Dear Teacher,

Pacific Crossing uses humor and likable, realistic characters to present a story about friendship. Your students will learn a great deal about life in Japan and the culture of Hispanic-Americans in the United States as they get to know Lincoln Mendoza and his friend Tony Contreras. Through their reading and book conversations, students will come away with a greater understanding of similarities among all cultures.
TEACHING OPTIONS

There are many ways that students can read and enjoy Pacific Crossing.

◆ Almost all students can benefit from having all or part of the book read aloud to help them appreciate the humor and characters in the book.

◆ A five-session plan that uses the strategy of Compare/Contrast allows for both teacher guidance and demonstrating independence. This option has students reading portions of the book on their own, and then participating in teacher-led discussion to stimulate meaningful conversation and comprehension. See Reading the Book pages 6–10.

◆ Cooperative groups may work together to form Literature Circles. A blackline master is provided on page 11 to help students run their own successful Literature Circles.

◆ The blackline master on page 11 may also be adapted for use by students who are reading the book in pairs or reading independently.

◆ Introducing the Book, Assess Comprehension, Writing, Activities, and the Story Organizer are features of this guide that may be used with all students.

JOURNAL WRITING

Students are encouraged to use journal writing to record their observations about what they read, note new vocabulary, and use their imaginations. Through journal writing, students are also encouraged to relate what they read to their own lives and develop the skills to assess their strengths and weaknesses as readers.

Within this guide, ideas for journal writing may be found on pages 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 16.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

This guide offers a number of opportunities for portfolio assessment of both reading and writing.

READING

See pages 12-13, 16.

WRITING

See pages 13, 14-15, 16.
CREATE INTEREST
Tell students that Pacific Crossing is about a Mexican-American boy from San Francisco who goes to Japan for six weeks during the summer as an exchange student. Ask students what they would expect to see if they were to visit Japan. What would they expect life to be like? How would they communicate?

BUILD BACKGROUND
On a world map, point out the Pacific Ocean, and show students how far it is from San Francisco to Japan. Ask them to compare Japan’s shape and size to the shape and size of their home state. How might these features make life different in Japan than it is where they live? Brainstorm a list of words and phrases that students associate with Japan. Write these words on chart paper and post in the classroom. Encourage students to add to the list as they read Pacific Crossing.

DEVELOP VOCABULARY
Strategy: Synonym/Antonym Chart
Explain to students that authors often use descriptive words to show how a character speaks or acts to make a story more understandable. For instance, Gary Soto describes Lincoln and Tony as "bewildered" when they are invited to Japan. Ask students to study the vocabulary words and supply synonyms and antonyms. Any unfamiliar words should be defined. Students can copy the synonym/antonym chart into their journals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
<th>Antonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>goggy</td>
<td>sleepy</td>
<td>alert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal Word List
Encourage students to look for words that describe people and places as they read Pacific Crossing. Suggest they look them up in the dictionary to find out the meaning of words that are new to them, and have students keep a list of these words to share with the class.

Vocabulary
Organizing Concept: Descriptive Words

groggy: sleepy or not fully aware; bewildered, as from being tired (p. 1)
hunkered: crouched or squatted (p. 34)
pathetically: in a way that would cause pity or sympathy (p. 5)
materialistic: concerned with objects rather than spiritual or intellectual pursuits (p. 59)
smirking: smiling in a self-satisfied way (p. 8)
solemnly: in a serious manner (p. 74)
smirking: smiling in a self-satisfied way (p. 8)
obnoxious: very disagreeable or unpleasant (p. 16)
determined: firmly decided (p. 110)
PREVIEW AND PREDICT

Determine the Genre  Ask students to examine Pacific Crossing and look for clues as to what kind of a book it is. Have students read the information on the back cover for further information about this realistic fiction book.

◆ Where do you think the people pictured on the cover might live?

◆ Is this book set in the past, present, or future?

◆ If you had a chance to be in that setting for six weeks or so, what experiences would you like to have?

