



**American Immigration Law Foundation
Immigration Curriculum Center Lesson Plan**

Grandfather's Journey By Allen Say

Focus Book - *Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say

Grade Level: 4th – 8th Grades

Goal:

Grandfather's Journey explores themes of cross cultural experience as well as intergenerational relationships and family history. The award-winning illustrations convey Say's love of family, as well as his love of place. Through a series of reading, writing and reflection activities, students will explore this cross cultural theme and develop a deeper understanding of why immigrants come to the United States.

Synopsis:

Grandfather's Journey is an autobiographical account of Allen Say's grandfather's travels through America in the early part of the 20th century. Grandfather, torn by his love for both countries, returns to Japan to marry but later immigrates to San Francisco where Say's mother was born. Always longing for the place he left, Grandfather eventually returns to his native Japan. The story explores themes of cross cultural experience as well as intergenerational relationships and family history. The award-winning illustrations convey Say's love of family, as well as his love of place.

Pre-reading:

- 1) Ask students to describe a place they have visited (on a vacation or family visit) either orally or in writing. How did they get there? How is this place different from where they live? Have the students illustrate their stories using any medium they choose.
- 2) Take a "picture" walk through the book. Let the students respond to the illustration. What is depicted? Who are the people we see? What is the time period? Where does the story take place? What medium did the artist use?

Reading:

Read the story to the students as they follow along in their own copies. After reading, discuss the events of the story.

Pages 4 and 5:

1. In what country does the story begin?
2. Who is telling the story?
3. How is grandfather depicted in the opening portrait?
4. How has he changed in the second illustration?
5. What are “European clothes”?
6. Why did he change his clothes?
7. How does grandfather travel?

Pages 6 and 7:

1. What body of water is he crossing? Where is he going?
2. What is the “New World”?

Pages 8 through 14:

1. Begin a list of some places grandfather goes.
2. Who are the “black men and white men” and “yellow men and red men” Grandfather meets?
3. Why are there so many different kinds of people in North America?
4. Why did grandfather travel to North America?
5. Why doesn’t grandfather think of returning home?
6. Which place did grandfather like best? Why?

Pages 15 through 17:

1. Why does he return to Japan?
2. Where does he decide to live and raise a family?
3. How is the picture of grandfather’s daughter on page 17 different from most of the other illustrations? Compare it to the picture on page 4. Why are they painted in this way?

Pages 18 through 21:

1. Why does the family return to Japan?
2. What did grandfather miss about Japan?

Pages 22 and 23

1. How does the daughter feel about returning to Japan?
2. What adjustments does the family have to make? What changes does the daughter make?

Pages 24 and 25:

1. How does the author (the grandson) learn about California?

Pages 26 through 29:

1. What keeps grandfather from returning to California?
2. What war is mentioned in the story? With which country was Japan at war?
3. Where do the grandparents go after the war?
4. Why didn't grandfather keep another songbird?

Pages 30 through 32:

1. Why did the grandson go to California?
2. How did he feel about "the land my grandfather loved"?
3. How is the grandson like the grandfather?
4. What does "the moment I am in one country, I'm homesick for the other" mean?
5. Why does the grandson feel that he knows his grandfather now?
6. What has he learned from his grandfather?

Post-reading Activities:

- 1) As a follow-up to *Grandfather's Journey*, read *Tea with Milk* by Allen Say. In this companion book to *Grandfather's Journey*, Say explores his mother's story (the daughter of the earlier book), describing her life as an American-born daughter of Japanese immigrant parents and her difficult adjustment when her parents return to live in Japan.
 - Have students reflect on the artwork in the book.

The first illustration is in sepia, like an old photograph. Discuss this with students. Why do you think Allen Say decided to use this type of painting for his first illustration? What do you see in this image? Why is the flag there? Who is the person in the window? Why does the artist show him half hidden? What do you think this means?

How does the scene change in the second illustration? How has the girl changed? What symbols does the artist use to represent the change of culture? The illustrations in the beginning of the book depict May's isolation from Japanese culture. How does Say present this theme visually? When does May become more a part of her surroundings in Japan? Choose one of the illustrations to write about.
 - Discuss the struggle May feels about belonging to two cultures.

In America, she has two names, speaks two languages and eats different foods at home than at her friends' homes. May's feelings of isolation continue and intensify when she moves to Japan. Discuss the changes in her lifestyle and what her feelings are. Use the worksheet to compare May's life in America to her life in Japan.
 - List May's (Masako's) goals for herself. List her parents' goals for her.

- What does a matchmaker do? Do other cultures have matchmakers? How does May feel about having someone arrange a marriage for her?
- Why does Masako (May) go to Osaka? Why do things seem familiar to her? Why does she want a job? How do her parents feel about her getting a job? Why did they feel this was shameful? Why didn't Masako tell them she was an elevator operator? How does Masako's job change?
- What do Masako and Joseph have in common? What makes them like each other? What does Joseph mean when he says, "home isn't a place or a building that's ready-made and waiting for you"? What do Joseph and May decide to do? Compare the feelings and experiences of May in *Tea with Milk* to Grandfather in *Grandfather's Journey*.

