Anchor Text Guidance: Grade 4, Module 4

Responding to Inequality: Ratifying the 19th Amendment

Text and author: *The Hope Chest* by Katherine Schwabach

Lexile®: 800

Text Overview

Set in 1917–1920, *The Hope Chest* is a literary text that tells the story of the eve of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, which granted women the right to vote. The story is told from the viewpoint of 11-year-old Violet, who discovers that her parents have been keeping letters from her that were sent by her older sister, Chloe. Chloe, who pursued an education and a career and spent her inheritance on a Model-T car she named the Hope Chest, had left the family home for New York, where she entered the fight for women's right to vote. Violet runs away to search for Chloe, teaming up with an African-American orphan named Myrtle and Chloe's friend Mr. Martin. *The Hope Chest* tackles issues of race, class, and bravery as the characters face gender and racial inequality issues prevalent in the United States in the first half of the 20th century.

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

- What can we learn from the process of ratifying the 19th Amendment?
- How can stories inspire us to take action to contribute to a better world?
- How and why can we encourage and support others to contribute to a better world?

By reading *The Hope Chest* along with supplemental texts that build historical context and uplift the experiences and perspectives of others, students develop a deep and critical understanding of the impact of the 19th Amendment on voting rights and civil rights. Students work to become ethical people by showing respect, empathy, and compassion for one another as they read about sensitive topics in *The Hope Chest*. Finally, students work to contribute to a better world by putting their learning to use to improve their community through a project the class develops and carries out.

© 2021 EL Education Inc. Created with the support of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools.
Except where otherwise noted, EL Education's Language Arts Curriculum is published under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Text Rationale

EL Education is committed to promoting students' character development through *The Hope Chest*, a fictional account of experiences during the suffrage movement. This module uses historical fiction and informational texts to introduce students to gender and racial inequality issues in the United States in the first half of the 20th century, and to recognize what the process of ratifying the 19th Amendment can teach us about how people responded to gender and racial inequality at that time.

In Unit 1, students begin reading *The Hope Chest*. They also read supplemental first- and secondhand accounts of real-life responses to inequality and compare and contrast the texts. In Unit 2, students continue to read *The Hope Chest*, identifying themes in each chapter and summarizing events that show evidence of a theme. They also analyze the meaning of similes, metaphors, idioms, adages, and proverbs. In Unit 3, students connect their learning about the process of ratifying the 19th Amendment to their own lives, as they focus on how they can make a difference and contribute to a better world. They research how students around the world have made a difference in their communities, before taking action as a class on an issue in their community. At the end of the module, students write Public Service Announcements (PSAs) encouraging other students to make a difference. They also write a press release to share with the local media about what their class did to take action and the impact of their work.

Additional Considerations

In designing this module, EL Education accessed research and first-person accounts of the experiences of those involved in the women's suffrage movement. 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 topics of inequality specifically related to race and gender.

It is important to note that the time frame during which *The Hope Chest* is set coincides with the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic, widely considered the most severe pandemic in recent US history until the COVID-19 pandemic. The Spanish influenza is referenced on page 7 of the novel: "That was the influenza - like getting run over by a steam train. Not just sniffles, but blood pouring out of your nose and ears. People didn't understand how the disease could hit that hard, could kill so many people when it was only the flu. Except that after 1918, it would never be 'only the flu' again."

Be especially sensitive to students' experiences and perspectives on this topic based on cultural background and family history. Foster inclusive action by creating space for students to express their feelings, while being aware that discussions may unearth trauma or social stigma. Consider explaining to families that students will be reading about and discussing inequality, including segregation and women's rights, set within a time frame that references a pandemic so that they can appropriately prepare the students. 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. Gender Inequality and Bias

The Hope Chest is set in a time in history where bias toward women was the norm. Women did not yet have the right to vote in the United States and were subjective to their fathers and husbands, who had more rights than they did. For example, on page 3, the sentence, "Father moved toward Violet, a huge, threatening tower of authority" is indicative of the time frame in which the novel is set. Children, particularly girls, were subject to the authority of males and had few rights or privileges of their own. These biases extended to educational and occupational opportunities as well. It was commonly believed that a woman's place was in the home, raising children and tending to the household. The idea of a "hope chest" is stated on page 21: "A hope chest was a big wooden trunk that a girl was supposed to fill with things she'd need when she was married - tablecloths and bed linens and dishes and things like that." On page 28, the sentence, "Mrs. Renwick went on, 'The Lord has given females the wonderful gift of being able to bear children, and that's the work women do'" encapsulates the prevailing viewpoint of the time period.

Be aware that gender inequality is still the norm in some cultures, and be sensitive to and respectful of students who may come from communities where this is the case. Teaching notes throughout the module identify potentially troubling content and provide suggestions for teachers to guide students through this content with sensitivity. 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. Use Conversation Cues to promote productive and equitable conversation.

