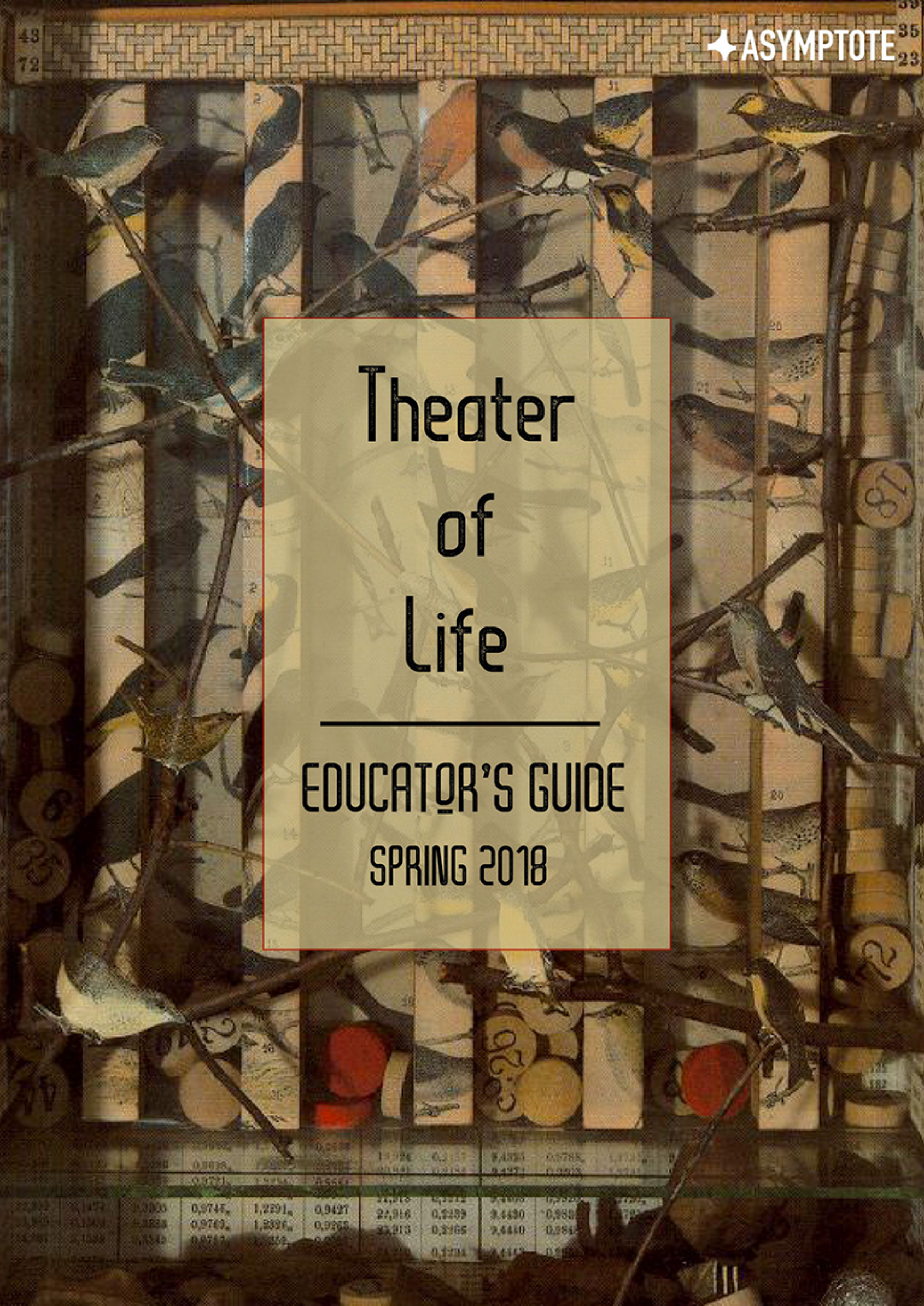


Theater of Life

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE
SPRING 2018





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Introduction

Welcome to the Spring 2018 *Asymptote* Educator's Guide!

With each new issue, we aim 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 includes seven different lessons. Each section contains activity suggestions that can be used in conjunction with each other to form complete lesson plans, or separately to complement lessons on other content.

Asymptote's Spring 2018 issue, "Theater of Life" focuses on the multiple specificities of geographical context. This Educator's Guide pulls out different pieces from this issue to interrogate them in an equally diverse set of pedagogical contexts. Interdisciplinary awareness comes into play here, as the lessons reflect a diverse array of elements interacting with each other to produce critical engagement and understanding of literature in the world.

We realize that the age ranges for each lesson vary, and we encourage educators to adjust these lessons to meet their needs, and to record these modifications. Your classroom and teaching experience is valuable to us, and hearing it helps us improve our formation of the next guide. 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 through the *Asymptote* blog. 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! *Asymptote* for Educators 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 want to participate in in the global conversation about translated literature as it relates to them, we are currently accepting submissions.

If you're interested in contributing, collaborating, or if you'd like to give us additional feedback, please contact us at education@asymptotejournal.com.

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

Learning Objectives

Students will

- Engage in close-read and analysis of a text
- Recognize connections between ideas in an essay
- Describe the relationship between their own lives and their socio-political contexts

Approximate Grade Level:

- High school

Approximate Length:

- 50 minutes

Pre-Class Activity

As a homework assignment, students should read [*Unhappiness is Other People*](#), by Dubravka Ugrešić and underline or highlight key terms or repeated themes.

Warm-Up Activity

Individual writing reflection: 10 minutes

Ask the students to free-write about moments in their lives when they have felt pure happiness.

In-Class Activity

Class Discussion: 5-10 minutes

Choose a few students (maybe 5) to come to the board and write down the key terms or themes that they highlighted in the reading. Discuss the different terms people highlighted, and why.

Group Activity: 10 minutes

Divide the students into three groups.

The first group will examine the representation of religion. What does it mean to be religious, according to this author? What are some moments in the text where religion is not mentioned, but things are described in ways that seem reminiscent of religion?

The second group will examine the moments of happiness that Ugrešić describes. What do they have in common? She suggests marine life, or water – what else? How are they different from the other things she describes in the text?

The third group will examine stupidity. What is it? What is it associated with?

After 10 minutes, reconvene as a class.

Group Presentation: 10-15 minutes

Each group will present their ideas.

Class discussion: 10+ minutes

Then, as a class, discuss the connections between these three components – what do they have to do with each other? Observing Ugrešić’s extreme frustration with her political milieu, consider what effects that would have on her day-to-day life or feelings of happiness. Note how the difference between humans and animals serves as the link or transition between the happiest memories and the anger at the present. Note that animals offer the possibility of an alternative form of collective life. Discuss how religion is related – as sin and redemption, but perhaps also as community, or as experience of transcendence or joy.

Finally, invite the students to look back at their memories of happiness. Ask them to consider how they are related to the larger social/political world of which they are a part. Briefly discuss their responses, and invite them to continue their reflection in a homework assignment.

Homework

Expanding on the final discussion, write a description of our current historical moment. Now, look back at the happiest memories you wrote about for class. What themes or ideas do you see resurfacing in your writing?

Briefly describe the connections between them.

CONSTRUCTING SUBJECTIVE INTERIORITY

Learning Objectives:

- Interpret visual art elements such as light, colour, composition and subject and compare them across discipline to literary equivalents
- Recognize the literary elements of syntax, image and grammar used to construct subjective interiority
- Demonstrate familiarity with these literary elements by using them in creative writing

Approximate Grade Level(s):

- High School

Approximate Length:

- 90 minutes
- Or two 45 minute classes

Materials Needed:

- Handout copies of Lee young-Ju's [Four Prose Poems](#)
- Writing tools for highlighting and underlining
- Slideshow of Vermeer Paintings: taken from Google Arts and Culture (see Appendix 1)
- Poster paper for groups to brainstorm discussion answers

Context:

In the translator's note, Lee Young-Ju's poems are understood as a constructed flow of 정(情) (*jông*) between people. These pieces reflect an interior subjectivity: disparate thoughts, observations and feelings caught up in a larger fabric of emotion, borderline. Her pieces can be read in an unadulterated stream-of-consciousness style, reflecting a strong literary intentionality in the precise placement of random elements to create something akin to a cacophonous, but quiet flow. This lesson deconstructs the writing process involved in the creation of this type of interiority, referencing the paintings of Johannes Vermeer as a visual example of Lee Young-Ju's literary interests. What is the relationship between interior space and subjective interiority? How is such interiority constructed? What literary elements can we use?

Warm-Up Exercise: Vermeer and the construction of the interior

Approximate Length: (15-20 minutes)

Introduction:

Johannes Vermeer is widely recognized as one of the first painters to paint interiority and interior spaces. His paintings are masterfully balanced compositions of domestic spaces and figures (often women), subjects that weren't classically included in fine art painting, that often gesture also to a subtle movement of emotion or narrative. Using consistently similar interior spaces. Vermeer used light, colour, posture, and composition to create different feelings and stories for each portrait.

Instructions:

1. Show the class Vermeer's "Woman Reading a Letter" image on overhead / projector,
Description of *Woman Reading a Letter* (1663)
In a quiet, private moment, a young woman stands, engrossed in reading a letter. It is morning, and she is still wearing her blue night robe. All the other colours are subordinate to its radiant lapis lazuli; yellow and red hardly make an appearance. Vermeer rendered the different effects of the cool light precisely. For example, he was the first artist to try soft grey for flesh, and to paint the shadows on the wall light blue.
(from Google Arts and Culture)
 - a. **Class discussion:** What elements stand out and why? What is the emotive impact of the painting?
2. Now show the class Vermeer's "Girl Reading a Letter by an Open Window" image on overhead / projector side by side with "Woman Reading a Letter".
 - a. **Describe:** Invite the class to create a description similar to the one from Google Arts and Culture.
 - b. **Compare and contrast:** What elements stand out in this second painting and why? Which elements are similar or different from the first painting? What is the emotive feeling of this painting and where does it come from?

Main exercise: Lee Young-Ju and the construction of the interior

Approximate Length: 25-30 minutes

Introduction: (use notes from lesson's context)

Instructions:

1. Divide the class into four groups, and assign one of Lee Young-Ju's poems to each group. Project the following questions onto the board, and distribute poster paper to each group to brainstorm the answers.

Group Discussion Questions:

- a) What is the setting for each poem? How do you know that?
- b) What is the dominant emotion or *jông* of each poem? Underline the parts of text that create it.
- c) What are the benefits of this indirect construction of interior emotion?

Class Take-Up:

Approximate Length: 30-40 minutes

Notes for Discussion Questions

1. What is the setting for each poem? How do you know that?
Each poem occurs in rooms and seemingly domestic spaces. Examples include:
“Behind the door” / “When I entered the street of my home,” / “The room I lived in when I was twenty.” / “In the house there are too many empty notebooks” / “In this bed”
Even “The tavern floor”, which is public space, is a space where people commune to socialize and eat, denoting a homely atmosphere.
2. What is the dominant emotion or *jông* of each poem? Underline the parts of text that create it.
Some literary techniques to pay attention to:
 - i. The use of **sentence fragments**
 - a. Disjointedness delays in the fullness of meaning by not finishing a thought
 - b. Reflects subconscious thought by delaying or denying completion
 - ii. The use of starkly **contrasting imagery**
 - a. Contrasting imagery gives the sense of the roving eye wandering
 - b. Creates a dreamscape or surreal atmosphere, where things are not logically linked by function, but by symbolic and thematic relation
 - iii. The use of **inconsistent tense**
 - a. Mirrors the subconscious where time is not linear or continuous
 - b. Reflects the flow of *jông* feeling which is directed and redirected constantly, moving backward and forward.
3. What are the benefits of this indirect construction of interior emotion?
Project or write the following quote on the board:
“Indirection of image – an instance in which a writer takes into consideration how a certain character would see (or, for that matter, smell/hear) a particular setting or image based on his / her / their emotional state...In other words, indirection of image is a way to take abstract emotions and project them onto something concrete. Doing so

creates the potential to explore interiority at a greater depth than what's afforded in mere exposition."

- from John Thornton Williams' "Indirection of Image" on Electric Lit

In other words, Lee Young-Ju shows interiority by mimicking the conditions of it, and framing it within inside space. Inside space functions as a medium or a metaphor to think about the inside space of a human and to explore the non-physical elements of the human experience.

4. **Discuss:** Compare Vermeer's depiction of interiority to Lee Young Ju's. Consider what details they use, and how those details contribute to the overall mood.

Writing exercise: (Homework)

- Create an interior monologue based on one of the two Vermeer paintings and construct a jông: "sentiment / feeling" for it.
- Use two of the techniques we discussed (sentence fragments / contrasting imagery / inconsistent tense) in your piece.
- The piece should be no longer than 300 words.

Fun extra activity: After the pieces have been completed, exchange pieces with a partner and brainstorm names for each other's pieces

LANGUAGE LEARNING HISTORY

Learning Objectives:

- Students will read, understand, and think critically about a reading passage
- Students will identify and reflect on language learning in their own lives

Approximate Grade Level:

- High school
- University

Materials needed:

- Amira Hanafi, [Cities and Dictionaries](#). Eva Heislar.
 - If reading the entire interview is not possible, then focus students' attention on the two-paragraph answer to *"I'm curious about your history with the language. Were you exposed to Arabic as a child? From grandparents, perhaps? What did the process of learning to speak Egyptian colloquial in Cairo teach you about language in general—especially about language as a material with which to make both visual works and poems?"*
- Chalkboard/whiteboard
- Projector to show examples from the slideshow of Hanafi's work

Approximate length:

90 minutes / or two 45 minute lessons

Homework Instructions:

Assign students to read and annotate the interview (or excerpt) for homework and to answer the questions below.

1. **Write:** Describe Amira Hanafi's personal history with the Arabic language. How did she learn and use Arabic growing up? How did she learn it as a university student? How do you think these experiences might have affected her identity and art?

Introduction:

Approximate length: 20 minutes

1. Project the images from the slideshow (linked in the interview) related to *A Dictionary of the Revolution*. Summarize the information about *A Dictionary of the Revolution*.
 - a. **Discuss:** What do you notice? Why?

2. Next project the images from the slideshow related to *Minced English*. Summarize the information about *Minced English*.
 - a. **Discuss:** What do you notice? Why? How are the images related to *A Dictionary of the Revolution* and *Minced English* similar or different? Why do you think she chose to use these particular art forms?

Warm-up Exercise:

Approximate length: 15 minutes

Students bring completed homework to class and check the answers with a partner.

1. **How did she learn and use Arabic growing up?** Spoke English at home, read Qur'an in Arabic, took lessons related to religion and history, visited family in Cairo every summer
2. **How did she learn it as a university student?** Studied Arabic formally, went to the American University in Cairo, stayed with grandmother and talked with her
3. **How do you think these experiences might have affected her identity and art?** Answers may vary. Draw students' attention to the following quotations from the article:

"I think of this relationship to Arabic as the origin of the way I experience the materiality of language—its sounds, rhythms, textures, and visual forms. In that experience, there's a rupture between the signifier and the signified."

"As a mixed person, I'm often described as "half" this and "half" that, which feels to me like being chopped into little bits. At the time I was making this book [Minced English], I was living in Chicago, and this feeling was particularly intense. In whatever space I occupied, I felt forced to make a choice about my racial identity."

Small group discussion:

Approximate length: 30-35 minutes

After students understand the basic information from the interview and have looked at images of her work, give students about 10 minutes to read the questions and think/free write about their answers, and then have small groups discuss their ideas for about 20-25 minutes.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your language learning history? How did you learn language growing up, as a student, and through other activities, such as travel, music, technology, etc.? How is your language learning history similar or different to Hanafi's?
2. *Dictionary of the Revolution* is based on a collection of words in Egyptian colloquial Arabic used during the 2011 revolution. What words are particularly relevant for current political and social climates? Who uses these words? Why?
3. People who speak languages that have a large number of speakers, such as Arabic or English, speak a dialect(s). Which dialect of English is most useful for you? Why? How is that dialect perceived by others?
4. How are language, culture, and identity related? How is this complex relationship expressed in Hanafi's work?

Whole class discussion:

Approximate length: 20-25 minutes

Share: At the end of class, come back together as a class and ask groups to share their answers.

Writing exercise (Homework)

For homework, choose one of the discussion questions and write your answer in paragraph form.

Extension:

Choose a word and use it as a conversation starter with several people. What types of stories, anecdotes, opinions, etc. do they share with you? Does the word have different meanings for different people? Why? Has the meaning of the word changed over time? Discuss what you have learned from this activity.

WRITTEN LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SPACES

Learning Objectives:

Students will understand and think critically about a reading passage and audiovisual materials

Students will explore the use of written language in public spaces

Approximate Grade Level:

High School or University

Materials needed:

Amira Hanafi, [Cities and Dictionaries](#). Eva Heislar.

Chalkboard/whiteboard

Audio equipment so students can listen to *What's Wrong in Chicago* (link in the piece)

Projector to show images from the slideshow of Amira Hanafi's work (link in the piece)

Approximate length:

- Two 60 minute lessons

Context:

"Walking can be an act of resistance in which the walker refuses to comply with the behaviors that more powerful authors of the city call for. I think that's in a large way what the situationists intended with the dérive, a practice I've played with a lot." -Amira Hanafi

Additional information about situationists and the dérive can be found online, such as at <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html>

Homework:

Assign students to read the interview for homework. To aid comprehension, have students take notes on the following:

- Write down interesting or important points about each of the five works discussed in the article. Include notes for *A Dictionary of the Revolution*, *Maps of the Orders of the Signs*, *Minced English*, *Forgery*, and *We are Fragmented*.

Lesson One

Warm-up:

Approximate length: 15 minutes

In class, have students compare homework notes and discuss their understanding of the reading and each artistic work, but especially *Maps of the Orders of the Signs*, the focus of the lesson. Explain any points with which students have difficulty understanding.

Main Activity:

Approximate length: 30 minutes

Write the 7 discussion questions listed below on the board. Students may want to take notes as the audiovisual materials are introduced.

- Play audio *What's Wrong in Chicago* (linked in the piece).
- Project images from the slideshow (linked in the piece) related to *Maps of the Order of the Signs*.

In small groups, students discuss the following questions, referring to their notes and the article as needed. Students should write brief answers as they discuss, as they will share their ideas in the next activity. Replay the audio and slideshow, if necessary. **Discuss:**

1. What kind of place is this?
2. What services are available?
3. Who has the power in this space?
4. How should people behave there?
5. What kind of language is used?
6. How do you think this place may have changed from the past until now?
7. How do you think the language from a walk in Chicago would be similar or different to a walk in an area you are familiar with?

Class Discussion:

Approximate length: 15 minutes

Review the small group discussion by asking students to share their answers. Through the discussion, students can develop an understanding of the relationship between the design of public spaces, the text used there, and how these are used to reinforce expected behaviors. (See Context above for more information.)

Lesson Two

Observation Activity:

Approximate length: 30 minutes

Have students walk with a partner in a designated area of the school campus. As they walk, they should record all written language they observe, either by writing notes or audio recording themselves reading all the text they encounter, including words from signs, vehicles, graffiti, and so on. Alternatively, show students pictures of the campus or local area and have them take notes of the text they see in the pictures. Students should compile their word lists and be ready to share them during the next activity. (If appropriate, students could choose a safe and familiar place to walk and complete this task for homework instead.)

