

# THE EAGLE HUNTRESS

## STUDY GUIDE

A COMPANION GUIDE TO THE DOCUMENTARY FILM, "THE EAGLE HUNTRESS,"  
FOR EDUCATORS, GRADES 6-12, TO BUILD:

SELF-ESTEEM | BELONGING | GENDER EQUITY





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## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

THE EAGLE HUNTRESS is executive produced and narrated by STAR WARS's Daisy Ridley. Like Ridley's character "Rey," Aisholpan never doubts her ability to be as strong or brave as any boy. She recognizes no obstacles and refuses to have her ambition denied. While she practices an ancient art, Aisholpan's story is a modern and inspiring one because she represents a world where a young girl's dreams—no matter how challenging—can come true.

Directed by Otto Bell, THE EAGLE HUNTRESS is narrated by Daisy Ridley, executive produced by Ridley and Morgan Spurlock, and produced by Stacy Reiss, Sharon Chang and Otto Bell. The director of photography is Simon Niblett, the editor is Pierre Takal and the film features a stirring end credits song, "Angel by the Wings," by Sia.



## **ABOUT THE EAGLE HUNTRESS**

THE EAGLE HUNTRESS follows Aisholpan, a 13-year-old girl, as she trains to become the first female in twelve generations of her Kazakh family to become an eagle hunter, and rises to the pinnacle of a tradition that has been handed down from father to son for centuries.

Set against the breathtaking expanse of the Mongolian steppe, THE EAGLE HUNTRESS features some of the most awe-inspiring cinematography ever captured in a documentary, giving this intimate tale of a young girl's quest the dramatic force of an epic narrative film.

While there are many old Kazakh eagle hunters who vehemently reject the idea of any female taking part in their ancient tradition, Aisholpan's father Nurgaiv believes that a girl can do anything a boy can, as long as she's determined.

The story begins after Aisholpan has been training with her father's eagle for many months. As every eagle can only have one master, the time has come for Aisholpan to capture an eagle of her own. Clambering down a sheer rock cliff with a rope, Aisholpan retrieves a fledgling eagle from its nest as its mother circles overhead. Her eagle will live, train, and hunt with her, until she releases it into the wild years later, so the cycle of life can continue.

After months of training her eagle with her father, Aisholpan is ready to test her abilities. She enters a renowned competition, the Golden Eagle Festival, and faces off against 70 of the greatest Kazakh eagle hunters in Mongolia.

The most arduous challenge is yet to come, as the rite-of-passage for every young eagle hunter is to take part in a hunt. Aisholpan must ride with her father deep into the frigid mountains and endure 40 below zero temperatures and perilous landscapes to prove she is a true eagle huntress.



## **ABOUT THIS STUDY GUIDE**

Thank you for including the documentary film, *THE EAGLE HUNTRESS*, in your classroom. The film and the companion study guide can serve as powerful curricular tools to encourage students age 12-17 to think critically, discuss and reflect on themes that are crucial to adolescent development, including:

- Building Identity
- Belonging
- Roles in Society
- Gender Bias/Stereotyping
- Personal Empowerment

## **RATIONALE**

During adolescence, students are in the process of discovering who they are, where they belong and what they want to become. The questions that can arise around identity development are often deeply personal and highly complex. Finding a mechanism that enables students to share openly, contribute ideas and take risks in the classroom is important but often challenging. *THE EAGLE HUNTRESS* can serve this purpose by encouraging students to:

- Explore a new culture that is both similar and different from than their own.
- Identify with the challenges a peer confronts while pursuing a dream.
- Find commonalities and intersections with a protagonist who is an ordinary person doing extraordinary things.
- Relate to a positive role model who displays many of the values our society hopes to instill in young people, including: self-determination, courage, conviction, resolve to reach her goals and relentless commitment to expressing her true self.

## **ORGANIZATION**

This study guide includes a variety of information and resources to allow educators flexibility in its use. Materials can be tailored to align with the learning objectives of each classroom, including: assessment of students' individual needs and levels, differences in background knowledge, as well as time permitted in the curricular calendar. The discussion guide and/or activities can be used to create a single lesson or an entire unit of study, depending on classroom learning goals. In addition, the guide provides options to broaden the scope of the curriculum including: background information, a glossary, possible curricular extensions, resources for additional information and relevant national standards.



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **EAGLE HUNTING**

Falconry has been dated to the 3rd Century B.C. in the Chinese Han Dynasty, but not all scholars agree on when people on the Eurasian steppe first began hunting with eagles. Marco Polo wrote about how Kublai Khan (Genghis Khan's grandson), 1215-1294, hunted with thousands of falconers, including golden eagles. We know that Kazakh nomads have hunted eagles for centuries. Aisholpan's father Nurgaiv knows the names of ten eagle hunters in his family before him—Aisholpan is a part of the 12th generation.

