new type of government (i.e. how to fix the problems). So the problems are not all fixed. For example, due to a power vacuum when a leader stepped down, sometimes undemocratic forces tried to take power. Thus, Arab Spring might be seen as a catalyst (starting point) for ongoing change, but the final outcome is yet to be seen.

Media: Collage of paper (colored and patterned), yarn and photographs

Cultural themes: Preservation of history, love and pursuit of knowledge, cultural/historical pride, democratic activism

Author/Illustrator backgrounds: Susan Roth and Kathy Leggett Abouraya wrote the book together. This is Kathy Leggett Abouraya's first book (although she is a journalist). Susan is an author/illustrator of 45 books.

In 2009, Susan Roth and Kathy Leggett Abouraya traveled to Egypt and visited Alexandria, the home of Kathy Leggett Abouraya's husband. They

were so awed by the library in Alexandria, built on the site of a world famous ancient library, that they decided to write a children's book about the two Alexandria libraries. While they were still writing the book, protests in Egypt (part of what was known as Arab Spring) broke out. When they heard about the way the library was protected from violence by the people of Alexandria, they changed the story they were writing to be about the way the library was saved.

Susan Roth illustrated the book. She *only* uses collage: no pencils, pens, or paints – only paper and fabrics. She shapes the materials using scissors or ripping, and then glues them together. In this book, as in much Egyptian art, bright primary colors and geometrical patterns are used in the collages.

Contextual Information References:

Wikipedia. (2015). *Arab spring*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring

About News. (2015). *Definition of the Arab spring*. Retrieved from <http://middleeast.about.com/od/humanrightsdemocracy/a/Definition-Of-The-Arab-Spring.htm>

Children's Literature. (2015). *Karen Leggett Abouraya*. Retrieved from <http://childrenslit.com/authorillustrator-bookings-book-sales/author-and-illustrator-list/karen-leggett-abouraya/>

Roth, S. (2014). *Susan L. Roth*. Retrieved from <http://www.susanlroth.com/index.htm>

Hands Around the Library. (2105). *About the book*. Retrieved from <http://www.handsaroundthelibrary.com/about>

ARAMCO World. (1986.) *Tentmakers of Cairo*. Retrieved from <https://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/198606/tentmakers.of.cairo.htm>

Learning Experiences:

This is for a mixed 2nd/3rd grade classroom. In social studies, the children study the Underground Railroad, and local Native American tribes, and a little bit about the civil rights movement. They see instances of injustice, and actions against injustice. It would enrich their experience to see another country in which people stood up against injustice to make a change, and were successful.

The children have very little information about the Middle East. However, we live in a culture where they may have heard about "Arab terrorists", as it is frequently mentioned in the news, or used as a reason for tighter security measures in many places. This book about Egypt is one example in which to see Arabs in their own country, as concerned citizens struggling for freedom. It also affords children an opportunity to see a struggle for justice successfully achieved in a present day setting.

Related texts:

Winter, J. (2005). *The Librarian of Basra: A true story from Iraq*. New York: HMH Books for Young Readers.

Stamaty, M.A. (2010). *Alia's mission: Saving the books of Iraq*. Decorah, IA: Dragonfly Books.

Family, Community and Current Event/People Connections:

Children can explore libraries in their own communities. Children can explore issues of fairness and unfairness in their school, and take action about it.

For older children (middle school and above), relate this book to the many current event demonstrations over the killing of African Americans, often by police officers. Look at the successes and changes brought about by the Black Lives Matter movement.

- What is similar in the Arab Spring protests in Alexandria (and perhaps Cairo) and the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States?
- What is different?

Learning Experience 1: Present the book *Hands Around the Library*: 40 minutes

Let children know that this is a true story that took place in Egypt a few years ago. Point out the title. Demonstrate and discuss how the cover has a "wrap around" style (It's one continuous picture instead of two pictures). Then attend to the picture (on the cover) using the following Visual Thinking Strategies:

- "What's going on in this picture?" (Not – "What do you see in this picture?" The latter often results in students making lists of what is depicted. The wording . . . urges them to probe for meaning.)
- "What do you see that makes you say that?" (Not – "Why do you say that?" "What do you see that makes you say that?" keeps the discussion anchored in the image. It is also less daunting; asking "Why?" implies that the student should provide motives, not evidence, for an opinion.)
- "What else can you find?" (This question must be asked frequently—not just when no hands are in the air—in order to make the point that there is usually more to be seen and talked about than students first think. This question may also be used when you think students have dwelled on a topic for long enough and you want them to return to searching.)

