

Learning Guide



Communication Nation

Episode 2: Mother Tongues

We hope you enjoyed learning all about some of the different languages people speak and why they are so important. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen

Answer TRUE or FALSE statements before and after listening to the episode.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts and Extension Projects

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8

Who I Am: Write an Identity Poem

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3, W.4, SL.4, .L.3; CASEL: Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, & Relationship Skills; NCA: Self-Expression & Creative Communication

Preserving Community Assets: Action Plan Design

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1, W.4, W.7, SL.1; C3 Framework for Social Studies: D2.Civ.7, D4.6, D4.7

Oral Language Storybook

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4, SL.5, W.3, SL.1; National Core Arts Standards (Visual Arts & Media Arts): VA:Cr1.1, VA:Cr2.1, VA:Pr6.1, MA:Re7.1

Language Maps

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1, RI.7, RI.9; C3 Framework for Social Studies: D2.Geo.2 & D2.Geo.9

Additional Resources & Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

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<https://www.childrenshour.org/mother-tongues/>



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!

Read each statement and write TRUE or FALSE based on what you already know.



2. After listening!

Based on what the experts said in the episode, write TRUE or FALSE.



Before Listening	TRUE or FALSE?	After Listening
	1. If it's close enough for them to understand what you mean, it's okay if you don't say someone's name correctly.	
	2. There are no Native languages spoken in any schools anymore.	
	3. Keres is now spoken all over the world.	
	4. Indigenous languages were once banned by the United States government in some settings.	
	5. Dr. Curtis Chavez says language helps Indigenous people keep their identity and culture strong.	
	6. All Indigenous languages in North America have been lost.	
	7. Research suggests that children often learn languages faster than adults.	

What did you learn?



Get Set to Listen

Answer key

1. FALSE. Saying someone's name correctly shows respect for their background. If it's hard for you to pronounce, you can practice saying it when they're not around and then surprise them by saying it correctly once you learn it. You can look up the correct pronunciation online to help you learn!
2. FALSE. In an attempt to preserve and revitalize Native languages, several Native languages are spoken and taught in schools. We learned about the Cochiti Children's Learning Center in Cochiti Pueblo, where they are learning Keres.
3. FALSE. Keres is spoken in only [a few places in New Mexico](#).
4. TRUE
5. TRUE
6. FALSE. Although hundreds of Indigenous languages have been lost due to colonization, forced assimilation, and discrimination, many Indigenous languages are undergoing [revitalization](#).
7. TRUE



Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to [the episode](#). Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

identity

The characteristics and qualities that make a person who they are.

culture

The customs, traditions, beliefs, and way of life of a group of people.



Vocabulary

ancestors

People from whom you are descended, including previous generations of your family.

values

A person's important beliefs and principles that guide their behavior and decisions.

role

The function and responsibility that a person has as a member of a group.

experiences

Events or activities that someone goes through.



Vocabulary

community

A group of people living in the same area or sharing something in common.

asset

Something valuable or beneficial.

resources

Materials, money, ideas, people, or other assets that can be used to accomplish something.

preserve

To keep something in its original state or in good condition.



Vocabulary

revitalize

To make something active, healthy, alive, or energetic again.

indigenous

To be native to a place, or the first ones to live there. Indigenous peoples maintain unique cultural practices, languages, identities, and connections to their ancestral lands.

imagery

Descriptive language that creates vivid pictures in the reader's mind.

oral language

Using spoken words to communicate.



Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think saying a person's name correctly is a sign of respect? How might someone feel when their name is mispronounced or made fun of?
2. Why is it important to make an effort to learn how to say someone's name correctly?
3. What can you do if someone keeps saying your name wrong?
4. How can learning about names help people better understand different cultures?
5. How is the language you speak connected to your identity?
6. How does learning an ancestral language help children connect to their heritage?
7. What is your family's mother tongue, or what languages were spoken by your ancestors?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Writing prompts

Narrative Prompts

1. Write about a time when someone said your name correctly—or incorrectly. How did it make you feel?

Informative/Explanatory Prompts

1. Research your first or last name. Find its meaning, origin, and any family story connected to it.

Extension: Create a class book or poster with each student's name, pronunciation, and something special about its meaning or history.

2. Research the reasons children generally learn languages more easily than adults.

Extension: Write a brochure with tips on how to learn a new language.

3. We learned about how the Cochiti Children's Learning Center is preserving and revitalizing the Keres language. Research other Indigenous language revival efforts and write an article about them.

4. What is your family's mother tongue, or what languages were spoken by your ancestors? Create a short "Guide to My Mother Tongue" pamphlet to teach others some of your favorite words and phrases.

