



Context:

Southeast Asians & other newcomers in California's classrooms

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Context is published eight times during the academic year as a way to provide staff with information and ideas concerning their newcomer students and parents. While the focus is on Southeast Asians, most articles and resources apply to other newcomer groups as well. This newsletter is developed with Economic Impact Aid funds, and district staff with English learners receive an automatic subscription. Other district staff may request a subscription, at no cost. Outside subscribers pay \$10.00 per year to cover mailing and handling costs.

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Refugee Educators Network

This group of educators meets at the above address 5 times per year to share information and plan an annual conference, the Southeast Asian Education Faire—9:00-11:30, 3rd Thursdays.

Join us!

September 16, 1993
November 18, 1993
January 20, 1994
February 17, 1994
May 19, 1994

Year of the Dog

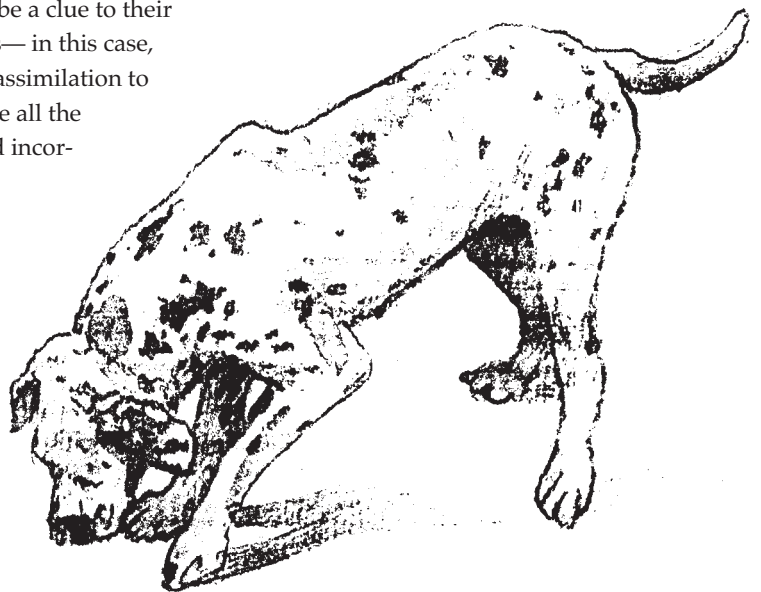
The “year of the dog” begins for cultures influenced by the Chinese on February 10, 1994. The lunar new year (*Chun Jie* in Mandarin, “spring festival”) lasts for fifteen days, until the lantern festival (*Yuan Xiao* in Mandarin), closes the new year festivities, this year on February 25. The lunar new year is common to “chopstick” cultures—those that have incorporated Chinese traditions into their own cultural ways during cultural contact at some period in history. “Sino-pheric” cultures are Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, and Mien. (In an interesting contrast, the Hmong, who have also been in contact with the Chinese for millennia, observe their lunar new year two months earlier. Could this be a clue to their cultural tendencies—in this case, avoiding outright assimilation to the majority culture all the while selecting and incorporating traditions from surrounding groups into their own identity?)

For teachers, the lunar new year is an ideal time to put together activities that use the

animal of the year as a unifying theme, activities that lead to the “construction of meaning” about the similarities and differences between American and Asian cultural worlds.

On the next pages are proverbs and other “teaching sentences” from all over the world that feature dogs. (There are more to be found! Ask around. Look also for dog parables and folk stories, idioms, cartoons, and stories.)

One interesting generalization that may be constructed is that the dog is more important in American culture than in Asian cultures. There are a number of ways this can be seen. For example, anthro-