Use Glossaries  Note on pages 127–130 the glossary of Spanish Words and Phrases and on pages 131–134 the glossary of Japanese Words and Phrases. Discuss why the author might have chosen to include these glossaries.

Students may record their predictions and questions in their Journals. As they read they can confirm or revise their predictions.

ASSESSMENT

As students read the book, notice how they:

✓ make connections with the theme of individuals as a composite of their experiences

✓ use the strategy of Compare/Contrast

✓ recognize how understanding Point of View and Plot add to their appreciation of Pacific Crossing

Reading On  Students who are reading the book independently may read at their own pace. Other students may go on to read pages 1–21 of the book.

Meet the Author

Gary Soto is a prize-winning poet and essayist as well as an author of children’s books. He grew up in a predominantly Mexican-American community in Fresno, California. His parents were field and industrial workers and very family-oriented. He believes his childhood inspired a great deal of his writing. While he was attending Fresno City College, he discovered poetry and then found he could “venture beyond.” His first collection of short stories for young people, Baseball in April, won the 1990 Beaty Award, Parenting magazine’s Reading Magic Award, and was named an ALA Best Book for Young Adults. Soto believes that books can change a kid’s life. “I think you have to keep our young people interested in reading,” Soto said. “Keep them reading so that they form habits . . . that will take them into deeper experiences and deeper opportunities. This is the power of literature.” Like Lincoln Mendoza, Gary Soto also studies Martial Arts.

MORE BY GARY SOTO

Taking Sides
Lincoln Mendoza (Pacific Crossing) moves to a new neighborhood and experiences loyalty conflicts when his new and old schools compete in basketball.

Fire in My Hands
A beautifully readable collection of 23 poems full of themes that are appealing to children.

Baseball in April and Other Stories
This award-winning book is a collection of short stories that brings to life characters and their loving families.
Synopsis

Lincoln Mendoza and his friend Tony Contreras, students at Franklin Junior High in San Francisco, go to Japan on a summer student-exchange program. They meet their sponsor families at the airport. Lincoln is driven to the Ono home, where he learns a few Japanese customs.

Launch the Key Strategy

Compare/Contrast

Think Aloud
It is important to remember that comparing means seeing how things, ideas, facts, persons, events, and stories are alike. Contrasting means seeing how they are different. As you read about Lincoln and his visit to Japan it is important to ask yourself which things, events, or characters could be compared or contrasted with each other to help you learn more about the story. Identify how things are alike and how they are different.

Comprehension Check

Based on what you have read so far, what do you think of the story?

(Respond to Literature)

In what ways are Lincoln and his friend Tony alike? How are they different?

Explain how you know. (Strategy: Compare/Contrast) Possible answer: They share a common background and an excitement about their trip. However, Lincoln has kept up his martial arts studies, but Tony has not. Tony is more of a show-off than Lincoln, as shown in his behavior upon landing in Japan.

What makes you think that Lincoln is happy to be back in San Francisco?

(Draw Conclusions) Lincoln’s grades improved from C’s to A’s; he helps his mother around the house; Lincoln no longer gets into fights at school.

What kind of a person do you think Lincoln Mendoza is? (Character)

Lincoln is generous, sensitive, curious, and ambitious.

Why do you think Lincoln was not happy living in the suburbs? (Make Inferences)

He had spent his first twelve years in the city, had a lot of friends there, and he missed them.

Lincoln looks at himself in the Onos’ car mirror. He sees that his “skin was unblemished, his eyes bright, and his hair black and shiny as a polished shoe.” Look in a mirror. Describe what you see there.

Reading On
In the next part of the book (pages 22–44), ask students to predict what will happen when Lincoln wakes up.
Synopsis  Lincoln gets to know Mitsuo and the rest of the Ono family. He works in the fields of the Ono family farm, goes to a public bathhouse, and meets his sensei. By the end of his first full day in Japan, he begins to feel at home.

