



Teacher Guide for *Halmoni and the Picnic*

Dear teachers:

Here are some ideas to serve as a guide for incorporating *Halmoni and the Picnic* into your classroom. At the end of this guide is a space for you to reflect on how you can involve families and bring in students' cultures as part of your pedagogy. To see how this guide was used in a classroom, read Elaine Hou's teacher commentary at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/storybook/commentary.html.



Compiled by Elaine Hou for the Family Involvement Storybook Corner
on the Harvard Family Research Project website

Access it online at:
www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/storybook/teacher_guide.html



Harvard Family Research Project

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Topic

Immigrant family experiences and involvement in children's learning

Age group: Grades 1–4

Book Information: Choi, S. N. (1993). *Halmoni and the picnic*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Plot Summary: A Korean American girl in elementary school is worried that her grandmother, a recent immigrant to the U.S., is lonely in her new country. The grandmother is embarrassed about her lack of English skills and finds it difficult to adjust to American culture. Through the encouragement of her friends and teacher, the girl invites her grandmother to chaperone a trip to the park. The grandmother joins the class for the day and gets to know her granddaughter's classmates and teacher. She contributes special foods and traditions from Korean culture to the class picnic.

Family Involvement Summary: This book demonstrates how school is not only a separate sphere of development in a child's life, but also a place where connections take place every day among families, teachers, and community members. The teacher reaches out to her student's family by inviting the grandmother to chaperone a school trip. She also demonstrates openness to diversity when she becomes the first person to try the grandmother's Korean dish, kimbap. Through a school-sponsored activity, the student finds that her peers and teacher appreciate her grandmother's culture. The grandmother feels more confident about being involved in her granddaughter's school activities and experiences the power of cultural exchange.

Lesson Plan Themes

This book can be used to:

- » Help all children explore and talk about immigrant family experiences.
- » Help all children appreciate the knowledge and resources their families can contribute to their learning experiences.
- » Support children from immigrant backgrounds in exploring the challenges, strengths, and meaning of their multicultural identities.
- » Encourage children from immigrant backgrounds to make connections between home, school, and community in their learning.
- » Help nonimmigrant children understand the value of multiculturalism.

Before the Reading

Write the word *culture* on the board and brainstorm with your students what makes up a culture. You can make a web diagram with culture in the center and different words and ideas stemming from it.

Here are some examples of what makes up culture: traditions, celebrations, different types of food and how they are eaten, messages that families pass down from one generation to the

next, how one understands oneself in relation to everyone else, how people communicate and understand each other, and so forth. Relate the word to the various cultures represented in your class. Talk about how there can be many various cultures in one country, such as the U.S., and how new cultures can be formed when people of different cultures interact. Also talk about how cultures may have different ways of helping children learn new things.

Note: The concept of culture is very complex. Because an exploration of culture is an ongoing endeavor, make sure to devote multiple lessons to this topic.

Prepare your students to engage with the immigrant family story. Ask them to consider ways in which they can contribute their culture or family traditions to the school. Write these ideas on the board. Ask your students to relate their ideas to the story they are about to read.

Tips for Reading

Encourage your students to read actively. Have them keep the idea of culture in mind as they read the following story. Ask them to think about how a family member shares her culture at school, how she helps children learn new things, and what the children learn.

Discussion Questions

In this story, the grandmother and granddaughter go through new conflicts and adventures together in relation to the immigrant experience.

- » How does Yunmi feel about her grandmother living in America? How does she feel about her grandmother coming to school?
- » How does Halmoni feel about living in America? How does she feel about chaperoning the school picnic?

The grandmother becomes involved in the child's learning experience. Through this involvement, individuals in the family and in the school forge a new connection and learn from one another.

- » What does Halmoni contribute to the class picnic?
- » How does Yunmi feel when Halmoni first comes to the picnic? How do her feelings change as time passes? What does she learn at the end of the story?
- » How do Halmoni's feelings change throughout the picnic? Does she also learn something new at the end of the story?

The teacher–grandmother interaction creates new engagement and connections between the home and school.

