

MODERN JUNGLES

**A Hmong Refugee's
Childhood Story of Survival**

EDUCATION MATERIALS



MODERN JUNGLES by Pao Lor

TEACHER PAGES



Introduction

The Wisconsin Historical Society, in collaboration with Pao Lor, is pleased to present education materials that will assist you in using the memoir *Modern Jungles: A Hmong Refugee's Childhood Story of Survival* in your classroom.

Centered on Pao's own story of survival, these materials will further readers' understanding of the history of the Hmong people. The materials also ask readers to consider how Pao's story of struggle and perseverance resonates with their own lives, framing issues large and small in the world around them.



Pao Lor

Designed for use in the secondary classroom, these lessons have been aligned with Wisconsin's Social Studies (2018) and English Language Arts standards (2020). We hope you find these tools both informative and useful in your classroom explorations of the world around us.

Pao Lor, author of *Modern Jungles*

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Enduring Understanding

Because of their allegiance to the United States during the Secret War in Laos, many Hmong became targets of ethnic persecution by the new regime. Arriving as refugees to the United States, they embraced their new opportunities including education, employment, and freedom, but they also encountered poverty, racism, stereotyping, language barriers, cultural misunderstanding, and other challenges as they worked to assimilate into their new homes while maintaining strong ties to their culture and traditions.

Essential Questions

- How are the experiences of past and present immigrants and refugees similar? How are they different? Provide some specific examples.
- In what ways do immigrant and refugee populations exercise agency in their decisions on assimilation into a new culture? Provide some specific examples.
- How do traumatic events in a person's life affect their future interactions? Provide some specific examples.
- How do dominant cultures within societies react to the changes that immigration brings and vice versa for minority and new cultures? Provide some specific examples.
- What safeguards are there for protecting minority rights, and how are these enforced or ignored by the dominant culture (majority)? Provide some specific examples.

The Student Will

- Demonstrate understanding of the differences and similarities between refugees and immigrants.
- Compare and contrast how different cultural groups assimilate into the dominant culture and how the dominant culture resists, adapts and/or becomes inclusive of the group.
- Analyze primary and secondary source documents and personal experiences/observations to draw conclusions on democratic safeguards for minority rights and opinions.
- Use historical events and their impacts to make connections with the present.
- Reflect on their personal journey and the impact it has on their interpretation of events and how the reflection has informed and advanced their cultural competency and proficiency moving forward.

A list of standards alignments is available at the end of this document

MODERN JUNGLES by Pao Lor

STUDENT PAGES



Before you begin

Before you begin reading, create a KWL chart to track your discoveries. What do you **know** about the Hmong? What do you **want** to know? And finally, when you have finished each chapter, what did you **learn**? You'll refer to this chart at the end of each chapter to record what you have learned.

Discussion Questions

- How does the Nelson Mandela quote on page one set the stage for what you are about to read?
- How are memoirs similar to other non-fiction? How are they different?
- Why might it be more difficult to find the history of “ordinary Hmong Americans” as Pao Lor states?



Pao Lor

Content Activities

- How might clan names be similar to surnames? On page 3, the author states: “...we often refer to ourselves as the Lor Clan from Na Mai...” Look into the origin of your surname. Where does it come from? What does it mean? Has the meaning changed over time? This helpful article from familytreemagazine.com is a good place to start: <https://www.familytreemagazine.com/names/surnames/surname-research-guide/>
- How does the history of the Hmong compare to your family history? Conduct some research into the origins of your family. There are several ways to get started:
 - Ask your older relatives for stories about your family past.
 - Research your ancestors on various websites, such as:
 - Wisconsin Historical Society: <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS15307>
 - Find a Grave: <https://www.findagrave.com/>
 - Ancestry: <https://www.ancestry.com/>

Part 1

SPOOK HEAVEN



CHAPTER ONE

Discussion Questions

- Why is the title of this section, “Spook Heaven,” a play on words?
- How do you think Pao Lor’s childhood compares with childhood where you live?
- What stands out to you about the traditional spiritual beliefs of the Hmong?
 - a. How do they view the spirits of their ancestors?
 - b. What is “the beam” and why does it hold a place of significance both literally and metaphorically?
- What qualities do Pao’s early childhood memories all share?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

“For spiritual and practical reasons, our home had no windows. Windows invited evil spirits, prowling thieves, or strangers into the house.”

- What kinds of beliefs influence the culture you have grown up in? Are there foods that are off limits? Do you dress a certain way on certain days? Do you attend special ceremonies? Looking through the chapter, make a list of beliefs and activities that influence how the Hmong see and deal with the world and compare these with your own. How many similarities are there? How many differences? How might a belief be both spiritual and practical? For example, is there a real benefit to teaching children that evil spirits wander in the night?
- Choose one or more factions involved in trying to control Laos in the 1960s and 1970s and then answer the questions below. (HINT: Use both the Introduction and Chapter One to begin your research).
 - Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)/United States Armed Forces
 - Royal Laotian Army/Chaofa
 - Pathet Lao
 - Vietminh/People’s Army of Vietnam

- Write one or two sentences to answer each question:
 - What motivated each group involved in the conflict?
 - Who did they consider allies?
 - Who did they consider enemies?
 - What impact did each have on Pao Lor and his family's life?
 - What impact did each have on the lives of the Hmong in general?

