

Double! Not Half.

Indian Education for All Model Teaching Unit for Language Arts

Overview

Anchor Text

Double! Not Half. by Rodney Gottula, illustrated by Arthur Lin

Synopsis*

When a little boy from Montana and his family move across the world to Japan, he faces the challenges of moving, learning a new language, and adapting to a new culture. But his new school and the friends he makes there make living in Japan fun! One day, when he overhears another boy calling him "half," he asks his father what it means—and learns a lesson he'll never forget. Loosely based on his own experiences as a father living and teaching in Japan, Rod Gottula's book explores how people of mixed races or cultures are referred to as "half"—a term which fails to take into account the tremendous beauty and sophistication that accompanies those who "walk in two worlds." By emphasizing the positive aspects of being multicultural and bilingual, *Double! Not Half.* aims to increase the reader's understanding of cultural diversity and the benefits that come with it. Its beautifully simple message of inclusion will foster appreciation for the value and potential that lies within every human being. The book's illustrator, Arthur Lin, utilizes the warmth of watercolors to create an authentic cultural experience that brings the story to life.

Lesson Summary

This lesson plan provides background information regarding identity and instructional strategies for use with the book. Teaching the book along with the recommended resources and strategies can meet Essential Understanding 2 and several English Language Arts standards. Teachers may modify the lesson as necessary to fit different grade levels and student abilities.

Essential Understanding Regarding Montana Indians 2: Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.

Note from the Author*

Dear Reader,

Thank you for buying my book, *Double! Not Half.* I hope it serves as a catalyst for discussion about how other cultures enrich our lives. Regardless of whether one



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considers “half” to be a negative term or label to be worn with pride, please understand that “double” is not meant to be a replacement label for the term “half.” I hope it is a metaphor to teach that being biracial or multicultural is not a fractional experience but an additive one. While this story is based in Japan and addresses cultural issues of language and race, there are almost limitless variations to our cultural experiences, whether they be related to social class, religion or even sexual or gender identity. Although the main character embraces his father’s philosophy and celebrates being “double, not half,” it is also important to remember that, ultimately, it is up to each individual to choose how he or she will identify.

My parents consistently fostered my understanding that people are people, regardless of language, color or creed. Their unconditional love helped shape the way I eventually learned to appreciate the goodness in others. Perhaps this is how I wound up living and teaching in Korea and Japan, how I fell in love with my Japanese wife, and how I became the father of a biracial, bicultural and (on a good day) bilingual children. *Double! Not Half.* would not exist if it weren’t for the many friends I made while teaching in Korea and Japan – people from around the world, each learning to function together in a new culture. Growing up in the countryside near Billings, Montana, I only saw homogeneity, but as we sipped beverages and shared our stories with one another, I began to better understand and appreciate the diversity of the people I grew up with and the culture that has always surrounded me.

In this journey of life, some are born “doubles,” like the boy in our story, and some become “doubles,” like I did. Either way, we all have something to learn from one another. You see, the tremendous experiences and unpredictable challenges of multiculturalism aren’t limited to birth right; they are available to anyone with an open mind, an insatiable curiosity, and the willingness to learn from others. Here’s to all who walk in two worlds, by nature or by choice. Yours is a gift worth sharing.

-RG

Time Frame

Two-three days (30 – 40 minutes per day or as time permits for classroom schedule and student grade level)

Learning Objectives

While reading and discussing aspects of the book students will:

- ✓ summarize relevant and interrelated issues about American Indian identity.
- ✓ work effectively and respectfully in a small group, listening to everyone’s responses.

- ✓ understand and analyze literary elements such as character and plot.
- ✓ ask questions, check inferences, and summarize information from reading and viewing background sources related to their own cultural identities.
- ✓ understand similarities among all peoples.
- ✓ understand and embrace differences among peoples.
- ✓ develop accurate images of Native peoples.
- ✓ understand and appreciate their own culture and history.
- ✓ understand and appreciate the culture and history of others.

Instructional Plan

Materials Needed

- One copy of *Double! Not Half*.
- Student journals/notebooks
- Access to film clips for the lesson
- Paper, pens, pencils, crayons
- Computer and projector
- Map of the United States and a map of Japan
- Globe

Lesson One: Introducing the book and the topics covered (suggested time frame 30 – 40 minutes)

Introduce the lesson with an introductory exercise of having students write down a few sentences about their favorite family traditions and how that makes up their identity. If possible, ask them to include a picture or image that represents one of their traditions. The idea with this activity is to get them thinking about identity and what helps shape that identity. A possible way to guide their reflective writing is to have them organize their responses under the following headings: who, what, when, where, and why.

