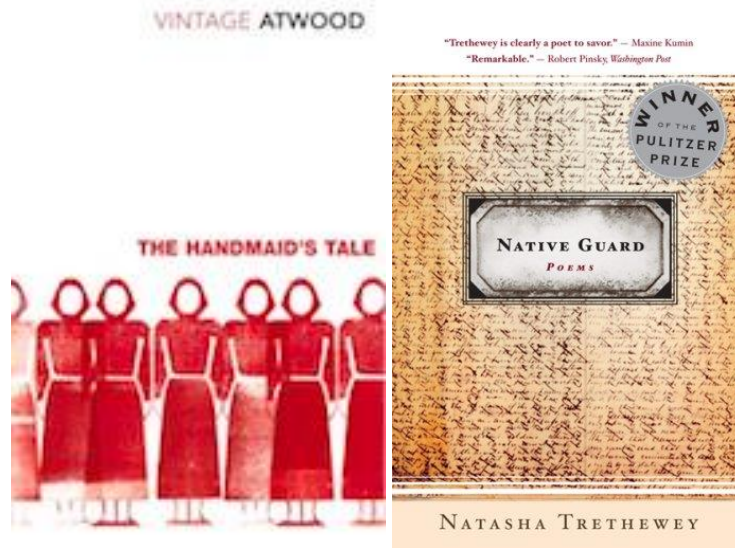


# “Theories of Time and Space”: Finding Identity Through Place



A five-week unit for juniors.

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## Rationale

Every student comes from somewhere. In this unit, my hope is that students will think about how the place or places they've come from have shaped them as they read about how different places have shaped characters and other people. The idea of a society is a group of people living together, following the same set of rules or customs. High school itself is a type of society, and by junior year, students have been shaped by their own home and school society. I want students to use this unit to begin thinking critically about what that concept of a society can mean, how many different groups it could describe, and how each of those groups affects its members. A society could be based around a geographic location, or a set of religious or political values, and each student is probably located within more than one of these communities. This unit will correspond with one of the key standards of the Common Core 11th Grade English classroom: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2 "Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text." By reading texts in which people are responding to the society they are located in, or have been involved with in the past, I hope students will begin to question, or at least consider, the ways their identity has been constructed and influenced by these societies, to be more self-aware, and not allow themselves to be defined by anything less than their own personal convictions.

The three texts I've chosen to read with the students in this unit represent three of the different ways a place or society can inform identity through three different genres. The main text we'll be reading is Margaret Atwood's classic novel *The Handmaid's Tale*.

The novel is a piece of speculative, dystopian fiction set in the near-future United States, in which the country has been taken over by a theocratic military dictatorship and renamed The Republic of Gilead. The novel outlines the caste system of this new society, and discusses the ways the characters are defined according to their role in this society. It is especially concerned with the enforcement of new gender and class roles. I thought this novel would be perfect for the unit because it is sometimes easier for students to analyze, question, or criticize something they aren't so familiar with. They will have the opportunity to see a society from the outside, rather than trying to grapple with the idea of something they themselves are part of. People might complain about the sexual elements of the novel, particularly the sexual violence, but sex is not presented in explicitly graphic terms within the novel, it is simply part of the society the characters have found themselves in, and the sexual nature of the text only serves to show the disgusting disparity between gender and class enforced by the society. The sexual nature of the novel is not a means of titillation, but a means to show the depth of morality's decline in The Republic of Gilead.

Students will also read selections from Natasha Trethewey's 2006 poetry collection *Native Guard* which won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 2007. Trethewey writes about growing up as a biracial girl in the Deep South. These poems will show students another way our identities are informed by the society we live in, as it was still illegal for her black mother and white father to be married in Mississippi in 1966. Geography is another factor that affects our identity, and Trethewey's poetry beautifully explore this aspect of her past, as she's coming to terms with defining her own place in American society. While some might question why I have chosen to use Trethewey in

this unit instead of a more established poet, after all, the struggle to define one's own identity has been around for as long as poetry, I would argue that not only has she won multiple awards for her poetry, but since 2012 has been the United States Poet Laureate, serving "as the official lightning rod for the poetic impulse of Americans," as the Library of Congress describes the position. You don't have to be biracial to understand Trethewey's struggle with her own identity. Trethewey is writing about herself, but also about an entire population of Americans who have experienced discrimination, or have had their identity molded because of their geographic location, and her poems will fit perfectly into the structure and function of this unit. I also think we should expose students to the fact that poetry is still a viable art form. Not all of it is ancient and indecipherable, but it can take on timeless issues in current ways. And I wanted to create a diverse group of writers for my students to read in this unit, to show that all identities are valuable, no matter how we form or discover them.

In my classroom, there will be as many different identities as there are students, and the readings from the unit should reflect wide range of individuals in the class. "Once More to the Lake" is an essay first published in 1941 and now available online. In the essay, White writes about a place he used to go on vacation, and compared the way he sees it as an adult to the way he saw it as a child, describing how the place, and he, have changed over the years. Perhaps some (lucky) students have not struggled to find their place in society, either at home or in school, but there is probably a specific place that has informed his or her identity, or at least means a lot to them. By reading this essay, I hope that students will realize that there are many factors that go into the shaping of identity, not just a society or a region. Every place we've lived or been, especially those places

that mean a lot to us, mean so much because they contribute to the people we become, and this essay will show students how to begin thinking about how one of those places can stay with us, and how we can respond to the places that have impacted us by writing about them.

