

THINKING ALOUD WITH MONITORING AND CLARIFYING

Good readers are actively involved in knowing when they stop understanding a part of a text. They recognize when their comprehension breaks down. They take steps to clarify what they don't understand.

Teaching Monitoring and Clarifying in Grades K–2

My Name Is Sangoel by Karen Lynn Williams
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Overview and Rationale

Sangoel is a young Sudanese refugee who leaves his native land during his country's civil war. When he arrives in the United States, everything is unfamiliar and intimidating. His struggles to fit in are complicated by the struggles of his teachers and classmates to correctly pronounce his name, one of his last reminders of his home and heritage. Upon its publication, this book was awarded multiple honors including the International Literacy Association's Children's Choices Reading List 2010, the Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People 2010, and the 2009 Notable Books for Children from *Smithsonian* Magazine. Young readers typically have more confusion with nonfiction text, so I have purposefully included a narrative text to model monitoring and clarifying using narrative text. With immigration and refugees being a hot topic in the news, I have included this book to help students understand the struggles of refugees to acclimate to American culture and schools.

Lexile Framework: 440

Grade-Level Equivalent: 2.1

Guided Reading Level: 2

What the Text Says	What I Say
"... It is the name of your father and of your ancestors before him." (p. 1)	<i>Wow. There's a lot in this first sentence I don't understand. Who is the Wise One, and is that someone's real name? What is a refugee camp? When I hear about a camp, I think of summer camps. What is Dinka? Is that a name? A religion? A place? I have to keep reading to have all of my questions answered.</i>
"... You will be Sangoel. Even in America." (p. 1)	<i>I still don't understand what a Dinka is, and I'm not really sure why this old man is so thin and he's telling Sangoel about America. Does this have to do with the refugee camp?</i>
He did not have a country. (p. 3)	<i>I'm not sure why his father was killed. Was he a soldier? I know Sudan is a country in Africa, but I'm not sure why there was a war there. But this part also answered my question about what a refugee is—the text tells me that a refugee is a person who does not have a home or a country. So a refugee camp must be a place where lots of people without homes or countries come together to live.</i>
Sangoel knew he would never see his friends again. (p. 3)	<i>I need to know more about what it means to be "resettled." Do only young people who can work get resettled? Is America the only place refugees get resettled? I had to slow down when I read that Lili and Mama were crying. I can't tell yet if they are crying because they aren't going with Sangoel to America, or because they are sad to say goodbye to everyone in the refugee camp. Maybe I'll find out more in the next pages.</i>

What the Text Says	What I Say
The “sky boat” took them to America. (p. 5)	<i>I’m not sure what the sky boat is. I see the words are in quotation marks, so maybe that’s a nickname for something. The only way to get to America from Sudan is either a boat or an airplane, so maybe sky boat is Sangoel’s word for an airplane.</i>
He shivered and his head ached. (p. 6)	<i>I had to reread this whole part because I didn’t understand why Mama was afraid of stairs and what magic doors were. But then I realized that Sangoel came from Sudan, where maybe he had never seen some of the things we are used to in America. It must be scary to be in a new place with unfamiliar things, like escalators and fluorescent lights.</i>
... and pointed across the room. (p. 8)	<i>Aha! The text clarified my confusion about what Dinka is. It’s an old language from Sudan.</i>
Sangoel was only eight, but he was the man of the family. (p. 8)	<i>I’m wondering what the author means by “man of the family.” I already know his father was killed, and he has a sister. Does this mean that he feels like he’s trying to be an adult like his father was? Is this a way for the author to tell me that Sangoel feels responsible for taking care of his family?</i>
... and pulled her and Lili through the crowd. (p. 8)	<i>Again—the text answered my question. Mama and Lili came to America. They must have been crying because they were sad to say goodbye to their friends in Sudan.</i>
Sangoel blinked back tears. (p. 8)	<i>I’m unclear on why this stranger would hug Sangoel and his family right after meeting them. I’m thinking that maybe she’s trying to make them feel welcome or to show them that she cares and is there to help.</i>
There was no barbed wire to keep them in. (p. 10)	<i>I wonder why the author said there was no barbed wire in America. Does that mean that there was barbed wire in the refugee camp in Sudan?</i>
She cried again when he turned it off. (p. 11)	<i>I don’t understand—does this mean Mama has never used a stove or a telephone? If they didn’t eat with forks, did they use their hands? Do they not know there are not real people in a TV? This goes along with the idea that there are so many new things in America!</i>
“Education is your mother and your father.” (p. 13)	<i>I’m lost with this last sentence—that education is his mother and father. What did the Wise One mean by that? I know school is not really his mother and father, so there’s another message there. Maybe what the Wise One meant is that school is as important as his mother and father.</i>
“My name is Sangoel,” he whispered, but no one heard. (p. 15)	<i>At first, I was unclear what was going on. I didn’t know whom he was whispering to—I thought he was whispering to himself. But when I reread, I saw that the teacher couldn’t pronounce his name correctly and the kids laughed at a mean nickname. Now I understand that he was trying to tell them his correct name, but the class couldn’t hear him over their laughter. At this point, several people have mispronounced his name—which makes me wonder if I’m saying it wrong too! How do we really say his name?</i>
... but in America they called it soccer. (p. 16)	<i>When I first read this, I didn’t understand what the author meant, but when I reread it, I got an important signal—the word but helped me to understand that soccer is the American term for the sport that Sangoel used to call football.</i>

