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As a biracial and bicultural person I have often received comments such as “You don’t look Asian at all,” “You got into that school because you’re Asian,” and “You’re American; you don’t act Japanese.” These comments are insensitive for they suggest that their owners are claiming to be authorities on other individuals’ cultural identities.

Through the teaching of multicultural short stories at the post-secondary level, I hope to foster thoughtful discussion on why our cultural identities cannot be read as “single stories.” While appropriating or even seeking to fully understand identities other than are own can “flatten” our differences (Alexander and Rhodes 431), through examining multicultural texts students can become confident readers searching for and defending diverse interpretations of texts, and as an extension, of cultural narratives as well.

“Challenging the existing canon” to feature modern and diverse people who do not identify with a dominant cultural group may help even reluctant students discover a love for reading (Dobai 141). Teaching multicultural fiction within the short story genre alongside an essential question will help students build textual competence as autonomous, self-aware, and engaged readers.

This curriculum unit is targeted to the freshmen college level; each lesson is designed with a ninety-minute class in mind. The sample lessons included here, with minor logistical modifications, would also be appropriate for a class of high school seniors. The proposed unit is framed around the essential question: “What is the relationship between culture and identity?” While this question is not explicitly addressed during every class and every activity, it serves as the unit’s overarching theme, weaving together readings—placing texts “in conversation with each other”—with pedagogical

approaches and class activities (Smith, Appleman, and Wilhelm 128). The goal is not to answer the question, for a good essential question is a “problem that is complex and to which no one really knows a definitive answer” (Smith, Appleman, and Wilhelm 61). On the first day of the unit, students consider their position on a variety of statements before working together to compile a list of key terms related to the essential question.

Throughout the unit the class returns to the question (either explicitly or implicitly) and modifies or adds to the list of terms as attitudes and beliefs are reconsidered. This question, one that does not exclude anyone, is also meant to help students “account for why a text might be important or interesting or even offensive to real readers” (Blau 102). The characters and themes presented in these multicultural texts are often more familiar and relevant to students than those depicted in canonical texts, while at the same time presenting complex questions and situations that students are given the responsibility to grapple with.

Reading multicultural literature can help students “read the world around us” and “share in other lives...without losing a sense of our own separateness” (Bruns 11, 15) in a manner that the predominantly white canon cannot. It is arguably a low-stakes, approachable way to increase cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity. Because teachers often have had little exposure to multicultural literature in their own education (Jetton and Savage-Davis 31), these diverse stories present instructors with the excellent opportunity to learn alongside students and model important practices such as rereading and the embrace of confusion. In regards to genre, the short story allows for a greater breadth of diversity than a similar unit on novels would, while still dedicating enough focus and depth to each story.

The cultural narratives provided in the sample lesson plans are just a subset of the stories this unit features. The unit reading list reflects an understanding of culture as a hybrid one that “is shaped by global migrations and exchanges of culture that transcends physical markers of difference” (Gibson 131). Students encounter Sherman Alexie’s homeless Spokane Indians, Umm Zakiyyah’s American Muslims, and Luis Negrón’s gay Puerto Ricans. Subcultures of religious belief, socioeconomic level, gender identity, and geographic region will be explored, in part to scaffold students who may struggle to reach beyond mainstream culture to see the nuanced ways their cultures are reflected in their identities (Dietrich and Ralph 2). All of the stories have been selected for their disavowal of reductive attitudes toward multiculturalism in America, their unequivocal command of language and narrative, and their nuanced exploration of the many facets—not only cultural—that complicate, rather than explain, their characters’ identities. The selection and teaching of these texts is not in any way meant to exoticize cultures that may be unfamiliar, but rather seeks to engage students in thoughtful, text-to-self discussions on what it means to be an individual living in an increasingly global world. The goal of the unit is to not to evade conflict and arrive at consensus, but rather to complicate conversations around cross-cultural interaction and identity (Dietrich and Ralph 1).