Hunting with eagles has always been unique to Eurasia, and it has only been practiced by the Kazakh and Kyrgyz people. Eagle hunting is currently practiced by Kazakhs in Bayan-Ölgii, Mongolia, as well as in Kazakhstan, and the Saur and Altai ranges in Xinjiang, China. The tradition is also kept up by the Kyrgyz people in Kyrgyzstan and Akqi, Xinjiang, China, and the Turkmen in Turkmenistan.

These peoples traditionally hunt with golden eagles, one of the fastest moving animals on earth, capable of reaching speeds of up to 190 miles per hour. Interestingly, for an activity that has been pursued for centuries by men, the eagle hunters solely use female eagles, because they are larger and fiercer. They weigh up to 15 pounds and average about three feet tall with very broad wings that can span over six feet. Golden eagles kill their prey using their razor sharp talons, which are powerful enough to break bones. Eagle hunting takes place in winter, usually from November through February, when it is easier to see the foxes and other prey against the snow.

Taking part in a hunt is the rite-of-passage for a young *bürkitshi* (eagle hunter), like Aisholpan. Young eagle hunters often compete in the Golden Eagle Festival in Olgii, which was established in 1999 and which Aisholpan won in her first competition.



## THE KAZAKH PEOPLE

Kazakhs (aka Qazaqs) are descendants of nomads who have roamed the land between the Altai Mountains and the Black sea for centuries, herding sheep, goats, camels, yaks, horses, and cattle. The foundation of their society was tribes of extended families led by male elders. Today, most Kazakh families are termed semi-nomadic because they only move seasonally, up to four times each year.

In 1911, Mongolia's leader Bogd Khan accepted the Kazakhs as citizens of Mongolia, and agreed to designate the area for them to settle. After Mongolia became a Communist country in 1924, leader Khorloogiin Choibalsan led a brutal purge of Kazakhs, Buddhists, and others, confiscating their properties and animals, as well as killing over 30,000 people.

When Kazakhstan declared independence in 1991, they welcomed all Kazakhs in the diaspora to return. Over 70,000 Mongolian Kazakhs did so, and only 100,000 remain today. Kazakhs are still the largest ethnic minority in Mongolia, representing four percent of the population. They have their own Kazakh language, which belongs to the Turkic family of languages, and are predominantly Muslim, whereas the majority of Mongolians are Buddhist or non-religious. Ninety percent of the Kazakhs live in Bayan-Ölgii, and the rest live mostly in Khovd Province and Ulaanbaatar, the nation's capital.

Kazakh culture has traditionally held rigid ideas about the roles of men and women—men herd, and women cook and care for children. But as time has passed, Kazakh nomads, despite their physical isolation, have become increasingly aware of and influenced by the modern world, including more progressive ideas about women. The 1924 constitution mandated equality of the sexes, and, over the decades, there were more female university graduates than male. As urban Mongolian women fought deeply engrained sexism in the 1990s and became lawyers, politicians, film producers, authors, journalists, and athletes, word traveled to the countryside through family members, tourism, and technology like cell phones. Over time, attitudes about gender have begun to relax among some rural Kazakhs, like Aisholpan's family, although many deeply patriarchal customs endure.



## PROFILE OF MONGOLIA

Mongolia is a landlocked nation in Asia, which shares borders with China and Russia. It's a sparsely populated country known for its lack of arable land and rugged terrain. Forty percent of its people are at least semi-nomadic, traversing the grassy steppes on horseback with mountains both north and west, and the Gobi Desert along the south.



Geographic Area: 603,909 sq mi

Capital: Ulaanbaatar

Population: Three million

Official Languages: Mongolian Cyrillic, Mongolian Script

Ethnic Makeup: 96% Mongol, 4% Kazakh

Religion: 53% Buddhist, 4% Shamanism, 3% Islam

Government: Unitary semi-presidential republic

Currency: Togrog



Sources: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongolia>, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15460525>

## DEFINITIONS

### FROM THE KAZAKH LANGUAGE

*Bürkit*: Eagle

*Bürkitshi*: Eagle Hunter

*Tomagha*: Leather hood worn by the eagle to keep it calm.

*Baldaq*: A Y-shaped wooden rest attached to a horse's saddle to serve as a perch for eagles to ride on the right arm of their master/mistress.

### KAZAKH CULTURAL TERMS

*Ger*: Traditional Kazakh dwelling, which is a round structure consisting of easily removable walls, poles and a ceiling covered with canvas and felt, tightened with ropes and designed to be sturdy enough for repeated dismantling and re-assembly.

*Tribe*: In traditional society, families or communities who share a common culture or language and social, religious, economic or blood ties.

*Nomadic*: Living without a permanent dwelling and moving seasonally to find food, water and/or grazing land.

## STUDY TERMS

**Culture:** A society's beliefs, customs, arts, and human intellectual achievements.

**Patriarchy:** A societal system, in which men hold authority or positions from which women are either segregated or excluded.

