

Teaching News Is Elementary

February 12, 2016

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times e-Edition, colored pencils and paper.

Article: “Journey with Newspapers In Education and Wing Luke Museum to learn how different Asian Americans celebrate the New Year” (Hmong New Year)

Pages: Main, A11

Date: Friday, February 12, 2016

Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

Look at the photo in the lower right hand corner of this article. What do you think a story cloth is? What story do you think is being told in the photo of the story cloth shown? What importance do you think story cloths have for the Hmong and their celebration of the New Year? Why are stories an important part of family and cultural traditions?

Vocabulary:

Read the following quotes and determine the meaning of the word based on how it’s used in the sentence:

“Paj ntaub (Pa-Dau) are **textiles** with geometric designs sewn into them that **adorn** women’s skirts, men’s collars and baby carriers.”

textiles: fabrics that are woven or knit

adorn: to make (someone or something) more attractive by adding something beautiful; decorate

“Other kinds of paj ntaub have images sewn into them **conveying** a significant event.”

conveying: to make (something) known to someone

“There, Hmong women began to create **intricate** story cloths to **document** their experiences fleeing the war through dangerous escapes and life in the **refugee** camps.”

intricate: having many parts

document: to create a record of (something) through writing, film, photography, etc.

refugee: someone who has been forced to leave a country because of war or for religious or political reasons

Journal Writing Prompts:

“Hmong New Year community celebrations include various traditional activities, many that have been continued in the United States, such as performing traditional duet folksongs called Kwv Txhiaj (gu-TSIA) or playing a bamboo instrument called a Qeej (Keen).”

How would you define a tradition? What traditions do you participate in with your family or community that include music? Why do you think music is an important part of tradition? Write about a tradition you participate in that includes playing or listening to music. Why is that tradition important to you? Where did the tradition come from – is it from another country or culture, or is it a tradition celebrated in the United States?

Discussion Questions:

Review the excerpt and discuss the following questions:

“Following the Vietnam War and the fall of Laos in 1975, many Hmong people fled to refugee camps in Thailand. There, Hmong women began to create intricate story cloths to document their experiences fleeing the war through dangerous escapes and life in the refugee camps.”

What is a refugee? How do you think it would feel to flee your home and your country and move to a new one? What difficulties would you face? What fears would you have? What things would you need to learn in order to assimilate (become a part of a different society)? Why do you think it was important for the Hmong to document their experiences of fleeing the war and their life in the refugee camps?

Small group discussion and activity:

“The Hmong did not have a written language until the 1950’s. Therefore, stories were told orally and used paj ntaub to teach Hmong culture from generation to generation.”

How are traditions and stories handed down from one generation to another in your family? Why are these stories important? Look at the comic strip story that Tsengyang Vang, one of the authors of this story, shared about how she was named. Then share a story about yourself or your family that has been told to you. Turn your story into comic strip form like the one shared in the article.