

**A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: *The Arrival*
by Shaun Tan**

Grade/Subject: 6th grade ELA

Time: 90-minute block

Background

This class is an ELL class. Before this lesson, students have already learned the history of U.S. immigration. This is the first time that students are exposed to a graphic novel – *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. The purpose of this 90-minute lesson is to help students gain insight into the experience of an immigrant, as well as into their inner world. By relating the graphic novel to their own experiences, students will be able to understand the terms related to immigration, such as identity, language barriers and culture shocks. In the process of reading this novel, students can also develop their literacy skills such as drawing important information from visuals.

Materials

- Graphic Novel: *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan
(*This book tells six sequential stories of a young man, who leaves his troubled homeland in search of a new home for his wife and daughter. He encounters language and cultural barriers and struggles to find a job and a place to live in the new land.*)
- Video Clip: *Making Visual Narratives: Using Shaun Tan's book the Arrival in the classroom*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ToRVZZeYLoQ>
- Poems and Lyrics:
My Homeland by Thomas Simunsen.
A Forest Child by Suzanne Delaney.
The Immigrant Lyrics by Sedaka, Neil / Cody, Philip

Content Objectives

1. SWBAT recognize that every immigrant has a unique background.
2. SWBAT identify the barriers and obstacles faced by a new comer to the United States (e.g. culture shocks, language barriers etc.)
3. SWBAT describe a variety of reasons why people leave their home countries to come to the United States.

Language Objectives

1. SWBAT apply key vocabulary related to the topic of immigration to inform and explain immigration experiences.
2. SWBAT analyze different kinds of texts (the graphic novel – *The Arrival*, poems and lyrics about immigration) and present key ideas conveyed by these texts.
3. SWBAT integrate information presented in multi-genre texts and write their own family story of coming to the United States.

Introduction

- **Show** the Video clip *Making Visual Narratives: Using Shaun Tan's book the Arrival in the classroom*. What did you see in the pictures? Did any of the pictures shown in the video look familiar to you? What did they make you think of?
- **Explain** to the students our goal today is to look into the experience of immigrants who come to a new and foreign land and explore how they feel inside.
- **Introduce** the book *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. **Open** the book and **show** the several pages to students. **Ask** students: What did you notice about the book? How is this book different from other books you have read?
- **Tell** students that graphic novels are similar to comic books because they both use sequential art to tell a story. However, graphic novels are usually longer and have more complex plots. **Explain** to students that *The Arrival* is a graphic novel without words and that they can use their own interpretation and connections to help them understand the pictures.

Lesson Procedures

Activity #1: Read the book *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan

1. **Write** the word “immigration” on the chalkboard. **Ask** students to brainstorm any word they can think of that is related to “immigration”. **Make** a Concept Vocabulary Web on the board. **Keep** the web on display and add words throughout the class.

Possible key vocabulary includes: immigrants, identity, sense of belonging, new experiences, fear, hope, language barriers, and culture shock.

2. **Model** Think Aloud in Chapter 2 (Chapter 1 was already shown in the video and students already talked about it in introduction part).

Teacher modeling: “I can see the father is staring at the family portrait in the cabin of the ferry. He can hardly eat anything because he misses his wife and daughter so much. Actually there are thousands of people on the ferry who are just like him. Time goes by so slowly as the ferry sails to the new land...”

3. **Stop** at the unrecognizable symbols and the strange creatures. **Ask** students: What do you think the author is trying to say through these strange symbols and creatures? **Listen** to students’ answers.
4. **Explain** to students that I think the strange symbols refer to language barriers because everything is unrecognizable and unreadable; and the strange creatures refer to cultural barriers a person who came to the new land encounters because they have never seen such things before in their home country. **Ask** students: What are the first indications of a new and foreign land? How does the main character react to them? What are some other obstacles and barriers an immigrant faces?
5. **Continue** modeling reading chapter 2 to students. **Listen** to and **answer** students’ questions.

6. **Pair** the students. **Ask** them to choose a favorite chapter and tell the story to each other. **Remind** students to add words they think are relevant to the Concept Vocabulary Web. **Walk** around the classroom and **answer** any question that may arise from students.

Activity #2: Read between the Lines

1. **Pass** out copies of the poems and lyrics about immigration. **Model** reading a poem. **Ask** students to pay attention to the rhythm and tone and try to imitate the teacher. **Ask** student to do choral reading.
2. **Distribute** the Signature Line Form. **Ask** students to choose a poem/song and complete the form. **Remind** students to add words from the poems/lyrics to the Concept Vocabulary Web. **Walk** around and **provide** help.
3. **Ask** students to share their Signature Lines and their reasons for choosing those lines.
4. **Group Discussion** (divide students into groups of 4): We learned from the book and the poems that people migrate to a new land or a new environment for different reasons. What are the reasons for migration?
5. **Ask** groups to share their answers to the whole class. **Write** down all their ideas on the chalkboard.

Activity #3: Write about Your Story

1. Every immigrant has a unique story. **Think** about your family's immigration experience. **Contemplate** the stories in *The Arrival* you just read. Did your family have a similar experience when you left your home country for the United States?
2. **Distribute** the Picture Journal Sheets. **Ask** students to rethink about the questions discussed in class: Why did your family leave your home country to come to the United States? What obstacles did you face when you first came here? How did you feel as a new comer to the new land? How do you feel about living here?

I will share my own experience upon arrival to the United States. For example, I didn't know how to use the water fountain to drink water; and I had no idea when people were talking about the temperature or distance because I used totally different units of measurement in my home country.

3. **Ask** students to start writing their family immigration experience on the Picture Journal Sheet. **Tell** them to refer to the key vocabulary on the Concept Vocabulary Web. They can also always refer to the pictures in *The Arrival* as their inspiration.

This will also serve as the home assignment for the day, because some students might need more information from their parents about the details of family immigration.

4. Students **bring** their journals the next day and share them with the whole class. **Post** their work around the classroom.