Yet it may be the case that “...what a text says may be less influential in its effect on a reader’s cultural encounter than how it says it” (Bruns 34). To that end, this unit asks that students closely observe and reflect on how the basic elements of fiction are working toward creating the world of a story (Bruns 88). These initial reactions, along with others recorded in class journals, are periodically collected to assess student experience with the texts and self-awareness of reading processes. Group work, in which students share their

responses to texts and grapple with questions, also serves as an informal assessment. The emphasis on group work is particularly important, for as Sheridan Blau stresses, actively sharing questions regarding interpretations of a text helps to cultivate a classroom environment that embraces the complexity that comes with understanding texts. Having students work together also places the responsibility on them, rather than the teacher, to solve textual problems (56). For the instructor, the insights gained from student journals and group work can help shape future lessons (Bruns 145), and offers a more holistic and purposeful assessment of student engagement and comprehension than quizzes or tests. Other assessments include short essays and papers, many of which give students agency (e.g., helping to create a rubric) and choice (e.g., selecting the poem to juxtapose a story with).

The pedagogical approaches demonstrated in the sample lesson plans center on what Christina Bruns argues is “the central contribution students can make to a literature course...an account of their own encounters with literary texts” (134). Reflective assignments, both through independent reactions written in their journals and in small and large group discussions, encourage students to embrace immersive reading, increase their metacognitive awareness, become comfortable with textual confusion and difficulty, and see the value of multiple interpretations of texts. In addition, students consider the significance of background knowledge to textual understanding; juxtapose texts to make intertextual connections; and analyze other genres, including film, poetry, and non-fiction, to increase transfer. Most lessons begin with reading the story at home, without any questions to consider, which encourages students to “inhabit the world of a text” and avoid confronting texts with suspicion (Bruns 73). Several lessons begin with pre-reading

activities that introduce difficult terms and themes, providing essential frontloading that activates students' interests and experiences (Smith, Appleman, and Wilhelm 39).

Hopefully, increased awareness of the essential moves that sophisticated readers make will help some readers in the class immerse themselves in their reading experiences, enabling them to reflect on and make meaningful connections with texts.

The lessons in the unit are sequenced, taking into consideration the texts, pedagogical approaches, and goals of each lesson and the overall unit, to eventually build up to a large project on micro-memoirs. With the essential question as the North Star, students are guided to reflect on the unit and consider their own personal histories. Students decide what the project ultimately looks like: a series of vignettes, a fictional short story inspired by real events, a poem, a comic book. Some students may experiment with form or even codemesh. Multimodality is encouraged, so projects might incorporate photographs, videos, or other artifacts. The hope for the final project is that students will consider how culture shapes identities and communities, and perhaps even feel empowered to work for social change on a micro or macro level (Bruns 96; Smith, Appleman, and Wilhelm 181). One day in the not-so-distant future multicultural literature may be an obsolete concept, with all of us living hybrid, global lives in fiction and in real life. But for the time being, multicultural literature's imperative is one of great relevance and importance—to bring to the forefront the diverse, overlapping stories that give voice to those outside the cultural mainstream of America.

## Lesson Topic: Introducing Multicultural Literature

### Objectives/Essential Question:

- Students will take a position on complex and nuanced cultural ideas, strengthening their awareness of their own beliefs and opinions
- Students will have agency as they begin to define key terms in the unit
- Students will make text-to-self (in this case, video-to-self) connections as they begin to broaden their understanding of what it means to be global citizens with unique cultural identities

### Teaching Strategies/Procedures:

- To introduce the unit focus on multicultural literature and pre-teach themes that will come up in the stories, the teacher will pass out an “Agree or Disagree” handout for the students to silently fill out. This activity immediately asks students to confront difficult topics, activating and complicating their own knowledge and experiences. Before a multicultural text is even read, students must begin to carefully consider the complex themes these stories address.
- Due to the sensitive nature of the topics at hand, instead of having students share their answers and opinions with each other, the “Agree or Disagree” activity will help inform the terms that the students begin to define.
- Letting students know that these definitions are fluid and will be revisited through the unit, the instructor will write the following terms on the board:
  - Culture
  - Diversity
  - Identity
  - Multiculturalism
  - Multicultural Literature
- The class will attempt to loosely define these terms, which will serve as a springboard for the following lessons.
- To close the lesson, students will watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk on the “danger of a single story.” Adichie argues that literature can perpetuate a single story, which dangerously hides the rich complexities that illustrate how our identities are made up of overlapping narratives.
- Students will answer questions ([prepared by ed.ted.com](http://ed.ted.com)) in small groups, reflecting on their own stories in a homework assignment:
  - Think about the communities to which you belong. *Is there a "single story" of your community? Your hometown? Your country? How did that "single story" come about? What is true about that story? What isn't? Has the "single story" changed over time?* Answer these questions in your journals, keeping in mind that we will return to these notes for a future project (<http://ed.ted.com/on/oQQimtYK#digdeeper>).

