

Other Applications of the Text-driven Approach

I Hate English

In [*I Hate English*](#),¹ Ellen Levine tells the story of a girl, Mei Mei, who has moved from Hong Kong to New York and does not want to lose her Chinese identity by speaking English. She has nightmares about forgetting Chinese and being forgotten by loved ones. She ultimately begins speaking English due to a persistent English teacher and learns to embrace both languages.

Throughout the whole class reading of the book, I model the interactive read-aloud method pausing and asking students if they have ever felt torn between two identities, two worlds, or two languages. I pause to ask how the students think Mei Mei is feeling, why she reacts the way she does, and what they might do if they were in her situation. The developmental activities include more focus and reflection on identity and the role that language plays in how one views themselves and is viewed by others.

Grandfather's Journey

In [*Grandfather's Journey*](#),² Allen Say tells the story of his grandfather, who traveled from Japan to the United States. The stories his grandfather told him of his time back and forth between these two places inspired the author to visit the United States from Japan as well. Having similar experiences, the author could now understand his grandfather's constant homesickness for one place whenever he was in the other.

Modeling the text-driven approach with this story begins much like the other two, this time using the story's illustrations to prompt the students to write or sketch initial ideas or make predictions about the story. The intake response and developmental activities focus on rebuilding the story from those same pictures. The author here, Allen Say, is also the illustrator and illustrates the text with beautiful watercolor paintings. So, I first choose several illustrations from key points in the story for students to caption. They can use words from our readiness activity or new words and phrases they create. Then, with a partner, they compare their captions for each picture and expand them into full sentences. Lastly, each student, on their own, takes those captions to rebuild a summary of the story in one paragraph. Extensions can include sharing stories with the class, illustrating their summaries, or utilizing the best response collaborative structure where a group of 2-3 students combines their summaries into one "best response" by including the best parts from each and creating one cohesive summary.

¹ Ellen Levine, *I Hate English* (New York: Scholastic, 1989).

² Allen Say, *Grandfather's Journey* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993).