This same E.B. White essay inspired one of the texts the students will produce. Students will choose a place that means a lot to them, and write a narrative in which they describe the place in detail, and then explain why it means so much to them, and how it has impacted their identity. Similar to the “Abandoned Farmhouse” assignment outlined by George Hillocks in his book *Narrative Writing: Learning a New Model for Teaching* (2007), the students will use this assignment as an opportunity for more creative writing, honing their skills for concrete detail, as White uses detail to show the difference in how he views the lake as an adult versus how he saw it as a child. The narrative assignment is in keeping with a standard for writing, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3, which states that students should “Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.” Writing the narrative will also serve to facilitate meaning making, as they explain why they chose to write about this place--what makes it so important and meaningful to them? They will also write about how this place has contributed to their own definition of what identity and society mean.

A more informal assignment will be the students’ weekly Response Journals, in which they will discuss and question elements of the text. They will use quotes from the text in their journals, which will allow them to informally begin the process of analyzing the text, and they will be able to use some of the journal entries as discussion starters

during the class. This journal is the perfect place for students to begin to think about their own definitions of identity and society, and how those two issues inform each other, as they will be writing an analytical essay, as the culminating text of the unit. This essay will allow students to explore the ideas of “Identity” and “Society” and discuss how society has informed the identity of one character from one of the three texts, citing examples from the text itself, addressing another standard, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1, stating that students should “Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.” Perhaps one particular character really stood out to a student, and clarified the student’s own idea of what shapes our identity. Ideally, the texts the students will produce themselves will be as diverse as the texts I have assigned.

If nothing else, by the end of the unit, the students will know there are many ways a place or society can inform identity, and there are as many ways someone can write about the relationship between the two. Hopefully though, they will see the ways the characters and speakers from the texts I’ve assigned have been affected, for good and ill, by society, and will apply that knowledge to their own lives. The purpose of reading and analyzing texts isn’t only to read and analyze and get a grade--the students should be able to use the knowledge they’ve creating during the process of analyzing, and relate it to how they live now, and carry it with them into the future.

## References

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# Materials

Class copies of *The Handmaid's Tale*

Class copies of *Native Guard*

Copies of "Once More to the Lake" by E.B. White

Paintings:

You can find using any internet search engine

*Christina's World* by Andrew Wyeth (1948)

*Las Meninas* by Diego Velazquez (1656)

*The Oath of the Horatii* by Jacques-Louis David (1784)

*The Kitchen Maid* by Jan Vermeer (1657-1658)

“Once More to the Lake”

By E. B. White

One summer, along about 1904, my father rented a camp on a lake in Maine and took us all there for the month of August. We all got ringworm from some kittens and had to rub Pond's Extract on our arms and legs night and morning, and my father rolled over in a canoe with all his clothes on; but outside of that the vacation was a success and from then on none of us ever thought there was any place in the world like that lake in Maine. We returned summer after summer--always on August 1st for one month. I have since become a salt-water man, but sometimes in summer there are days when the restlessness of the tides and the fearful cold of the sea water and the incessant wind which blows across the afternoon and into the evening make me wish for the placidity of a lake in the woods. A few weeks ago this feeling got so strong I bought myself a couple of bass hooks and a spinner and returned to the lake where we used to go, for a week's fishing and to revisit old haunts.

I took along my son, who had never had any fresh water up his nose and who had seen lily pads only from train windows. On the journey over to the lake I began to wonder what it would be like. I wondered how time would have marred this unique, this holy spot--the coves and streams, the hills that the sun set behind, the camps and the paths behind the camps. I was sure that the tarred road would have found it out and I wondered in what other ways it would be desolated. It is strange how much you can remember about places like that once you allow your mind to return into the grooves which lead back. You remember one thing, and that suddenly reminds you of another thing. I guess I remembered clearest of all the early mornings, when the lake was cool and motionless, remembered how the bedroom smelled of the lumber it was made of and of the wet woods whose scent entered through the screen. The partitions in the camp were thin and did not extend clear to the top of the rooms, and as I was always the first up I would dress softly so as not to wake the others, and sneak out into the sweet outdoors and start out in the canoe, keeping close along the shore in the long shadows of the pines. I remembered being very careful never to rub my paddle against the gunwale for fear of disturbing the stillness of the cathedral.

The lake had never been what you would call a wild lake. There were cottages sprinkled around the shores, and it was in farming although the shores of the lake were quite heavily wooded. Some of the cottages were owned by nearby farmers, and you would live at the shore and eat your meals at the farmhouse. That's what our family did. But although it wasn't wild, it was a fairly large and undisturbed lake and there were places in it which, to a child at least, seemed infinitely remote and primeval.

I was right about the tar: it led to within half a mile of the shore. But when I got back there, with my boy, and we settled into a camp near a farmhouse and into the kind of summertime I had known, I could tell that it was going to be pretty much the same as it had been before--I knew it, lying in bed the first morning, smelling the bedroom, and hearing the boy sneak quietly out and go off along the shore in a boat. I began to sustain

the illusion that he was I, and therefore, by simple transposition, that I was my father. This sensation persisted, kept cropping up all the time we were there. It was not an entirely new feeling, but in this setting it grew much stronger. I seemed to be living a dual existence. I would be in the middle of some simple act, I would be picking up a bait box or laying down a table fork, or I would be saying something, and suddenly it would be not I but my father who was saying the words or making the gesture. It gave me a creepy sensation.

We went fishing the first morning. I felt the same damp moss covering the worms in the bait can, and saw the dragonfly alight on the tip of my rod as it hovered a few inches from the surface of the water. It was the arrival of this fly that convinced me beyond any doubt that everything was as it always had been, that the years were a mirage and there had been no years. The small waves were the same, chucking the rowboat under the chin as we fished at anchor, and the boat was the same boat, the same color green and the ribs broken in the same places, and under the floor-boards the same freshwater leavings and debris--the dead helgramite, the wisps of moss, the rusty discarded fishhook, the dried blood from yesterday's catch. We stared silently at the tips of our rods, at the dragonflies that came and wells. I lowered the tip of mine into the water, tentatively, pensively dislodging the fly, which darted two feet away, poised, darted two feet back, and came to rest again a little farther up the rod. There had been no years between the ducking of this dragonfly and the other one--the one that was part of memory. I looked at the boy, who was silently watching his fly, and it was my hands that held his rod, my eyes watching. I felt dizzy and didn't know which rod I was at the end of.