Presentation:

Approximate length: 30 minutes

Pairs should share their experiences of walking and their word lists with another pair. After each pair presents their work, students should engage in a discussion of the 7 questions above as they relate to their observation activity.

Writing Exercise (Homework):

Choose one of the following prompts to write about.

- Write a reflection on what you learned from the activity of observing, recording text, and discussing it with classmates. Refer to the 7 discussion questions.
- Write a poem based on the words you collected during the experiential learning activity.
- Describe the process of creating a work like *Maps of the Orders of the Signs*, incorporating concepts discussed in the interview: multivocal/polyvocal, research, and wandering/walking.

Additional resources:

Amira Hanafi <http://www.amiraha.com>

Maps of the Order of the Signs <https://amirahanafi.com/tagged/maps> and the linked book <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EvozY4nPjCaOjt6MrPmxbZMZbHSp9I5Q/view>

DE/RE/CONSTRUCTING RACE THROUGH PERFORMANCE

RACE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

The Harvard Writing Center's [Student Guide to Performance Studies](#) defines “performance” in the following way:

Any action that is ‘not-for-the-first time’—that has been learned, rehearsed, and is then ‘twice-behaved,’ or performed. Performance Studies scholars claim that any action follows this ‘performative’ paradigm, even those we typically assume are natural or spontaneous (like getting dressed in the morning, or ‘being’ a man). PS scholars study how the behavior is prepared and presented as a means to understand an individual’s or group’s values and organization.

In this lesson, we hope to offer activities that use *Asymptote* pieces to encourage critical analysis of the points of contact between literature, race, and performance. The activities are centered on a drama that addresses U.S. racial politics—featuring such figures as Mumia Abu-Jamal, an activist and journalist who was sentenced to death in 1982 after the 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner; Martin Luther King; and Coretta Scott King. The characters’ harrowing realities and remembrances are depicted through the lens of Guadeloupe-born French writer Alain Foix, who recently published a biography of MLK. This lesson focuses on literary analysis and is not intended to be an in-depth exploration of history or politics; however, we hope it will spark fruitful discussions in classes across disciplines.

Learning Objectives

Students will

- Practice formulating and refining questions through critical engagement with texts
- Demonstrate close-reading skills by analyzing the de/re/construction of race in drama
- Create thematic intertextual conversations between different writers
- Practice writing a creative close-reading analysis

Approximate Grade Levels: Upper-level high school and older

Materials Needed

- from Alain Foix’s [The Last Scene](#), translated by Amelia Parenteau
- Henry Ace Knight’s [An interview with Mario Vargas Llosa](#) (only for Activity Three)
- chalkboard or whiteboard
- copies of discussion questions and interview quotes (optional)
- poster paper for groups to brainstorm discussion answers
- YouTube, if accessible in class

Pre-Class Activity

Have students

- Read and annotate *The Last Scene*, *An interview with Mario Vargas Llosa* (optional), and the accompanying biographies
- Bring at least one question about *The Last Scene* to class

Activity One: General Discussion Questions

Approximate Length of Activity: 20-30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- from Alain Foix's *The Last Scene*, translated by Amelia Parenteau
- chalkboard or whiteboard

Instructions:

1. Briefly review background information on the major figures featured in *The Last Scene*. Consult resources listed at the end of the lesson.
2. Conduct a discussion on students' first impressions of the drama, with the goal of generating questions to be explored throughout the lesson. Encourage students to share the questions they created for homework, and take notes on the board as they speak. You could guide the conversation with the following:
 - What emotions did you experience while reading? What parts of the text elicited strong reactions?
 - What do you think is the purpose of the drama, and who is its intended audience?
 - (Share and briefly discuss the definition of "performance" with students.) How do you think your reactions to the piece would be different if you had watched a performance of it? Consider effects created by acting, costumes, type of stage, set design, lighting, sound, audience participation/reactions, and the context of the production—school show, community theatre, touring show, etc.
 - How do you interpret the portrayals and roles of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Martin Luther King, and Coretta Scott King? How are race and racial politics constructed and/or challenged?
3. Encourage students to support their responses with textual evidence and go beyond preconceived differences between Malcolm X/Mumia Abu-Jamal and Martin Luther King, including the oversimplified violent/nonviolent dichotomy. Depending on the focus of the class, consider comparing the construction of these characters in the drama to texts by these figures, such as excerpts from Malcolm X's autobiography. One particularly relevant section to the discussion of violence is the following:

