

# Aaron Takehiro Trumbull



An American Boy of Mixed Ancestry  
(composite)  
Today

## **Section Contents**

Teacher Introduction

Story

- Introduction
- My Family
- Of Two Worlds
- World Travels
- Life in Castro Valley
- Back to School

Lesson Plans

1. Diversity Chart
  - Instructions for Teachers
  - Student Worksheet
2. Be a Crossroads Kid
  - Instructions for Teachers

Storybook Summary

## Aaron Takehiro Trumbull

### Teacher Introduction

The story of Aaron Takehiro Trumbull is based on the experiences of many children of mixed ancestry. The Hayward area is highly diverse, with dozens of languages spoken in schools and neighborhoods. There are restaurants and shops throughout the community reflecting all the different immigrant groups that have come here over the decades and there are new immigrants moving here all the time.

But in addition to cultural diversity within the community itself, there is also diversity within families. This area has a high percentage of people whose families are made up of distinct ethnic and cultural groups. The city of Hayward itself is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for people who listed themselves as having mixed ancestry on the 2000 US Census. People from very different backgrounds are marrying and having families, more commonly today than ever.

The story of Aaron was researched and written by Leah Aguilera, who teaches 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at Independent Elementary in Castro Valley. Leah herself has mixed ancestry. She has a background in Ethnic Studies and has taught children of all backgrounds for seven years. Her own experiences as a person of mixed heritage have contributed to her understanding of the complexities surrounding multi-cultural families.

Such diversity in our community presents opportunities and challenges for educators in the classroom. We hope the story of Aaron will offer a springboard for you to discuss heritage and diversity in your classroom. The resource list here provides several good sources on teaching about immigration and cultural diversity.

## Aaron Takehiro Trumbull

### Introduction



Hi, my name is Aaron Takehiro Trumbull. I live with my family in Castro Valley, California.

I like to ride my bike, play sports, video games, and often like to read when my video game time runs out. I think I am the same height and weight as the other boys I play with. I have dark brown hair and brown eyes. My dad says my big smile reminds him of my mom. My skin color is a little darker than some of my friends but a little lighter than my friend Alex. In fact, I am a lot like all my friends here in Castro Valley, except Mom says I am special, too.

When I really think about it, I guess I know that I am different in some ways. Mom says there are a lot of things about me that make me unique and that I have special things I can share. I used to think that meant I was going to be a super baseball star or the fastest runner in my town, but as I get older I know she meant it in other ways. Most of my real differences have to do with my family, and where my family came from.

### My Family

I live with my mom, dad, and my older sister Amy. My mom's name is Rieko and my dad's name is Michael. I also have a dog named Mochi. She is a Black Labrador retriever. Castro Valley is the only place I really remember growing up, but my mom told me that it doesn't really explain the whole story of where I came from. To do that, I have to understand where she and dad are from.

My Mom is from a small town in Japan and my Dad is from New York. Both places are extremely far apart in the world and in different countries. Even though Dad says New York is like living in a different country from the rest of America, I know it was nothing like the place where my mom came from.

Sometimes we look at our pictures of Japan and talk about the differences. There are pictures of people wearing different clothes than people here in California. They look like nice, happy people. Although in some of the older pictures, my relatives rarely smile. Even though they aren't always smiling mom says they are thinking good thoughts for each other. I also saw pictures of people selling fish and vegetables in huge markets and rolling green hills with mist near the bottom. The most funny thing to me are the pictures of my Mom very young and riding a bicycle. There are several pictures like

that. She says that a bike is the most common way to get from place to place. Japan looks very beautiful to me.

My Dad has old pictures of him in New York also. There are pictures of him with my Grandma and Grandpa at the Statue of Liberty and camping at a National Park. The people look different than the people in the pictures from Japan. They look happy, too, but I always see cars in these pictures. A big difference I can tell is that my dad grew up with many more cars than my mom did. Dad says they traveled a lot and the easiest way for them was by having a station wagon to hold his brothers and sisters.

Mom and Dad met in college at Berkeley, California. They both went to the University to study. Mom says they fell in love and decided to get married. They got an apartment in Berkeley and lived there for a while with no furniture but went to restaurants almost every night. Then she jumps over the next part and just says me and my sister came into their lives. She told me that she and my Dad moved to Castro Valley so that we could live in a great town with good schools.