### Introducing Multicultural Literature: Agree or Disagree?

For each statement below, please note whether you Agree (A) or Disagree (D):

\_\_\_\_\_1. Multicultural literature “is about some identifiable ‘other’—persons or groups that differ in some way (for example racially, linguistically, ethnically, culturally) from the dominant White American cultural group” (Cai and Bishop, as cited in Dobai 141).

\_\_\_\_\_2. The main goal of multicultural literature is to “challenge the existing canon by expanding the curriculum to include literature from a wide variety of cultural groups” (Cai and Bishop qtd. in Dobai 141).

\_\_\_\_\_3. Celebrating cross-cultural interaction can lead to what some argue are negative attitudes, including color-blindness and an erasing of our differences.

\_\_\_\_\_4. Instructors of multicultural literature should try to “resolve or evade conflicts” that may arise when discussing the clashing or coming together of cultures (Dietrich and Ralph 1).

\_\_\_\_\_5. Multicultural literature only offers “superficial insights into issues of diversity” (Jetton and Savage-Davis 34).

\_\_\_\_\_6. Culture and race should always be at the forefront of a multicultural story.

\_\_\_\_\_7. “Books in any genre that include people—both those of color and those who are not color but who are part of a distinct cultural group, race, or religion,” (p. 208) such as women, gays, and lesbians, should also be included in the category of multicultural literature” (Stoodt-Hill and Amspaugh-Corson qtd. in Varga-Dobai 141).

\_\_\_\_\_8. “In order to present a *true picture* about a particular group of people or to validate a story as real and truthful, there is need for an insider perspective: the *real experience* of the author (Sims Bishop qtd. In Varga-Dobai 143).

**Lesson Topic:** Mary Yukari Waters, “Shibusa”**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- Students will become familiar with the terms *codeswitching*, *codemeshing*, *multilingualism*, and *language hybridity*.
- Students will have the responsibility to define the above terms, rather than simply receiving the definitions from the instructor.
- Students will conduct research to build on their knowledge of language hybridity.

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- To introduce the topic of multilingualism, the professor will pass out an example of her own hybrid language.
- Four terms will be written on the board: codeswitching, codemeshing, multilingualism, and language hybridity. The class will break into four groups, with each group assigned as an “expert” on one of the terms.
- At the library, each group will research their term and find one real-world example to share with the class. Perhaps they can find a newspaper article that gives an example of their term, or a poem that demonstrates their term.
- When the class comes back together, each group will present their term and its associated example. As a class, definitions will be created for the terms.
- Turning the class’s attention to the short story “Shibusa,” students will skim through the text (which they’ve already read) to find examples of codemeshing. For example, many of the protagonist’s thoughts and dialogue include filler words that have been kept in Japanese, likely because there are no equivalent English words. Onomatopoeias have also been kept in Japanese phonetically.
- Students will be asked if they noticed these Japanese words, and if so, how they felt about seeing them.
  - Did they wonder what the Japanese words meant?
  - Did they assume they were filler words that didn’t impact meaning?
  - If these words aren’t helping Waters tell her story, what value do they have?

## Talking about Hybrid Literacies (Class Discussion Notes)

The anticipatory set for this lesson on multilingualism will be for me to share my own hybrid “Japanglish” with my students. I’ll pass out the below handout so that they see a real-world example of the codemeshing we’ve encountered in the Mary Yukari Waters story.

