



Literature & Character Education

The Circuit

Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child

by Francisco Jiménez

Teacher Resource Guide

Grades 6 - 8



The Language Arts and Reading Company

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(continued from page 3)

Page 23

To Practice 20
Character Development Vocabulary: Language Barrier • Role Play: Outside In • Character Interview: In the Characters' Shoes • Friends of All Languages

To Express 21
Creative Connection: Makeshift Mania • Literature Response: Journal Suggestions

Reading 2: Following the Work (pp. 45–83)

Overview 23

To Read 24

To Discuss 24
Vocabulary: Word Log • Spanish Words • Critical Thinking Questions

To Practice 25
Character Development Vocabulary: Empathy • Partner Role Play: Empathy • Research Project: Migrant Children Today

To Express 26
Minilesson: Specific Details • Expository Writing: Job Description • Literature Response: Journal Suggestions

Page 28

Reading 3: Still Moving (pp. 84–134)

Overview 28

To Read 28

To Discuss 29
Vocabulary: Word Log • Spanish Words • Creative Connection: Declaration of Independence • Critical Thinking Questions

To Practice 30
Panchito's Language Goal • Our Language Goals • Oral Presentations: The Lives of Migrant Children • Migrant Lives: We Can Make a Difference

To Express 31
Creative Connection: *Welcome* in All Languages • Final Writing Project • Minilesson: Short Story • Prewriting • First Draft • Peer Response • Revise • Proofread • Present • Revisit the Central Question

To Participate 33
Welcome to Our Community!

Appendix 1: Reproducibles

Reproducible 1: K-W-L Chart 34

Reproducible 2: Spanish Vocabulary 35

Reproducible 3: Role Play Scenarios 36

Reproducible 4: Research Organizer 37

Reproducible 5: Language Goal Plan 38

Reproducible 6: Interview Questions 39

Reproducible 7A & 7B: Story Map 40

Reproducible 8: Character Sketches 42

Appendix 2: Additional Resources

Appendix 3: Assessment

Assessment Overview 44

Comprehensive Test A: Multiple Choice 45

Comprehensive Test B: Essay 46

Love & Friendship Observational Checklist 47

Page 34

Page 43

Page 44

ABOUT THE TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Overview

This guide divides *The Circuit* into three separate readings that allow students to probe the Central Question, explore the migrant experience, strategize measures of inclusion that counteract language barriers, and write their own short stories about an experience of being “new.”

Central Question

How can we welcome people into our school and community?

Character Development Concept

Love & Friendship involves exploring the nature of our relationships with friends, family members, and neighbors. *The Circuit* Teacher Resource Guide emphasizes the importance of welcoming newcomers, such as immigrants, into our communities. Students practice empathy and learn to develop relationships with people whose background and language may be different from their own.

Reading Comprehension Strategies

This guide focuses on two reading strategies and models the use of multiple strategies. The following strategies are featured in *The Circuit* Teacher Resource Guide.

Infer In order to draw logical conclusions from a text and to form opinions, evaluate, and make decisions and judgments, a student draws inferences as he or she reads. Inferring allows a reader to synthesize new ideas and information from the text in order to create new understandings. Inferring requires the reader to go beyond the literal meaning of the text.

Ask & Answer Questions Students ask questions during reading in order to set a purpose, clarify understanding, maintain personal interest, and draw inferences. Answering these questions while reading helps students evaluate what they have learned and assimilate implicit information into their overall comprehension of the text.

Reading & Critical Thinking Skills

The following skills are embedded in reading, writing, and discussion activities throughout this guide: Evaluate; Draw Conclusions; Main Idea & Supporting Details; Fact & Opinion; Points of View; Cause & Effect; Character, Setting, Plot; Sequence; Compare & Contrast; Analysis; and Synthesis.

Writing

Students engage in writing activities in a variety of genres, including Literature Response Journal options, a character sketch, and a job description. In a final narrative writing project, students write a short story about an experience as a newcomer. This guide also includes alternative writing prompts for expository, persuasive, and descriptive writing.

Vocabulary & Literary Analysis

A variety of activities encourage both vocabulary development and vocabulary enrichment. Students keep a Word Log in which they record vocabulary words and other unfamiliar words they encounter, and they engage in literary analysis to analyze the author’s style. Students will also work with vocabulary in relation to the mood, plot, characters, and setting of the story.

Oral Language, Listening, & Fluency

Students have numerous opportunities to develop their oral language, listening, and fluency skills through role play, oral presentations, character interviews, and more.

Unit Planner for *The Circuit*

Use this three-week planning guide to develop your own teaching schedule for *The Circuit*. Your plan will depend on

- the length of the class period or literacy block,
- the activities you select, and
- whether students complete reading, writing, and other assignments in class or as homework.

