



The Booklist Project

Focus: Allen Say Author Study
Book List

Developed by: Ruth Donth
Summer, 2012

Grades 2-5



Book List Project-Allen Say

Allen Say was born in Yokohama, Japan in 1937. He apprenticed under Noro Shinpei, a cartoonist until he was sixteen when he and his father moved to America. Say's father enrolled him in military school but the experience was very difficult because he is half Japanese and half Korean in a postwar situation. He was expelled for smoking and went to a regular high school where he took art classes. Say then attended the University of Berkeley to study architecture but in 1962 his student deferment was revoked and he was drafted and sent to Germany for two years. He published his first work in photography in the newspaper *Stars and Stripes*.

The Boy of the Three-Year Nap, published in 1988, won a Caldecott Honor Award and the Boston Globe-Horn Award. That year Say dedicated himself to writing and illustrating children's books. In 1994, *Grandfather's Journey* won a Caldecott Medal. His books have many deep themes including some autobiographical, adoption, aging, and folktales which he retells. Some themes may be difficult for younger children to understand. The characters in Say's books are primarily Japanese. When the story setting is Japan, the illustrations convey the Japanese culture and may interest students with similar backgrounds.

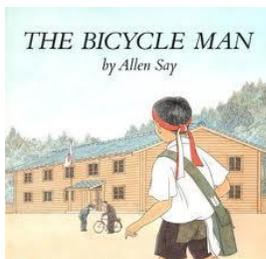
“When Say creates a book, he wants his pictures to tell the story. Sometimes he paints half the pictures for a book before he knows for sure what the story will be about. And he says some of his best ideas could only come to him through pictures, not words. ‘You react physically to a work of art,’ Say remarks. ‘When you break out in goose pimples, then you know you have

something.”” (<http://www.eduplace.com/kids/tnc/mtai/say.html>) The official author website is <http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/authors/allensay/author.shtml>

Reading Rockets also has a short biography on Allen Say and videos of him talking about his writing and journey to America. The URL is <http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/say/>

The grade level for the book list would be about grades 2-5 because of the deep themes that Say writes about.

Book List



1. Say, A. (1982). *The Bicycle Man*. New York: Scholastic. [0-590-44196-5]

ALA Notable Book; Booklist Editors' Choice; Reading Rainbow Feature Selection

The Bicycle Man is a story of an afternoon long ago, when making friends was as easy as riding a bicycle. The story takes place in Japan after WWII during a sportsday event at a little school in the side of a mountain. The children, teachers, and parents are all having a great time when two soldiers show up to watch the proceedings. The soldiers then get involved by riding and doing tricks on the principal's bicycle. All this happens even though the soldiers cannot communicate with the Japanese.

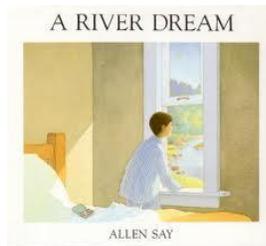
ELLs should be able to see the fun people can have even though they are unable to communicate with each other. The characters in the book had no trouble figuring out exactly what the other wanted.

WIDA Proficiency Level 3; Developing

Lexile 500L; DRA 38; Grade Level Equivalent 3.8

Go to www.server.shopdei.com/126.0068g.pdf to view a PDF from Reading Rainbow on how to incorporate *The Bicycle Man* into a bicycle or wheels theme unit. Another website <http://www.wiseowlfactory.com/BookaDay/archives/1389> offers a worksheet that could be used with older students to check comprehension. At Global Diversity Through Literature at URL <http://www.valdosta.edu/~lamartin/global.html> there are many lessons.

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Nook/Kindle



2. Say, A. (1988). *A River Dream*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. [0-395-48294-1]

New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Book of the Year

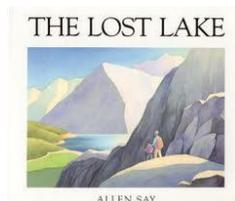
A River Dream is the story a boy named Mark who is sick in bed with a high fever. He receives a gift, a fly box for fishing, from his uncle which triggers a memory of his first fishing trip. Dreams and reality merge as Mark opens the fly box and a cloud of mayflies flutter out. He follows them out the window where he notices his neighborhood has disappeared and a river has appeared. Mark climbs out the window into an awaiting boat and as he drifts down the river he spots his uncle fishing. He and his uncle have a fishing adventure where Mark learns about making difficult choices; will he kill the fish or set it free?

