Unit 1 /Week 3

Title: Yang the Third and Her Impossible Family

Suggested Time: 5 days (30 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.4, RL.5.10, SL.5.1, SL.5.3, RF.5.4, L.5.4, L.5.5, L.5.6, W.5.9

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

You can adopt aspects of another culture, while still maintaining pride in your own.

Synopsis

Mary (Yingmei) Yang is often embarrassed by her family’s use of Chinese customs, and she desperately wants to fit in with other American girls. In an effort to gain popularity, she volunteers Mrs. Yang to accompany her friend, Holly Hanson, during an orchestra audition. When Holly tells Mary that she does not want to be in the orchestra, Mary is torn between pleasing her friend and allowing Mrs. Hanson to see her mother in a more positive light. When differences between Chinese and American cultures cause a breakdown in communication, Mary Yang realizes that family is more important than being popular. With this realization comes the understanding that it is okay to make mistakes while learning the ways of a new culture.

1. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along.

(Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)

1. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text Dependent Questions** | **Answers** |
| What things did Mary (Yingmei) do to try to become an American? | She changes her name to Mary. She keeps lists of American words and phrases. She takes a cat from the most popular student in school, even though it is forbidden. |
| What does the author say Mary (Yingmei) cannot control? | She cannot control or prevent her family members from saying or doing things that embarrass her in front of her American friends. |
| When you **audition**, or try out for an **orchestra**, you often need an **accompanist**, someone who plays the piano while you perform. Why does Mary offer to help her friend Holly in the audition? | Mary’s mother does embarrassing things, but she plays the piano well. Mary felt confident in her mother’s ability. By offering her mother’s services as an accompanist, Mary felt her mother would be able to get on Mrs. Hanson’s good side and that Holly would be grateful. |
| How does Mrs. Hanson feel when Holly tells her the accompanist is sick? What evidence does the author provide to show Mrs. Hanson’s feelings? | Holly had practiced a difficult piece (by Brahms) for a long time in order to get good at it. Mrs. Hanson is upset that the accompanist is sick because now she will have to find someone new who can learn and play this difficult piece of music for Holly’s audition - in a short amount of time. |
| **Grimace** means to make an ugly face because you are annoyed, disgusted, or in pain. Why did Holly grimace as she looked around the rehearsal hall? | The author had already told us that Mary felt envious or jealous at the thought that Holly might get to be part of the orchestra. Mary viewed playing in the orchestra as a privilege. When she expresses her feelings to Holly and asks about the cost, Holly states that being part of the orchestra is expensive, but she’d rather use the money for something different. The grimace on her face as she looks around the hall tells us that she is really unhappy at the thought of having to be in the orchestra. |
| After learning about Holly’s feelings regarding the orchestra, how does Mary feel about asking her mother to accompany Holly at the audition? | Mary is struggling to decide whether her mother should accompany Holly at the audition. Holly doesn’t really want the orchestra position, so she may get mad and not be her friend anymore if Mrs. Yang accompanies her during the audition. When Mary thinks about her mother and the many social blunders she has made, she believes that her talent as a pianist will bring her respect from the Hanson family. She badly wants to feel as if she (and her family) belong. |
| Fourth Brother is sensitive to how Mary feels. What in the text demonstrates that he cared about her feelings? | He eats a peanut butter and jelly sandwich instead of his normal bean sprouts and tells Mary that he is trying to get used to the peanut butter because he knows the bean sprouts embarrassed her. He also knows about the cat, but doesn’t tell the family about it. He feeds the cat and doesn’t want a dog to hurt the cat. |
| Mrs. Sylvester, the Yang’s neighbor, says that she has seen a cat. Why is the cat an additional thing for Mary to worry about? | Mary has not told her family about the cat she accepted from Holly and is worried Mrs. Hanson will mention it to her parents. She is worried that if the cat is found, she will have to get rid of it and that may affect her friendship with Holly. She may also get in trouble with her parents because accepting the cat was forbidden. |
| The author includes the description of the juggling act in China where, “A girl balanced three plates simultaneously by spinning them at the ends of three chopsticks”. Mary isn’t physically juggling plates when she says “I felt like that juggler. At any minute, one of the plates might fall and smash into bits.” What is she *juggling*? | Mary is juggling the thought that she might lose her friendship with Holly, her need for her mother to demonstrate her talents on the piano, her family embarrassing her and the fear that someone might find the cat. She is afraid all of her efforts to fit in will come “tumbling down.”  She is also juggling her need to be accepted in America with her proud Chinese heritage, although that is not yet expressed in the text. |
| The text states, “It was strange to hear Mrs. Hanson sounding so anxious to please.” When someone is **anxious**, it means they are nervous or worried about something. What is Mrs. Hanson anxious about and why? What does it mean that she was “anxious to please?” | Mrs. Hanson is afraid that Mrs. Yang might not play for Holly’s audition. She is “anxious to please” because she is willing to do whatever she needs to do in order to get Mrs. Yang to agree to accompany Holly at the audition. Mrs. Hanson is concerned about Holly getting into the prestigious orchestra camp. |
| What evidence from the text indicates that Mary’s family is pleased after the phone call from Mrs. Hanson? What words and phrases does the author use to show this? | Mary’s mother’s face turned pink – she was happy. Second Sister and Eldest Brother both *beamed* and *nodded agreement*. The father said that it was about time people learned how good Mother was. |
| The text says, “Mother,” I interrupted desperately, “we haven’t tuned the piano for some time. Do you think that will bother Holly?” This is an example of a split quotation – explicit instruction may be necessary before the next questions are asked:  Why does the author want you to know that Mary interrupted someone desperately? Who did she interrupt and why? | The author wants you to know that Mary interrupts Mrs. Hanson by saying “Mother” in a desperate tone. She then asks her mother a question to distract Mrs. Hanson from asking about the cat. We know this because a few sentences later it says, “At last that took Mrs. Hanson’s mind from Rita…” |
| How do you know that Holly has “…obviously been well taught.”? The author emphasizes that “there was something lifeless about her playing-and that was fatal.” (pg. 80-81) What does the word “fatal” mean and why would this type of lifeless playing be fatal for Holly?  (The teacher may want to go over the homographs *bow* and *bow.* The author says, “Her bowing was correct…” Bowing in this case is the movement of the bow over the strings of the viola – not the action of making a curtsy.) | Holly uses her bow correctly, has neat fingering, and true pitch. She follows the score carefully and obeys all the dynamics signs (abbreviations used to signify the volume of music).  All of the Yangs realized “from the expression on Holly’s face that her heart wasn’t in the music.” Holly also says, “I told you I had stage fright.” This musically inclined family infers that Holly will not be chosen for the orchestra if she repeats the same performance at the audition. |
| Mrs. Hanson says, “I mean, we wouldn’t want Holly to fail the audition!” When the entire Yang family answers “yes,” how does Mrs. Hanson respond? | She and Holly stare at Mary’s family. Mary knows something is wrong as Mrs. Hanson turns abruptly and walks to the front door. “Good night!” she says curtly. |
| Why does Mrs. Hanson say that it sounded like the Yangs wanted Holly to fail the audition? What past experience does Mrs. Hanson use in order to relate to Mary’s family’s mistake? | The Yangs said “yes” meaning they *agreed* they wouldn’t want her to fail the audition. The American custom would be to say “No, we wouldn’t want her to fail the audition.” Mrs. Hanson references a song with the words, “Yes, we have no bananas.” The song uses the word “yes” even though there were “no bananas.” Mrs. Hanson and Mary realize that this is what the Yang family was also saying. They agreed that they did not want Holly to fail the audition. |
| How does Mary’s behavior help you understand what she was feeling? What does Mary come to realize about her family and their adjustment to America? | Mary follows Mrs. Hanson and Holly out of the house. When she catches up to them, she uses an indignant voice to tell Mrs. Hanson that her family agrees they do not want Holly to fail the audition. She tells them her family is new to the country and doesn’t get everything right immediately. She asks Mrs. Hanson to be patient. Her indignant response tells the reader she was feeling defensive about her family. |
| Mary realizes she has been unfair to her family. What lesson has she learned? How do you know? | She thought her family had not made an effort to learn American ways, but Mary realizes she was also making mistakes. Her mother spent her time cooking and feeding them and hadn’t had time to learn new customs. Mary says she is ashamed of herself instead of being ashamed of her mother. She says, “I’m actually one of them…just like the rest of my family.” |

