



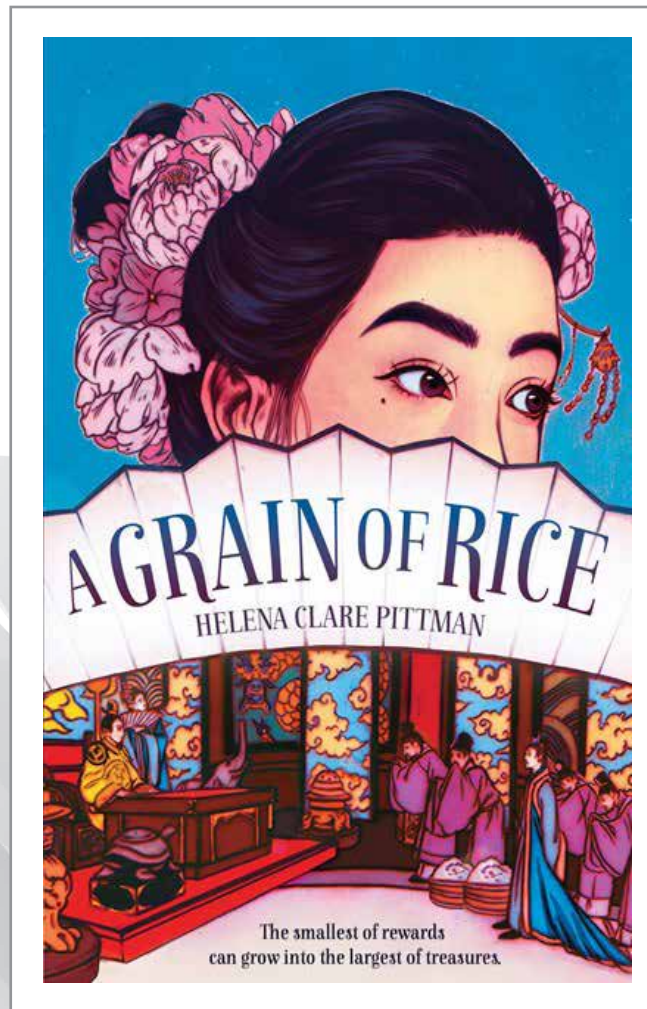
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

A Grain of Rice

Helena Clare Pittman



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

A Grain of Rice

Helena Clare Pittman

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, sorting,
research, visualizing,
evaluating

Literary Elements

Story elements,
characterization

Writing

Couplet, triplet,
limerick, riddle

Art

Collage

Vocabulary

Alphabetical order, sentence
and paragraph use,
analogies, tongue twisters,
synonym/antonym

Comprehension

Predicting

Listening/Speaking

Poetry reading, role play,
oral persuasion

Summary

The Emperor opens the door of the palace so that the people of his kingdom can come before him. Pong Lo, the son of a farmer, asks to marry the Princess. Rejected by the Emperor, but encouraged by the Princess, Pong Lo is given a job at the palace, and is soon an indispensable member of the staff. When the Princess becomes ill, it is Pong Lo's potion that revives her. As a reward, the Emperor vows to fill any request made by him, except marriage to the Princess. Pong Lo requests one grain of rice, doubled every day for one hundred days. Glad to fill this request, the Emperor does so until the fortieth day. He then calls Pong Lo to the palace, admitting that Pong Lo is worthy of marrying the Princess.

About the Author

Helena Clare Pittman was born January 26, 1945, in Brooklyn, New York. She attended Pratt Institute, B.F.A., 1969; and later attended Parsons School of Design. Pittman is an author and illustrator, having been a teacher and professor in the 1980s. Her home is in Huntington, New York.

Background Information

Rice

Rice is one of the world's most important food crops. More than half the people in the world eat this grain as part of their meals. Nearly all of the people who depend on rice for food live in Asia.

Rice is a cereal grain. Like other cereal grains, rice belongs to the grass family. But unlike other grains, rice grows best in shallow water. Rice thrives in many tropical areas because of their warm, wet climate. Farmers usually flood rice fields to supply the growing plants with moisture. China and India are the world's leading rice-producing countries. Together, they produce more than half the world's yearly rice harvest.

Nearly all of the rice produced in the world provides food for people. Rice supplies about half the calories in the daily diet of many people in Asia. It is an excellent source of carbohydrates, the nourishing substances that provide the body with energy. Rice also has small amounts of minerals and the B vitamins. Rice has very little fat and is easy to digest.

Most rice is eaten as milled white rice—rice that has had both its hull and bran layers removed. Brown rice has had its hull removed but not its bran layers. Brown rice is more nutritious than white rice because the bran layers contain most of the kernel's vitamins and minerals. However, most people prefer white rice. Quick-cooking rice is partially cooked after milling. The kernels become more absorbent in the process and need less time for final cooking.