COMPREHENSION CHECK
What do you think of the way the Onos are treating Lincoln? (Respond to Literature)

How does the work Lincoln does in Japan compare to the work he does in San Francisco? (Key Strategy: Compare/Contrast) In Japan, he works long hours in the Ono’s field, weeding, irrigating, and examining the plants for worms. In San Francisco, he didn’t do much work, except washing his uncle’s car and mowing lawns when he wanted extra spending money.

How did Lincoln feel when he found out who the sensei was, and that he had bragged to her about his abilities? (Character) He was very embarrassed about it, and he felt like a loud-mouthed braggart.

How do you think Mitsuo would tell about meeting Lincoln if he was narrating the story? (Point of View) He would tell about the slang words and different behaviors he noticed in Lincoln, such as slapping Tony’s shoulder.

What did Lincoln do on his first full day in Japan? (Sequence) He woke up; went back to sleep; woke up again; had lunch; helped Mitsuo work in the field; went to the public bathhouse with Mitsuo; tried to get into a pachinko palace; returned home; met Mrs. Oyama; had dinner; went to the dojo for his first kempo practice; returned home; and talked to Mitsuo.

Why was Lincoln embarrassed when he met Mrs. Oyama for the second time? (Cause/Effect) He had bragged to her about his ability in kempo before he knew who she was.

How would you feel if you were away from your family in a new place? Write about what you would do to help yourself adjust.

Reading On  As students read the next section (pages 45–70), ask them to predict if Lincoln will get homesick.
Reading the Book

Supporting All Learners

Extra Help As students take turns reading aloud, pause now and then to paraphrase passages that you think might be difficult for some. (Paraphrase)

Challenge Gary Soto has his characters use a lot of American and Mexican-American slang. See the conversation between Lincoln and Tony on pages 49–51 as an example. Ask students to find other examples of slang. How would you explain this slang to someone who had never heard it before? (Make Connections)

Session 3 After Pages 45–70

Synopsis Lincoln and Mitsuo get to be better friends as they work in a neighbor’s field, visit Mitsuo’s uncle’s work shed, go to the public bathhouse, go fishing, and talk about American slang. Lincoln and Tony decide to make some Mexican food for their new families. One night at dinner, the Onos talk to Lincoln about how World War II affected their lives.

Comprehension Check

What do you think was the funniest moment in this part of the book? (Respond to Literature)

How are Mrs. Ono and Lincoln’s mother alike? How are they different? (Key Strategy: Compare/Contrast) They both love families. They are both good cooks. They have different homes and lifestyles in different countries.

What proof is there that Mrs. Ono treats Lincoln the same as she treats her son? (Draw Conclusions) She insists that both of them work in their elderly neighbor’s field, she cuts their hair the same, and she cleans their ears.

Why do you think Lincoln changed the words of his mother’s letter when he pretended to read it to the Onos? Do you think it was right or wrong to do so? (Make Judgments) In a way, he was lying, but he was doing it because he felt that his mother’s tone was too informal for the Onos. He wanted to make a good impression, so he changed a few of the sentences. It would have been rude not to share the letter at all, so he had to do something about it.

What do you think it meant when the letters from Mr. Ono’s grandmother stopped arriving? (Make Inferences) She had died when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Think about an older relative of yours whom you respect. In your journal, explain your reasons for feeling this way.

Reading On In the next section (pages 71–95), Oyama-sensei wants to see Lincoln. Ask students to read on to see what this means for Lincoln.
Synopsis  Lincoln and Mitsuo go to see Oyama-sensei, as she had requested. She asks Lincoln to help her with translations of Japanese poetry into English. Lincoln and Tony cook their Mexican meal for the Onos, who eat it politely, even though it doesn’t really turn out well. Mitsuo and Lincoln go on a camping trip with Mr. Ono. Mr. Ono gets bitten by a spider and becomes quite ill. Lincoln has to drive him to a doctor, even though he has never driven before.

