

Asia Scope and Sequence for English

Secondary Units of Work

Engaging young Australians with Asia



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These Units of Work are drawn from *Asia Scope and Sequence for English* which can be downloaded from the website: http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public_html/scope_sequence.htm.

Originally designed to be part of the Scope and Sequence document, they have been compiled in this format as well to assist the planning of teachers in secondary schools.

Level

Unit of Work

Lower Secondary

Beyond the River ✓
Art as a Bridge between Cultures
Poetry into Performance

Middle Secondary

Our Region, Our Home
Floating Lives (Film Festival)
Japan Diary – My Double Journal

Stage of Schooling: Lower Secondary

Learning Focus: Speaking and Listening (*Asia Scope and Sequence for English*, p. 24)

Students discuss ideas and information and present arguments sustained by supporting details and evidence on topics that explore the common and distinguishing elements of their own and other cultures. They:

- engage in group discussions about topical issues arising from their study of Asia and persuade others to a particular point of view
- debate topics which highlight differing cultural views on an issue.

Texts/Resources

The River (Curriculum Corporation, 2001)

Overview

Children's books are an excellent resource to use with older students. This unit requires students to consider and discuss the power of picture books to influence perceptions of culture and position audiences in particular ways. Students are involved in reading, viewing, writing, speaking and listening throughout the unit, but the focus is on debate and discussion, using written texts as a starting point.

Duration

Depending on how much of the unit is attempted, these activities would take approximately one to two weeks.

Activities

Introductory Activity: Old Favourites

1. Ask students to form small groups and discuss the picture books they enjoyed as young children, or indeed, still enjoy. Give them five minutes to come up with a shortlist of five books.
2. Have the groups share their shortlists with the class, comparing them and identifying any common features.
3. Through further discussion, consider how many of the picture books are about people from places other than Australia, or about different places or cultures. It may be useful to introduce the concept of books as providing a mirror to students' own cultures or a window to other cultures.
4. Ask students to work in their groups again to think about why they shortlisted certain books. Are any of these books about different places or cultures?
5. Introduce *The River* as an example of a children's picture book about a particular culture. Ask students to look at the front cover to deduce in which culture or country the story might be set and what it might be about. Also ask students whether they think the book is set in the past or the present, or in the city or the country based on the cover illustrations.

Activity One: Reading *The River*

1. Read *The River* aloud to the class. Use your voice to emphasise the contrast between the parts of the story set in urban, contemporary China and those set in rural, traditional China.

2. Use some of the following questions as the basis for class discussion. Students might discuss their answers to these questions in pairs or small groups prior to class discussion.

- Where are the two parts of the story set?
- At what time do the two parts of the story take place?
- Who are the two main characters?
- What is their relationship?
- What is the purpose of Xian's quest?
- What does the treasure turn out to be?
- What does Hong do as a result of reading Ming's book?
- How do the illustrations and text work together to create meaning? (Do they match? Are they different? How do they complement each other?)
- Did you enjoy the story? Why or why not?
- Which elements of the book, if any, are particularly Chinese?
- Which elements of the book, if any, are universal? Could people from many cultures relate to them? (Students may suggest receiving something that causes a change in their life, finding out about a mysterious story, going on a dangerous journey, keeping a treasure safe and experiencing feelings such as fear or sadness.)
- How do you feel about hearing or reading stories that are set in different countries or about different cultures? Why do you feel this way?
- What have you learnt from this story?

3. Students should write a brief reflection on the Introductory Activity and Activity One, including their responses to the story and their ideas and feelings while listening to and participating in small group and class discussion.

Activity Two: More than Just a Story

1. Return to students' answers about what they learnt from listening to *The River*. Ask them to suggest how picture books could be used to help children gain an understanding of other cultures.

2. Move on to considering how you could work out whether a book would be useful in teaching others about another culture. Ask students to suggest some of the necessary features of such a book. Some questions to assist them in their thinking could be:

- What kinds of people would these books include?
- Where might the books be set? (Keep in mind that Australia's own cultural diversity provides plenty of opportunities for exploring different cultures at home.)
- What sorts of stories might the books contain?
- What sorts of pictures might the books contain?
- For whom might the books be written?
- For what purposes might the books be written?

Write students' ideas on the board.

Activity Three: The Picture Book Test

1. Distribute copies of Appendix One, the Picture Book Test, which provides some ideas for assessing picture books.
2. Ask students to work in small groups to discuss what each of the points in the Picture Book Test means and suggest an example of how it could be relevant to a picture book.
3. Work through the points with the class orally, collecting explanations and examples for each.