Extension: Interview a parent, grandparent, or elder about the languages spoken in your family.

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. Is it important to protect Indigenous languages? Why or why not?

Extension: What are some ways that we can protect Indigenous languages?

2. Does language diversity make our country stronger? Give reasons to support your opinion.

Extension: Hold a debate.

3. Should students be encouraged to learn their family's or community's heritage language? Support your opinion with reasons.



Who I Am

Listen

to [Part 1: What's in a Name?](#)

Your identity is who you are as a person. Each person has a story and background that defines who they are. Help others learn about your identity with this activity. Write notes and draw information about yourself in each section below.

My Names (first, last, nicknames, preferred names, name meanings)	My Roles (Within your family, friends, community, school)
My Places (Where you live, where your ancestors are from, places you visit, what the geography/environment is like)	My Culture (Languages you speak, holidays you celebrate, favorite foods, religion, values, and beliefs)
My Interests (Hobbies, activities, sports, collections, talents)	My Experiences (Important events in your life)

Once you have ideas in each box, use them to create a poem on the next page!



Who I Am

Create a poem about your identity and who you are. For each line, choose and write words related to what you noted in the categories on the previous page.

Line 1: Names	_____
Line 2: Roles	_____
Line 3: Places	_____
Line 4: Culture	_____
Line 5: Interests	_____
Line 6: Experiences	_____

This is who I am.

Take a blank piece of cardstock paper and fold it into three equal parts. Fold the page into a three-dimensional triangle. On one side, write your poem. On the other side, design a name tag that reflects your identity. The third side will serve as the base of your structure. Use the space below to sketch ideas for your name tag. Use information and visuals from your chart.



When you are finished, read your poem and introduce yourself with your name tag to at least 2 other people.



Preserving Community Assets

Listen

to [Part 2: Saving America's First Languages](#)

Your community includes the people, places, and ideas around you and what you value. You can belong to many communities—some you choose, like clubs, and others you're automatically part of, like school. Communities have assets, and people can strengthen their communities by working to preserve or protect them.

Brainstorm a list of assets/resources that exist in your city or town.

Provide at least 3 examples for each category in the chart below:

 People in your community who help others	 Organizations and services in your community that help others
 Places in your community where you can enjoy nature	 Languages and cultures of the people in your community



Preserving Community Assets

Choose one asset or resource from your chart that you would like to support.

What could people in your community do to help this asset?

Circle or highlight all of the possible options.

Celebrate the Asset	Improve the Asset	Preserve the Asset
Show them/it appreciation and gratitude	Help make physical improvements like cleaning or making more safe	Raise awareness by creating content that can be shared or published
Recognizing their/its value	Help with something they/it need/s	Consider changes to the built environment
Consider them/it and show them/it respect	Help plan support related to a struggle they have	Bridge connections with other assets

Now select one of the options and design an action plan to support a community asset of your choice. With the help of others who share the same goal, put your plan into action.



Supporting an Asset in My Community Action Plan Design



Shared goal:

Steps to take:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Resources that could be helpful:



Oral Language Storybook

Listen

to [Part 3: Preventing Extinction of Indigenous Languages](#)

Create

a wordless picture book story that can be told out loud (orally) in any language. Check out the “Book List” for some examples of wordless picture books.

Think about a time when you, or someone you know, learned an important life lesson. Share your ideas with others and make a list of your thoughts. Include at least one drawing to help tell the story.

Brainstorm

What’s the life lesson? _____

Now, imagine telling this story in a creative way. You can use imaginary characters, animals, or any characters that help tell your story. Consider the setting and take notes of your ideas below.

Characters

Who is this happening to?

Describe their physical appearance and personality.

Setting

Where will your story take place?

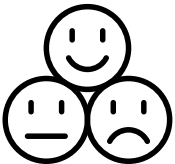
What is this place like?



Oral Language Story Book

Use Imagery

Now imagine experiencing the five senses in your story. What do your characters see, feel, smell, hear, and taste? Create imagery with descriptive language and visuals for each sense.

Reflect

- How can telling this story teach people, bring them joy, or help them through their own experiences?
- What would you like the listener/viewer to remember about your story?
- What knowledge, belief, idea, or value does your story represent?



Oral Language Story Book

Storyboard

Create your visual story made up of five scenes that are sequenced, or put in order. In these spaces, brainstorm and sketch ideas of visual imagery for each scene.

Cover image	Scene 1
Scene 2	Scene 3
Scene 4	Scene 5

Finalize

Gather materials and create your story in final form. Include color, details, symbols, and imagery you have sketched above. Do not include any text. Practice telling your story orally using your storybook as a tool. Share your story with others.

