

GRANDFATHER'S JOURNEY

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By Allen Say

Ages: 5-10

Themes: Family, Feelings, Immigration, Japanese Culture, History

Running Time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY

This simple, yet poignant, story follows a young Japanese man from his homeland to the United States, and back to Japan many years later. Narrated by his grandson, the man's journey is mirrored in his own life. Soft illustrations gracefully show American and Japanese landscapes and geography. This film conveys the love and attachment that the narrator and his grandfather feel for both lands and cultures. When in one place, they inevitably miss the other one. In this way the grandson gains a deeper understanding into his grandfather's mind and heart.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify some of the push-pull factors of immigration.
- Students will make inferences.
- Students will locate Japan on a map.
- Students will compare and contrast Japanese and American culture and geography.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Discuss some of the significant push-pull factors of immigration. Include:

- Improved job opportunities
- More/better land
- Religious persecution/religious freedom
- Forced relocation (example: African slaves, Native Americans)

Give students examples of different groups of people who migrated for these various reasons. Ask students if they can think of any other reasons why people might leave their home country to permanently settle in another. Then, tell students that they're going to see a movie about a man who moves from Japan to the United States. Encourage them to watch and listen for reasons that the man left Japan, and then returned many years later. Do his choices fit into the reasons for immigration that you discussed?

Have students interview family members about where their ancestors came from. Provide students with guiding questions such as:

- What country did our ancestors come from?
- When did our first ancestor or ancestors come to the United States?
- Why did our ancestors leave their home country?
- What are some experiences that they had?

If you have Native American students, change the questions to reflect their unique place in North American history. Suggested questions:

- What nation or tribe were your ancestors a part of?
- Where did they live?
- Did your ancestors have to leave their original land? Where did they go?
- What are some experiences that they had?

Encourage students to bring pictures and/or other cultural items from their ancestor's home. Give students time to share their stories, pictures, and artifacts.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Give a mini-lesson on making inferences. Explain to students that when you make an inference, you use clues in the text to draw conclusions about the characters, setting, or plot. Tell students that you're going to play part of the movie again and that they should look and listen for clues that tell them that the story took place in the past. Replay the beginning of the movie and pause it before the grandfather returns to Japan. Ask:

- Did you see anything that helped you recognize that this part of the movie took place in the past? (*old fashioned clothes, train, steamship*)

Then, guide students through making other inferences about the characters, setting, and plot. Replay parts of the movie as necessary. Some ideas are:

- Do you think that the grandfather was a happy man? Why or why not?
- Why do you think that the grandfather never kept another songbird?
- Why do you think that the narrator says, "I think I know my grandfather now," at the end of the movie?

Give students a blank outline of a world map. Show them where Japan is and have them color it. Tell students to locate the United States on the map and color it also. Using different colors, have them outline or circle the seven continents and label them. Ask:

- What continent is Japan a part of?
- What continent is the United States a part of?
- In what hemisphere(s) is Japan located?
- In what hemisphere(s) is the United States located?

Use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast Japanese and American culture and geography. First use the movie to guide students in looking for differences and similarities between the two countries. Focus on clothing, architecture, and geography. As an extension, show students pictures or slides of elements of Japanese culture, such as food, musical instruments, artwork, and places of worship. Help students incorporate these elements into the Venn Diagram, using their background knowledge of American culture to compare and contrast.

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