**Custom:** An accepted belief about how to look, behave or act in a specific society, time or place.

**Community:** People living in the same place or sharing a particular characteristic in common, such as language, race, religion, attitudes, goals or interests.

**Tradition:** Customs, beliefs or values that are transmitted from generation to generation. Traditions can create social cohesion, clearly defined expectations of how to look, act or think and/or a sense of belonging in a society. They can also limit a person's ability to fully participate in society and express his or her true self.

**Traditional Roles:** Societal expectations about our roles, behaviors and relationships that are defined by race, religion, age, gender and other limiting characteristics. They are learned and vary by culture.

**Self-Concept:** How one see oneself or self-image based on strengths, weaknesses, status, etc.

**Identity:** A set of changeable characteristics that make up who we are, what we like to do and how we present ourselves to the world. These characteristics include interests, personality characteristics and values.

**Gender Bias/Stereotyping:** Rigid beliefs about gender based on generalized characteristics. Gender bias/stereotyping can influence how a person behaves, looks or feels. They can lead to stigma or discrimination towards people who do not or cannot display the gender norms expected by society.

**Gender Equity:** A condition in which all people have full access to the rights and opportunities a society has to offer, regardless of gender.



## **PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE SCREENING**

1. Provide a synopsis of THE EAGLE HUNTRESS (see About THE EAGLE HUNTRESS section).
2. Provide relevant background information (see Background Information section).
3. Preview relevant definitions (see Definitions section).
4. Engage student's background knowledge by asking students to consider the following before the screening:
  - How do you imagine life in Mongolia?
  - The artist Sia, provided the closing song, "Angel on the Wing" for THE EAGLE HUNTRESS (can play song or a part of it). In its refrain, she repeats the phrase "You can do anything."
  - Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
  - Do you agree or disagree that stereotypes can limit our ability to reach our potential?
5. Create film-to-self connections by asking students to consider the following during the screening:
  - How is Aisholpan's life the same and different from your own? Think specifically about cultural elements, including: friends, family, community, food, education, technology, popular culture, rituals, and activities.
  - What characteristics does Aisholpan have that help her on her journey to becoming an eagle huntress?
  - Consider how Aisholpan is supported and challenged during her journey to becoming an eagle huntress.
  - Have you ever wanted to do or become something in your life like Aisholpan? What kind of commitment did it require? In what ways were you supported or challenged?

Record key responses on the board or have students reflect in writing. Encourage students to take notes relating to these questions and anything else that stands out to them about THE EAGLE HUNTRESS during the screening.



## **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

What were the filmmakers trying to say in THE EAGLE HUNTRESS?

What was it like to watch a peer pursuing a dream? Do you consider Aisholpan a role model? Why or why not?

What words come to mind when you think of Aisholpan?

How did these characteristics help her to become an eagle huntress?

Are these characteristics worth admiring? Which ones do you think are most necessary to pursuing a dream?

Have you displayed any of these characteristics while pursuing a dream? Are there any characteristics that you would like to develop?

Do you believe these characteristics are universally human or specific to Aisholpan's culture?

How do you think Aisholpan viewed herself? How did her positive self-concept help her achieve her goal?

Being the first eagle huntress in Mongolia defied tradition and the traditional roles of Kazakh culture. How was Aisholpan able to forge an identity different from the expectations of her tribe?

What special challenges did she face because she was young? Because she was a girl?

How did the Elders label her negatively because of her gender? How did she respond to the stereotypes?

People, groups and institutions can attach labels to us that are different from how we would describe ourselves. How are our identities influenced by how we think others see us?

In what ways do traditional roles in our society limit people from reaching their full potential? How important is it to believe in yourself? How important is it to have other people believe in you?

Aisholpan received different messages from her family and the Elders about a girl's place in society. What messages have you gotten growing up about how boys are supposed to be or how girls are

supposed to be? From your family? Your culture? Other students? Your friends? Your teachers? Have these messages ever been at odds with each other?

Aisholpan broke a gender barrier by becoming the first female eagle huntress. Do people like Aisholpan pave the way for gender equity in a society? Do we have gender equity in our society? What would it take to get there?

What role did her family play in Aisholpan becoming an eagle huntress?

How did her family contribute to Aisholpan's positive self-concept? How did she rely on these relationships in her pursuit of a dream?

Could she have become an Eagle Huntress without the guidance of her father? Her family? Why or why not?

At what points did her father's encouragement help her the most? The support of her family?

The filmmakers showed Aisholpan in other roles in her life besides becoming an eagle huntress. What were some of the roles that Aisholpan had in the film? How were they similar or different from the roles we take on in our society?

Our identities are made up of the many different roles we take on in our lives. One of Aisholpan's roles was as a friend and a classmate. How did Aisholpan's friend's respond to her desire to be an eagle huntress?