2) Intergenerational Studies

Have children talk with and interview the oldest person in their family (at least 50 years old). Ask what life was like when he or she was growing up. How were things different, such as school, home life, transportation, technology, entertainment, etc.? (You may want to make up an interview questionnaire with the students) Write and illustrate stories about the people interviewed.

3) Art

Explore the medium of watercolor. Study the illustrations in *Grandfather's Journey*. How does the artist use space and compose the pictures? How does he show distance? Give students an opportunity to experiment with the watercolors. Have the students illustrate a favorite place using watercolors and then describe the place in a story or haiku poem. Look at sepia portraits. Have the students paint a self-portrait using only brown and white paint to create a "sepia" portrait as Allen Say does in his books.

4) History

Discuss the time period of *Grandfather's Journey*. How do we know when the story takes place? What war does Say refer to in the book? With what country was Japan at war? With the students, list the events of World War II that they know. Look at the picture on page 27 of *Grandfather's Journey*. What does the picture depict? For an expanded lesson on the bombing of Japan, read to the class Sadako and the *Thousand Cranes* (Eleanor Coerr, 1977) or *Hiroshima No Pika* (Toshi Maruki, 1980). Discuss what the impact of a war with America might have had on people who had lived in America, such as Grandfather or who were American citizens by birth, such as May.

During the war, Japanese Americans were evacuated and relocated to internment camps in the have students research Japanese-American Internment during World War II (on the Internet) and find answers to the following questions.

1. What was Executive Order 9066?

2. Who signed it into law?
3. When was it enacted? Why?
4. What were the effects of it?
5. List and locate the internment camps on a map.
6. Define "Nissei" and "Essei."
7. How did our government redress the effects of the internment? When?

The following books can be used to explore this subject with students:

Baseball Saved Us by Ken Mochizuki (Lee and Low Books, Inc. 1993)

The Bracelet by Yoshiko Uchida (Philomel Books 1993).

So Far from the Sea by Eve Bunting (Clarion Books 1998).

The Invisible Thread by Yoshiko Uchida (Jules Messner, Simon and Schuster Inc., 1992).

Journey to Topaz by Yoshiko Uchida (JACP, 1985).

Journey Home by Yoshiko Uchida (JACP, 1977).

Children of Topaz: The Story of Japanese-American Internment by Michael Tunnell and George W. Chilcoat (Holiday House, 1996).

Manzanar: Ansel Adams Photographs by John Armor and Peter Wright (Times Books, 1988).

I Am an American by Jerry Stanley (Crown Publishers Inc., 1994).

Flowers From Mariko by Rich Noguchi and Daneen Jenks (Lee and Low Books Inc., 2001).

5) Literary Map

Following the story, have students list the places Grandfather visits and describe what Grandfather sees in each place. Using a map of the Japan and the United States, have students locate the places listed on their literary maps.

6) Geography and Culture

Locate Japan on a world map. Make an outline map of Japan. Locate and label the capital, the cities named in the books as well as mountains and waterways. Locate San Francisco and calculate the distance to Japan.

Using the Internet, have students visit various landmarks and sites in Japan and report about them to the class.

Have student's research and demonstrate various Japanese crafts or arts to the class such as origami, Japanese calligraphy, cooking, poetry (haiku), or flower arranging (ikebana). *Country Topics Japan* by Richard and Sheila Tames (Franklin Watts) is a good source for Japanese facts and classroom activities.

7) Immigration

Why did Grandfather come to America? Discuss immigration "push-pull" factors. Some people came to America because they were drawn, "pulled" here for a

variety of reasons. Others were “pushed” out of their native lands for different reasons.

By 1920, thousands of Japanese “picture brides” entered the United States. Research the stories of these women. Who were they? Why did they come to America? What was their process of immigration? What were their lives like when they arrived here?

Read the stories of Angel Island detainees.

<http://www.angel-island.com/tlee.html>

Discuss their immigration experiences and compare their stories with the more familiar ones of the Ellis Island immigrants.

Have students read other immigration stories and compare them to *Grandfather’s Journey*.

Bunting, Eve. *Going Home*. Harper Collins, 1996.

Bunting, Eve. *How Many Days to America? A Thanksgiving Story*. New York: Clarion Books, 1988.

Calhoun, Mary. *Tomo’s Cat*. New York: Morrow Books, 1996.

Jacobs, William Jay. *Ellis Island: New Hope in A New Land*. Atheneum Books For Young Readers, 1990.

Kline, Suzy. *Song Lee in Room 2B*. New York: Penguin, 1993

Kuklin, Susan. *How My Family Lives In America*. Bradbury, 1992.

Levine, Ellen. *I Hate English*. Scholastic, Inc., 1989.

Levine, Ellen. *If Your Name Was Changed At Ellis Island*. Scholastic, Inc., 1993.

Levinson, Riki. *Watch The Stars Come Out*. Puffin Books, 1995.

