

I greatly enjoyed reading this book. I feel that *The Namesake* is a story that many people can relate too. It's a story about struggle, triumph, finding your place in your family and finding a place in your life. Isn't this what everyone goes through at some point in their lives, regardless of culture, gender, race, or nationality? I know that I have and I was really able to engage in the story and relate points of my life to aspects and situations that were happening in the book.

*The Namesake* has also helped me to look closer into how I can be more responsive to my own students. As an international teacher in China, I have probably taught the most culturally diverse classes these past 3 years than I've ever encountered in my career. I'm sure I will encounter it again and I hope to!

I think there are more ways than I know to be culturally responsive to students' identities through literacy. I will use literacy in the most general terms possible, reading/writing/speaking. The first day of school I had a young child come into my class. His family had moved to China from Spain the year before. This young child went through K4 the whole year without speaking one word. Did not speak one word of English, not one word of Chinese, nor even one word of Spanish. Now, I am not saying that this is anyone's fault in particular, maybe he wasn't ready yet. His first day in my class, after having just met his parents and greeting them in Spanish (although I am not fluent in the least!) realized how scared this young boy must have felt. Coming into a culture that is completely different than his own. I proceeded by conversing with him in Spanish, and continued this for the first month of school. I did not require him to answer me in English, or ask me anything in English, I simply wanted him to know he had a place in my class, in our class. Eventually the Spanish lessened until it was nonexistent, for the most part, and that being mostly on his accord. I remember knowing and telling him and his parents how proud I was of him and how far he had come along. I know that it took all of the teachers in his school life; ESL, art, gym, computer, music; that helped to contribute to his success and *The Namesake* really helps me remember situations like this. All the times I attempt to speak to my students

in Chinese, or simple French phrases, or even Japanese or Korean, I feel like I am trying to honor them more and acknowledge where they come from.

Another activity that we do to help teach Literacy in the classroom is our geography unit 'Where in the World is Barnaby Bear?' This is one of the first units we do and I post a huge atlas in the class with pins from where each student is from connected to their countries flag and their name. We talk about the different parts of the world that each student is from and what the culture is like. Sometimes the parents like to come in and talk about it more, but it is not forced because often times they feel embarrassed by not knowing English. Then right before our October holiday each student is given a bear to keep. They take their bear on their holiday and take pictures with the bear doing different activities, eating different foods. This activity also helps to show parts of the world that none of our students are from. When they return the students do a show and tell, bringing in artifacts and pictures to illustrate their holiday. We also learn to write a recount of the holiday using the pictures again as illustrations. This activity also helps students to focus on listening and learning about their classmates.

I know that there are many other activities to do in classroom, and I learn from other teachers and books, such as *The Namesake*, for ideas and ways to help me better understand not only different cultures, but my students as well.