Although her friends seemed supportive, Aisholpan was the only one of her friend's learning to be an eagle huntress. Do you think it would be hard to be the only one of your peers pursuing a certain goal?

Did Aisholpan act differently in her many roles? What influenced her behavior? Do people in our society ever act differently based on the different roles and activities they do?

Think of the roles that you take on in your life. Do you behave differently depending on the roles and activities you do?

Even though Aisholpan was breaking tradition by becoming the first girl to hunt eagles in Mongolia, she also sought to belong to the tradition of eagle hunters. In the film, she says, "Because all of the men in my family have been eagle hunters, it's my dream to become the first eagle huntress in Mongolia." In what ways was she seeking to belong to a tradition, and in what ways was she standing outside of traditional roles by becoming an eagle huntress?

In the film, Aisholpan's father said "Since Aisholpan is a girl, it was important that her riding and hunting styles are flawless." Do you think it's fair that, because she was a girl, she might have been held to a higher standard than her male counterparts to be accepted by the eagle hunting community?

Aisholpan was accepted as an Eagle Huntress during the competition after she won the competition. Do you think she would have been accepted, if she hadn't shown great skill and talent? Do you think it is necessary for someone to be talented to be accepted?

The Kazakh people are a traditional society with few modern influences. How are traditional societies and modern societies similar and different? How does their isolated geography influence the speed at which their beliefs or values change or grow?

The tradition of eagle hunting in the Kazakh culture is hundreds of years old. Do we have any traditions in our society that are that old? What does it mean if you do not share the traditions or beliefs of the dominant culture? Does it mean you don't belong? In what ways does it make it easier or harder to forge an identity?

Eagle hunting in Kazakh culture is traditionally male. Many activities in Kazakh culture adhere to

patriarchal ideas about the roles of men and women. Were there other ways in the film that people adhered to rigid ideas about what men and women are supposed to do, or how they are supposed to behave? Are there any ways in which our culture defines the roles of men and women in traditional ways?

The Elders suggested that Aisholpan was accepted during the eagle hunting competition because of the influence of tourists. Do you believe that Western influences had an impact on Aisholpan being accepted as an Eagle Huntress? Are outside influences on a traditional culture advantageous or not?

The Elders still did not accept Aisholpan as an eagle huntress, even after she won the competition. They said she needed to actually hunt a fox in the wilderness. Aisholpan was not deterred by this. She said, "I will prove that I am a real eagle huntress." Are there ways that negative voices can actually challenge a person to accomplish a goal? Do you believe she would have had the strength to ignore these negative voices without the support of her family?

How do technological advances, social media and popular culture influence identity? How have they influenced your identity? How are your values, beliefs and roles similar and different from generations before you?

Contrary to the Elders, Aisholpan and her family believed that anything is possible, regardless of gender. Did this support help Aisholpan pursue her dream? Do you believe that anything is possible?

Books, music, films, social media and popular culture can influence how we identify ourselves. The Sia song, "Angel on the Wing," asserts that "You can do anything." Do you agree or disagree with this message? In what ways does music and other media either reinforce traditional values or encourage individual expression?

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Activity One: Fostering a Positive Self-Concept/Identity**

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Students will understand the meaning of self-concept and identity.
- Students will identify characteristics that lead to a positive self-concept and influence our identity.
- Students will identify characteristics needed to accomplish a goal.
- Students will understand that these characteristics can transcend a particular culture and society.

#### **MATERIALS/PREPARATION**

- Definitions: Culture, Self-Concept, Identity
- Personality Characteristics List
- Writing Assignment Prompt

#### **GROUP LESSON**

Ask students to list some of the characteristics that Aisholpan displayed that helped her accomplish her goal of becoming an eagle huntress (see Personality Characteristics List below). Record key responses on the board, or prompt from Personality Characteristics List. Ask if they thought Aisholpan believed in herself and/or had a strong sense of self. Explain that many of these characteristics were part of her self-concept, and that she identified herself as being capable of achieving a goal.

Explain that like Aisholpan, part of their self-concept and identity is made up of the things that they believe about themselves, and what they think they can and cannot do. Ask them to think of something that they are good at doing (examples: a hobby, an activity, a sport, an academic subject, a school assignment, being a good friend, supporting a family member, community service), and to think of the characteristics that it took to be good at it. Introduce the writing assignment.



## WRITING ASSIGNMENT PROMPT

- Write a description of something you are good at doing. What did it take for you to succeed? Include as much detail as possible including: how much time it took, what talents you have that made you good at it, what skills you needed to develop, what you needed to learn or practice, any challenges you faced, why you are proud of your accomplishment.
- What personality characteristics did you display to accomplish that goal? (use characteristics generated during class discussion or any others that apply.)
- What are the characteristics of which you are most proud?
- Did you believe in yourself? How did a positive self-concept help you accomplish your goal?
- How did achieving the goal contribute to your identity in a positive way? Did you feel more capable after achieving your goal? In what ways?
- Are there any other characteristics that you would like to develop further?

