Anchor Text Guidance: Grade 5, Module 4

The Impact of Natural Disasters

Text and author: *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti* by Edwidge Danticat

Lexile®: 590

Text Overview

EL Education's Grade 5, Module 4 is designed to prompt consideration of these compelling questions:

- How do natural disasters affect the people and places that experience them?
- How can we prepare for a natural disaster?

Eight Days: A Story of Haiti by Edwidge Danticat tells the story of how imagination and hope can help us overcome challenges. The story is about a massive earthquake that struck the island of Hispaniola, comprising the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, in January 2010. Haiti was most severely affected, as many people died and many survivors lost their homes. The author draws on her own experience and that of her 5-year-old daughter as they processed the earthquake, with family and friends at the forefront of their minds, to create hope in the form of this story. Students work to become ethical people by showing respect, empathy, and compassion for each other as they read about the human impact of natural disasters in the literary text *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti*.

Text Rationale

EL Education is committed to promoting the development of students' efforts to become ethical people. Throughout this module, students read literary and informational texts to understand the impact of natural disasters on places and people. In Unit 2, students read short literary texts about the human impact of natural disasters, including *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti*, a song about the 2011 tsunami in Japan, and a poem about the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the people of New Orleans, Louisiana. These texts, along with other media examined in the module, focus on the human experience and help students analyze point of view.

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Additional Considerations

Teaching notes throughout the module identify potentially troubling content and provide suggestions for teachers to guide students through this content with sensitivity. Investigate the routines, practices, rituals, beliefs, norms, and experiences that are important to your students and their families. Integrate this background into the classroom as students explore the topic of natural disasters and the physical and human impact they can have on communities. Be sensitive to students' experiences and perspectives on these topics, and foster inclusive action by creating space for students to express their feelings about issues embedded in the text, while also being aware that these discussions may unearth trauma or social stigma. Consult with a guidance counselor, school social worker, or ESL teacher for further investigation of diversity and inclusion.

EL Education recommends that school leaders and teachers read the texts in advance, with their specific school community in mind, to become familiar with the issues presented so that they can discuss them with students and families as needed.

Examples of sensitive topics that teachers should be prepared to address are detailed below.

1. Racism

In designing this module, EL Education made intentional decisions to feature the writing and creative works of people of color. Teachers should be aware that all of the people in the texts are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), which might suggest a singular narrative. We recommend that teachers engage students in open dialogue whenever possible to combat stereotypes, assumptions, or misrepresentations. Encourage multiple student perspectives and discussion through the use of Conversation Cues to promote productive and equitable conversation. This will also serve to focus students on working to become ethical people by showing respect, empathy, and compassion if classmates are upset by perspectives in the text.

2. Disaster, Displacement, Family Separation, and Death

Although sensitive topics such as displacement, family separation, hunger, and dehydration, as well as death, are not explicitly stated in *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti* or supplemental texts, these issues might come up for students who have a connection to natural disasters and therefore must be carefully and sensitively discussed. EL Education also encourages teachers to be aware of the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and how issues of disaster, displacement, family separation, and death may have played out in the lives of students. Speak with students and families in advance, especially those who may have sensitivity to the topics discussed.

Tasks

Throughout the module, there are tasks that intentionally or incidentally serve to mitigate possible concerns and support students' enthusiastic, informed, and safe reading.

Unit 1

Lesson 1: In this lesson, students explore and infer the module topic by viewing videos of natural disasters including Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Students are introduced to the module's guiding questions, which include how natural disasters affect the people and places that experience them. Note that some students may connect with this topic personally and deeply. Monitor students and determine whether there are any issues surfacing that need to be discussed in more detail as

a whole group, in smaller groups, independently, or with families. Students' feelings may be personal, and they are not required to share them. Encourage students to use Conversation Cues to promote productive and equitable conversation and to focus on working to become ethical people by showing respect, empathy, and compassion if classmates are upset by events in the text.

Lesson 7: In this lesson, students draw from their research as they participate in a Science Talk focused on the question: How do natural disasters affect the people and places that experience them? Be mindful of students' sensitivity to the topic of natural disasters.

Unit 2

Lesson 1: In this lesson, students read *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti* in triads. Before they begin this work, consider reading page 1 of the text aloud and leading students through the Mini-Language Dive. This will provide context for the text and help students understand that most of the story takes place in Junior's imagination. Consider inviting students to practice the focus structure of the Language Dive sentence before they read in triads, leaving the questions and practice that follow the Reconstruct activity for the lesson closing. Encourage students to focus on working to become ethical people by showing respect, empathy, and compassion if classmates are upset by events in the text.

