Title/Author: *14 Cows for America* by Carmen Agra Deedy, Illustrated by Thomas Gonzalez

Suggested Time to Spend: 5-7 Days

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RI.2.1, RI.2.2, RI.2.3, RI.2.4, RI.2.6, RI.2.7; W.2.2, W.2.8; SL.2.1, SL.2.2, SL.2.6; L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.4

Lesson Objective:

Students will listen to an illustrated read aloud and use literacy skills (reading, writing, discussion and listening) to understand the central message of the book.

Teacher Instructions

**Before the Lesson**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis below. **Please do not read this to the students**. This is a description to help you prepare to teach the book and be clear about what you want your children to take away from the work.

Big Ideas/Key Understandings/Focusing Question

How do the Maasai help the people of New York? They offer sacred cows that represent life as a gesture of hope, support, and compassion.

What is the story teaching us? We all share commonalities of humanity: life, death, and hope. We may be different, but these are universal connections that connect cultures and people. Knowing this, each individual has the ability to help one another.

Synopsis

A Maasai man relates his 9/11 experiences with his African villagers. After asking for permission from the elders, he offers his precious cow (which represents life to the Maasai people) to the American people as a symbol of life and hope. The tribe responds in turn with another offering of 13 more sacred cows.

1. Go to the last page of the lesson and review “What Makes this Read-Aloud Complex.” This was created for you as part of the lesson and will give you guidance about what the lesson writers saw as the sources of complexity or key access points for this book. You will of course evaluate text complexity with your own students in mind, and make adjustments to the lesson pacing and even the suggested activities and questions.
2. Read the entire book, adding your own insights to the understandings identified. Also note the stopping points for the text-inspired questions and activities. *Hint: you may want to copy the questions vocabulary words and activities over onto sticky notes so they can be stuck to the right pages for each day’s questions and vocabulary work.*