### My “Japanglish”/Mother Tongue in Text Message Conversations

In the text message exchange below, I am asking my mother if she knows about a man who escaped from a prison near my parents’ house. When I text with my mother, I usually eliminate “the” because she, a non-native English speaker, regularly leaves out articles in her written and oral communication. If I were texting this to a friend who was a native speaker, I’m sure that despite the casual nature of texting, I would have said, “Did you hear about **the** prison escapee in barnegat?”

Some Japanese words are interspersed but are kept in romaji (Romanization of Japanese).

In this example, my mother is thanking me for the flowers I sent her for Mother’s Day. It’s interesting that only the word “happy” is in English, despite the number of Japanese words she could have used. In my reply, I say “you’re welcome,” wish her luck on a final project she’s working on for her class, and say that I’m also trying my best on my final projects.

I was probably too lazy to change the English keyboard on my phone to the Japanese one, which is why “ganbatte” (good luck) is in romaji. But that doesn’t explain why the next sentence begins in Japanese and then switches to English!



**Lesson Topic:** Junoz Diaz, “Fiesta, 1980”

**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- Students will think meta-cognitively about their textual experiences
- Students will be encouraged to embrace feeling confused and/or resistant to texts
- Students will consider the significance of background knowledge

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- After reading the story at home, class discussion will concentrate on the inclusion of Spanish phrases in the text.
  - Students will spend ten minutes writing down how they reacted to the Spanish text, as well as any relevant questions they have. These questions can be directly in response to the Spanish text, and/or in regards to questions about the overall story. Perhaps students will want to know what a certain Spanish phrase means in English to help them understand a passage. Maybe students will question why Diaz didn’t include sufficient context in another passage so that non-Spanish speakers would not feel potentially isolated while reading.
- Students will then break into small groups to share their questions with each other.
- When the class comes back together, the instructor will ask for volunteers to share their reactions to the Spanish text.
- The discussion will then turn to textual understanding and questions that still linger after the small group activity.
- Once the class thoughtfully discusses any remaining questions, and perhaps Spanish speakers in the class have translated the Spanish text, the discussion will transition to the issue of background knowledge (see artifact for discussion questions).

**Assessment**

- Since this lesson focuses on self-awareness of student encounters with foreign languages, the reflective assignments and class participation will simply be marked as complete or incomplete. The instructor will monitor the group discussions to make sure students stay on topic and everyone is actively participating.

### Junot Diaz Class Discussion Teacher Guide

- Questions to guide initial reactions to the Spanish text:
  - Was the Spanish alienating and confusing? Or comforting and familiar?
  - Why do you think Diaz decided against including translations?
  - What is Diaz trying to accomplish by presenting the characters' multilingualism in this way?
  
- Questions that transition to textual understanding and student questions that linger:
  - Did anyone know the English translation for *Que Dios te bendiga*?
  - For those of you who didn't, did you figure it out from contextual clues?
  - For those of you who didn't figure out the literal meaning, did you try to figure it out or not?
  - Do we need to know Spanish to appreciate and understand this text?
  - Do you still have questions about this text? What are they?
  
- Questions regarding prior knowledge of Spanish language:
  - For those of you who didn't know the Spanish phrases, now that you have the English translation for *Que Dios te bendiga* (as an example), does this new knowledge change your understanding of the passage and/or story at all?
  - Do you have a different reaction to the Spanish words now compared to when you first encountered the text? Why or why not?

**Lesson Topic:** Lost in Translation? Using Media to Reconsider Dominant Literacies

**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- To build on the previous lessons on language hybridity, students will become familiar with other manifestations of multilingualism.
- Students will hopefully see that there is potential to enjoy a text in a similar fashion to how they enjoy watching a film.
- Students will compare and contrast the experience of watching a film to reading a story.
- Students will engage in criticism, learning to notice and comment on biases in how texts represent cultural attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs.

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- During this mandatory viewing party, students will first watch the Oscar-nominated short film documentary *Chau, Beyond the Lines*, which is in Vietnamese with English subtitles.
- The instructor will ask students to write their reactions to engaging with this type of media while watching the subtitled film. Guided questions will help students stay focused (see artifact).
- Following the documentary, parts of the film *Lost in Translation* will be shown. Students will be asked to write down their reactions to certain cultural exchanges and representations (see artifact).
- A homework assignment will ask students to conduct independent research, analyze texts for bias and evidence, and come to the next class prepared to engage in a mock debate.