### **Of Two Worlds**

I enjoy knowing a lot about America and Japan. To me, there are some really cool things about being both Japanese and American. I can even speak English and Japanese. I learned Japanese from my Mom because she reads books to us in Japanese. She also plays movies for us in Japanese. Sometimes I don't even realize that I am listening to a different language than English because I understand them both so well. My Dad reads to us in English.

I mostly speak English at home. I think it is because all my friends only understand English so I use it everyday. I am learning Korean from my friend Seung, but I just know a few words.

Even though I know it is cool to be Japanese and American, I have found out that there are some things that bother me, too. Sometimes people just like to call me Japanese. Sometimes they think I just came from Japan. Sometimes they just think I am from other places I don't know much about, like China or Korea. It bothers me because I know I was born here. It also bothers me a little, because they don't ask questions.

Sometimes they do ask questions and forget anyway. It makes me sad sometimes, because I found out some people will just see me however they want to and don't change their mind even after I tell them about my family.

## Aaron Takehiro Trumbull

Sometimes I get nervous around other families because we all look a little different. My mom speaks English with an accent and looks a little different from other moms. Nobody has really ever been mean and usually everyone makes us feel welcome, but I sometimes wonder if they are really nice people or just acting that way.

But Mom has taught me to be proud about being American and Japanese. She says there are many things to be proud of. Most of all, I have found out that it is ok to be myself. Our family has had several discussions about how cool it is to have two cultures in the family.

### **World Travels**

Every year, I get to go back East and visit my grandparents, Grandma and Grandpa Trumbull. I usually go during November, when the leaves on the trees are gold, yellow and red. We fly into New York City and take a train to their house. When we get there, Grandpa Trumbull likes to show us where our Dad played baseball as a kid. I play baseball in Castro Valley. Grandpa Trumbull even shows us Dad's old baseball mitt. It looks old. It makes me feel very American. Grandpa says that Baseball is an American pastime, and I tell him about my favorite ball player, Ichiro Suzuki. Then Grandpa laughs and messes up my hair.

Every year, my family also flies to Japan. We usually go during the summer when I do not have school. This year, my sister and I got to go to my cousin's school for a few days as visitors. It was a lot of fun. At first, I was a little nervous to speak Japanese, but quickly I figured it was the only way I was going to get to know people. I thought I would forget some words and say them in English, but I didn't and made friends.

### **Life in Castro Valley**

I am in the fourth grade and my sister is in middle school. She is almost a teenager and changes get her mood a lot. Mostly though she is really nice to me. She likes to talk on the phone a lot and goes to see new movies every week.

I like my school. Some of my friends in school like to play Yu Gi Oh cards with me, because I can pronounce all the characters. They think I sound cool and I think it is cool that there are Japanese words on the cards.

My teacher loves it when I bring sushi for the whole class to eat. Some of the other students have brought new foods for me to try, like pupusas and samosas. In my class, there are other students who have parents that are from different countries. Between all

## Aaron Takehiro Trumbull

the students in my class, we can speak 6 different languages. My teacher can only speak English. Of course, in class we all speak English.

At home everything looks just like all my friends' houses. We have a TV, stereo, computer, couches, dining table, and our own bedrooms. There are a couple of small differences that I have noticed. For example, we have to take our shoes off before going past the main hallway in our house. I have found out that it isn't just because we are Japanese, but my mom is pretty strict about it. We also have art in our house with Japanese writing on it.

My mom is a great cook, too! She can cook great food like miso, noodles, rice, and small dumplings called gyoza. But she also cooks good hamburgers. She can also make my favorite, macaroni and cheese.

I think Castro Valley is a great place to live. On Tuesday night at Pyzanno's Pizza in Castro Valley all kids can eat free, and after dinner, my sister and I get a big ball of pizza dough to take home. Pyzanno's has the best pizza in Castro Valley and is fun because there are video games to play in the back.

Sometimes on the weekend we go to Golfland for a game of Pee Wee golf or we go see a movie at the Chabot Theater. Castro Valley is also cool, because it is close to other places we visit, like San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley. It also has a Bart Station here so it is easy to get to the Oakland Coliseum to watch the A's. Maybe Ichiro Suzuki will be there, he plays for the Seattle Mariners. But really he is from Japan.

### **Back to School**

It looks like it is going to be another warm day today. The summer is almost over and the new school year is coming up fast. Mom says that I have gotten used to sleeping in late even though she has kept me busy going to different summer camps. One week was baseball camp. Another week was computer camp. This week is soccer, I think. It's already 8:00 am, but I feel like I could sleep another hour.