2. Racism and Bias Toward Immigrants

The use of the word *colored* appears in *The Hope Chest* to describe African-American people; for example, on page 31: "She was conscious that other people had suitcases and even trunks, which colored men in dark uniforms and red caps wheeled along for them on carts." Explain to students that *colored* is a derogatory term reflective of the time period of the novel. Invite frank discussion about whether the class feels comfortable hearing this word read aloud or not, and emphasize to students that the term should not be used today. In addition, even after the 19th Amendment passed, women of color were still unable to vote. Most African-Americans were blocked by a variety of means, including poll taxes, literacy tests, and other barriers, while Native Americans and Asian immigrants were largely excluded from citizenship entirely. These can be very sensitive issues to discuss, and depending on the population of the class, they may require more discussion time than is allocated. If that is the case, consider not reading the full text outlined and instead extending the discussion. Continuously remind students what respect, empathy, and compassion look and sound like using the Working to Become Ethical People anchor chart.

Another example of racism and bias toward immigrants in *The Hope Chest* is when Violet and Myrtle travel by train to find Violet's sister, Chloe. Myrtle is forced to move her seat from the suffragists' train car to the "colored" car. When they arrive in Nashville, Myrtle is not welcome in the hotel and is not allowed to be served in restaurants. Explain to students that there were laws at this time called Jim Crow laws that enforced segregation in transportation, schools, movie theaters, hotels, and restaurants. Jim Crow laws were federal, state, and local laws that enforced a racial caste system, particularly in the Southern United States.

Equally offensive and racist is the terminology, "the wrong sort of people." The sentence on page 32, "Girls weren't supposed to say 'sir' - that was for boys and the Wrong Sort of People" depicts the bias at that time toward Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), who were largely regulated to second-class citizenship status through a legal system that promoted white supremacy as an ideal. Though somewhat less explicit than Jim Crow laws, teachers should be aware that many laws continue to legalize racism and bias to promote a white-centric culture. Be sensitive to students' and families' feelings and experiences, specifically those who have experienced issues of inequality and segregation, as race inequality is still very much a part of the culture of our country.

On page 6, the sentence, "Violet had asked for an igloo, too, but Chloe had said that Alaskan Eskimos didn't live in igloos" is indicative of how Inuit people were described during this time period. *Eskimo* is an offensive and racist term that is no longer appropriate. Eskimos are racially distinct from American Indians and are most closely related to the Mongolian peoples of East Asia. This population considers itself to be the Inuit peoples.

Finally, *The Hope Chest* is set during the period immediately following the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution. On page 11, in a letter to Violet, Chloe writes, "The federal government has started deporting foreign-born radicals to Russia. Can you imagine? A lot of them didn't even come from Russia. Some of them have lived in this country nearly all their lives. But I guess that's what happens when you have a war. People start hating immigrants." Be sensitive to students' and families' feelings and experiences with immigration, specifically those who have experienced governmental policies such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Be aware that bias and violence against immigrants is still very much a part of the culture of our country, and be sensitive to and respectful of students who may have experienced such.

3. Outdated Norms, Customs, and Other Potentially Offensive Language

Explain to students that *The Hope Chest* takes place between 1917 and 1920, and as such, characters use language that is outdated and could be considered derogatory in a contemporary setting. Though EL Education does not censor its texts, it recognizes the way in which engaging with offensive language can have a painful or damaging impact on students. Teaching notes throughout the module take a variety of different approaches to mitigate these effects. For especially sensitive language, teaching notes advise teachers to be candid, clear, and sensitive, as well as create space for students to gauge their own reactions and articulate their needs.

Early in the novel, an example of this type of language is when Violet and Myrtle meet a boy who is described as a "hobo." This term generally holds a negative connotation today and can be used as a slur, though the term historically referred to migratory workers who traveled from place to place seeking work, often by rail. Many people were forced to become "hoboes" due to economic conditions that left them without homes or jobs. As students engage with the text, continuously remind them what respect, empathy, and compassion look and sound like using the Working to Become Ethical People anchor chart.

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 participate in an Infer the Topic protocol to familiarize themselves with the module topic, using pictures and quotes from the texts they will be reading. Note that some students may be sensitive to these materials because they depict segregation. Prepare students for this work using the habits listed on the Working to Become Ethical People anchor chart, and be aware 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. Use Conversation Cues to promote productive and equitable conversation.

Lesson 2: Continue to be aware that gender inequality is still the norm in some cultures, and be sensitive to and respectful of students who may come from homes where this is the case. Throughout each lesson where students read *The Hope Chest*, they continue to work to become ethical people by showing respect, empathy, and compassion if their peers are upset by events in the text.