Eventually read from the back material in the book: "All around the outside of the library are 4000 blocks of granite. Each stone is carved with a letter or sign from 500 different alphabets!"

Ask the questions provided to initiate an active process of discovery and probing on the part of the students.

Listen carefully to and acknowledge every answer by looking with the students at the image, pointing to those details mentioned, and paraphrasing what students say.

Facilitate the discussion as it progresses, linking various converging and diverging opinions and helping students to synthesize a variety of viewpoints.

Encourage further inquiry, keeping the process open-ended and asking students to stretch and search for information beyond what they know."

After you have explored the cover, do a picture walk through. Choose 3 or 4 pictures that seem important to you to focus the Visual Thinking Strategies technique described above.

End by recording some predictions that they make about the story.

At another time, re-read the predictions previously made about the book, then read the book, *Hands Around the Library*. Check: What new things did they learn or notice? Take a few comments. Then read "About the graphic leit motifs" at the next to the last page of the book. Model finding a letter or symbol from the picture of the library's wall on the endpapers and making that shape with your body for children to see. Have some volunteers come close to the book to choose a letter in some language. Have them draw the shapes in the air or make shapes with their bodies to share them with other students.

Learning Experience 1 Reference:

Housen, A. & Yenawine, P. (2000). *Visual thinking strategies: Understanding the basics*. New York: Visual Understanding in Education.

Learning Experience 2: Book performance: 1 hour 15 minutes

Part 1: 20 minutes

Today, we will do some performances based on the book.

"First we will do a warm up exercise called Imagination Ball.

Object of the Game: To pass an imaginary ball around the circle, maintaining a consistent size, shape and weight of the ball.

How to play: Facilitator stands in the center of a circle and lifts up an imaginary ball – the size of a basketball—for participants to see. Give them moment to see the ball. Tell them the object of the game.

I coach my students by displaying the ball in front of them and saying, "I'm holding an imaginary ball. Can you see it? I'm holding the two sides. Can you imagine the top and the bottom? If not, look closer. Challenge yourself. Use your imagination. It has weight. It has mass and volume/size." If they're still not buying it, I cajole them further. "I'm not crazy. I know there's no ball here! My job is to make it real. Acting is believing. We're going to pass this ball around the circle as actors, pretending the ball is absolutely real."

Explain the challenge of this exercise is to keep the ball a consistent size – to NOT allow it to get as big as a beach ball, or as small as a softball. Demonstrate the changing sizes as you instruct them.

Begin to pass the ball, handing it from person to person, around the circle.

COACHING NOTE: If one person is holding the top and bottom, instruct the next person to take hold of the two sides of the ball.

Side coaching is helpful to keep the ball visible and consistent. Point out moments when the ball is particularly clear. Note when the ball gets larger, or smaller. Encourage the players to take their time to imagine and feel the weight of the ball.

Once the group is able to hand the ball from person to person around the circle maintaining focus and size, try incorporating simple passes – a chest pass or a bounce pass (or a roll or an arch pass). As you introduce each type of pass, discuss the basic physics of the move. Encourage them to notice the amount of force used in the pass, in order to judge how quickly the ball will travel. Perhaps pass the ball around from person to person, trying different throws.

COACHING NOTE: An important key to this ball game is eye contact. Encourage the students to be intentional in their actions, and make it clear to whom they are passing the ball.

At the end, take some time to ask students what they noticed about the activity: e.g. how it felt, what they had to do to succeed at the activity.

Part 2: 20 minutes

Stand with students in a semicircle to create a "front area"/"staging area". Show children the endpaper of the book. Hold the picture open to the children. Tell them: we are going to make a still picture with our bodies of this picture. Point to one person in the picture. Ask a volunteer to make the shape of that person in the front area and freeze in that shape. ("Make sure it is a shape you can hold for a few minutes"). Then ask another volunteer to pick another person and join the first person. Continue asking for volunteers until the picture is complete. If more children want to join in, have some of them represent the wall in the background.

Take some comments about how it felt to be part of the picture or to look at the picture.