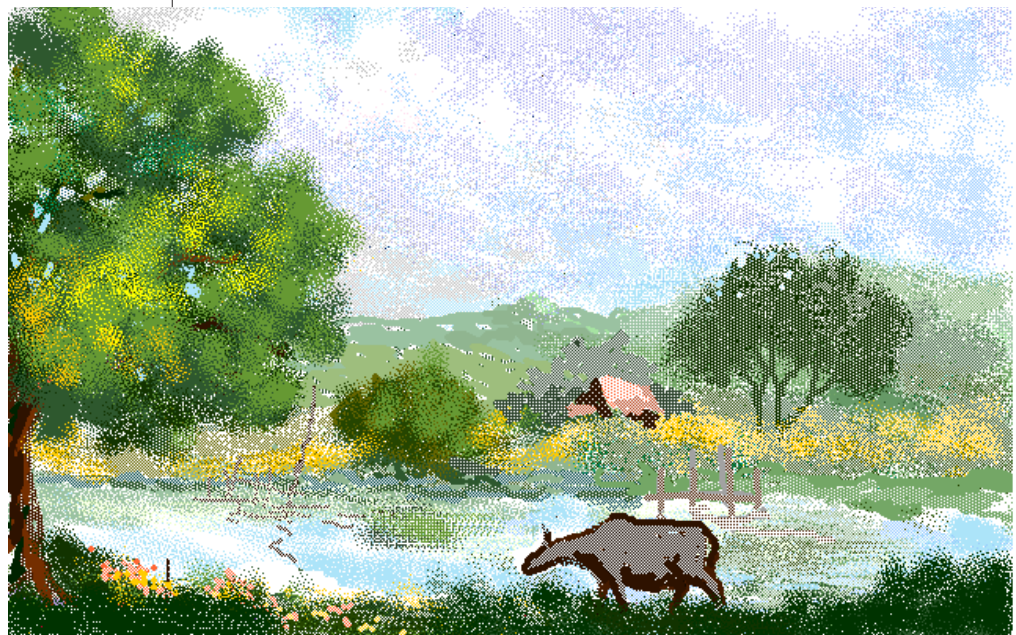


pologists and linguists look at the number of words there are for a particular class of objects to see how important that thing is in the speakers' world (the classic is the variety of words for "snow" among the Inuit or words for "rice" among many Asian groups). Try it out: name all the kinds of dogs you can in one minute; then ask a Chinese or Vietnamese friend to do the same in their own language. Translate the words literally into English. Compare the lists; you've already begun to compare and contrast "Chinese" and "American" conceptual worlds...and values.

Dogs in the family

In general, societies that are concerned with survival or economic advancement regard the dog as hardly worth the cost of its keep. It hunts, barks at strangers, and serves as a four-footed garbage disposal, but it produces nothing of value for the family. Cows, buffalo, horses,

pigs, and chickens are more important to the family than the frivolous dog. Contrast this to American society, in which dogs are part of the family, surrogate children who are loyal, forgiving, unquestioning, and uncritical. Investment in dogs is acceptable in American culture in part because both leisure and waste are visible signs of status ("survival is no problem for us"). In which other societies do dogs spend vacations at resort hotels, go to the hairdresser, have their teeth scaled, undergo hip replacement surgery, or receive inheritances? We invest in dogs as seriously as we do in our children. Some years ago, a curious newcomer to America asked why Americans favor small families—two children, one boy and one girl. "Why don't Americans want lots of children? Why do Americans have several dogs and cats but only two children? Why not spend all that effort and



money on humans rather than animals?" An interesting question, to be sure.

Dog food

Many Americans harbor the suspicion that newcomers, especially Asians, eat their dogs. It's true that in other cultures, dog is an acceptable form of protein, just as cute little lambs give up their legs for American (Australian, French, English...) dinner plates. Why is there such a horror of eating dog, unless Americans regard the dog as something almost human? There is a European antecedent to the expression of xenophobia by referral to the culinary habits of different others—for example, a German ethnic slur for Italians is "Katzenfresser," or "cat-eaters." Is the underlying fear the pan-human dread that those who are not like us will invade and destroy our families, in this case, eat our "children"?