## LESSON CLOSURE

Bring students together to discuss their writing. See if there are common characteristics that students listed that were essential to developing a competency. See what characteristics they said that they shared with Aisholpan (e.g. to analyze if qualities are culturally-specific or universal). See if there are common characteristics that students would like to develop. Brainstorm ways that these can be developed by thinking about how Aisholpan accomplished her goal. Record key responses on the board. Use both their observations from the film of Aisholpan, as well as their own personal experiences, to reinforce the idea that their identities are influenced by the ways that they see themselves, and how a positive self-concept is necessary to achieve goals.

## SAMPLE PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

Strong	Active	Brave
Ambitious	Independent	Intelligent
Clever	Cooperative	Assertive
Detailed	Courageous	Understanding
Adventurous	Agile	Self-Sufficient
Reliable	Responsible	Muscular
Confident	Competent	Optimistic
Graceful	Capable	Skilled
Joyful	Goal-Oriented	Risk-Taker
Determined	Rebel	Commitment
Bold	Free	Persistent

## **Activity Two: Understanding How Our Identity is Shaped by Others**

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Students will understand that identity is socially constructed.
- Students will understand that identity is influenced by others and that the values of different people, groups and institutions can be conflicting.
- Students will see the relationship between the individual and the group.

### **MATERIALS/PREPARATION**

- Definitions: Culture, Self-Concept, Identity, Tradition, Traditional Roles, Custom, Gender Bias/Stereotyping
- T-Chart with “Family” on one side and “Elders” on the other. Possible quotes from film to include on the chart:

#### ***Family***

“She (Aisholpan) decided on her own to be an eagle hunter. And I believe it’s a woman’s right to choose.”

“I think boys and girls are equal.”

“Sometimes I worry, people might think it’s strange because she does something that men usually do. But she shows extraordinary strength, regardless of her gender.”

“I just want my daughter to love her life.”

“Girls can do anything boys can if they try.”

“You proved yourself today. You were as brave as any man.”

“She is a very brave and courageous girl.”

#### ***Elders***

“Girls do not hunt eagles.”

“Women are weaker, more fragile.”

“While men go eagle hunting, women are at home preparing tea and water.”

“It’s hard for girls to go to the mountains and chase animals on horses.”

“They get cold.”

“Women are supposed to stay indoors and quarrel for gifts after parties, while men are meant for the outdoors, and we quarrel for the catch.”

- Writing Assignment Prompt



## GROUP LESSON

Review Activity One (if included in curriculum). Explain that our identities and self-concept are also influenced by others, and that the values of different people, groups and institutions can sometimes be at odds with each other. Ask students to generate a list of people who supported Aisholpan, as well as those who did not support her. Put up T-Chart including quotes. Discuss how these values either adhere to or defy custom, tradition, traditional roles and gender bias/stereotyping. Discuss what they think are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these positions. Record key responses on the board. Explain that, like Aisholpan, their own self-concept and identity is influenced by others in society. Ask them to brainstorm a list of people, groups and institutions who can either support them in pursuing their goals, or who hold values or beliefs that might deter them from achieving a goal (list can include peers, friends, teachers, school, family, politicians, laws, church, media outlets). Record key responses on the board. Tell them they will be adding to their writing assignment from Activity One to see who and how they felt supported towards reaching their own particular goal and how they did not. Introduce the writing assignment.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT PROMPT

