

Welcome!

Grade 5, Unit 10

Novel Study: *The Science of Breakable Things*

Welcome to Grade 5, Unit 10, *The Science of Breakable Things*. Here is what your student will be learning about and accomplishing over the next few weeks.

What's the story?

Your student will be reading the award-winning novel, *The Science of Breakable Things*, by Tae Keller. The novel is a remarkable middle-grade novel about a seventh grader, Natalie, and her attempts to “grow a miracle”: to win an egg drop contest (and its prize money) and buy her mother—a **botanist struggling with depression**—a rare Cobalt Blue Orchid. Simultaneously, Natalie navigates the **challenges of adolescent friendships**, learning that sometimes what she thinks about others is not always accurate. Through Natalie's witty (and often sarcastic) observations, the novel portrays the up-and-down life of a young girl, her **struggles with her friends and her Korean-American identity**, and the lengths to which she will go to **reach her mother**.

What will my student learn?

The Science of Breakable Things **tackles many difficult subjects**. Whether students have never encountered such issues or have struggled with them personally, they can gain rich empathy and growth from reading about Natalie and her family's experiences. This novel offers numerous opportunities for **exploring science content** such as botany, physics, and health; developing students' **health and wellness** competencies; and studying the techniques authors use to create great works of literature.

Your student will also, of course, **develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language**. Daily **close-reading** and **writing activities** will support your student's successful completion of the culminating task for the unit: ***The Science of Breakable Things* Presentation**. As the unit progresses, please see the work in your student's unit folder, as well as the Project Presentation Rubric (Activity Page 1.4) for more details about your student's final project.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. Why does the author use scientific steps to organize the novel?
Follow up: How can we relate these steps to our own lives?
2. Who are the main characters in the novel?
Follow up: Which character or characters do you like the most? What about them do you find interesting?
3. Can you relate to any of the characters in the story?