Dog talk

Do dogs sound the same the world over? Undoubtedly they do, but different languages represent their vocalizations differently, according to Berlitz, in "Native Tongues" (1982):

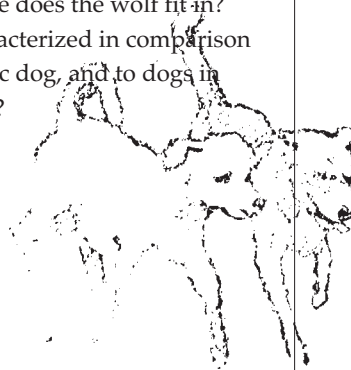
English	bow-wow
French	ouah-ouah
Italian	bau-bau
Spanish	jau-jau
German	haff-haff
Russian	gaf-gaf
Chinese	wu-wu
Japanese	wau-wau

First words

Surprisingly, *dog* does not show up in Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, or Cambodian proverbs and idioms as frequently as chicken, fish, tiger, and other creatures. In fact, a small pocket dictionary from Hong Kong did not even list *dog* as an entry. *Dog* is probably one of the first words in an American child's lexicon, certainly among the first 100 words learned. Pick up an American children's book, and dogs will be characters in the stories or featured in the pictures. If *dog* is less prominent in a child's vocabulary, or acquired at a later age, think about the implication for administering translated versions of vocabulary-based ability tests to Asian children. Just because the item is translated doesn't mean that it carries the same cognitive significance for estimating "mental age."

The proverbial dog

On the next page are dog proverbs. What can you say about the "character" of the dog in other cultures, based on the roles they play in verbal images? Consider the coyote in American lore (probably borrowed from the "trickster" stories of various American Indians): is the dog in other cultures more similar to the coyote than to the "dog-as-child" in American culture? Where does the wolf fit in? How is it characterized in comparison to the domestic dog, and to dogs in other cultures?



Activities

Pick a proverb and illustrate it. Use drawing, magazine picture collage, photography, computer graphics. Think about the obvious meaning, and the deeper meaning. All of these proverbs are "teaching sentences." What does each one try to teach?

Which proverbs express the same idea?

Which proverbs express opposite ideas?

Get into a group. Choose one proverb (pick one at random). Discuss what it means. How many meanings? Can you think of a proverb from another language that expresses the same idea?

Print the proverbs on strips of paper or tagboard. Cut them apart between two words. Each group in the class does the same. Put all the pieces upside-down on a table (or floor). Play like "concentration"—turnover two pieces and see if they fit together to make one proverb. If they do, your group has to explain what it means. Then your group gets a point. If another group can give a convincing alternate meaning to the proverb, they also get a point. Group with most points wins..

Develop a chart of "dog characteristics" by language or country of origin, based on what the proverbs suggest. Compare and contrast each language group's attitude towards dogs.

Research the origin of breeds of American Kennel Club dogs. For example the "Pekingese" is a "Peking" dog, from China. Get pictures of the dogs, match the pictures to proverbs, and display them around a world map, with strings to show where in the world they came from.

Which language groups have the most different kinds of dogs? What does that say about the importance of dogs to that culture?

Americans think of the dog as "man's best friend," loyal and true. Can you connect other animals with human characteristics? How about the following:

dragon, tiger, rooster, fox, goat, chicken, rabbit, cow, horse, snake, monkey, tortoise, cat

Compare the animals and their human characteristics by culture (you'll need someone from the language or culture for this). Are different animals regarded differently by different groups? How so?

It's a dog's life

At 20 a man will be a peacock, at 30 a lion, at 40 a camel, at 50 a serpent, at 60 a dog, at 70 a monkey, and at 80 nothing.
(Spanish)

If you would call the dog to you, do not carry a stick.
(West African)

Before you beat the dog, learn the name of his master.
(Chinese)

Do not step on the tail of a sleeping dog. (Turkish)

Your dog and your child act as you teach them. (Greek)

The man who sits atop an elephant will not fear the bark of a dog. (Indian)

If you lie down with dogs, you will arise with fleas. (Latin)

The dog stole and the goat is being punished. (West African)

The snappish cur always has torn ears. (French)

If two men quarrel, even their dogs will have differences.
(Japanese)

A dog does not resent begin called a dog. (West African)

A dog that will fetch a bone will carry a bone. (English)

A barking dog never bites. (French)

Why keep a dog and bark yourself? (English)

Love me, love my dog. (Latin)

It is a poor dog that is not worth whistling for. (English)

Let sleeping dogs lie. (French)

It is easy to find a stick to beat a dog. (English)

