

Lesson plan for *Five Stalks of Grain* and the Ukrainian Holodomor
 Prepared by the KU Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (KU CREES)

Lesson Topic	<i>Five Stalks of Grain</i> and the Ukrainian Holodomor
Class/Grade	Middle School English Language Arts
Introduction	<p>This lesson is designed for Kansas middle school or home school classrooms grade 8 based on the English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Visual Arts standards for grade 8.</p> <p>Instructors are encouraged to contact the KU Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (CREES) if they would like the CREES outreach coordinator to visit their classroom and present about Russian, East European, or Eurasian culture. You can contact CREES at crees@ku.edu</p>
Essential Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the Holodomor? • How can food be used as a weapon? • What health issues (physical and mental) arose as a result of the Holodomor? • What themes appear in the graphic novel <i>Five Stalks of Grain</i>? • How are the themes presented visually in the novel? How do the stylistic choices affect the reader?
Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. • RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text. • RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. • RL.8.9 Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new. • RL.8.13 Read and comprehend high quality dramas, prose, and poetry of appropriate quantitative and qualitative complexity for Grade 8. • W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.* • W.8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.* • W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.* • W.8.10 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W.8.11 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. • SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on Grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. • SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation. • VA:Re7.1.8 Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others. • VA:Cr2.3.8 Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations* <p>*only applies to extension assignment</p>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Five Stalks of Grain</i> graphic novel by Ivan Lysenko • Holdomor video • Teacher powerpoint • Cultural References Powerpoint • Quiz
Time Requirement	Three class periods of 50 minutes each

Procedure	
Pre-lesson Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your students read something about the Holodomor in preparation for the video on the famine. Pages 9-13 in this document give a good overview and some historical context. It references the 10 stages of genocide, which are on page 4 of the same document.
Lesson introduction	<p>Day One:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a class opener/bell-ringer activity, show your students a map of Ukraine and ask them to tell you what they know about Ukraine. They can write it down on a piece of paper, say it aloud, or everyone can write it on the board. Give them a little information about Ukraine using the first few slides of Teacher Powerpoint. • Show your students the word Holodomor and explain its meaning • Have your students watch this 10:45 minute video that gives an overview of the Holodomor. • You can review some terms that may be unfamiliar to them such as Gulag, kulak, collective farm, and Tsar. There are slides on these in the Cultural References Powerpoint.

- Share information about the number of victims of the Holodomor using the slide in **Teacher Powerpoint**
- There is a lot of helpful information including a timeline of events, historical context, and term definitions on [this site](#) which you can use if you'd like to expand on the historical aspects of the lesson instead of an overview.
- Ask them to discuss with a partner "How can food be used as a weapon?"
- Have them share what they discussed in pairs and then discuss as a class. Can they think of examples in history/current events in which food (or other resources) /are used as a weapon?

Homework: Have students read *Five Stalks of Grain* at home. While they read at home, have them keep a reading journal in which they identify the setting, characters, major plot points, and themes.

Day Two:

- Start class by asking them why they think the novel is called *Five Stalks of Grain*. Would they have called it something else? Why or why not?
- Next, discuss the characters, setting, and plot of the novel.
- Have them tell you who the characters are and what happens to them. You can fill in missing information as needed. If there are cultural or historical references that they don't understand you can give them additional information. Use **Cultural References Powerpoint**. You can choose which slides you'd like to add to the **Teacher Powerpoint** depending on how in depth you'd like to go into certain topics.
- Talk about the characters' names: Nadia and Taras.
- The names of the characters are a great segue to a discussion of the themes. What themes did they notice?
- Make sure to discuss the slide about Toll Houses since this concept is central to the novel. Taras and Nadia are on a journey and are tested along the way. Can your students identify some of the "toll-houses" the children face in the novel?
- Discuss what health issues (physical and mental) arose as a result of the Holodomor? This is where you can discuss the theme of trauma/transformation as well as generational/inherited trauma.
- To end class, ask them why they think it is important that the characters' relatives go to the house and read Nadia's story 61 years later? Are there parts of their family history that inform their identities? They can think this question over at home.

Homework: Have students reread the novel. In their reading journals have them focus on the images and write down how they think the

	<p>images relate to the themes discussed in class today. Ask them to choose one page or image from the novel that was the most striking to them and be prepared to discuss why they chose that image.</p> <p>Day Three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open class by sharing the image that struck you the most from the novel and why. Have this image on the screen when they arrive. Next, go around the room and have them share the images they chose and what made them choose it. • What images repeat throughout the novel? (birds, eyes, hands, icons, Nadia's father's medal) • If you want to talk more about the style of the images and visual references, see the slide on icons in Cultural References Powerpoint • Finish any final discussion of the novel in terms of themes, style, and historical context. Give time to ask questions. • Use remaining class time to explain the assignment and let them start working on their graphic novels. If possible, have them leave class with an idea for their novel in mind already. <p>Homework: Take the quiz on the novel and the Holodomor. Extension activity below if desired.</p>
<p>Wrap-up</p>	<p>Ask if your students have any questions. Did they like the novel? Why or why not? Share additional resources if they are interested in learning more about the Holodomor.</p>
<p>Extension/ Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz on Holodomor and <i>Five Stalks of Grain</i> • Have them create their own short graphic novel on a theme from <i>Five Stalks of Grain</i>. You can let them choose a theme or assign one. The novel can be based on their lives, history, or be completely fictional. To accompany their graphic novel, have them write a page or two explaining how their novel embodies the theme they chose/were assigned. What stylistic choices did they make to portray their theme to the reader? Are the characters' names important to their novel's meaning? What visual references inspired their novel in terms of the artwork? Why? • If they don't want to draw pictures for their project they could find images online or from magazines/newspapers. • To extend the assessment further, students could present the graphic novel to the rest of the class. Students could swap novels with a partner and try to guess their partner's theme.