We caught two bass, hauling them in briskly as though they were mackerel, pulling them over the side of the boat in a businesslike manner without any landing net, and stunning them with a blow on the back of the head. When we got back for a swim before lunch, the lake was exactly where we had left it, the same number of inches from the dock, and there was only the merest suggestion of a breeze. This seemed an utterly enchanted sea, this lake you could leave to its own devices for a few hours and come back to, and find that it had not stirred, this constant and trustworthy body of water. In the shallows, the dark, water-soaked sticks and twigs, smooth and old, were undulating in clusters on the bottom against the clean ribbed sand, and the track of the mussel was plain. A school of minnows swam by, each minnow with its small, individual shadow, doubling the attendance, so clear and sharp in the sunlight. Some of the other campers were in swimming, along the shore, one of them with a cake of soap, and the water felt thin and clear and insubstantial. Over the years there had been this person with the cake of soap, this cultist, and here he was. There had been no years.

Up to the farmhouse to dinner through the teeming, dusty field, the road under our sneakers was only a two-track road. The middle track was missing, the one with the marks of the hooves and the splotches of dried, flaky manure. There had always been three tracks to choose from in choosing which track to walk in; now the choice was narrowed down to two. For a moment I missed terribly the middle alternative. But the way led past the tennis court, and something about the way it lay there in the sun reassured me; the tape had loosened along the backline, the alleys were green with plantains and other weeds, and the net (installed in June and removed in September)

sagged in the dry noon, and the whole place steamed with midday heat and hunger and emptiness. There was a choice of pie for dessert, and one was blueberry and one was apple, and the waitresses were the same country girls, there having been no passage of time, only the illusion of it as in a dropped curtain--the waitresses were still fifteen; their hair had been washed, that was the only difference--they had been to the movies and seen the pretty girls with the clean hair.

Summertime, oh summertime, pattern of life indelible, the fade proof lake, the woods unshatterable, the pasture with the sweet fern and the juniper forever and ever, summer without end; this was the background, and the life along the shore was the design, the cottages with their innocent and tranquil design, their tiny docks with the flagpole and the American flag floating against the white clouds in the blue sky, the little paths over the roots of the trees leading from camp to camp and the paths leading back to the outhouses and the can of lime for sprinkling, and at the souvenir counters at the store the miniature birch-bark canoes and the post cards that showed things looking a little better than they looked. This was the American family at play, escaping the city heat, wondering whether the newcomers at the camp at the head of the cove were "common" or "nice," wondering whether it was true that the people who drove up for Sunday dinner at the farmhouse were turned away because there wasn't enough chicken.

It seemed to me, as I kept remembering all this, that those times and those summers had been infinitely precious and worth saving. There had been jollity and peace and goodness. The arriving (at the beginning of August) had been so big a business in itself, at the railway station the farm wagon drawn up, the first smell of the pine-laden air, the first glimpse of the smiling farmer, and the great importance of the trunks and your father's enormous authority in such matters, and the feel of the wagon under you for the long ten-mile haul, and at the top of the last long hill catching the first view of the lake after eleven months of not seeing this cherished body of water. The shouts and cries of the other campers when they saw you, and the trunks to be unpacked, to give up their rich burden. (Arriving was less exciting nowadays, when you sneaked up in your car and parked it under a tree near the camp and took out the bags and in five minutes it was all over, no fuss, no loud wonderful fuss about trunks.)

Peace and goodness and jollity. The only thing that was wrong now, really, was the sound of the place, an unfamiliar nervous sound of the outboard motors. This was the note that jarred, the one thing that would sometimes break the illusion and set the years moving. In those other summertimes, all motors were inboard; and when they were at a little distance, the noise they made was a sedative, an ingredient of summer sleep. They were one-cylinder and two-cylinder engines, and some were make-and-break and some were jump-spark, but they all made a sleepy sound across the lake. The one-lungers throbbed and fluttered, and the twin-cylinder ones purred and purred, and that was a quiet sound too. But now the campers all had outboards. In the daytime, in the hot mornings, these motors made a petulant, irritable sound; at night, in the still evening when the afterglow lit the water, they whined about one's ears like mosquitoes. My boy loved our rented outboard, and his great desire was to achieve single-handed mastery over it, and authority, and he soon learned the trick of choking it a little (but not too much), and the adjustment of the needle valve.

Watching him I would remember the things you could do with the old one-cylinder engine with the heavy flywheel, how you could have it eating out of your hand if you got really close to it spiritually. Motor boats in those days didn't have clutches, and you would make a landing by shutting off the motor at the proper time and coasting in with a dead rudder. But there was a way of reversing them, if you learned the trick, by cutting the switch and putting it on again exactly on the final dying revolution of the flywheel, so that it would kick back against compression and begin reversing. Approaching a dock in a strong following breeze, it was difficult to slow up sufficiently by the ordinary coasting method, and if a boy felt he had complete mastery over his motor, he was tempted to keep it running beyond its time and then reverse it a few feet from the dock. It took a cool nerve, because if you threw the switch a twentieth of a second too soon you would catch the flywheel when it still had speed enough to go up past center, and the boat would leap ahead, charging bull-fashion at the dock.

