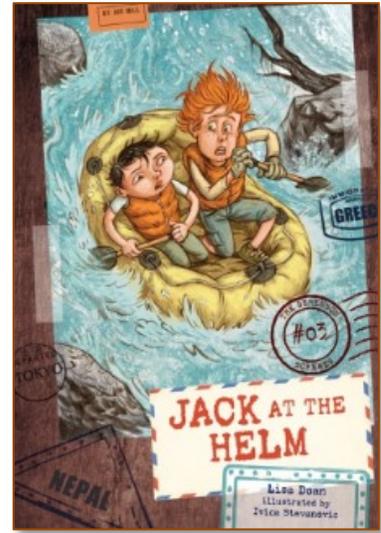


A Common Core State Standards  
Aligned Discussion & Activity Guide  
for

# Jack at the Helm

Book #03 in the Berenson Schemes Series



Ages 9-12/Grades 3-6

ISBN: 978-1-4677-1078-7

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*Jack's parents have bought a farmhouse in Nepal. It'll be the site of a new religion—their latest get-rich-quick scheme. Sure, the Berensons don't know quite how to get to the place. But once they arrive, their plan is sure to work. When the Berenson family's travels leave Jack lost in the wilderness of Nepal, a patched-up old raft is the only way to track down his mom and dad. At least this time, Jack has company. He's riding with Harry from Connecticut, a traveling dude who has been trying to find himself—and who also wound up stranded. As Jack and Harry ride down a winding river, they'll have to watch out for rocks, rapids, and even crocodiles!*

Guide Created by Debbie Gonzales





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## Discussion Questions & Writing Prompts

***“You see, Son, spirituality is big business these days. Consumers want to know, why am I here? How did I get here? Am I coming back? Can I come back rich? So your mom and I went ahead and bought a monastery in Nepal. (pg. 5)”***

- Define the word ‘spirituality.’
- Discuss the Berenson’s vision of creating a religion as a product to sell to consumers. Tell what this type of reasoning reveals about their character.
- Nepal is known for its Buddhist and Hindu temples and monasteries. A monastery is a building or buildings occupied by a community of monks living under religious vows. Based on this definition, explain the irony of the Berenson’s intent to buy a monastery.

***✍ Writing Prompt:*** *Jack’s dad states, “That’s the beauty of it...The Dalai Lama can’t be mad – it’s against his religion. (pg. 5)” The Dalai Lama, a monk, is the spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism. Write an informative essay examining life as a monk living in a monastery. Research the Dalai Lama and the basics of Buddhism. Using your research as foundation, give your opinion regarding Jack’s dad’s point of view regarding the Dalai Lama.*

***“Harry,” Jack said, “I’m sorry to tell you that my parents could have gotten pretty far before they noticed either one of us was missing. But that’s not the really bad news. Once they notice, they’ll come up with a rescue plan. The rescue plan will probably be something like, ‘Why don’t we paraglide over the mountains until we find them?’ (pg. 39)”***

- Consider Jack’s description of his parents. Is his evaluation reasonable? Explain your answer.
- Explain how Jack is able to respond to this situation in such a matter-of-fact, logical manner.
- Do you agree that Jack’s parents would develop a rescue plan as outlandish as the one quoted above? If so, explain their motivation for doing so. If not, tell why Jack would judge his parents’ parenting skills in this way.
- Examine Jack’s character. Discuss the effect his parents’ irresponsibility has on Jack. Tell how they have helped to shape Jack’s outlook on being lost, once again.

***✍ Writing Prompt:*** *Write a narrative essay from Jack’s point of view in defense of his statement in the quote above. Cite examples from any of the three Berenson Schemes stories, proving that Jack’s scatterbrained parents are completely undependable, untrustworthy, and unpredictable.*





***But maybe Harry was fine and just ...just what? If Harry was fine, Jack would have found him by now.***

***Harry wasn't fine. He was gone (pg. 85).***

- Explain the rationale behind the phrase 'just what.' Describe what Jack is inferring by this statement.
- Explore Jack's response to the fact that Harry is missing. Tell what this reaction reveals about Jack's character.
- Earlier, on page 84, Jack states that Harry considered the raft trip to be an adventure rather than a treacherous event.
  - Compare Jack and Harry's points of view regarding the perils of the rafting trip. Describe ways in which the two view the event in the same way.
  - Contrast Jack and Harry's awareness of the dangers of the trip. Tell of ways that their points of view differ.

