

TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

Nine-In-One Grr! Grr

Told by Blia Xiong and adapted by Cathy Spagnoli

illustrated by Nancy Hom

Reading Level

Reading Level: Grade 2–3

Interest Level: Grades K–3

Guided Reading Level: L

Accelerated Reader® Level/

Points: 3.1/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: 660L

Genre: Folktales/Traditional Literature

Themes: History, Environment and Nature, Conflict Resolution, Animals, Fantasy, Exploring Ecosystems, Folktales and Traditional Literature, Hmong Interest, Asian/Asian American Interest

Synopsis

“Nine-in-one, Grr! Grr!” sings Tiger happily as she returns from the kingdom of the great god Shao. Shao has told her she will have nine baby tigers every year as long as she remembers his words: “Nine-in-one.” Bird is worried about the prospect of a world full of tigers (tigers who would eat birds!) and sets out to trick Tiger into forgetting her all-important song. Before long, poor Tiger has her song backward—“One-in-nine, Grr! Grr!”—and the balance of nature is ensured.



BACKGROUND

Laos and the Hmong People: Laos is the only landlocked country in Southeast Asia. It borders Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. Its landscape is mountainous and densely forested. It is a poor country, with most residents living in rural communities along the Mekong River. For images, and more student-friendly information on Laos geography and culture, visit <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/laos/>.

The Hmong people are an ethnic group that have not had a specific country of their own. In the 1960s-1980s, many Hmong refugees came to the United States upon fleeing civil war in Laos. For more information about the Hmong people, see <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/03/01/10-things-hmong>.

Tigers: Tigers are the world's largest wild cats. A female tiger typically gives birth to three or four cubs and cares for them until they are 18-30 months old. A mother tiger typically has a new litter every 2.5 years. Tigers are carnivores, and hunt alone at night. Various types of tigers live in India, Southeast Asia, and Siberia. The entire species is endangered.

For more student-friendly tiger information, see <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/tiger/> or <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/animals/general-animals/10-tiger-facts/>. For more information about tiger cubs, see <https://www.tigers.org.za/birth-and-care-of-the-young.html>.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- This story is a folktale. What do you know about folktales?
- What do you know about tigers?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Talk about the title of the book. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, illustrations, italicized repeating line, and “About the Story” note.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- why Tiger keeps singing “Nine-in-One Grr! Grr!”
- how Tiger gets tricked
- what this folktale explains

Encourage students to consider why storyteller Blia Xiong and book author Cathy Spagnoli would want to share this story with young people. Additionally, encourage students to consider why artist Nancy Hom would want to depict this story with paintings modeled on appliqued “story cloths” of the Hmong.

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Why is Tiger lonely? What does she wonder about?
2. What does Tiger decide to do?
3. What is it like where Shao lives?



VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

mate, cubs, “great god Shao,” bamboo, wild banana trees, rooster tail feathers, dragon, stone wall, plum tree, purr, cave, barking deer, quails, pheasants, shortcut, growl, chirp, Hmong

Academic

future, gentle, climb, curved, colorful, decorations, shining, peaceful, greet, dangling, respectfully, lonely, silent, remember, memory, clever, grin, soar, polite, explain, squawk, promise, repeat, thoughtful, concentrate, suddenly, furiously, innocent, sweetly

4. How does Shao respond to Tiger? What's his important reminder as Tiger leaves?
5. Why does Tiger worry? What does she decide to do? What does her song mean?
6. What does Bird wonder? Why does she go see Shao herself?
7. How does Shao respond to Bird?
8. What does Bird do when she sees Tiger?
9. How does Bird change Tiger's song when she repeats it? How does Tiger react?
10. What do the Hmong people say this story tells us?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What makes the land of the great Shao special?
2. What do you notice about how Shao talks to the animals and how they talk to him? What does that say about how they feel about each other? What specific words does the author use to help you know?
3. Why can songs help make something easier to remember?
4. What does Bird's reaction to seeing Tiger and hearing her song tell you about her as a character? How would you describe her?
5. After talking to Bird, do you think Shao regrets telling Tiger she'd have nine cubs each year? Why or why not?
6. The story says Bird speaks “innocently” to Tiger. Is Bird innocent? Why or why not?
7. How does Tiger feel at the end of the story? Why might she be happy even though Bird changed her future?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Why do you think Tiger was so anxious to learn about her future from Shao? What's something you wish you could find out about your future and why do you want to know?



2. If you had to choose to be one of the characters in this story, who would you be? Why? Use evidence from the story to help you describe that character.
3. Besides explaining why there aren't many tigers in the world today, what might this story teach us? Include reasons you think the lesson you describe is a valuable one.
4. What's your favorite way to remember something? Write about a time when you had to remember something and how you did it.
5. Read the "About the Story" note. Make a list of reasons why remembering and sharing traditional stories is important.