CHAPTER TWO

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Pao's father brought them to see the school?
- What does Pao's reaction to what happens tell you about the resilience of children? Are there limits?
- How do clothes define people/cultures?
- How are Hmong funerary practices similar to other cultures? How are they different?
- What do the rooster and bull tell you about Hmong society? Is it a complete picture?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

- By the end of this chapter, Pao has already lived in at least four villages. Compare the following two passages:

"The Laos I knew was ancient and isolated, beautiful, delicate, and vulnerable...In Laos, life moved according to ancient traditions and rituals marking such milestones as birth, marriage, childbirth, work, grandchildren, and death."

"It didn't take me long to realize that life in Vaj Loog Zeb would be harsh. Given the landscape, it was difficult to raise crops, and we were always low on food. Life was more uncertain, and I began to feel a sense of hopelessness and isolation."

- Using the events in Chapter Two, make two lists, one with evidence supporting each view of Pao's past. How do you think each passage relates to the other? What evidence is there that Laos is no longer the way Pao remembers from Chapter One?

- Compare and contrast the four instances (snake, rooster, bull, bird) in Chapter Two where Pao interacted with animals. Consider the following questions:
 - Why was the snake treated differently from the others?
 - How does culture play a role in how we treat animals?
 - Can an animal be both a pet and food? Why or why not?

"I was fascinated by the traditional Hmong clothes and the bands of dangling French coins wrapped around people's waists and shoulders."

- Search the internet for examples of Hmong traditional clothing. Some sites to start with are:
 - Traditional (this site contains some limited advertising): <https://daauwvillagelaos.com/homepage/hmong-lifestyle/our-hmong-traditions/>
 - Modern (this site contains some limited advertising): <https://magazine.mtmary.edu/2016/11/17/culture-and-couture-hmong-fashion/#:~:text=Breathing%20new%20life%20into%20tradition,keen%20ability%20for%20fabric%20manipulation>
- Consider the following questions:
 - How have they changed over time? How have they remained the same?
 - Why do you think the Hmong continue to preserve their Hmong traditional clothes?
 - In what way do clothes define roles and responsibilities in your community?

CHAPTER THREE

Discussion Questions

- Why did the Hmong disguise their graves?
- How does Hmong culture view family ties and obligations?
- How does Pao continue to adapt to the changes in his life?
- How is the assassination a turning point for Pao's family?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

- Pao's father was likely assassinated because he worked for the Pathet Lao as tasseng. Consider the following: "Between a rock and a hard place." This idiom is often used to describe people who have to make a difficult choice between two bad options.
 - How does this apply to Pao's father?
 - Why do you think he made the decisions he did?
 - Do you think there was a better option? Why or why not?
 - What would have changed had Vayeng refused to work with the Pathet Lao?
 - How might life have been different for Vayeng in France? What cultural ties may have influenced his decision to stay in Laos?
 - What life lessons, if any, do think Pao learned from his father? What life lessons have you learned from your parents/legal guardians?
 - What difficult life experiences have you endured and moved on from?
 - What did you learn from these experiences?
 - How do these experiences continue to impact you today?
- Pao's life changes dramatically after the death of his father, starting with their flight through the jungle to reach the Mekong River.

"I tried to get used to the harsh jungle, the starvation, and the constant walking. The revolting stench of rotting corpses, from those who hadn't survived this journey, followed me everywhere...I hated what was happening to me, but I kept on."

- Using evidence from the chapter, describe the effect of his journey on Pao. How has he changed? How might this affect him as he grows older? How do you think you would react to what was happening?

Part 2

KITES IN A HURRICANE



CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion Questions

- Before you begin reading, what do you think "Kites in a Hurricane" means?
- What do you think the flags in the river were marking? Why was it important?
- How does Hmong spiritual belief factor into this chapter?
- How did life in the camp compare to life in Laos?
- What changed in the way extended family members reacted to Pao's family? Why?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

- Pao relates many stories told to him while he and his siblings were at the camp. Some are cautionary tales, some are fairy tales, and others are about what happened to the many refugees who fled Laos. Stories that are passed down from generation to generation like this are part of an oral history tradition shared by many cultures.
- Which story resonated with you? Why?
- Which story reminds you of one you have heard yourself? Make a list of some popular stories that try to teach certain behaviors and what they are for. For example, in "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," a young man who liked tricking his fellow villagers learns a hard lesson about lying when the wolf really does appear.
- Choose either a cautionary tale on page 57 or one of the fairy tales from pages 58-60.
 - What is the main point of the story?
 - What behavior is it hoping to create or curb, if any?
 - How are some stories and superstitions useful while others might be harmful?