We had a good week at the camp. The bass were biting well and the sun shone endlessly, day after day. We would be tired at night and lie down in the accumulated heat of the little bedrooms after the long hot day and the breeze would stir almost imperceptibly outside and the smell of the swamp drift in through the rusty screens. Sleep would come easily and in the morning the red squirrel would be on the roof, tapping out his gay routine. I kept remembering everything, lying in bed in the mornings--the small steamboat that had a long rounded stern like the lip of a Ubangi, and how quietly she ran on the moonlight sails, when the older boys played their mandolins and the girls sang and we ate doughnuts dipped in sugar, and how sweet the music was on the water in the shining night, and what it had felt like to think about girls then. After breakfast we would go up to the store and the things were in the same place--the minnows in a bottle, the plugs and spinners disarranged and pawed over by the youngsters from the boys' camp, the fig newtons and the Beeman's gum. Outside, the road was tarred and cars stood in front of the store. Inside, all was just as it had always been, except there was more Coca Cola and not so much Moxie and root beer and birch beer and sarsaparilla. We would walk out with a bottle of pop apiece and sometimes the pop would backfire up our noses and hurt. We explored the streams, quietly, where the turtles slid off the sunny logs and dug their way into the soft bottom; and we lay on the town wharf and fed worms to the tame bass. Everywhere we went I had trouble making out which was I, the one walking at my side, the one walking in my pants.

One afternoon while we were there at that lake a thunderstorm came up. It was like the revival of an old melodrama that I had seen long ago with childish awe. The second-act climax of the drama of the electrical disturbance over a lake in America had not changed in any important respect. This was the big scene, still the big scene. The whole thing was so familiar, the first feeling of oppression and heat and a general air around camp of not wanting to go very far away. In mid-afternoon (it was all the same) a curious darkening of the sky, and a lull in everything that had made life tick; and then the way the boats suddenly swung the other way at their moorings with the coming of a breeze out of the new quarter, and the premonitory rumble. Then the kettle drum, then the snare, then the bass drum and cymbals, then crackling light against the dark, and the gods grinning and licking their chops in the hills. Afterward the calm, the rain steadily rustling in the calm lake, the return of light and hope and spirits, and the campers running out in joy and relief

to go swimming in the rain, their bright cries perpetuating the deathless joke about how they were getting simply drenched, and the children screaming with delight at the new sensation of bathing in the rain, and the joke about getting drenched linking the generations in a strong indestructible chain. And the comedian who waded in carrying an umbrella.

When the others went swimming my son said he was going in too. He pulled his dripping trunks from the line where they had hung all through the shower, and wrung them out. Languidly, and with no thought of going in, I watched him, his hard little body, skinny and bare, saw him wince slightly as he pulled up around his vitals the small, soggy, icy garment. As he buckled the swollen belt suddenly my groin felt the chill of death.

## Goals/Rubrics

Throughout this unit, students will examine the ideas of Identity and Society, and read texts in which society or place informs the characters' sense of identity. The In-Process texts for this unit include personal narrative, in which they begin to grapple with the unit's main ideas, and a weekly response journal in which they keep track of their changing ideas and have the opportunity to refine their thoughts prior to writing the culminating essay. The Culminating Text for this unit will be an analytical essay, allowing students to write about analyze how society has informed the identity of one of the characters from one of the texts.

### Goal 1: Narrative

Students will write a short narrative in which they discuss Identity and Society by writing about a place that has made a big impact on their identities or a time when they have noticed their identity was shaped by their society. They will briefly describe their personal definitions of these two ideas, and consider ways in which society can inform a person's or character's identity. This narrative's purpose is to get the students to start thinking about two ideas that will be the focus of this Unit over the next six weeks.

Students will use their own experience to illustrate their definitions. The narrative should be 400-500 words. Worth 100 points.

Narratives earning an "A" will:

- include a discussion of both terms, informed by personal examples from the narrative
- include three ways in which a society or place can inform identity
- meet the word count requirements
- not include grammar or other errors that distract from the reading of the text
- be turned in on time

Narratives earning a "B" will:

- include a discussion of both terms, but only provide examples for one
- include only 2 ways in which a society or place can inform identity
- meet the word count requirements
- not include grammar or other errors that distract from the reading of the text
- be turned in on time

Narratives earning a "C" will:

- include a discussion of only one of the terms with examples, or will discuss both terms with no examples
- include only 1 way in which a society or place can inform identity
- not meet word count requirements
- include a few grammar or other errors that distract from the reading of the text
- be turned in 1-2 days late



Narratives earning a "D" will:

- discuss only one term with no examples from literature or personal experience
- include only 1 way in which a society or place can inform identity
- not meet word count requirements
- include grammar or other errors that distract from the reading
- be turned in 3-4 days late

Narratives earning an "F" will:

- not discuss either term
- include no examples of ways in which a society or place can inform identity
- not meet word count requirements
- include many grammar or other errors that distract from the reading
- be turned 5 or more days late

## Goal 2: Weekly Response Journals

Students will also engage the texts with weekly response journals, in which they discuss or question an element of the reading. Each journal will be 150-250 words, and will include 1 or more quotes from the text in question. The student will write two per week, resulting in 12 entries total. At least three times during the unit the student will “present” their response or question in class. They will discuss their response at least once before the end of the third week, and must have discussed at least three of their responses by the end of the unit’s sixth week. This will engage students in class discussion, and will allow students more agency in determining the elements of the texts the class will discuss.

Journals will receive a "Check Plus" if:

- the student writes 2 per week
- each entry meets the word count requirement
- each entry includes 1 or more quotes from the text

Journals will receive a "Check" if:

- the student writes two per week
- one of the entries does not meet the word count requirement
- one of the entries does not include 1 or more quotes from the text

Journals will receive a "Check Minus" if:

- the student writes only 1 entry
- the entry does not meet the word count requirement
- the entry does not include 1 or more quotes from the text

The journals will be graded weekly, and students will receive a Check Plus, Check, or Check Minus every week. Or the student will earn a 0 for the week if he or she does not turn the journal in. At the end of the unit, students will receive 3 points for every "Check Plus", 2 for every "Check", and 1 for every "Check Minus." They will also receive 5 points for each time they use an entry for class discussion, as long as their contribution is on time. The highest number of points a student can earn for the Weekly Response

Journals is 33. There are a total of 50 points available for the Daily Grade portion of the final grade, and the journal will comprise 33 of these, with the other 17 points being earned through in class writing assignments and projects.