Lesson 2: In this lesson, students watch the video and read aloud the lyrics of the song "In the Water Where the City Ends." This song is about the tsunami that devastated Japan's Tohoku region after an earthquake in 2011. Although the video accompanying this song is an abstract animation, students may find the representation of devastation to homes and people upsetting. Please preview the video and determine whether any students—such as those who have experienced a natural disaster—need to be prepared in advance to watch it. In addition, English language learners (ELLs) may find it challenging to understand the video and lyrics, as both are very abstract. Therefore, you may wish to consider viewing and discussing the video with students before the lesson. Also consider paraphrasing each verse of the song for students, as the words are disjointed and often do not make much sense. This will support students in comprehending the visuals in the video and the song's lyrics, allowing them to meet the learning targets of the lesson. During the closing, consider providing sentence frames for students to use in their QuickWrites for Text-Dependent Question 6. For example:

- The song ____ by ____ is about ____. The visuals in the video contribute to the meaning of the song because ____. For example, ____. The tone of the song is ____, and the visuals contribute to helping us understand this tone through ____. The visuals contribute to the beauty of the song by ____. For example, ____.

Lesson 4: Note that the poem read in this lesson, "O' Beautiful Storm," contains religious references. Acknowledge that in times of hardship, some people find strength in their religious beliefs. Be sensitive to students' experiences and perspectives on this topic and foster inclusive action by creating space for students to express their feelings, while also being aware that these discussions may unearth trauma or social stigma.

Also in this lesson, students watch a video of the poem "Katrina: Don't Let Her Go" and identify the meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases. This poem is about Hurricane Katrina, which caused severe devastation along the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005, with some of the most significant devastation in New Orleans, Louisiana.

- Only the first seven lines of the first stanza of this poem are viewed, because later lines contain inappropriate content for students of this age. As a result, students do not view this video on their own electronic devices.
- The video contains footage taken of the damage from the hurricane. Preview the video to determine whether any students need to be prepared in advance (e.g., those who have experienced a natural disaster and may be upset by the video's content). Consider speaking to families and inviting them to preview the video with their students as well.

Lessons 5 and 6: Here, students complete the Mid-Unit 2 Assessment, in which they read and watch a video of the poem "Job," about the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Since "Job" is a long, relatively complex poem whose second half contains religious references, students only work with the first half of the poem for the assessment. However, they do watch the whole video. As the poem contains references to religious figures, it is important that this is acknowledged in the context that in times of hardship, some people find strength in their religious beliefs to get through it. This is also a good opportunity to emphasize working to become ethical people, respecting others' beliefs—which may not be the same as our own—and practicing tolerance.

The fluency excerpt students read for Part I of the assessment does not contain religious references, as EL Education does not wish for students to have to read things that potentially go against their personal belief systems. It will likely take more than one lesson to listen to all students read aloud, so two lessons have been allocated. If students finish Part II of the assessment, encourage them to use the time to add new vocabulary from "Job" to their vocabulary logs.

Lesson 7: In Lessons 1–2, students read *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti* and analyzed the illustrations for how they convey meaning, tone, and beauty. In this lesson, they revisit that text and analyze how the narrator's point of view influences how events are described. Students focus on working to become ethical people by showing respect, empathy, and compassion as they analyze the point of view of a narrator who is facing terrifying challenges, which some students may find upsetting.

Lesson 9: Students complete the End of Unit 2 Assessment, in which they reread and watch "Job." Similar to the Mid-Unit 2 Assessment, since "Job" is a long, relatively complex poem with religious references in the second half, students work only with the first half of the text for the assessment. However, they do watch the whole video before they begin. Again, it is important that this reference is acknowledged in the context that in times of hardship, some people find strength in their religious beliefs. This is also a good opportunity to emphasize working to become ethical people, respecting others' beliefs—which may not be the same as our own—and practicing tolerance.

Unit 3

As students prepare for the End of Unit 3 Assessment and the module's performance task, consider inviting members of the community, family members, or teachers to come into the classroom (or appear virtually) to share their personal stories about natural disasters. Expert visitors such as scientists with expertise on natural disasters, particularly those relevant to the local area, may be invited as well.

Unit 3 focuses on engaging students in acts of service around preparing for or responding to natural disasters in order to apply and deepen their learning. Students can:

- share their Public Service Announcements (PSAs) with other classes at school;
- share their PSAs with local radio or TV stations;
- create emergency preparedness kits for other classrooms, local community organizations, or families in need;
- organize fundraising projects to raise money for an area affected by a natural disaster; or
- collect supplies to send to an area affected by a natural disaster.

Linguistic Bias

In Unit 2, Lesson 8, students participate in a Language Dive that guides them through the meaning of a sentence from Stanza 1 of "O' Beautiful Storm." The focus of this Language Dive is comparing and contrasting varieties of English. The goal of this conversation is to celebrate the varieties of English students encounter in this unit and to deepen their understanding about the intentional language choices authors make based on purpose and audience. Whenever possible, encourage students to compare the variety of English they hear and use in the classroom to any varieties of English they hear and/or use outside of the classroom. Refer to the Module 1 Teacher Guide Appendix or the EL Education Tools page (https://curriculum.eleducation.org/tools/k-8) for additional information on Language Dives.

Including Families

Families of students working through this module are invited to discuss any concerns they have about the texts with their children and the teacher. Teaching notes throughout the module recommend that teachers speak to families of students who may be particularly affected by the topics encountered. Notes in the homework materials distributed to families recommend that they reach out to teachers with questions or concerns about the texts. These materials also encourage families to talk with their children about the texts they are reading, particularly if any of the topics raised might be sensitive to a particular student.