- Analyze the photo from the top of page 56 (below, top). What details do you notice about Pao's family? How is it similar or different from the photo on page 4 (below, bottom)? How is Vang assuming a leadership role for the family, even in this photo?



Top left:

Photo from the top of page 56; a family picture taken at Ban Vinai. Pictured from left are Pheng, Vue, Kong, Vang, Vang's wife Bao Lee holding their daughter, Pao, and Yanghoua.



Bottom left:

Photo from page 4; Pao's parents, siblings, and cousins in a photo taken before he was born. Pao's mom holds his brother Pheng, and to her right are Yanghoua, a cousin, Vue, Pao's dad, and Vang.

Photos courtesy of Pao Lor

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion Questions

- Why might Pao have suddenly felt hopeless just as his life was about to change?
- What do you think of Pao's views of America?
- How has Pao's life in Laos and Thailand prepared him for America? How has it not?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

- During the Vietnam War and the Secret War in Laos, music figured prominently in the American antiwar protests. In the following passage, Pao writes of the songs the Hmong created during this time:

"One good thing to come of all this death and sorrow was music...Most of the songs were about the loss of their homeland and an ancient way of life, other songs urged the Hmong to love each other and stay together, while some, in a different vein, protested poverty and the kinds of social injustices and military atrocities that had displaced the Hmong in Laos."

- Choose three popular songs from the era and compare them to the themes above. What is the theme of the song you chose? What do the songs have in common? What is different? Do you think music crosses cultural barriers? Why or why not? How does music shape your view of the world? How do current events shape the music of an era?
 - For help finding music from the era, please consult the following site, which provides songs used in the Ken Burns documentary *The Vietnam War* along with quotes from the series: <https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-vietnam-war/episode-playlists/>
- Pao learns from other families in the Thai refugee camp that America is "the heavenly kingdom above the clouds where cities glittered of gold," and that Americans "...were all tall and blond and would welcome Hmong refugees with open arms..." as well as that "...America was the land of giants who ate people."
 - What does this tell you of the life of refugees in the camps?
 - Are these ideas of America based in reality in some way? If so, how? List some examples.
 - What other metaphors, similes, or tales do you know about America (e.g., the American Dream)? What do they mean?
 - How do these myths portray an incomplete picture of what life in America is like? What truth is there behind these myths?

- Pao reacts to being bullied by attacking one of the bullies who pushed him down. “Then I was going toward him with an anger I couldn’t control.”
 - Why did Pao feel this way?
 - Do you think the traumatic effects of Pao’s early life factored into his reaction? Why or why not?
 - How have you reacted to being bullied or seeing someone being bullied?
- Pao’s anger is an example of having “raw emotions,” or feelings so powerful they can make you feel out of control.
 - Have you ever experienced similar raw emotions?
 - What actions did you take?
 - Why are such emotions so overpowering?
- Sometimes actions taken when we are upset or angry can have severe consequences.
 - What are some better ways to deal with our emotions (often referred to as coping)?
 - What coping skills have you learned? Are they effective?

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion Questions

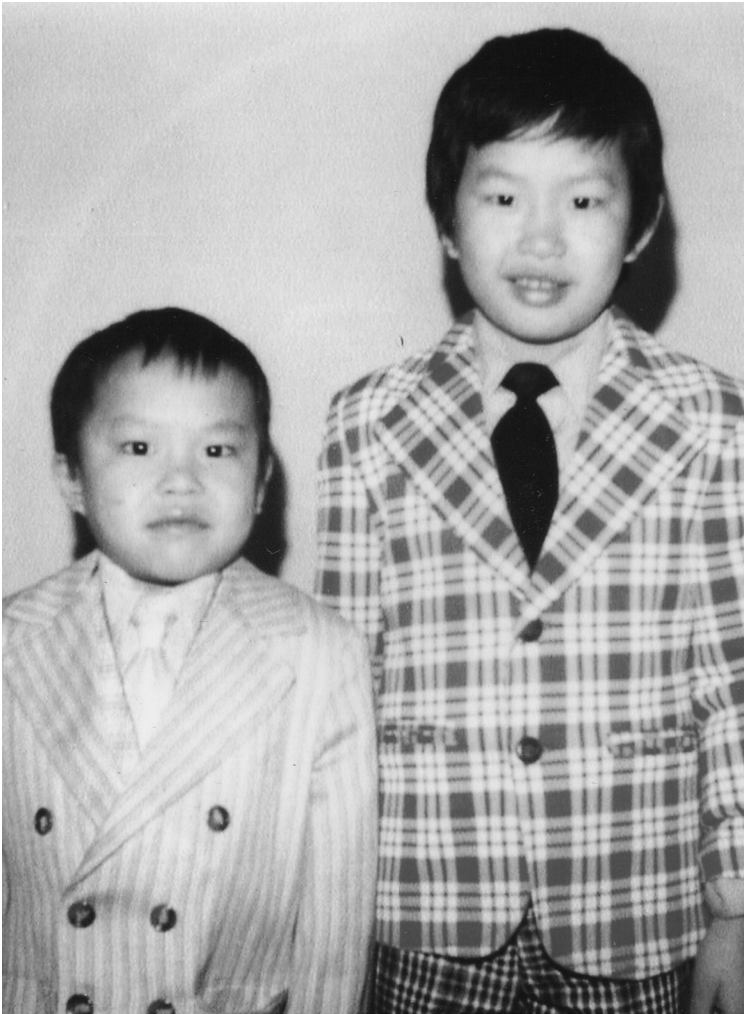
- How does Pao handle the transition from Long Beach?
- What stands out to you about Pao’s memories of his first months in school?
- What personal motivations does Pao show?
- How does Pao distance himself from his feelings of home?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

