Teacher Resource Kit

The Journey Seed
A Story of Roots, Home, and Growing Again

Written by Sabbithry Persad
Illustrated by Chandrima Chatterjee

In a warm village in India, Mala dances in the red dust and listens to her family's stories. When life changes and her family must leave, Mama gives Mala a single mango seed—a journey seed—to remember where they began.

Across a vast ocean and into a new land, Mala learns that even when everything feels different, roots can grow in unexpected places . . .

The Journey Seed is a tender, lyrical picture book about migration, memory, and the quiet strength of carrying home within you, wherever you go.

Picture Book | 5-10 Years | Grades K-2

LCCN: 2026936259

ISBN: 978-1S-953384-51-5 (hardcover)
978-19-53384-55-3 (e-book)

Recommended Grades: K–3
Reading Experience: Read-aloud, shared reading, and guided reading
Lexile® Measure: 620L*

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A note on culturally responsive teaching: The Journey Seed is rooted in the real history of Indenture and the lived experience of Indo-Caribbean and broader South Asian diaspora communities. When sharing this book and accompanying activities, frame these as ongoing, living histories connected to real families today, including, potentially, students or families within your own school community. Approach discussions of migration, displacement, and cultural loss with sensitivity, and create space for students with their own migration stories to share only if and when they are comfortable doing so. The author's note and accompanying backmatter provide additional context and helpful information on exploring this important topic with care.

Author:
Sabbithry Persad is an author of several award-winning titles, including *the Earth Day Garbology Kids®* series and the nonfiction children's book *What Is Coronavirus?* Her family heritage reflects the often-overlooked history of Indian indentured migration to Trinidad. She created The Journey Seed to honor resilience, cultural continuity, and the enduring search for belonging across generations. A veteran, Persad now lives in Orlando.

Illustrator:
Chandrima Chatterjee is an illustrator and former editor based in New Delhi who has always loved books, stories, and art supplies. She brings stories to life through vibrant, expressive artwork that captures movement and warm, fuzzy emotions on every page. When she's not buried in her sketchbook, you might find her traveling, reading, watching movies, or enjoying a good meal.

Publisher:
Eternal Tree Books is an award-winning independent publishing house, based in the United States, that produces mainly children's books. Their most popular book, Leaf Talks Peace: Buddha's Message of Harmony, is the first picture book to be endorsed by The Dalai Lama.

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01. Mapping Mala's Journey

Learning Objectives:

- Students will trace and describe the route of Mala's family's migration from their village in India across the sea to a new island.
- Students will use map skills to identify key geographic features encountered on a long journey.
- Students will begin to understand migration as a real historical experience connected to the history of Indenture.

Curriculum Links:

- **NY ELA 3R2/4R2:** *Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea (applied to recounting the sequence of the journey).*
- **NYS K–8 Social Studies Framework, Grade 3: Communities around the World — Key Idea 3.1a/3.1b:** *Earth is comprised of water and large land masses that can be divided into distinct regions... Globes, maps, photographs, and satellite images contain geographic information.*
- **NYS K–8 Social Studies Framework, Grade 3 — Key Idea 3.2a/3.2b:** *World communities can be located on globes and maps... in relation to each other and to principal parallels and meridians.*
- **3SL5:** *Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems... add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.*

Materials

- World map or globe.
- Blank outline map (India to the Caribbean/Indian Ocean or Atlantic route, depending on the book's specific setting).
- Yarn or string, and push pins (or dry-erase markers if laminated).
- The Journey Seed sticky-note "ship" markers.

Instructions:

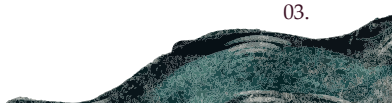
1. Read The Journey Seed aloud, pausing to note place-based details (leaving the village, the sea crossing, arrival on the island).
2. On a world map or globe, help students locate India and identify the general direction and distance of the crossing described in the book. Use the map illustration on pages 15/16 to help students identify countries and oceans.
3. In pairs, students create a story map, mapping Mala's route on a blank outline map using yarn or marker, labeling the starting point ("Home") and ending point ("New Island Home").
4. Students add several labels and descriptions along the route noting what Mala might have felt or seen at each stage (e.g., "leaving family," "long days at sea," "first sight of land").
5. Share routes as a gallery walk; discuss as a class what was the same and different across groups' maps.
6. Each pair can share their story maps with the class.

