



## The Wild Book by Margarita Engle: Four Lessons in Perseverance and Belonging

A Unit Study for Fourth Grade

<p>The major goal of this unit study is:</p>	<p>Students will learn about a character, Fefa, who lives with dyslexia and whose perseverance (“steadfast despite challenges”) and a sense of belonging (“having your voice heard”) help her to grow. Students participate in weekly lessons inspired by <b>The Wild Book</b> by Margarita Engle; since each chapter of this book is written in free verse poetry format, each student will have creative writing opportunities that culminate into a personalized collection of their work.</p>
<p>The major goal aims to develop these skills:</p>	<p>§110.6. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 4 TEKS (1) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, discussion, and thinking--oral language. The student is expected to:              (A)listen actively, ask relevant questions to clarify information, and make pertinent comments</p> <p>(7) Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking. The student is expected to:              (A) describe personal connections to a variety of sources              (E) interact with sources in meaningful ways such as notetaking, annotating, freewriting, or illustrating</p>
<p>The evidence for this plan rests partially on these summaries of research/theory:</p>	<p>Jean Piaget Constructivism: students will draw on personal experiences to illustrate the themes of perseverance and belonging.</p> <p>Jerome Brunner cognitive-based Scaffolding Practice as (inspired by Lev Vygotsky): In a very specific way, scaffolding represents a reduction in the many choices a child might face, so that they become focused only on acquiring the skill or knowledge that is required.</p>
<p>Materials to Gather:</p>	<p>Lined paper of various colors for “Exit Ticket” writing activity, other materials vary as indicated per lesson plan.</p>

**Lesson One: I Persevere Because of Where I Come From**

Engage:

Teacher will assign student pairs (partner group) in your preferred way. Give each partner group a plastic cup and 10 of the same small items (e.g., mini marshmallows, mini erasers). Have students stand in a row across from another row of one another's partners. One student will hold the plastic cup and one student will hold the 10 mini-items. The student with the mini-items will underhand toss the item one at a time to the partner with the cup. The goal is for students to catch all 10 of the items in the cup without dropping any of them. If you have a larger space and want to add a challenge, have one partner per group take one step back after each toss.

**Discussion Questions:**

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all challenging and 10 being extremely challenging, how challenging was this activity for your group?
- What strategies did your partner group use to overcome the challenges together?

Materials needed: enough plastic cups for student pairs, enough for ten of identical mini-items (e.g. mini marshmallows, mini erasers) for each student pair.

Reader Response:

Book section pp. 3-31

Refer to **The Wild Book:**

**pp. 30-31: Bird-People**

*When I ask Papa to explain,  
he says if you don't have blood  
from one tribe, you have it  
from another—El que no tiene  
sangre del Congo  
tiene del Carabali.*

*He tells me that his own  
daring Basque ancestors  
voyaged to Cuba  
by way of Columbia*

*Mama says she is a mixture  
of native Cuban indios  
and musical Canary Islanders,  
people who once knew how to talk  
like birds, whistling their words.*