ELLs who come from countries where fly fishing or any fishing is prevalent will enjoy the beautiful pictures. It could lead to discussions about different ways and reasons people fish around the world.

WIDA Proficiency Level 3; Developing & Level 4; Expanding (phrasing and vocabulary are demanding)

Lexile 490L; DRA 28; Grade Level Equivalent 3.8

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Nook/Kindle



3. Say, A. (1989). *The Lost Lake*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. [0-395-50933-5]

The Lost Lake is a boy named Luke who goes to live with his father in the city one summer, but his father is quiet and works a lot and Luke gets bored so he starts cutting out pictures of rivers, lakes, and mountains. Then one day he hands Luke a pair of hiking boots and tells him they are going camping. He tells Luke that they are going to a special place where his father used to take him when he was a boy, the Lost Lake. When they arrive at the lake it is crowded and noisy so Luke and his father decide to find their own Lost Lake. The long search allows the two to bond and Luke notices his father is a different person, a better person away from the city.

ELLs will be able to experience the country and mountain regions through the beautiful watercolor pictures that Say paints in this book. The story can teach them to appreciate the natural environment. Teachers can connect landscape features to the regions their ELLs come from. They may be able to share some “special” places from their native country.

WIDA Proficiency Level 2; High Beginners (with literacy in L1) and Level 3; Developing
Lexile 420L; DRA 18-20; Grade Level Equivalent 3.9

There are a few online sites available at

<http://books.google.com/books?id=Ghy2YOamgZwC&pg=PA126&lpg=PA126&dq=the+lost+lake+by+allen+say+activities&source=bl&ots=Uabu6iWqyl&sig=u9iZwhfbviRiGmdsXG0SZayRvI8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=GxPAT4iLAcWI6AGOnMzQCg&ved=0CEwQ6AEwADgK#v=onepage&q&f=false> there are story stretcher ideas for this book and other camping, river, and swamp

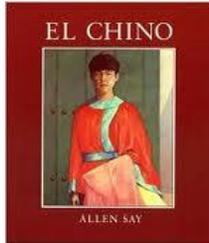
related themes. At

[https://docs.google.com/a/psdri.net/viewer?a=v&q=cache:elkqGicfVrgJ:peninsula.swiftclassroom.com/artondale/streickshipman/documents/inference the lost lake by allen say.doc+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgpxRSNUbkqWWYPMIJ7sHcSXnHVGfp5e-u_Q4VKeCoZjjVeiTStYPunH-](https://docs.google.com/a/psdri.net/viewer?a=v&q=cache:elkqGicfVrgJ:peninsula.swiftclassroom.com/artondale/streickshipman/documents/inference+the+lost+lake+by+allen+say.doc+&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgpxRSNUbkqWWYPMIJ7sHcSXnHVGfp5e-u_Q4VKeCoZjjVeiTStYPunH-)

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teaches student how to make inferences from different facts in the story and what they know from their own lives.

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Nook/Kindle



4. Say, A. (1990). *El Chino*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. [0-395-52023-1]

Booklist Editors' Choice, Bulletin Blue Ribbon, Horn Book Fanfare Selection

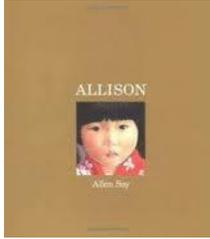
El Chino is a unique and inspiring true story of Bong Way “Billy” Wong and the pursuit of dreams. Billy is the son of Chinese immigrants who grew up in the Southwest. He was told by his father that he could be anything he wanted to be. All he ever wanted to do was play basketball and be a great athlete. He plays in high school and does very well but never got to play in college because he was too short. While traveling to Spain, he sees a bullfight and thinks it is an amazing thing. When he gets up close to the bullfighter, he notices that he is taller than him. The next day he buys some Spanish clothes and enrolls in bullfighting school. In the end, he becomes a matador but he embraces his Chinese roots and dresses in a Chinese costume.