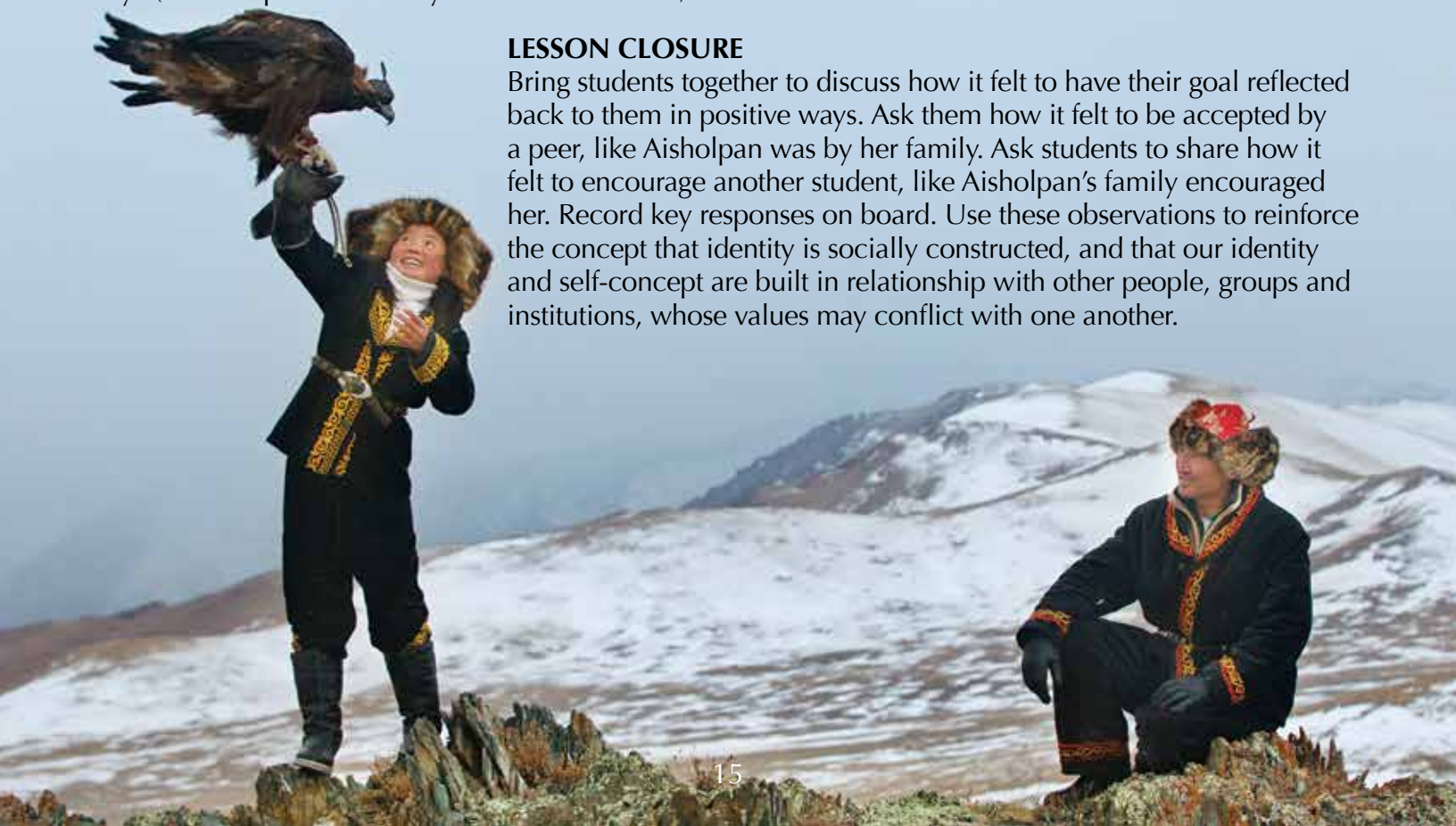
- What people, groups or institutions supported you in reaching your goal?
- What did they say to you? Did they encourage you? Did it jibe with your own self-concept?
- What did they do? Support you with time? Teach you something you didn't know?
- Were there people who you wished supported you more? What could they have said or done differently?
- Were there any ways that you did not feel supported? Did you feel labeled? Did anyone or anything impact your self-concept in a negative way or attempt to keep you from reaching your goal?
- How did these various values either adhere to or defy custom, tradition, traditional roles and gender bias/stereotyping? Were their opinions ever at odds with each other.

## PAIR SHARE

Explain to students that they will take turns sharing with their partner what they have written about achieving a goal. After sharing, they will take turns reflecting the goal back to each other in positive ways (use Sample Personality Characteristics List).

## LESSON CLOSURE

Bring students together to discuss how it felt to have their goal reflected back to them in positive ways. Ask them how it felt to be accepted by a peer, like Aisholpan was by her family. Ask students to share how it felt to encourage another student, like Aisholpan's family encouraged her. Record key responses on board. Use these observations to reinforce the concept that identity is socially constructed, and that our identity and self-concept are built in relationship with other people, groups and institutions, whose values may conflict with one another.



## **Activity Three: Belonging to Community**

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Students will understand the meaning of community.
- Students will understand that traditions and traditional roles reinforce social conventions, cohesion and a sense of belonging in a group.
- Students will understand that traditions and traditional roles can limit a person's ability to reach their full potential.
- Students will see the relationship between the individual and the group in a community.

### **MATERIALS/PREPARATION**

- Definitions: Tribe, Community, Tradition, Traditional Roles, Custom, Gender Bias/Stereotyping
- Create statement/s for students to consider that is based on your knowledge of student interests and school culture. The statement/s should generate a strong yet possibly polarizing opinion.
- Small Group Prompt
- Blank Chart Paper
- Two Charts: Majority Belief Pros and Cons, Minority Belief Pros and Cons

### **GROUP LESSON**

Explain that all people have a desire to belong and, at the same time, they have a desire to assert their individuality within a group. An example from the film was that Aisholpan wanted to be a part of the eagle hunting tradition of her tribe, but she also wanted to express her individuality by being the first girl to achieve this goal.

