

A companion guide to the
Literature to Life production of
The Latecomer
By Kao Kalia Yang



TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE



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KEEP EXPLORING

**More ways to engage with
your LTL performance!**



PRE- AND POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

The following activities are recommended to be used as preparation and reflection before and/or after seeing the Literature to Life performance of *The Latehomecomer* by Kao Kalia Yang.

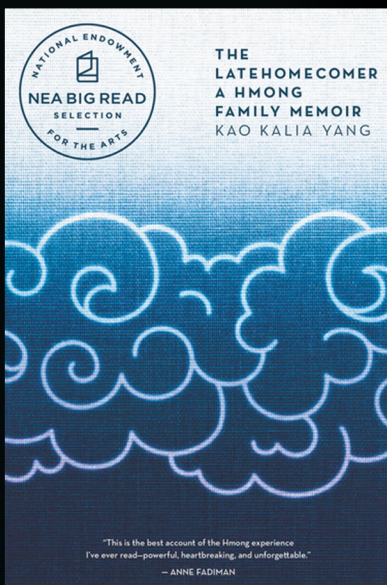
Our Teacher Resource Guides are designed for adaptation and flexibility in response to the teachers' needs. We have attempted to create enough variety to address different styles of learning and exploring. It is our hope that our guides provide insight and inspiration for teachers and students to explore texts from a theatrical perspective.

The time noted for each activity is approximate - please use the activities as they best fit within your classroom.

All Literature to Life resource guides are developed in collaboration with our Teaching Artists. We encourage teachers using our resource guides to reach out to us at info@literaturetolife.org to further discuss the material and collaborate in the shaping of your own exploration in the classroom. Think of us as a layer of support for you and your students.

“I fell from the clouds
into my grandmother’s hands.”

-The Latehomecomer



WHAT IS YOUR AMERICAN DREAM?

CULTURAL & SOCIAL CONTEXT, PRESENTING IDEAS, MIXED MEDIA

55 MINUTES

Students will creatively critically explore the idea of the American Dream using quotes from the book and mixed media.

MATERIALS

- **Selected passages** from *The Latehomecomer*.
- **4 poster board signs** labeled (post one in each corner of the room):
 - “Strongly Agree, “Agree Somewhat,” “Disagree Somewhat,” and “Strongly Disagree”
- **Pen and Paper**
- **Collage Materials** - poster board for each student, scissors, glue, various magazines and/or newspapers, markers, any other available art supplies

INSTRUCTIONS (STEPS)

Warm-Up Activity:

The Silent Walk

5 min

After reading each statement aloud, ask students to silently move and stand by the poster board sign that best expresses their opinion of each statement:

- *Being middle class is the American Dream.*
- *The American Dream is achievable for anybody, even people not born in America.*
- *The American Dream is a good thing.*
- *Non-Americans have a generally accurate view of what America is actually like.*
- *Money is essential to the American Dream.*

Share and Discuss

10 min

As a group, share observations and thoughts from the previous exercise. Then, ask students what they think of when they hear the phrase “American Dream.” Record answers on a chalkboard/whiteboard. Invite students to consider different aspects by discussing questions like:

- *Is the idea of the American Dream unique to Americans, or is it a “human” dream?*
- *Do all people in America have equal opportunities to achieve the American Dream? What do you base your opinion on?*
- *Has the American Dream changed over time? If so, how?*
- *What is your American Dream?*

Read and Write

10 min

Distribute a passage from the book to each student. After reading, give students a moment to free-write briefly about their reactions to the quote they read.

Share

15 min

Invite students to share their freewrites. Use their responses to continue to refine and expand the original brainstorm list for “American Dream.”

A Visual Expression

15 min

Using provided art materials, ask students to make a collage that visually illustrates what the “American Dream” means to them. Invite students to share their pieces and talk about the visual choices they made and why.

