

Song Lei in a New Land



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Text Type: Fiction: Narrative — Realistic Story

Guided Reading Level: Q

Summary: This sequel to *The Flight of the Little Swallow* begins with a family's move to Canada from China. The book traces Song Lei's first few weeks at school and the challenges she encounters.

Text Features

- ▶ table of contents
- ▶ note to reader, listing characters
- ▶ word list (Mandarin words)
- ▶ glossary

Text Supports

- ▶ informative chapter headings
- ▶ speaker usually identified in dialogue

Possible Text Challenges

- ▶ challenging vocabulary
- ▶ inclusion of text from another source (letter)
- ▶ lack of illustrations

First Session (pages 4-14)

Reading Strategies

Comprehension

- ▶ making connections: text to self
- ▶ inferring

Working with Words

- ▶ solving multi-syllabic words using a variety of strategies, including context, visual cues, and chunking

Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ make text-to-self connections
- ▶ make inferences about characters and their feelings
- ▶ state opinions
- ▶ solve multi-syllabic words using a variety of strategies

Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ participating in discussions
- ▶ sharing opinions



BEFORE READING

Inferring/predicting

Activating and Building Prior Knowledge

Display the front cover of the book. Ask students what is happening in the picture. Ask, *How do you think the birthday child is feeling? How do you know? What evidence in the picture leads you to think this? What do you think we might find out in the book? Do you think the event pictured here will be part of the book?*

Now show students the back of the book. If they have read *The Flight of the Little Swallow*, have a few students share what happened in that story. Read the back text.

Making connections: text to self

Ask students if any of them remember a time when everything was new (new school, home, friends). Ask them to share how they felt and what helped them feel comfortable in the new situation.

Text features/predicting

Overcoming Text Challenges

Read “A Note to the Reader” on page 2. Look back at the cover to see whether or not students can figure out which characters are on the cover. Now read the table of contents on page 3. Using the chapter names, ask students whether or not they can predict what might happen in some of the chapters.

Now turn to the glossary on page 63. Explain that the glossary provides a list of the Mandarin words used in the story. Depending upon the needs of students, explain the pronunciation brackets and how to use the glossary. Have students turn to page 4. Find the word in italics, *Leilei*. Have them turn to the glossary and find the word. Do the same with the words *Aiya* and *Nihao* on page 5.

Teaching Tip: Have students put a sticky note on the glossary page to give them easy access to it as they read.

ESL Note: This story might be difficult for ESL students because there are no illustrations to help them. Pair ESL students with good readers. Have them discuss each chapter as soon as they’ve read it, with the good readers helping ESL students understand the main event in the chapter. Have ESL students draw a picture to illustrate the main event. ESL students will end up with an illustrated story, and an exercise in synthesizing will be provided for the good reader.

Inferring

Setting a Purpose

Read the title of chapter 1 to students. Ask, *How could Song Lei have old friends in a new country? Read chapters 1 and 2 for clues as to how Song Lei feels now that she is in a new country with old friends.*

Teaching Tip: Students may need to use a bookmark or sticky note to mark places in the text where they find clues.



DURING READING

Have students read chapters 1 and 2 independently, thinking about the purpose for their reading.

Encourage students to stop after every couple of pages to reflect on their reading and think about what is happening to Song Lei and how it makes her feel.

Remind them to check the glossary when they come to a Mandarin word.

Observe and listen as students read the text, assisting them with word-solving strategies, vocabulary, punctuation, and comprehension questions. Note students' ability to decode unfamiliar words and any difficulties they encounter. Offer prompts to encourage students to problem-solve as they read.

If students finish before others, have them reread the two chapters independently or with a partner.



AFTER READING

Inferring

Ask, *What feelings did Song Lei have in these two chapters? What clues did you find to let you know how Song Lei was feeling? Look at page 6, first paragraph: "The boy stared at her, then turned back to the adults." Why do you think he did that? How do you think he is feeling? Now look at paragraph 6: "Haven't you seen a luggage carousel before?" How would you feel if you were Song Lei? Continue looking for more clues in the chapter (page 7, middle of page: "rolling his eyes"; page 7, last two paragraphs; page 13, the letter). How do you think Song Lei felt not being able to understand English words? Have you ever felt like that?*

Word solving and building

Ask students what strategies they used when they came to challenging words. Point out positive reading strategies you observed while they were reading.