ELLs can learn to embrace their roots from this story and learn not to be embarrassed by customs and ceremonial costumes that their families may have. They can also learn the lesson that Billy learned “in America, you can be anything you want to be.” ELLs can learn to blend their identities as Billy did in the story, he was able to blend his Chinese/American/Spanish cultural and still know who he is.

WIDA Proficiency Level 2; High Beginners (with literacy in L1) and Level 3; Developing

Lexile 600L; DRA 38; Grade Level Equivalent 4.3

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Nook



5. Say, A. (1997). *Allison*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. [0-395-85895-X]

Parents' Choice Silver Award, Parenting Reading Magic Award, National Parenting Publications Book Award

Allison is a moving statement on families, adoption, and the search for belonging. When Allison tries on her new kimono she realizes she looks more like her favorite doll, Mei Mei, than her parents. So Allison starts to ask questions about her real parents in an attempt to understand why her real mother did not want her. She starts to act out destroying some of her parent's special childhood toys. Then a stray cat grabs her attention, so Allison feeds him and asks to keep it because "He doesn't have a mommy or daddy." They keep the cat and Allison and her parents talk about how their family is growing with the cat. Then Allison realizes they are all a family and she learns the true meaning of adoption and family.

ELLs who have been adopted from other countries may be able to relate to Allison and her journey to acceptance. It could also be used with ELLs in an environment or neighborhood where everyone else is the same and they are different. Allison learns the meaning of family; families are very diverse all around the world, so teachers can take the opportunity to discuss what a family means to each of their ELLs.

WIDA Proficiency Level 3; High Developing and Level 4; Expanding (depth of theme)

Lexile 430L

The University of Washington Libraries has lesson plans for multicultural children's literature at URL <http://db.lib.washington.edu/mcld/lessons.html> one of the books they cover for 4th and 5th graders is *Allison*.

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Kindle



6. Say, A. (1995). *Stranger in the Mirror*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. [0-395-61590-9]

Stranger in the Mirror is a cleverly designed story that explores society's reactions to age and the physical differences in people. Sam comes home one day and is missing hearing his grandpa's voice; he thinks "I don't want to get old." We are not quite sure where his grandpa went; we just know he left one day waving good-bye with Sam thinking his parents sent him away. The next day Sam wakes up and looks in the mirror and he is old like his grandpa. His parents take him to the doctor who says they must wait and see, but Sam may still attend school. Once at school, the teachers and students stop and stare and a few make fun of him even his sister wants him to move his room downstairs where their grandpa used to live. He decides to run away when a skateboard comes tumbling through the air and lands next to him. Sam takes the skateboard through his neighborhood doing all kinds of tricks and he suddenly forgets he is old and running away. The owner of the skateboard finally catches up with Sam and demands the skateboard back. When he gets home he finds that his sister put his backpack in his grandpa's old room. Sam is left wondering in his room about why people are treating him so differently when he notices his skateboard and thinks "Pretty good for an old man. But what's the difference? Who cares what I look like? I'm Sam. Nobody can change that." He falls asleep and awakes the next morning back to normal.

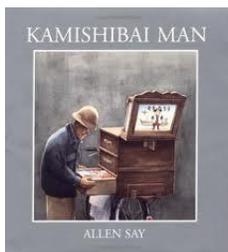
ELLs can learn about differences in people and how we should treat everyone with respect and kindness. It's also a great opportunity to talk about grandparents and all the different names we have for them. Teachers can also explore all the ways different cultures treat grandparents.

WIDA Proficiency Level 3; High Developing and Level 4; Expanding (vocabulary is challenging)

DRA 55

There are many web sites that have grandparent's day activities a teacher can incorporate with the book *Stranger in the Mirror*. Also at URL <http://www.loveland.k12.oh.us/district/technology/ITech/LES/Reading/S.htm> there is a list of books and activities that teachers can use.