*I am glad to know  
that I am part bird-person,*

	<p><i>because birds come in all colors, and they belong to many tribes. Maybe I should just sing pretty bird songs at school, instead of struggling to read OUT LOUD.</i></p> <p><b>Discussion Question:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you think Fefa feels toward her family background? Give examples for your reasoning.</li> </ul>
<p>Closure (Exit Ticket Writing Activity):</p>	<p>Allow students to choose from paper of various colors. Write question(s) on whiteboard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What goal are you persevering toward now?</li> <li>• How will the things we talked about and tried today help you to persevere in the face of challenges?</li> </ul> <p>Let students know they have the option to write and/or illustrate their responses. Differentiate by allowing students to choose one question if they prefer. Give students 10-15 minutes to complete activity. Collect their work. (At close of Unit Study, return all exit ticket writings for students to assemble into a Perseverance Portfolio).</p>
<p>How will I know if children grow/learn/gain something from the lesson?</p>	<p>Ask questions during discussion; writing activity demonstrates reading comprehension.</p>
<p><b>Lesson Two: I Persevere Because of Others</b></p>	
<p>Engage:</p>	<p>Have students gather around a table. Have a bottle of food coloring ready and place the bowl of water in the center. Choose 4-5 volunteers. Explain to the students that the bowl represents the classroom or school community. Ask one student to lightly squeeze 1 drop of food coloring into the water.</p> <p>Explain that one drop of color represents one kind act. Discussion Question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students to look at the food coloring and make inferences about how one kind act affects the school community.</li> </ul> <p>The blue drop pretty much stays in one place but it does spread a little bit to the water right around the drop. Ask another student to add a drop on the edge of the colored portion of water (from the first drop). Ask students to notice what’s happening with the water now that the second drop has been added. Continue adding one drop at a time on the edge of the colored portion of water.</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happened when we had just one kind act in the class?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What happened each time there was another kind act?</li> <li>• What does this food coloring and water demonstration tell you about our class and school community?</li> </ul> <p>Materials needed: bowl of water, one bottle of food coloring (to share between students).</p>
<p>Reader Response:</p> <p>Book section pp. 32-62</p>	<p>Refer to <b>The Wild Book:</b></p> <p><b>p. 53: Ugliness</b></p> <p><i>My brothers interrupt my daydreams. They whisper Josefa, Fefa, Fefa la fea. Fefa. Ugly. Certain slimy froglike words can do a lot more thank jump and tease.</i></p> <p><i>So when a wild parrot lands on the red tile roof, I teach it to call out feo, feo ugly, ugly, hoping my brothers will understand that the bright green bird is talking about them, not me.</i></p> <p><b>Discussion Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did Fefa feel hearing her brothers’ words? How do you know?</li> <li>• Do you think she was right to teach the wild parrot those words? Why or why not?</li> </ul>
<p>Closure (Exit Ticket Writing Activity):</p>	<p>Allow students to choose from paper of various colors. Write question(s) on whiteboard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are other ways that Fefa could have responded to her brothers’ unkind words? Imagine that you are a friend writing her a letter of encouragement. What advice would you give her?</li> </ul> <p>Let students know they have the option to write and/or illustrate their responses. Differentiate by allowing students to choose one question if they prefer. Give students 10-15 minutes to complete activity. Collect their work. (At close of Unit Study, return all exit</p>

	ticket writings for students to assemble into a Perseverance Portfolio).
How will I know if children grow/learn/gain something from the lesson?	Ask questions during discussion; writing activity demonstrates reading comprehension.
<b>Lesson Three: I Persevere Because of Who I Am</b>	
Engage:	<p>This activity aims to teach students about respect for others' unique qualities, and to reinforce the idea that one cannot always judge the quality of a person by his or her appearance; sometimes people can be appreciated for their differences.</p> <p>To begin the lesson, write the word <i>unique</i> on the whiteboard. Ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the word mean to you?</li> <li>• What is it that makes you unique among your classmates?</li> </ul> <p>Next, draw a simple outline of a person on the board. Draw two horizontal lines across the person's body. One line should divide the person's head (including the neck) and torso (shoulders to waist); the other should divide the torso and leg area (from the waist-down). Talk about one section of the body at a time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss some of the features that might make up a person's head/neck. Lead students to understand that people can have blue eyes or brown eyes, small ears or big ears, curly hair or straight hair, dark skin, light skin, or a shade in between, freckles, glasses, or a hat, and so on. Write students ideas about a person's head on the board or chart next to the head area of the person you drew.</li> <li>• Discuss some of the ways in which people's bodies might be different. Lead students to understand that people can be skinny or heavy, muscular or frail, square- or round-shouldered, and so on. Talk about the kinds of clothing people might wear -- a T-shirt, a sweater, a feathered boa. Write down some of the possibilities of the person's name.</li> <li>• Finally, focus on the lower body (from the waist down). Point out that people can have skinny or stubby legs and their feet point in, out, or straight ahead. People wear pants, dresses, high-top sneakers, high-heeled shoes, construction boots, ballerina slippers, and so on. Write down students' ideas.</li> </ul> <p>When you are satisfied that students have the three parts of the body sorted out, provide each student with a piece of white drawing paper measuring 2 inches square. Have students write their names on one side of the paper and draw on the other side of the paper the head of a person. Tell students that this should not be</p>

