Identity Mash-Up

**SEL FOCUS:** SOCIAL AWARENESS

**Story Title:** "Taking the Best of Both Worlds" by Claire Shin

**Story Summary:** Mocked by her family for not being able to properly hold chopsticks and teased by her friends for her heavy American accent, Claire doesn’t feel “Korean enough.” A friend helps Claire see she isn’t alone and Claire finds comfort in the many cultures that surround her in New York City.

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**Learning Objectives**

Youth will build their SEL by:
- Reflecting on their sense of identity and culture
- Increasing empathy for other youths’ experiences

Youth will increase their literacy by:
- Making meaning of text through group read-aloud and discussion

**Important Vocabulary**
- authoritative
- jeered
- patronizing
- heritage

**Materials**
- One copy of YCteen Issue #270 for each student
- Journals or notebook paper and pencils
- Chart paper and markers

**Preparation**
- Read the story ahead of time.
- Prepare and post the session agenda.
- Create an open space in the room for the Concentric Circle activity.
- Write up steps for Concentric Circles activity (in bold) on chart paper (optional).
- For the Explore the Ideas Activity, write each question (in bold) on a separate piece of chart paper and post them around the room.
GETTING STARTED
Review the agenda (posted):
Agenda: Identity Mash-Up
- Opening Activity: Concentric Circles
- Read and Discuss: "Taking the Best of Both Worlds" by Claire Shin
- Explore the Ideas Activity: Questioning Carousel
- Closing Circle

OPENING ACTIVITY — CONCENTRIC CIRCLES
(8 minutes)
This activity helps students activate background knowledge.

1. After reviewing the agenda, tell the students that they are going to do an activity during which they will share their opinions with others.

2. While the students are still seated, read aloud the activity procedure that you wrote on chart paper:
   - You will form two standing circles, one inside the other.
   - Each person will be facing a partner.
   - I will read questions aloud and everyone will have a chance to respond while their partner listens.

3. Divide students into two equal groups. One way to do this is to have students count off by twos. (If you don’t have two equal groups, you can join one.)

4. Have the 1s stand and move into the open space you cleared and form a circle facing outward.

5. Have the 2s stand and form a second circle around the first one, facing inward.

6. Then explain to the students that the person they’re facing will be their first partner.
7. Review the specific steps of the activity with the students (you may wish to write these steps on chart paper for students’ reference):

- You will take turns responding to a question that I ask.
- When one person speaks, the other listens.
- When I say “Switch,” the speaker and the listener switch roles.
- When time is up, I will ask one circle to rotate and everyone will have a new partner.

8. Have partners greet each other by shaking hands and saying “Hello.”

9. Ask the students:

- “What is one way you celebrate your identity?”

10. After both partners have answered the question, ask the inside circle to move two spaces to the right while the outside circle stands still. When new pairs form, have students greet their new partner.

11. Time permitting, repeat the process using these prompts:

- “What is one thing you really like about yourself?”
- “What is one strength you see in others that you admire?”
- “Describe a time when you’ve felt out of place.”

12. Have everyone return to their seats and thank group members for sharing.
READ AND DISCUSS THE STORY (20 minutes)
By practicing active reading strategies while reading aloud, students build comprehension and develop fluency.

1. Introduce the story (see the story summary on p. 8 of this lesson guide).

2. Share the expectations for a group read-aloud: volunteers take turns reading aloud as much or as little as they would like. As the teacher, you may stop periodically to ask students to share their responses to the story.

3. While sitting in a circle, read the story aloud together. Consider asking these open-ended questions during or after the read aloud:
   • What’s standing out to you about the story?
   • What advice would you give the writer if you were her friend?
   • What helps the writer feel more comfortable by the end of the story?

4. Thank the group for reading and sharing.

EXPLORE THE IDEAS — QUESTIONING CAROUSEL (12 minutes)
During this post-reading activity, students make connections, build understanding, and rehearse positive behaviors.

1. Introduce the next activity by explaining to the class:
   • “Now that we’ve read Claire’s story, we’re going to do an activity where we move around the room and share our thoughts about the story.”

2. While the class is still seated, review the directions. Tell them:
   • “I have posted four posters around the room, each with a question on it.”
   • “Spend three minutes at each poster in small groups, discussing and writing down your responses to each question.”
   • “When I call time, rotate one poster clockwise with your group. At your new poster, read what has been written.”
   • “Add ideas and comment on what’s already there with new
thoughts or questions. Feel free to get creative.”
• “Wait for more instructions when you have completed a full lap and have returned to your first poster.”

3. Read the signs in each corner aloud, checking for understanding about each question:

• How is Claire’s identity not valued by her family?
• How does it make Claire feel that her identity is not valued?
• What could Claire’s family and friends change to value her identity?
• What changes for Claire and how is she able to value her own identity by the end of the story?

4. Divide the class into four groups by having them count off 1-4, directing each number to start at a separate poster.

5. Hand out one or two markers per group. Then tell them to begin answering the question at their poster while you keep track of time.

6. While the small groups write and discuss, move around the room to listen and support them.

7. In three minutes, or when the hum of conversation dies down, regain everyone’s attention and tell all groups to rotate one spot clockwise.

8. Repeat steps 6 and 7 until the groups have traveled to all posters.

9. When groups are at their first poster again, regain their attention. Tell them:

• “Read over the comments written at this poster. Circle or underline two or three responses that stand out.”

10. After groups have chosen their favorite responses, ask one student from each poster to share what they chose and why.

11. Time permitting, have students share a few highlights from their discussions with the whole class. They can share points of agreement or disagreements, new ideas, or questions.

12. Have students return to their seats and thank them for sharing.
CLOSING CIRCLE  (5 minutes)
In Closing Circle, students make personal connections to the story and share their take-aways with each other.

Guide students in a go-round share of responses to these prompts:

1. “What stood out for you in Claire’s story and our activities today?”

2. Finish this sentence: “One way I celebrate my identity is by…”

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Were your students interested in this lesson? Here are some ways to extend the learning:

- Claire’s experience is common among YCteen writers. “Finding Friends Who Accept Me” by Anonymous is a good example. Search [YCteen.org](http://ycteen.org) for other great stories on this topic.

- Have students create an identity board that represents different aspects of their identities with drawings, magazine cut-outs, etc. They can present these or display them in the classroom.