Extension

Ask someone who speaks more than one language to read their interpretation of your story from their perspective. Share your story with your family and/or community.

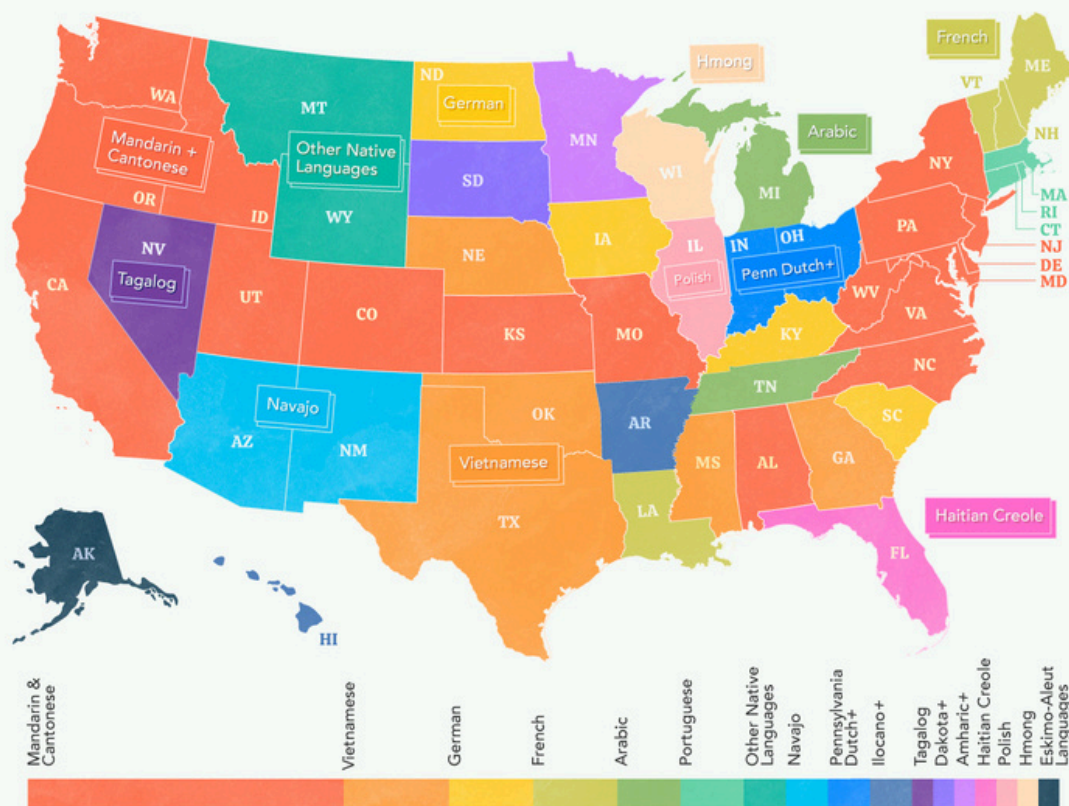
Language Maps

The Most Commonly Spoken Language in Every U.S. State

Besides Spanish & English

There are over 7,000 different languages spoken around the world. While most of the U.S. population speaks either English or Spanish, many additional languages are spoken across the country too.

Here's what the most commonly spoken language, aside from Spanish and English, in every state is:



• Ilocano+ includes Ilocano, Samoan, Hawaiian, Marshallese, or other Austronesian languages.

• Dakota+ includes Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, and Sioux.

• Amharic+ includes Amharic, Somali and other Afro-Asiatic languages.

• Pennsylvania Dutch+ includes Pennsylvania German, Yiddish, or other West Germanic languages.



Cantonese and Mandarin have the highest share of foreign-language speakers and comprise 5.2% of the total population.



Tagalog, one of the dominant languages spoken in the Philippines, is spoken by 1.7 million people and comprises 2.6% of all other foreign languages spoken in the U.S.



Dakota, Lakota, Nakota, Sioux languages could be considered as the rarest of the second languages, with only about 15K people speaking the various dialects.

Source: Migration Policy (2019 American Community Survey)



COLLABORATORS RESEARCH + WRITING Anshool Deshmukh | DESIGN + ART DIRECTION Pernia Jamshed

Learn More

[Language Map of the United States](#)

This interactive map shows the top 5 languages other than English spoken in different states and is color-coded by the percentage of speakers in that state.

[MLA Language Map](#)

View an interactive map showing the percentages and numbers of speakers of the selected languages in this detailed collection of data from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey.

