

The SEL Interactive Read Aloud Collection

Tulare County Office of Education

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Watercress by Andrea Wang

SEL Competencies: **Self-Awareness:**

- The protagonist recognizes and reflects on her feelings of embarrassment and pride throughout the story. She begins to understand her own emotions in the context of her family's immigrant experience.

Social Awareness:

- The protagonist learns about her parents' perspective, developing empathy for them and understanding the cultural and emotional significance of their actions.

Relationship Skills:

- The story highlights the importance of family relationships, communication, and understanding different perspectives within a family dynamic.

Responsible Decision-Making:

- The protagonist's journey from embarrassment to understanding shows growth in making responsible emotional decisions, including learning how to handle complex feelings of shame and pride.

Self-Management:

- The book explores managing and expressing emotions when faced with social situations, like feeling embarrassed about one's background or culture.

Background

Watercress by Andrea Wang is a beautifully written and illustrated picture book about a young girl who, while on a family trip to gather watercress, experiences a complex mixture of emotions. The book touches on themes of family, identity, culture, and understanding different perspectives. As the story unfolds, the girl navigates feelings of embarrassment and pride related to her family's immigrant experience. By the end of the story, she gains a deeper understanding of her parents' experiences and their efforts to provide for the family.

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Before You Read	<p>Have you ever felt embarrassed about something your family does or where they come from? Can you share a time when you felt this way?</p> <p>How do you think it feels to be proud of something important to your family or culture?</p> <p>What do you know about the tradition of gathering food from nature or the importance of food in different cultures?</p> <p>How do you think the main character might feel when her family goes to gather watercress?</p> <p>What might it be like to move to a new place and try to fit in with people who have different customs and ways of life?</p>
While You Read Guiding Questions	<p><i>What do you think the girl is feeling when her family is gathering watercress? (Self-Awareness)</i></p> <p><i>How does the girl's feeling of embarrassment affect her interaction with her parents? (Self-Management)</i></p> <p><i>Why do you think the girl is worried about what others think of her family's way of life? (Social Awareness)</i></p> <p><i>How does the mother's explanation of the watercress change the way the girl feels about the experience? (Relationship Skills)</i></p> <p><i>Why do you think the girl's parents continue to gather the watercress, even though it's not something many people do in their community? (Responsible Decision-Making)</i></p> <p><i>What can we learn about the importance of food from the way the girl's family gathers watercress? (Social Awareness)</i></p> <p><i>How does the girl's understanding of her family's actions change throughout the story? (Self-Awareness)</i></p> <p><i>What do you think the girl learns about her family's culture by the end of the story? (Social Awareness)</i></p> <p><i>What do you think the girl will say to her friends now that she understands more about her family's traditions? (Relationship Skills)</i></p> <p><i>What can you do to show understanding and respect for your family's traditions, even if they seem different from others? (Responsible Decision-Making)</i></p>
After Reading	For Grades K-2:

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Activity: "My Family's Tradition" Drawing and Sharing

1. **Objective:** Students will reflect on their own family traditions and connect with the protagonist's feelings in the book.
 2. **Materials:** Paper, crayons/markers.
 3. **Instructions:**
 - Ask the students to think about a tradition their family has, like a special meal, holiday celebration, or activity they do together.
 - Have them draw a picture of this tradition.
 - Once finished, ask students to share their drawing with the class and explain why it is important to them.
 4. **Discussion:** After everyone has shared, guide a discussion about how it feels to be proud of your family traditions and how understanding different traditions can help us be kind and respectful to others.
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For Grades 3-5:

Activity: "Empathy Letters"

1. **Objective:** Students will practice empathy and self-reflection by writing a letter from the perspective of the protagonist.
2. **Materials:** Paper, pencils, markers for decoration.
3. **Instructions:**
 - Ask students to imagine they are the protagonist from *Watercress*. Write a letter to a friend explaining how they felt at the beginning of the story and how they feel at the end.
 - Encourage students to describe what they learned about their family's culture and how they now feel about their family's traditions.
 - Students can decorate the letter to make it personal and creative.
4. **Discussion:** After writing, have students share their letters in small groups. Discuss how empathy helps us understand others' perspectives and how our own family traditions shape our identity.