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a trick for remembering something or one of the animals in the story.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings,

look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1 and 2 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types and Purposes, Strand 3)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-2 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4 and 6)

1. Have students act out this story with simple masks or stick puppets. Encourage them to use expression to convey the characters' personalities and intentions.
2. Talk about Tiger's strategy of making up a song to remember something important. List important things that your class needs to remember. Have students work in small groups to make up simple songs to remember them and teach them to the rest of the class.
3. Read other multicultural folktales, such as *Baby Rattlesnake / Viborita de Cascabel* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/baby-rattlesnake-viborita-de-cascabel>) or others in this collection (<https://www.leeandlow.com/collections/multicultural-folk-tales>). Compare the characters, settings, and events to those in *Nine-In-One Grr! Grr!* Discuss the message of each tale.
4. Explore the practice of oral storytelling with students. Create a chart listing key differences between oral stories and stories in books. List



behaviors that make an oral storyteller successful, such as expression, gestures, sounds, etc. Have students practice telling this story or another tale as an oral story. This unit on oral storytelling from the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute has a wealth of ideas: <http://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/units/2008/2/08.02.01.x.html>.

- Discuss how traditional tales often reflect elements of nature found in a particular region. Have students write different versions of this story set in different regions with animals and other details appropriate to that region.
- Investigate *pourquoi* tales with students — tales that explain how something came to be. Based on the characteristics described here: <https://penandthepad.com/three-elements-pourquoi-tale-8475556.html>, how is *Nine-In-One Grr! Grr!* a *pourquoi* tale? Once they are familiar with the structure of this type of story, invite students to write their own.

Art

(Reading Standards, Craft and Structure, Strand 4 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

- Learn more about Hmong story cloths, perhaps also reading *Grandfather's Story Cloth* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/grandfather-s-story-cloth>) and *Dia's Story Cloth* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/dia-s-story-cloth>). Look at images of story cloths and make connections to the illustrations in *Nine-In-One Grr! Grr!* Make a class mural or individual collage artwork to imitate this art form.

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Communication, Strand 1)

- Use this story to frame a discussion about the importance of not distracting others at school. Play a game in which you give a student a phrase to remember while walking across the room. Have the student try twice — once with lots of interruptions and background noise, and once with no distractions. Discuss which situation was easier and why.
- Read other stories from the Hmong culture, such as *Jouanah: A Hmong Cinderella* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/jouanah>).

[leeandlow.com/books/jouanah](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/jouanah)). Make connections between texts around what each title shares about the Hmong culture and the southeast Asian landscape.

Science

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

(Writing Standards, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9)

- Have interested students research tigers and present their findings to the class. Create a chart comparing true information about tigers with information from the story. What details from the story are accurate? Which ones are unrealistic?
- Have students research the real reasons tigers are endangered, such as hunting and destruction of habitats. Learn more about organizations working to protect the tiger population. If possible, plan a way to support their efforts.
- A “Eu bird” is not a real species. Have students make guesses as to what species the bird in the story could be and compile evidence to support their guesses.

Home/School Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1)

Have students ask adult family members about stories they were told when they were children. Were any of the stories told in order to teach a lesson or explain something in nature? How did the stories reflect the location, community or culture in which they grew up? Have family members visit school to share stories if possible.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Blia Xiong came to the United States in 1976, fleeing war torn Laos. She settled in Seattle, and in 1976, she formed a Hmong association to preserve the traditional music, dance, crafts, and stories of her homeland.

Cathy Spagnoli, a professional storyteller in Seattle, started to collect stories from Southeast Asian refugees in 1983 as a way to build cross-cultural bridges. She met Blia Xiong at that time, and they have since worked together on various Hmong tales.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Nancy Hom is a fine artist, printmaker, and graphic designer who is based in San Francisco, California. Her medium for this book was based on traditional Hmong story cloths, which is a technique of colorful multi-imaged embroidery.

Book Information for

Nine-In-One Grr! Grr



\$10.95, PAPERBACK

9780892391103

32 pages

*Reading Level: Grade 2–3

Interest Level: Grades PreK–3

Guided Reading Level: L

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 3.1/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: 660L

THEMES: History, Environment and Nature, Conflict Resolution, Animals, Fantasy, Exploring Ecosystems, Folktales and Traditional Literature, Hmong Interest, Asian/Asian American Interest

RESOURCES ON THE

WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/nine-in-one-grr-grr>

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All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.