Building character through literacy with children's literature

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ABSTRACT

Character education is described as curriculum specifically developed to teach children about the quality and traits of good character. One means in which children can learn about good character is through the pages of high quality children's literature. In this study, the author defines the characteristics of an effective character development program for grades K-6 built around children's literature. Discussion focuses on how literature can be brought into the curriculum in helping to develop character traits in a meaningful, substantial manner.

Keywords: Character education, character development through literacy, literature-based character development

CHARACTER EDUCATION AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Character education describes curriculum developed to teach children about essential traits needed to build good character. It is a deliberate effort to develop noble character and cultivate core virtues that are worthy for the individual and society as a whole. It requires careful, calculated planning for success (Prestwich, 2004; Tyra, 2012). It deals with teaching students to develop the ability to decide how to behave in an appropriate manner in various social situations with the purpose of developing individuals who are capable of understanding moral values and who choose to do the right thing. Hoge (2002) defined character education as any overt or conscious attempt to effect the development of desirable individual traits or qualities. Although a number of definitions and interpretations of character education are found in the literature, the content of programs typically align with the core principles and values of generosity, kindness, honesty, tolerance, trust, integrity, loyalty, fairness, freedom, equality, and respect of and for diversity (Bohlin, Farmer, & Ryan, 2001; Brooks, 2001). Experts in the field of character development recommend implementing a character education curriculum in the elementary and middle school years which includes the aforementioned traits to help students become responsible, respectful, contributing members of our democratic society.

One area of the curriculum in which character education naturally resides is in the social studies. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), the nation's largest professional organization of social studies educators, asserted that social studies teachers are bound by duty to teach character and civic virtue in its position paper Fostering Civic Virtue: Character Education in the Social Studies (1997). In the paper, character education was defined as instruction that teaches and nurtures civility, compromise, open-mindedness, and toleration of diversity. The council strongly encouraged teachers to pursue this area of the social studies curriculum recommending teachers integrate social and behavioral science content with humanities (including literature), to ensure the achievement of academic and civic competence in K-8 classrooms.

BENEFITS OF CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS

The benefits of character education are multifaceted going beyond the apparent outcomes of being a good person and responsible citizen. Ryan (1999) found that instruction centered on character development helped improve students' academic achievement and communication skills thus promoting a stronger sense of independence and self-confidence. He suggested these outcomes of character education lead to the creation of trusting learning environments where students feel good about themselves and others.

Schools have an important role to play in the development of children's social and emotional growth. Educators must find ways to infuse the curriculum with character building (McElmeel, 2002). Schools with successful character education programs reported less absenteeism, fewer discipline problems, decreased referrals for misbehavior, a lower dropout rate, and higher performance scores on standardized achievement tests (Wynne & Ryan, 1997). Katilmis, Eksi, and Ozturk (2011) found character education programs had a positive effect on both character development and academic success. Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D. and Schellinger, K. B. (2011) reported the results of their meta-analysis of over 200 different studies regarding the efficacy of character education. They confirmed school-based efforts which promote students' social and emotional learning produced a positive impact on

academic learning, increasing achievement test scores by 11 to 17 percentage points. This data indicates schools with effective character education programs can enhance a child's success both in school and in life. When schools are welcoming and supportive places, students are encouraged to attend, stay on task, and improve their levels of achievement.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CHARACTER EDUCATION

Character education appears to provide students and teachers with many benefits in the classroom setting and beyond; however, one challenge educator's face is procuring the necessary curriculum materials and background to teach it. Even though at least 17 states in our nation require character education to be taught and 27 receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education to teach character education (Besson-Martilotta, 2013; McElmeel, 2002; Tyra, 2012), many schools or school districts have not created a curriculum or set instruction to meet this need (Delisio, 2008). These mandates make the teaching of character a crucial and necessary component of the curriculum. In spite of state and federal legislation mandating character education, schools have limited resources, competing demands, and time constraints.

LITERACY AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

One way to bring character education into a crowded curriculum is to make it part of the literacy program by embedding character lessons in reading and language arts instruction through the vehicle of high quality children's literature. This tactic, when coupled with social studies content allows the teacher to cover multiple parts of the curriculum: social studies (using books to address the NCSS Strands mentioned before), literacy, and character education. Literature is a powerful teaching tool. The characters children and young people meet in the pages of a book can have a profound influence on them, almost as strong of an impact as that of real people they know and meet. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Communication and Outreach (2005) suggested reading character themed books to and with children, encouraging older children to read on their own, and discussing the books with children will help them absorb and develop the values of strong character.