### Goal 3: Character Identity Essay

Students will write an essay (500-700 words) in which they analyze an aspect of one of the texts in which a character is defined by his or her society. This analysis can center on a scene from the text, a personality trait of the character, or how the character functions in the larger society as a whole. The student will turn in a tentative thesis/topic as well as three quotes from the text they have chosen to write about that defend or interact with that topic the week before the final draft is due. Worth 100 points.

For this essay, students earning an "A" will:

- Analyze a character from the text using more than their three quotes as supporting evidence in a clear and concise way, demonstrating the construction of new, original ideas
- Turn in both the essay as well as the tentative topic on time and meet word count requirement.
- Turn in an essay free of grammar or other errors that distract from the reading of the text.
- Use MLA format and citations correctly

Students earning a "B" will:

- Analyze a character in terms of their identity, but with less clarity and consistency than A papers.
- Use only three quotes from the text as supporting evidence
- Turn in both the essay as well as the tentative topic on time, and meet word count requirements.
- Turn in an essay free of grammar or other errors that distract from the reading of the text.
- Use MLA format and citations correctly

Students earning a "C" will:

- Fall short of analysis, relying mostly on plot summary
- Use less than three quotes from the text as evidence
- Fall slightly short of word count requirements (within 75 words)
- Turn in essay and/or tentative topic 1-2 days late
- Turn in an essay with a few grammar or other errors that distract from the reading of the text.
- Include errors using MLA format and citation

Students earning a "D" will:

- Include no analysis or evidence from the text
- Not meet word count requirements for either the essay
- Turn in either the essay or the tentative topic 3-4 days late

- Turn in an essay with a few grammar or other errors that distract from the reading of the text, with errors in MLA format and citation

Students earning an “F” will:

- Demonstrate no understanding of the topic
- Not meet word count requirements
- Turn in either the essay or tentative topic 5 or more days late
- Turn in an essay with many grammar or other errors that distract from the reading of the text.
- Use no MLA formatting or citations

# Introductory Activity

Daily Lesson Plans:

Based on 50 minutes of class per day

Day 1: Introductory Activity

- 3 minutes: take attendance
- 5 minutes: Tell students the theme, goals, and texts for the new unit. Explain the introductory activity: I will project four paintings onto the screen. Students will choose one of the paintings and use it to respond to a prompt. Then they will break into groups, one group per painting and discuss what they've written: similarities and differences in their responses, things they noticed about the painting no one else has, etc. Finally the class will come back together so each group can report on their narratives and their insights into the painting.
- 15 minutes: Choose a painting and respond to the prompt:

Prompt: Imagine you are the character or one of the characters in the painting you chose. Write a first person narrative in which you 1.) Describe the setting of the painting, 2.) Describe what daily life is like in that place, and one way in which that setting might have contributed to your identity, and 3.) how you are feeling in the moment the painting has captured.

- 15 minutes: Break the students into groups according to the painting they chose (if too many students pick one painting their group can be split in two). Have them discuss their narratives.
- 10 minutes: Stop individual group discussion and have each group report on their particular painting, especially describing how members characterized the setting, and listing ways members of the group wrote about how the setting affected the identity of the characters in the painting.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class.

Paintings:

1. *Christina's World* by Andrew Wyeth (1948)
2. *Las Meninas* by Diego Velazquez (1656)
3. *The Oath of the Horatii* by Jacques-Louis David (1784)
4. *The Kitchen Maid* by Jan Vermeer (1657-1658)

## Daily Lesson Plans:

Based on 50 minutes of class per day

### Week One

#### Day 1: (Monday) Introductory Activity

- 3 minutes: take attendance
- 5 minutes: Tell students the theme, goals, and texts for the new unit. Explain the introductory activity: I will project four paintings onto the screen. Students will choose one of the paintings and use it to respond to a prompt. Then they will break into groups, one group per painting and discuss what they've written: similarities and differences in their responses, things they noticed about the painting no one else has, etc. Finally the class will come back together so each group can report on their narratives and their insights into the painting.
- 15 minutes: Choose a painting and respond to the prompt:

Prompt: Imagine you are the character or one of the characters in the painting you chose.

Write a first person narrative in which you 1.) Describe the setting of the painting, 2.)

Describe what daily life is like in that place, and one way in which that setting might

have contributed to your identity, and 3.) how you are feeling in the moment the painting has captured.

- 15 minutes: Break the students into groups according to the painting they chose (if too many students pick one painting their group can be split in two). Have them discuss their narratives.

- 10 minutes: Stop individual group discussion and have each group report on their particular painting, especially describing how members characterized the setting, and listing ways members of the group wrote about how the setting affected the identity of the characters in the painting.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, hand out journals, dismiss class.

Homework: Write a journal entry about the class activity. Did it change your idea of how identity can be influenced? What elements of the painting you chose especially jumped out to you as something that could affect identity?

Paintings:

1. *Christina's World* by Andrew Wyeth (1948)
2. *Las Meninas* by Diego Velazquez (1656)
3. *The Oath of the Horatii* by Jacques-Louis David (1784)
4. *The Kitchen Maid* by Jan Vermeer (1657-1658)

Day 2: (Tuesday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Introduce Margaret Atwood and the novel. Pass out the class copies of the book, along with handout with the two pages of the first chapter copied on it, and black markers. Read the first chapter of the novel silently with the class (p. 3-4). Explain the found poem group activity. Show them a copy of a blackout poem on the projector.



