

A Map Into the World

by Kao Kalia Yang, illustrated by Seo Kim

Identities & Themes

- East/Southeast Asian American (Hmong)
- Bi/Multiracial identity or relationships
- Multigenerational relationships
- Grief/Loss
- Feelings
- Friendship
- Kindness
- Community

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. How did you learn about or experience grief or loss as a child? How has that shaped your experiences as an adult?
2. How do you talk about grief or loss with your students? How can you make sure they feel safe to express the emotions that come with grief and loss?
3. Which students in your class are being confronted with big changes in their lives right now? How can you make sure your classroom is a place of support for them?

Background Information for Teacher

This is a beautiful story about the cycle of life, as the Hmong family in the book moves through the seasons while also experiencing the birth of children and the death of a friend. The girl in the book reaches out across differences of age, race, and culture to offer kindness and compassion to her grieving neighbor. This book helps children talk about loss, grief, and change in ways that create empathy and understanding for each other's lived experiences.

While this book has a hopeful message, be mindful of students in your class who have had a loss in their lives. Let them know ahead of time that you will be sharing a story about grief and loss, so they know what is coming and can talk privately about it with you first if they need or want to. Remind students that they do not need to share their grief or loss with the class. Additionally, letting them know about a loss you may have experienced can help students feel less alone.

Before reading this book, be sure to read the **Pronunciation Guide** at the beginning of the book. Learning to pronounce names from another culture is a form of respect and can teach children to honor the languages and cultures of those who are different from them.

Discussion note: In 1976, the first Hmong refugees came to the United States from refugee camps in Thailand. Originally from Laos, the Hmong had to flee their homelands because of war. Many fled under the cover of night and had to cross the dangerous Mekong river. Some families spent years in refugee camps before settling in the U.S.

Needlework has been an important part of Hmong culture for centuries, and after resettlement in the U.S., story cloths became one way for the Hmong to keep their stories alive. Many story cloths, like the one in the book, tell about how the Hmong got to America. Before reading this book, be sure to show the enlarged story cloth at the beginning and tell your students about it. You may want to find other examples of Hmong story cloths to show students and see if they can figure out the story by the pictures in the needlework. A good book about the Hmong refugee experience to share with your students is *The Whispering Cloth: A Hmong Refugee Story* by Pegi Deitz Shea.

Anti-Bias Education Tenets

- Empathy & Understanding
- Healthy Complex Identities
- Respect Across Differences
- Notice, Name, & Reject Bias
- Responsiveness & Action

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision Making
- Relationship Skills

Read this to the students before reading the book:

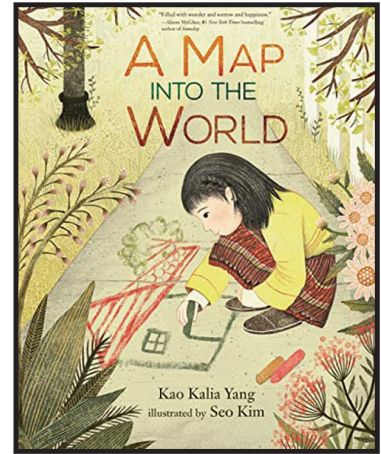
Paj Ntaub (pronounced Ba Ndao) goes through a year of changes when her family moves into a new house and her twin brothers are born. Through each season, she carefully observes the world around her. Listen to see how she uses her observations to help her neighbor find his way back into the world.

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. **Look at the picture of the Hmong story cloth at the beginning of the book. How is the story cloth like a map into someone's world?**
2. How would you describe Paj Ntaub?
3. **What are some of the things Paj Ntaub observes about Bob and Ruth throughout her first year in her new house?**
4. How does Paj Ntaub try to show the world to her baby brothers?
5. How do you think Paj Ntaub felt when she waved to the person in Bob and Ruth's house and they didn't wave back? Why do you think the shadow person never waved back?
6. **How do you think Bob felt when Ruth died?**
7. **Why did Paj Ntaub draw a map into the world for Bob?**
8. **What is the importance of the seasons in the story?**
9. **Think of a time when someone you knew was sad. How did you feel? What did you do?**
10. How can art be a source of joy?

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. Draw or write about what makes you feel better when you are sad.
2. Look at the map Paj Ntaub drew for Bob. What would you put on a map into your world? How is Paj Ntaub's map similar or different to a map into your world?
3. Try to remember the things you've discovered, learned, or enjoyed in the last year. Draw a map into your world that shows the things you listed above.
4. Create a Venn diagram to compare Paj Ntaub and Bob.
5. Divide a sheet of paper into 4 sections. Label each section with a season. Have students fill in things they've discovered, learned, or enjoyed in that season.



Literacy Connections

- Personal narrative
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast events
- Compare and contrast characters
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe setting
- Describe characters/
Character development
- Use illustrations/pictures/
photos to gain information
- Make predictions
- Make inferences
- Make text connections (to
self, text, the world)
- Describe major plot events
- Sequence events