Part 3: 35 minutes

Divide the class into groups of three's or four's. Divide the twelve double pages of the book as evenly as possible (e.g. if there are 24 children, in groups of four, each group will get 2 pages). Tell each group they will be using their bodies to make their pictures for the rest of the group. They will have 15 minutes to plan and practice what they are going to do, and then everyone will gather to show each other the book.

Walk around as children are planning to help or comment or question as you see a need.

Clap a pattern, or signal in some way for the group to gather as a whole. Stand in a line in order of the pages in the book, so each group will be ready to go when it is their turn. Everyone enters from the left, and exits to the right, just like in a book.

Let students know that they will enter and make their picture, hold it for 3 seconds, make their next picture, hold it for 3 seconds, etc. and then exit. Tell them that as the students make their picture, the teacher will narrate the text for that picture. The audience is silently watching, the

only sound will be the narration, or any sounds that might be from the actors in the picture.

Begin the performance.

End with asking for comments about what stayed with them from the pictures that their fellow students made. Ask if any students made some connections with their fellow performers.

Learning Experience 2 Reference:

Hellweg, P. K. (2014). *Actively engaged: Theater games as a dynamic teaching tool in the classroom*. Retrieved from <http://www.enchantedcircletheater.com/teacher-resource/products-and-resources/actively-engaged-a-dynamic-tool-for-classroom-use/>

Learning Experience 3: Creating a tent covering: 1 hour 15 minutes

NOTE: This activity will take a lot of preparation before and afterwards. Before hand, buying and cutting fabric squares and shapes. Afterward, sewing or gluing them on to a larger piece of fabric, and figuring out how to drape it over a frame (which you have bought or constructed), or hang it in a corner of your classroom.

Explore some the Egyptian geometric designs found in building designs, tents and fabrics in Egypt. Prepare before-hand multiple (simple) shapes cut from felt in bright primary colors: circles, and circles cut into quarters to make fans, squares, and squares cut in half to make triangles, or squares cut in half another way to make rectangles, parallelograms to make long diamonds, isosoles triangles (long sided triangles), etc.

20 minutes: Read some of the back matter of the book. Alexandria Then and Now: Ancient Library, Modern Library, and The January 25, 2011 Revolution. Project a picture of the next page onto the wall to enlarge it. Take a close look at the squares of patterns lining the top and the bottom

of the page, using VTS questions with the group (See fuller explanation in experience #1, or the article cited below it): What is going on? What do you see that makes you say that? What else do you notice? See if patterns or symmetry is pointed out . . . It will help you think about how to model your example later). Turn the page and project that image as well.* Continue with the VTS questions. Afterwards read the explanation "About the graphic leit motifs: at the bottom of the page.

20 minutes:

Remind children that the library was a safe place for the people in Alexandria Egypt to find books, think thoughts, explore ideas, talk with each other and share their thoughts. Libraries in our country work in some of the same ways. In Egypt, designs on buildings and tents are often beautiful and colorful and mathematical – using lots of shapes and bright colors. In our classroom we can make a safe space for reading and thinking, creating a small tent to remind us of some of the things we learned in this book about the library in Alexandria Egypt.

I have some materials for us. Bring out some of the shapes you have prepared. Ask children if they know the names of any of the shapes. Accept all names. Have a sheet with a picture of the shape, and name or names of the shapes underneath to create a common language in the class.

You will be making squares that I will put together to make a covering for a tent in our room. Here's how one square might look.

Next take a large square and several small shapes, and talk about how you might make a pattern/design with the shapes. Plan first, then once you like your plan, glue it down. (Ask for help or suggestions from your class as you like).

You will each get a square, then plan a design, and when you are satisfied, glue it together. When you finish one square, you can make another.

35 minutes:

Pass out large squares to each child and have them go to areas which have many smaller shapes and glue (and possibly glue spreaders) in order to make their own felt squares.

Collect the squares and prepare a tent covering and tent for your classroom: Ask for help from parents if possible.

Art Extension: Susan Roth has a paper doll collage project. Students/children from all are invited to make a paper doll self-portrait and send them to her as symbols for the good will of today's children to work for peace. She will use them on her website, in art exhibitions or as gifts to children who live very far from each other.