Found Poem Activity Directions: In groups of 4 or 5 use the copied version of the first chapter to create a blackout poem signifying what your group thinks the novel is going to be about. Consider what clues from the first two pages set up how you predict the novel might unfold.

- 30 minutes: Have students working in groups on their blackout poems. Walk around the classroom to see how each group is working, what angle their poem is taking, answering questions, etc. Collect the poems at the end of the session.
- 2 minutes: Dismiss class, assign homework.

Homework: Read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 7-33

Day 3: (Wednesday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 10 minutes: Have students reconvene with their groups, give each group's poem back to them, and have them discuss how last night's reading confirmed or contradicted the predictions their poem suggests.
- 35 minutes: Each group shows the class their poem, reads it aloud, and reports their predictions from yesterday and the discussion they've just had about how the reading changed their idea of the directions the novel might take. This activity should allow for a class discussion led by each group's own discoveries. Students can ask questions of each other and of you.
- 2 minutes: Dismiss class, assign homework

Homework: Read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 37-64 for Friday's class. Remind them they have two journal entries due by Friday. (One should have already been written.)

Day 4: (Thursday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 10 minutes: Use today to get the students to start thinking about narrative writing. They should be starting to consider how narrative writing works, and why it's a valuable tool for expression. This activity will be good practice when they begin writing narratives about their own lives. Explain the Abandoned Farmhouse activity (borrowed from *Narrative Writing: Learning a New Model for Teaching* by George Hillocks).

Assignment: Write a short narrative in which you visit or happen upon an abandoned farmhouse. Be sure to include elements like:

- how you got to the house, why you are there, why you decide to explore
- details describing the house itself, what it looks like, what's inside, who you think used to live there
- how long you stay at the house, why you decide to leave, if you are changed at all by your experience there

- 25 minutes: Let students work on their narratives. Work on your own to share along with them.
- 10 minutes: Let students share all or part of their narratives. Share your own if they ask or if they are initially hesitant to read their own writing aloud.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Remind students to have p. 37-64 read by tomorrow, and that their two journal entries are due the next day

Day 5: (Friday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 10-15 minutes: Allow students to bring up something from their reading journal to initiate class discussion of the novel.
- 15-20 minutes: have students break into groups of 4 or 5 and come up with one burning question from what they've read in the novel so far. Once each group has come up with their question (about 5 minutes) let them ask the class, and have the class answer/discuss the group's question.
- 15 minutes: Allow students to read for the rest of the class. Happy Friday! I hope to have time in class to let the students read every week. They can read *The Handmaid's Tale* or anything else, as long as it's not homework for another class.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 69-106 for Monday

## Week Two

Day 6: (Monday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Introduce Narrative assignment to the class. Discuss the goals and rubric. Ask if there is anything they think should be added to the rubric or if anything is unfair. Adjust using best judgment.
- 30 minutes: Pass out copies and read “Once More to the Lake” by E.B. White as a class. Use remaining time for a class discussion in which students discuss the conventions of the essay, what they think, do they like it, and how it compares to their Abandoned Farmhouse narratives. Should not be much time after reading.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Re-read “Once More to the Lake” or catch up in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Quiz

Tomorrow

Day 7: (Tuesday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Quiz on *The Handmaid’s Tale* so far. Quizzes receiving a check or check plus can count as one journal entry. Directions: Find 1 quote from the text that shows how Offred is affected by the society of Gilead and discuss.
- 20 minutes: Allow students to break into groups of 4-5 to discuss their ideas for their narratives. How did the White essay inform the way they think they want to write their narrative? Will theirs be similar or different to White’s?

- 10 minutes: Come back together as a class. Members of groups should share their best ideas, or ask their most burning questions.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class.

Homework: Read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 109-140 for tomorrow. Tell students they can conference about their narrative on Friday, so they should start working.

Day 8: (Wednesday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance Housekeeping
- 20 minutes: Journal Discussion—2 or 3 times a week, we will have a journal discussion, when students will fulfill part of their Response Journal assignment to bring up a topic or question from one of their journal entries. They have to prompt discussion at least once before the end of the third week, and three times total before the unit is over at the end of the fifth.
- 5 minutes: Explain Homebody in-class activity, and have students break into small groups of 4-5.
- 20 minutes: Students will work on homebody activity with their groups. Tell them they will have some additional time to finish them in class tomorrow, and then will present their drawing to the rest of the class. Have them pass whatever materials they have completed by the end of this class session for the teacher to store and pass back to the groups tomorrow.

Homebody Activity Instructions: (adapted from Smagorinsky's *Teaching English by Design* p. 37)

With your group, draw a depiction of the Commander's household, using symbols, key phrases from the text, and other details to show the house in terms of Gilead's social society as well as the character's relationships to one another, as far as we have read in the novel. You can draw the house any way you wish, as an actual house, or a floor plan—be creative, and use whatever symbols, quotes, and details speak loudest to your group. This should be a way to show concretely what details of Gilead society we have learned so far in our reading. Be sure to include signs of the Commander, Serena Joy, and Offred.

- 2 minutes: Dismiss class, assign homework

Homework: read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 143-171

Day 9: (Thursday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 5 minutes: Re-form groups from yesterday, and pass groups back whatever materials they were working with and on the day before.
- 15 minutes: Allow students to finish working on the Homebody activity.
- 20 minutes: Allow each group to pass around and/or display their projects. Each group should present to the rest of the class, describing why they chose to depict the Commander's house the way they did, and defend their choices of whichever quotes, symbols, or other details they chose to include to reference the house in relation to Gilead society, and its occupants to the society as well as to each other.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Catch up in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Day 10: Friday

3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

20 minutes: Journal Discussion—Remind students they must have presented at least one comment or question from their response journals to prompt class discussion by next Friday.