Extensions:

Research extension: Introduce, in age-appropriate terms, the historical system of Indenture that shaped journeys like Mala's, using a short teacher-led explanation or supplementary text.

Math extension: Estimate and compare distances (using a map scale) between India and different possible island destinations.

Writing extension: Students write a postcard "from Mala" to someone back home, describing one moment of the journey.



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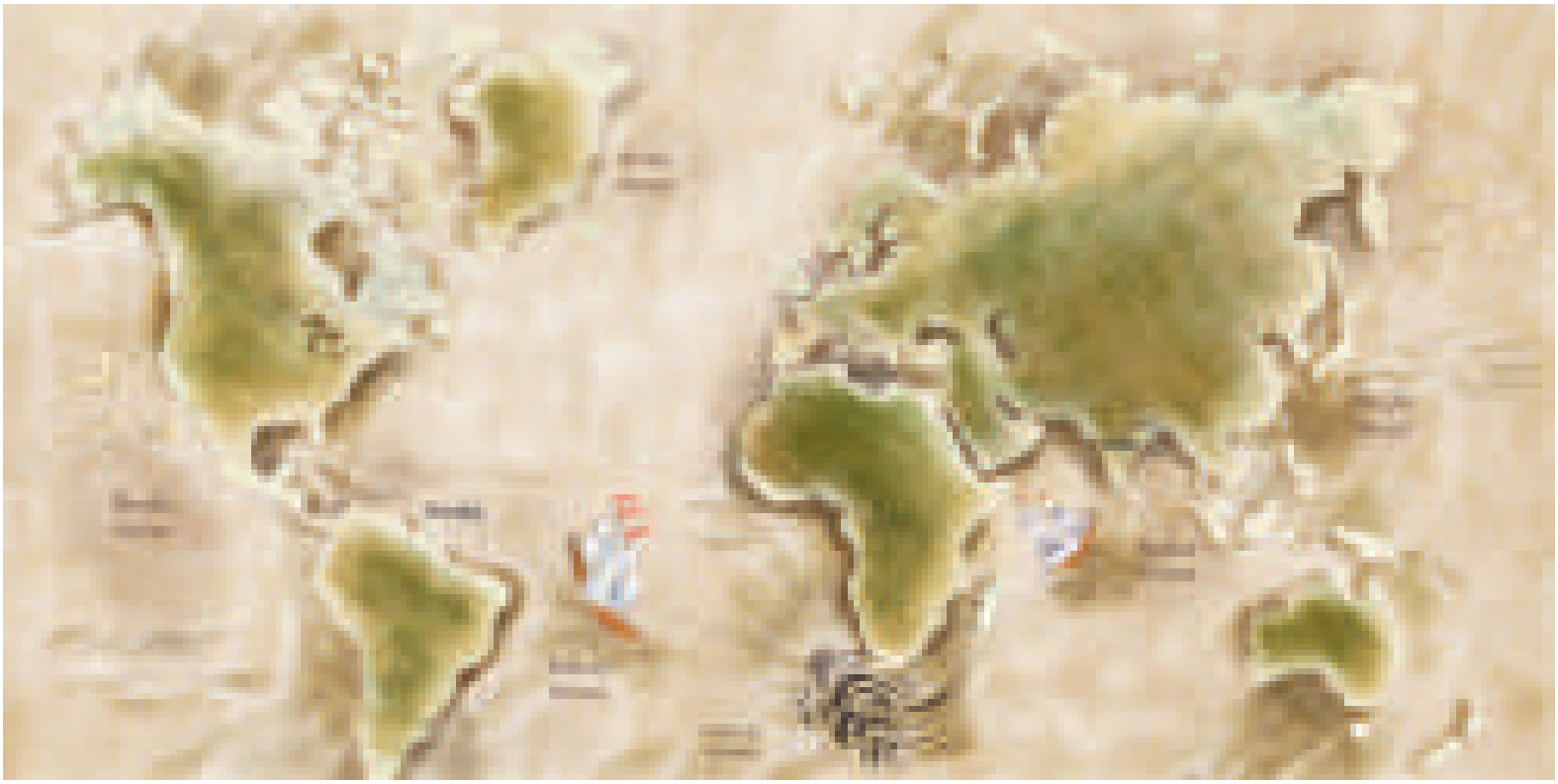