You can't teach an old dog new tricks. (English)

While two dogs are fighting for a bone, a third runs away with it. (English)

Dog does not eat dog. (Latin)

Every dog has his day. (English)

Every dog is allowed one bite. (English)

Every dog is a lion at home. (English)

Trying to draw a tiger, ending up with the picture of a dog.
(Chinese)

Hanging up a sheep's head and selling dogmeat. (Chinese)

Crowing like a rooster, and snatching like a dog. (Chinese)

A tiger does not beget a dog. (Chinese)

You can't get ivory out of a dog's mouth. (Chinese)

A biting dog does not show his teeth. (Chinese)

A lean dog shames his master. (Chinese)

A good dog does not get in the way. (Chinese)

Repeat good advice three times and even a dog will get
bored. (Chinese)

One dog barks on seeing something, and a hundred dogs
bark at the sound. (Chinese)

If you play with a dog, you get licked in the face. (Vietnamese)

If you have a wild dog, you will lose all your neighbors.
(Vietnamese)

Cats scratch, dogs bite. (Vietnamese)

If you have a dog, hang the food in a high place; if you have a
cat, cover the food tightly. (Vietnamese)

If the female dog doesn't wag its tail, the male does doesn't
follow. (Hmong)

Pigs do, dogs eat. (Hmong)

When the others work, you don't have to work with them;
when others eat, you're a dog begging for scraps. (Hmong)

When there's a lot left over, they invite you to eat, but you
don't eat; when the food's all gone, you act like a dog lick-
ing fat. (Hmong)

A dog never loses its way, a grown man is never afraid.
(Kammu)

Zodiac Activities

Find a way to compare the three systems—chart, diagram, etc.

Which animals are in both the American and Chinese zodiacs? Are their characteristics similar or different?

List all the characteristics. Group the similar ones together. Use a thesaurus to find other words for similar characteristics. For each group, find one term that would include all the others. Find opposites. Use classmates to find out how these characteristics are expressed in other languages (write the words in the other language, then translate word-by-word).

Group characteristics into "positive" and "negative" human qualities. Are there some that are both positive and negative? Under what conditions are they positive? under what conditions are they negative?

Choose three characteristics that describe you. Write them on a piece of paper. Fold up the paper and put it in a box, along with all the pieces of paper from all the other members of your group. Pick one and read it out loud. Try to guess who the paper belongs to. Each one takes a turn.

Make a chart of different cultures represented in your class. For each one, write the characteristics that are admired. (Use proverbs to give you ideas about what different groups think is important.) What are the similarities? Differences? Can you predict conflicts between people who do not know about one another?

American Zodiac

Aquarius (Water Carrier) January 20—February 18	unselfish, idealistic, original
Pisces (Fishes) February 19—March 20	sensitive, timid, methodical
Aries (Ram) March 21—April 19	bold, impulsive, independent
Taurus (Bull) April 20—May 20	patient, determined, stubborn
Gemini (Twins) May 21—June 21	ambitious, intelligent, temperamental
Cancer (Crab) June 22—July 22	moody, impressionable, sympathetic
Leo (Lion) July 23—August 22	generous, enthusiastic, temperamental
Virgo (Virgin) August 23—September 22	intellectual, placid, tactless
Libra (The Scales) September 23—October 23	just, sympathetic, sociable
Scorpio (Scorpion) October 24—November 21	loyal, philosophical, willful
Sagittarius (Archer) November 22—December 21	practical, imaginative, just
Capricorn (Goat) December 22—January 19	ambitious, loyal, persistent

What time of day were you born? Chinese divide the day into 12 2-hour periods, and each is associated with an animal. These influence your personal characteristics.