COMPREHENSION CHECK

What do you think was the most exciting thing that happened in this part of the book? (Respond to Literature)

How was the evening of Lincoln’s Mexican dinner different from other evenings at the Ono’s house? (Strategy: Compare/Contrast) Instead of sitting outside and talking after dinner, Mrs. Ono cooked another meal. This was because everyone was still hungry after the Mexican dinner, which didn’t come out quite as Lincoln and Tony had hoped.

Why do you think Oyama-sensei asks for Lincoln’s help in translating? (Draw Conclusions) She thinks his English must be better than hers because he is an American.

What causes the swelling in Mr. Ono’s arm? (Cause/Effect) A bite from a spider.

Describe the events of the plot that took place during the camping trip. (Plot) Mitsuo, Mr. Ono, and Lincoln hiked to a shrine and then to a campsite, where they pitched a tent and slept. When they woke up, Mr. Ono complained about some pain in his arm. They realized he had been bitten by a spider. They continued hiking, and Mr. Ono got worse; they finally decided to go back only after a monk suggested it.

If you have ever had Mexican food, write a description of the experience. If you have never had Mexican food, describe your favorite kind of food. Use words that appeal to all the senses.

Reading On In the next part of the book (pages 96–134) Lincoln and Mitsuo do more things together. Ask students to read on to discover what Lincoln experiences.
Synopsis
Mr. Ono rests after having spent the night in the hospital. Lincoln and Mitsuo go to a junkyard to sell the car parts that had been ruined by Lincoln as he drove down the mountain. Mr. Ono treats the boys to a sumo wrestling match. Later he plays a joke on them, sending them to Tokyo on a wild-goose chase. Mr. Ono takes the boys to a bar for a farewell soda, and the next day, Lincoln gets promoted in kempo after a final demonstration match. As Lincoln flies home to San Francisco, he thinks about his mother and also his new family in Japan.

COMPREHENSION CHECK
- Do you like the ending of the story? Explain why or why not.
- (Respond to Literature)
- What causes the damage to Mr. Ono’s car? (Cause/Effect) The damage is due to Lincoln’s poor driving ability.
- How do you compare Lincoln’s skill in kempo after his six weeks in Japan to his skill when he arrived? (Key Strategy: Compare and Contrast) He is promoted, along with two other boys. He has improved and learned.
- Summarize the adventure the boys had when they went to Tokyo. (Summarize) They took a train 150 miles to Tokyo, riding in the cargo car. They got chased by a security guard. They got off at the wrong stop, took the wrong bus, and went even farther out of their way. They took a subway, got to the Sumitomo Building, found the note in a planter, then took the subway and the train back home.
- Why do you think Gary Soto chose to begin and end the book with Lincoln on an airplane? (Draw Conclusions) The title of the book, Pacific Crossing, gives a clue. The book is about crossing the ocean, both literally and figuratively. Beginning and ending the book on an airplane both sets up and gives closure to the title.
- Lincoln wants the Onos to visit him in California. If you had out-of-town guests, what sights would you take them to see? Describe a sightseeing tour of your hometown.

SESSION 5
After Pages 96–126
Literature Circles

Use these cards to help you as you read and discuss *Pacific Crossing*. Record your ideas and answers in your Journal as you read.

**SESSION 1**
*After Pages 1-21*

**TALK ABOUT IT** In a small group, talk about how you might compare yourself with Lincoln Mendoza. What about his life in San Francisco reminds you of your own life? Make a chart or list to help your group compare your lives, and then discuss with your group the similarities and the differences.

**SESSION 2**
*After Pages 22-44*

**TALK ABOUT IT** Lincoln is surprised at many things that he finds in Japan. For example, he was surprised that the Onos worked so hard in their field. In your group, discuss why Lincoln could be feeling at home so soon, considering that he was in a place that held so many surprises for him.

**SESSION 3**
*After Pages 45-70*

**TALK ABOUT IT** With a partner, find incidents in this section that show how Mitsuo respects his elders. Such respect is a characteristic of Japanese culture. Discuss with your partner the advantages and disadvantages of such a system. Discuss whether or not respect for elders is found in American culture.