Maestro, Betsy. *Coming To America: The Story Of Immigration*. Scholastic, Inc., 1996.

Rosenberg, Maxine B. *Making A New Home In America*. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1986

Shaw, Pegi, Deitz. *The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee’s Story*. Boyds Mills Press, 1995.

Surat, Michelle Maria. *Angel Child, Dragon Child*. Sholastic, Inc., 1983.

Winter, Jeanette. *Klara’s New World*. Borzoi Books, 1992.

Namioka, Lensey. *Ties That Bind, Ties That Break*. Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2000.

Choi, Sook Nyul. *Gathering Of Pearls*. Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Balgassi, Haemi. *Tae’s Sonata*. Clarion Press, 1997

Yep, Laurence. *Thief of Hearts*. Harper Trophy, 1995

Immigration Web Sites:

National Park Service

<http://www.nps.gov/stli>

Ellis Island Home Page
<http://www.ellisland.org>

The History Channel
<http://www.historychannel.com/ellisland/main.html>

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation
<http://www.aiisf.org>

Have students research information on Asian immigration to the United States.

1. When did various Asian groups begin to come to America?
2. What were their reasons for immigrating here?
3. What were the immigration laws for Asians?
4. How did laws differ for Chinese and Japanese and Europeans?
5. How did these laws change over the years?
6. What was the Chinese Exclusion Act? When was it enacted? Why?
7. Why did this law change? What is the history of Angel Island? Compare this immigration station to Ellis Island on the east coast.
8. What work did these immigrants do in the United States?
9. Where did they live?
10. What was the Immigration Control Act of 1924? To whom did it apply?
11. Why was it enacted?
12. When were foreign-born Asians allowed to become naturalized American citizens?

Information on Asian American Immigration and Japanese Internment is available on the following websites:

Internment Camps and Japanese Immigration
www.uwec.edu/Academic/Geography/Ivogeler/w188/j1.htm

Ansel Adams Manzanar Photographs
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammen/aamhtm/aamsp.html>

A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the Constitution
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/overview.html>

Asian American Studies Web links
<http://hist.umn.edu/~ericalee/aahist.html>

Asian and Pacific Island American History and Literature for K-12 teachers
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/asia.htm#E>

American Immigration Homepage
<http://www.bergen.org/AAST/Projects/Immigration/index.html>

Angel Island Immigrant Journeys of Chinese-Americans
<http://www.angel-island.com/tee.html>

8) Literature

Read other books by Allen Say. In his other books, Allen Say continues to explore themes of intergenerational relationships, duality of culture and artistic inspiration. Have students read these books individually, compare them to *Grandfather's Journey* and *Tea with Milk* and report to the class about their readings.

Allison (Houghton Mifflin Company 1997) tells the story of an adoptee and her search for belonging.

Stranger in the Mirror (Houghton Mifflin 1995) is a story about a young boy who wakes up one morning to find that he has become an old man like his grandfather and that people's perceptions and treatment of him change dramatically.

Emma's Rug (Houghton Mifflin 1996) explores issues of artistic talent and creativity which are challenged when Emma's source of inspiration is changed.

9) Wall Poetry at Angel Island

Detainees at Angel Island left accounts of their experiences and feelings in the form of poems written on the walls of their cells. Have students research these poems on the Internet:

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation
<http://www.aiisf.org>

What stories do these writings tell?

Students may want to explore Chinese and Japanese poetic forms and write their own poetry.

Transcripts of these poems are available from the Angel Island Association (415-435-3522).

10) What's in a name?

May is upset when her family returns to Japan and she is called by her Japanese name Masako. Allen Say changed his name when he came to America (from Sensei). Have students interview their parents to find out how their own names were chosen. Were any of their names (last or first) changed from foreign names? Where did their last names come from?

What do they mean? In the past people were named for their occupations (Taylor, Carpenter, Wheeler, etc.), the places where they lived (Warshavsky for Warsaw or London), or for their parents (Johnson, Thompson, etc.).

Have students explore naming traditions of different cultures. They can write illustrated stories of their names and share with the class.

- 11) Research Allen Say (<http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/author/say/question.html>) on the Internet to learn more about him and how his life story has inspired his writing and art. Where was he born? Where does he live now? What is his most recent book? Use the interview with Allen Say by Stephanie Foer in class students. Have students use the interview as a basis for writing an essay on Allen Say and his art.

Have students write questions they would like to ask him. Perhaps they can send these to him via email. In the interview Allen Say says, "a good story should alter you in some way; it should change your thinking, your feeling, your psyche or the way you look at things." Explain the ways in which reading *Grandfather's Journey* changed you or the way you look at things.

Other books by Allen Say:

The Sign Painter, (Walter Lorraine 2000).
Tree of Cranes, (Houghton 1991).
El Chino, (Houghton 1990).
The Lost Lake, (Houghton 1988).
The Bicycle Man, (Parnesso Press, Houghton 1982).
The Inn-keeper's Apprentice, (Harper and Row 1979).

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