***✍ Writing Prompt:*** *Note that rather than blaming his parents, Jack is assuming responsibility for his dilemma. Jack states, "I'm always telling my mom and dad to be careful ...To stop making bad decisions. But it turns out I'm just like them. (pg. 5)" Analyze Jack's point of view. Explain why he feels responsible for Harry. Tell what this feeling of responsibility reveals about Jack's character. Cite examples from the text to support your position.*

***Harry rubbed his arms and said, "You know, when you think about it, it's almost unbelievable that we're huddling under a cliff in Nepal somewhere, totally lost, because your parents decided to start their own religion. (pg. 103)"***

- Discuss the development of Harry's character. Tell how his perspective of Jack's parents changed as a result of particular story events. Explain how those events helped to shape his character.
- Jack states that his parents' motto should be 'Expect the unbelievable. (pg. 103)' Identify the reasons Jack would make such a statement.
- Consider the effect of the Berenson's lack of parental instincts had on Jack's character. If he has been raised to expect the unbelievable, what does this say about his survival skills?

***✍ Writing Prompt:*** *Write an opinion piece exploring the effect of Berenson's style of parenting and Jack's character. Study the effect from the point of view that their dormant parental instincts either empowered or harmed Jack's character. Cite examples from the text to support your position.*



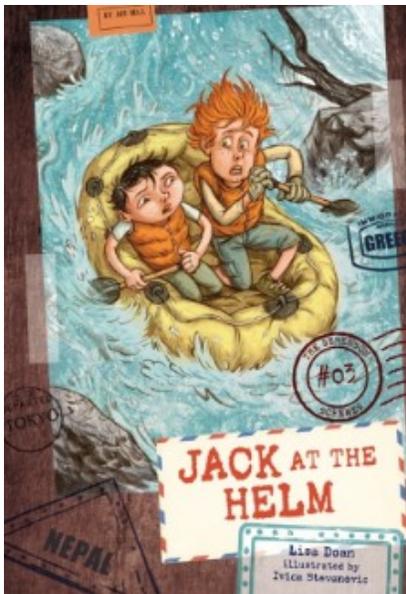


***“Then it’s settled,” Jack said. “From now on, you just have to be yourselves. But you have to work really hard at it. (pg. 138)”***

- Acceptance is defined as believing in the goodness of something. Discuss what the effect of Jack’s acceptance of his parents’ eccentric nature had upon him.
- Identify the moment in the story in which Jack realized that accepting his parents as they are would be a beneficial thing. Tell when that event took place.
- Explain how the other characters were affected by Jack’s willingness to accept his parents.
- The phrase ‘at the helm’ refers to someone who is in control of a situation, someone who knows what to do and how to do it. Tell how the book’s title – *Jack at the Helm* – reflects Jack’s character. Discuss how Jack being at the helm affected the other characters, as well.

**✍ Writing Prompt:** *Four attributes of the Buddhist faith are wisdom, compassion, knowledge, and merit. Through the acquisition of wisdom, a person is able to create new possibilities and inventions. When one practices compassion, they are able to add more love and kindness in the lives of others. With knowledge, an individual is prepared for the obstacles of life. Practicing the attribute of merit brings about a positive influence on others, thus developing a sense of respect and consideration for all. In an informational essay, identify ways that Jack demonstrated each of these attributes. Cite examples from the text.*

**Reference:** "The 4 Attributes." *Of Buddhism Are Wisdom, Compassion, Knowledge and Merit*. Web. 16 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.shaolinzen.org/Dharma-Z/Buddhism01-Z/basics06Z.html>>.