**SESSION 4**
*After Pages 71-95*

**TALK ABOUT IT** Lincoln describes Mexican food for Mitsuo, mentioning enchiladas and tacos, hot frijoles, steaming rice, fiery salsa, tortillas, and chicken mole. If you were an exchange student in a different country, what do you think you would like to share with your exchange family about the United States? Discuss your ideas with a small group.

**SESSION 5**
*After Pages 96-134*

**TALK ABOUT IT** With a group, discuss the reasons you think Mr. Ono had for sending the boys to Tokyo to find a hidden note. As you do, think about these questions: What do you think Lincoln will remember about that day? Do you think the trip was a valuable experience? Why?
REFLECT AND RESPOND
How did the six weeks Lincoln spent in Japan change his composite picture of himself? (✓ Theme Connection)

What did Lincoln learn about teenagers in Japan? What did Mitsuo learn about American teenagers? (✓ Strategy: Compare/Contrast)

How would the book have been different if it had been told from Mitsuo’s point of view? (✓ Point of View)

What was the big problem that Lincoln solved in this book? What plot twists did the author add to make the book more interesting? (✓ Plot)

STORY ORGANIZER
Copy and distribute the Story Organizer on page 16 of this guide. Invite students to complete this page on their own. Encourage them to share their completed work by comparing their answers with those of other students.

READ CRITICALLY ACROSS TEXTS
“Seventh Grade”
- Gary Soto brought much of his own personal life experience to the characters and theme for Pacific Crossing. What details did Soto provide in Lincoln’s and Tony’s actions and in “Seventh Grade” that reflect a personal knowledge of Mexican-American heritage?

The Mozart Season
- Both Allegra in The Mozart Season and Lincoln in Pacific Crossing are challenged by an upcoming performance or test for which they practice a great deal. What are some of the details in each story that made you aware of how hard both Allegra and Lincoln had to work to prepare for their performances?

“Shooting Back”
- Photography is used in “Shooting Back” to show neighborhoods as kids see them, and in Pacific Crossing the author uses words to describe Lincoln’s home. Is setting an important element of both selections?

A Topic for Conversation
PLEASD TO MEET YOU
There are many interesting characters that Gary Soto describes throughout Pacific Crossing. Which character would students most like to meet? Invite all students who have read this book to discuss this question and support their answer with details from the book.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:
Lincoln: The character of Lincoln is who I would most like to meet. I would like to meet him because I am interested in the martial arts, and I thought it was interesting that he was able to learn from an experienced teacher in Japan.

Mrs. Ono: She seemed like a really good mother. I thought it was a nice thing for her to call Lincoln’s mother for a recipe so that she could make tortillas for him while he was visiting. It would really be strange to have her clean my ears!

Mitsuo: I would like to have a Japanese friend who could teach me what it is like to be a teenager in Japan. He was really nice to Lincoln and showed him many things. I would like to meet both him and his family.

Mr. Ono: He was such a practical joker that I would like most to meet him. Before reading the book, I thought he would be a very serious man. I would like to go on a hunt to Tokyo like the one he sent Mitsuo and Lincoln to do.
Martial Arts  Many of the martial arts that are popular today in the United States began in Asia. Although the origins of most martial arts was a stylized fighting, the study of martial arts is used to develop self-discipline, self-confidence, exercise, and self-control. Kung Fu and Tai Chi originated in China. Kempo and Karate are martial arts that were practiced in Japan long before they became popular in the United States.

Research
Have students research the meaning of the term “samurai” and its importance to Japanese history and culture. Suggest that students prepare a report to share with the class.

Meet the Author
What would students like to ask Gary Soto about Pacific Crossing? They might be interested in knowing if Lincoln and Tony are characters patterned after either himself or one of his own friends. They may want to know if the author practices any martial arts. Encourage students to record their questions and ideas in their journals.

Cooking
Suggest that students bring a favorite recipe from home of a food that they might wish to share if they were an exchange student. Would there be ingredients that would be difficult to find in a foreign country? Compile the recipes in a classroom recipe book and suggest that students might like to sample their friends’ favorites with their own families at home.