A DIFFICULT JOURNEY

ANALYZING PERSONAL NARRATIVES. PERSONAL GROWTH, TRANSITIONS, AND MILESTONES

50 MINUTES

Students will engage in an exploration of personal journeys and how they contribute to an individual's growth and development.

MATERIALS

- Writing materials
- Art Supplies (crayons, markers, colored pencils, collage materials)
- Long pieces of craft or art paper (one per student)

INSTRUCTIONS (STEPS)

Reflect

10 min

Working with a partner, ask students to talk about the different kinds of journeys a person can take. Each pair should then share out to the class and record ideas on the board. (If students are stuck on the concept of physical journeys, prompt them to also consider emotional journeys or journeys in maturation, like adolescence to adulthood.)

Write

15 min

Ask students to journal in response to the following questions:

- Write about a journey— physical, emotional, spiritual, or another kind of journey— that you have taken in the past few years. Where did you start, and where are you now?
- What obstacles did you face on your journey?
- Where or when did you receive help on your journey?
- What have you learned about yourself and/or your world as a result of your journey?

Create

15 min

Give each student a long sheet of craft paper and explain that they will be creating a visual timeline charting the course of their journey. Explain that the timeline does not necessarily have to be accurate in terms of dates and scale of time to distance.

Share

10 min

Ask students to share their timelines and journey stories. Discuss as a class the similarities and differences between them.

EXTENSION: LOOKING AT JOURNEYS

For students who have already read *The Latehomecomer*, facilitate a discussion about the multiple kinds of journeys that Kao Kalia and her family took:

- Kao Kalia, Dawb, and their parents all took the same physical journey from Laos to America, but they had different experiences along the way. How do you think the experience of the journey was different for the adults and the children? How was it different for each of the siblings?
- Over the course of the book, Kao Kalia goes from being a young child to an adult. How does she change as she gets older? Are the changes always positive?
- Sometimes, journeys can be challenging or painful. What are some of the difficulties Kao Kalia encounters during the course of the book? How does she address these challenges?
- What are some of the lessons Kao Kalia learns by going on her life journey?

THE LIFE OF A REFUGEE

GLOBAL MIGRATION, REFUGEE STORIES, EXPLORING CULTURES - DIFFERENCES AND COMMONALITIES

45 MINUTES

Students will explore how an individual refugee story can illuminate the experience of an entire culture, as well as the commonalities that exist between refugee stories from all over the world.

MATERIALS

- [Video](#): Author Kao Kalia Yang's TED Talk.
- [Fact Sheet about Hmong Refugees](#).

INSTRUCTIONS (STEPS)

Define

10 min

Ask the students to brainstorm what the terms **refugee** and **asylum seeker** mean.

- According to the UN, a refugee is a person forced to flee their country because of violence or persecution.

Distribute the fact sheet about Hmong refugees and discuss what students find surprising or interesting. [Watch a short video](#) showing images of the Ban Vinai Refugee Camp.

Read

5 min

Read the provided passage together ([pp. 113-114](#)) aloud.

Write

10 min

Ask students to make their own list of what personal items they might pack if they were in a situation where they were quickly leaving their current home and culture for an unknown land, with no expectation of returning. Remind them that they can only pack what they can carry themselves.

Watch & Discuss

20 min

Watch Kao Kalia Yang's [TED Talk](#).

Discuss the persecution Kao Kalia experienced prior to coming to America and compare it to the difficulties she experienced after coming to America.

- What are some of the challenges refugees may face, even after they achieve physical safety in a new country?

EXTENSION: OTHER PERSPECTIVES

Invite students to consider and discuss a current refugee crisis. (Possible examples may include: refugees fleeing from Myanmar into Thailand and India to escape violence in early 2021, the ongoing influx of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum along the US-Mexico border, the Syrian refugee crisis which has been ongoing since 2011, etc.)

- It is clear that becoming a refugee and leaving everything you know behind is not necessarily an easy choice. What are some of the reasons that a person might decide to leave their home and become a refugee?