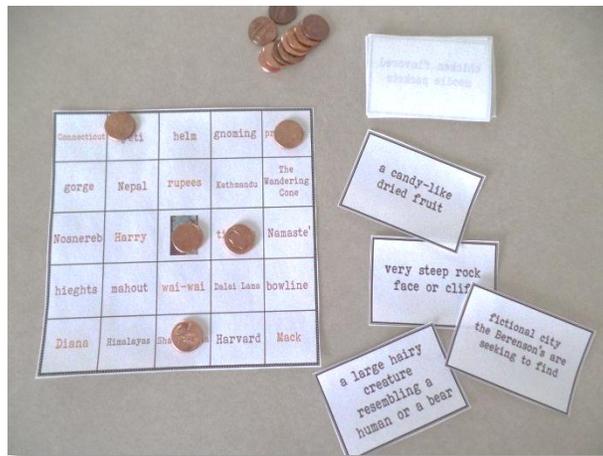


## Jack at the Helm Bingo

**Objective:** To describe characters, settings, and major events in a story in a game-like manner.

### Materials:

- *Jack at the Helm*
- Cardstock
- Scissors
- Jack at the Helm Bingo Board (Guide, pg. 7)
- Jack at the Helm Game Cards (Guide, pg. 8-10)
- Jack at the Helm Bingo Answer Sheet (Guide, pg. 11)
- 25 game pieces (pennies, buttons, beans, etc.) per player



### Procedure:

- Depending on how many players will be competing, print 2 to 4 **Jack at the Helm Bingo Boards** on cardstock.
- Print double copies of **Jack at the Helm Game Cards**.
- Use scissors to trim around the borders of the game board and the cards.
- To play the game, mix up game cards and stack them, face down.
- Each player manages their own game board and collection of game pieces. Players are also free to refer to *Jack at the Helm* for plot or character clarification.
- A player begins by choosing a card from the top of the stack. If the card matches a space on their board, they may mark the match with a game piece.
- Return card face down near original stack.
- Note that the center space on the game board is a Free Space.
- As the game continues, a player loses a turn if they choose a card that has already been covered on their board.
- The winner has either blocked out 5 spaces in a row or covered all of the spaces, depending how the players decide they'd like to play.
- Definitions and description can be verified using the **Jack at the Helm Bingo Board Bingo Answer Sheet**.





## Jack at the Helm Bingo Board

Connecticut	yeti	helm	gnoming	precipice
gorge	Nepal	rupees	Kathmandu	The Wandering Cone
Nosnereb	Harry		titaura	Namaste'
heights	mahout	wai-wai	Dalai Lama	bowline
Diana	Himalayas	Shangrilala	Harvard	Mack





## Jack at the Helm Game Cards

a large hairy  
creature  
resembling a  
human or a bear

chicken flavored  
noodle packets

a candy-like  
dried fruit

Harry's envisioned  
ice cream shop

fictional city  
the Berensons are  
seeking to find

Nepal's  
monetary unit

very steep rock  
face or cliff

Religion founded  
by the Berensons





fabled land of  
Buddha, Hindu  
temples and  
mountain scenery

a respectful and  
spiritual greeting

a person who works  
with, rides, and  
tends an elephant

a stuffed monkey

city located in  
central Nepal

a mountain range

Harry's greatest  
fear

steering mechanism  
on a ship or boat





Harry's home state

head monk &  
spiritual leader  
of Tibet

Jack's sweetheart

taking pictures  
of a designated  
object while on  
a trip

the first  
Nosnereb disciple

Harry's parental  
collegiate desire  
for their son

narrow valley  
between  
hills or mountains

simple knot used  
to form a fixed  
loop at the end  
of a rope





## Jack at the Helm Bingo Answer Sheet

<b>bowline</b>	<i>simple knot used to form a fixed loop at the end of a rope</i>
<b>Connecticut</b>	<i>Harry's home state</i>
<b>Dalai Lama</b>	<i>head monk &amp; spiritual leader of Tibet</i>
<b>Diana</b>	<i>Jack's sweetheart</i>
<b>gnoming</b>	<i>taking pictures of a designated object while on a trip</i>
<b>gorge</b>	<i>narrow valley between hills or mountains</i>
<b>Harry</b>	<i>the first Nosnereb disciple</i>
<b>Harvard</b>	<i>Harry's parental collegiate desire for their son</i>
<b>heights</b>	<i>Harry's greatest fear</i>
<b>helm</b>	<i>the steering mechanism on a ship or boat</i>
<b>Himalayas</b>	<i>a mountain range</i>
<b>Kathmandu</b>	<i>city located in central Nepal</i>
<b>Mack</b>	<i>a stuffed monkey</i>
<b>mahout</b>	<i>a person who works with, rides, and tends an elephant</i>
<b>Namaste'</b>	<i>a respected and spiritual greeting</i>
<b>Nepal</b>	<i>fabled land of Buddha, Hindu temples and mountain scenery</i>
<b>Nosnereb</b>	<i>religion founded by the Berensons</i>
<b>precipice</b>	<i>very steep rock face or cliff</i>
<b>rupees</b>	<i>Nepal's monetary unit</i>
<b>Shangrilala</b>	<i>fictional city the Berensons are seeking to find</i>
<b>The Wandering Cone</b>	<i>Harry's envisioned ice cream shop</i>
<b>titaura</b>	<i>a candy-like dried fruit</i>
<b>wai-wai</b>	<i>chicken flavored noodle packets</i>
<b>yeti</b>	<i>a large hairy creature resembling a human or a bear</i>





