

## The Thing About Luck

By: Cynthia Kadohata

*Activity Level: Advanced*

### PURPOSE

Students will read and explore this chapter book in five sections (would be successful over five sections in a classroom or after school reading program). Students will use close reading techniques, identify character traits, make storyline predictions, broaden vocabulary, and grow empathy for the characters both in and out of the book through their exploration into the language and lives of the characters.

### NEBRASKA STATE EDUCATION CONTENT STANDARDS CONNECTION

#### LA.5.RP.5

Compare and contrast the treatment of themes and topics in literary texts of the same genre.

#### LA.5.RP.6

Analyze a literary text to answer and develop inferential questions to enhance the comprehension of self and others, quoting or paraphrasing specific evidence from the text.

#### LA.5.W.1

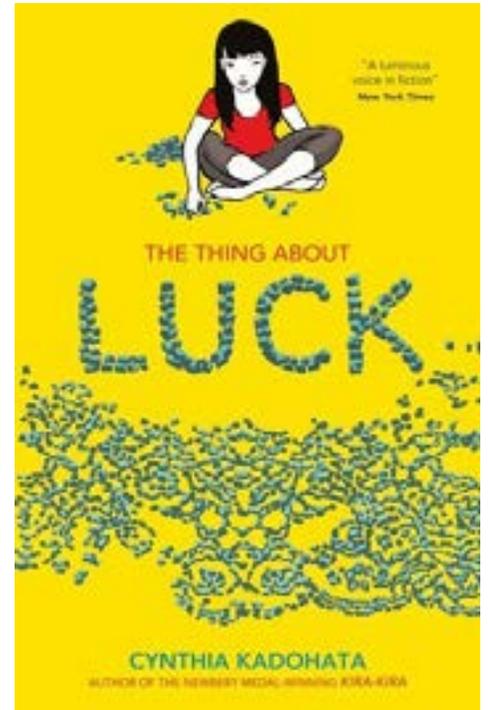
Create grammatically correct multi-paragraph compositions with varied sentence structures.

#### LA.5.SL.1

Prepare for and participate in structured discussions and collaborations about 5th grade topics and texts.

### WHAT'S THE CONNECTION TO AGRICULTURE?

The details Kadohata shares in *The Thing About Luck* paint a picture of the logistics of careers in agriculture. From planning a convoy and feeding the crew, to cleaning up the combine and long nights cutting crops, farmers, ag-related business owners, and employees rely on each other for a common goal during wheat harvest. Readers glimpse the momentum and manpower behind a custom wheat harvesting operation, providing exposure to crop production methods, food cost, and the impact agricultural operations have on local, national, and world economies.



## MATERIALS

Required:

- *The Thing About Luck* by Cynthia Kadohata (one book per student)
- Close Reading Techniques anchor chart to be posted in classroom
- Close Reading Annotations anchor chart to be posted in classroom
- Working Journal (provided with this literature guide, one per student)
- Two-sided wide Bookmarks (or ‘Thinkmarks’): Close reading annotations on one side, room for notes on notes side (approximately five (5) per student, print on heavy paper)
- Computer screen, projector, or smartboard for watching a video in Sections Two and Three
- 2-5 index cards per student and marker for Section Five Shared Values activity

Recommended:

- Models of combine, grain cart, bins, semi for Section One
- Wheat grain for students to touch in Section Two

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### FIELD TRIP

Upon completion of the book, students travel to a grain elevator for a tour if possible.

The tour includes:

- Explaining the size and capacity of the bin and storage area.
- Demonstrating a moisture tester.
- Showing the dumping area to see where trucks unload.
- Students have an opportunity to ask questions about how grain is handled and shipped.
- Students learn why the facility is called an “elevator”.
- Students watch a semi-truck unload.

