

Enlighten Me

By Minh Lê, illustrated by Chan Chau

Teaching Tips



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TELLING STORIES

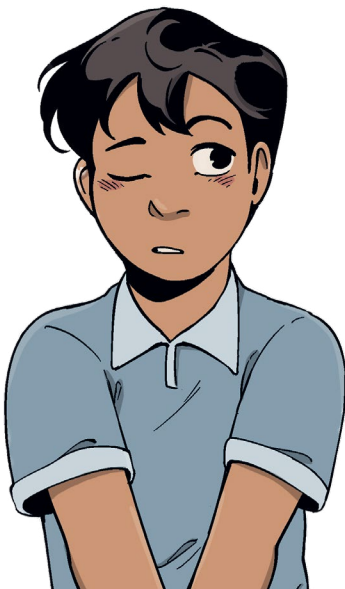
Enlighten Me embraces the tradition of oral storytelling as a way of sharing intergenerational wisdom, teaching life lessons, and strengthening communal bonds.

- Invite your students to investigate different storytelling traditions across the world.
- Encourage students to find oral stories from their homes and communities and share these stories in various modes including traditional storytelling using cultural artifacts or digital storytelling using digital tools and software.
- Guide your students in comparing lessons and values embedded in *Enlighten Me* versus lessons and values embedded in mainstream American popular stories such as Marvel graphic novels.
- Collaborate with librarians to invite family and community members from diverse racial/ethnic groups to share their oral stories to the school community.



EMBRACING SILENCE

In *Enlighten Me*, Binh spends a weekend in silence, disconnected from his digital devices. But being silent does not mean he isn't listening to the words of the Jataka tales being shared by Sister Peace or the sounds of the natural world around him.

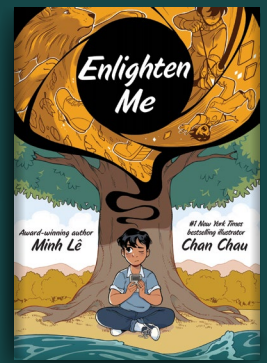


- Ask students to consider silence in their own lives. Have them track the moments of silence they experience over a single day. When do they hear "nothing"? How does silence make them feel? Give them time to compare and contrast their notes and experiences.
- Invite students to choose silence for a designated period of time—an hour, an afternoon, a full day. Again, have students jot down their thinking throughout the period of silence and share their experiences with one another. What was hard? What was comforting? Did they notice any changes in their ability to hear other people and/or the world around them? In their ability to think?
- In small groups, have students offer suggestions for how to incorporate more silence into their lives. This could include periodic digital "silence" and abstention from technology to help their overall well-being.

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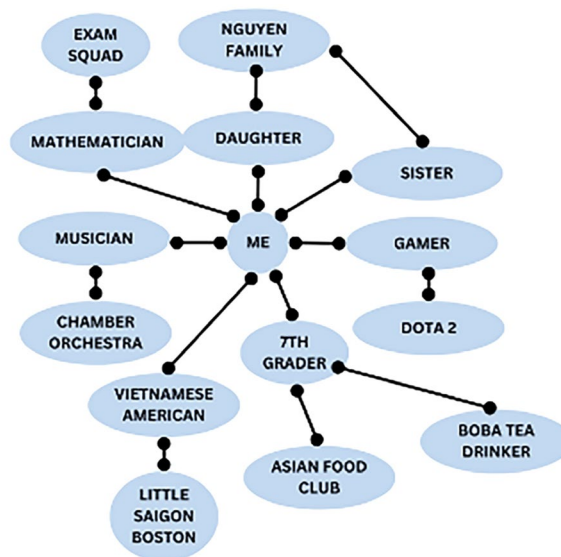


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MAPPING IDENTITY

Enlighten Me focuses on a Vietnamese boy's journey of exploring his identity and finding his connected self within his family and community.

- Use an identity chart to help your students explore Bình's multifaceted identity
- Use the same identity chart to help your students understand their identities as connected to multiple social and cultural communities.
- Emphasize that everyone has many identities: some are visible, some are invisible, some determine our social status as "normal, mainstream, majority" or "different, diverse, minority." Most importantly, different aspects of our identities are subjected to privilege or oppression. See example:



MAPPING COMMUNITY

Enlighten Me highlights the importance of communal support networks in fostering our sense of belonging.

- Use community mapping as a pedagogical tool to guide your students in documenting community-based resources, needs, and opportunities.
- Use these questions to guide your students in their community mapping: Which places are essential to your community? Why? What specific locations do youth value in your community? Why? How can we improve and support these places? How can we ensure that everyone has access to these places?



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EXPLORING GRAPHIC FICTION

Some students may be avid readers of graphic books; others may be less familiar with the structures at work within them.

- As students begin the novel, introduce the basic terminology for the elements of graphic books. You might find this [list of terms and concepts](#) from the National Council of Teachers of English's "Read Write Think" database helpful.
- Engage students in conversations about how action is built within and across panels and frames. How does their understanding of Binh shift and deepen based on what he says and thinks in speech bubbles?
- Invite students to make a list of recent events in their lives, large or small. Have each select one to share in a one-page graphic mini-memoir using the visual elements they've explored in *Enlighten Me* as their tools for meaning-making.



USING VIDEO GAMES AS STORY STRUCTURE

When Binh arrives at the silent retreat, he desperately misses his Game Boy, which offers him both entertainment and escape. As Binh attempts to adjust to silence, his mind returns to the bullying incident at school earlier that week. Readers experience his memory of the event as a video game: "Level One – Binh vs. the Jerk at School."

- As they read the novel, have students use their gaming expertise to unpack what they are reading.
- Explore how the author Minh Lê and illustrator Chan Chau use video gaming to reveal Binh's processing of both the Jataka stories he is hearing and his relationships with his family members and classmates.
- Invite students to try out using a video game structure to tell a fictional story or personal narrative.

These Teaching Tips were created by Dr. Alisha Nguyen and Dr. Mary Ann Cappiello.