**Assessment:**

- During the viewing party the instructor will monitor the room to make sure all students are taking notes.
- In the following class the instructor will ensure that the mock debate is conducted in a fair, respectful manner and that all students have the opportunity to participate (and demonstrate that they did their homework).

## Lost in Translation? Reconsidering Dominant Literacies

### *Chau, Beyond the Lines*

As you watch the film, jot down some notes here on how you're reacting to the subtitles and foreign language audio. I've included some guiding questions in case you feel stuck.

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- Do you often watch movies/TV shows with subtitles? Why or why not?
- Do you find reading subtitles distracting? Inviting? Why do you think you react in this way?
- Do you prefer the experience of reading the Diaz story to this one of watching a film with subtitles? Can you compare the experiences or not?

### *Lost in Translation*

We'll be watching parts of this film, primarily the sections that include cross-cultural communication as well as the end. I'd like you to take notes on the cross-cultural interactions and answer the questions below regarding the ending.

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- At the very end of the movie we don't know what Bob whispers in Charlotte's ear. How do you feel about this? Is this a satisfying ending for you?
- Do you think we should have been given "subtitles" for this final communication? Do we need to know what is said to reach some conclusion regarding the meaning of the film?

### **For homework:**

Critics disagree on the representation of the Japanese characters in *Lost in Translation*. I'd like you to find two credible articles online, one that supports the representation as accurate and fair and one that believes the film portrays the Japanese characters in a negative light. Please read both articles thoroughly to understand their positions, highlighting key ideas and taking notes in the margins. We will have a mock debate in our next class in which half of the class will defend the film's depiction of the Japanese characters and the other half will argue against it. I'll ask both sides to provide other examples of media representation of culture, so it would be beneficial to start brainstorming examples.

**Lesson Topic:** Ha Jin's "Children as Enemies"**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- Students will increase metacognitive awareness of their reading processes.
- Students will pay close attention to a text to find textual evidence.
- Students will challenge the misconception that "there is only one authoritative and best interpretation for most literary texts" (Blau 60) when they become frustrated with the prompt to choose one side in the story and then to consider the opposing argument.
- Students will be guided past reading to interpretation (through close reading) and criticism (by considering the value of the text).

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- After the short story is read for homework, class discussion will open with the instructor asking students if they liked the story and if they sided with anyone in the story.
- Students will then be asked to identify the one line in the story they found to be the most important as evidence for which character they believe is "right."
  - Identifying a line, rather than simply writing about one's reaction to the text, will hopefully reveal interpretive differences (Blau 62) as well as ideas in the text that students find objectionable (Bruns 110).
- After writing down their line and a brief rationale explaining their decision, students will need to find more evidence in the text to back up their claim.
- Students will then need to play "devil's advocate" and critique or question their claim with a counterclaim, once again providing textual evidence (see artifact).
- The instructor's role during this discussion will be to ensure that students provide accurate and compelling evidence to support their interpretive claims.

**Assessments:**

- The handouts will be turned in so that the instructor can gauge whether or not students are actively mining the text for evidence to support their claims.

**Toulmin Argumentative Model** (Adapted from ReadWriteThink.org)

Directions: Consider which character in the story you believe to be morally right. Find the one line in the story that best represents why, and write that down below. Then, find additional evidence to support your claim. Later, I'll ask you to play devil's advocate and come up with a counterclaim, backed up by evidence from the story.

**Claim (One Sentence from Text and Brief Rationale):**

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**Evidence:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Counterclaim with Evidence:**

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**Lesson Topic:** Jhumpa Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth"

**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- Students will consider the relationship between place and identity.
- Students will understand the characteristics of the different points of view employed in fiction.
- Students will practice comparing texts to read deeply and think critically.