“One memorable thing from that first summer in Wisconsin was the day I tried to ride a bicycle...”

- Pao’s memories of growing up in Green Bay, being bullied, making friends, learning to ride a bike, etc., may seem similar to your own experiences. Choose an experience from the chapter and compare and contrast it with one of your own.
 - What is the memory about?
 - Who besides yourself is in it?
 - What were you trying to do, understand, or be part of?
 - Who supported you? Who opposed you?
 - How is your memory similar to Pao’s? How is it different?

- As Pao continues his journey, other Hmong families come to live with them even as his family continues to move from place to place. Using U.S. Census data such as that found on <https://www.socialexplorer.com>, find the following information:
 - How many Hmong are living in the United States today?
 - Which states have the largest Hmong populations? Where does Wisconsin rank?
 - Given what you have learned about Pao's experience, why do you think the Hmong settled in certain states over others?



Kong and Pao dressed up for their first Hmong New Year celebration in Green Bay, in the early 1980s.

Photo courtesy of Pao Lor

Part 3

PERMANENT RESIDENT ALIENS

CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion Questions

- What were some advantages for Pao in the growing Hmong community?
- How do Pao's early experiences continue to shape his life?
- What themes do you see emerging in how Pao reacts to bullying?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.



A gathering of Lor clan members and relatives in Green Bay, Wisconsin, in the mid-1980s. Pao is in the middle row, wearing a V-neck tee shirt.

Photo courtesy of Pao Lor

Content Activities

"I wanted to be perfect, to score one hundred percent on my tests and write in very neat letters."

- Pao is determined to move up to the third grade, but this isn't the first time we've seen his drive to succeed. Think of a time when you were driven to be the very best you could be and answer the following questions:
 - What motivated you?
 - If you succeeded, how did it make you feel? *(questions continued on next page)*

- If you fell short, how did that make you feel?
 - Why might the pressure to “be the best” be more intense on immigrants and refugees than it might be for U.S. born citizens?
 - If you could speak to a young Pao Lor, what might you say to him?
- Define the following in your own words:

“If the Hmong don’t help the Hmong, who’s going to help the Hmong?”

- Using this idea as a guide, create a phrase that helps explain your outlook on life. You can use one you already know (for example, YOLO, popular in the early 2000s, You Only Live Once) or make up your own. Then explain why you chose that phrase.

“When I went to bed that night, I didn’t realize the decisions I made that day might define my future.”

- We often make decisions without understanding their consequences. Think of a time you had a decision to make and then create a decision tree with the choice at the top and possible answers as each branch. It might be something simple, like whether or not to spend money on a movie, or complicated, like whether or not to stay at a job. Follow each branch through, imagining the consequences. Would you have changed your decision? How has this decision shaped your life?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Discussion Questions

- How does Pao’s account of the tensions in the Hmong community impact your view of immigrants?
- How does the way Pao reacts to being bullied himself differ from when he sees others being bullied? Why do you think that is?
- In what ways has Pao gained confidence in himself? How does it show?
- How was Pao’s reading level placement a “mixed blessing?”
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

“The best thing to do was keep my composure and do my best. I had learned who I could trust, how to take pride in myself—be it in athletics or academics—and to remind myself: I will show them someday.”

- In this chapter Pao begins to deal more with ethnic and racial slurs, bullying, and finding and losing friends.
 - Make two lists. On the first list, write down what you think Pao values in his relationships with his family, friends, teachers, and the world.
 - As you do so, make a list of your own and consider what you value.
 - How are these lists similar? How are they different?
 - What’s surprising about the two lists?
- Pao uses the hunting skills he learned in the jungles of Laos to hunt and kill a small bird. What other skills have you seen Pao use as he makes his way through American society? For this activity, you will make a list of character traits that you feel Pao has and discuss it in small groups. For example, Pao is loyal to his family, so loyalty would be a character trait. When you have finished, rank them in order of importance to Pao’s life and explain why you did so. When finished, share with the larger class your groups’ results. What do you think of the combined list?