Activity Four: Designing a Test

1. Using students' own suggestions from Activity Two and the points in the Picture Book Test, have groups design their own test, selecting the ideas they think are useful and relevant. They should feel free to add further ideas of their own. This part of the activity offers students the opportunity to discuss and debate topical issues and persuade others which points are the most important.
2. Have students use a word processing programme to develop a suitable table format for their test, with the aim of using it to assess a range of picture books. They should consider whether they want to use a series of tick boxes, or spaces in which to write a numerical score, or lines on which to write comments.

Activity Five: Testing the Test!

1. Ask students to bring a range of picture books to class for assessment. The school librarian may also be able to provide books if the school has junior classes. Try to ensure that the selection includes books that are inclusive of other cultures and others that are not.
2. Ask students to individually assess a range of picture books using the test they designed with their group. They should examine at least five books.
3. Have students form their groups again to discuss:
 - how easy the test was to use
 - what kinds of answers they found
 - what generalisations they can make based on the results
 - whether any parts of the test were unclear or irrelevant.

Have students share their answers with the class.

4. Reflect together on the challenge of finding picture books that depict other cultures, and on how students might adapt or refine their tests for further use. Hopefully students will raise the issue of the limitations of any one book in representing or providing a definite picture of a culture.

Activity Six: Writing a Picture Book

1. With their experience in assessment, students are now well equipped to design their own picture books to both entertain an audience and teach them about another culture. There is a good guide to writing a picture story book at <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Children's-Story>. It may be useful to review this website with students prior to commencing this activity.
2. Ensure that students specify an audience for their picture book, such as Australian children aged seven to ten. Ideally, when completed, the books should be read to their intended audience, with students reporting back to the class on how successful their book was in engaging the audience and introducing them to another culture.

Consolidation Activity: New Books

1. If time permits, students could use their refined tests to assess each other's work, or their own work, once the picture books are finished. A display of the books, along with the tests, could be set up in the school library.

Extension Activities

1. Develop a poster for promoting one of the books that performed well on the test.
2. Explore Libby Hathorn's website at <http://www.libbyhathorn.com/lh> and report back to the class about her other books.
3. Research the concept of the journey in fiction and find examples of journey stories from different cultures. Present the results of your research to the class.
4. Develop a test to assess how sensitively adolescent fiction books deal with cultural differences. Apply it to some popular books.

Assessment

Assessment is ongoing throughout this unit by keeping note of student participation in class discussion and carefully monitoring group discussions. Students may submit the tests they design and the books they write, along with the results of applying their test, as a form of self-assessment. Or the Picture Book Test (Appendix One) can be used to assess students' work.

PLEASE NOTE: Assessment record sheets are included as samples only and are based on the *Asia Scope and Sequence for English*. You will need to adapt them in line with specific state and territory curriculum goals.

Links

<http://www.libbyhathorn.com/lh>

Libby Hathorn's website, which also includes the story 'The Wishing Cupboard', about exploring a fascinating Vietnamese cupboard

<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Children's-Story>

A guide to writing a picture story book

http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/pdf/the_river/theriver.pdf

A professional learning resource that includes classroom activities based on *The River*

This unit has been developed as part of a set of units to support the *Asia Scope and Sequence for English*, which highlights key studies of Asia concepts and content that can be incorporated into P-10 English. The website is http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public_html/scope_sequence.htm.

Appendix One: Picture Book Test

- Does the book show a variety of different characters whose ancestors are from places other than Australia, or who speak a language other than English?
- Are these characters on the fringes of the story, or part of the main action?
- Are individual and personal details given about these characters, or do they follow cultural stereotypes?
- What kind of language is used to describe these characters? Give some examples.
- What kinds of images are used to describe these characters? Give some examples.
- Are the language and images used to describe these characters positive or negative? Give some examples.
- Which characters' voices are heard most in the story?
- Which characters' voices are heard least in the story?
- Which characters are seen as admirable, strong, powerful or wise?
- Who wrote this story? Who illustrated it? Are the writer and illustrator part of the group the story is about?
- Is the tone of the book (ie how the writer and illustrator feel about the content) respectful and sensitive towards people of different cultures?
- How could you tell if this is an authentic or accurate picture of the culture/s portrayed, remembering that any culture is much more complex than any single book could represent?

Appendix Two: Beyond the River Assessment Record

Name:		
Task	Completed	Not yet completed
Listened to <i>The River</i> being read aloud and participated thoughtfully in class discussion about the book		
Worked effectively in a small group to analyse the Picture Book Test		
Worked effectively in a small group to design an original test, discussing ideas and offering points of view about the ways characters can be portrayed		
Read a range of picture books and applied the test to them		
Reflected on the suitability of the test through discussion, both within a small group and with the class as a whole		
Wrote a picture book for a specific audience, with the aim of sensitively exploring another culture		
Shared the picture book with the intended audience and reported back to the class		

Comments: