



◆ASYMPTOTE

Educators' Guide

SPRING 2017

PEOPLE OF THE IN-BETWEEN





EDUCATORS' GUIDE

SPRING 2017 | PEOPLE FROM THE IN-BETWEEN

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **Spring 2017 *Asymptote* Educators' Guide**. With each new issue, we release this guide to provide materials designed to support educators who want to integrate *Asymptote* content into their classrooms.

We hope that *Asymptote's* educational materials find their way into a wide range of classrooms and contexts, across regions and disciplines, and so we have tried to design a flexible resource that can supplement various learning environments. This guide is arranged into **six sections**, each representing a different classroom concept which we believe can be reinforced through the study of world literature in translation and includes lesson plans for each concept.

The [Spring 2017 issue of *Asymptote*](#), themed “**People from the In-Between**” draws its title from a poem in its stunning and timely Banned Countries Special Feature, and recalls images of Syrians, Iraqis, Iranians, Libyans, Somalis, Sudanese, and Yemenis from all walks of life affected by Trump's (thankfully brief) travel ban. People with canceled plans, waiting in transit points, anxious loved ones. The articles in the feature, however, transcend that moment and explore other timeless varieties of in-betweenness. The theme ripples throughout the rest of the issue as well. We read about a territory struggling for autonomy, art forms that aren't fully visual or literary, a translation project that spans continents and can't possibly ever be finished, and the dining car of a moving train. We hope the following materials will help you to engage with the abovementioned concepts at their intersections with this versatile theme and with the work already occurring in your classroom.

We realize that the appropriate age ranges for each lesson will vary widely, so we encourage educators to adjust these lessons to meet their needs, and to record these modifications. Your classroom experience is very important to us, and hearing about it helps us to improve our offerings. Please leave **feedback and suggestions** [here](#).

Finally, if you like what we do and want to get involved, we would love to hear more from you! We are currently seeking **contributors** willing to share **thoughts** and **experiences** about teaching world literature for the *Asymptote* for Educators **forthcoming website**. We'd especially love to read and share your **anecdotes** from the lessons you teach based on this guide, or using other *Asymptote* content. Let your stories inspire others! The *Asymptote* for Educators website is interested in publishing **student work** as well. If your students have produced excellent responses to the assignments offered in this guide, other work to do with *Asymptote* content, or if they want to participate in the global conversation about translated literature as it relates to them, we are currently accepting submissions. If you're interested in contributing, or if you'd like to give us additional feedback, please contact us at education@asymptotejournal.com.

LITERATURE IN WORLD CONTEXT

Politics and the Poet

She volunteered to go alone.

- [Elections](#) by Elena Fanailova

From This Issue: Elena Fanailova's [Elections](#), translated by Eugene Ostashevsky

Learning Objective:

Students will:

- Understand the 2014 political events regarding the popular upheaval in Ukraine, Russia's forced annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, and Western responses to the events
- Demonstrate and improve their close-reading skills of a text rooted in a possibly unfamiliar context
- Reflect critically on the relationship between the author and her sociopolitical environment

Approximate Grade Level(s): Undergraduate Level

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 50 minutes

Materials Needed:

- [Elections](#) (1 per student either online or printed)

Lesson Plan

Introduction

The two poems by Elena Fanailova featured in *Asymptote's* Spring 2017 [Issue](#) refer to two recent elections. While the first poem clearly refers to the 2014 Ukrainian presidential election, the political context of the second poem is more obscure. It might be written from the perspective of a reporter from Moscow who was sent to the provinces, namely to Voronezh (a city south of Moscow), to cover some election, although the election in question is difficult to identify.

The following lesson plan offers tools to decode the sociopolitical context in which the two poems are set, so that students can more easily and informedly focus on the highly subjective stances that the "I" of the poems expresses, and on their stylistic and literary qualities, which are explored in the second part of the lesson.

Pre-Class Activity

At home, have students read about the 2014 political events in Ukraine, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the Chechen-Russian conflict (referred to in the second text).

Alternatively, present this information in class, either at the beginning of class or in the previous lesson.

Suggested readings:

- A [brief overview](#) of the 2014 Ukrainian events, composed by the Watson Institute for International Studies of Brown University. Though a little outdated, it still effectively summarizes the background and main events, and the perspectives implicated in the protests.
- A [timeline](#) of recent events in Ukraine
- A [video interview](#), in which Professor Patricia Herlihy explains the historical tensions between Russian and Ukraine over Crimea

- A [timeline](#) of main events in the Chechen-Russian conflict by CNN

Warm-Up Activity

In small groups or pairs, have students read the two poems and identify the political events and personalities to which they refer.

Offer the following clarifying information if necessary:

- **Leningrad** (*Voronezh Elections 2002*, 13) was the name of the city of Saint Petersburg from 1924 to 1991.
- **Valodya** (*Voronezh Elections 2002*, 17) refers to Putin. Volodya is the typical nickname for Vladimir, Putin's first name.

In-Class Activity

In small groups or pairs, have students close read both poems, either annotating the text or taking notes, with the aid of the following prompts:

- How would you describe the tone of the two poems? What states of mind and emotions are expressed or alluded to by the speakers? Support your answers with textual references.
- What are the main differences in tone between the two poems?
- Look at the syntactical structure (i.e. the sentence structure) of the first poem. How would you characterize it? Are the sentences long or short? Simple or complex? What is the effect on you as the reader?
- And what about the second poem?
- Considering that the second poem is set in 2002, why do you think the city of Saint Petersburg is referred to by its communist name of Leningrad? What are the effects of this anachronism?

Have the class come back together and further discuss the close readings. Then use the following questions to prompt class discussion:

- What *should* the relationship between a poet and politics be?
- Why?
- Can you think of other examples of political poetry? Compare them to Fanailova's.

Closing Activity

Summarize the material covered in class, integrating students' opinions, and introduce the homework.

Home Assignment

Write a three-page paper, or a shorter contribution to an online discussion board, on one of the following topics:

- Choose a different poem by Fanailova and provide a close reading of it. If students have Russian, they can analyze the Russian original instead.
- Contrast and compare Fanailova's election poems with another political poem of choice.

Resources

- [Interview](#) with Elena Fanailova
- [Elena Fanailova on refugees](#)

- [Other poems](#) by Elena Fanailova available online. More are collected in the volume *The Russian Version*. Translated by Genya Turovskaya and Stephanie Sandler. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Ugly Duckling Press, 2009.
- Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies – [lesson plan](#) on “Teaching the News”

WRITING, READING, AND TECHNOLOGY

Speaking with Visual Brevity

Just as new technologies, like writing and the printing press, once changed definitions of what literature was and could be, the internet now challenges us to expand and adapt our understanding of the “literary.” Broadly speaking, new technology impacts literature in the following ways:

- Thematically: Literature set in contemporary society encounters technology just as contemporary humans do.
- Linguistically/formally: Technology creates new vocabulary, new connotations for existing vocabulary, and new conventions for different modes of communication (for example, the way language is used in the news, on twitter, on facebook). For writers and artists, these become new materials to incorporate into their creations, pushing traditional boundaries of possibility ever-farther.
- The Digital Archive: Performance and oral literature are no longer bound to the single moment, but can be recorded and shared. Meanwhile, the written word is no longer bound by the static page, but can be affected by reader interaction.
- Digital Humanities: The intersection of traditional humanities studies and computational research and data analysis.

Asymptote's online platform exemplifies the ways in which digital archives can bridge various forms of media, and in so doing, challenge the frontiers of literature. *Asymptote* brings together texts and creators from across the world, and presents this work in ways that traditional print cannot—through audio recordings, videos, and visuals. In this section, we hope to offer lessons that use *Asymptote* features to encourage fruitful critical analysis of the points of contact between literature and technology.

From This Issue: Kambiz Derambakhsh's [Literary Series](#), interview by Poupeh Missaghi

Learning Objective:

Students will

- Examine and define the term 'literary'
- Appraise the ways in which cartoons can be considered 'literary' and defend their stances
- Examine the ways in which technology impacts art and literature thematically
- Analyze how reader interaction affects Derambakhsh's cartoons through Instagram

Aligned Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9](#)

Approximate Grade Level(s): Mid-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 1 – 2 hours

Materials Needed:

- Internet access
- Highlighter pens (enough for one per pair)
- Laptops for paired/small group work

OR

- Printed copies of Kambiz Derambakhsh's [Literary Series](#) and the accompanying interview transcript

Lesson Plan

Introduction

This lesson will look at the recent work of prominent Iranian cartoonist and graphic artist Kambiz Derambakhsh. His work is a great starting point for a discussion about the place of technology in art, and about the ways in which the cartoon can be considered a literary genre in its own right. Through his [Literary Series](#), which we will discuss in this lesson, Derambakhsh hopes to “bring attention to books, and to the activities and technologies that distract.” Derambakhsh regularly exhibits and publishes books in addition to maintaining an active Instagram account, making his work a perfect stimulus for reflection on the impact of medium, context, and reception on literature.

Pre-Class Activity

During the week prior to the lesson, ask students to tally the number of times they engage with literature or art online (any digital literacy - social media or online news, for example) and the number of times they engage with a piece of printed work (written text or visual art). They only need to tally their experiences outside of school hours (to eliminate any bias that takes place within the educational environment).

Prior to the main lesson, ask pupils to briefly reflect on their pre-class activity. What did they notice? Were they surprised by how much time they spent on social media? Was anyone surprised by how often they still turn to print?

Warm-Up Activity – The 140 Character Literary Genre

Ask pupils to spend 10 minutes drafting as many 6-word write-ups of their weekend activities as possible. Show students some examples of this condensed form of storytelling, e.g. ‘No taxidermist loved his daughter more;’ ‘For sale. Baby shoes. Never Worn.’ Share some of these as a class. After the sharing, ask if they know which form of social media limits its users to 140 characters? Some argue that Twitter is a new literary genre – do they agree? (Extension: With an advanced group, you can ask students to write 140 character descriptions, approximately 30 words).

In-Class Activity I – Visual Stories as a Literary Genre

Write the following on the board:

Literary (Adjective):

1. Concerning the writing, study or content of literature, especially of the kind valued for quality of form.
2. (of language) associated with literary works or other formal writing.

Working in pairs, ask pupils to discuss, given the definition on the board, whether they think that the cartoon can be considered a ‘literary form.’ Give pupils 10 minutes to discuss before debriefing as a class. If pupils are struggling, encourage them to consider the following prompts:

- What is literature?
- What should great literature provide?
- Who is it for?

Hand out copies of Derambakhsh's [Literary Series](#) cartoons (or provide laptops to access the online version) and the table from Appendix 1 (following this lesson). Ask pupils to discuss in pairs/small groups the 'stories' behind each of these images. In the second column, have students take notes on the following:

- What are the messages (both for individual images and for the cartoon series as a whole)?
- Who is the intended audience?

Then, have the pairs/groups debrief their experience by discussing the following questions:

- Describe the experience of analyzing these cartoons without the help of any written words.
- Do you consider these cartoons to be literary? Why/why not? Have you changed your mind since the first exercise?
- Derambakhsh has a regular cartoon series called *Visual Stories* which is published in a monthly journal in Iran. He titled this latest cartoon series [Literary Series](#). Why might he have chosen this title? What does it tell pupils about Derambakhsh's work and interests?
- Derambakhsh talks of his work as having a "literary appeal" and notes that viewers of his work have previously remarked that "they didn't know whether they were looking at poetry or a drawing or a cartoon." What do you think about this? Can visual art be considered akin to poetry? Why/Why not?

Finally, hand out copies of the interview transcript. In the same groups, ask pupils to reflect further on the discussions above within the new context of Derambakhsh's own words, highlighting any interesting statements. Then come back together as a class and have the groups share their insights and quotations.

In-Class Activity II – Instagram as an Art Form

Draw the pupils' attention to the following extracts from the interview transcript:

1. [On the [Literary Series](#)] "People do not read enough...I have tried to bring attention to books, and to the activities and technologies that distract."
2. [On a minimal use of language] "My ideal today, is to speak with the least number of lines and simplest of forms, like the Japanese Haiku. This is a new age and people do not have time to read long forms, so I work hard to say what I want with visual brevity."

Pose the following question for a very brief class discussion: Are these two statements contradictory?

Tell students that Derambakhsh has an active Instagram account and invites commentary from followers. Then share the following statement from journalist Holly Williams in her article "Art for Instagram – is social media ruining art?":

"Art is for everyone, and encouraging a new, younger generation to get involved and feel it belongs to them is incredibly important. Social media can be a massive part of that."

Split the class into two groups. Ask one group to argue a case for social media as art, and the other to argue that social media is ruining art. The two sides should use arguments made by Derambakhsh and Williams as well as their own opinions and experiences.

Closing Activity

Ask pupils to consider the advantages and disadvantages of political or philosophical messages conveyed through visual art “without a word being spoken.” Have them write a short paragraph about what, in this context, the role of the translator is.

Home Assignment

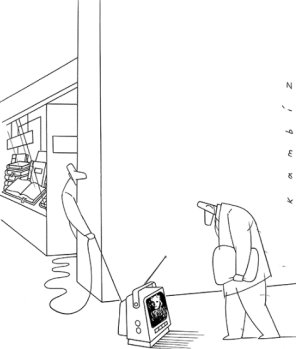


In the interview transcript, Derambakhsh highlights cartoonists outside of Iran who have inspired him. Ask pupils to choose one of these cartoonists to research and present a short briefing in the next class. In addition to a description of the artist and images of a few of their pieces, students should offer answers to the following questions:

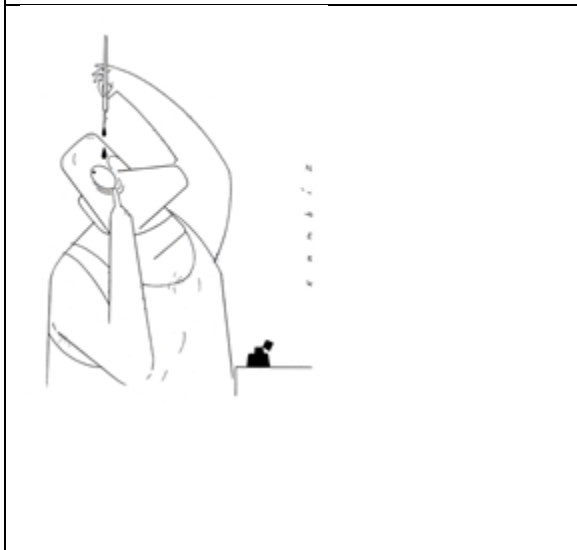
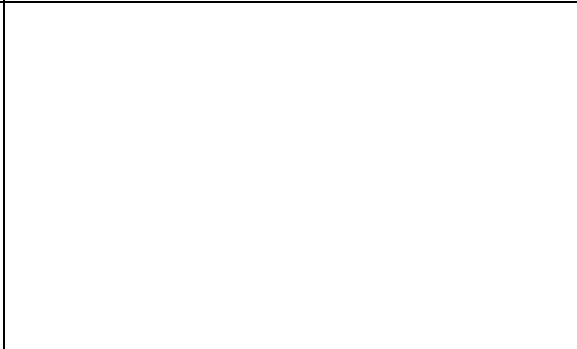
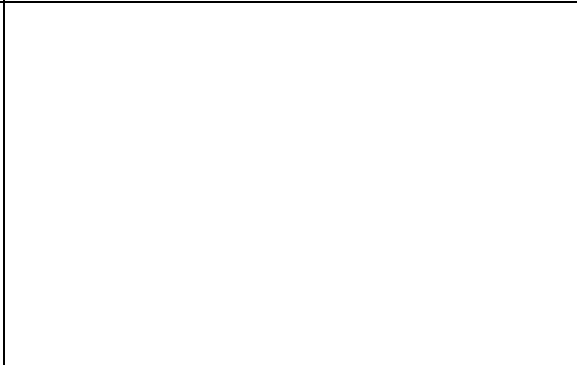
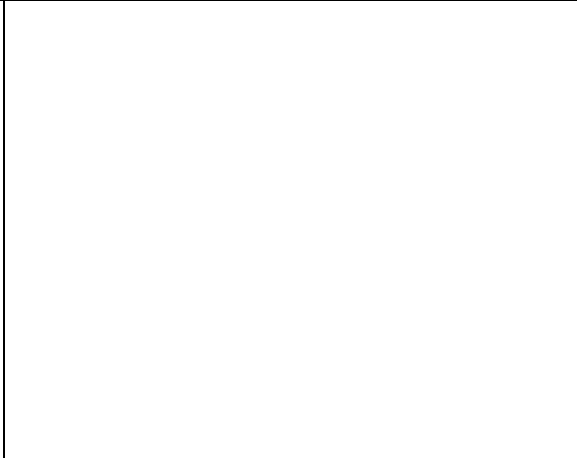
- Where can you see the artist’s influence on Derambkhsh?
- How is this cartoonist’s artwork similar/different?
- Have any of your views from the previous lesson changed?

OR

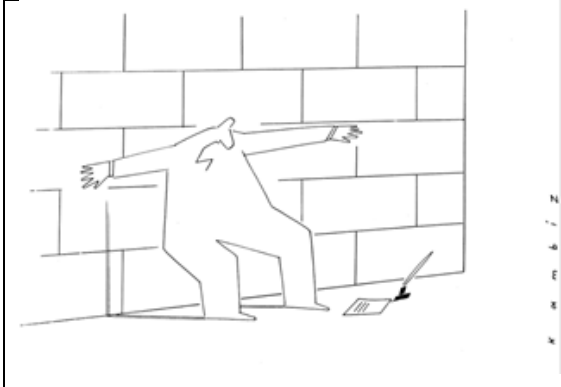
Look at this [article](#) about the comparisons between Instagram imagery and primary genres of Western secular art. In light of their new reading, ask pupils write a brief reflection on their earlier debate about social media as an art form, and to draw further on the work of Kambiz Derambakhsh in their arguments.

Appendix 1

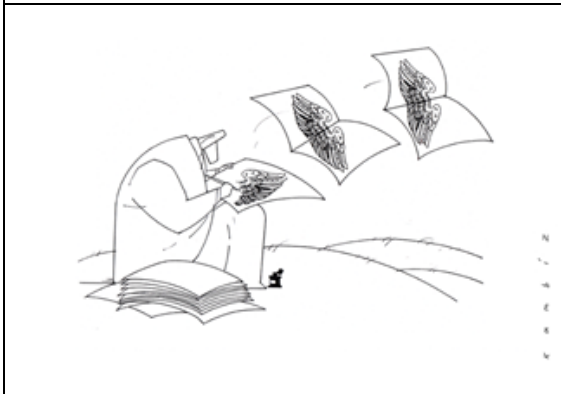
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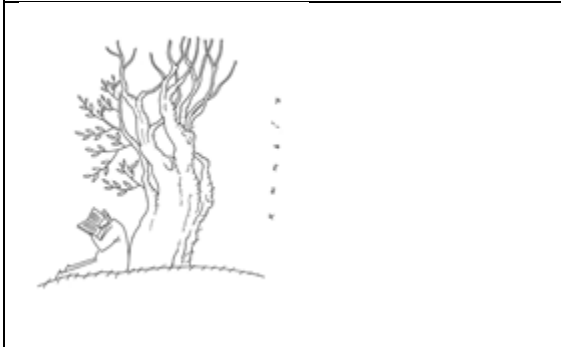




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CRITICAL ESSAY WRITING: BEYOND THE FIVE PARAGRAPH ESSAY

A Reporter-at-Large

At some point or another, most young writers are exposed to the five-paragraph essay: introduction, three body paragraphs of supporting examples, and conclusion. This is for good reason. The five-paragraph essay teaches students how to make themselves understood by crafting an organized argument. However, once this skill set is mastered, we believe the model can become restrictive. *Asymptote* offers both abundant examples of artful critical and expository writing and opportunities for students to practice such writing themselves.

From This Issue: Bartek Sabela's [Every Grain of Sand](#), translated by Tul'si Bhambry

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Identify and analyze the elements of a journalistic article, including themes, imagery, and organization
- Evaluate the effects of those elements and whether or not they are successful
- Investigate and author their own article

Aligned Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10](#)

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level High School; Undergraduate Level

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 90-100 minutes in either one or two sessions

Materials Needed:

- [Every Grain of Sand](#) (1 per student either printed or annotatable)
- A white board or alternative
- A projector
- Internet access to [Every Grain of Sand](#) (to view collectively)
- A way to annotate collectively, either white board markers or smart-technology

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

Have students read and annotate [Every Grain of Sand](#) for homework.

Warm-Up Activity

Have students respond in their journals or on scraps of paper to the following prompt in no more than one sentence: What is [Every Grain of Sand](#) about? Then have students share their answers aloud and collect key words and phrases on the board.

In-Class Activity I – Creating an Impression

Give students five minutes to independently skim the article and underline words, phrases, and images used to describe Western Sahara. Then collect some of their answers on the board. Pose the following question for class discussion: What impression do these descriptions give you of Western Sahara?

Divide students into groups of three or four. Explain to students that they will replicate the previous activity in their groups. Assign 1/4 of the groups to work on each of the following:

- Hamza

- Morocco
- Gdeim Izik
- The foreigner

Feel free to add to the list if you feel so inclined, or if the warm-up activity yields other fruitful options. Make sure the students both highlight descriptive words and phrases and discuss their impressions based on those terms.

To close this activity, ask students whether the article provides a biased or unbiased report of the situation in Western Sahara. Have them provide examples to support their answers.

In-Class Activity II – Structure and Organization

Point out to the students that even though the piece deals with a variety of issues, characters, and events, its structure allows it to weave them together into a cohesive narrative. As a class, you will try to identify the structure of the piece and how/why (or not) it is so successful.

Project [Every Grain of Sand](#) on the board. Number the paragraphs and have the students do the same on their paper copies. Have a student read the opening paragraph out loud and then pose the following question for class discussion: How many of the terms from the previous activity does this paragraph introduce? Discuss how they appear and are woven together.

Then have students independently scan through the rest of the piece. Beside their paragraph numberings, have them write the topic of that paragraph in 1-2 words.

Next, have them bracket together paragraphs that they believe belong together in a section and to label the topic of that section in 1-2 words.

Reconvening as a class, have one student come to the board, bracket their first section, and share their paragraph and section topic(s). Ask the rest of the class whether they agree or disagree, and to propose alternate answers. Continue to move through the piece in this manner until you feel that the students are sufficiently competent in the skill.

Then have a look at the closing paragraph. Pose the following questions for class discussion:

- Compare the opening and the closing paragraphs. Consider the length, the topics mentioned, and the effect on you as a reader.
- What have you learned previously about the relationship between opening and closing paragraphs. Do these examples align with what you would expect? How and how not?
- What is the effect of the closing paragraph on you as the reader? Do you think it closes the piece well? Do you like it? Why or why not?

Closing Activity

Have students write a short paragraph in response to the following and hand it in to you on their way out of the classroom:

Do you think [Every Grain of Sand](#) successfully weaves complex themes and discreet stories together into a cohesive narrative? How or how not? Use examples from the lesson to support your answer.

Home Assignment – Investigative Journalism

Bartek Sabela, the author of [Every Grain of Sand](#), was educated as an architect, but is now a traveler and a writer who follows his passions to find and share fascinating, important stories with readers. In this assignment, students will practice the organizational skills they analyzed today by following his example. This can be a short or long-term assignment depending on the skills you want to emphasize.

Ask students to choose a story or issue close to their hearts, preferably a local one, and to write an article about it. Remind them that this is not a five-paragraph essay, but an article that could be published in a magazine or newspaper. The perspective can be biased or unbiased, but they should commit strongly to their choice. Like *Every Grain of Sand*, their articles should weave together multiple (at least 3) elements of a complex issue into a cohesive narrative. Elements might include:

- A profile of an individual affected by the issue
- The two (or more) opposing sides of a conflict
- An event
- Their own position as the narrator
- An ideal or value at the heart of the issue

For other great examples, check out:

The New Yorker's A Reporter-at-Large section: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/a-reporter-at-large>.

We want to see your students' articles! Submit excellent work to education@asymptotejournal.com either just to share, or for the opportunity to have them published on our forthcoming website.

LITERARY DEVICES

Analyzing Conflict

In this section, we take an in-depth look at a commonly used literary device. Students will learn how to identify the chosen device, become comfortable discussing it, and analyze how it functions in a given text and their interpretive process.

From This Issue: Hermann Burger's [The Emergency Break](#), translated by Adrian Nathan West

Learning Objectives:

Students will evaluate the internal and external conflicts of the characters of [The Emergency Brake](#).

Aligned Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10](#)

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 90 minutes

Materials Needed:

- [The Emergency Break](#) (1 per student)
- T-charts (from Appendix 2)

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

For homework, have students read the text and define words of foreign origin that they may not be familiar with.

Suggested vocabulary list:

- *chef de service*
- *Réchaud*
- *schnitzel*
- *les fromages*
- *service compris*

Warm-Up Activity

Have students journal for several minutes about the following prompt: Write about a time when you had to make a difficult decision. Call on selected students to share and discuss their journal entries.

In-Class Activity I

Tell students that when characters in a story have to make difficult decisions, it is called an **internal conflict**. Then, tell students that their objective for the class period is to evaluate the internal and external conflicts of the characters in [The Emergency Brake](#). Lead a discussion about the different types of conflict one might find in a story (i.e. man v. man, man v. nature, man v. self, man v. technology, man v. fate/supernatural, man v. society).

In-Class Activity II

Have students work in pairs to identify and provide textual evidence of the types of conflicts the narrator encounters in [The Emergency Brake](#). Provide students with a T-chart to record their responses.

Closing Activity

Have students report their findings to the class.

Home Assignment

Write an essay using one of the following prompts:

Compare the internal conflicts of the narrator to those about which you journaled during the warm-up activity.

OR

Describe how the conflict directs the conversation between yourself and the narrator.

Appendix 2

Internal Conflict

Example from Text	Type of Conflict

CLOSE READING THROUGH TRANSLATION

Tracing Language, Madness, and Literary Appropriations

“Translation is the most intimate act of reading” – Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

It has been said that the process of translating is the closest a reader can come to a text; the process of translation is related to the process of textual analysis in that both are acts of re-creation. The analytical reader, like the translator, joins in the continued creative existence of the text through the art of close reading. As Anita Raja put it in her spectacular essay, “Translation as a Practice of Acceptance,” “The text of the other jostles the language of the translator, creating friction, producing a new text in its image and likeness. That is why translating is not transcribing but rather re-writing in a different language, in a way that remains bound to the original and yet is inventive on its own. The translator’s inventiveness is wholly dedicated to accommodating the original in the best possible way.”

In this section, we ask readers to identify the translator's goals, and then to use the strategy of close reading to evaluate how successfully these goals were met—to discuss what is successfully transferred, what is “lost”, and also what is gained through translation. Close reading requires attentiveness to grammar, sentence structure, parts of speech, vocabulary choices, and the multiple valences or significances of words and phrases. It can also prompt discussion about cultural and historical context.

From This Issue: Aleksandra Lun’s [The Palimpsests](#), translated by Elizabeth Bryer

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Think critically about the ways in which different reading practices affect the way readers interpret content
- Analyze how we create meaning from close readings
- Design a palimpsest in class and theorize its valence as a heuristic for approaching world literature
- Practice writing a close-reading analysis

Approximate Grade Level(s): Undergraduate Level

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 45-55 Minutes

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboard or projector
- Parchment paper
- E-learning page (optional)

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

Have students read Lun’s piece and encourage them to highlight words, names, and places with which they are unfamiliar. Urge students to look up the definition of palimpsest and how it has been used historically. (Optional) Working in pairs/groups, have students identify unfamiliar terms, authors, etc. and post brief descriptions of them onto the class’s e-Learning page or a class Google doc to create textual annotations, which can help them think about how to understand the piece more comprehensively. Depending on the size of the class (or the number of different groups), each student pair/group can present their annotations at the beginning of class to help introduce Lun’s piece and jumpstart a conversation about the tenor of students’ interpretations.

Warm-Up Activity

In addition to addressing any remaining uncertainties about content or language, use the following questions as icebreakers:

- How easily were you able to follow Lun's writing?
- Were the many literary references difficult to understand or place?
- How do you define a palimpsest?
- Why might Lun's story be built around the idea of a palimpsest?
- How might a document's status as a palimpsest change our reading of it?

****Consider either only doing two of the three in-class activities, or using the third in a separate class period.**

In-Class Activity I – Making Sense of Lun's Literary Appropriations

This can be done either in small groups or as a class depending on class size and time constraints.

Create a chart using the board, or try one of the SmartArt visual charts following the lesson in Appendix 3. For the first part of class (10-15 minutes), have students call out different examples of literary appropriations—Hemingway, Melville, Cernuda, Goethe, etc.—and group them visually in relation to how they frame the main storyline. After approximating a visual map of the excerpt's complex literary references, pose the following questions for class discussion about how they function in the piece:

- What's the cumulative effect of the many different references on you as a reader? Consider the references themselves, how they interact with each other, and their sheer quantity.
- As a rhetorical strategy, how do you understand the story's focus on German, Spanish, and American authors?
- Thinking about content, what's Melville's significance in the story? Hemingway's? What is your favorite literary reference in the excerpt, and what does a close reading of that scene entail?
- Who is the intended audience?

In-Class Activity II – Visualizing Palimpsests

Separate the students into small groups (or the pairs from the pre-class activity) and give each group four 11 1/2"X 18" sheets of parchment paper (printer sized). Then, assign each group one of the different "layers" in Lun's story: Hemingway, Nietzsche, Cernuda, Melville, Pope John Paul II, asylums, Vampires, psychoanalysis, etc. Each group should have a different one. Then have students complete the following exercise:

1. On the first piece of parchment paper, instruct the students to write down their topic (e.g. "Melville" or "Melville's *Typee*").
2. On the second piece, have students identify briefly some basic contextual information about that topic, either from their pre-class reading or from in-class collaborative research.
3. On the third piece of parchment paper, have students summarize in 1-2 sentences how they think their "layer" functions in the overall narrative.
4. Have students stack all of the sheets so that the different layers, although no longer visible, still bears traces of their significance on the whole.

Now that each group has approximated its palimpsest, instruct the students to walk around the class and exchange their projects with other groups. Have students discuss and compare the roles of their narrative “layers”:

5. On the fourth piece of parchment paper, have students hypothesize the relationship between their group’s “layer” and a second group’s in 1-2 sentences. Have them write one final sentence about how the two layers work together in the story.

Gather all of the different pieces of parchment paper and layer them on top of one another somewhere in the center of the classroom, and encourage students to consider how this project lays bare the connections between all of the discrete close readings that each group performed initially. Now that they can visualize the complexity of Lun’s narrative, use the following prompts for a class discussion by which students will think about the interrelationships between each of the mini-palimpsests:

- What is the role of allusion in your palimpsests?
- How did this activity, without examining the erasure of texts, mirror Lun’s attempt to weave together different narrative layers?
- Finally, given the definition of palimpsest, how does the title function as a framing device for the story? How do you view/understand the title after reading and discussing the story?

In-Class Activity III – Approaches to World Literature

This activity encourages students to consider not only how the idea of palimpsests can enrich their close readings, but also how their own approaches to literature, especially world literature, are often filtered through various critical layers that mirror elements of the palimpsest. This discussion-based activity prompts students to reflect on how seemingly discrete elements of the story (e.g. Belgium’s absent government, the protagonist’s unwelcome celibacy, etc.) are related.

Break the class into small groups and have each group address one (or more) of the following questions:

- In light of the piece's title and its thematic implications, what do we make of the speaker's preoccupation with sex or its absence? Employ any knowledge you might have of psychoanalysis and consider the layering of Freud/repression throughout the piece.
- Czesław Przęśnicki returns time and time again to Belgium’s absent government – why is this important? What might this suggest or symbolize in the many contexts of the excerpt?
- Czesław Przęśnicki offers an overview of his novel, *Wampir*, essentially giving the reader a story within a story. How do we read *Wampir's* narrative as a commentary or reflection on the "main" storyline?
- Given the narrator’s provocative statement that asylums are “linked to lunacy and literature,” what might be the nature of this relationship? The coupling of lunacy and asylum might be expected, by why literature?
- How do these interpretive exercises themselves, cumulatively, constitute a palimpsest? Can we take this process—of layering different readings, meanings, and interpretations—as a heuristic when approaching world literature/literature in translation?

After the groups have had some time to consider their responses (5-10 minutes), have each group present its findings to the rest of the class.

Home Assignment

Have students perform a close reading (in a paragraph or two) of a selection from Lun's text through the lens of the topics explored during the in-class activities. These short papers can be submitted online or brought to class to workshop/peer edit to consider different strategies for clear and persuasive writing.

Ideas for Extension

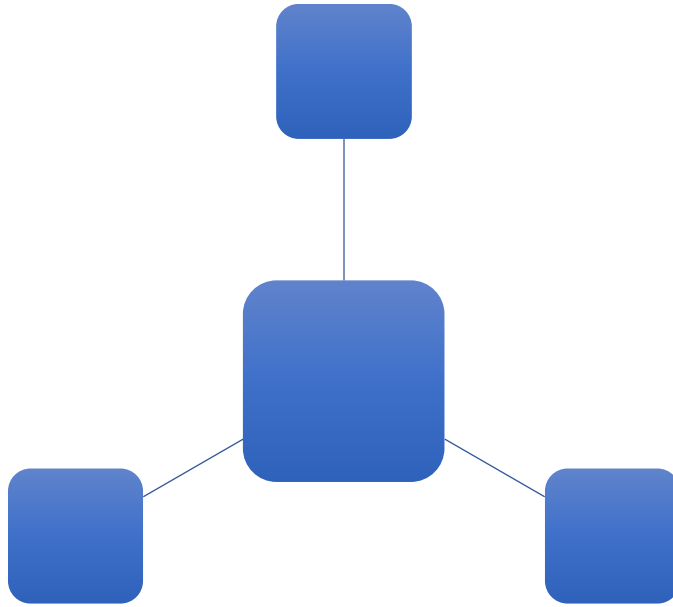
Have students experiment with Prezi (or a similar digital tool) to create a more interactive, digital visualization of Lun's narrative matrix based on the class discussions and their homework assignment. Ask them to post a link to their digital palimpsest on the class's e-Learning page, or have them present it in class so that students can discuss how it helps to illuminate different elements of Lun's narrative.

Resources

- Sarah Dillon's *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, and Theory* (London: Continuum, 2007).
- Salvador Jimenez-Fajardo's (Ed.) *The Word and the Mirror: Critical Essays on the Poetry of Luis Cernuda* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1989).
- (A "Foreigner's Guide" to Polish literature that offers both an overview and recommendations for further reading) <http://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-literature>
- *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (a peer-reviewed academic resource): <http://www.iep.utm.edu/nietzsch/>

Appendix 3

SmartArt images to consider as a visual aid for mapping out Lun's excerpt:



BANNED COUNTRIES SPECIAL FEATURE

Welcome to this section of the Spring 2017 Educators' Guide specifically devoted to the current issue's [Banned Countries Special Feature](#). Though both iterations of the travel ban have thankfully been suspended, many of the fears and misconceptions underlying them thrive in the US and around the world and manifest in different ways every day. *Asymptote* for Educators believes that the classroom can be a safe space for students to encounter diverse voices and to interrogate their own assumptions. While this goal in part motivates all sections of all of our Guides, we decided to take the opportunity highlight this timely feature.

Be sure to also check out our accompanying Saturday blog series, [Teach This – Banned Countries Special Feature](#), in which educators like you weigh in with their own lesson plans. Have your own ideas you'd like to share? [Teach This](#) is open for submissions! Email education@asymptotejournal.com for more information.

Lesson 1: Narrative Voice

From This Issue: Edil Hassan's [Two Poems](#)

Ubah Cristina Ali Farah's [A Dhow Crosses the Sea](#), translated by Hope Campbell Gustafson

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Analyze themes using examples from the texts
- Use different methods to examine the ways in which word choice creates meaning

Aligned Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10](#)

Approximate Grade Level(s): Lower-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 1 hour

Materials Needed:

- Whiteboard or alternative
- Projector
- [Blank world map](#)
- [Two Poems](#) (enough for small group work)
- [A Dhow Crosses the Sea](#) (enough for small group work)
- Printed copies of the chart below (enough for small group work)
- Writing utensils
- Collage-making materials (enough for small group work)

Lesson Plan

Warm-Up Activity

Ask students to brainstorm words that they associate with Somalia and collect those words on the board. Students might know a lot, think they know a lot, know very little, or know nothing at all. Please assure students that whatever level of knowledge they have or think they have is perfectly fine. Ask students to share where they got their impressions/information from. Project a [blank world map](#) on the board. Have a volunteer come find Somalia on the map, or if nobody knows where it is, have a couple of students guess before you label it yourself. Have students

identify potentially important geographical features. If you know that your students are already familiar with the country/region, you can skip the map.

In-Class Activity I – Origin Stories and Drought

Have a student read [Origin Stories](#) and [Drought](#) out loud. Then listen to the recording of Hassan reading her poems.

Split students into groups of three or four and assign each group one of the following themes:

- Water (or lack thereof)
- Land
- Family
- Women
- Men
- Nation

More than one group can have the same theme and not all themes need be addressed necessarily. Have each group highlight words and phrases that relate to their theme.

Then, have them fill in the following chart to explore the effects of the word choice on their understanding off the theme. In the “Impression” column, they can briefly describe the impression they get from the word or phrase using emotions, colors, paraphrase, description of the surface meaning, etc. When students have completed their charts, have them discuss whether and how (or how not) the word and image choices give a consistent impression of the theme in one poem and across both.

Word/Phrase	Impression

To close the activity, have each group summarize in one sentence what the texts have to say about the theme and collect their answers.

In-Class Activity II – A Dhow Crosses the Sea

As a class, read [A Dhow Crosses the Sea](#) round-robin style. Then, in the same groups, with the same themes, have students again highlight words and phrases that relate to the theme and, without the chart, discuss the impressions they get from these words or phrases. This time, though, pass around construction paper or poster board, scrap images from magazines or elsewhere, colored paper, etc. Explain that they will use these materials to make a collage that conveys the impression(s) they were discussing. Alternatively, they can use images from the internet and make digital collages.

As before, close the activity by having each group summarize in one sentence what the text has to say about the theme.

Closing Activity

Lead a class discussion using the following questions as prompts:

- How were the two methods of representing meaning (the chart and the collage) similar? How were they different?
- Which method did you like better? Why?

Emphasize the fact that both representations were drawn directly from the examples they found in the text, and so, therefore, were their synthesizing sentences.

Home Assignment

Have students write a short essay comparing and contrasting their group's two synthesizing sentences, and thereby, the two pieces' commentaries upon the given theme. Be sure to remind them to support their arguments with the examples from the text that they already highlighted in class.

Lesson 2: Poetry Splash

From This Issue: Negar Emrani's [Three Poems](#), translated by Kaveh Akbar

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Develop and practice particular close-reading techniques
- Identify themes in poetry

Aligned Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10](#)

Approximate Grade Level(s): Mid-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 1-2 hours

Materials Needed:

- Dictionaries
- Printed copies of [Three Poems](#) (enough for 1 per pair)
- Highlighter pens (enough for 1 per pair)
- Individual writing pens
- Printed copies of the table in Appendix 4 (enough for 1 per pair)

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

Have students read each poem from [Three Poems](#) for homework. They don't need to make any notes, just read each poem twice through – once silently and once out loud. Ask them to choose their favorite to study further in class.

Warm-Up Activity

These poems each play with themes of nature. Find a piece of music to share with the class of sounds from the forests, the sea etc. Ask the students to close their eyes, put their heads on their desks, and listen carefully. When the music is finished (or has played long enough) ask them to open their eyes and identify a few of the sounds they heard. If any themes surface, write them on the board. Leave this as a reference point for later in the lesson.

In-Class Activity I – Poetry Splash

Ask for a volunteer to read their favorite of Emrani's [poems](#) out loud. Instruct the listeners to observe the ways in which the recitation affects how they receive the poem.

Template the following symbols and definitions on the board for an initial 'Poetry Splash.' Ask pupils to make markings on the poem where they feel the accompanying sensation is true for them. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers here, this is simply an exercise to help begin to dig a little deeper into the possible meanings behind the poetry – to get a 'closer' reading of the text:

* This word is cool

! This is something important

? I don't get it: I don't understand this line or phrase

Then ask pupils to provide feedback on this activity. How did they find it? Was it difficult or easy to find relevant places to use all the symbols?

Write the following questions on the board to prompt small-group/table discussion. Note that each pupil will have chosen their own favorite poem from the three available. Ideally pupils will be paired/grouped according to their selected poem and will focus their discussion on that poem.

- What did you like about the poem?
- How did the poem make you feel?
- Which words or phrases did you like?
- What words or phrases need clarification?
- What, if anything, surprised you?
- What do you think the poem is about?
- What might the poem be saying?

Have each group briefly share their findings. After this exercise, ask pupils to choose a sentence of their poem for one of the following:

- a) Use the sentence as a starting point for your own poem
- b) Use the sentence as a stimulus to draw an illustration to accompany your chosen line

In-Class Activity II – Identifying Themes

Now explain to pupils that you want them to try and identify some of the themes within this poem, based on their close-reading work. To do so, have pupils (alone or in pairs) complete Appendix 4.

Come back together and pose the following questions for class discussion:

- Did you notice any themes? (Record commonly identified themes on the board).
- Were there images, words and phrases that particularly enriched your interpretation of the poem?
- What is your favorite line from the poem. What is it about this line that you are drawn to? What does this line mean to you?

Closing Activity

Have each student identify a theme within their chosen poem, write it down with three supporting examples from the text, and hand it in as they leave class.