## Nepal - A Map Foldable

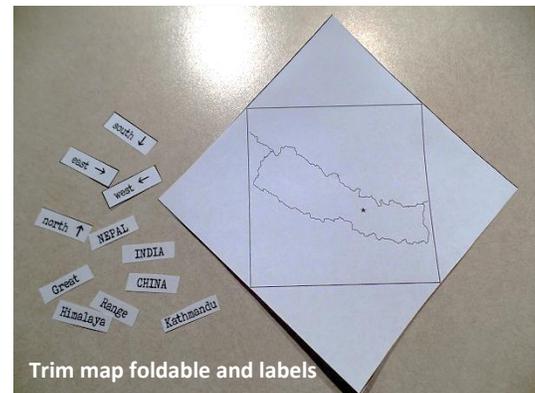
**Objective:** To explore the protagonist's character development through a study of setting.

**Materials:**

- The Nepal Foldable Map and Labels (Guide, pg. 13)
- The Nepal Foldable Map and Labels Answer Guide (Guide, pg. 14)
- Scissors
- Glue stick or tape
- Colored pencils or markers (optional)

**Procedure:**

- Print **The Nepal Foldable Map and Labels**.
- Cut out labels.
- Use colored pencils or markers to color map, if desired.
- Trim around the diamond-shaped border framing the map.
- Using the **Nepal Foldable Map and Labels Answer Guide** for verification, locate correct countries, city, and land forms. Using the glue stick or tape, secure them on the foldable map.
- Fold the triangle border shapes toward the center of the map in an envelope-like fashion.
- Secure the directional labels reading north on the top flap, south on the lower flap, east on the right flap, and west on the left flap.