Text features

Ask students to share how the glossary helped them understand the story. Ask, *Did you find it difficult when you came to a Mandarin word?*

Optional Approach

You may wish to have students read the rest of the text independently. Set a purpose for reading and choose a date to come back together to discuss and work with the text using the Optional After Reading session (see page 8). You may choose to do some diagnostic work with students or to hold a book discussion halfway through to check their comprehension of the text.

Setting a Purpose

Synthesizing/infering

Tell students to read to find out how Song Lei adjusts to life in Canada.

Second Session (pages 15-27)

Reading Strategies

Comprehension

- ▶ making connections: text to self
- ▶ inferring

Working with Words

- ▶ solving multi-syllabic words using a variety of strategies, including context, visual cues, and chunking

Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ make text-to-self connections
- ▶ make inferences about characters and their feelings
- ▶ state opinions
- ▶ solve multi-syllabic words using a variety of strategies

Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ participating in discussions
- ▶ sharing opinions



BEFORE READING

Inferring

Activating and Building Prior Knowledge

Ask students to reread both of Song Lei's letters to Chen Nainai (pages 13 and 14). Ask, *Why did she write the second letter? Why didn't she tell Auntie Jin how Ling Wei had behaved? Why didn't she tell anyone about the first letter she wrote to Grandmother Chen?*

Predicting/inferring

Overcoming Text Challenges

Locate the first page of the next two chapters. Read the chapter titles, "Starting School" and "Learning English." Ask, *What are we going to find out about in these chapters? How do you think Song Lei is going to feel about these experiences?*

Making connections: text to self

Ask students to remember their first day of school. How did they feel? Ask, *Do you think Song Lei will face the same challenges you did? Why or why not?*

ESL Note: This is a perfect opportunity to have ESL students share their experiences of their first day at your school.

Language predictability

Discuss some picturesque phrases with students so that they will be prepared when they encounter these phrases. For example, on page 16, tell them that Song Lei looked pretty in her new clothes, but that "didn't settle the twitching dragon inside her." Discuss and lead students to understand what this means. On the same page, work similarly with "Song Lei's feet turned into concrete," and "frozen with panic" on page 20.

Inferring

Setting a Purpose

Say, *Read chapters 3 and 4, looking for clues about how Song Lei feels about her new school. Use sticky notes to mark the place in the text where you find the author's clue.*



DURING READING

Direct students to read pages 15–27 independently.

Observe and listen to students as they read. Offer prompts to help students problem-solve. For example ask, *Does it make sense? Does it sound right? Does it look right?* Remind students to use the glossary when they come to Mandarin words in the text.

Encourage students who finish early to reread and check their sticky notes for evidence of Song Lei’s feelings.



AFTER READING

Inferring/analyzing

Depending on the experience of your students, you might begin phrasing your questions about Song Lei’s feelings by asking, *What evidence in the text supports your thinking?* Have students share their evidence.

Language predictability

Have students look at the end of paragraph 6 on page 16, “chirping sparrows.” Why would the author use these words to describe the girls’ voices? On page 17, what does it mean near the end of the page when she “held her chin up”?

Third Session (pages 28–50)

Reading Strategies

Comprehension

- ▶ synthesizing
- ▶ evaluating

Working with Words

- ▶ solving multi-syllabic words using a variety of strategies, including context, visual cues, and chunking

Assessment Opportunities

Note each student’s ability to:

- ▶ synthesize story events by comparing life in Canada and China
- ▶ evaluate author’s craft
- ▶ state opinions
- ▶ solve multi-syllabic words using a variety of strategies

Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ participating in discussions
- ▶ sharing opinions



BEFORE READING

Inferring

Activating and Building Prior Knowledge

Ask students to reread Song Lei’s letter to Chen Nainai (pages 25 and 26). Ask, *How is she feeling about her new school and Canada now? Why did she tear up the letter?*

Predicting/inferring

Overcoming Text Challenges

Locate the first page of the next three chapters. Read the chapter titles, “Cool Autumn,” “Cool at School,” and “Invitations.” Ask, *What do you think is going*

Language predictability

to happen at school in these chapters? What do you think “Invitations” refers to? Look at the front cover again. Does this help you?

Ask students to think about the word *cool*. Does it have more than one meaning? Ask students to tell you which meaning is being used in this story.

Synthesizing

Setting a Purpose

Say, *Read chapters 5, 6, and 7. As you read, find examples of how different life is for Song Lei compared to her life in China. Make and fill in a two-column chart labelled “Canada” and “China.”*



DURING READING

Direct students to read the chapters independently.

