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# THE LOTUS SEED

Author: Sherry Garland  
Illustrator: Tatsuro Kiuchi  
Publisher: Harcourt Brace

## THEME:

Many cultures make up American society. Each retains unique attributes of its own heritage, yet each also contributes to a multicultural, harmonious “whole” society.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY:

When forced to leave her country, a young Vietnamese girl takes a lotus seed with her as a reminder of her past.

This book inspires LeVar to explore traditions and heritage passed down through generations when he meets young people from Vietnam, Yemen, Russia and South Africa who have recently come to the United States. Each retains unique attributes of their own heritage, yet also contributes to a multicultural, harmonious society.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Discuss with the class why the seed was so important to the grandmother in the story.

Discuss why families pass stories and/or objects on to future generations. Why was the narrator of the story going to save the lotus seed given to her and then give seeds from its plant to *her* children?

Have the class define “homeland.” Discuss some of the symbols of America.

Have students prioritize information they think someone their age who is new to this country should know about life here. Discuss ways in which they might make this new person welcome.

## CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have the students interview family members (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles) about a favorite memory or family story and then write the memory in the form of a story to share with the class.

Invite the students to tell about a cherished item in their homes that has been passed from generation to generation.

Ask the students to imagine that they had to leave their homes and have them list five things that they consider important enough to take along with them. Invite them to share their lists and tell why they chose those items.

Have the students compare and contrast the story grandmother’s life in Vietnam with her life in the United States.

Obtain a copy of the book and show the students the poem written in Vietnamese on the back of the dust jacket. Read the translation of the poem to them from the back inside flap of the dust jacket. Have them compare the description of the lotus flower in the poem with the descriptions of the flower in the book.

Have students research Vietnamese culture. Locate Vietnam on a world map. Begin the activity by brainstorming two charts, “What We Know” and “What We Want to Know.” Use the story as a starting place for entering ideas on the charts. Keep the charts on display so that as students acquire new information, they can add and delete from them.

Enlist the aid of the students in collecting flower seeds and have them examine the seeds with a magnifying glass. As they compare and contrast characteristics of the seeds, have them make sketches, sort the seeds into categories according to various attributes, and make notes about their findings. They might also graph the results of their classification of seeds.

Have the students brainstorm a list of flower names. Discuss which flowers are fairly common to the area in which they live and which flowers are rarely found there. Differentiate wildflowers from “domesticated” varieties.

Have students compare the conditions under which a lotus flower grows with the growing conditions of flowers we typically have in our gardens.

## RELATED THEMES:

immigrants  
families  
flower gardening  
home  
cultural diversity

## RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #130 — The Carousel  
Program #7 — Liang And The Magic Paintbrush  
Program #39 — The Paper Crane  
Program #29 — Watch The Stars Come Out

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Her work with Vietnamese families has inspired Sherry Garland to write about Vietnamese culture. She has published novels for young adults as well as picture books that have themes related to Vietnam and its people. She lives with her husband in Houston, Texas.

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**ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:**

Tatsuro Kiuchi is a native of Tokyo, Japan, but studied art in the United States. *The Lotus Seed* is his first book. He currently lives in Tokyo.

**BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:**

I'M NEW HERE

by Bud Howlett (Houghton Mifflin)

HALMONI AND THE PICNIC

by Sook Nyul Choi, illus. by Karen M. Dugan (Houghton Mifflin)

GRANDFATHER'S JOURNEY

by Allen Say (Houghton Mifflin)

**SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:**

POSTCARDS FROM VIETNAM

by Denise Allard (Raintree Steck-Vaughn)

CLEVERSTICKS

by Bernard Ashley, illus. by Derek Brazell (Crown)

HOANG BREAKS THE LUCKY TEAPOT

by Rosemary Breckler, illus. by Adrian Frankel (Houghton Mifflin)

WHERE THE RIVER RUNS WILD

by Nancy Price Graff, photographs by Richard Howard (Little, Brown)

HOANG ANH, A VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN BOY

by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith, photographs by Lawrence Migdale (Holiday House)

DUMPLING SOUP

by Jama Kim Rattigan, illus. by Lillian Hsu-Flanders (Little, Brown)

MAKING A NEW HOME IN AMERICA

by Maxine Rosenberg, photographs by George Ancona (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard)

TREE OF CRANES

by Allen Say (Houghton Mifflin)

THE WHISPERING CLOTH: A REFUGEE'S STORY

by Pegi Deitz Shea, illus. by Anita Riggio (Boyd's Mills)

ANGEL CHILD, DRAGON CHILD

by Michele Surat, illus. by Vo-Dinh Mai (Raintree)

