

**Let's Read! 2022**  
**Foundational lesson: Exploring Imagery**  
**Created by: Alma Žero**

**Topic:** Language and Storytelling

**Essential Questions:**       What is the power of language?  
                                      What is the power of imagery in storytelling?  
                                      How do our senses help us expand methods of expression?

**Time:** 45-60 Minutes

**Materials:** Watercolor paint, brush, cup of water, paper

**Chapter focus:** Four Skinny Trees

**Language focus:** Imagery (descriptive language used to appeal to a reader's senses: touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight; creating a picture or an experience with words)

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→ **Engage (10-15 Min)**

**Watercolor Conversations**

Step 1:

Students work in pairs (preferably across each other) with a set of watercolor supplies (which could also be colored pencils or markers). A blank sheet of paper is between them, which they will use to express their emotions. Before starting:

- prompt students to think about how they might show different emotions with colors, lines, and shapes. *What shape could represent excitement? What line would describe nervousness? What color could express sadness or happiness?*
- discuss how a visual conversation might mirror the components of a good verbal conversation. *Just as in everyday conversation, it is impolite to talk over someone; once the other person paints a mark, you may respond. Just like in real conversations, you should relate and interact with each others' marks on the paper. Don't paint on separate sides; add to each other's work. Since there is no eraser, you must accept everything your partner puts down and find a way to build on it. You will only interact visually, which is why this is a silent activity.*

Step 2:

Read aloud the chapter "Four Skinny Trees".

While listening, students think about how the imagery makes them feel and assign colors, textures, lines, and shapes to those emotions. They paint/draw for approx. 2 minutes.

Step 3:

Spread the papers on the floor or post them on a wall. Reflect (you may write responses on the board to enhance critical thinking and shared understanding)

- On the chapter and language: *How did you choose colors to show your emotions about Esperanza's description? What imagery made you think/stop/move forward? Where did you express that in the visual conversation? How do you usually express your emotions when reading a scene with powerful imagery?*

- On the visual conversation: *What did it feel like to have a visual conversation? What was communicated? What was gained? What do you feel was lost?*

→ **Explore: (30-35 Min)**

### **Community Poem**

#### Step 1:

Students read the chapter again and write down the imagery that made them think/stop/move forward during the visual conversation. From that imagery, students choose 3-5 words or phrases. *Think about your own street and neighborhood, the nature, the buildings, the sounds, the colors; and use the 3-5 words or phrases in individual writing for 5 minutes. The writing can take any form (prose, a tweet, a poem). Write as much as you can without worrying too much about spelling, grammar, or formatting.* The main goal is that students are able to write their ideas down clearly.

#### Step 2:

Once finished, ask students to choose one line that they would like to share with the whole group. Invite them to write this line on a sentence strip. After students write the line they would like to share on their strip of paper, invite them to think about a physical gesture: *How might you use your body to activate these words?* Practice this skill with students by creating a physical gesture together for an example sentence written by the facilitator: *Thinking about time, space, relationships, shape, contrast, stillness/movement, and/or levels, what are some gestures I could use to activate these words?* Have students give you suggestions for physical gestures, being sure to identify what elements of physicality are being used. After working together to create a gesture, invite students to think about a physical gesture for the sentence they wrote on their own sentence strip. Students should continue to think about physicality and how their body can help to activate, complement, or create contrast to their sentence.

#### Step 3:

Next, split students into groups of 4. In their groups, they will combine their lines of text to create a four-line community poem. Their poem should include everyone's line. It doesn't have to include the full line but it should include at least something (a word or phrase) from everyone's line. After students have created their four-line community poems, invite them to incorporate gesture and physicality. They can use the physical gestures they created earlier or create new gestures with their group. Finally, invite each group to share their community poem one at a time.

→ **Reflect (5-10 Min)**

After each performance, ask students to reflect back to the performers; what words, images, or ideas stuck out to them. Ask students if they recognize words from the chapter that inspired the individual group members. Continue until each group has shared, making connections between performances when possible.

- *What were some of the different ways we saw the theme represented in the community poems? What connections did you see across the community poems?*
- *How similar or different are your community poems from the chapter "Four Skinny Trees"? Where do you see the connections?*

- *We used three different ways of expression today: images (visual conversation through shapes, lines, colors), our bodies (performance), and words (verbal and written language). Which one felt the most comfortable? What does that tell you about yourself?*