Mom has just come into my room to check on me again. I guess I am not moving as fast as she wants me to. I'll just put on my soccer clothes and head downstairs to eat breakfast. In the mirror I think I look just like so many people I know. My clothes match every kid I see. A blue t-shirt, black soccer shorts that hang almost to my knees and colorful socks that look bulky over my shin guards. My hair is short and messy on top.

## Aaron Takehiro Trumbull

I have figured out how to be a good friend and I blend well with all the kids I know. And yet in the mirror, I can see my small differences, too. I know my facial features are a little different. I know I am both American and Japanese. Not just one or the other. I know that sometimes people may not understand who I am, but I think it is more important that I understand.

As I look in the mirror, I feel special and proud. I know I have opportunities, because my parents have tried hard to make sure I have chances to do well. I know I have a lot of friends that accept me for who I am. I know I am a person that has a lot to offer. But most of all, I know that I am loved.

So off I go to practice. I hope it's cool today.

See Ya!

Aaron Takehiro Trumbull

**Aaron Takehiro Trumbull**



**Lesson Plans**

*People:* Aaron Takehiro Trumbull  
*Classroom Kit:* Immigration Discovery Kit

**1 – Diversity Chart**

**Activity Goals**

- To understand the complexity of a character.
- To explore words of identification.

**Setting the Context:**

Sometimes Aaron feels different, because his parents are from distant places – New York and Japan. He doesn't want people to look at him and think he's just Japanese. He is proud of and identifies with both sides of his family. Aaron is more than just his heritage; he is good at playing baseball and can get to really high levels on his Xbox games. He feels fortunate to have a lot of friends that accept him as he is. He is a person that has a lot to offer.

**Activity Instructions:**

Just like Aaron, everyone in the classroom is unique, with his/her own heritage, background, skills and interests. Use the following sheet to create a diversity chart. Have the students write their name in the center circle. In the surrounding circles, have them write words that they identify themselves with. See Aaron's chart below.

Some words to use:

Buddhist  
Jewish  
boy  
girl  
student  
3<sup>rd</sup> grader

soccer player  
big brother  
little brother  
big sister  
little sister  
piano player