As character education concepts are taught within the context of literature, students realize traits such as respect, honesty, courage, and kindness are real and interesting aspects of the world around them. Writers of trade books have much flexibility in their writing styles and can bring to the pages of their books richness of background, originality of style, and creativity (Gunning, 2012). Literature integration is an effective way to teach children about positive character traits, but Libresco and Balantic (2013) caution only if it is done by keeping character development at the center of curriculum and instruction.

Good literature with character development themes has the power to develop, shape, and reinforce dispositions essential for instilling in students important core ethical values. Creating character themed lessons that combine high quality appropriate children's literature with effective literacy instruction can be a daunting task. Teachers therefore are faced with the dilemma of finding books that will do double duty in teaching both character and literacy concepts. What follows is a discussion of how quality children's, adolescent, and young adult literature can be used to promote character education and literacy learning in the K-6 classroom.

DEFINING THE "CHARACTER" IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The intent of the full study, presented, in part, here, is integrating the teaching of character with research-based literacy instruction through children's literature. The first order of business is operationalizing what is meant by character and what traits should be the focus of instruction. So what is character? After examining character traits from the research literature as well as successful character development programs, a panel of 20 educators who possessed expertise in character education ranked character traits and recommended the following character traits essential to include in a literacy-based character development curriculum: (1) caring, compassion, kindness, and empathy, (2) citizenship, (3) courage, (4) fairness, (5) honesty and trustworthiness, (6) integrity, (7) leadership, (8) perseverance in establishing and attaining goals, (9) respect, (10) responsibility, and (11) team work and cooperation. These character traits are universally recognized by people from all walks of life and transcend religious and cultural beliefs. They are meant to be valued by diverse individuals who come from different backgrounds who may hold different beliefs.

A literacy-based program, built around these eleven traits, will offer educators a unique curriculum unlike any available to date. The distinguishing factor which sets this program apart from others available, both commercially and in the research, is that embedded in the study of character development are research-based literacy instructional strategies used with high quality, and in many cases, award winning trade books. Educators will be provided with the resources needed to teach and reinforce literacy skills such as vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics and other word recognition skills, while teaching and reinforcing positive character traits.

BOOKS WITH CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THEMES TIED TO LITERACY

In selecting the books for curricular inclusion the goal was to find good stories which were currently in print or widely available in library collections that exemplify the character traits identified for the program. The books selected, presented in sets, focus on each of the traits. For each trait there are a minimum of 15 books with a range of reading levels which are explicitly stated. Under each category, the books are summarized to provide the reader with an overview of the content. Each book is accompanied by lessons which provide explicit instruction in research-based reading skills such as fluency, reading comprehension, word recognition, and vocabulary development. The lessons include classroom activities that require the students to use critical thinking skills to express their ideas and perspectives by relating personal experiences to story themes. The trade books shared connect well to the social studies and literacy and provide engaging, authentic examples of individuals who work, live, play, survive, and thrive in large part due to the values they possess.

BOOK SELECTION CRITERIA

Every year, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), publishes their Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People list in their official journal Social Education. The books included in the list are selected by a review committee appointed by NCSS in conjunction with the Children's Book Council (CBC). The books are appropriate for children in grades K-12 and emphasize human relations, diversity, and sensitivity to a broad range of topics related to the

social studies. The books are of high literary quality, have a pleasing format, and include, where appropriate, illustrations that complement and align to the text. The books are categorized for the most part according to the ten thematic strands of the NCSS. Of the ten strands, four relate in some fashion to character development concepts. Strand I Culture, Strand III People, Places and Environments, Strand IV Individual Development and Identity, and Strand V Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, contain books with themes related to character development. The books annotated in these lists were examined to ascertain which contain content suitable for inclusion in a character development program.