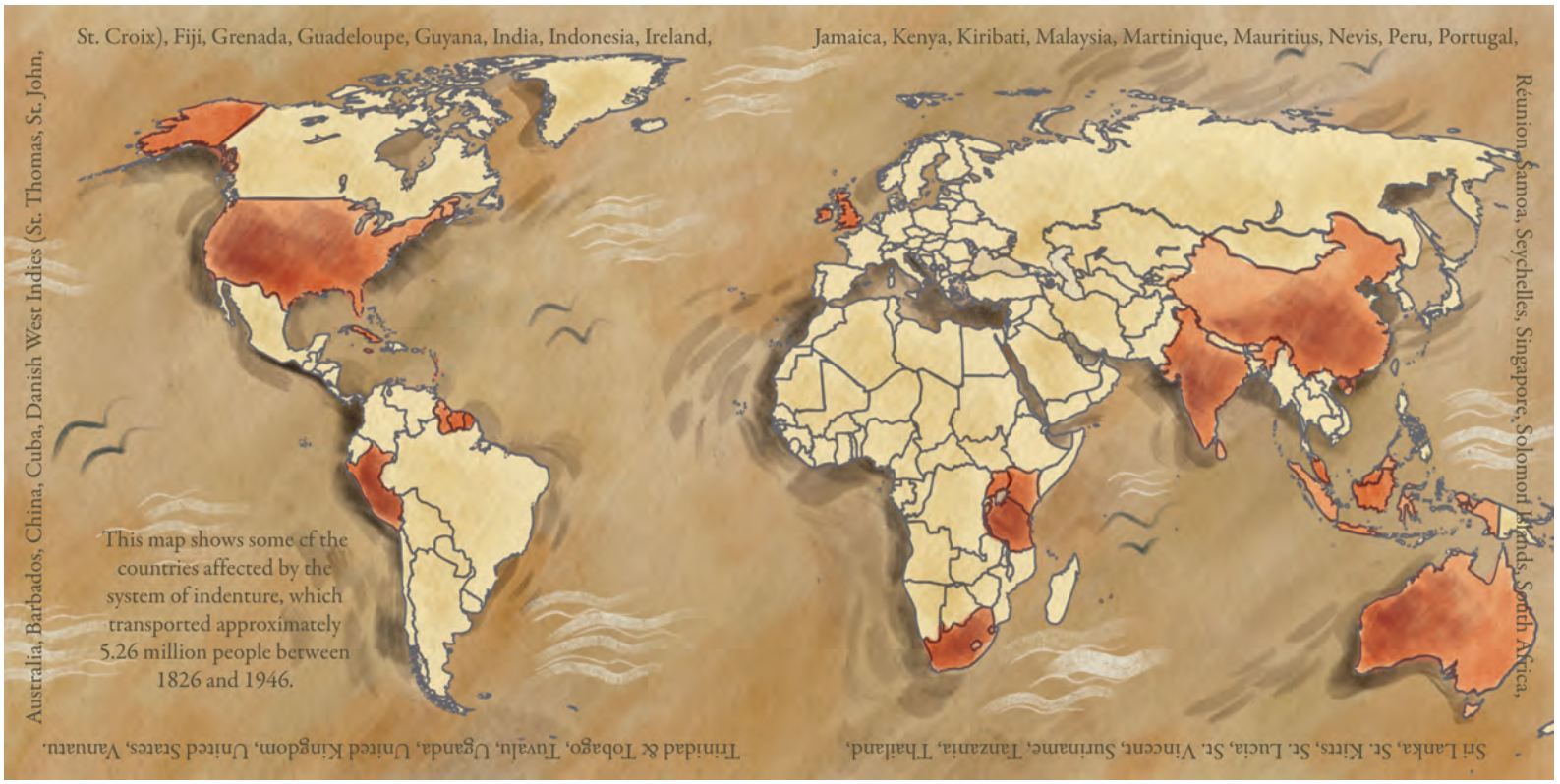

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02. Symbols of Memories

Learning Objectives:

- Students will explain how an object (the mango seed) functions as a symbol of memory, identity, and love in the story.
- Students will identify a personal object that carries meaning for them or their family.
- Students will practice descriptive and reflective writing.