dancer  
singer  
video game expert  
girl scout  
boy scout  
cookie baker

**Aaron Takehiro Trumbull**

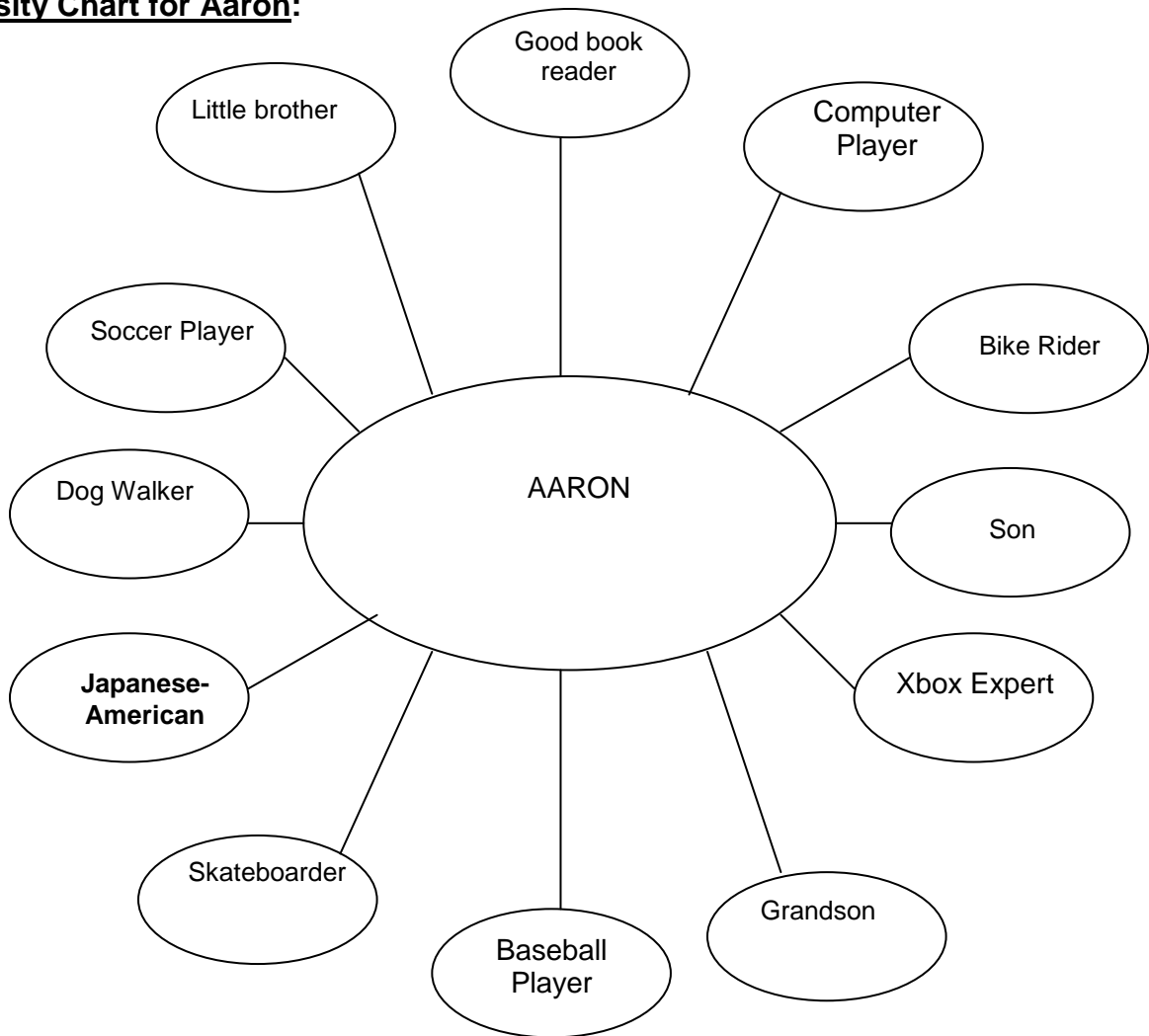


**Lesson Plans**

*People:* Aaron Takehiro Trumbull  
*Classroom Kit:* Immigration Discovery Kit

**1 – Diversity Chart**

**Diversity Chart for Aaron:**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Aaron Takehiro Trumbull**

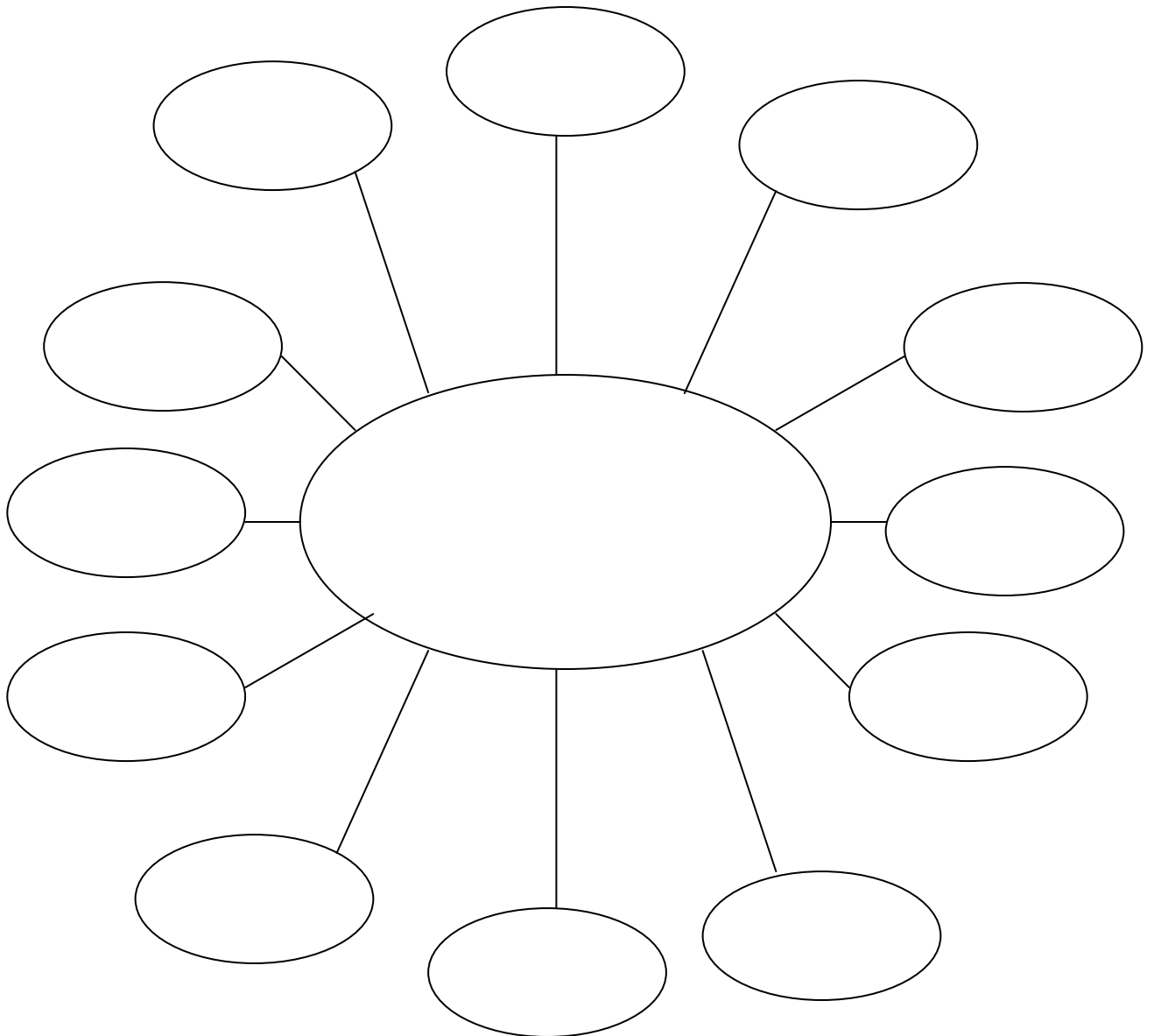


**Lesson Plans**

*People:* Aaron Takehiro Trumbull  
*Classroom Kit:* Immigration Discovery Kit

**1 – Diversity Chart**

**Diversity Chart**



**Aaron Takehiro Trumbull**



**Lesson Plans**

*People:*  
*Classroom Kit:*

Aaron Takehiro Trumbull  
Immigration Discovery Kit

**2 – Be a Crossroads Kid**

**Activity Goals**

- To connect and relate prior experiences, insights, and ideas to characters in written text.
- To write brief narratives describing prior experiences.

**Activity Instructions:**

Although Aaron’s story is a composite of a modern day boy, his life is probably not that different from your students. Make your classroom kit using memorabilia from students’ lives. Have them share their own stories and personal artifacts and present them to the class. Invite them to write a story about their own lives.

Stories should discuss:

- Any languages they speak
- Immigration or traveling
- Family and homelife
- School and after-school activities
- Chores and homework
- Games, toys or sports
- Special holidays or family traditions

Objects to include:

- Musical instrument
- Favorite songs or albums
- Storybooks
- Clothing
- Learning or working tool
- Cultural object
- Photographs
- Any other documents – newspaper articles, maps, artwork

**Aaron Takehiro Trumbull**



**Lesson Plans**

*People:* Aaron Takehiro Trumbull  
*Classroom Kit:* Immigration Discovery Kit

**2 – Be a Crossroads  
Kid**