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Communication and Outreach, (2005) published an extensive annotated list of books that support character development. The titles are separated into three groups by age. Beginning books are appropriate for ages 1-6, intermediate books are best for ages 6-9, and advanced books work well with children 9 and older. Other useful and credible professional sources for finding appropriate trade books include literary and book reviews, and awards granted from professional organizations. Examples of these types of resources include the New York Times, Kirkus Review, the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction (awarded annually to an author for a meritorious children or young adults book published in the previous year that focuses on historical fiction), and the Coretta Scott King Award (given annually by the American Library Association to exceptional African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults that exhibit an appreciation of universal human values and African American culture).

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) annually identifies the cream of the crop in children's books with their Notable Children's Books list. Notable books are defined as those which contain content that is worthy of note or notice, distinguished, outstanding, and important (Association for Library Service to Children, 2014). The books selected are from genres such as, fiction, information, poetry, and picture books for all age levels (birth through age 14). They are of the finest quality and exhibit venturesome creativity that reflect and encourage children's interests in exemplary ways. Each year, books automatically added to the Notable Children's Books list include those which have been granted the following major awards in children's literature: Newbery, Caldecott, Pura Belpré (presented to Latino/Latina authors and illustrators whose work best portrays and celebrates the Latino culture), Robert F. Sibert (awarded to outstanding information books), Theodore Seuss Geisel (given to the most distinguished American book for beginning readers), and Batchelder (given to the publisher of the most outstanding book of the year that is a translation) Award and Honor books. The books are categorized by age and grade range as follows: Younger Readers appropriate for children in grades preschool through second grade (ages 3-7); Middle Readers suitable for grades 3-5, ages 8-10; Older Readers appropriate for grades 6-8, ages 11-14; All Ages these books appeal to and interest children in all of the above age ranges.

After all resources were examined and a list of books was selected, a team of highly qualified educators read the selected books and categorized traits attributed to each. It is important to establish a selection criterion when identifying books to use in this character development program. The books must possess character themes and also lend themselves to teaching literacy skills appropriate in K-6 classrooms (this is quite a large order). The books included in this character development program were selected through a qualitative content analysis. There are resources available that have identified and categorized trade books suitable for teaching character traits to K-6 aged children both by trait and in some cases, age or grade level (Besson-Martilotta, 2013; Bryant, 2008; Hester, 2001; Kilpatrick, Wolfe, & Wolfe, 1994;

Linkona, 1996; Lintner, 2011; McElmeel, 2002; Tyra, 2012; National Council for the Social Studies 1972-present; U.S. Department of Education Office of Communication Outreach, 2005). These resources were scrutinized by experts and books were carefully chosen which best exemplified the traits to be studied.

Adapting selection criteria found in the research (Besson-Martilotta, 2013; Bryant, 2008; National Council for the Social Studies 1972-present), the checklist in Figure 1 (Appendix A) was developed where readers were asked to respond to questions regarding the strength of character traits found in the books reviewed. The character traits readers were asked to consider aligned to the following: (1) caring, compassion, kindness, and empathy, (2) citizenship, (3) courage, (4) fairness, (5) honesty and trustworthiness, (6) integrity, (7) leadership, (8) perseverance in establishing and attaining goals, (9) respect, (10) responsibility, and (11) team work and cooperation. The results of this tasks produced lists of books aligned to the eleven character traits. The author then selected from the master list, fifteen books for each trait to be part of a text set where character education and literacy learning curriculum are developed.

TEXT SETS

The use of trade books is a pivotal component of the program. Quality literature is used as the springboard upon which important character development and literacy lessons are built. The trade books upon which the program is built are rich in narrative and informational content and offer a valuable complement to textbooks and other curricular materials used in the K-6 classroom setting. Studies indicate effective teachers use multiple texts with a range of formats and difficulty levels to share information with their students. Libresco and Balantic (2013) contend that literature-based accounts presented from multiple perspectives allow students to extend their understanding of individuals and events that shape reality. Therefore, the format upon which the program is built is presenting trade books in the form of text sets. Text sets are multi-genre collections that focus on one theme or topic. The text sets in the program are aligned to each of the identified character traits outlined above. For the purposes of this program they include books of fiction and non-fiction, pamphlets, poetry, web sites, maps, charts, and other information which allow teachers to add depth by incorporating multiple viewpoints to the study of any complex issue or topic.