1 a.m.–3 a.m.	ox
3 a.m.–5 a.m.	tiger
5 a.m.–7 a.m.	rabbit
7 a.m.–9 a.m.	dragon
9 a.m.–11 a.m.	snake
11 a.m.–1 p.m.	horse
1 p.m.–3 p.m.	goat
3 p.m.–5 p.m.	monkey
5 p.m.–7 p.m.	rooster
7 p.m.–9 p.m.	dog
9 p.m.–11 p.m.	pig
11 p.m.–1 a.m.	rat

Chinese Zodiac

If you were born in:

You are:

Year of the Rat
1948, 1960, 1972, 1984

charming, fussy, thrifty

Year of the Ox
1949, 1961, 1973, 1985

quiet, patient, stubborn

Year of the Tiger
1950, 1962, 1974, 1986

courageous, selfish, suspicious

Year of the Rabbit
1951, 1963, 1975, 1987

fortunate, respected, daydreamer

Year of the Dragon
1952, 1964, 1976, 1988

honest, energetic, short-tempered

Year of the Snake
1953, 1965, 1977, 1989

quiet, wise, helpful but interfering

Year of the Horse
1942, 1954, 1966, 1978

independent, talkative, popular

Year of the Sheep
1943, 1955, 1967, 1979

gentle, classy, pessimistic

Year of the Monkey
1944, 1956, 1968, 1980

genius but unreliable, clever, skillful

Year of the Rooster
1945, 1957, 1969, 1982

fortunate (sometimes), industrious

Year of the Dog
1946, 1958, 1970, 1982

loyal, dutiful, sharp tongue

Year of the Pig
1947, 1959, 1971, 1983

brave, determined, few but lifelong friends

Compatible couples

Chinese couples check the "year" of each person to see how compatible they will be. Which animals should marry? Which animals should avoid one another? Check with a Chinese fortune teller to see if your ideas are the same.

These are drawn from sources written by Taiwanese or Mandarin Chinese. Customs differ from one region to another, as well as from one family to another ("family" here meaning the "100 families," or clans, that are represented by last names).

Lunar New Year Customs

Sweeping

New Year's Eve is the day for sweeping the house—getting rid of the year's misfortune, big and small. No one would sweep on New Year's Day, for this would sweep away the new year's fortune.

Red envelopes

Called *hong bao* (in Mandarin) or *lai xi* (by Vietnamese Chinese), these red envelopes contain money for the children, and for the unmarried (imagine how well this reinforces the ideal of marriage). The amount in the packet should be an even amount, to bring luck and prosperity. Odd numbers are unlucky. The red envelopes are accepted with good wishes, and are not opened in the presence of the giver or other people.

Red

Red signifies joy and luck, and is an auspicious color for all festive occasions. Red banners hang on the front door, and red lanterns hang everywhere. Food is offered in red containers, gifts wrapped in red paper, and the house is decorated with red flowers. Of course, red clothes are appropriate. Black is unlucky and is avoided during the new year festivities. White is the color of the gods and black the color of the evil spirits. The points of the compass are assigned colors: east is blue, west is white, south is red, and north is black.

Hmmmm....?

Sharp things

Sharp things might cut the good fortune of the new year. Knives, scissors, needles are put away and kept out of harm's way. Gifts with sharp ends—pens, pencils, tools—are not happily received. Breaking objects breaks the good luck as well.

Flowers

Flowers decorate the house and ancestors' altar for the fifteen days of the new year. Flowers whose names sound like auspicious words are especially popular. Chinese like the pink "pineapple flower" (fortune), the orchid (love and fertility), the lotus (holiness or summer), the chrysanthemum, plum blossom (honest friendship). In Vietnam the yellow or pink blossoming tree branch is symbolic of the new year.

Firecrackers

Noise scares away the evil spirits lurking around, and firecrackers are perfect spirit-chasers. Where firecrackers are illegal or dangerous, people play tape recordings of firecrackers.

New Year Symbols

Greet people with wishes for good fortune and luck. The dragon, deer, bat, and peach symbolize luck. The three figurines symbolize happiness, success, and longevity. Oranges symbolize gold, both because of their color and because the word sounds like "gold" in Cantonese. They are offered in pairs or even numbers. The word for "tangerine" sounds "luck" in Cantonese, and the word for "kumquat tree"

sounds like “golden luck.”

Tray of Prosperity

An octagonal tray is used to serve special treats to guests (“eight” sounds like “prosper” in Cantonese). The melon seeds and dates symbolize progeny—wishes for many children. There is also coconut, sugared ginger, and lotus seeds.