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- After reading the short story, the instructor will ask students to name the different points of view in fiction. Writing these notes on the board, the teacher will then ask students to share what they think the benefits and disadvantages of using each type might be.
- Then, during a ten-minute quick write, students will write down why they think Lahiri alternated third-person point of view in the story. They will also comment on whether they think this particular strategy worked well, or if they believe she might have benefited from using a different, or more consistent, point of view. Students should also include how the point of view does or doesn't illuminate the themes of place and identity in the story.
- For homework, students will write a short paper juxtaposing this story with the last story they read, "Children as Enemies" (see artifact).

**Assessments:**

- Students will be graded on the essay based on a rubric.

### Different Points of View: Mini Essay Assignment

Write a 2-page, double-spaced essay in which you compare and contrast (juxtapose) the different points of view in Ha Jin's "Children as Enemies" and Jhumpa Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth." This assignment will be good practice for a longer essay we will write later in this unit, which will also ask you to make intertextual connections.

Juxtapose the two stories on the level of form, specifically **point of view**. Since we already discussed this in class, you can quickly summarize the differences here. Spend most of your time describing how these differences inform the themes of the stories, specifically regarding the connection between place and identity. See if you can consider aspects of cultural identity beyond race and ethnicity, such as gender, language, and socioeconomic status.

Make sure you address how each point of view helps each author explore complexities regarding place and identity. Are the authors saying different things about place and identity? What are they each saying about the relationship between place and identity? And is point of view helping them communicate their ideas?

**Lesson Topic:** Nathan Englander’s “What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank”

**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- Students will be introduced (or reintroduced) to several basic elements of fiction: plot, character, setting, conflict, and symbol.
- Students will have an understanding of how allegory is used in literature.
- Students will analyze two texts to juxtapose the authors’ approaches to form and meaning, and build awareness and knowledge of both texts.

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- After the short story is read for homework, the instructor will ask students if they know what an allegory is. Depending on how the discussion goes, the instructor may give a definition of the term from the dictionary. The instructor will ask students to spend five minutes thinking about what they think the allegory(s) in this story might be. They should then write down their understanding of the allegory and any evidence from the story to support this position.
- Students will then be broken into groups, with each group assigned to a basic element of fiction: plot, character, setting, conflict, and symbol.
- In their groups, students should first share with each other what allegory(s) the story may be suggesting. Each group does not need to come to a consensus on one allegory but should at least narrow it down to a general theme.
- Students will need to then go back to the story to find examples of how their assigned element may support a hidden moral or political meaning of the story. Students may need to conduct some independent research (or consult a classmate or the instructor) to become “experts” on their selected element.
- Each group will volunteer one person to share their findings with the class. The instructor will jot down overarching themes that arise from the report-out, and ask the class if their understanding of the story’s hidden meaning changed at all from the group activity and hearing other people’s interpretations.
- To introduce the homework assignment, the instructor will hand out copies of Raymond Carver’s “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love.” Students may notice the similarity between this story’s title and the Englander story’s. The instructor will reveal that the Englander story—not only its title—is consciously alluding to the Carver story. Students will need to read the Carver story for homework and write an essay juxtaposing the two (see artifact).

**Assessments:**

- A rubric developed by the class, with the instructor’s guidance as needed, will be used to grade the paper.

### Juxtaposing Two Texts: Mini-Paper

We've read the Nathan Englander story, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank." Both independently in our journals and in our small and large group discussions we've considered the allegory(s) within the story as well as how examining the basic elements of fiction might provide evidence to support our understanding of the allegory(s).

I'd like you now to read the story that clearly inspired Englander, Raymond Carver's "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love." As you read, I'd like you to pay attention to the same basic elements of fiction we discussed in regards to the Englander piece. Please then reread the Carver story again, and take some notes in your journal on what you think the allegory of this story might be.

Once you have considered the similarities and differences between the two stories' characteristics in terms of the basic elements of fiction, I'd like you to **focus on one element of fiction** for this paper.

Please **juxtapose**—compare or contrast—your chosen element of fiction in the two stories. For example, if you select *setting* you may want to talk about how both stories take place in apartments in the afternoon, and the characters physically leave the apartment in the Englander piece while the characters in the Carver story stay glued to the kitchen table. It may also be interesting to think critically about how both authors use sunlight.