TEXT SETS BY CATEGORIES

Each of the text sets developed to teach character traits consists of a minimum of 15 trade books (5 picture books, 5 books of juvenile literature, 5 adolescent novels), 5 websites and 5 miscellaneous articles/types of information such as maps, charts, pamphlets, art, or recordings. The text set includes trade books which are either narrative and/or informative. The reading levels of the material are diverse and are noted for each book. Using text sets is one way to provide for the diverse readers in the classroom. The lessons developed in teaching about the character traits as presented through text sets are written in a teacher-friendly, detailed format. The research-based literacy activities are designed to promote and reinforce positive character traits and teach students specific life skills.

BOOKS IN EACH TEXT SET

The titles in each text set are divided into three categories: picture books (grades PreK-3), juvenile literature (grades 3-6), and adolescent literature (grades 6-8). For the purpose of this study, one example of how a character trait will be addressed in the program is partially included. The trait of caring, compassion, kindness, and empathy is presented in abbreviated form. In the full program, for each trait, the trait itself is described in teacher and student-friendly language. Then the books upon which the text set is built are presented in annotated form followed by lessons which address literacy and character development. Below is an example of the one annotated listing which will be included in the total literacy-based character development program with accompanying assignments.

CHARACTER TRAIT: CARING, COMPASSION, KINDNESS, EMPATHY

Caring and kindness is manifested through helping others unconditionally and expecting nothing in return. It means a person has empathy for and shows compassion to others. A caring individual is one who is concerned about or interested in another person, animal, or situation. Individuals who possess this trait identify with and are concerned about others feelings and needs. So crucial in today's world, this trait allows individuals to be understanding and tolerant of different points of view and beliefs. Children who learn empathy, caring and compassion mature into adults who realize their actions affect others in both positive and negative ways. They understand that if they do something that is not in the best interest of another, they can cause that person unhappiness or pain (U.S. Department of Education Office of Communication and Outreach, 2005).

PICTURE BOOKS

Bang, Molly, (1987). *The Paper Crane* New York: Greenwillow Books. (Grades PK-3)

The Paper Crane is a retelling of an ancient Japanese folktale which is beautifully illustrated by Molly Bang with cut-paper collages and paintings. Folktales are stories which have been passed down generation by generation through the years in the oral tradition. The authors are unknown, but the stories hold universal truths and timeless appeal and often address and reflect the values of a group of people. In the tale, a once-prosperous restaurant has fallen on hard times when they lose customers because their street is being turned into a highway. One night a stranger pays for his meal with a magical paper crane that comes alive and dances. Shortly after the visit, business returns to the restaurant.

Teaching Idea One:

Activity type: Venn Diagram and writing

Grade Level: 2nd – 3rd grades

The teacher will read *The Paper Crane* aloud to the class and hold a whole class discussion of the story as follows:

The poor man in the story could not pay for his meal at the restaurant, but the owner of the restaurant and his son were not cruel to him, instead they treated him with kindness. Ask the students to share how the restaurant owner and his son showed compassion and kindness toward the poor man. After each student's response, the teacher will look in the book and reread the

example the student shared. Students should come to realize others should be treated with kindness regardless of their status or class in society.

After this discussion, the teacher will read Paul Galdone's retelling of the Grimm folktale, *The Elves and the Shoemaker* aloud. This story is a folktale with German origins. In the 1800's, brothers Jacob and Wilhem Grimm traveled the German countryside speaking to the common folk and learning of the stories they had heard from their elders. They wrote the stories down they heard and compiled them into a large book of Grimm's Fairytales. Galdone does a superb job maintaining the integrity of the original version in his retelling. After reading this story aloud, the teacher will hold another discussion about being kind to people regardless of their relative affluence or poverty.

Next the teacher will draw a Venn diagram on the board so the students can compare and contrast the folktales *The Paper Crane* and *The Elves and the Shoemaker.* Venn diagrams are useful because they provide students with a graphic representation of a discussion. The graphic of the Venn diagram becomes even more helpful for young children and second language learners if the teacher provides pictorial representations of student responses. In the Venn diagram the teacher will write (and if possible, tape pictorial depictions) students' responses which will show the relationships between and among the two stories shared. The teacher will record the differences in the parts of the circles that do not intersect. The ideas listed in the intersecting section of the diagram will reveal how the students think the stories are similar.