CHAPTER NINE

Discussion Questions

- Where does Pao’s reaction to funerals stem from?
- What evidence is there that Pao is beginning to distance himself from traditional Hmong culture? Is that distancing advancing and transforming the Hmong cultural identity, or is it diminishing it?
- Where does Pao turn for guidance in his life? Who or what do you turn to for guidance?
- What choices does Pao make at this age that change the course of his life? What choices have you made that have changed the course of your life?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

In this chapter Pao describes Hmong funerary practices as well as his reaction to them. As with many things, his present is influenced by his past, with the death of his parents and the corpses he has seen figuring prominently in his memories of death.

"The sharp sounds from the qeej were also hard to bear."

- Using the following link, listen to a selection of qeej music and answer the questions: Qeej Tu Slav https://youtu.be/sx_jlKrr_l8; Chai Lee; "Offering Oxen to the Deceased" (14m 45s mark to end)
 - How do you feel while listening?
 - Is it similar to any other music you have heard? If so, what or what instrument?
 - How might your frame of mind affect your perceptions of what you are hearing?
- Now listen to the following selection of bagpipe music, often performed at Scottish funerals, and answer the questions: Amazing Grace; <https://youtu.be/ojzrkCSwMvo>; The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (0:00m mark to 59s)
 - How do you feel while listening?
 - What similarities do the two pieces of music share?
 - Do you consider music to be universal? In other words, is it something that everyone can understand, regardless of language? Why or why not?

"Mr. Metz's compassion and his belief in me came into my life when I desperately needed it. He brought me hope and good news when I lacked both. Other than perhaps my mom and dad, he was the first person to make me feel that I could do something."

- Mr. Metz is more than a teacher to Pao. He becomes "like a father figure" or mentor, pushing him to succeed and supporting him when needed. Think back to a time in your life when someone supported you in an important way and answer the following questions:
 - What did you need support with?
 - Who helped you?
 - How did that support change your life?
- Next, choose a way to express how you feel about that support. You could:
 - Create a playlist or choose a song that describes your feelings about the event
 - Draw, paint, or sculpt a piece of art about the event (it could be abstract!)
 - Write a song or poem
 - Write a letter to the person who supported you (you don't have to send it)
 - Write it as a piece of fiction that happened to someone else

Part 4

GHOSTS OF THE PAST



CHAPTER TEN

Discussion Questions

- How is Pao assimilating into American society and culture? How is he retaining his Hmong cultural identity?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.



Pao at age fourteen or fifteen. Photo courtesy of Pao Lor.

Content Activities

“Over the summer, I learned that Hmong girls my age were getting married...I heard of Hmong men my age getting married as well...I couldn’t imagine being married or having kids while I was still in junior high school.”

- Cultures around the world have different standards for marriage regarding age, eligibility, courtship, and even dowries. For this exercise you will interview someone in your life who is married. First, read the following article on Hmong marriage practices: <https://religionsmn.carleton.edu/exhibits/show/hmong-religiosity/hmong-rituals-birth-marriage-d/traditional-hmong-weddings>
 - Which traditions are similar to ones you recognize? Which are different? How might these rituals continue to change over time?

- Pao continues to deal with racism and bullying as he progresses through junior high. Many ethnic groups, upon arriving in America, have faced similar issues, even to the point of anti-immigration laws and policies being put into effect. At one point Asian Americans (specifically Chinese but later expanded to include all people of Asian descent) were excluded from entering the United States almost entirely. For this activity, choose three pieces of anti-immigrant legislation to study from the list below. Create a three-circle Venn diagram and list the traits of each in the appropriate areas:
 - Who is the legislation aimed at?
 - What do they have in common?
 - What is different about each?
 - Who benefited?
 - Who was harmed?

The Naturalization Act of 1790

The Immigration Act of 1891

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1892

The Immigration Act of 1917

The Immigration Act of 1924

Formation of the Border Patrol (1924)

Bracero Act of 1942

- The following website may be helpful for summarizing the above acts: <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/immigration-united-states-timeline#:~:text=The%201882%20Act%20is%20the,and%20the%20sick%20or%20diseased>

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Discussion Questions

- How is the arrival of Pao's uncle significant?
- How has Pao's assimilation into American society changed him?
- How do "soul-calling" ceremonies compare with other birth rituals, such as baptism?
- What questions might you have asked of Pao's uncle?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.

Content Activities

"In Hmong culture, family histories and ancestral stories are often passed down through oral storytelling."

Pre-Interview

Oral histories are a kind of primary source that historians use to gain personal stories of events from the past. These histories are a recollection of people, experiences, emotions, and thoughts from a specific time or event in history. Use the following guide below to help shape your interview questions.

Guiding Questions

- What historical information are you looking for?
- What type of person do you want to interview? Who are they? What do they do? Why are they relevant to your topic?

