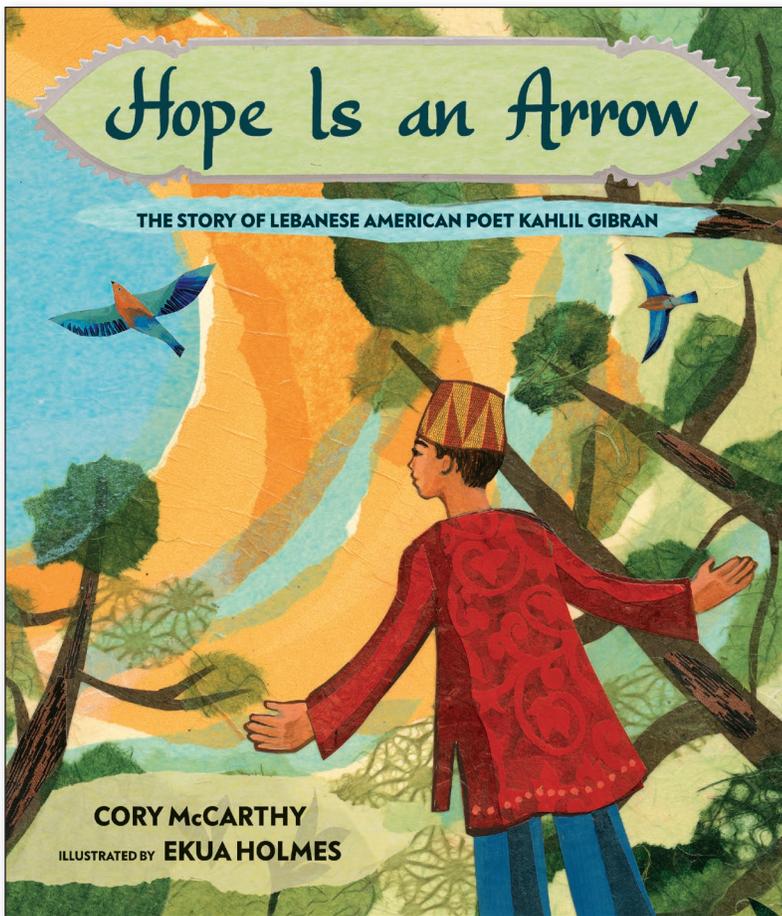


# Hope Is an Arrow

THE STORY OF LEBANESE AMERICAN POET KHLIL GIBRAN

CORY McCARTHY

ILLUSTRATED BY EKUA HOLMES



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## Common Core Connections

This guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Before Kahlil Gibran became the third-best-selling poet of all time, he was Gibran Khalil Gibran, an immigrant child from Lebanon with a secret hope to bring people together despite their many differences. Kahlil's life highlights the turn of the twentieth century, from the religious conflicts that tore apart his homeland and sent a hundred thousand Arab people to America to settling in Boston, where the wealthy clashed headlong with the poor. Throughout it all, Kahlil held on to his secret hope, even as his identity grew roots on both sides of the Atlantic. How could he be both Kahlil Gibran, Arab American, *and* Gibran Khalil Gibran, the Lebanese boy who longed for the mountains of his homeland? Kahlil found the answer in art and poetry. He wrote *The Prophet*, an arrow of hope as strong as the great cedars of Lebanon and feathered by the spirit of American independence. More than a hundred years later, his words still fly around the world in many languages, bringing people together.

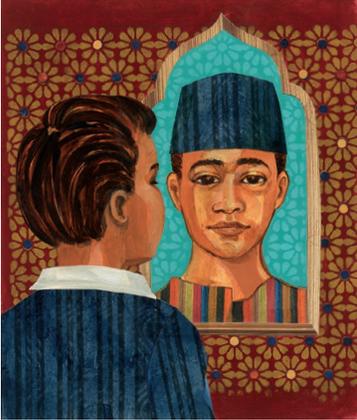
This guide explores the topics of immigration and how childhood experiences have lifelong repercussions, the use of the extended metaphor of the arrow through the text, the ways the illustrations extend and enrich the story, and the themes of hope and connection.



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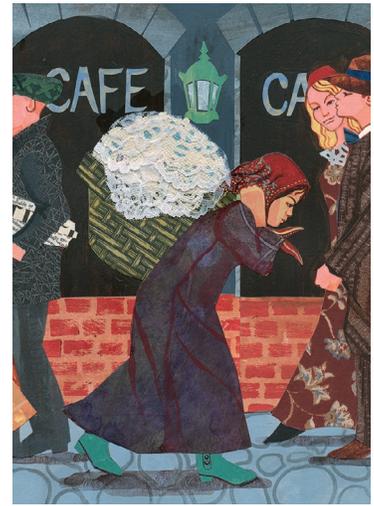
## Discussion Questions

1. As you consider the cover before reading, what do you think the title means? What are other metaphors for hope?
2. His teachers changed his name from Gibran Khalil Gibran to Kahlil Gibran. Even the spelling of *Khalil* was changed! Why do you think they did that? How would you feel if your name was changed without your permission?