Explain that a classroom is an example of a community where students want to fit in, but also want to express their individuality. Explain that they are going to do a group activity that explores what it means to share a belief, value or opinion of a community and what it means to stand outside of this belief, value or opinion. Introduce Group Activity.





## **Activity Four: Analyzing Gender Bias/Stereotyping**

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Students will understand the meaning of gender, gender bias/stereotypes and gender equity.
- Students will understand that gender identity is socially constructed.
- Students will understand that gender identity is influenced by gender bias/stereotyping.
- Students will understand that full participation in a society means that each person's unique qualities, gifts and skills contribute to fair and respectful communities.

### **MATERIALS/PREPARATION**

- Definitions: Tradition, Traditional Roles, Gender Bias/Stereotyping, Gender Equity
- T-Chart with "Family" on one side and "Elders" on the other. Possible quotes from film to include on the chart:

#### ***Family***

"She (Aisholpan) decided on her own to be an eagle hunter. And I believe it's a woman's right to choose."

"I think boys and girls are equal."

"Sometimes I worry, people might think it's strange because she does something that men usually do. But she shows extraordinary strength, regardless of her gender."

"I just want my daughter to love her life."

"Girls can do anything boys can if they try."

"You proved yourself today. You were as brave as any man."

"She is a very brave and courageous girl."

#### ***Elders***

"Girls do not hunt eagles."

"Women are weaker, more fragile."

"While men go eagle hunting, women are at home preparing tea and water."

"It's hard for girls to go to the mountains and chase animals on horses."

"They get cold."

"Women are supposed to stay indoors and quarrel for gifts after parties, while men are meant for the outdoors, and we quarrel for the catch."

- Chart that includes jobs that are traditionally male and female. Jobs can be found at: <http://www.thedigeratlife.com/blog/index.php/2007/05/29/traditional-jobs-for-men-and-women-the-gender-divide/>
- Small Group Prompt
- Blank Chart Paper

### **GROUP LESSON**

Explain to students that there were many ways that Aisholpan's culture had rigid ideas about the roles of women and men that were at odds with how her family viewed gender. Put chart with quotes on board. Ask them which quotes they agree or disagree with. Ask them if they think it was hard for her to pursue her dream without female role models. Ask them if they think it would have been fair if Aisholpan were forbidden from pursuing her dream because of gender bias/stereotyping.

Ask them if they believe that these kinds of gender bias' and gender stereotypes exist in our culture. Introduce chart with careers. Ask them to guess whether these jobs are traditionally male or female in

our society. Reveal percentages of women in traditionally female jobs and men in traditionally male jobs. Ask them to generate a list of characteristics needed to perform the particular jobs. Record key responses on the board. Ask if they believe that one gender is better suited for a particular career, or if they think that gender bias/stereotyping has led to adherence to rigid gender roles in particular jobs in our culture. Ask them if they believe that men and women are inherently better at certain things, or if they think gender stereotypes are socially constructed. Tell them to think about their own lives and how they identify as either girls or boys. Introduce the writing assignment.

### **WRITING ASSIGNMENT PROMPT**

- Aisholpan received different messages from her family and the Elders about a girl's place in society. What messages have you gotten growing up about how boys are supposed to be or how girls are supposed to be? From your family? Your culture? Other students? Your friends? Your teachers? Are these messages ever at odds with each other?
- Do you think it would be hard to change the gender bias'/stereotypes in our culture? For example, how hard would it be for you to be the first of your gender to participate in an activity, like Aisholpan was?
- Do you believe that gender bias' affect people's ability to be what they want?
- Do you think it is important for people to fully participate in a society, regardless of gender?

### **LESSON CLOSURE**

Bring students together to reflect on their notions of gender bias/stereotyping and gender equity. Record key responses on the board. Use both their observations from the film of Aisholpan, as well as their own personal experiences, to reinforce the idea that gender bias/stereotyping can limit a person's ability to fully participate in a society and that gender equity can lead to each person expressing their unique gifts, talents and skills in a society.



## **Activity Five: Reaching Our Full Potential**

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Students will understand that technology, media and popular culture have an influence on identity and self-concept.
- Students will understand how expressing a full-range of characteristics can lead to each person reaching their full potential.
- Students will understand how each person’s unique qualities, gifts and skills can contribute to fair and respectful communities.

### **MATERIALS/PREPARATION**

- Definitions: Self-Concept, Identity, Tradition, Traditional Roles, Gender Bias/Stereotyping, Gender Equity
- Small Group Prompt
- Blank Chart Paper

### **GROUP LESSON**

Explain to the students that the filmmakers of *THE EAGLE HUNTRESS* presented a compelling tale of the personal empowerment of a young person. Ask students how Aisholpan was a positive role model to them, or how and why they found her journey to be personally inspirational. Prompt students to generate the idea that Aisholpan was able to defy traditional gender roles and express her true self. Record key responses on the board. Explain that, like the film itself, the Sia song at the end of the film, “Angel in the Wing” asserts that “You can do anything.” Ask if they believe this message is true. Ask students how important it is for young people to be able to display a full-range of characteristics and pursue a dream, like both the film and the song suggest.