The Lesson – Questions, Activities, and Tasks

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| **Questions/Activities/Vocabulary/Tasks** | **Expected Outcome or Response (for each)** |
| **FIRST READING:**  Read aloud the entire book with minimal interruptions. Stop to provide word meanings or clarify only when you know the majority of your students will be confused.  If possible, display the book on an overhead projector, or document camera, while reading the story. This way, students can look at the illustrations, which help to enhance the story. | The goal here is for students to enjoy the book, both writing and pictures, and to experience it as a whole. This will give them some context and sense of completion before they dive into examining the parts of the book more carefully. |
| **SECOND READING:**  (Before this lesson, do a geography lesson on where Africa and New York are located. Introduce the pictures of the landscapes you will be using in the second read.)  Purpose: Setting up the distinction between past and present  Provide pictures of African landscape and the New York Skyline prior to 9/11. The story should be read in its entirety and the questions below are the stopping points.  1. Reread the first two sentences on page 2. Where is the story taking place? What makes the village “remote”?  2. Reread the following pages and answer the following question: When is this happening? How do you know? (Note to teacher: use the verbs to help determine time. Teacher demonstrates holding up the Africa sign, which represents the present.)  -second paragraph on page 2  -page 3 orally and listen for the verbs. (Show me your sign.)  -page 9.  3. Reread pages 3-8. Describe the Maasai people. How does the people of Maasai feel about Kimeli? Use text evidence to support your claims.  4. Reread the second paragraph on page 10. What does the word *remember* represent or mean? Explain your thinking? How does it connect to time? When you think of remember, do you think of the present or the past? (All questions do not need to be used. They are scaffolds to help get to the meaning.)  5. Reread page 11. We just talked about the word *remember*, what did Kimeli remember?  6. Reread page 14, paragraphs 1 & 2. When is this happening? Show me your sign. How do you know?  7. Reread page 14. What words help you know that Kimeli has started telling the story? What words or clues help you know this? When is this happening? Show me your sign. How do you know?  8. Reread page 15. Focus on the first two sentences. How did Kimeli’s story end? When is this happening? Show me your sign. How do you know?  ACTIVITY: Work in collaborative groups and create something that demonstrates what happened in the past and present. | Village in Kenya, Africa. Even a small, “remote village” where the “news travels slowly…” can help a country as big as America.  It is happening present. The evidence is the verb “watches” since it is in the present tense.  The evidence is the verbs *sees*, *run*, and *cries*.  The evidence is *hears, wants, spreads, calls, sighs* and the last sentence says “he is home.”  The Maasai were once warriors. Now they are nomadic cattle herders. They are peaceful people.  The children care for him. When they see him, they run to him “with the speed and grace of cheetahs.”  Remember means that it is something that has occurred in the past. “He remembers September.” It tells us that it has happened in the past.  “Buildings so tall” refers to a city.  “Melt iron” refers to city buildings.  He has brought with him one story.  “More than three thousand souls are lost”.  It happens in the past.  They are gathering under the tree to hear the story. This is in the present tense. The men, women and children listen.  The first 2 paragraphs describe where the tribe is “to hear the story.” The text states “with growing disbelief, men, women, and children listen. This is a story that happens in the past, in New York City.  It says that more than “three thousand souls are lost.”  That sentence references the past and New York City.  Students could create a picture, a short constructed response, a tableau, etc. |
| **THIRD READING:**  Compare and Contrast  Use a graphic organizer such as a double bubble or a Venn diagram. With this read we will only focus on certain pages of the text including illustrations.   1. Refer to page 3 &4 illustrations and text. 2. Refer to page 8. What does the author say about how cows are treated? 3. Refer to page 9 & 10. What do you see? How is that different from how people in New York live? 4. Refer to page 25-26. What do you notice that is similar or different? Or Compare and contrast what you see on these pages. | The Maasai wear robes and Kimeli wears “western” clothing, which is an athletic jacket and pants. The Maasai wear headpieces.  “They treat their cows as kindly as they do their children. They sing to them. They give them names. They shelter the young ones in their homes.”  The homes are made of straw and mud. City homes are made of iron, brick, wood, concrete, etc.  Clothing, headgear |
| **FOURTH AND BEYOND:**  Figurative Language & Figurative Art/ Illustrations   1. Refer to page 8. A metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things by saying one thing “is” something else. What is the metaphor on page 8? What does the author mean when he says the cow is life? How does the illustration support the text? 2. Refer to page 11. What does the author mean when he says “It has burned a hole in his heart”? 3. Refer to page 14. How does the illustration support the text? 4. Reread page 25 to the students. What words or phrases does the author use to convey this is a very special celebration.   **FIFTH READ:**  Compassion and hope   1. What examples from the story demonstrate compassion? 2. Why do you think Kimeli chose to give the Americans a cow instead of something else? What in the story helps you understand this? 3. What made the cow such a special gift? Use evidence from the text. 4. Reread page 30. What is the author’s message? Use text evidence to support your conclusion.” 5. What does this story tell us about the Maasai people? 6. Teacher reads “A Note from Kimeli Naiyomah” and asks why the author added this section. How might it have added to your understanding of the story? Use evidence from the text. | The cow is sacred. It holds a special place in the Maasai’s way of life.  The illustration shows the smiling child caressing the cow’s head.  It has burned a hole in his heart. It is a story that means something to him. This hyperbole shows how much pain this memory has caused him and the severity that it has affected his life.  *“Fire so hot they can melt iron? Smoke and dust so thick it can block out the sun?”* Illustrations show fire in the sky, and burned trees. There is no sun in this picture.  Point out the words: gently chiming of cow bells, sacred knoll, chant a blessing, presence of the cows, clothing worn by the Maasai  Page 8 – Treatment of cows  Page 11 “burned a hole in his heart”  Page 15-“easily moved to kindness when they hear of suffering or injustice”  Page 18 –“He is shaken but above all he is sad. What can we do for these poor people?”  Page 19- He offers his only cow, they give their blessing gladly, want to offer something more.  Page 22- They invite the U.S. diplomat  Kimeli valued the cow foremost. On page 8 it talks about how the Maasai care for the cow. It states multiple times in the text that “the cow is life”. (P.8, 18, 19)  He offers his **only** cow. He also asks blessing from the elders.  The Maasai is their most valuable possession therefore the most difficult to give up.  “No nation so powerful”- USA  “people so small”- the Maasai  wounded means hurt, not just physically but emotionally  Offer mighty comfort-giving support during difficult times  The Maasai people believed that they could do something to help people in a nation far away. This teaches us that no matter how small you may be, you can do something that will give compassion, comfort and hope.  You learn about the author and shares his life. It adds to the story by explaining his feelings about his childhood and his love and respect for cows. He loves and respects his elders. He shares how he got to New York before 9/11. |

FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK - Culminating Task

* What is the author trying to teach us? Have the students write a letter to Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah to thank him for his contribution and explain what they learned while citing evidence from the text. (If companion texts are used, compare his actions with the other people you have learned about that have made a difference in other people’s lives)
  + Possible answer:

Dear Kimeli

I wanted to write to thank you for sharing the story of September 11th under the acacia tree with your tribe, the Maasai. By sharing the story with the elders, you were able to tell how much this hurt the people of America. They understood our pain and wanted to help us. I learned in your book that the cow is life to the Maasai. Thank you and your tribe for giving us 14 cows. I now know what a valuable gift they are. Thank you for blessing them. In the end, you were able to offer us comfort.

Sincerely,

Vocabulary

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| **These words merit less time and attention**  (They are concrete and easy to explain, or describe events/  processes/ideas/concepts/experiences that are familiar to your students ) | **These words merit more time and attention**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, and/or are a part  of a large family of words with related meanings. These words are likely to describe events, ideas, processes or experiences that most of your student will be unfamiliar with) |
| Page 14- disbelief–doubt about the truth  Page 14- iron- type of metal used in buildings  Page 15- kindness-being nice; compassion  Page 30- comfort- making someone feel better in difficult times  Page 30- wounded- suffering, feeling emotional pain | Page 2 -remote – something that is far away and not located next to anything else  Page 8- nomadic - a member of a people that has no fixed home but wanders from place to place  Page 3, 19, 25- blessing- to dedicate something special; approval  Page 12, 22- elders- a leader or senior figure in a tribe  Page 14- tradition –specific practice among a group of people that has happened repeatedly over a long period of time  Page 14- unfolds – reveals; develops  Page 15-suffering –deep sorrow, misery or pain  Page 15-injustice- unfair treatment  Page 15-souls-deep feeling or emotion  Page 22 - diplomat– an official person that represents a country whose main job is to keep peace with and negotiate with other countries  Page 24, 25-sacred- something or someone who is considered holy or blessed  Page 24 -ritual- a special ceremony that’s traditional performed |

Fun Extension Activities for this book and other useful Resources

* Informational text on Abraham Lincoln, Louis Pasteur, Sitting Bull, George Washington Carver, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Golda Meir, Jackie Robinson, Sally Ride
* Companion Book: “Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters”
* <http://peachtree-online.com/pdfs/14CowsTG.pdf> has extended activities. One is on writing a cinquain reinforcing themes within the book. An example is below:

Cows

Quiet, strong

Grazing, lowing, healing

They are a gift.

Life.

Note to Teacher

* CA HSS 2.5: Students understand the importance of individual action and character and explain how heroes from long ago and the recent past have made a difference in others’ lives.
* Since the book does not have numbered pages, you might want to number the pages with post it notes. Page 1 is the page with the illustration of Kimeli’s shoes.

**What Makes This Read-Aloud Complex?**

1. **Quantitative Measure**

Go to <http://www.lexile.com/> and enter the title of your read-aloud in the Quick Book Search in the upper right of home page. Most texts will have a Lexile measure in this database.

Most of the texts that we read aloud in K-2 should be in the 2-3 or 4-5 band, more complex than the students can read themselves.

2-3 band 420-820L

4-5 band 740-1010L

580L

1. **Qualitative Features**

Consider the four dimensions of text complexity below. For each dimension\*, note specific examples from the text that make it more or less complex.

Lesson –Universality of us all

Multiple storylines

Concept of making a difference

Illustrations support text

Time shifts

Non-fiction Narrative

Figurative language- children run with the speed and grace of cheetahs, burned a hole in his heart, Buildings so tall they can touch the sky?, Fires so hot they can melt iron?, Smoke and dust so thick they can block out the sun?

Vocabulary: diplomat, remote

Geographic knowledge

9/11

Maasai (African culture)

**Meaning/Purpose**

**Structure**

**Knowledge Demands**

**Language**

1. **Reader and Task Considerations**

What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports can I provide?

* + Build knowledge-pair text to do this-content standards (primary sources, photographs, other informational text)
  + Vocabulary specific to Maasai tribe
  + Inferences from the text

How will this text help my students build knowledge about the world?

* + The lesson will teach students about how one person can make a difference through an act of compassion, no matter how big or small.
  + Connection between two cultures

1. **Grade level?**

What grade does this book best belong in? 2nd grade