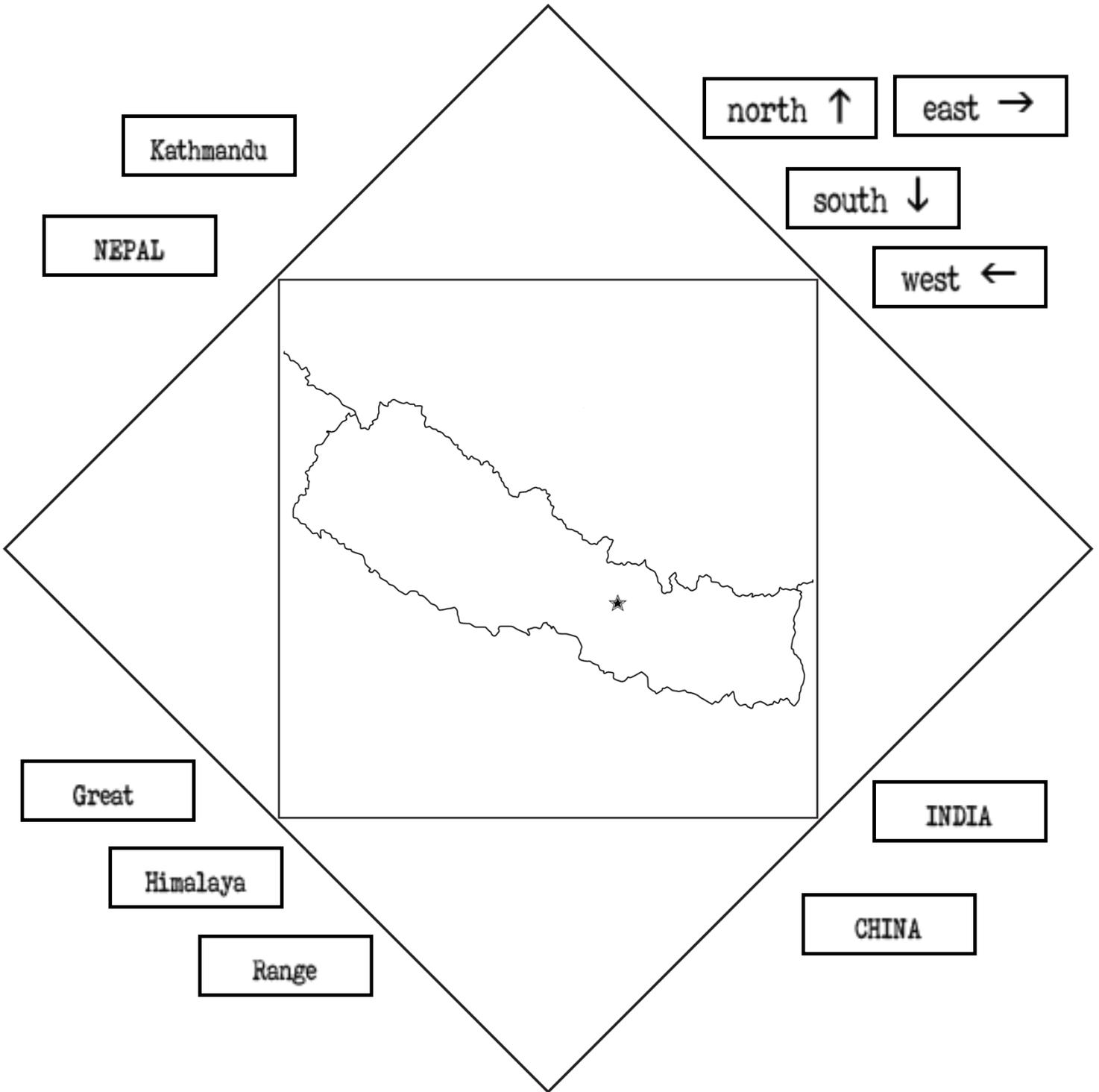
**✍ Writing Prompt:** Write an informative or explanatory essay exploring the use of setting to develop Jack's character. Explain how confronting the treacherous terrain revealed weaknesses within Jack. Tell how facing these situations demonstrated an inner strength within him, one that transformed Jack to become a decisive leader. Compare and contrast Jack's willingness to confront the trials of survival with Harry's.

**Reference:** Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. Web. 12 Jan. 2015. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline\\_of\\_Nepal#mediaviewer/File:Nepal-CIA\\_WFB\\_Map.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_Nepal#mediaviewer/File:Nepal-CIA_WFB_Map.png)>.