Explain that, while certain media and popular culture can pressure young people to conform to traditional expectations and gender stereotypes, there are also books, music, films, social media and popular culture that promote a strong sense of self and empower young people to do and be whatever they want. Ask them if they believe it is important to listen to positive messages in the media, in order to reach their full potential. (NOTE: If you have completed Activities 1-3, you can review the list of other people, groups and institutions that the class named as positive role models for them). Break students into small groups to work on Small Group Prompt. Tell them to record answers on blank chart paper.

### **SMALL GROUP PROMPT**

- There are many people, groups and institutions that can help young people believe in themselves. Similarly, books, music, films or other media/popular culture can encourage you to pursue your own goals, assert your own values or express your true selves. Make a list of any that have personally influenced you in positive ways.
- Be prepared to explain to the class the reasons you consider their messages to be positive, and how they inspire you to be your true self.
- In what ways do you wish that the messages presented in music, film or other media/popular culture were more encouraging to young people?

### **LESSON CLOSURE**

Have each group present their list to the class. Use both their observations from the film of Aisholpan, as well as their own personal experiences, to reinforce the idea that in order for young people to reach their full-potential, they need to feel empowered to pursue their own goals, assert their own values and enjoy the freedom of self-expression. Reinforce the value of good role models.



## **CURRICULAR EXTENSIONS**

### **JOURNALING**

Students may find issues surrounding gender, stereotyping and identity formation to be extremely personal. Journaling can provide students with a private vehicle for reflecting deeply, making connections between lessons, as well as gaining the most personal insight about the ideas generated by THE EAGLE HUNTRESS. Journaling may either be free-form responses to the film that are generated from classroom discussions or activities, or written off of prompts provided by you.

### **CONNECTIONS TO LITERATURE**

THE EAGLE HUNTRESS contains story elements of the hero's journey that are familiar to many works of literature. A curricular extension to this study guide would be a literary comparison between one of following books and the film:

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*

Baum, Frank L. *The Wizard of Oz*

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. *The Mists of Avalon*

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*

Hinton, S.E. *The Outsiders*

Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Secret Life of Bees*

Naidoo, Beverly. *Journey to Jo'burg*

Paolinin, Christopher. *Eragon*

Pullman, Philip. *The Golden Compass*

Riordan, Rick. *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Verne, Jules. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief* and *I Am the Messenger*



## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### ***Mongolia***

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongolia>

<http://www.infoplease.com/country/mongolia.html>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15460525>

The Kazakh People

<http://www.beforethey.com/tribe/kazakh>

[http://www.macalester.edu/academics/geography/mongolia/mongolian\\_kazakhs.html](http://www.macalester.edu/academics/geography/mongolia/mongolian_kazakhs.html)

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kazakh>

### ***Eagle Hunting***

<http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1878468,00.html>

<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/the-eagle-hunters-of-mongolia>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/mongolia/travel-tips-and-articles/mongolias-lost-secrets-in-pictures-the-golden-eagle-hunters>

### ***Adolescent Identity Development***

<http://www.actforyouth.net/adolescence/identity/>

<http://lp.wiley.com/HandbookPsychology/SampleChapters/Volume6.pdf>

<https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/develop.pdf>

### ***Adolescence and Self-Esteem***

<http://understandingteenagers.com.au/blog/teenagers-and-self-esteem-key-factors/>

[http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf\\_slfestm\\_0603.pdf](http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_slfestm_0603.pdf)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/surviving-your-childs-adolescence/201009/adolescence-and-self-esteem>

### ***Fostering Gender Equity***

<https://teachunicef.org/teaching-materials/topic/gender-equality>

<http://www.tolerance.org/category/classroom-resources/gender-equity>

<http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/196713/0052704.pdf>

### ***Gender and Careers***

<http://womensissues.about.com/od/womenintheworkforce/a/WomenWorkTopOccupations.htm>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-leadership/post/could-your-gender-affect-your-career-interests/2011/04/01/gIQACBqscL\\_blog.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-leadership/post/could-your-gender-affect-your-career-interests/2011/04/01/gIQACBqscL_blog.html)

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4078050/>

# **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS**

## **Common Core Standards**

### ***Speaking and Listening 6-12: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards***

1. 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.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
4. 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.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Source: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/SL/>

### ***Writing 6-12: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards***

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Source: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W/>

### ***Reading 6-12: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards***

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Source: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/>

### ***National Council for the Social Studies (K-12)***

**People, Places, and Environments:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

**Individual Development and Identity:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

**Power, Authority, and Governance:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

**Global Connections:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

Source: National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, 1994.



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