

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade 6: Lesson 17** In this lesson, we read paragraphs 6-12 of the text “Sticky Rice.” We learned more about how sticky rice is an important food in Laos. Our focus was how an author uses both narrative and informational text to develop a central idea.

#### A Taste of Sticky Rice, Laos’ National Dish

- (6) What explains the national love of sticky rice? Many Laotians laughed when I asked them. Sticky rice is what their grandparents and great-grandparents ate, they said. Perhaps they were caught off guard by my question: like baguettes in France and sushi in Japan, sticky rice is so ingrained in Laos’ culinary heritage that most Laotians don’t think about it in isolation.
- (7) Sticky, or “glutinous,” rice has been growing in mainland Southeast Asia for at least 4,000 years. Historians debate whether ancient farmers grew sticky rice because it was suited to local growing conditions or because they liked its taste and chewy texture. What’s clear is that, by the 18th century, sticky rice had been largely replaced across the region by varieties of non-glutinous rice, a.k.a. “white rice.”
- (8) But sticky rice is still the primary staple in Laos and parts of the five countries bordering it: China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. In Laos, slightly larger in area than Utah, per-capita sticky rice consumption is the highest on earth at more than 345 pounds per year. The average American, by contrast, eats less than 20 pounds of rice annually, according to the United States Drug Administration.
- (9) Urbanization, migration and other forces are altering rice-consumption habits across Laos, says historian Grant Evans, to the point where some urban dwellers now associate sticky rice with “country bumpkin ways of eating.” But Evans, the author of several books about Laos, also says he doesn’t know a single Laotian person who never eats sticky rice. From a cultural perspective, he explained, sticky rice is still “the way the Lao identify themselves.” Case in point: as of the mid-1990s, a popular Laotian band in the United States was calling itself Khao niaw — the Laotian words for, sure enough, sticky rice.
- (10) The dish comes in various shapes and sizes — a recent agricultural research project on rice in Laos involved more than 13,000 rice samples, more than 11,000 of them glutinous — but the basic method of consuming khao niaw is the same countrywide. Harvested sticky rice grains, which are typically shorter and fatter than non-glutinous ones, are soaked overnight, steamed in the morning and eaten all day. Sticky rice still tastes great after two steamings, said Luck, but steaming it thrice makes it “too sticky.” Because sticky rice lacks the starch amylose, it congeals — and breaks off into fist-sized pieces — more easily than white rice under similar cooking conditions.
- (11) A hunk of sticky rice is a delicious, bread-like dipping implement. Laotians prefer to eat sticky rice with non-soupy dishes, rather than with just curries and sauces, said Caroline Gaylard, co-founder of Tamarind, a café and cooking school in Luang Prabang, the former Laotian royal capital. According to Gaylard, an Australian who moved to the country, sticky rice complements the popular Laotian dish jeow, a dry paste made from chili peppers and herbs, as well as the royal dish mok pa fork, which features steamed fish, dill, shallots and coconut milk.

(12) Sticky rice figures in religious traditions across Laos, where the predominant faith is Theravada Buddhism. Laotians cook sticky rice dishes — notably khao tom, a fusion of sticky rice, coconut, banana and mung bean — for ceremonies related to plantings, rainfall, harvests and death. During the popular baci ceremony, uncooked sticky rice grains are tossed into the air after communal prayers. And when a Laotian is dying, a village elder may rub sticky rice on the person and throw the rice away to banish bad spirits.

**Notes Template:**

TRAVEL NARRATIVE	INFORMATIONAL TEXT

**Independent Practice:** Write a 1-page journal entry about a time when you traveled to somewhere new. Similar to our article, your journal entry should use characteristics of a travel narrative and also an informational text. That means that you will write a true personal account and also include factual details about the place you traveled to.

You can gather the factual details by using your own background knowledge, by doing some research online, or by asking an adult about the place you are talking about in your journal entry.

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