2024 Global Children’s Literature Teacher Fellowship Program Lesson Plan

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Africa Group, April 6, 2024

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| **Context** |
| **Lesson Title:** |
| **What was the context for your lesson?**  **1.** **Grade Level:** 6th  **2.** **The subject area(s) for which you created the lesson:** English Language Arts  **3.** **The make-up of your class (rural, urban etc.; diverse, homogenous, etc.) and how that helped you think about your lesson:** This lesson was created for students in a suburban community with >85% free and reduced meals with an ethnic distribution of: 68.8% are white, African American 12%, Hispanic 10.6%, 2+ 7.8%, Asian 0.4%, Indigenous 0.4%. Approximately one-third of the students come from neighboring districts with greater than one-fifth of the total coming from a very depressed, adjacent city. Many of the students in this community do not have the opportunity to travel, and many have never visited the local art institute, library, science museum, etc. Despite access to the broader world through the internet, many are caught up in their own local context.  **4.** **Your own identities and how they play into your lesson (here, you might think of how your identities and experiences might affect what and how you plan to teach this lesson):** I have had the opportunity to study extensively including abroad on three occasions. I recognize that my lens is singular and that my life is privileged because of the countless people who have preceded me across the globe and over time by their contributions to the world, which have made it what it is. It is inspiring to “meet” others through books, to discover other foods, hobbies, occupations, games, and so much more. Helping others to extend the boundaries of what the world holds from their local context to something much broader is exciting, and, perhaps, will inspire them to become more than they otherwise might have. |
| **Process** |
| How did you select the literature for your lesson?  **1. What literature will you use?** *A Long Walk to Water* (Park, 2016); *Sangoel* (Williams & Mohammed, 2009); *When Africa Was Home* (Williams, 1991)  **2. What was your process for literature selection?** I contemplated the dangers of having a single story about a person, place, or culture. Thus, I sought to select texts that would complement Chimamanda Adichie’s message in her TED Talk of the same topic that would help students recognize the need to look beyond one text (A Long Walk to Water) and begin to seek additional sources to enlarge and deepen their understanding of South Sudan as a unique country, and underscore that there are also similarities between South Sudan and other places in the world both in and beyond the continent of Africa.  **3. Where and how did you learn about this literature (browsing, internet search, award lists, in-person recommendation, etc.):** Internet searches for children’s literature from South Sudanese authors, news sources about South Sudan, a trip to the local library and conversations with the children’s librarian, visits to local used bookstores, and a review of my personal book collection.  **4. Did you consult some of the resources identified in the library visit and the Zoom meetings?** As a result of my experiences in MSU’s Global Children’s Literature Fellowship I purchased *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (Kamkwamba & Mealer, 2012). I also used the MSU online library catalog to look for other children’s/YA books about South Sudan. The only one in their holding is *Africa, Amazing Africa* (Atinuke, 2021), which I would make available for the students in a classroom set were I their teacher.  As a result of this fellowship and the textbook we were provided, I became explicitly aware of the distinctions between cultural texts, global texts, and international texts. |
| **Lesson** |
| **1. What do you want students to learn? (goals)**   * Students will be able to identify the central idea and supporting details in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's [TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story."](https://youtu.be/D9Ihs241zeg) * Students will be able to explain Adichie's purpose in giving the TED Talk and how she conveys it. * Students will be able to critically discuss the portrayal of South Sudan in *A Long Walk to Water* after watching The Danger of a Single Story and how the narrative can be enlarged by considering other perspectives such as those in the books My Name Is Sangoel (Williams & Mohammed, 2009) and When Africa Was Home (Williams, 1991). * Students will be able to discuss the dangers of having a single story about a person, place, or culture.   **2. Why does this lesson matter from the perspective of global understanding and engagement? (rationale)**  The single story reduces people, rendering them incomplete, flat, one-dimensional. As a result, it becomes difficult to recognize equal humanity in the characters of a single story.  **3.** **What will you do?** (the actual lesson). Please explain the lesson in detail. Feel free to use whatever format you usually use to create a lesson plan. (You may wish to include artifacts.). You should include theme/topic, global perspective, unit/lesson background, activities/instructional approaches and so on.  **Interactive ELA Lesson (Topic): Seeing Beyond the Single Story (60 minutes)**  **Global perspectives:** social injustices, othering  **Grade Level:** 6th  **Books:** *A Long Walk to Water* (Park, 2016); *Sangoel* (Williams & Mohammed, 2009); *When Africa Was Home* (Williams, 1991)  Additional resources of what does not constitute additional narratives for South Sudan, but would support other narratives: *One Plastic Bag* (Paul, 2015) – about Isatou Ceesay and the recycling women of The Gambia; *Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya* (Napoli, 2010); *How Djadja-Em-Ankh Saved the Day: A Tale from Ancient Egypt* translated from the Original Hieratic, with Illustrations and commentary (Manniche, 1976); *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (Kamkwamba & Mealer, 2012) about 14-year-old William Wamkwamba, who lived in a drought-ravaged area of Malawi pursued a dream that brought electricity and running water to his desperately poor village. *Fali* (Lucas, T. & Lucas, G., 2006) - Fourteen-year-old Amadou lives in a village in Mali. One day, Amadou's father asks him to teach their youngest donkey, Fali, to pull the cart. The young boy and the donkey become a big help to Amadou's family. But soon the cart becomes too heavy for the little donkey to pull. Moral: always take care of your animals. *Africa, Amazing Africa* (Atinuke, 2021).  **TED Talk:** “The Danger of a Single Story” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) (<https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en>)  **Michigan 6th Grade ELA Standards Addressed:**   * Rdg-Literature 6.1: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. * Rdg-Literature 6.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text. * Rdg-Informational Text 6.7: Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue. * Speaking & Listening 6.1d: Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing. * Speaking & Listening 6.2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.   **Learning Objectives:**   * Students will be able to identify the central idea and supporting details in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's [TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story."](https://youtu.be/D9Ihs241zeg) * Students will be able to explain Adichie's purpose in giving the TED Talk and how she conveys it. * Students will be able to critically discuss the portrayal of South Sudan in *A Long Walk to Water* after watching The Danger of a Single Story and how the narrative can be enlarged by considering other perspectives such as those in the books My Name Is Sangoel (Williams & Mohammed, 2009) and When Africa Was Home (Williams, 1991). * Students will be able to discuss the dangers of having a single story about a person, place, or culture.   **Materials:**   * Internet access and AV equipment to show TED Talk; paper and pencil for exit ticket   **Lesson Procedure**  **Introduction (5 minutes):**   1. **Connector:** Begin by asking students to share their thoughts and feelings about the book *A Long Walk to Water*. What surprised them? What did they learn about South Sudan? 2. **Introduce TED Talks:** Briefly explain the concept of TED Talks and their purpose of sharing ideas. 3. **Introduce Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:** Show a [picture](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/sep/15/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-nigerian-writer) of Adichie and tell students she is a famous writer who will talk about the danger of a single story.   **Main Activity (50 minutes):**   1. **Watch TED Talk (20 minutes):** Show students Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's [TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story".](https://youtu.be/D9Ihs241zeg) 2. **Central Idea and Details (5 minutes):** After watching the talk, ask students what they think Adichie's main message is. Have them discuss in pairs and then share as a class. Guide them to identify details from the talk that support the central idea (e.g., her childhood experiences, stories about her classmates). 3. **Author's Purpose (5 minutes):** Ask students why they think Adichie gave this TED Talk. What is she hoping to achieve? Look for answers related to raising awareness, challenging stereotypes, and promoting understanding. 4. **Group Discussion (10 minutes):** Facilitate a class discussion about the dangers of having a single story about a person, place, or culture. [The following questions are suggestions based on the class being taught, background information they have, etc.]    1. How can these stereotypes be limiting?    