

Unit 1.2 • What Makes A Family?

Unit Overview

Family ties are the focus of the second unit, which combines a novel, poetry, and nonfiction. Students explore ways that families can support each other, focusing on how different kinds of people can behave like families. Composing memory poems, debating whether young teens should work, and a poetry slam are some of the high points of this unit.

Unit texts

Students begin this unit by reading a second short story from the collection *Local News* by Gary Soto, also used in Unit 1.1. In the story “*First Job*,” the main character attempts to earn money by doing a job for a neighbor, with moderately disastrous results. Next, students build background knowledge about the foster care system to support their understanding of the core unit novel by reading the nonfiction text *Foster Families*. Then students are introduced to the unit focus on poetry by reading selections from *How to Eat a Poem*, an anthology of contemporary and classic poems that highlight topics of relevance to young teens. Finally, the core unit novel is *Locomotion*, by Jacqueline Woodson. This novel, told in first person poems, features an African American boy adjusting to foster care.



Literature Used in Unit 1.2:

- *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *How to Eat a Poem* by American Poetry & Literacy Project and The Academy of American Poets, eds.
- *Foster Families* by H.W. Poole
- “*First Job*” from *Local News* by Gary Soto

Unit skills and topics

Literary analysis	• Genres of poetry, e.g., sonnet and haiku, rhyme scheme, line breaks • Characterization
Reading comprehension	• Predicting and confirming/disconfirming predictions as a component of Reciprocal Teaching • Previewing nonfiction using the table of contents and illustrations • Skimming and scanning as nonfiction reading strategies
Decoding	• Identifying spelling patterns for long and short vowel sounds • Pronouncing vowel teams • Identifying syllables as units within words • VC CV syllable division rule
Debate	• Teens working: A good idea or bad idea? • In <i>Locomotion</i>, how are the different characters “family” to Lonnie?
Fluency topics	• Foster care system, Brooklyn, the Knicks and Mets, African American poets, house fires, nontraditional families, adoption
English language development	• Offering alternatives to extend or deepen awareness of factors that contribute to particular outcomes • Interpreting figurative language in context to make inferences about character