Learning Experience 3 Reference:

Roth, S. (2013). *Let's hold hands!* Retrieved from <http://www.susanroth.com/letsholdhands/index.htm>

Summative Learning Experience:

Two options are presented for students to explore. 1) Find an issue that students want to change in the school and figure out how to communicate it to others in the school. Or 2) find out about your local libraries. Learn more about how they came to be and the function that they serve for the community.

Option 1: 1 hour 15 minutes, possibly another session needed to complete the work.

This is a book about what many people in one country did to make changes to things that were unfair in their country, and at the same time, still protect what was important for them. In the last activity, we will be exploring issues in the children's own school that may feel unfair.

Part 1: 20 minutes:

In our own school, sometimes there are things that feel unfair and need to change. Has anything unfair happened to you?

Brainstorm: Has anyone ever felt they were treated unfairly? Where was it? Classroom? Playground? Lunch? In a sentence or 2, what happened?

Teacher records all children's thoughts and ideas.

Asks children if there are any similar issues that kids can link into a bigger issue? If there are similar issues, teacher can mark them by colors. Or is there a single issue that best shows the problem many children are facing?

Choose a central theme or an issue together.

Part 2: 20 minutes

Talk about why it's important to let other people know what you think. Can change happen if people don't take any action to make some change happen? Ask how people in the Egypt, in the story, took an action to make change happen. What must it have been like to be the first person to step forward to join the director of the library? How it felt when other people joined in?

Think about how they, students, can let other people in the school know what they want to change: Record another brainstorming list:

Prompting questions, if needed:

Could they perform examples of the problem and of a solution at a school assembly? Can they make posters to place around the school and make an announcement about it at a school assembly? Can they write letters to the principal or to other classrooms?

Part 3: 35 minutes: Have children choose how they would like to express their desires for change, and make small groups. Children can then work on their projects.

After 25 minutes, they can come back and share what they have done so far.

If they need more time, make another time for the children to finish their work.

Option 2: This activity would take place on different occasions over a several week period.

The culminating Inquiry activity could be to learn more about the libraries in the children's communities. As I work in a school where people come from different towns, different libraries would be represented.

Part 1: 20 minutes - Brainstorm

Discuss:

- What do we know about the libraries in our towns?
- What questions do we have about our libraries? (Perhaps cluster some of the questions).
- How old are they? Who started the library?
- Who gets the books in the library, and who pays for the books in the library?
- Can we ask for a book for the library to get? What can we do if we find a book in the library that we find hurtful in some way?
- What other activities, other than getting out books, happen in the library?
- How can we support our library?

Part 2: 25 minutes (a different time than Part 1)

Assign Homework to do with parents or friends

Project onto the wall, or show a poster, with the various questions about libraries that the class generated. Have children choose a question that they would like to research. Talk about where there are resources to answer their questions. They can visit the library and ask. They can call the library. They can look on the Internet.

Talk about asking an interview question. How it is their job to listen. What if people tell them something that leads to a different question? How good is that? Go with it.

Model "Interviewing". Invite a person up who you interview using a simple question, such as "what do they like to do in their free time?" Model how one question might lead to another question. Have students pair up, and interview each other about what they like to do in their free time. See if they can find another question to ask their partner. (Then

switch). Re-form into a circle, and have some students share what new questions came up for them.

Remind children that when they ask their questions about the library, they should use their good listening strategies, and to ask another question if they think of one.

Part 3: 30 minutes (A different time than Part 2)

Children take turns sharing what they learned from their research question/s.

Talk about next steps. With whom might they like to share this information?

How would they like to share the information? They can make posters, write a report, and make a performance. Ask children to think about what they'd like to do, and let them know that they will make a decision in the next writing workshop time.

Part 4: IA different time than Part 3)

Writing workshop time Mini lesson. Remind children that they will be finding a way to share the information about their library research. Have children pick a form for their research. Tell them that they will use this time to prepare. Model how you might choose to prepare information from a question.

When they come back at the end of writing workshop, have the children decide with whom and when they'd like to share their projects. Record their ideas.

Part 5. IA different time than Part 4)

Practice presenting. Present in front of each other in preparation for their larger preparation.

Standards:

Common Core ELA:

READING: LITERATURE:

Key Ideas and details

RL 3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

READING: LITERATURE

Integration of knowledge and ideas

RL 3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting)

READING: INFORMATIONAL:

Craft and Structure

RI 3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE:

Comprehension and Collaboration: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL 3.1a Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.

SL 3.1d Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

SL 3.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.