3. Study the illustration of Gibran looking in the mirror after his family arrived in Boston. What does this say about his struggle with identity? What other identities can you see when you look in a mirror?

4. Consider the picture of his mother carrying linens and the text that accompanies the image. What connections can you make between the words (in the text and in the quote by Gibran) and the picture in this spread and our world today?



5. Fred Holland Day was an important supporter of and mentor for Kahlil Gibran. Who are your supporters and mentors? They might be people you know or others who inspire you through their work or art.
6. What do you think was the author's purpose in writing this book? Read the author's note at the beginning of "Source Notes and Additional Stories from Kahlil Gibran's Life" and discuss the ways that information changes or expands your initial thinking.
7. After reading the whole story including the notes at the end, go back and study the illustrations carefully. How did illustrator Ekua Holmes incorporate the topics and themes with visual symbols, colors, and physical items in her collages?

## Classroom Activities

### FOLLOWING THE PATH OF AN EXTENDED METAPHOR

Have your students study the last page of the main text, which begins "Kahlil Gibran became an arrow shot true . . ." It mentions arrows, feathers, flight, trees (Lebanese cedars), and hope. Now reread the book, tracking all the references to arrows, feathers, flight, trees, and hope. Find how the author wove all these words throughout the story of Gibran's life. Ask your students, "What words hold meaning in your life?" Then have them create collages that illustrate their personal key words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4-6

## IMMIGRATION

Gather other picture books featuring immigration stories (fiction or biography) and/or encourage your students to interview classmates, family, or community members to discover their immigration stories. What similarities and differences can be found when you compare these stories with Gibran's story? Did others struggle with religious clashes and economic disparities? Did they suffer the loss of family members? Were there mentors or supporters that helped make their dreams come true?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7-9



## THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

After reading aloud the book to your students, reread the book and work together to find evidence in the text for the childhood experiences that influenced Gibran to become a poet. Then have students interview an elder in their family or community to learn about the experiences that molded them. Additionally or alternatively, students can explore their own experiences that might lead to a future career or to one of their hopes coming true. The results of these interviews or personal explorations can be shared as poems, essays, or multimedia presentations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4-6

## COMPARE/CONTRAST

Using print or online copies of Emily Dickinson's poem "Hope' is the thing with feathers" and Langston Hughes's poem "Dreams," have students compare and contrast the excerpt from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* found on the next to the last spread of the main text to these two other well-known poems that use metaphors for hope and dreams. Have students create a visual or a multimedia presentation that incorporates words and images from the three poems.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4-6

## UNPACKING A POEM

Provide students with a copy of the excerpt from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*. Lead them in “unpacking” or annotating this poem to discover repetition (the words *let* and *love*), alliteration (*spaces, sea, souls*), consonance (all the words that start or end with the *s* sound), and metaphor (love is “a moving sea between / the shores of your souls”).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4-6

## ILLUSTRATING WITH COLLAGE

Ekua Holmes's illustrations use collage and acrylic paints. Provide students with a variety of materials such as tissue paper, magazines and catalogs, colored paper, fabric scraps, and paint, plus scissors and glue. Using the themes and ideas either from the book or from their responses to one of the other activities that explore the book in more depth (Extended Metaphor, Immigration, Childhood Experiences, or Compare/Contrast), encourage students to create a collage in the style of Ekua Holmes.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cory McCarthy is an acclaimed, best-selling author of books for young readers. They studied poetry and screenwriting before earning an MFA in writing for children and young adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts, where they now serve on the faculty. Like Kahlil Gibran, their family emigrated from Lebanon and settled in New England.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ekua Holmes is the illustrator of numerous books for children, including *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer*, *Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement* by Carole Boston Weatherford, which received a Caldecott Honor and a *Boston Globe–Horn Book* Honor and for which she received a John Steptoe New Talent Illustrator Award; *Out of Wonder: Poems Celebrating Poets* by Kwame Alexander, Chris Colderley, and Marjory Wentworth, for which she received a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award; and *The Stuff of Stars* by Marion Dane Bauer, for which she also received a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award. Ekua Holmes lives in Boston.

This guide was prepared by Mary Lee Hahn, an experienced teacher and poet.