

You Remember Everything That Happened

Grades

11+

Author

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Illustrator

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Author Bio

Tyra Lyn likes to write family history-based short stories and fantasy superhero novels. She lives in Goleta, California with no dogs and no cats.

Illustrator Bio

Scott Gandell is a professional illustrator, printmaker, and an entrepreneur. He is a past President of The Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles, and is an alumnus of Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Scott’s work has been published in magazines, newspapers, and books. His work has also been exhibited in galleries in the U.S. and Canada and has been acquired by clients and collectors worldwide.

Summary

Set in Vietnam, “You Remember Everything that Happened” is the story about a general who meets his end by assassination, narrated by the general’s grandchild. The story is divided into two parts and two different perspectives. Part one is written from the perspective of the general’s first wife. She recounts how she came to marry the general, her unhappy family life with him, and how she stood up to him when the general’s second wife accused her daughter of stealing a necklace. In the second part, the general survives several assassination attempts, but in the final attempt meets his end.

Common Core Anchor Standards Addressed

Writing Anchor Standards-Text Types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Research for Building and Presenting Knowledge

- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

READING Standards

Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Craft and Structure

- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
- Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Academic Vocabulary to Explore

(See vocabulary approach in Appendix A of CCSS.)

Tier Two

Bewildered
Gawk
Nestled
Accolades
Inebriation
Brigadier general
Detonating
Incendiary
Scrutinize
Braised
Silhouette
Incendiary
Mechanism
Pockmarks
Fondue
Porridge
Hamlet

Complementary Short Story to Introduce BEFORE Reading the Text

The first story in *China Men* by Maxine Hong Kingston: **On Discovery:** *the story of Tang Ao's discovery of the "Land of Women."*

Warm-up Questions

(To introduce the story, should be used as a quick write or a journal/reflection piece.)

1. Share a historic story from your family that reminds you of themes such as gender inequality, oppression of women and family life during wartime. If you haven't personally experienced or heard any, share the books you've read about these themes.

2. Are you, or someone in your family, from an immigrant family? Is there any story about life in your/your family member's home country you can share?
3. Does your family have a patriarch? How does this shape roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for your family members? (If not, do you know a family that does have a patriarch? How does it seem to shape them?)

Possible Themes for Study

- The greatest pleasures during wartime can be material things: jewelry, gifts, food, etc.
- Resource-competing mentality and behavior in a polygamous family.
- The unpredictability of human lives during wartime.
- Repression of women in a male dominated society or household.
- The inescapability of fate.
- How we see ourselves and how others view us are often two different things.
- Resisting repression.
- Survival.

Main Idea for Study

The choices we make now will have future impact on our lives, and sometimes inescapable consequences.

Focus Questions

1. How is marriage defined in our modern society? What are some of the traditions and roles that you associate with marriage? Talk about the concept of societies where polygamous marriages are acceptable. How are gender roles, responsibilities for women, and the traditions of a marriage different within a polygamous marriage? Why do you think modern society has generally evolved away from this type of marriage?
2. No one escapes from the tragedy of a war, not even a high-ranking general who doesn't always have to go to the battlefield. Death lurks around the corner when you least expect it. Each ordinary day is full of perils and surprises. Talk/write about an individual's day in the life during wartime.
3. Do the men and women in your household have equal say and responsibilities? How or how not?

(The focus questions can be used for a Socratic Seminar and/or a writing assignment.)

Comprehension Questions

1. How many kids were mentioned and described, directly and indirectly, in the story? How many kids does the grandmother have, based on the first part of the story?
2. Why did the grandmother find relief in her daughter's hatred towards the second wife? What's the relationship between these three women in the household?
3. What are the hints the narrator has dropped to indicate that the daughter never stole the necklace from her stepmother?
4. In the second story, why did the general shoot the cat? What signal was he sending to the enemy?
5. Explain who these characters are: Nam, Duong, Kiet, Chien and Tuan. Who recommended the restaurant where the general last dined? Who's the one reading in the general's car?
6. On which assassination attempt is the general finally killed? Explain how he was killed. Who was also killed in the car bombing? What were their titles?