- » How does Yunmi's teacher interact with Halmoni? How does she invite Halmoni to be involved in school?
- » How does the teacher help her students appreciate and learn about Halmoni's culture?
- » What does the teacher learn from Halmoni? How does this enrich her teaching?

Reflective Writing Activity

The following activity will help students connect the stories to their personal experiences. It will also encourage them to think about school, community, and society as places made up of diverse family heritage and knowledge.

Ask your students to write about how their family teaches them new things based on their culture or family traditions (if your students keep a journal, have them do this activity as part of a collection of personal thoughts concerning their experiences). The following prompt questions may help get their thoughts started:

- » Can you personally relate to this story? Why or why not?
- » What are some things that are special about your culture or family traditions? Is there a part of your culture or family life that you especially enjoy?
- » Was there ever a time that you were embarrassed about something in your culture and family traditions? Did anyone in your family help you not to be embarrassed? If so, how?
- » How does your family help you learn new things? How do other families you know do this differently?

If your students are comfortable, have them share their reflections. For younger students, you can modify and use these questions for group discussion.

Additional Activities

Reflections With the Family

After students answer the reflective writing activity questions, have them ask their family members the same questions and record the answers. This can be done as an interview with a family member or a journal entry where families contribute their thoughts and ideas along with their children's.

Learn New Languages

Halmoni and the Picnic contains some Korean words. Ask your students to make a chart of the words and their meanings. If there are any students in your class who speak Korean, ask them to teach the class how to pronounce the words, as well as other words they would like to teach. If students speak other languages in class, have them teach the class new words. Your students can list these new words and their meanings in the chart.

Personal Family Involvement Story

Ask your students to brainstorm ways their family has been involved in their learning experiences. Ask them to brainstorm ways they would like their family to be involved. Have your students write and illustrate their own family involvement story based on their brainstorming.

Reading Together

Have your students trace and cut out their handprints on brightly colored paper and ask their parents or other family members to do the same at home. Every time the family reads a book together, have both the parent/family member and the child write down the book title on their respective handprints and bring them to school. Create a bulletin board with a family

involvement theme and display the handprints linked together. Add to these handprint links each time the family reads another book together.

Family Storytelling

Have your students begin writing a story about anything they would like. Tell them not to finish the stories, but instead bring them home and read them to their families. Then have them ask family members to write another section of the story. Your students and their families can alternate the storytelling until the family decides to finish it. Have your students and their families illustrate the stories.

Family Recipes

Have your students bring in family recipes. Ask them to write about how the recipe is special to their family. Put together a class recipe book compiled from all the recipes and make copies for each student. You may even have a food day where your students and their families bring in samples to share.

Family Bulletin Board

Decorate a bulletin board with the word *family* in different languages. Throughout the year, display different family activities (stories, recipes, family reading handprints, etc.) on the board. You can invite family members to a family night at school, where they can view the board and engage in oral storytelling.

A Reflective Space for Teachers

Halmoni and the Picnic is not only a great story for engaging parents and children in learning experiences; the story of a teacher and immigrant grandmother's interactions can also generate thinking about family involvement practices.

Culturally diverse families can serve as resources in the classroom. However, with the many demands of teaching, it is often difficult for teachers to take time out to reflect on their practices with culturally diverse families.

The following questions can facilitate your reflections on the home–school connection. This reflective space can help teachers discover teaching as an empowering endeavor that connects families, schools, and communities.

- How do I incorporate the diverse family and cultural experiences of my students into the classroom?
- How do I communicate with the students' parents/grandparents/guardians? What do I hope to gain from such communication? What do I hope to contribute? In what ways can I improve communication so it becomes more reciprocal as well as culturally sensitive?
- What are some challenges I have faced when interacting with my students' families? What do I attribute these challenges to? In what ways can I gain more understanding of families and their potential roles as resources in teaching? What are some ways I can achieve this understanding and transform perceived barriers into opportunities?
- Do I use families as a source of knowledge to inform all facets of my teaching—including curriculum planning and instruction, classroom management, assessment of student progress and achievement, reinforcement of new learning tasks, exploration of

new learning inquiries, students' holistic development, and my own development as a professional?