2. How can we avoid falling into this trap?    3. Look at a [map of North America](https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?hl=en&hl=en&mid=1MTSHFipxAdupelKBd14_DxCnnnBEuMk&ll=9.06434808197718%2C0&z=2) (23 countries; (430 languages (177 are indigenous)) and consider how alike or different people are in Yukon Territory, Montreal, Louisiana, El Salvador—all of these places are located on one continent. Similarly, [Africa](https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?hl=en&hl=en&mid=1MTSHFipxAdupelKBd14_DxCnnnBEuMk&ll=0.09993747439591871%2C-9.19667848787146&z=3) is a continent of many countries, languages, religions, cultures, etc. (54 Countries, 3,000 languages). [The links goes to a Google map that was created showing pushpins in those various countries. Additionally, there are pushpins in The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, and Malawi]       1. Note: the countries in Africa were selected because the following books take place in those respective countries (The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan, Suth Sudan, Kenya, and Malawi). This illustrates that having a story from one place in Africa not only is a “single story” problem, it may not even be the right story.    4. Do stories from different African countries provide insight about Sudan? [They may, they may not…consider that [some countries are similar to Sudan while others are very different](https://objectivelists.com/2022/07/16/which-countries-are-most-similar-to-south-sudan/).]    5. Do stories from non-native writers provide insights about South Sudan? [They can if the author extensively studied the country, the people, the land, etc.] Consider showing how little is available with a quick Google search “[Children’s books by Sudanese authors](https://www.google.com/search?q=children%27s+book+from+Sudanese+authors&rlz=1C1GCEV_enUS888US888&oq=children&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqBggAEEUYOzIGCAAQRRg7MgwIARBFGDkYsQMYgAQyEwgCEC4YgwEYxwEYsQMY0QMYgAQyDQgDEAAYgwEYsQMYgAQyBggEEEUYPTIGCAUQRRg8MgYIBhBFGEEyBggHEEUYQdIBCDg0ODRqMGo3qAIAsAIA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)”    6. With so few books available, how else might you find out more about South Sudan? Search Google for “[news from South Sudan](https://www.aljazeera.com/where/south-sudan/)”; search Google [Sudan news stories for kids](https://newsforkids.net/tag/sudan/)    7. Is there one book that would represent everything about America well? Similarly, do you think there is one book that represents everything about Sudan well?    8. How might a story be impacted by the time in which it is written, like 1809? 1950?    9. How might the story be impacted if it is told by those in power? By those being oppressed?    10. How might the story be impacted if it is told by an 8-year-old? By a 25-year-old? By an 80-year-old? By a boy? By a girl? By somebody who is rich? Poor? [These questions, which are not exhaustive, are intended to help students understand there are many characteristics that contribute to a perspective.] 5. **Connecting to A Long Walk to Water (10 minutes):** Think about Salva's journey and/or Nya's village life. Do you feel that having read about two characters in one book about South Sudan is enough to challenge the “single story” problem?   **Wrap-up and Assessment (5 minutes):**   1. **Exit Ticket:** Answer the question: One danger of a single story is… 2. **Reflection:** As a closing activity, ask students to reflect on their own lives. Have them consider if there are any "single stories" they might hold about themselves or others. How can they be more open-minded and understanding?   **4. How will you know if students learned what you intended? (assessment)** Use of an exit ticket; anecdotally, by what they say and how they say it as time moves on. |
| **Enactment** |
| **How did the lesson go?** I borrowed a 6th grade classroom. Although I had indicated to the teacher that I would need to show a video, and she assured me that was fine, the technology was not working. This ate into the allotted time. That issue notwithstanding, it was helpful to give an overview of the TED Talk which they were about to watch. Given the chance to do it again, I would likely cut out part of the talk and focus on the first 10-12 minutes or so.  When talking about the danger of a single story, an example that was offered by the classroom teacher who was there and learning alongside her students was effective: she has always believed that pizzas were made one way—how they are eaten locally. When she traveled to Chicago, she found that pizzas are made very differently. It was a simplistic example, but provided another perspective on a single-story narrative that was, possibly, more relatable to some students.  After the TED Talk, students turned and talked for about 90 seconds to share what intrigued them about the video, how were they making sense of it. Then the whole class offered ideas. Students talked about how only sharing one perspective doesn’t tell somebody’s whole story. “You can’t just tell one story.” “You have to hear multiple stories to really get to know them.” Some students were surprised, as Chimamanda’s roommate was, that English is an official language in Nigeria. Another student thought it was inappropriate for the roommate to share her misunderstandings or ask questions that could be considered rude. This led to an unexpected conversation about the imperative 1) of suspending judgment and seeking clarity, and 2) engaging in dialogue with the intention to learn. If people don’t engage in dialogue, then misunderstandings are less likely to be uncovered and reversed, which was a valuable lesson.  