Text-dependent Questions

These questions may be used for Response to Literature writing pieces. They should not be used as comprehension questions.

1. Why do you think the narrator changed voice and called the general "you" in the second part of the story? What's the benefit of directly addressing him in the second voice this way?
2. Discuss why the grandmother still loves the grandfather after she was treated unfairly. Why does she still carry the jewelry from him "through forty-five years and twelve thousand miles and a war"?
3. Why does the grandfather like buying jewelry and having a second wife? Describe his character and personality from the scenes in both the first and the second story. Why the disparity in his actions between yelling at his first wife for not responding right away and letting his bodyguard go home to catch a presentation?
4. Why does the grandfather love his 14-year-old son more than the two wives?
5. What do you think happened after the grandmother defended her daughter by threatening the grandfather with a knife? What happened between the grandmother and grandfather? What about the second wife?
6. The narrator has a name for the son, Tuan, but not for the daughters. Explain why.
7. The first and second wives are jealous of one another. What creates their jealousy? Is it a society that encourages polygamy? Is it the general? Is it just themselves? Explain whether and why you think it's one or more of these factors.

Types of Writing – Exercises & Activities

Narrative

1. Write the first part of the story from the daughter’s point of view. How did she view the events between her father, the general, and her mother, the general’s first wife? What did she think of her mother? What did she think of her father? How did she react to being accused of stealing a necklace by the second wife? How did these events change her?
2. Write a short story where the characters cannot escape their fates—where the life decisions they make early in the story and their lives affect who they are and what becomes of them later in the story and their lives.
3. Write a short story involving two characters who will see each other very differently. Begin the story from one character’s perspective. Half way through, change to the other character’s perspective.

Descriptive

1. Write a few short paragraphs describing the general’s last meal: Beef Served Seven Ways. Also include details of how you think the restaurant might have looked, what they discussed at the table, how the waiters interacted with them, and what they ate or drank with the meal.
2. In the first part of the story, we learn that the second wife and first wife dislike one another. Write a description of the first wife through the eyes of the second wife.

Expository/Analytic

1. Write a story set in a historical era you are familiar with. Or, write a story about a family during the time of war, colonization, civil conflict or even post-apocalypse.
2. Read the first story in *China Men* by Maxine Hong Kingston: **On Discovery: The Story of Tang Ao’s Discovery of the “Land of Women.”** How are the relationships and experiences of the men and women in this story alike and different from those in *You Remember Everything That Happened?*

Additional Reading & Research

Read Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior*.

Research the Vietnam War from 1956 – 1975.

Activity

1. Invite a war veteran to come to the class as a guest speaker. Have her or him speak to the class about the ways in which fighting in a war continues to affect your life after you have left the war or the war is over. How can experiences in war change life back at home? Afterwards, have the class write a journal reflection piece about what they heard, saw, and learned during this presentation.
2. Have students debate a political subject in class. Feel free to make it controversial and guide the students in working on this as an academic debate exercise and not as a personal argument. Pair up the students. In each pair, one student will take one side of the debate and the other student the other side. Time the debate. After three minutes, have the students switch sides. Afterwards, have the students write about how it felt to change sides and share their thoughts in class. How does this change the way they view some current hotly debated political issues?

Field Trip

1. Take a class trip to the offices of The Feminist Majority Foundation in Los Angeles and learn about their programs to empower young women in the United States and internationally. While there, engage in one of their activities designed to assist women. (If not in Los Angeles, visit a similar organization or an organization that works on human rights issues.) Afterwards, have students write a journal entry about what they learned and how they can actively promote women's empowerment for themselves and others.
2. Take a class trip to the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. (If not in Los Angeles, visit a similar institution.)