somebody they know; this *unique* person should come from their imaginations. Remind them to think first about the features the persons head will have; they can refer to the list they and their classmates created in the first part of the lesson. They should include as much detail as possible in their drawings.

It is very important that students fill up the entire square with the image of the person's head. Also, remind them their head could use a neck to sit on!

When students finish drawing a unique head, provide them with a sheet of paper that measures 4 inches square. After students write their names on one side of the paper, they should turn the paper over and draw the torso (shoulders to waist) of the person. Before they draw, remind students to imagine the features of the persons torso. How is the body shaped? What clothing is the person wearing? Once again, students should fill the entire space and draw as much detail as possible. *Think unique!*

When students finish drawing a torso, hand them a third sheet of paper; this time a 3-inch square. Have students write their names on one side of the paper and draw the bottom part of their person (waist down to the feet). Remind students to fill up the space and include as much detail as possible. Once again, tell them to *think unique!*

As students finish their final square, have them check to be sure their names are on all three parts; then collect them. You might have students put the heads in one box or folder, the torsos in another, and the legs in a third.

### **Putting It Together**

Distribute to each student a head, a torso, and a set of legs. Students should not get a body part that they drew. Have students tape together the three body parts to create a totally *unique* "friend." The new friends will be pretty unusual-looking people, to say the least! But...

### **Here is the crux of the activity...**

*Everybody is different, or unique. What a person looks like on the outside has nothing to do with what is inside! Every person has special talents, special qualities...*

After students have had a good laugh about how the three body parts came together to create an unusual-looking person, ask each student to think up a name for his or her new "friend" and to give some thought to some of the characteristics the new friend might have. Ask: What special qualities does this unique person have?

	<p>What special talents does the person possess? What do you have in common with your new friend? How are you different?</p> <p>Materials Needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-inch square of white drawing paper, one sheet/student</li> <li>• 3-inch square of white drawing paper, one sheet/student</li> <li>• 4-inch square of white drawing paper, one sheet/student</li> <li>• art supplies (e.g., crayons, markers, or paints)</li> <li>• writing paper and pen/pencil</li> </ul> <p>(source: <a href="https://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp294-05.shtml">https://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp294-05.shtml</a>)</p>
<p>Reader Response:</p> <p>Book section pp. 63-96</p>	<p>Refer to <b>The Wild Book:</b></p> <p><b>pp. 94-95: Dance-Smart</b></p> <p><i>Everyone says I am a fine dancer! Suddenly, I feel drumbeat, guitar-ripple, maraca-rattle dance-smart.</i></p> <p><i>Jose is a naturally smart teacher, and Dario has a way with plants in the garden, and baby Ruben or little Etelvina might grow up to be smart in the handy way of artists, carving statues or painting murals.</i></p> <p><i>I am dance-smart when my feet and hands forget to worry about the rhythms that I know how to tap and clap OUT LOUD.</i></p> <p><b>Discussion Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think Fefa means by “dance-smart”? Give examples from the text to support your answer.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Looking at how Fefa describes her family members, can you give them a similar nickname as she gives herself? For example, “Jose, naturally smart teacher = teach-smart”.</li> <li>Turn and Talk Partners: finish this sentence “I am ___ - smart because _____.”</li> </ul>
<p>Closure (Exit Ticket Writing Activity):</p>	<p>Allow students to choose from paper of various colors. Return to the Engage Activity: After students have decided on the qualities of the “unique friend” they created, have them write about it! Ask each student to begin a story with the words: <i>I would like you to meet my new friend, [name goes here]... .</i> Then give students the freedom to choose what they will write as they go on to describe exactly what it is they like so much about their new buddies.</p> <p>As time permits, invite them to share them with their classmates. You might use this read-aloud session as an opportunity to reinforce the lesson you hope they will take from this activity: <i>What a person looks like on the outside has nothing to do with what that person is like on the inside!</i></p> <p>Collect their work. Additionally, the essays and illustrations might make a fun bulletin board display!</p> <p>(At close of Unit Study, return all exit ticket writings for students to assemble into a Perseverance Portfolio).</p>
<p>How will I know if children grow/learn/gain something from the lesson?</p>	<p>Ask questions during discussion; writing activity demonstrates reading comprehension.</p>
<p><b>Lesson Four: I persevere because I know I belong</b></p>	
<p>Engage</p>	<p>Find a blank puzzle template online to cut out (or purchase a pre-printed one) and distribute; you can do this in so many ways, but my suggestion would be to give every student in your classroom a puzzle piece to write their name on and decorate with markers and other art supplies, and then have the entire classroom come together to assemble the puzzle. The idea is to show each student how unique their puzzle piece is, but that they all fit together despite their differences.</p> <p>Consider gluing the pieces together and displaying it on a bulletin board as a reminder to the kids in your class that they are an important part of the group!</p> <p>Materials needed: blank puzzle (template or actual puzzle pieces)</p>
<p>Reader Response:</p>	<p>Refer to <b>The Wild Book</b>:</p>