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What the Text Says	What I Say
"My name is Sangoel," he said before the coach could say it wrong. (p. 16)	<i>I'm not sure if the author is trying to hint that Sangoel is used to people saying his name wrong or if the message here is that Sangoel is getting braver, and not whispering anymore.</i>
"My name is Sangoel," he called softly as the boy ran off. (p. 17)	<i>I'm not certain if this boy is trying to be kind and just cannot pronounce his name, or if the boy is purposefully saying his name wrong to taunt Sangoel.</i>
... and he wished he were back at camp. (p. 18)	<i>There are some things that I wish the book would clarify for me—where does their food come from? Who is paying for their apartment? Does Mama have a job, or did they bring any money from Sudan?</i>
You will always be Sangoel. (p. 18)	<i>I can't tell yet if Mama is trying to be helpful and make Sangoel fit in with an American name, or if Mama thinks a new name would help him forget some of the bad things about Sudan.</i>
He had bad dreams about war and running and hiding. (p. 19)	<i>I'm not sure why he'd choose the floor over a bed. Maybe the author is hinting that he used to sleep on the floor in the refugee camp, so he's returning to something that felt safe and comfortable.</i>
He put on his almost-white shirt and went to school. (p. 21)	<i>I need to know what he made with the markers and this shirt. The author has done a great job building suspense, so I want to keep reading to see what this shirt says.</i>
Sangoel nodded and smiled! (p. 22)	<i>Yes! I got the answer—I wanted! I kept reading to find out how his name was correctly pronounced. I was saying it "San-go-el" too, just like everyone else, but here I learned its correct pronunciation.</i>
"My name is Sangoel. Even in America." (p. 26)	<i>The author is making a really important point here—that his name is more than just a word. Sangoel's name is a link to his family and his past. Maybe that is why the Wise One was so insistent that he always be Sangoel, even in America.</i>
Author's Note (p. 28)	<i>I'm going to read the Author's Note because I'm hoping that it will give me some answers to some of the questions that the text did not answer for me.</i>
... and may not be able to bring along family members, money, clothing, or food. (p. 28)	<i>I was confused earlier about who was paying for Sangoel's apartment and food, and this part clarified for me that most refugees can't bring food and money and clothing with them.</i>
Often there are no schools, no electricity, and no clean drinking water. (p. 28)	<i>Wow—at first I had thought a refugee camp was like a summer camp, but I was really wrong. Refugee camps sound like terrible places to have to live.</i>
Years of war and persecution have forced many people to leave Sudan. (p. 28)	<i>This clarifies more about that unfamiliar word—Dinka—for me. It's not just a language, but a group of people in Sudan.</i>
Today more people choose to keep the name that connects them to their heritage. (p. 28)	<i>I'm understanding a lot more about why Sangoel and the Wise One are so insistent on keeping his name, and why Mama's idea of an American name just doesn't feel right to him.</i>