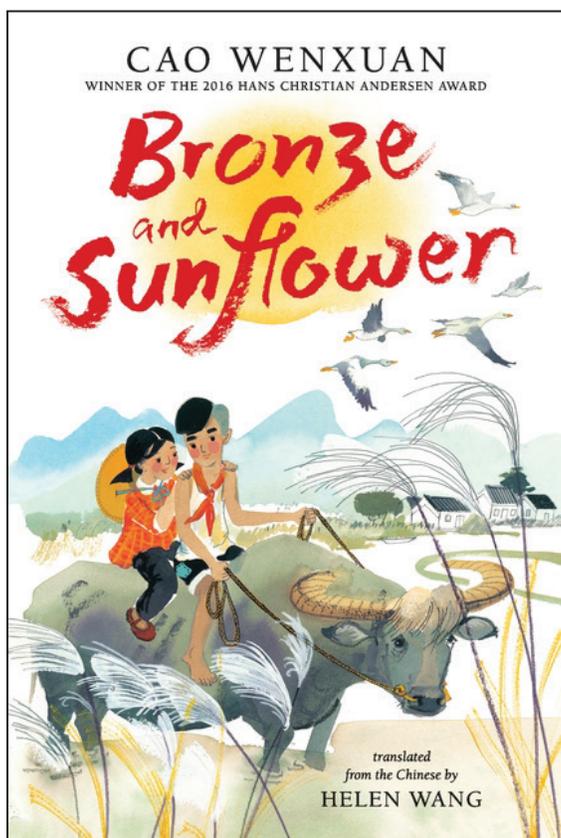


## Classroom Ideas

# Bronze and Sunflower

CAO WENXUAN



HC: 978-0-7636-8816-5

\$16.99/\$23.00 CAN • Ages 9–12

Also available as an e-book and in audio

## Summary

This beautifully written, timeless tale by best-selling Chinese author Cao Wenxuan tells the story of Sunflower, a young city girl who moves to the countryside. She grows to love the reed marshlands – the endlessly flowing river, the friendly buffalo with their strong backs and shiny round heads, and the sky that stretches on and on in its vastness. However, the days are long, and the little girl is lonely. Then she meets Bronze, who, unable to speak, is ostracized by the other village boys. Soon the pair is inseparable, and when Bronze's family agrees to take Sunflower in, it seems that fate has brought him the sister he has always longed for. But life in Damaidi is hard, and Bronze's family can barely afford to feed themselves. Will the city girl be able to stay in this place where she has finally found happiness?

## About the Author and Translator

**Cao Wenxuan** is one of China's most esteemed children's book writers and has won several of China's important awards for children's literature. *Bronze and Sunflower* is his first full-length book to be translated into and published in English. A professor of Chinese literature at Peking University, Cao Wenxuan has seen many of his books become best-sellers in China, and his work has been translated into French, Russian, Japanese, and Korean.

**Helen Wang** studied Chinese at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and is now a curator at the British Museum. She has been a translator for more than twenty years. She lives in London.

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# Classroom Ideas

## Discussion Questions and Activities

### Before Reading

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end?

What is the purpose of this novel (e.g., to entertain, inform, or persuade)? How can you tell? Who do you think is the intended audience?

### After Reading

This novel has many themes that share a message. Write a short paragraph about each of the following themes:

- Family
- Poverty
- Loyalty
- Community

Based on what Sunflower thinks, says, and does, how would you describe her? What is important to her? What are her strengths? How does she change over the course of the story? Also answer these questions for Bronze.

As a class, create a character map to explore the relationships in the book. Use a blackboard, whiteboard, or large sheet of paper. Put Sunflower's and Bronze's names in the center and circle them. Add character names to the map and circle each one. Then draw lines between the characters who interact with each other. Once you have mapped the relationships, see who connects with whom. Are there any characters who connect with everyone else? Write a short description about the key relationships, focusing on how they change over the course of the novel.

Describe the setting of the novel, including the location and time. Write a short report on the villagers, such as what they eat, what their houses look like, what they do for work, and any other interesting information. Use evidence from the book to support your descriptions.

Why do you think the villagers were so reluctant to take Sunflower in? Why do you think Bronze's family decided to take her in?

Write a book report on *Bronze and Sunflower*. Write whether you enjoyed the book, giving examples from the text to explain your evaluation. Make a recommendation about who would be interested in this book and draw connections to similar or related books.

### Narrative Pyramid

*Bronze and Sunflower* unfolds in chronological order, which works well for studying story structure. One graphic organizer that links character and actions is a narrative pyramid. You can find templates for one on the Internet or create your own. A narrative pyramid has eight lines, with its words centered to resemble a pyramid. Each line contains one more word than the line above it, in this order:

line 1: the main character's name

line 2: two words that describe the character

line 3: three words that describe the book's setting

line 4: four words that describe the character's main conflict

line 5: five words that describe a key event in the story's plot

line 6: six words that describe another key event

line 7: seven words that describe a third key event

line 8: eight words that describe how the character's conflict is resolved

After completing your pyramid, decorate your paper and share it with the class.

### Readers' Theater

Work in small groups to dramatize a scene from the book. First find a passage with a lot of dialogue. Convert the passage to a script with a short introduction to set the scene. The parts that aren't dialogue should be assigned to a narrator who gives the introduction, explains action if necessary, and helps with transitions. After you have written and edited the script, choose roles and practice delivering lines. Then perform for the rest of the class, with or without props.

### Geography

Write a description of the land based on how the author describes the environment. Make a collage of images that you think represent the author's description of the land. How do the features of the environment affect the residents of the area?

Look up Damaidi on Google. Where is it? What language do people speak there?



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