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Nook



7. Say, A. (2005). *Kamishibai Man*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. [0-618-47954-6]

Kamishibai Man is the story about a Japanese street performer who tells stories and sells candies. Kamishibai means “Paper Theater” and the Kamishibai man would ride his bike into town and clack two wooden blocks to gather the young children to come listen to stories. The invention of television changed all that as the children stopped coming to hear the stories and only one small boy remained. After that, the storyteller stopped riding his bicycle into town. Though many years have passed, he still longs to be a kamishibai man again, and so he returns to the city to share his stories one more time. He recalls all his adventures and then looks up to see a large group of people clapping, listening, and requesting more stories. They are all the children now grown up saying, “Just like the old days.”

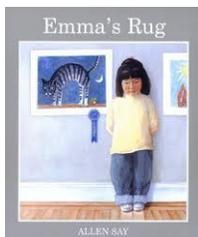
ELLs could benefit greatly from this book because of the story telling option. Story telling is an excellent way to get ELLs to listen and to speak. They could take the time to tell their own stories. How they got to this country, customs, or cultures. There could be discussions on the importance of storytelling in their country and who in their family tells the best stories. It’s an opportunity waiting to be taken by any teacher.

WIDA Proficiency Level 4; Expanding (not a lot of picture support)

Lexile 690L; DRA 30-34; Grade Level Equivalent 3.2

Miss B Busy Bee is an excellent web site at URL <http://alysiabattista.blogspot.com/2011/12/kamishibai-man.html> that not only has writing ideas but a couple of videos about what a kamishibai man is and does. Also at URL http://www.mrnale.com/Journeys_Lesson_Activities.htm#7 Mr. Nale’s Virtual Classroom has journey themed lessons for grade 3 that include games and quizzes on subjects and predicates.

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Kindle



8. Say, A. (1996) *Emma’s Rug*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. [0-395-74294-3]

Parents' Choice Award, Parenting Reading Magic Award

Emma’s Rug is the story of a child who discovers that creativity comes from within. Emma receives a small rug when she is born and her mother places it by her crib. Emma loves the rug and she carries it everywhere she goes; laying on it, sitting on it, and staring at it; but never stepping on it. Emma started to draw and paint and in first grade won top prize in an art

competition. Soon her room became filled with trophies and plaques. Emma believes the rug is her inspiration. She hid her rug in the bottom of her chest of drawers and would take it out everyday asking, “What should I draw next?” Emma’s mother finds the rug in her room and decides the rug needs cleaning, so she throws it in the washing machine. Emma is devastated when she finds out what her mother has done and shuts down completely; not talking or drawing. She throws away all her drawings and paintings and boxes up all her trophies and ribbons and finally throws away the rug. While sitting alone in her room she is startled by some movement, so she rushes outside and sees other things that have inspired her painting before. “I can see you!” she cries with joy and then begins to draw again realizing that her creativity comes from within not the rug.

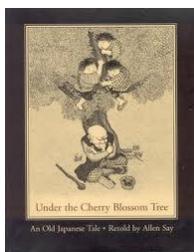
This book can be used with ELLs when talking about expressing themselves creatively. Drawing, painting, or any form of art can be a great way for ELLs with limited English to get their point across or have an outlet to express ideas. Artists from their country could also be shared with the class.

WIDA Proficiency Level 3; High Developing and Level 4; Expanding (tough vocabulary)

Lexile 450L; Grade Level Equivalent 4.8

At URL <http://www2.mcdaniel.edu/Graduate/TI/pages/thayer/lesson.htm> there are lessons for 4th and 5th graders on where creativity comes from. At URL http://books.google.com/books?id=q3uXZ6VBd-0C&pg=PT284&lpg=PT284&dq=emma's+rug+lesson+plans&source=bl&ots=2vRCuHSDil&sig=Ql6Vo83kGrLTFyNJOkB0g7Flbic&hl=en&sa=X&ei=BdvDT_vHMKPs6gGBjNWYCg&ved=0CHoQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=emma's%20rug%20lesson%20plans&f=false there is a section of a book called *Common Core Curriculum Maps in English Language Arts, Grades K-5* where they use *Emma's Rug* to teach a 3rd grade lesson on making interdisciplinary connections. There is a writer’s workshop unit at URL www.jmeacham.com/docs/writers.workshop/units/routines.pdf for students in grade 3 that has to do with rug and flying carpets.