Unit Planner

Time Frame	Readings
Week 1	Reading 1, Pages 1–44
Week 2	Reading 2, Pages 45–83
Week 3	Reading 3, Pages 84–134

Resources

Francisco Jiménez's comments about *The Circuit* as semi-autobiographical can be found on his Web site in an Interview by Chris Liska Carger, originally published in *Book Links*, December 2001/January 2002, pp. 14–19.



Genre Francisco Jiménez refers to *The Circuit* as a collection of semi-autobiographical stories. Write the word *autobiographical* on the board and ask students what it means. Explain that something that is autobiographical contains the elements of an autobiography—an account of a person's life as written by that person. While the stories in *The Circuit* are in fact autobiographical—they are true stories about the author's life—Jiménez considers them to be “90 percent fact and 10 percent fiction.” He acknowledges that he occasionally changed the sequence of events, or made up something if his memory failed him.

Activate Prior Knowledge

Distribute copies of the K-W-L Chart (Reproducible 1, p. 34). K-W-L is a teaching strategy that helps activate prior knowledge and set a purpose for reading. Review the chart with students. Have students brainstorm what they already know about migrant children and write this information in the appropriate category in the *K* column of their chart. Ask students what they want to know about migrant children. Instruct them to pose these questions in the *W* column. As students read *The Circuit*, they will record answers to their questions and new information in the *L* column, and they will add new questions that arise in the *W* column.

Share information about migrant farm workers and Mexican immigration to the United States from the Context of the Story section of this guide (pp. 10–11). Students incorporate this information into their K-W-L Chart and record any new questions.

Geography Connection

Explain that geography is an integral part of the immigrant experience and the migrant lifestyle. Immigrants leave their home country to find a new life in a strange land, and migrant farm workers continually move from place to place in order to get work. Display a map of the world, and have students find Guadalajara. Point out that Francisco Jiménez and his family lived in a small village just north of Guadalajara before they came to the United States. Show students Mexicali, in northern Mexico, on the border of California. Tell students that this is where Panchito and his family crossed the border into the United States.

Give students a sense of the seasonal migrant “circuit.” On a map of California, trace the Jiménez family's migrant route from Corcoran to Santa Maria to Fowler and back to Corcoran. Encourage

students to note this route as they read, and to track the family's deviations from the route as they migrate from labor camp to labor camp. Have students pay particular attention to the ways in which seasons and crops determine where the migrant family in *The Circuit* lives and works.

Reading Strategy: Infer

Tell students that when readers draw inferences, they synthesize new ideas and information in the text in order to better understand the characters and the plot of the story. Inferring requires readers to go beyond the literal meaning of the text—that which is explicitly stated—in order to draw logical conclusions or form new opinions. Inferring is an especially useful strategy to use when reading a text that is sprinkled with words of another language. Point out that Francisco Jiménez uses Spanish words (printed in italics) throughout the book. One can infer the meaning of the Spanish words from the context of the story.

Model this strategy as you read aloud the first two paragraphs on page 1. You may wish to use the example below.

Infer “The author begins the first story with the word *la frontera*, which I think is a Spanish word since it's in italics. I don't know Spanish, so I will keep reading for clues about the meaning of this word. He goes on to write that the family will “take a long trip north, cross *la frontera*, enter California...” and then “Once we cross *la frontera*, we'll make a good living in California....” I can infer from the context that *la frontera* must be the land between Mexico and the United States. I am not sure what land, exactly, but I am certain from the context that it is land that must be crossed in order to get from Mexico to California.”

Reading Strategy: Ask & Answer Questions

Explain to students that readers ask and answer their own questions before, during, and after reading to help them understand a text. Often, these questions are answered by the text as the reader continues reading. Other times a reader needs to resort to other sources (such as the Internet, nonfiction books, the teacher, or classmates) to answer questions. Asking and answering questions also helps readers set a purpose for reading. Students will practice this strategy by asking and answering questions on their K-W-L Chart throughout reading.

Teacher Think Alouds

A Think Aloud provides a way for teachers to model how they use a reading comprehension strategy (or multiple strategies) while reading. It is one of the best ways to make reading comprehension concrete for students.

As you read a section of the text to students, stop and explain how you are using the strategy: tell students what you are thinking, what connections you are making, the questions you ask yourself, the predictions and inferences you make, and what you visualize.

Multiple Reading Strategies

Tell students that readers often use more than one reading strategy at a time. Use a Think Aloud to model how students can draw inferences to help them answer the questions that they ask. For example:

“After I asked myself the question, ‘What does *la frontera* mean?’ I continued reading and looked for clues in the text that would help me answer my question. I used those clues to draw inferences and get my answer.”

K-W-L CHART

Name _____ Date _____

Migrant Children			
	What I <u>K</u> now	What I <u>W</u> ant to Know	What I <u>L</u> earned
Work			
Education			
Home			
Family			
Friends			
Neighbors			
Language			
Hopes/Goals			
Other			

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SPANISH VOCABULARY

Reading 1

comal (p. 7): Earthenware dish for cooking tortillas.

