

# LITERACY AMIDST VIOLENT CONFLICT

A Teacher's Guide to Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree*.

Jennifer Chinenye Emelife.

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## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

- Pre-reading activities help students connect the new information they will learn from a text to what they already know.
- These activities also provide an opportunity to give students context on the complex issues addressed in the novel.
- The activities can activate students' prior knowledge of armed conflict, terrorism, and displacement through prediction, brainstorming, gallery walks, and discussions.
- Choose one or all, depending on your class needs.

- Do you know what a baobab tree looks like?
- Have you ever seen one? If yes, what words can you use to describe it?

Next, show students an enlarged image of a baobab tree and its fruits from the internet. Then invite students to connect this image to their own environment/realities:

- What is the baobab tree called in your local language?
- What is the fruit called?
- What kinds of things do you use the tree for in your community?
- What other trees around your environment look like the baobab tree?

### 1. Understanding Key Terms

Discuss the meaning of the Baobab Tree. Ask students the following to guide whole class discussions:

Invite students to study the image of the baobab tree shown to them by asking:

- How does this image of the baobab tree connect to feelings of home and shelter?
- What parts of the tree help you think this way?
- What other themes, ideas or feelings can you gather by looking at the tree?

## 2. Prediction

Invite students to predict what the novel will be about by examining the cover page.

Divide students into a group of three or four, depending on class size. Ask them to look at the cover page and discuss their first impressions about the book with group members.

Next, ask them to write in their journals their predictions. Encourage them to use thinking stems such as I like...I hope...I feel...I am puzzled by...I am reminded of...I predict...I wonder...

Thinking stems allows each student to share their response, without any concerns about being wrong since there are no wrong answers.

For example, you could ask students to select three or four thinking stems and share their predictions using these:

- *I like the way the sun hovers around the tree.*
- *I am puzzled by the fact that there are no persons on the page.*
- *I am reminded of a desert by looking at the sand-filled area*
- *I wonder if the book will be about loneliness*

Then do a whole class discussion, inviting students in each group to read out their opinions of the cover page, and then ask them to hold onto their thoughts and compare that with what the book will be about as the class progresses.

## 3. Gallery Walk

For this activity, you will need to print out an excerpt from the book and other related images from the internet. Print out the epigraph page, right before page 1, with the following lines:

*...They wrote the story on a column,  
And on the great church-window painted  
The same, to make the world acquainted  
How their children were stolen away,  
And there it stands to this very day*

Browse the internet for images that depict:

- A happy northern Nigerian girl reading with friends
- Boko Haram kidnapping Chibok girls
- Protest for #BringBackOurGirls
- A Chibok girl reuniting with family

Feel free to enlarge and use any of the images suggested below:



Paste these printed-out documents around different sections of the classroom wall.

Divide students into 4 groups and have each group move around, stopping at each document posted on the wall. Allow students time (about five minutes on each photo) to talk to each other about the photo they are looking at.

Then, as a whole class, prompt students to complete the following three thinking stems independently:

(1) I notice . . . , (2) I feel . . . , (3) I wonder . . .

#### **4. Blurb Activity**

In a whole class setting, do a read aloud of the information that appears in the blurb on the back cover of the book. Ask students to identify some keywords from the blurb that help them understand what they think the book will be about. Invite students to predict more events that they expect to learn about in the book.