Suggested Activities

- Research the culture of the person you will be interviewing. Consider:
 - Respect for traditions around sharing of information. For example, in this chapter, Pao offers his uncle a beer and makes it clear that his uncle does not have to agree to tell him anything. By showing this level of respect, Pao shows his understanding of traditional Hmong cultural roles and norms.
 - Specific greetings and salutations. For example, Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., etc.
- Share your questions with your subject before the interview so they can be comfortable answering (or declining to answer certain questions).
- Your interview subject may wish to review the transcript before final publication. You should agree to this, since it can help you:
 - Ensure that traditional knowledge is treated appropriately or removed at the request of your subject.
 - Anticipate any potential conflicts regarding privacy.

Designing and Conducting the Interview

- Introduction: Create a script that you will start the recorded interview with. You need to introduce yourself, your interview subject, the date, the place the interview is taking place, the purpose of the interview, and an explanation of the project.
- Example: This is [first, last name]. Today's date is [month, day, year]. I am at [location, city, state, at the house of]. I am interviewing [first, last name] about [theme/topic] for [class or project name]. Also with us is [first, last name] who is [job they are doing to aid in the preservation of interview]. *(continued on next page)*

- Gather biographical background of the person you are interviewing: full name, birth date, birthplace, and occupations. Write three warm-up questions to ask based on this biographical information to uncover more information.
- Write four open-ended questions that provoke stories and narratives to assist in gathering information or details about the event, time period, or experience you are researching.
- Write potential follow-up questions to clarify or expand on information from your subject.
- Make an appointment and be on time.
- Consider bringing a culturally appropriate gift.
- Explain to your subject what the project is about and why you are interested in learning more on the topic.
- Let your subject know how their information will be used and disseminated.
- Make sure your subject agrees to be recorded and signs the release.
- Bring your notes and other information along to guide the interview. When your subject strays from your theme or questions, use your notes to return to original question.
- If unclear about a response, repeat what you understood them to say to verify it.
- Make sure you thank your subject for their time and express how appreciative you are of what they shared with you.
- Iterate a timeline detailing steps to publication, including time necessary for transcript review or privacy concerns.
- Send a thank you letter upon your return home.

Adapted from: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Park City Museum. Engaging Students with Primary Sources. Retrieved from: File:///C:/Users/JH3/Documents/Wisconsin%20Historical%20Museum/Object%20Lesson%20Plans/Oral-History-Lesson-Handouts.pdf

EPILOGUE

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Pao ended his story where he did?
- What surprised you about his eventual career?
- How did his life experiences lead him forward? How might they have held him back, even if temporarily?
- What did you learn from this chapter? Fill in your KWL chart.



Pao at high school graduation. Photo courtesy of Pao Lor.

CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

(Note to teachers: The following activities have been designed as culminating activities for students after reading through and doing the exercises for *Modern Jungles*. Please feel free to adapt them for your classroom.)

Creative reflection

- Create a reflection on Pao's life as described in *Modern Jungles*. You may write, draw, paint, sing, sculpt, or express your feelings on the material in any way that you and your teacher find appropriate. Consider explaining how his experiences both shaped his life, affected your view of the Hmong and their experiences, and the impact his life journey has on you. Finally, present your work to your class.

Tracing Pao's journey

- Using Google Earth, trace Pao's journey from Long Tieng to Green Bay, Wisconsin.
 - Explore the geographical regions, places, and cities Pao mentions in the book. Places to explore: Phonsavan, Long Tieng, Phu Bia, Muang cha, Muang Oo, Nongkhai, Loei (Hmong Culture Temple), Bangkok, Long Beach, Green Bay
 - Consider the following questions:
 - a. What similarities between Pao's descriptions and the locations are notable?
 - b. Which events occurred there during Pao's life?
 - c. How have places changed since Pao last saw them?
 - The last village Pao lived in before his father was assassinated is located at the mountain Phu Bia. There are plans to turn it into a tourist attraction: <https://laotiantimes.com/2021/01/12/phu-bia-mountain-to-be-developed-as-new-tourism-site/>

Exploring Thai refugee camps

- Using YouTube, explore the following refugee camps located in Thailand:
 - Nong Khai (youtube.com: Search query: Nong Khai refugee camp Thailand)
Example: Lao Refugee Camp 1979: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYESTIAeyhQ>
 - Ban Vinai (youtube.com: Search query: Ban Vinai refugee camp Thailand)
Example: Ban Vinai Refugee Camp Thailand 1980-1981: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1M0Q7xITc4o>
- What does it mean to be a refugee? Since 1951, the 1951 Refugee Convention has defined and protected them under international law. Discover more here: <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/what-is-a-refugee.html#:~:text=The%201951%20Refugee%20Convention%20is,group%2C%20or%20political%20opinion.%E2%80%9D>

- What experiences do you see that are similar to Pao Lor's recollections of life in the camp?
- What might a day in the camp be like for a child? For a teenager? For an adult?
- How are people dressed? What are they doing?
- Would Pao's life have been different had he stayed in the camp longer? Why or why not?
- Write a reflection on what you have observed on life in a refugee camp in Thailand. Consider capturing screen shots from the documentaries to illustrate your reflection.