Vocabulary

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|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING**  Words addressed with a question or task | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING**  General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION**  not enough contextual clues provided in the text | accompanist  grimaced | particular, prevent  rehearsal (rehearsed), tendons  doubtful  privilege, professional, quavered  simultaneously, disgracing, ruin  curiously, transposed  obviously, dynamics, distract  conclusion  earnestly, abruptly, curtly, indignantly  sobered |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | anxious  fatal, desperately | customs, accomplish  swerved  privilege, bundle, blunders  quavered  negotiate  complicated, immediately, patient  apologize, ashamed |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

*Mary is embarrassed by her family at the beginning of the story, but comes to appreciate them at the end. Using evidence from the text, provide details from at least two major events which helped change Mary’s thinking.*

Answer: At the beginning of the text, Mary was embarrassed because her family members would say and do things that embarrassed her in front of her new friends. For example, her mother made many social blunders. Fourth Brother ate bean sprouts (traditional Chinese food) instead of foods like peanut butter (traditional American food). As the story unfolds, Mary realizes that there are many good things about her family. Fourth Brother tries to eat American foods because he realizes that she is embarrassed when others see him eat traditional Chinese foods. Mary’s mother takes the time to help Holly, even though she has been busy taking cooking and feeding the family. When Mrs. Hanson becomes angry at the Yang family because she thinks they want Holly to fail the audition, Mary comes to realize how easy it is to make unintentional mistakes when learning about a new culture. She reflects on how she has made many mistakes learning about America, even though she has studied American ways carefully. She finally realizes she is still part of her family’s culture, too.

Additional Tasks

* Do you think Mary is right to tell Mrs. Hanson and Holly how their laughter makes her feel? Why or why not?

Answer: Answers may vary.

* We can tell from the story that music was very important to the Yang family. What is important to your family? How would someone from the outside know this was important to your family?

Answer: Answers will vary.

* Mary is embarrassed by some of the things her family does and says around her new friends. Have you ever been embarrassed by someone in your family? Tell about a time when you were embarrassed.

Note to Teacher

* It is extremely important to read the prologue before engaging with the story. It is a part of the story.