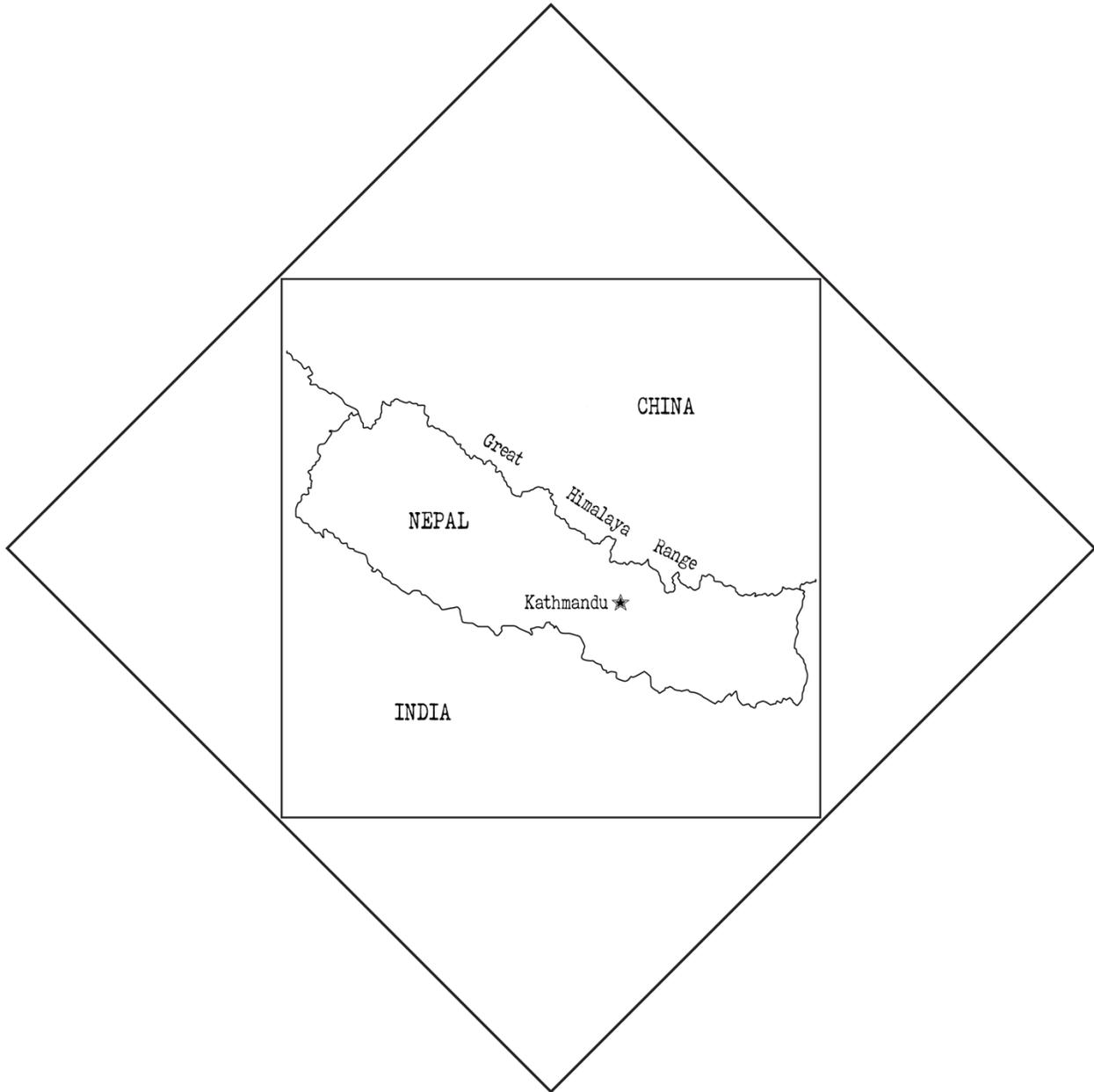


### Nepal - A Map Foldable & Labels





# Nepal - A Map Foldable & Labels Answer Guide





## Common Core State Standards Alignment

### English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature

		Discussion Questions & Writing Prompts	Bingo	Map Foldable
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1	Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3	Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.	x	x	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 2-3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1	Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3	Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3	Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.	x		





**English Language Arts Standards »  
Reading: Foundational Skills**

		Discussion Questions & Writing Prompts	Bingo	Map Foldable
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.3.3	Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.3.3.c	Decode multisyllable words.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.3.4	Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.3.4.a	Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.4.3	Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.4.4	Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.4.4.a	Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.3	Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.4	Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.4.a	Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.	x	x	x





**English Language Arts Standards » Writing**

		Discussion Questions & Writing Prompts	Bingo	Map Foldable
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	x		x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.7	Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	x		x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7	Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	x		x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.7	Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content	x		x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.	x		





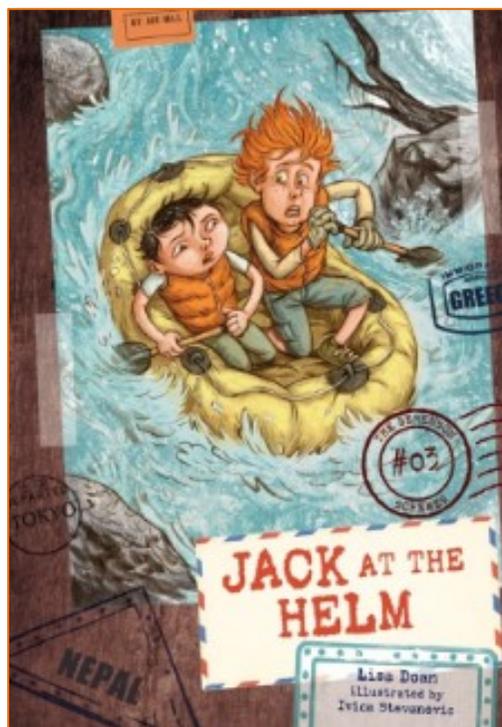
**English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening**

		Discussion Questions & Writing Prompts	Bingo	Map Foldable
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 3 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.2	Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	x		x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.3	Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 4 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.2	Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	x		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 5 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	x	x	x
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.2	Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.		x	x





## Acknowledgments



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