Exploring the Hmong experience

- Explore different resources and histories of the Hmong experience in Laos and the United States. Choose three that you find particularly interesting, describe them, and explain why you chose them, using examples from each. Remember to cite your work. Below are some links to get you started.
 - Books
 - Hmong in Wisconsin* by Mai Zong Vue: <https://shop.wisconsinhistory.org/hmong-in-wisconsin>
 - Mai Ya's Long Journey* by Sheila Cohen: <https://shop.wisconsinhistory.org/mai-yas-long-journey>
 - Links
 - Hmong Timeline from the Minnesota Historical Society: <https://www.mnhs.org/hmong/hmong-timeline>
 - Hmong in Wisconsin from the Dictionary of Wisconsin History: <https://wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS1754>
 - Hmong History from the Hmong American Center: <https://www.hmongamericancenter.org/hmong-history/>
 - Newspapers
 - <https://laotiantimes.com/>
 - Media
 - Joe Bee Xiong: War to Peace: <https://pbswisconsineducation.org/biographies/xiong.html>

Inviting a guest speaker

- Consider inviting a guest speaker into your classroom, either virtually or in-person. You can reach many authors, including Pao Lor, through the Wisconsin Historical Society Speakers Bureau: <https://wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS15372>

Learning about unexploded ordnance

- While not part of Pao's memoirs, there are millions of pieces of unexploded bombs and other ordnance buried in Laos alone. Worldwide, they kill or injure tens of thousands of people every year. Using the website <http://legaciesofwar.org/about-laos/leftover-unexploded-ordnances-uxo/> or another resource, answer the following questions:
 - Which types of ordnance are left behind?
 - Who is most likely to be injured or killed by it?
 - What effect does this have on the country dealing with it?
 - Who is responsible for clearing it?



Unexploded cluster sub-munition found at Plain of Jars, Laos. Photographed on September 23, 2012 by Seabifar. Accessed from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BLU-26_cluster_sub-munition.JPG. Original color photo converted to black and white.

- Expand on your research. You can start with the United States Department of State website: <https://www.state.gov/reports/to-walk-the-earth-in-safety-2017/>
 - Which groups are trying to end the use of these types of explosives?
 - Do you agree or disagree that they should be banned? Why or why not?

Standards Alignment: English Language Arts

The *Modern Jungles* education materials can help meet or exceed a wide range of English Language Arts standards. Please see DPI's publication *Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts* to see a breakdown of each anchor standard listed below.

From DPI's *Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts*:

"To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts...By reading informational text, students build a foundation of knowledge that will also give them the background to be better readers."

Anchor Standards for Reading

Overarching Statement: Read and comprehend a variety of complex literary and informational texts for many purposes (including enjoyment), including texts that reflect one's experiences and experiences of others. This includes independently and proficiently understanding grade-level text.

Key Ideas and Details

- Anchor Standard R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly/implicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Anchor Standard R2: Summarize key ideas and details in order to identify central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development.
- Anchor Standard R3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

- Anchor Standard R4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Anchor Standard R5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- Anchor Standard R6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text, drawing on a wide range of diverse texts.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Anchor Standard R7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats.
- Anchor Standard R8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- Anchor Standard R9: Analyze and evaluate texts using knowledge of literary forms, elements, and devices through a variety of lenses and perspectives.

Anchor Standards for Writing

Overarching Statement: Write routinely for a range of culturally-sustaining and rhetorically authentic tasks, purposes, and audiences over extended time frames (time for inquiry, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two).

Text Types and Purposes

- Anchor Standard W1: Compose reflective, formal, and creative writing, which may happen simultaneously or independently, for a variety of high-stakes and low-stakes purposes.
- Anchor Standard W2: Compose writing for a variety of modes to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- Anchor Standard W4: Make intentional and informed decisions about development, organization, and style, to produce clear and coherent writing that are culturally-sustaining and rhetorically authentic to task and purpose.
- Anchor Standard W5: Plan, revise, and edit to make informed and intentional decisions to produce clear and coherent multimodal writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.
- Anchor Standard W6: Use print and digital technology to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Inquiry to Build and Present Knowledge

- Anchor Standard W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained student-driven inquiry, demonstrating an understanding of the subject under investigation.

- Anchor Standard W8: Gather relevant information from multiple print, digital, and community sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and follow a standard citation format.
- Anchor Standard W9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and inquiry.

Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

Overarching statement: Listen to understand and adapt speech to a variety of purposes, audiences, and situations in order to meet communicative goals. Be able to justify intentional language choices and how those choices differ for culture and context.

Comprehension and Collaboration

- Anchor Standard SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Anchor Standard SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- Anchor Standard SL4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Anchor Standard SL5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Anchor Standards for Language

Overarching statement: Demonstrate an understanding of how language functions in different cultures and contexts. Apply this knowledge to meet communicative goals when composing, creating, and speaking, and to comprehend more fully when reading and listening. Be able to justify intentional language and convention choices and explain how those choices differ for culture and context.