Farmers may use rice hulls for fertilizer and add bran layers to livestock feed. In industry, hulls are sometimes used as an ingredient in such products as insulation and cement. A few producers extract cooking oil from the bran. Many people in Asia use the straw (dried stalks) from rice plants to thatch roofs and to weave sandals, hats, and baskets.

China

China is a country in eastern Asia. It is the world's largest country in population and the third largest in area. About one fifth of the world's people live in China. The country covers more than a fifth of Asia. China's vast land area includes some of the driest deserts and highest mountains in the world, as well as some of the richest farmland.

The Chinese call their country *Zhongguo*, which means Middle Country. This name may have come into being because the ancient Chinese thought of their country as both the geographical center of the world and the only cultured civilization. The name China was given to the country by foreigners. It may have come from *Qin*, the name of an early Chinese dynasty.

Most of the Chinese people live crowded together in the eastern third of the country. This region has most of China's major cities and nearly all the land suitable for farming. Agriculture has always been the chief economic activity in China. About 79% of the people live in rural villages, and about 70% of all workers are farmers. Although only a small percentage of the people live in urban areas, China has several of the largest cities in the world. They include Shanghai and Beijing, the nation's capital.

China has the world's oldest living civilization. Its written history goes back about 3,500 years. The Chinese people take great pride in their nation, its long history, and its influence on other countries. The Chinese were the first people to develop the compass, paper, porcelain, and silk cloth.

In 221 B.C. the Qin dynasty established an empire with a strong central government. This empire lasted in some form for more than 2,000 years. During those years, Chinese society survived wars, rebellions, and the rise and fall of numerous dynasties. The Chinese developed an increasingly powerful and efficient system of government, built great cities, and created magnificent works of literature and art.

In the 1800s, the Chinese empire began to weaken. In 1911, revolutionaries overthrew the empire. The next year, China became a republic. However, an effective government was never established. In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party defeated the Nationalists and set up China's present government. The Nationalists fled to the island of Taiwan, where they re-established their own government.

Chinese Literature

Chinese literature is one of the oldest and greatest of the world's literatures. Chinese writers have produced important works for almost 3,000 years.

During most of China's history, the Chinese did not consider literature a separate art form. They expected all cultured people to write in a graceful, elegant style, regardless of the topic. Many masterpieces of Chinese literature deal with subjects that some Western writers read as nonliterary. These topics include history, philosophy, politics, religion, and science.

Many works of Chinese literature teach a moral lesson or express a political philosophy. These themes appear especially in the writings of Confucians. Confucianism is a philosophy founded by Confucius, who lived from about 551 to 479 B.C. It was the dominant Chinese philosophy until the 1900s. Many other writers were Buddhists or Taoists, rather than Confucians. Buddhism was a major Chinese

Section One, pp. 1–5

Vocabulary

humblest (1)	request (2)	peasant (2)	qualified (2)
outraged (3)	boldness (3)	clever (4)	skillful (4)

Vocabulary Activities

1. Complete each of the analogies using a vocabulary word. (Sample: *HOT is to COLD as GOOD is to BAD.*)
 - a) UNHAPPY is to SAD as _____ is to LOWEST. (*HUMBLEST*)
 - b) HERE is to THERE as _____ is to INEPT. (*CLEVER*)
 - c) GOOD is to KIND as _____ is to FARMER. (*PEASANT*)
 - d) BETTER is to WORSE as _____ is to UNFIT. (*QUALIFIED*)
 - e) UP is to DOWN as _____ is to TIMIDITY. (*BOLDNESS*)
 - f) STAY is to REMAIN as _____ is to OFFENDED. (*OUTRAGED*)
2. Use as many of the vocabulary words as you can in one meaningful paragraph.

Discussion Questions

1. How does it come to be that Pong Lo, the humble son of a farmer, kneels at the feet of the Emperor of China? (*Once a year the Emperor of China opens his court to all people. p. 1*) Does Pong Lo have a purpose for his visit? If so, what is it? (*Pong Lo comes to ask for the hand of the daughter of the Emperor in marriage. pp. 1–2*)
2. What is your first impression of Pong Lo? Discuss first impressions. Do you think that they are usually accurate? (*Answers will vary.*)
3. The princess, Chang Wu, tells her father, “The young man is clever. He could be useful!” (p. 5) Why do you think that the princess does this? What do you think has impressed her about Pong Lo? (*Answers will vary.*)
4. In what way(s) do you think Pong Lo could be useful to the Emperor? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Make an attribute web for Pong Lo. (*See page 10 of this guide.*) Add to it as the story unfolds.
2. Start a story map. (*See page 11 of this guide.*)
3. Make a prediction as to what will happen next. Will Pong Lo be given a job at the palace? Will Pong Lo impress the Emperor and the Princess? Will something happen to change the course of events?