Fortune Foods

Anyone who has eaten several wedding feasts knows that foods are chosen for their symbolism. Favorite foods for the fifteen days of the new year are: oysters (“hao see” in Cantonese, “activity” as in good business), sea moss or black seaweed (“prosperity”), shitake mushrooms (“wishes fulfilled”), red dates (“prosperity comes early”), lotus seeds (“many descendants”), carp (“surplus”), bean sprouts (“prosperity” because they grow quickly), abalone (“everything” “surplus”), carrots (“abundance”), peanuts (“prosperity” “birth”), tofu (“prosperity”). In addition, chicken symbolizes punctuality, pork wealth, and wood fungus intelligence (because it resembles the human ear). Ancestors are offered peanuts, lichi (prosperity “branching” out), longan (happiness and union), and lotus seeds (continuity, “having many children”).

New Year Cake

The word for cake (“gao” in Mandarin) sounds like “high”; thus it symbolizes a better life in the new year. It is round (completeness, eternal), the inside is sticky (loyalty,

as in “sticking together”), and sweet (an easier life). Vietnamese cakes for the new year are like tamales: beaten sticky rice wrapped around a center filling and steamed in a banana leaf.

Offerings

Three kinds of deities are honored during the new year: the ancestors, the spirits of heaven and earth, and the god of wealth. Deities are thanked for protection during the past year, and asked for continued protection and luck during the new year. The kitchen god is one of the important household deities, for this is the one who reports the behavior of the household members to the Jade Emperor.

Lantern Festival

The first full moon of the new year (the fifteenth day) marks the end of the new year festivities, and is the time for love. The “man in the moon” and the god of destiny bewitch people who cross paths on this night, and unmarried youth make wishes for good matches. The lion dance is traditionally a part of this celebration.

New Year Poems

These two line poems are brushed on strips of red paper and hung on the door to greet guests. They sound a lot like proverbs, for example:

*Two hands open an imperial road,
One knife cuts off the root of a rumor.*

The characters have a pattern of sound and meaning, which cannot be translated.

Can you make any generalizations about what values are important in Chinese culture?

Do other Asian groups share these values?

When people raised in cultures that have these values come to live in America, do you think there will be any conflict?

Can you predict conflict between the generations—between parents and their children, who acquire different values by experience with American culture in schools and in the media? Think of specific arguments that might occur....

Two Dog Stories

Iu-Mien and P'an Hu

(from Jacques Lemoine, *Yao Ceremonial Paintings*)

The Yao (Iu) people (Mien) are linked with the most ancient period in Chinese history. All Chinese scholars, and most people interested in China's folklore, have read the story of P'an Hu, the Palace dog who married a Chinese Emperor's daughter. As told in the *Chronicles of the Later Han Dynasty* (Hou Han Shu), written by Fan Yeh in the 5th century, the proto-Chinese Emperor Kao-hsin (2435–2365 B.C.) promised to give one of his daughters in marriage to anyone who could rid him of General Wu, the chief of the marauding Chüan Jung ("Dog Jung") tribe. A five-colored dog named P'an Hu, a familiar pet of the Court, succeeded and brought General Wu's head to the Emperor. The dog and the princess were subsequently married and their children (six boys and six girls, who intermarried) were the forefathers of the Iu-Mien.

Known as P'an Hu Chung ("Race of P'an Hu") at some period in Chinese history, the Iu Mien gradually became known as "Yao" to the Chinese. P'an Hu's story is pure mythology. Some earlier commentators pointed out that the "five-colored dog" may have been a metaphorical term for a servant, or possibly a tribesman of the Chüan Jung tribe, the same as General Wu. Other historians suggest that the myth accounts for the creation of several tribes of the southern provinces (She of Chekiang, Fukien, and Chaochow, and Miao of Hainan Island), all of whom claim P'an Hu as an ancestor. In reality, these groups are of the same ethnic stock as the Yao (all of the Miao-Yao linguistic family).