Assessment
The checked questions on page 12 help assess students’ understanding of:

✓ the theme of individuals as a composite of their experiences
✓ the key strategy of Compare/Contrast
✓ how strategies including Point of View and Plot help them appreciate the information in the book

You may also wish to review and discuss selected students’ completed Story Organizers.

Listen to Students Read   Ask selected students to read aloud from a part of the book that shows an exciting event in the plot. You may wish to tape-record students as they read the section aloud.

Students may add their recordings, copies of favorite Journal entries, their completed Story Organizer, and other completed assignments to their Literacy Portfolios.
WRITING PROMPTS

Letter
Ask students to think about the characters in Pacific Crossing. How do they feel after the summer is over? Invite students to imagine how Mitsuo feels after Lincoln returns home. Have them write a letter from Mitsuo to Lincoln. Remind them to use some similes in their writing as does Gary Soto, and to check a model to make sure they have used the correct form for a friendly letter.

Personal Essay
Have students imagine that they are going to a new place far from home. They will be there for at least six weeks, and are allowed to take only two suitcases. Have them make a list of the things they would bring that would help them feel more at home once they get there. Suggest they also consider what they could bring to help their new friends understand their home and culture. Have them note how they would use each item on their lists. Then ask them to create a short personal essay that tells what they would bring and why.

Realistic Fiction
Ask students to think about the way Pacific Crossing was written. Even though Lincoln and the other characters are not real people, they seem real. The characters speak in ways that people speak today and the situations could be possible today. Have students write a short piece of realistic fiction. Ask them to fill in the chart like the one below to help them plan their stories before they write.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Realistic Fiction</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>believable events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>characters who speak like real people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plots that make sense</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>accurate descriptions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>true-to-life themes</td>
<td></td>
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INTEGRATING LANGUAGE ARTS

Reading/Writing/Viewing
Make a “Pictionary”  In Pacific Crossing, Gary Soto includes lists of Spanish and Japanese words that are used in the book. Choose at least ten Spanish words and ten Japanese words from these lists and illustrate them in a “pictionary.” Follow these steps: Choose the words that interest you the most. Write each one on a separate sheet of paper, along with the definition. Draw an illustration or diagram to make the definition clearer. Make a cover for your book. Punch holes in one margin of the pages, and fasten the pages together. Books may be put on display in the classroom.

Writing/Speaking
Role-Play a Phone Conversation  Gary Soto writes about only one phone conversation Lincoln had with his mother. Add another phone conversation to the story. Follow these steps: Choose a few particularly interesting events from the story. Discuss with your partner how Lincoln would describe these events to his mother. Write down the conversation they might have had, from beginning to end. Include not only the news from Japan, but also any news his mother might have for Lincoln. Role-play your conversation for the class.

INTEGRATING THE CURRICULUM

Art
Comic Strip  Have students choose a favorite episode from the book to illustrate as a comic strip. Have them divide their pages into panels or sections. Ask them to draw a different picture in each panel to show the episode in sequence. Encourage students to add speech balloons and thought balloons as necessary and write the character’s words and thoughts in these balloons. Display comic strips in the classroom.

Social Studies
Map Japan  Have students locate Japan on a world map. Ask them what the geography of Japan is like. How does Japan’s geography influence its culture? For example, ask students why fish is such an important part of the Japanese diet. Invite students to present their ideas to the class.
Name

Story Organizer
Lincoln and Tony learn that life in Japan is sometimes different from and sometimes similar to life in America. Use the Venn diagram below to tell about the similarities and differences.

Life in Japan

Life in America

How do Tony’s feelings about the trip compare with Lincoln’s? Write a short summary of the trip from Tony’s point of view.
Vocabulary-Building Bookmark

by Beverly Jones and Maureen Lodge

Write the title of your book and draw a picture. Cut out the bookmark. As you read your book, write new words on the lines.