¿Cómo se dice 'es tuyo' en inglés? (p. 26): How do you say 'it's yours' in English?

corridos (p. 19): Mexican ballads.

la curandera (p. 36): Healer.

Dios lo quiera (p. 4): God willing.

el mal de ojo (p. 36): Evil eye.

El Rancho Blanco (p. 1): The White Ranch.

frijoles de la olla (p. 35): Beans.

la frontera (p. 1): The border.

la migra (p. 4): Immigration officers.

mi'jo (p. 3): My son. **Mi'ja** (p. 107) means "my daughter."

¡Otra vez la burra al trigo! (p. 4): Stop repeating yourself!

Santo Niño de Atocha (p. 41): Holy Child of Atocha.

sí (p. 13): Yes.

soledad (p. 9): Loneliness.

tío (p. 2): Uncle.

¡Vámonos al hospital! (p. 37): Let's go to the hospital!

verdolagas (p. 7): A wild herb.

viejo (p. 7): Literally "old one;" affectionate term for husband.

Vieja (p. 37) is the feminine form and an affectionate term for wife.

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Reading 2

allá (p. 71): There.

el Angel de Oro (p. 45): Gold Angel.

braceros (p. 73): Farm workers.

carne con chile (p. 80): Meat with chile.

contratista (p. 65): Labor contractor.

corridos (p. 83): Mexican ballads.

es todo (p. 76): That's all.

Feliz Navidad (p. 56): Merry Christmas.

listo (p. 75): Ready.

mi olla (p. 76): My pot.

mocoso (p. 69): Snot-nosed child.

paisano (p. 52): Fellow countryman.

periquito bonito (p. 57): Pretty parrot.

Qué Dios los bendiga. (p. 53): May God bless you.

quince (p. 79): Fifteen.

Santa María, Madre de Dios, ruega Señora por nosotros los pecadores ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte, amén. (p. 60): Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for our sins now and in the hour of our death, amen.

Tienen que tener cuidado. (p. 79): You have to be careful.

tonto (p. 48): Fool.

vámonos (p. 79): Let's go.

Reading 3

abuelita (p. 98): Grandmother.

¡Ay, Dios mío! (p. 109): Oh, my God!

Ah, sí. Es muy buena gente. (p. 125): Ah, yes. He is a very good person.

campesinos (p. 98): Farm workers.

gracias a Dios (p. 111): Thank God.

huaraches (p. 88): Sandals.

hacendados (p. 98): Landowners.

La Llorona (p. 105): A mythical Mexican figure who appears as a ghost weeping over her drowned children.

librito (p. 103): Notepad.

Se han vuelto locos. (p. 119): They've gone crazy.

sin vergüenza (p. 90): Person without shame.

taquitos (p. 89): Tacos (Mexican food consisting of a rolled-up tortilla with meat, rice, and/or beans filling).

¡Ya! ¡no seas tonto! (p. 111): Enough! Don't be foolish!

ya pues (p. 119): All right, already.

LANGUAGE GOAL PLAN

Name _____ Date _____

2. Obstacles and Challenges	3. Steps I Can Take
1. Language Goal	
5. Family Members and Friends Who Can Help Me	4. Character Traits That Will Help Me Pursue My Goal

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

Directions

Use the questions below to conduct an interview with someone whose memories are important to the story you are writing. (Or adapt these questions to meet the needs of your story.) Even if you are telling your story in the first person from your point of view, you can draw on information from family and/or friends who were present when the story takes place. Remember to ask follow-up questions that flow naturally from the person's answers.

Have you ever moved to a new country, school, or community? What was your experience?

Notes from follow-up question:

How did people treat you when you arrived?

Notes from follow-up question:

What was your favorite thing about the new place?

Notes from follow-up question:

What was the hardest thing about arriving at a new place?

Notes from follow-up question:

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ESSAY TEST FOR *THE CIRCUIT*

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Write one or more sentences in response to the following questions.

1. How would you describe the living and working conditions of a migrant family? Support your answer with examples from the book.

2. How are Mexican farm workers treated in the United States? Support your answer with examples from the book.

Directions: Write a short essay to answer the following question.

3. How do Panchito and his family help each other through hard times? Support your answer with examples from the book.

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CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLIST

Theme 5: Love & Friendship

Student Name _____

Behaviors	Observation 1	Observation 2
	Date: _____	Date: _____
Love and Respect for Self		
Shows self-respect		
Practices responsible behavior		
Demonstrates hopefulness and optimism		
Demonstrates courage		
Demonstrates creativity		
Demonstrates perseverance		
Shows self-love and self-acceptance		
Demonstrates independence		
Love and Respect for Others		
Demonstrates trust		
Shows compassion		
Shares ideas and things		
Demonstrates loyalty		
Has at least one friend		
Develops interpersonal relationships consistently		
Balances closeness and independence in friendships		
Demonstrates ability to take another's point of view		
Helps others		
Works to solve problems as they arise		
Works with others for the common good		
Comments: _____		

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