P'an Hu came to symbolize the Iu Mien, and the legend has been used by both the Chinese and Iu Mien for their own purposes. Those who wished closer identity with the Chinese reminded people that they had a Chinese princess as an original ancestor; those who wished distance recalled the non-Chinese ancestor. Modern customs derive from the mythological past, including the strong taboo for eating dog, although it is a normal part of the diet for others in the region.

Yang Sheng's Dog

In the T'ai-ho period of the Chin Dynasty there was a young man named Yang Sheng who had a smart and loyal dog.

Yang Sheng often brought his dog with him when he went to the city to do business. On his way he would find some friends to talk and drink with. One day the weather was very cold, so he drank a little more than usual. On the way back home, however, he fell asleep in the grass.

Suddenly a strong wind started to blow, and it carried a little spark, which caused the dry grass to catch fire all at once. The dog barked excitedly, but Yang Sheng did not wake up. The dog could see that the fire was burning closer and closer to the its master. It found a puddle of water and quickly got its body wet, then shook the water onto the grass next to Yang Sheng. This way, it saved Yang Sheng's life.

On another day, Yang Sheng was hurrying down the road with his dog in the night and he carelessly fell into a dry well. The well was very deep, and he could not climb out. When the dog saw its master was in danger, it did not run away, but stood at the edge of the well and barked the whole night. Around dawn, a passer-by thought that the barking dog was quite strange, so he came, looked down the well, and found out that there was a man inside the well.

As soon as Yang Sheng saw that somebody had come, he called out, "If you pull me out, I'll reward you very nicely." But that person wanted the dog to be his reward. Unwilling to give up his dog, Yang Sheng said, "This dog saved my life before. I'd rather stay right here than lose it."

"Then die in there," said the passer-by, not pleased.

At this time the dog lowered its head and gazed at Yang Sheng, wagging its tail. Yang Sheng understood its meaning, then agreed to give it to the passer-by. The passer-by then quickly pulled him out of the well.

After Yang Sheng returned home he could only think about his lost dog. But after five days, the dog returned.



Southeast Asians in the School Community

Huynh Dinh Te	<i>Jokes & Puns in Southeast Asia</i>
Peter Tran	<i>Laughter as a Social Medicine</i>
No Tran	<i>Jokes of Oppression (Vietnam)</i>
Mory Ouk	<i>Cambodian Culture through Jokes</i>
Khamchong Luangpraseut	<i>Laotian Cultures through Jokes</i>
Seree Weroha	<i>Classroom Success for Lao and Thai Students</i>
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Phuoc Nguyen	<i>Jokes of Acculturation</i>
May Kou Vang	<i>A Hmong Woman's Journey through College</i>
Tony Vang	<i>California Hmong High School Dropouts</i>
Pete & Sally Kunstadter	<i>Early Marriage? Characteristics of Sacramento Hmong</i>
Kaota Saepharn	<i>Mien Youth in America</i>
Christine Muok	<i>Cambodian Mental Health in Stockton: Case Studies</i>
Minh Hoang Nguyen	<i>Vietnamese Parents & Children</i>
Maryetta Hamzawi & Nguyen Dang	<i>Newcomers' Names</i>

Other Newcomers in the School Community

Dan Holt	<i>Korean Culture through Proverbs</i>
Charles Hwang	<i>Chinese Brush Painting</i>
Alla Volovich	<i>Russian Youth in American Schools</i>
Ayyad Al-Qazzaz	<i>Peoples of the Middle East</i>
Maryetta Hamzawi & Nguyen Dang	<i>Newcomers' Names</i>
Jennie Cerullo	<i>Crosscultural Communication: From Southeast Asia to Russia</i>
Mark Curry	<i>Southeast Asian Youth, Prosecution and Probation</i>
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Language & Culture in the Classroom

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JoAn Criddle	<i>The Educator's Role in Reducing Intergenerational Conflict</i>
Frank Worrell	<i>Violence in the Classroom: Prevention & Intervention</i>
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Edith Crawford	<i>Sheltered English Demonstration Lesson</i>
Jennie Cerullo	<i>Crosscultural Communication: From Southeast Asia to Russia</i>
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Mary McGroarty	<i>Culture & the Classroom</i>

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10th annual

Southeast Asia Education Faire '94

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