

**TITLE**

# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING

GRADE LEVEL: K-5

**DISCIPLINE:** English, History

**TOPIC:** Hmong culture, familial heritage, cultural wealth

**STANDARDS:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.2, K.6, K.7, K.9, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2,2.4, 2.7, 3.2,3.3, 3.6, 3.7,4.7,4.9, 5.7, 5.9.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Analyze the relationships between family, culture, beauty, and wealth.
- Understand the value of cultural wealth.
- Understand the history of the Hmong people and how it impacts us today.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- How can one's familial heritage influence oneself as they grow up?
- How is literature used to reflect key themes surrounding family, culture, beauty, and wealth?
- Why is it important to understand the history of the Hmong people, and how can we see the impact of their stories today?

**KIT INCLUDES:**

Clickable links can be found in the lesson plan document.

- [About the Book, Author, and Illustrator \(K-5\)](#)
- [Vocabulary \(K-5\)](#)
- [Themes \(K-5\)](#)
- [Theme Chart \(K-3\)](#)
- [Reading Guide \(K-5, contains a variety of adaptable questions\)](#)
- [Drawing Activity \(K-3\)](#)
- [History of the Hmong \(K-5\) & Historical Connections Worksheet \(3-5\)](#)
- ["Yer and the Tiger" \(K-5\)](#)
- [Listen & Discuss Activities \(Listen: K-3, Discuss: K-5\)](#)
- [Compare & Contrast with The Most Beautiful Thing \(K-5\) f book](#)

**CLASSROOM HOURS NEEDED:**

The main book analysis & themes are designed to be split into multiple days, ideally two or three 60-minute class periods.

**FINAL ASSESSMENT TYPE:**

Reading guide, theme chart, drawing activity, compare & contrast activity, historical connections worksheet, listen & discuss activities

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Main Lesson Plan: [The Most Beautiful Thing](#) (includes all worksheets, activities, and resources)  
Folktale: ["Yer and the Tiger"](#)

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## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING LESSON PLAN

This lesson plan is based on the book, *The Most Beautiful Thing*, which portrays the culture and history of the Hmong people. Weaving together a young girl named Kalia's story with that of her beloved grandmother, the book moves from the jungles of Laos to the family's early years in the United States.

Below are several tools that you can use to introduce your students to the book, including instructions for when to use them. Each activity is designed to be flexible in terms of timeline and length.

It is recommended for classrooms to follow this [read-aloud](#) if you are unable to acquire a physical copy of the book. Have students read over the [vocabulary & pronunciation](#) guide as part of the read-aloud or prior to reading the book (page 4 of the lesson plan). An additional resource for pronunciation, made by Lerner Publishing, has also been linked to the [beginning of the lesson plan](#).

### READING GUIDE

The [reading guide](#) includes questions for pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading. Students can follow along while the video is being played. The reading guide also focuses on reflection questions; these questions can also be utilized in a discussion format.

### THEMES & THEME CHART

First, introduce the idea of themes to your students. Below is an example that you can give to your students.

**Themes:** What is a theme? A theme is a major topic, idea, or message that is very important to a piece of literature.

The themes listed in the complete lesson plan can help students understand what the author is trying to tell us in the story. You can find them on [pages 5 and 6](#) of the lesson plan. Then, students can fill in the [theme chart](#) after or during their [reading of the book](#).

## HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS: HISTORY OF THE HMONG PEOPLE

As part of the resources in this lesson plan, educators are encouraged to have students complete the historical connections worksheet ([page 7 and 8](#)). The worksheet is recommended for grades 3-5, although it can be adapted to be suitable for younger grades.

Here is a longer version of the background that is summarized on the "historical connections worksheet"

Educators should familiarize themselves with this history before facilitating the worksheet.

Hmong people are indigenous to southern China. They migrated to Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand during the nineteenth century as a result of land expansion by the Chinese government. During the Vietnam War in the 1960's, the Hmong were recruited by the American CIA to fight the "Secret War" in Laos against the communist party, the Pathet Lao, and the North Vietnamese. Eventually, the war ended with a cease-fire and

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peace treaty that mandated the retreat of all US military troops. By the end of the war, about 30,000 Hmong soldiers had lost their lives.

By 1973, the Pathet Lao had overthrown the existing Laotian monarchy. They began a vicious campaign to hunt down all the Hmong people who had worked with the United States' backed CIA. The individuals that were found would either be killed or captured and thrown into concentration camps. Thousands of Hmong people fled the country in order to avoid persecution. They moved into refugee camps, mainly in Thailand, that were overseen by NGOs such as the UNHCR, IOM, the IRC, and the Thai Ministry of the Interior. From there, they sought asylum and were relocated to countries in Europe such as Australia, France, Canada, Germany, and the United States. The first Hmong family to resettle in Minnesota arrived in November 1975. Even more came after the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 was passed. As of the 2010 United States Census, more than 260,000 Hmong reside in the United States, with over 66,000 residing in Minnesota.

\*\*U.S. Refugee Act of 1980: Raised the annual ceiling for refugees from 17,400 to 50,000, created a process for reviewing and adjusting the refugee ceiling to meet emergencies, and required annual consultation between Congress and the President. It also changed the definition of "refugee" to a person with a "well-founded fear of persecution".

### DRAWING ACTIVITY

- 1) Have students draw what they consider to be "the most beautiful thing" in their life and write a short description.
- 2) What is important about this activity? This activity is meant to reflect and tie together different aspects of this lesson, while also introducing a creative format. Students should be encouraged to think about their family, their culture, and their friendships. Examples of this include a family member, a pet, a friend, etc.
- 3) If there is not enough time, this can also be a take-home assignment.

### COMPARE AND CONTRAST: "YER AND THE TIGER" (A HMONG FOLKTALE)

This activity has students exercise their listening skills by incorporating an alternative learning method. They will listen to the folktale, "[Yer and the Tiger](#)." For background, vocabulary, music credits, and common core standards, please refer to the resources listed below the main listening resource when you follow the link. Students will explore the same themes from "The Most Beautiful Thing" but apply them to a different kind of media.

Prior to listening, have students close their eyes and do a breathing exercise. You can refer [to this link](#) for creative methods.

Play the audio and have students answer the questions on the corresponding "Yer and the Tiger" pages in the lesson plan (pages 9 & 10). Educators are encouraged to pause the folktale to have students answer the questions in the "Listening" section, while the "Discuss" and "Compare and Contrast" sections are to be completed after listening to the folktale in its entirety. The Venn diagram activity can be found [linked here](#).



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