The paper should be 4-5 pages double-spaced. In your juxtaposition, please spend some time (one paragraph is sufficient) describing what you believe the allegories of the stories to be. How did, or didn't, your selected element of fiction reveal, illuminate, or complicate your understanding of the allegories? Make sure to include examples from both texts to support your argument.

**Lesson Topic:** Gish Jen, “Who’s Irish?”

**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- Students will consider the choices an author makes regarding voice and style
- Students will discuss the impact of language on identity formation
- Students will write their own literacy narratives, connecting themes in the texts with their own lives

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- The instructor will write two words on the board: style and voice. Students will call out things that come to mind when thinking about these two words in regards to fiction—these could be characteristics, examples, benefits, etc.
- A handout with questions will then be passed out. Students will work in pairs to discuss how Jen is using style and voice to develop her plot, characters, and story conflict. The questions can serve as an optional guide for students who want structure or get stuck.
- The instructor will then ask for pairs to volunteer to share one interesting thing they discussed.
- The lesson will then transition to the essay “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan. Students will read the essay silently, highlighting or circling words or sentences they find important.
- Then, in a “pointing” activity, students will be asked to share these words and phrases by reading them out loud whenever they feel compelled in the “Quaker style” manner.
- A brief discussion on the essay will follow this activity (see artifact).
- For homework, students will write a literacy narrative of at least 500 words in which they describe at least two different languages or “Englishes” they use. Students must include examples of when they use one language versus the other, making connections between these languages and their identities. Has one language limited them in any way? Is one language more comfortable or natural for them than the other?

### Questions to Guide Your Conversation on Gish Jen's "Who's Irish?"

- Why do you think Jen chose to write the first-person narrator's voice in "broken English"?
- How else would you characterize the protagonist's voice?
- Would your experience with the story be different if she had written the narrator's voice in "standard English"?
- How is the narrator's "broken English" emphasizing themes/issues/questions of the story? For example, is it highlighting a void between the protagonist and other characters in the story?
- How would you describe the mood and tone of the story? How are they being used to convey meaning or a theme?

### Discussion Questions for "Mother Tongue"

- What point is Tan making with the example of her mother and the hospital?
- What point is she making with the example of the stockbroker?
- Tan says that experts believe that a person's "developing language skills are more influenced by peers"; yet she thinks that family is more influential, "especially in immigrant families." Do you think family or peers exert more influence on a person's language?
- Why does Tan discuss the SAT and her performance on it?
- Why does she envision her mother as the reader of her novels?

**Lesson Topic:** Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s “On Monday of Last Week”

**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- Students will find textual evidence to interpret a story through a specific literary perspective.
- Students will be exposed to different literary perspectives through which to read a story, all leading to viable readings of a text.
- Students will be encouraged to read autonomously by grappling with a text amongst themselves.
- Students will gain confidence as they grapple with a text that can be difficult to grasp, not because of thick prose or obscure references, but because of its subtlety.

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- Students count off so that five groups are made. Everyone is given a handout describing five literary perspectives (see artifact), with each group responsible for one perspective. The five perspectives are: psychological, formalist, historical, biographical, gender.
- Each group is given forty-five minutes to consider how applying their particular perspective may help a reader understand a cultural theme or issue in the story.
- Each group must identify passages that stand out clearly through the lens they apply to the text.
- Each group must then individually write a short reflective piece describing how applying their particular perspective to the story exposed new confusion/questions, led to greater understanding, or simply validated their interpretation of the text.
- When the class comes back together, each group shares how one might interpret the story through their lens, and volunteers share surprising or interesting findings from the reflective piece.

**Literary Perspectives for Reading**  
**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "On Monday of Last Week"**

The Psychological Perspective

Consider what is motivating the characters to act the way they do. What do they want from each other? How do they change (or not change) during the course of the story? What are their dreams, their fears?

The Gender Perspective

Examine interaction between characters of the opposite sex for any illuminating behaviors, power dynamics, stereotypes, etc. For example, could it be argued that one character's thoughts and behaviors are perpetuated or fueled by gender norms?

The Historical Perspective

Think about the historical context of the story—not only when the story was written and when and where the story takes place, but about the three-dimensional world these characters are living in. What sort of societal, political, economic, and cultural pressures might be placed on them?