### Discussion Questions:

- Did the elevator look like you thought it would while you were reading the book?
- Why do elevators require the wheat to be dry in order to store it there?
- How many bushels do you think a semi will haul into the elevator in one load? *A modern semi-truck will hold about 1,000 bushels of wheat.*
- How much does a bushel of wheat weigh? *A bushel of wheat weighs 60 pounds.*
- How many kernels of wheat are in a bushel? *There are about one million kernels of wheat in a bushel.*

### Lesson Extender:

- Arrange for a local farmer to bring a combine to the elevator.
- Allow students to see the mechanical operation of the combine and how it merges many different jobs into one machine.

## Supplemental Social Studies activities:

- Agricultural Transportation (NE AITC activity - Section Two):  
<https://www.nefbfoundation.org/educators/teacher-resources/enriching-activities>
- Teaching Empathy classroom activity (Section Two):  
<http://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/quick-guide-teaching-empathy-classroom/>
- Food Systems Feed the World (NE AITC – Social Studies):  
<https://www.nefbfoundation.org/educators/teacher-resources/enriching-activities>
- Thank a Farmer or Rancher letters – see Bonus Writing Prompts section at the end for creative writing ideas: <https://www.nefbfoundation.org/educators/get-involved/thank-a-farmer-rancher>

## Supplemental Science activities:

- Edible Plant Parts (NE AITC - Science):  
<https://www.nefbfoundation.org/educators/teacher-resources/enriching-activities>
- The Germinator (NE AITC - Science), germination stages:  
[https://www.nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUNdation/PDFs/Lesson\\_Plans/TheGerminator.pdf](https://www.nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUNdation/PDFs/Lesson_Plans/TheGerminator.pdf)
- Bread in a Bag activity: <http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/cafe/breadinabag.html>

## COMPANION RESOURCES

### Wheat-specific topical resources:

- Nebraska Wheat Board's publication *Wheat: from field to flour*; a resource on the production of wheat and the science of creating flour:  
<https://nebraskawheat.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/WheatFromFieldToFlour.pdf>
- Wheat Flour Moisture Testing info (Section Three):  
<https://nebraskawheat.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/WheatFlourTestingMethods.pdf>
- Explanation of math of grain measurement (Section Five):  
<http://ks wheat.com/news/2015/07/22/what-does-a-bushel-of-wheat-mean-to-me>

### Supplemental Career resources:

- Agriculture – The Center of an Economic Web (NE AITC – Social Studies)  
<https://www.nefbfoundation.org/educators/teacher-resources/enriching-activities>
- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Career toolkit:  
[https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/documents/Toolkit/Ag\\_Food\\_NaturalResources.pdf](https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/documents/Toolkit/Ag_Food_NaturalResources.pdf)

## BONUS CREATIVE WRITING PROMPTS

- You have placed a tracker on a grain of wheat in an effort to find out exactly where it travels before it arrives on someone's plate. After it is cut by the combine header, where does it go and why? Are you surprised to find out its journey? Why or why not?
- Describe what it might feel like to sit on a wheat farmer's porch sipping a cool glass of water during wheat harvest watching the combines travel back and forth across the field. How would your view be different from observing the field during the other seasons and why?

- After many hours of sitting in a combine harvester, what would be your ideal summer meal to nourish you? Would it be meatloaf or a baked lasagna? Soup or tuna sandwiches? Explain your meal in great detail using all five senses to relay your experience. Explain your meal in great detail thinking about the many people that raised and processed your food before it was on your plate.
- Create a conversation between a grain of wheat in the field and a grain of wheat that has been harvested and transported to the grain elevator for storage. What questions would the grain of wheat ask the grain who had been through the harvest? What memories would the harvested grain ask the grain in the field to describe again so he could enjoy thinking about his time in the field and part of the wheat plant?
- The harvest moon is the name given to the final full moon before the fall season officially begins. The moon gives farmers the opportunity to work through the night to harvest their crops. Imagine you are a character from *The Thing About Luck*. Write an introduction for yourself and your job with the Parkers and how the full moon could help you during the night.