[Language Diversity in the Top 20 Cities in the U.S.](#)

An article and maps from Lingua Link DC.



Image [source](#)



Additional Resources

[The Race to Save Indigenous Languages](#)

Listen or read this NPR interview with Alaina Tahlate, who is working to preserve Caddo, her mother tongue.

[Language Map of the United States](#)

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Videos

[Affirming Children's Linguistic Identity](#)

A short video for educators and parents about the importance of helping children be proud of their cultural and linguistic identity from CECE Early Childhood at Eastern CT State University.

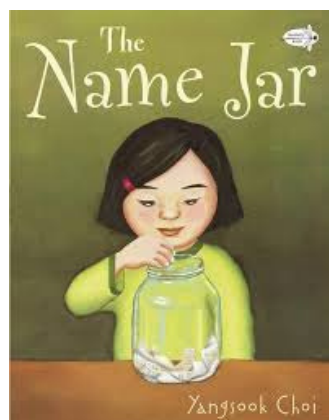
Book List



Say My Name

by Joanna Ho, illustrated by Khoa Le

"In moving, lyrical prose, the book celebrates the beauty and sounds of each name alongside their culture of origin. The author builds a strong case that everyone should embrace their names and honor and learn those with which they may not be familiar." —*Kirkus Reviews*
ages 4-8



The Name Jar

by Yangsook Choi

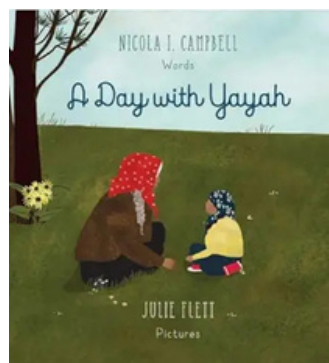
This heartwarming story tells how a young Korean girl learns to appreciate her name. In the process, she shares her identity with her peers, and they all learn a little something more about each other.
ages 5-9



Spanish Is the Language of my Family

by Michael Genhart, illustrated by John Parra

A young boy prepares for a Spanish spelling bee with his abuela, who shares her past experience of being punished for speaking Spanish. An intergenerational book about hope, family ties, and cultural pride.
ages 4-9



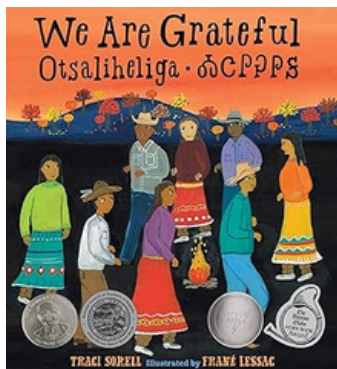
A Day with Yayah

by Nicola Campbell, illustrated by Julie Flett

A First Nations family goes foraging in British Columbia while a grandmother passes down her language and knowledge to her young grandchildren. A celebration of language, culture, and heritage.
ages 3-8



Book List

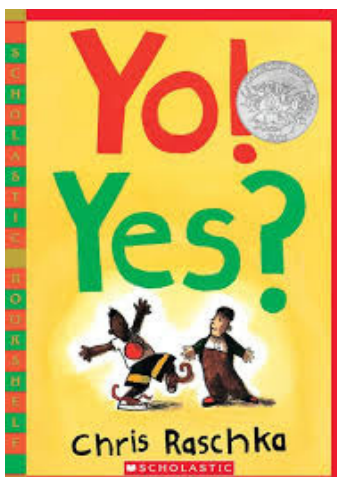


We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga

by Traci Sorell, illustrated by Frank Lessac

The word *otsaliheliga* (oh-jah-LEE-hay-lee-gah) is used by members of the Cherokee Nation to express gratitude. Learn about the Cherokee year of celebrations and experiences and celebrate Cherokee language and culture.

ages 1-9

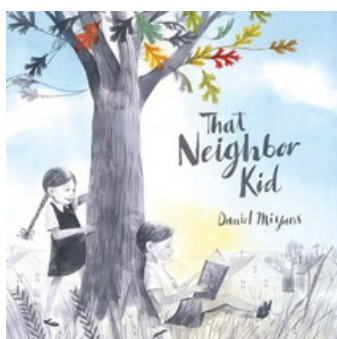


Yo! Yes?

by Chris Raschka

While not technically completely wordless, this picture book tells a simple yet powerful story about friendship and communicating (practically) without words.

ages 3-8



That Neighbor Kid

by Daniel Miyares

This sweet wordless picture book tells the story of two kids who work up the courage to be friends.

ages 4-8