The Formalist Perspective

Viewing the story through this lens requires close attention to the formal components that make up this short story, such as stylistic choices, symbols, and word choice. For example, you may want to consider the significance of Adichie's use of italicized phrases to your understanding of a passage in the text.

The Biographical Perspective

Thinking about the story in terms of a biographical context may require researching Adichie to find out her personal background, world views, and what she has said about her writing. But remember that it's often tempting, and potentially risky, to assume that a writer is always drawing on his or her own experiences when writing a work of fiction.

**Lesson Topic:** George Saunders’s “The Semplica-Girl Diaries”

**Objectives/Essential Question:**

- Students will begin to see the value of rereading to understand difficult texts.
- Students will understand that often a lack of cultural or background knowledge is the cause of difficulties with a text, rather than a lack of intelligence.
- Students will discuss the scope of multicultural fiction.
- Students will understand the use of metaphor in a piece of literature.
- Students will make intertextual links between texts of different genres.

**Teaching Strategies/Procedures:**

- Students will come to class having read the story twice for homework. After the first reading, they would have written down questions they had, and after the second, one or two sentences in their own words stating what they believe the story is about.
- Half of the class (the 1s) will be handed a portion of an interview George Saunders did for the *New Yorker* (see Works Cited) and asked to read it silently. Meanwhile, the other half of the class (the 2s) will skim through the Saunders story, circling or highlighting passages that support their interpretation of the story’s overarching meaning/message/warning.
  - The 1s will be allowed to write a second sentence based on the additional information they now have, but they should not cross out or throw out the initial sentence(s) they wrote for homework.
- In pairs of 1s and 2s, students share their sentences with each other, as well as any questions they have about the text. The 2s will need to provide some textual evidence to support their claim, while the 1s will be allowed to reveal to the 2s the background information they now have and how it did or didn’t change their understanding of the text.
- When the class comes back together, the instructor will ask if students think that everyone should have been given the *New Yorker* interview to read before reading the story for the first time. Other guiding questions could include:
  - Did anyone conclude while reading the class for homework that the main meaning was a metaphoric one commenting on the immigrant experience in the U.S.?
  - What do you think about Saunders’s comment that, regarding this metaphor, “anyone would have that interpretation of it?” Do you think that’s a fair statement to make, especially when he’s the one who wrote the story?
  - Saunders refers to the meaning of the story as ““about”” the way that people of means use and abuse people without.” Yet he goes on to say that the story can’t only be about that. Let’s hear some other interpretations you came up with for what the story is about.
  - The discussion will conclude by asking students to spend five minutes writing in their journals on whether or not this story belongs in a multicultural literature unit. The goal is to get students thinking about the essential question and how they define multiculturalism and the other key terms of the unit.
  - An essay will be assigned for homework, which will be graded based on a rubric (see artifact).

### Metaphor and Meaning: Short Essay Assignment

Write a 4-page essay, double-spaced, in which you **closely examine a metaphor** in one of the poems listed below. Describe the metaphor for an audience who may be unfamiliar with the text, making sure to reference words/phrases/stanzas from the poem. Please resist the urge to go online and find out what others have said about these poems. I'd like you to focus on your own experience and understanding of the poem. I'll leave the scope up to you—you may want to focus on a metaphor from one line or stanza, or discuss an extended metaphor that covers an entire poem.

After describing the metaphor, take a position on whether or not your selected poem succumbs to the “too-easy-metaphor dilemma” that Saunders refers to in his *New Yorker* interview. Is the metaphoric meaning the only meaning of your poem? Or is the poem about something else as well? If you believe the latter to be true, make sure to fill your reader in on what else you think the poem (or line or stanza) is about. And if you believe the metaphoric meaning is the only meaning of the poem, please explain whether or not you believe this one meaning is sufficient within the context of the poetry genre.

Please choose one of the following poems for your essay:

- “A Red, Red Rose,” Robert Burns
- “Lady Lazarus,” Sylvia Plath
- “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers,” Adrienne Rich
- “Leaving the Motel,” W. D. Snodgrass

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