Curriculum Links:

- **NY ELA 3R2:** *Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea (used here to unpack how the seed carries the story's central meaning).*

NY ELA 3R9 (RL): *Recognize genres and make connections to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events, and situations (supports discussing the seed as a symbol students connect to their own lives).*

NY ELA 3W3: *Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events, using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.*

Materials:

- A real or picture-based mango (and, if possible, a mango seed) for hands-on observation
- "*My Journey Seed*" template (a seed-shaped writing/drawing organizer)
- Colored pencils

Instructions:

1. Revisit the parts of the book where the mango seed is introduced and carried. Ask: *Why do you think Mala's family chose to carry a seed, of all things, on such a difficult journey?*
2. Discuss as a class what a symbol is, and how the seed represents more than just a plant; it represents home, memory, and hope for the future.
3. Read the backmatter section of *The Journey Seed*, "Why a Mango Seed?" to the class.
4. Distribute the "*My Journey Seed*" template. Students think of one small object that is (or could be) meaningful to their own family's story. The object can be real or imagined.
5. Students draw the object inside the seed outline and write 3-4 sentences explaining what it represents and why someone might carry it with them.
6. Volunteers share their "journey seed" with the class, if they wish.

Extensions:

Art extension: Create a class "Garden of Journey Seeds" bulletin board display featuring each student's seed drawing.

Family connection: Invite students to ask a family member about an object that has been passed down or carried during a move, and share what they learn (optional, respecting that not all families have such an object or story to share).

Science extension: Plant real seeds (if available) and observe growth over several weeks, connecting the biological process to the story's theme of new beginnings.

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03. The Heritage and Traditions that We Carry

Learning Objectives:

- Students will identify the traditions, songs, and heritage Mala's family carries with them on their journey.
- Students will compare how families preserve culture and identity even when their surroundings change.
- Students will practice respectful listening and sharing about cultural traditions.

Curriculum Links:

- **NY ELA 3SL1:** *Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions... building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.*
- **NYS K–8 Social Studies Framework, Grade 3: Communities around the World — Key Idea 3.5b:** *Communities around the world can be diverse in terms of their members, languages spoken, customs and traditions, and religious beliefs and practices. People in world communities celebrate various holidays and festivals.*
- **NY ELA 3W2:** *Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.*
- **NYS SEL Benchmarks (K–3 benchmark band), Goal 1:** *Young people develop a self-awareness that nurtures and affirms a strong sense of identity, informs decisions about their... (self-awareness, including cultural identity).*

Materials:

- Chart paper divided into: "Things Mala's Family Carried," "Songs/Traditions," "Things They Left Behind"
- "What I Would Carry" worksheet (a simple suitcase outline for drawing/writing)
- **Optional: recorded example of a folk song or lullaby (teacher-selected, culturally appropriate**

Instructions:

1. As a class, revisit the book and list on chart paper what Mala's family and other families carried with them (for example, physical items, songs, traditions, and memories). Encourage students to explore the illustrations to find items that families carried with them on the long journey.
2. Explore the backmatter section of the The Journey Seed, which includes photographs of personal items that people carried on this journey.
3. Discuss: Why might songs and traditions be just as important to carry as physical belongings? What is hard about leaving a home behind, even when carrying so much?
4. Distribute the "What I Would Carry" suitcase worksheet. Students draw and label 3–5 things (objects, traditions, or memories) they would want to carry if they had to begin again somewhere new.
5. In small groups, students share one item from their suitcase and explain why they chose it.
6. Close with a class discussion connecting this activity back to the real experiences of migrant and diaspora families, including Indo-Caribbean communities described in the book (see cultural sensitivity note at the beginning of this guide).

Extension:

Music extension: Learn about the role of song and oral tradition in preserving culture across generations; if appropriate, invite a guest speaker or listen to an example with context provided.

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Writing extension: Write a short paragraph titled "What My Family Carries," connecting the activity to students' own heritage (with sensitivity to varied family structures and backgrounds).

Interview extension: Students interview a family or community member about a tradition that has been passed down, and present findings to the class.