Observe and listen to students as they read the text. Offer prompts to help students problem-solve as they read. For example, say, *Does it make sense? Does it sound right? Does it look right?* Remind students to use the glossary when they come to Mandarin words in the text.

Encourage students who finish early to reread these chapters and confirm their evidence for the two-column chart.



AFTER READING

Synthesizing

Have students share their evidence and complete the two-column chart. Example:

Canada	China
<i>Clothing:</i> jeans, capris, cool T-shirts	Skirts, silk
<i>Make-up:</i> nail polish	
<i>Celebrations:</i> Birthday party with treat bags	

Evaluating/making connections: text to self

Recall page 19 with students and discuss the play on words the author uses for Mr. Harriman’s name. Note that it appears again on page 45. Ask, *Why would the author use this technique?* Now look at page 46. Discuss Mr. Baldwin—Mr. Bald One. Ask, *Is this something people do? When a person’s name reminds them of something, do they change the name the way these children did? Do you think this is good writing by the author?*

Ask, *How did you feel about Kennedy’s response to the invitation (page 49)? If you were in Song Lei’s class, what would you do to help her fit in?*

Fourth Session (pages 51-62)

Reading Strategies

Comprehension

- ▶ synthesizing
- ▶ predicting/infering
- ▶ making connections: text to world

Working with Words

- ▶ solving multi-syllabic words using a variety of strategies including context, visual cues, and chunking

Assessment Opportunities

Note each student's ability to:

- ▶ make text-to-world connections
- ▶ make inferences about characters and their feelings
- ▶ predict story events
- ▶ synthesize information
- ▶ solve multi-syllabic words using a variety of strategies

Oral Language Opportunities

- ▶ participating in discussions
- ▶ sharing opinions



BEFORE READING

Predicting

Activating and Building Prior Knowledge

Ask students to reread the final paragraph of chapter 7. Ask, *Do you think the birthday party is going to be a success? Why or why not? Do you think Song Lei will do anything to try to make it a success, or will she just hope for the best? Why do you think so?*

Inferring

Ask, *Is there something in that last paragraph that makes you think Song Lei is starting to fit in?* (correctly pronouncing Mr. Harriman's name, asking about treat bags)

Predicting/infering

Overcoming Text Challenges

Read the title of chapter 8 together. Ask, *Why do you think the author chose this title for the final chapter? What do you think might happen?*

Synthesizing

Setting a Purpose

Tell students, *Read to find evidence of how the characters have changed their behaviour over the course of the story. Label sticky notes, or make a chart in your log with Song Lei, Wayne, Mom, and Friends. When you find the evidence in the story, put a sticky note at that spot in the text, or record in your reading log.*



DURING READING

Direct students to read the chapter and the poem on page 62 independently. Encourage them to pause at the end of each page and think about whether the characters are now behaving differently from how they behaved previously, and if so, in what way.

Observe and listen to students as they read the text. Assist them with word-solving strategies, vocabulary, punctuation, and comprehension queries. Remind students to use the glossary when they encounter Mandarin words.

Encourage students who finish early to reread and confirm their evidence for sharing.



AFTER READING

Synthesizing

Have students share their evidence of changes in the characters' behaviour by looking back at their sticky notes or log entries.

Making connections: text to world/evaluating

Read the poem on page 62 together. Autumn said that this poem could be about Canada. Ask, *Do you agree or disagree? Explain.*

Optional After Reading

Synthesizing

If students have completed the text independently, use the following After Reading discussion suggestions to support comprehension, word solving, and good reader strategies.

Ask students if Song Lei has changed from the beginning of the book to the end of the book. Ask, *Do you think Song Lei will continue to be happy in Canada?* Then ask, *Is there is any way we could make it easier for new immigrants who come to Canada? What could we do at school to help them?*

Text features

Look at the "A Note to the Reader," table of contents, and glossary. Ask students to explain how these text features helped them when reading the book.

Rereadings

Provide opportunities for students to reread a favourite chapter or part of the book independently or with a partner.

Focused Follow-up

The following activities are optional. Choose those that best meet the needs of your students.

Synthesizing

Feeling at Home

Discuss with students what the children in Song Lei's class could do to prepare for her arrival. Make a list of things they could do to help her fit in.

Making connections: text to world

Make Someone Welcome

Ask students to pretend that a new student is coming to their class from China. Have them write a letter to the student welcoming them and preparing them for life in Canada.