After the students have completed the Venn diagram, they will participate in a group activity called Talking Circles (Alberta Learning, 2002)
Talking circles is an effective strategy to use help students share feelings about the topic under study. In this strategy there are no right or wrong answers – just lots of sharing and discussing the topic in a trusting environment. Students are assured that what they say will be heard and accepted without criticism from their teacher or peers. Through this strategy, they will gain an empathetic appreciation for other points of view.
The steps in the process are as follows:
1. The teacher will share the topic with the whole or small group setting with students sitting in a circular formation. The topic is caring and showing compassion for others.
2. For the book, *The Paper Crane*, the teacher will ask students to share their ideas about how the characters in the story showed caring and compassion for the old man who came to the restaurant who could not pay for his meal.
3. Students will take turns sharing their ideas. Only one person will speak at a time. Classmates are asked to listen in a nonjudgmental manner to the speaker. The student talking will hold a paper crane as his/her ideas are being shared.
4. To ensure everyone who wants to share has an opportunity to do so, the paper crane can be passed around the circle systematically.
5. Students who do not choose to share are informed ahead of time that silence is an acceptable response. No one is pressured at any time to contribute; instead students respond "I pass."
6. The teacher must coach student to avoid comments that put down others or themselves, such as "I don't think anyone will agree with me, but …". Words like "good" or "excellent" are also forms of judgment.
Finally, if appropriate and time permits, students will be asked to write an essay that compares the circumstances described in the two folktales focusing on the concept that every person, regardless of their position in life, should be treated with kindness.

Teaching Idea Two:
Activity Type: Developing a Storyboard Mobile in Response to the Folktale
Grade Level: 2nd- 3rd grades

The teacher will conduct a modified picture walk through the story after it is initially read aloud to review the sequence of events that occurred as the story unfolded.

During this picture walk of *The Paper Crane* the teacher will slowly flip through the pages, allowing students to recall the events that took place in the story.

As each event is recalled, the teacher will emphasize the importance of showing others kindness no matter what their status or position in life may be.

In pairs students will create a storyboard of the tale by folding an 8 ½ -11 sheet of white construction into three (3) boxes. Partner One will number the boxes 1, 2, and 3. Partner Two will number the boxes 4, 5, and 6. Students will talk with one another and decide how to illustrate the six main parts of the story in which kindness was depicted. Partner One will illustrate events 1, 2, and 3. Partner Two will illustrate events 4, 5, 6. The events must be sequential in nature and align to the plot of the story. The teacher will circulate as this task is completed.

After the events have been illustrated, the partners will cut out their boxes and retell the story to another partner set placing the boxes in order as the story is being retold.

Finally, the partners will create a story board mobile by writing the character trait words, "Kindness, Caring, and Compassion" on a 8 ½ x 11 piece of construction paper and then hanging the events in order using yarn to string from the trait words. The story board mobiles can me hung around the classroom or on a clothesline strung along the side of the room.

Teaching Idea Three
Activity Type: Character Trait T Charts (compassion and empathy)
Grade Level: 2nd- 3rd grades

This activity helps students understand the traits of compassion and empathy. After a discussion of compassion and empathy the teacher will draw a T chart on poster board. T charts are a two-column charts shaped like a "T" which are used to organize ideas. The words compassion and empathy will be written at the top of the board above the T chart. On the left side of the T chart the words "looks like" will be written. The words "sounds like" will be on the right side of the chart. The teacher will solicit responses from the students to fill in each side of the chart. This strategy can be used to explore other character traits, such as, respect, courage, and honesty (Taylor, 2005).

Teaching Idea Four
Activity Type: Creating words with origami letters
Resources: Origami Alphabet http//en.origami-club.com/abc
The website provides both a diagram and an animated demonstration for folding paper into the shapes of the letters of the alphabet. Children will work in teams to conduct a partner rereading of *The Paper Crane*. The teacher will distribute the handouts in Figures 2 and 3(Appendices B and C).

OTHER PICTURE BOOKS IN THE TEXT SET

Bunting, E. (2000) *The memory string*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
De Paola, T. (1988). *Now One Foot, Now the Other*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Son.
Fox, M. (1992). *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*. New York: Puffin.

Galdone, P. (1984) *The elves and the shoemaker* New York: Clarion.