25 minutes: Free Reading: students may read *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Native Guard*, or anything else as long as it's not homework for another class. While class is reading, students can speak to teacher individually about their narratives. Show what they have, ask questions, etc.

2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 171-206

### **Week Three**

Day 11: (Monday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 10 minutes: Discuss the merits of good narrative writing. What have the students seen in the novel so far, and the White essay that they are going to use in their own narrative writing, or what narrative strategies have they already used when working on their assignment?

- 10 minutes: Introduce in-class narrative activity in which students focus on the ways language and gender interact, and discover their own gender biases in writing.

#### In-Class Narrative Writing Assignment

Write a narrative explaining why the characters listed below find themselves in a hall outside a courtroom. Please use pronouns clearly when you refer to the characters so that I can easily tell to which characters you refer and so that I know who does what. (If you want, you may even give the characters names to identify them.) Because this is an in-class assignment, I will not grade the paper for spelling and minor punctuation mistakes. You have 25 minutes to write your narrative. Have fun with your story!

The Characters: an attorney, a physician, a police officer, a judge, a teacher, a professor, a nurse

- 25 minutes: Students will write their story in class. Remind them when they are getting close to the end of the writing session because they will now be allowed to finish at home.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 207-224 Narrative assignment DUE

Wednesday.

Day 12: (Tuesday)

- 2 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping



- 15 minutes: Students will break into group of 4-5 and discuss whether or not they think they wrote their characters in a gender-biased way, then they will read their narratives to the group.
- 15 minutes: Students will come back together to read a few of their narratives aloud to the class. Have them call out the genders of their characters and make a chart on the board of each characters and the gender each student chose to give them.
- 15 minutes: Discuss as a class the implications of what the chart on the board shows. Most likely, students will make the characters with certain jobs female (nurse, teacher) and other male (judge, professor). Apply this discussion to *The Handmaid's Tale*, and talk about the gender roles in the society of Gilead within the novel. Are they similar to our own biases?
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Have students write a reflection to their biases (or lack thereof) as one of their journal entries for the week. Narrative assignment DUE tomorrow!

Note: The lesson plans for the last two days have been adapted from:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/avoiding-sexist-language-using-201.html>

Day 13: (Wednesday) Narratives DUE

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 20 minutes: Journal Discussion—students must have presented one comment or question from their journal by Friday.

- 25 minutes: Students can read their narrative aloud to the class. Once everyone who wants to read aloud has done so, they can pass around their narratives for the rest of the class to read silently.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 224-255

Day 14: (Thursday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 5 minutes: Explain the group activity, and have students break into small groups of 4-5
- 20 minutes: In groups, have students complete the following activity using the text of the novel they've read so far.

Laws of Gilead:

Students will break into groups of 4-5 and make a list of the Laws of Gilead. They will use the text to write down what rules the characters must follow and break down the social caste system, and then discuss how the different characters respond to the laws, get around them, etc.

- 15 minutes: Groups will write their list of Laws and castes on the board, with each group adding whatever Law or level of society they found that hasn't already been added. Once the list is comprehensive and each group has added theirs, the class will discuss Gilead and Offred's place within that society in terms of the Laws the students have listed. They can respond to this activity in the journals if they wish.

- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Catch up in *The Handmaid's Tale* and work on journal

Day 15: (Friday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Explain the analytical essay assignment. Go over your expectations for both the final essay and the tentative topic assignment. Show them the rubric you have created. Ask students if they think it is fair/if there is anything they think should be changed or added. You can adjust according to your best judgment.
- 20 minutes: Journal discussion. Students who haven't presented at least one comment or question from their journal to prompt discussion must have done so, or do so, by today or they will have points deducted from their response journal grade. Each student will present their entry, and the class will respond, and then move on the next student. There might be more volunteers than usual today, so if it must bleed into the free reading time that's okay.
- 20 minutes: Free reading: Students can use this time to finish *The Handmaid's Tale* which they will be assigned to do over the weekend, or read something else of their choice as long as it's not homework for another class.
- 2 minutes: Dismiss class, assign homework

Homework: Read *The Handmaid's Tale* p. 259-311 (end of book!)

## **Week Four**

Day 16: (Monday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 10 minutes: Ask students if anyone knows what neologism means. Discuss their answers, or immediately pull up the definition on the class projector for everyone to see. (def. a newly coined word or expression). Ask them if they noticed any neologisms in *The Handmaid's Tale*.
- 35 minutes: Divide the book into 5 sections, each with 62 pages. Have students break into groups of 4-5 and choose from one of the five different sections of the book. Ask each group to find as many different neologisms in their section as they can, and discuss the original meaning of the word vs. the new meaning, or the new word's meaning within the Republic of Gilead.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Finish *The Handmaid's Tale* if they haven't yet

Day 17: (Tuesday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 5 minutes: Have students re-form their groups from the previous day, and remind themselves which words they found and want to present to the rest of the class.
- 30 minutes: Starting with the group covering the first section of the novel, each group will present the neologisms they found, reading the passage from which it came, and reporting on their discussion of the word's implications within the novel. The teacher should add any words they think are important that the group may have missed, and should ask questions/encourage students from other groups to ask questions as well.

- 10 minutes: Journal Reflection—students can use this time to write in the journal, choosing one word, either one they discussed in their own group or another, and writing about its meaning in Gilead and its meaning in our own society. How does the word function differently? Or does it? How does the novel’s treatment of language contribute to Atwood’s construction of this speculative society?
- 2 minutes: Dismiss class, assign homework

Homework: Finish journal if they didn’t in class. Read “Theories of Time and Space” from *Native Guard* and turn in a hand-written copy of the poem.