<p>Book section pp. 97-121</p>	<p><b>p. 114: Justice</b></p> <p><i>Men in uniforms gallop to the farm. Fausto tries to escape, but he ends up with his wrists trapped in handcuffs— he is the captive, not me.</i></p> <p><i>Our family is safe. Papa calls me a heroine. Mama calls me an angel Jose tells me that I am the slowest, most careful, observant reader he has ever known.</i></p> <p><i>I have finally received encouragement from a teacher.</i></p> <p><b>Discussion Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and contrast how Fefa sees herself in this chapter poem with how she saw herself in “Ugliness” (p. 53).</li> <li>• Do you think she sees herself differently than in the beginning of the book? Why or why not?</li> <li>• Can you describe a time when a teacher’s words encouraged you?</li> </ul>
<p>Closure (Exit Ticket Writing Activity):</p>	<p>Read this mentor text to students:</p> <p><b>MUTT</b></p> <p><i>When you see me Do you see The color of Africa? Do you see the rhythm of Cuba? Do you see The strength of the Cherokee? Do you see The empire of China? Do you see The tropics of the Caribbean? If not, look closer. - Zarinah James, age 16</i></p> <p>Mutt Poem Scaffold Activity: Allow students to choose from paper of various colors. Either write on whiteboard or distribute individual preprinted copies;</p>

	<p>Remind students that if they choose, they may change the structure of the poem to make it their own:</p> <p><i>MUTT</i></p> <p><i>When you see me</i>  <i>Do you _____</i>  <i>The color of _____?</i>  <i>Do you see _____?</i>  <i>Do you _____</i>  <i>The _____?</i>  <i>Do you _____</i>  <i>The _____?</i>  <i>Do you _____</i>  <i>The _____?</i>  <i>If not, look closer.</i></p> <p>Give students 10-15 minutes to complete activity. Collect their work. (At close of Unit Study, return all exit ticket writings for students to assemble into a Perseverance Portfolio).</p>
<p>How will I know if children grow/learn/gain something from lesson?</p>	<p>Ask questions during discussion; writing activity demonstrates reading comprehension.</p> <p>As Unit Study comes to a close, return all exit ticket writings for students to assemble into a Perseverance Portfolio. Allow students to create their portfolio cover from construction paper (18" x 12"): they will fold paper in half lengthwise, stack their exit ticket writings inside, and staple along the left making a "book". Have them title it "Perseverance" and illustrate according to their preference.</p>

Reference:

Engle, M. (2014). *The wild book*. HMH Books for Young Readers.