Juvenile Literature

DiCamillo, K. (2000). *Because of Winn Dixie*. Candlewick Press. (Newbery Honor Book 2001)
Estes, E. (1944). The *hundred dresses.* New York: Harcourt.
Giff, P.R. (2002). *Pictures of Hollis Woods*. New York: Random House. (Newbery Honor 2003)
Kadohata, C. (2004) *Kira-Kira*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers/Simon and Schuster. (Newbery 2005)
Patron, S. (2006). *The Higher Power of Lucky.* New York: Simon and Schuster. (Newbery 2007)

Adolescent Literature

Peck, R. (2000). *A year down yonder*. Dial. (Newbery 2001)
Rylant, C. (1992). *Missing May*. Dell. (Newbery 1993)
Sachar, L. (1998). Holes. Frances Foster. (Newbery 1999)
Spinelli, J. (1997). *Wringer.* New York: Harper Collins. (Newbery Honor 1998)

NEXT STEP

The development of the character education program is in progress. The trade books for each text set have been selected with additional titles identified to supplement these readings. Additional text set materials, such as recordings, film clips, pamphlets, etc. have yet to be identified. The curriculum is being developed with the focus on character development integrated with literacy learning. The end product is projected to be completed within the next two years. The author is developing a team of experts to assist in the development of the program.

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APPENDIX A

Figure 1 Character Development Book Selection Criteria
Name of the Book:_____Rater:_____
Prominent trait(s) reflected in the book:_____
Traits: (1) caring, compassion, kindness, and empathy, (2) citizenship, (3) courage, (4) fairness, (5) honesty and trustworthiness, (6) integrity, (7) leadership, (8) perseverance in establishing and attaining goals, (9) respect, (10) responsibility, and (11) team work and cooperation.
Please read the book in its entirety to get a feel for its content. After reading the book, think about the content. Please answer the following questions about the book by marking an "X" in the appropriate space. Identify the prominent trait(s) reflected in the book and feel free to make comments:

Questions to Consider	Yes	No	Comments
Does the content of the book emphasize human relations?			
Does the content of the book represent a diversity of groups?			
Is the book sensitive to a broad range of cultural experiences?			
Does the content of the book present an original theme or a fresh slant on the character trait?			
Is the book easily readable?			
Is the book of high literary quality?			
Does the book have a pleasing format?			
Where appropriate, does the book include illustrations that enrich the text?			
Is moral or character development a main part of the plot? (this allows students to empathize with the			

| characters)			
Does the book contain themes relating to the values and character traits exulted in the program of study?			

APPENDIX B
Figure 2
The Paper Crane Partner Rereading

The Paper Crane by Molly Bang
Partner Reading

Read each of the following questions aloud with your partner, taking turns to read each question. Read the story, *The Paper Crane*, taking turns with your partner, each reading one page at a time. When you have finished reading, work with your partner to answer and discuss these questions. We will talk about the questions as a class.

1.   The
2.   What
3.   What
4.   What
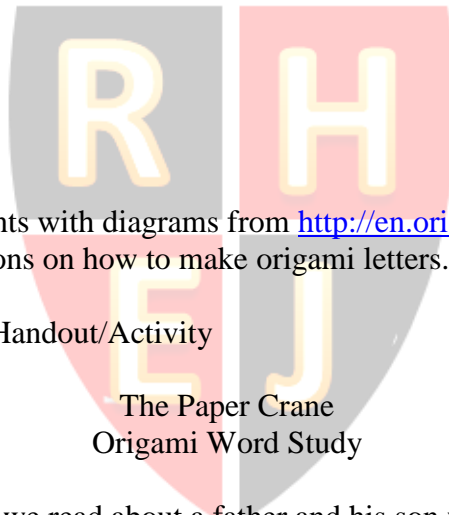
APPENDIX C
The teacher will provide students with diagrams from http://en.origami-club.com/abc/ which provides step-by-step instructions on how to make origami letters.

Figure 3Origami Word Study Handout/Activity

The Paper Crane
Origami Word Study

In the story, *The Paper Crane*, we read about a father and his son who own a restaurant which was about to close because people had stopped coming in for business. The words below are in the story and knowing their meaning helps us understand the story better. In small groups, you will make origami letters to create each of the words listed. With your group members you will talk about what you think the words mean. You will work as a group to draw a large paper craze on chart paper. The words will be glued inside the paper crane.

Words to Know

highway   stranger
unusual   gentle
customer   restaurant
over   place
own   find
so