Knowledge of Language

- Anchor Standard L1: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

- Anchor Standard L3: Demonstrate an understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. when reading or listening.
- Anchor Standard L4: Demonstrate an ability to collaboratively and independently build vocabulary knowledge when encountering unknown words including cultural, general academic, and discipline-specific terms and phrases; use vocabulary appropriate to the context and situation.

Conventions of Standardized English

- Anchor Standard L5: Discern when and where it is appropriate to use standardized English, and demonstrate contextually appropriate use of the conventions of standardized English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Anchor Standard L6: Discern when and where it is appropriate to use standardized English, and demonstrate contextually appropriate use of the conventions of standardized English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Standards Alignment: Social Studies

Reading the book *Modern Jungles* and completing the student exercises can help meet or exceed the following select social studies standards and learning priorities for grades 6-12 (m, h):

Inquiry

Standard SS.Inq1: Wisconsin students will construct meaningful questions that initiate an inquiry.

- Inq1.a: Develop questions based on a topic
- Inq1.b: Plan an inquiry

Standard SS.Inq2: Wisconsin students will gather and evaluate sources.

- Inq2.a: Gather diverse sources (electronic, digital, print, and other mass media) applicable to the inquiry
- Inq2.b: Evaluate sources

Standard SS.Inq3: Wisconsin students will develop claims using evidence to support reasoning.

- Inq3.a: Develop claims to answer an inquiry question
- Inq3.b: Cite evidence from multiple sources to support a claim
- Inq3.c: Elaborate how evidence supports a claim

Standard SS.Inq4: Wisconsin students will communicate and critique conclusions.

- Inq4.a: Communicate conclusions
- Inq4.b: Critique conclusion

Standard SS.Inq5: Wisconsin students will be civically engaged.

- Inq5.a: Civic engagement

Behavioral Sciences

Standard SS.BH2: Wisconsin students will investigate and interpret interactions between individuals and groups (Sociology).

SS.BH1: Wisconsin students will examine individual cognition, perception, behavior, and identity (Psychology).

- BH1.a: Individual cognition, perception, and behavior
- BH1.b: Personal identity and empathy

SS.BH2: Wisconsin students will investigate and interpret interactions between individuals and groups (Sociology).

- BH2.a: Relationship of people and groups
- BH2.b: Cultural patterns

SS.BH3: Wisconsin students will assess the role that human behavior and cultures play in the development of social endeavors (Anthropology).

- BH3.a: Social interactions

SS.BH4: Wisconsin students will examine the progression of specific forms of technology and their influence within various societies.

- BH4.a: Progression of technology

Economics

Standard SS.Econ1: Wisconsin students use economic reasoning to understand issues.

- Econ1.a: Choices and decision making

Geography

Standard SS.Geog1: Wisconsin students will use geographic tools and ways of thinking to analyze the world.

- Geog1.c: Mental mapping and maps from memory

Standard SS.Geog2: Wisconsin students will analyze human movement and population patterns.

- Geog2.a: Population and place
- Geog2.b: Reasons people move
- Geog2.c: Impact of movement

Standard SS.Geog3: Wisconsin students will examine the impacts of global interconnections and relationships.

- Geog3.a: Distribution of resources

Standard SS.Geog4: Wisconsin students will evaluate the relationship between identity and place.

- Geog4.a: Characteristics of place

Standard SS.Geog5: Wisconsin students will evaluate the relationship between humans and the environment.

- Geog5.b: Interdependence

History

Standard SS.Hist1: Wisconsin students will use historical evidence for determining cause and effect.

- Hist1.a: Cause
- Hist1.b: Effect

Standard SS.Hist2: Wisconsin students will analyze, recognize, and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time and contextualization of historical events.

- Hist2.a: Patterns stay the same over a period of time
- Hist2.b: Patterns change over a period of time
- Hist2.c: Contextualization

Standard SS.Hist3: Wisconsin students will connect past events, people, and ideas to the present; use different perspectives to draw conclusions; and suggest current implications.

- Hist3.a: Connections
- Hist3.b: Perspective
- Hist3.c: Current implications

Standard SS.Hist4: Wisconsin students will evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources to interpret the historical context, intended audience, purpose, or author's point of view (Historical Methodology).

- Hist4.a: Historical context
- Hist4.b: Intended audience
- Hist4.c: Purpose
- Hist4.d: Point of view (POV)

Political Science

Standard SS.PS2: Wisconsin students will examine and interpret rights, privileges, and responsibilities in society.

- PS2.b: Fundamentals of citizenship
- PS2.c: Asserting and reaffirming of human rights

Standard: SS.PS4: Wisconsin students will develop and employ skills for civic literacy.

- PS4.a: Argumentation
- PS4.b: Compromise, diplomacy, and consensus building