(Note: previous two days of lessons have been adapted from

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/language-power-handmaid-tale-1161.html?tab=4#tabs>)

Day 18: (Wednesday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping, students will turn in their copies of the poem
- 10 minutes: Introduce Natasha Trethewey and *Native Guard* to the class, including a brief biography and some selections of critical articles about the poetry collection. Read “Theories of Time and Space” aloud to the class and ask if they agree with the critics so far.
- 15 minutes: Teacher will hand out copies of “Theories of Time and Space” and “The Southern Crescent” from *Native Guard*. Students will break into groups of 3-4 and spend this time reading the two poems silently to themselves, and underlining their favorite line, circling words they don’t know or sections they

want to ask the rest of their group about, and starring lines they want to bring up in discussion, writing their comment on the paper. They should be thinking about how the poems work together and how they are different.

- 20 minutes: Groups should discuss the poems as a pair, and as separate piece, bringing up the favorite lines, questions, and comments they wrote on their copies. The teacher should circulate the group to discuss any questions students can't answer with their group's help alone, and share his or her own favorite lines, insights into the poems.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Read *Native Guard* p. 7-15

Day 19: (Thursday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 20 minutes: Journal Discussion—remind students they have to share a journal entry two more times before the end of the unit next week.
- 15 minutes: Poetry Game.

Poetry Game Directions: (adapted from Dear Weaver)

Students think of the first letter of their first name (or first letter of their last name) and for one minute write down all the words they can think of that begin with that letter. Then give them thirty seconds to circle their three favorite words, and ten seconds to choose their favorite of those three. The teacher should be keeping time, but also participating to share his/her poem with the class once the activity is complete. On a separate sheet of

paper, students should write the letter of the last name down the left side of the page like this:

N

A

M

E

Then the student will use the word they chose to start writing a poem, incorporating the other letters of their name as letters starting other words as the poem progresses. Tell students the poem should be one single piece of writing, and that each letter of their name shouldn't start a completely new idea or be its own line. Give students the rest of the time to finish their poems. As people start to finish, go around and read their poems and show them your own.

- 10 minutes: Go around the room and let students share their poems with the class. Ask if any of them can draw a comparison between their poem, and something they've read in *Native Guard*.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Read *Native Guard* p. 19-31

Day 20: Friday MLA Tentative Topics Due

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 10 minutes: Have the students turn in their tentative topics, with the three quotes they plan on using. Go over MLA formatting. Since their analytical essay is only pulling textual support from one novel, the focus should be on formatting of the

paper as a whole, and in-text citations of the author and page number the quote they choose is from. Use some of the quotes the students have turned in as examples, and show how they would be cited in MLA format within their essays. Also show students how to quote poetry in essays, for those students who choose to write about a poem from *Native Guard* for their essay.

- 15 minutes: Journal discussion—remind students they only have two more journal discussion sessions (Monday and Friday) to present one of their entries to the class, and they have to discuss three total before the end of the unit.
- 20: Free Reading: Students can use this time to read *Native Guard* or anything else as long as it's not homework for another class. They can also use this time to meet with the teacher about their topic or quote selections.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Read *Native Guard* p. 35-46

## **Week Five**

Day 21: (Monday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Journal discussion
- 30 minutes: Poetry Election activity.

Instructions: On a piece of paper, class will vote on what they think are the four “best” poems that represent the theme of the unit (identity and society) in *Native Guard*. With the help of the class, we will count the votes and come up with the four poems they believe are the best. We will discuss why students voted for the poems they did. What do



they think makes one of the poems better than the others. Then, four students will volunteer to represent one of the four poems, and defend to the class why they think their poem is the best, addressing its literary merits, and its relevance to the themes of the unit. Once the representatives have logged their defenses, the class will vote on the one poem they think best encompasses the unit, and we will count the votes and declare a winner.

- 2 minutes: Assign homework and dismiss class

Homework: Work on essay—remind students we will be meeting in the computer lab tomorrow, so if they have any work they have already done, they should either email it to themselves or save it on a USB drive.

Day 22: (Tuesday) Class will meet in computer lab

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 45 minutes: Students will use the computers to work on their essays. Teacher will be on hand to answer any questions about the assignment. At the end of the session, each student should print out what they have written so far to turn in for the teacher to save for peer conferencing tomorrow.
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: If students continue to work on their assignments at home, they must print out an updated version of their essay drafts, otherwise they will be conferencing with the drafts they handed in at the end of class yesterday.

Day 23: (Wednesday)

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

- 5 minutes: Have students break up into groups of 4 (with one group of 3 or 5 if the numbers aren't even) for peer conferencing. There will be four rounds of conferencing, each ten minutes long, in which students will read their peer's draft and write three good things, three questions they have, and three suggestions to make it better, realizing that these drafts are a work in progress and aren't complete.
- 10 minutes: Peer conference round 1
- 10 minutes: Peer conference round 2
- 10 minutes: Peer conference round 3
- 10 minutes: Peer conference round 4
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Work on essay—bring the most updated version of your essay to computer lab where we will meet for class tomorrow. Remind students they still have two journal entries due for the week.

Day 24: (Thursday) computer lab

3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping

45 minutes: Students will use the computers to work on their essays. Teacher will be on hand to answer any questions about the assignment.

2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class

Homework: Finish essays! Finish journals! Tomorrow is last day for journal discussion.

Day 25: (Friday) Essay Due—last day for journal discussion

- 3 minutes: Attendance and housekeeping
- 20 minutes: Last journal discussion—students must have used at least three journal entries to prompt discussion by today or points will be deducted from their daily grade.
- 25 minutes: Free reading—students can bring whatever they want to read, as long as it's not homework for another class. Hooray!
- 2 minutes: Assign homework, dismiss class.

Homework: Come to class ready to start a new unit on Monday!