

Synopsis: On the Move: A Midwest Side Story

On the Move: A Midwest Side Story is a module that incorporates four major themes: friendship, the lives of migrant workers, the Spanish language, and farming. Our journey begins with one of two main characters- Tommy. Tommy Klaver is a normal 5th grade boy who has a lot to learn about diversity. We are then introduced to Maria Agosto, the daughter of a migrant worker who has moved his family from their less-than-desirable living conditions in Texas to a better life at Jenkin's Orchard in Northport, Michigan. Maria and Tommy meet at school, and their teacher assigns them to be partners on the project, "Where Does Our Food Come From?" Neither of them are thrilled. Tommy doesn't want to work with a girl, and also doesn't understand why Maria sounds so different when she speaks. Maria is feeling awkward and out of place. Nevertheless, the two agree that Tommy will come to Maria's house on the apple orchard farm to learn more from her father, Mr. Agosto, about how food is grown. Tommy ends up learning a great deal more than what he had anticipated. Not only does he learn about farming, he is introduced to the Spanish language, enjoys a traditional Latin American meal, and learns about the lives of migrant workers. Maria grows to enjoy Tommy's company, and feels more "at home" in Northport because of his friendship. As the story develops, Tommy and Maria learn more about language, reality, acceptance, and maintaining friendships.

Major Themes:

The Experiences of Migrant Workers: The module tells the story of Maria Agosto, the daughter of a migrant worker. Throughout the story, the everyday life of this migrant working family is juxtaposed with that of a typical suburban family. Sub-issues include the instability of place and community due to seasonal job availability, challenging living conditions, the language barrier, and labor-intensive work.

Adjusting to Change: Maria must adjust to living in a new state, new climate, going to a new school, and making new friends. She must adapt to living in an area in which the culture is very different from her home in Texas.

Overcoming Differences: We want students to learn that they should never judge someone based on first impressions. Maria's first impression of Tommy is that he is a rude, mean kid. Tommy's first impression of Maria is that she is strange because he does not understand her accent. These assumptions are proven wrong! Tommy learns that you can become good friends with someone who, at first, seems different from you. You just have to try to get to know them. Tommy and Maria develop a friendship through working together on the project.

Where Does Our Food Come From?: Students in Maria's new class are assigned to find out where food is grown. Through the expertise of Maria's dad, Mr. Agosto, the children learn how different food grows best in certain climates and during particular seasons.

Related 4th Grade GLCE Requirements:

4th Grade English

R.CM.04.01 Connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.

(Student readers will answer the questions we have provided at the end of each page on the module.)

S.CN.04.05 Understand, providing examples of how language differs from region to region of the United States as a function of linguistic and cultural group membership. (We have included lots of Spanish vocabulary in the module, complete with audio of correct pronunciations and a glossary.)

4th Grade Social Studies

G2.0.1 Describe ways in which the United States can be divided into different regions (e.g., political regions, economic regions, landform regions, vegetation regions).

(We explain how various regions are ideal for growing different crops. Ex: Florida is ideal for citrus.)

G4.0.1 Use a case study or story about migration within or to the United States to identify push and pull factors (why they left, why they came) that influenced the migration. (H)

G4.0.2 Describe the impact of immigration to the United States on the cultural development of different places or regions of the United States (e.g., forms of shelter, language, food). (H)

(Through his interactions with the Agosto family, Tommy learns about the Latino culture, including cuisine and language.)

5th Grade English

R.CM.05.01 Connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.

(The students are asked to apply their own prior knowledge and life experiences to enhance their understanding of the story.)

Characters:

Maria Agosto- A 5th grade girl who is part of a migrant worker family; she just moved to Michigan from Texas.

Tommy Klaver- A 5th grade boy who goes to Maria's new school.

Mr. Agosto- Mr. Agosto is a migrant worker who just recently moved his family from Texas to Northport, MI, where he found work on an apple farm- Jenkin's Orchard.

Mrs. Agosto- Mrs. Agosto is Maria's mother; she likes to cook traditional Latino meals.

Mrs. Klaver- Tommy's mother.

Mrs. Harper- Tommy and Maria's 5th grade teacher who assigns the "Where Does Our Food Come From?" project.