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Nook/Kindle



9. Say, A. (1974). *Under the Cherry Blossom Tree*. New York: Harper & Row. [0060252162]

Under the Cherry Blossom Tree is an old Japanese Tale retold by Allen Say. It’s about a spring day when all the poor villagers are happy and their grumpy landlord wonders why. He sits

under a cherry tree eating cherries when he swallows a pit and it goes to the top of his head. Soon a cherry tree starts to grow out of his head and the children are amazed. When spring returns and the tree is in bloom the children start to dance around the landlord. He gets furious and rips the tree out of his head leaving a hole. When it rains the hole fills with water and fish appear. So one day the children decide to fish in the landlords head while he is sleeping. He wakes up and starts to chase the children but trips on a rock and flies head-over-heels into the air. His feet sink into the hole in his head and suddenly his whole body disappears and all that is left of the wicked landlord is a lovely pond in the valley. The pond comes to be known as the happiest spot in the valley.

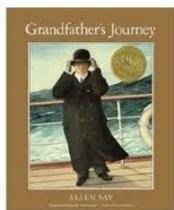
ELLs can use this story as a starting point to learning about Folktales from their own country and learning the meaning behind it. It's an opportunity for them to retell those tales in their own words. Cherry trees symbolize spring in Japan and it's an important cultural aspect, ELLs can talk about things that are significant in their own countries.

WIDA Proficiency Level 3; High Developing (vocabulary and phrasing)

Grade Level Equivalent 4.8

Colorin Colorado at URL http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/cherry_blossoms/ has ideas on how to use the *Once under the Cherry Blossom Tree* with a friendship, folk tales, and cherry blossom theme. There's a whole unit on PDF at URL http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=10&sqi=2&ved=0CHYQFjAJ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.smith.edu%2Ffceas%2Fnews%2Fjapanese%2520Cherry%2520Tree-Global%2520Roots%2520and%2520Local%2520Blossoms%2520NCSS.pdf&ei=gDTFT8LPNuP40gHm7oHFCg&usq=AFQjCNHmV9nIdY_4w0HQ90Mjz689YELTkA that deals with friendship and cherry blossoms. There is also a YouTube video at URL <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t68i7ypoHgc> with a first grade class.

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Nook/Kindle



10. Say, A. (1993). *Grandfather's Journey*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. [0-395-57035-2]

Bulletin Blue Ribbon, Caldecott Medal Book, ALA Notable Book, Booklist Editors' Choice, Boston Globe/Horn Book Award, Horn Book Fanfare Selection, School Library Journal Best Books of the Year, New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books of the Year

Grandfather's Journey is the story of Allen Say's grandfather trip to America and the unique cross-cultural experience. He warmly conveys his own love for his two countries and describes the strong and constant desire to be in both places at once: When in one country, he invariably misses the other. His grandfather, he tells us, would understand.

If they have immigrated or migrated, ELLs can take this opportunity to tell their family's story on how they came to America. It's a great journey and a way to incorporate families. It's also a great opportunity to talk about grandparents and all the different names we have for them. Teachers can also explore all the ways different cultures treat grandparents.

WIDA Proficiency Level 3; High Developing (due to vocabulary and poetic use of language)

Lexile 650L; DRA 34; Grade Level Equivalent 4.2

<http://faculty.salisbury.edu/~elbond/grand.htm> is a website that has ideas for great ideas for discussions. <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/lesson-plan/reading-comprehension/48618.html> has ideas on furthering and expanding questioning for grades K to 3. <http://www.brighthubeducation.com/lesson-plans-grades-1-2/72708-grandfathers-journey-cross-cultural-differences-lesson/> has excellent questions to ask while reading and some art and social studies ideas on cross-cultural experiences. <http://ethemes.missouri.edu/themes/1366> has many different links that include ideas on journal prompts and family tree webs. It also has links to videos about the author Allen Say.

Available in hardcover, paperback, and Nook/Kindle

REACH. INSPIRE. CONNECT.



The Booklist Project

A Project of the
M.Ed. In TESL Program,



Feinstein School of Education and Human
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