When students were asked about the story they felt was being relayed in A Long Walk to Water, responses were offered that highlighted important themes: poverty, tenacity, vision, resourcefulness, homecoming, resilience. The conversation expanded again to the single story narrative and the fact that other books can help broaden ideas around poverty, resilience, etc. They linked this back to Fide’s story, the impoverished son of her family’s hired help and the fact that she was so surprised to learn of his family’s creativity and ability to weave such beautiful baskets.  Also, students lifted up the issue of Mexicans and the ongoing narratives around immigration.  I shared the overarching idea of several books with them that I had brought (but could not read due to the 15 minutes spent on technology problems): My Name Is Sangoel, The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind, and When Africa Was Home.  Based on engagement and students’ responses, the topic was relevant for them and one which they not only seemed to understand, but also found to be important.  **1.** **When did you teach the lesson?** Friday, April 5, 2024, from 8:45-9:40 AM. It was scheduled for Friday, March 22. However, school was unexpectedly closed that day to inclement weather. Monday, March 25-Monday, April 1 was spring break. The only day I could teach this lesson was Friday, April 5. It was not ideal as not only were these not my students (I am a superintendent), but the students had finished the unit which was centered on A Long Walk to Water two weeks previously on March 21.  **2. What did you do?** See above.  **3. How did students respond?** See above. |
| **Reflection** |
| Reflection (Self-evaluation)  **1. What were you pleased with?** I was pleased with the whole class discourse that followed the TED Talk.  **2. Are there things you learned for next time?** Most of my problems were a result of stepping into somebody else’s classroom. Discovering that the interactive Smart Board hadn’t worked all week and no ticket had been submitted, being in a class where dry erase markers aren’t kept at the board where they are used, being in a class where students had not been prepped for my guest teaching their class on this day all led to a less robust lesson than I would have otherwise had. I wish I had been able to share the world map with the pins that I created for them, the websites I had curated, and actually read the books aloud that I brought.  As indicated previously, I would have shortened the video. I also would have reduced some specific discussion prompts to paper – one per group – for students who are more visual. And I would provide them with post-it notes to gather their own thinking before turning and sharing with a partner and/or the table.  **3. Were there any surprises?** Only those already discussed above.  **4. What recommendations do you have for other teachers when using this book?** I would allow for more time than a single lesson to really unpack these ideas. Students need time to talk through their (evolving) understandings of stereotypes, the danger of a single story, and what steps they would like to take regarding South Sudan having read *A Long Walk to Water* (Park, 2016) coupled with their understanding of the single-story dilemma. The person who is talking is the person who is thinking. While the teacher will engage in lecture bursts, the students need time to grapple with the ideas presented in order to solidify their emerging understandings.  **5. What did this experience teach you about global children’s literature and including global children’s literature in your curriculum?** First, it helped me be very clear about the distinction between cultural literature, global literature, and international literature. It also provided me with insight to the criticality of intentionally teaching from many global texts to personalize people, cultures, and places so that students are not making assumptions based on stereotypes that have been passed down through other people, other experiences, and/or other texts. Brilliance exists in all cultures. Our students need to see that people the world over are smart, capable, curious, playful, creative, and so on. That which is different—people’s names, foods, clothing, etc.—are just that: different. People need to be very mindful of the pejorative language they use when they respond to difference by saying things like that is *weird, ignorant, dumb, stupid,* or *not normal*. Students need recognize that how they dress, speak, act and so on is different to others…perception is not a one-way street. Each person is perceived by other people, just as each person is the perceiver of other people. This is an important concept for our students to apprehend.  Global children’s literature provides a means for introducing all matter of global topics: religions, regions, cultures, time, history, dress, meals, architecture, music…this being but a short list of examples. Teachers fundamentally are tasked with nurturing students’ curiosity and critical thinking. Global children’s literature can be used to both nurture and satisfy their curiosity while building bridges between them and the broader world. |
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