Lesson 3: In the closing of this lesson, students read informational text excerpts presented at the back of *The Hope Chest* and make connections between what was happening in these texts and what is happening in the novel. Part of this discussion is the use of the word *colored* to describe African-American people. This can be a very sensitive issue to discuss, and depending on the population of the class, this may require more discussion time than is allocated. If that is the case, consider not reading the full text outlined and instead extending the discussion. Continuously remind students of what respect, empathy, and compassion look and sound like using the Working to Become Ethical People anchor chart.

An optional Language Dive can be used in this lesson to guide students through the meaning of a specific sentence to understand figurative language and word relationships, deepening their understanding of why people want to effect social change. Students then apply their understanding of the meaning and structure of the sentence to discuss inequalities that Violet and Myrtle face in *The Hope Chest*, as well as when learning about idioms in future lessons. 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.

Lessons 5 and 6: During the opening, students hear chapter 5 of *The Hope Chest* read aloud and are introduced to idioms, adages, and proverbs. This chapter is read aloud because of its complex language and slang that students may find challenging to read. Although students are only five chapters into the book, some of the themes are starting to become evident (e.g., do something meaningful; inequality is injustice). In these lessons, students continue to work to become ethical people by showing respect, compassion, and empathy if their classmates are upset by the text.

Lesson 10: In this lesson, students are guided through a close read of "The Girl Who Acted before Rosa Parks," a secondhand account of a girl who, like Myrtle in *The Hope Chest*, was asked to change her seat on public transportation due to segregation. The purpose of the close read is for students to better understand how the event made the girl, Claudette Colvin, feel, and how we know this from her story. The event in the article occurred in 1955, more than

30 years after the time of *The Hope Chest*, so it is important to explain to students that these kinds of things went on for many years. Again, students may find this upsetting, particularly because it was a real-life event of someone who experienced segregation firsthand. Continue to be sensitive to the needs of students, and allow them to reflect silently or discuss how this text makes them feel. Before the lesson, preview the Close Reading Guide: "The Girl Who Acted before Rosa Parks" to identify the key instructional moves in closely reading the text, and consider explaining to families that students will be reading about and discussing equality, including segregation, so that they can appropriately prepare students.

Unit 2

Lesson 1: In this and each lesson where students read *The Hope Chest*, students continue to focus on working to become ethical people by showing respect, empathy, and compassion if their peers are upset by events in the text. The research reading that students complete for homework helps build both their vocabulary and knowledge pertaining to inequality and ratifying the 19th Amendment. Before the lesson, consider reading aloud chapter 8 of *The Hope Chest* to students to help them comprehend this complex text.

ALL Block: During Additional Work with Complex Text work time in this unit, students work with the historical notes in *The Hope Chest* to make connections with the characters and events in the story. Preview before sharing with students, and determine which events are appropriate for this age. It is important to be sensitive to students' and families' experiences with inequality, specifically racial and gender inequality, as these issues are presented in the text. Consider asking the following questions:

- "In which time period is this book set? How do you know?" (1917–1920, because it mentions 1917 and then references "three years later")
- "What questions do you have after reading this blurb?" (Responses will vary, but may include: What is a hope chest? What is a *suff*? What is an *anti*?)
- "Whose right to vote is this book about? How do you know?" (women—it says Chloe is fighting for the right of women to vote)

Part of this discussion is the use of the word *colored* to describe African-American people. This can be a very sensitive issue to discuss, and depending on the population of the class, may require more discussion time than is allocated. If that is the case, consider not reading the full text outlined and instead extending the discussion. Continuously remind students of what respect, empathy, and compassion look and sound like using the Working to Become Ethical People anchor chart.

Unit 3

Lesson 1: This lesson connects the reading of *The Hope Chest* completed in Units 1–2 to the research and performance task focused on throughout this unit: "How can kids take action to make a difference in their communities?" Students begin by discussing a quote from *The Hope Chest* where Violet realizes she wants to work to make a difference in the lives of others. Students then watch the video "For the Heroes: A Pep Talk from Kid President." This video helps frame the unit: Kids can, and should, take action in their communities. Students focus on working to contribute to a better world as they begin their research on how kids can take action and make a difference. The research reading that students complete for homework helps build both their vocabulary and knowledge pertaining to inequality and ratifying the 19th Amendment.

Opportunities for Community and Service

- Invite members of the community, family members, or teachers to visit your classroom (or join the class on a virtual platform) to share their family histories pertaining to segregation and/or voting rights.
- Invite a historian with expertise on voting rights and/or segregation, particularly local history, to talk with the students about it (in person or virtually).
- Visit (in person or virtually) a voting rights and/or segregation exhibition at a local museum.
- Have students share their PSAs with other classes at school or with local radio or TV stations.

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.