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04. Understanding Indenture

Learning Objective:

- Students will describe, in age-appropriate terms, the historical system of Indenture and how it shaped journeys like Mala's family's.
- Students will understand that The Journey Seed reflects real events in history, not only a fictional story.
- Students will begin to connect this history to the broader Indian diaspora and Indo-Caribbean communities today.

Curriculum Links:

- **NYS K–8 Social Studies Framework, Grade 3 Social Studies Practices — Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence, Practice A.6:** *Create an understanding of the past by using primary and secondary sources.*
- **ELA 3R9/4R9:** *Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic (used here to compare the picture book with a short informational passage on Indenture).*
- **3R1:** *Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.*
- **NYS K–8 Social Studies Framework, Grade 3 — Key Idea 3.3a:** *Geographic factors influence where people settle and their lifestyle. Some geographic factors make a location more suitable for settlement, while others act as deterrents.*

Materials:

- A short, teacher-prepared or vetted informational passage on Indenture history, written at a grade-appropriate reading level
- KWL chart (Know / Wonder / Learned)
- World map from Activity 1 (for reference)

Instructions:

1. Before introducing new information, ask students what they remember about Mala's journey and complete the "Know" and "Wonder" columns of a KWL chart.
2. Read aloud a short, informational passage explaining that Indenture was a real historical system in which many people from India traveled, often under difficult and unfair conditions, to work in other parts of the world,and that many Indo-Caribbean families today are descendants of that history. The backmatter of The Journey Seed contains a section titled, “Historical Note for Educators and Caregivers.” This content can be used to explore this topic further, if deemed appropriate for your grade-level or class.
3. Discuss as a class: How does knowing this history change the way we understand Mala's story? What questions do we still have?
4. Complete the "Learned" column of the KWL chart together.
5. Return to the map from Activity 1 and add a note about the historical context of the journey.

Extensions:

Research extension: In small groups, students research one fact about Indo-Caribbean communities today (with teacher-curated, vetted sources) and share with the class.

Discussion extension: Connect this history to other migration stories students may know from their own families or communities, being sensitive to the range of experiences in the classroom.

Timeline extension: Create a simple class timeline placing the historical period of Indenture in context with other events students have studied this year.

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05. Building a Community of Belonging

Learning Objective:

- Students will describe how Mala and her family build a sense of belonging in their new home.
- Students will identify actions that help newcomers feel welcome in a community.
- Students will apply these ideas to their own classroom or school community.

Curriculum Links:

- **NY ELA 3R3:** *In literary texts, describe character traits, motivations, or feelings, drawing on specific details from the text.*
- **NYS SEL Benchmarks (K–3 benchmark band), Goal 2:** *Young people use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish, navigate, and maintain mutually supportive relationships with individuals and groups that nurture a strong sense of belonging.*
- **NY ELA 3W1:** *Write an argument to support claim(s), using clear reasons and relevant evidence.*
- **NYS K–8 Social Studies Framework, Grade 3: Communities around the World — Key Idea 3.8a:** *Across global communities, governments and citizens alike have a responsibility to protect human rights and to treat others fairly.*

Materials:

- Chart paper titled "Welcoming New Members to our Community"
- Sticky notes
- "Welcome Kit" design template (blank page for drawing/writing a set of items or actions to welcome a new student)

Instructions:

1. Discuss the ending of the book: How does Mala's family begin to feel at home in their new place? What helps them feel like they belong?
2. As a class, brainstorm on chart paper: What are ways people can help someone new feel welcome (at school, in a neighborhood, in a new country)?
3. Individually or in pairs, students design a "Welcome Kit" — a set of items, actions, or words they would offer to a new student joining their class, inspired by the warmth shown in the story.
4. Groups share their Welcome Kits with the class.
5. Close by inviting students to choose one real action from their Welcome Kit to practice in the classroom or school this week.

Extensions:

Opinion writing extension: Students write a short opinion piece: "Why it matters to welcome newcomers," using reasons and examples from the book (a full-length application of 3W1).

Community action extension: As a class, create and actually implement a real "welcome newcomer" plan or buddy system for new students throughout the year.

Cross-curricular extension: Connect this activity to a broader unit on AAPI heritage or immigrant and diaspora experiences, inviting students to explore other stories of new beginnings.