NOTIONS OF HOME

ORAL REPRESENTATIONS OF IMMIGRATION, EMIGRATION, AND FINDING HOME

50 MINUTES

Students will create an oral presentation that explores the idea of “home” from commonly held assumptions to broader perspectives as seen in the Hmong migration story of Kao Kalia Yang.

MATERIALS

- Index cards and writing tools
- [Video](#): Author Kao Kalia Yang’s TED Talk

INSTRUCTIONS (STEPS)

Brainstorm

3 min

Divide the class into small groups and have each group write down as many quotes about “home” that they can think of (e.g. “Home is where the heart is.”) Give them limited time (~3 minutes) to see how many quotes they can brainstorm together. Each quote should be written on an index card.

Organize and Share

3 min

Collage is a technique of art creation, primarily used in the visual arts, but in music too, by which art results from an assemblage of different forms, thus creating a new whole. Give the groups ~2 minutes to organize their quotes and assemble an oral “collage” - the quotes can be read aloud sequentially and/or overlapping to explore the effect of listening to the words. After some practice, each group shares their oral “collage” with the class.
This is an intentionally fast activity for students to explore the effect of their words and discover the assumptions we often make about home.

Written Personal Reflection

5 min

Ask students to journal about their individual response to the shared quotes:

- *Did the words ring true to you? Why or why not?*
- *Do they reflect your personal reality and idea of “home”? Why or why not?*
- *Is there anything you want to add to this idea of home to make it more personal to you?*

View & Take Notes

20 min

Watch Kao Kalia Yang’s [Ted Talk](#), focusing on what she says about “home.” Take notes as you watch, then discuss as a class:
What did you hear her say that relates to the idea of home? What does home mean to her? Did it change over time?

Reconstructing “Home”

20 min

Working in their original small groups, have students create a new oral “collage” taking into account Kao Kalia’s perspectives, as well as other points of view previously expressed in class. After presenting once again, discuss as a class what changed and why.

EXTENSION: SPOKEN WORD

Invite students to write a written reflection on “home” in the form of a spoken word piece. In the spirit of a writer who shares her voice, consider having a spoken word event where students can share these works either at a live event or as pre-recorded performances.

KEEP EXPLORING

WHAT TO DO AFTER YOU SEE THE PERFORMANCE...

Here are a few more ideas about how you can encourage your students to reflect on the play. We would love to have copies of some of the writings or artwork your students create! Please email your reflective works to info@literaturetolife.org.

WRITE	✓
<p>When Kao Kalia is separated from Grandmother, she writes her letters telling her about her new life. Imagine that you are Kao Kalia and write a letter detailing your new life and experiences.</p>	
<p>Kao Kalia uses poetic, descriptive language, even to describe the simplest of things. For some examples, follow this link. Using this kind of language, describe a member of your family or your favorite meal.</p>	
RECORD	✓
<p>Create a brief list of people you know that came to “America” as immigrants or refugees. Develop interview questions about the experience of traveling to America for the first time. If possible, conduct interviews with these individuals and record them to share with the class.</p>	
<p>Kao Kalia’s grandmother relies on the oral tradition of storytelling to pass on the family’s history. Talk to your parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, family friends, etc. and pick a family story from before you were born to learn, practice, record, and share with the class.</p>	
DRAW	✓
<p>In <i>The Latehomecomer</i>, Grandmother tells Kao Kalia a story about an old woman who turns into a tiger. Draw your own interpretation about what this might look like - perhaps as a cartoon, graphic novel, etc.</p>	
<p>Multiple times in the book, we read about the myth of unborn babies flying in the sky and watching human lives unfold. Draw or paint your interpretation of these descriptive passages.</p>	
<p>Kao Kalia describes stark differences between the physical environments of Ban Vinai Refugee Camp and the McDonough Housing Project in Minnesota. Draw these two environments based on the descriptions in her text.</p>	

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Teaching Artists, and explore our Programs.

Email us!

info@literaturetolife.org

Based on the memoir *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*
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