Help students define identity on both an individual and collective level. Have students offer examples of both collective and shared identities (such as families, tribes, nations, etc.). Remind students that identity is influenced by the world around us – our shared culture, values, behaviors, and history, the place where we live, and our personal experiences.

Next, have students briefly share one of their traditions and their pictures, if they included one.

Watch [Greetings from Montana American Indian students](#).

- Prepare to watch the video by telling your students this video talks about the roots of tribal identities from the viewpoint of tribal members. While they are watching the video, students will hear words that tell about tribal identity or that suggest tribes' values (what matters to their identity, what they believe in). Encourage students to write down some of the words in the video that explain or describe tribes' identities.
- Consider using a 3 – 2 – 1 prompt to review the film. Ask students to use their journals to write down three things they saw in the video that caught their attention, two questions they have about information presented in the video, and one thing they really enjoyed.
- One key feature of the video to point out is that many of the young people featured in the video were speaking their own language.

Lesson Connections and Reflections

- Have a guided discussion about students' unique identities and traditions and make connections with content from the video clip.
- Set the stage for the next lessons by telling students they will be watching a video about Japan and will read a book that is set in Japan and in Montana.

Lesson Two: Background information about Japan (suggested time frame 30 minutes)

Tell students they will be reading a book that is set in Japan and in Montana. Utilize a map, globe, or a program like Google Earth to locate Montana and then Japan. Then use the suggested ideas and resources below to introduce your students to Japan.

Visit this site called [Japan for Kids](#) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Kids Web Japan provides fun content that helps children learn about Japan. Check out the explore Japan section for ideas and resources for teaching about Japan. The site has kid friendly information about culture and history along with lots of pictures and suggested learning activities. For more background information, use this [resource about Japan](#) from National Geographic for Kids.

Consider using a 3 – 2 – 1 prompt to review the information you presented. Ask students to use their journals to write down three things they learned that caught their attention, two questions they have about information presented, and one thing they really enjoyed.

Guide a discussion about what they learned - images of cities, dancing, drums, food, national parks, mountains, volcanoes, etc. Did student see anything similar to things we do here in Montana? Consider doing a population comparison with Montana. How many people live in Japan? How many people live in Montana? How many people live in our town?

Have students write a brief reaction paper to what they learned. After providing time to journal, have a discussion and allow the students to share their reactions. For younger students,

consider having them share their thoughts orally and make sure to provide them with guidance and support so they can clearly articulate their thoughts.

Lesson Three: Reading the Story

Next, introduce the story by sharing the note from the author and discuss. Read the story aloud as a class. Lead a discussion about their reactions to the story. Make sure to bring the focus back to issues of identity.

Now reread the story again and stop at various points in the book to talk about the various topics and themes presented. Point out the use of voice, perspective, vocabulary, traditional words, and figurative language. Consider using a 3 – 2 – 1 prompt to review the book. Ask students to use their journals to write down three things they heard that caught their attention, two questions they have about information presented in the book, and one thing they really enjoyed. Once again, refer to the book and have students summarize key points in the story and utilize the synopsis to guide the discussion and review.

Review main ideas and themes from the lessons and have students write a reaction paper using the book title. Perhaps, students could write their own stories about being “double” or write a poem based on identity and connect it to the theme of the book. Why do you think the author called his book, *Double! Not Half.*?

Collect their papers and provide individual feedback.

Extended Learning Activities

[Our Family and Other Families](#) uses Hayao Miyazaki's anime film, *My Neighbor Totoro*, to spark discussion about the universality of families. The film follows two girls during the 1950s as they adjust to life in rural Japan and wait for their mother to recover from illness. The film is a good-hearted movie notable for its lack of villains, tragedy, and fear.

For further teaching ideas and strategies check out the following lesson plans that deal with identity and stereotypes.

[I Know Who I Am: My Ethnic Heritage \(Grade 1\)](#)

[I Know About Many Cultures \(Grade 1\)](#)

[Crossing Boundaries Through Art: Seals of Montana Tribal Nations \(Grades 3-5\)](#)

Standards

[***Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians***](#)

Essential Understanding 2

Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.

English Language Arts Standards

Kindergarten

- ✓ KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS RI.K.3 With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text. Include texts by and about American Indians.
- ✓ RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE W.K.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. Include sources by and about American Indians.

First Grade

- ✓ KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS RL.1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson. Include stories by and about American Indians.
- ✓ RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE W.1.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. Include sources by and about American Indians.

Second Grade

- ✓ CRAFT AND STRUCTURE RL.2.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including American Indian stories, describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

* Information provided by author