*Using the bags to get to know each other.*

Have each child put his/her story, objects, and photographs in a paper bag. Collect all the bags, then mix them up and hand them back randomly to the students. Have each child present his/her bag to the class. First have them hold up the objects and guess what they are. Can they guess who the person is by these objects? Next, have them read the story out loud. Can the class guess who it is?

After sharing, don't forget to have them decorate and label their bag. You can refer to these personal exhibits throughout the year when holidays, birthdays, and other special events occur.

**Storybook Summary - Aaron Takehiro Trumbull**  
***How My Parents Learned to Eat***

By Ina R. Friedman, Illustrated by Allen Say  
Houghton Mifflin, 1984

For the main character in this story, eating with both chopsticks and a fork is natural. This is because he comes from a family of mixed origin. His American father was stationed in Japan where he met his mother. Father was very shy about their cultural differences and never thought he could overcome them and learn to use chopsticks. A cute twist to the story is that his mother, who was also shy about learning to use a fork, ends up learning how to use western utensils from a British man. When the couple finally meets for a meal, she is very proud to show off her fork skills. But father is surprised that she uses them differently from him – like the British! In the end they have a good laugh. This story is shared with their son.

*Discussion Topics*

- Different types of cultural differences
- Food is important in all cultures and many times becomes the way people bond
- Challenges and rewards of being of mixed origins
- Pride and positive attitudes about being from two cultures
- The Crossroads child Aaron Takehiro Trumbull also straddles these two cultures – how does he feel about this?