Appendix 4

What I read	What I think	What I wonder
<p><i>Example (Abbas)</i> <i>They took Abbas</i></p>	<p><i>Abbas is the name of someone important to the poet.</i></p>	<p><i>Does the name have another meaning in its language of origin</i></p>
<p><i>Example (A Prophet)</i> <i>I never learned which rotten tooth gave me my smile.</i></p>	<p><i>The poet doesn't like her smile.</i></p>	<p><i>Is the rotten tooth a metaphor for something she feels is rotten in her life?</i></p>
<p><i>Example (Somewhere Between the World and the Mirror)</i> <i>The smell of dust clings to me, the smell of granny's perfume and globe amaranths.</i></p>	<p><i>The poet remembers her granny.</i></p>	<p><i>What is globe amaranths?</i></p>

Lesson 3: Communication and Empathy

From This Issue: Omar Youssef Souleimane's [Away from Damascus](#), translated by Ghada Mourad

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Acquire new tools to develop empathy and listening skills
- Refine their skills for textual analysis and close reading

Approximate Grade Level(s): Undergraduate Level

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 50 minutes

Materials Needed:

- [Away From Damascus](#) (1 per student)
- Whiteboard or projector
- Writing materials (optional)

Lesson Plan

Introduction

As stated in the mission statement of the [Indiegogo fundraiser](#) that made *Asymptote's Banned Countries Special Feature* possible: "Stories have the singular power to bring attention to our common humanity." Literature has an extraordinary potential for helping readers develop empathy, something we dramatically need in a time when our busy, highly-mediated lives seem to allow no space for others or the Other. Empathy is a skill that can be taught and developed, and therefore this lesson plan offers tools to teach students how to develop their empathy skills through the close reading of Syrian poet Omar Youssef Souleimane's [texts](#).

Pre-Class Activity

As homework, have students read the three poems, translator's note, and bios.

Warm-Up Activity

Give students a few minutes to review the texts that they read for homework.

In-Class Activity I – Listening and Connecting

The activity suggested here is inspired by David Sable's work on active listening (see references in the **Resources** section), and it is a great way to foster community among students and to create connections between students and texts. If you are not comfortable with this kind of activity, you can adapt the lesson to a more traditional structure by adopting the opening prompt for initial discussion and then transitioning to the textual analysis section.

1. Project or write on the board the following prompt for reflection: **How does it feel to be 'in-between?'**
2. Students sit in silence for a few minutes and observe their mental responses to the prompt as they arise in relation to the three poems. They can free write, mentally observe their thoughts without recording them, or mentally observe their responses first and write them down later. It is very helpful to let students know in advance how much time will be dedicated to each step (for instance: 3 minutes to sit in silence and 3 minutes to write), and then time them through each step.
3. In pairs or groups of three, students share their thoughts. Allow each student to express her response without being interrupted, either by reading what she has written until the

end, or by allowing and timing a precise amount of time for each student to speak. Partner/s listen attentively.

4. Partner/s repeat/s back to the first students what they have just heard. If the first student feels misrepresented by her partner's words, she can add an additional comment to clarify.
5. Switch roles.
6. Students come back together and share their responses with the whole class.

Based on how much time you choose to allow for each step, this activity usually takes between fifteen and twenty-five minutes.

In-Class Activity II – Textual Analysis

Use the following prompts to facilitate discussion:

[The People of the In-Between](#)

- Who are the people of the in-between? How are they characterized in the poem?
- What is the prevalent sentiment in the text?
- Several images of incompleteness are utilized in the text. Which ones? What is their effect? How does the concept of incompleteness relate to that of in-betweenness?

[Do Not Tell Anyone](#)

- What is the structuring simile of the poem? What effects does it generate?
- What is the effect of paradox in this poem?
- How would you characterize the style and tone of the poem?

[In the Foreign Land](#)

- What is the prevalent sentiment expressed in the poem?
- Who are the speakers in this text? How do they compare to the speakers in the other poems?

Would you say that these poems express an individual experience or a shared one? Why?

Closing Activity

Recapitulate the main points emerged from the two activities, making explicit connections between reading literature and developing one's skills for empathy, connection, and dialogue.

Resources

On literature and empathy:

- [How Reading Literature Cultivates Empathy](#)
[How to Teach Empathy through Fiction](#)

On mindful listening:

- David Sable talks about [mindful listening and creating connection through dialogue](#).
- David Sable, "[Reason in the Service of the Heart: The Impacts of Contemplative Practices on Critical Thinking](#)," in *The Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2014) [requires subscription].
- On mindful listening: Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education*. Jossey-Bass: 2013, 137-148.

Lesson 4: Using TPCASTT to Analyze Poetry

From This Issue: Omar Youssef Souleimane's [Away from Damascus](#), translated by Ghada Mourad

Learning Objectives: Students will use, analyze, and interpret selected poems from [Away from Damascus](#) by Omar Youssef Souleimane.

Aligned Common Core Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10](#)

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level High School

Approximate Length of Class Period(s): 90 minutes

Materials Needed:

- [Away from Damascus](#) (1 per student)
- TPCASST graphic organizers from Appendix 5 (1 per student)
- Projector or whiteboard

Lesson Plan

Pre-Class Activity

Have students find and provide a summary of a news article on the current political climate in Syria.

Warm-Up Activity

Read [In the Foreign Land](#) aloud to students. Lead a discussion about the author's use of sensory images and how it affects the students' understanding of the poem's underlying themes.

In-Class Activity I

Give each student a copy of [Away from Damascus](#) and a TPCASTT graphic organizer (which you can find in Appendix 5 following this lesson). Tell students that TPCASTT is a method used to analyze poetry. Explain each section (title, paraphrase, connotation, attitude, shift, title (again), and theme). Model how to complete the organizer using a projector or a whiteboard. Think aloud and solicit student input.

In-Class Activity II

Separate students into small groups. Distribute [Do Not Tell Anyone](#) to one half of the groups and [The People of the In-Between](#) to the other half. Have them use TPCASST to analyze the poem you gave them.

Closing Activity

Have students report their findings to the class.

Home Assignment

Students will use their notes from the class activity to write an essay interpreting their assigned poem.

Appendix 5

TPCASTT Organizer

Title- Predict what the poem is about based on the title.	
Paraphrase each line on a literal level	
Connotation- examine beyond literal. Consider figurative language and how it contributes to the meaning of the text.	
Attitude- What is the speaker's attitude?	
Shift- How does the speaker shift in attitude? How does the poem progress or change?	
Title- Reevaluate the title within the context of the text.	
Theme- What is the poem about? What is the poet's message?	

FEEDBACK

Thanks for taking the time to read the *Asymptote* Guide for Educators. We hope you found it useful and engaging. Have questions, comments, critiques, or testimonials? Please leave your feedback [here](#). We look forward to hearing from you!

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