Anyway, now, each day I live as if I am already dead, and I tell you what I would like for you to do. When I am dead—I say it that way because from the things I know, I do not expect to live long enough to read this book in its finished form—I want you to just watch and see if I'm not right in what I say: that the white man, in his press, is going to identify me with "hate."

He will make use of me dead, as he has made use of me alive, as a convenient symbol of "hatred"—and that will help him to escape facing the truth that all I have been doing is holding up a mirror to reflect, to show, the history of unspeakable crimes that his race has committed against my race.

You watch. I will be labeled as, at best, an “irresponsible” black man. I have always felt about this accusation that the black “leader” whom white men consider to be “responsible” is invariably the black “leader” who never gets any results. You only get action as a black man if you are regarded by the white man as “irresponsible.” In fact, this much I had learned when I was just a little boy. And since I have been some kind of a “leader” of black people here in the racist society of America, I have been more reassured each time the white man resisted me, or attacked me harder—because each time made me more certain that I was on the right track in the American black man’s best interests.

—Malcolm X, from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pg. 221 (see Charles Preston’s Black History Month Library, link at end of lesson, for free access)

Activity Two: Analyzing Music in Literature

Approximate length: 50-80 minutes

Materials Needed:

- from Alain Foix’s [The Last Scene](#), translated by Amelia Parenteau
- YouTube, if accessible in class
- chalkboard, whiteboard, or copies of discussion questions
- poster paper for groups to brainstorm discussion answers

Instructions:

1. Have students underline all musical performances and references in the Foix piece. Provide background information on any unfamiliar musical pieces or artists.
2. If you have internet access, play Youtube clips of *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*, Harry Belafonte’s song on Martin Luther King, *Precious Lord Take My Hand*, and György Ligeti’s *Lontano*. Have students take notes on the performances.
3. Have students choose one musical element in *The Last Scene* they would like to critically analyze. This could be the element they believe is most impactful, least impactful, or particularly intriguing. Split students into pairs or small groups based on their selections. Try to have at least one group per element.
4. Before beginning group work, give students 5-10 minutes to individually free-write about their musical element and its relationship to the rest of the drama. Encourage students to consider questions raised in the first activity and why, in their view, the musical element does or does not work well in the piece. Students might also think about effects created by the intermingling of sight, scent, and sound.
5. Share at least a few of the following questions with students on paper or the board. Distribute poster paper to each group to collectively brainstorm answers for 20-30 minutes. Encourage students to discuss ideas generated in the free-write and ground their responses in evidence from the text.

- a. Why did you choose your musical element? What role does it play in its particular scene and in the text as a whole? What emotions and senses are evoked? What is its effect?
 - b. In what way does your musical element describe, comment on, resist, complicate, or perform another action on the content and themes of the text, such as race and racial politics?
 - c. How do you understand the relationship between gender and music in the text? In your view, how do musical elements in the text construct or resist gender roles? How do you interpret the portrayal of Coretta Scott King?
 - d. What is the cumulative effect of the musical elements on you as a reader? Consider the elements individually and in relation to each other. How may this effect be different to a spectator of a performance of the piece?
 - e. Consider the piece's multiple layers of performative acts. How do you understand the relationship between performance and politics?
6. Reconvene as a class to discuss responses and draw connections between musical elements.

Activity Three: Intertextual Readings of Race and Culture

Approximate length: 30-45 minutes

Materials Needed:

- from Alain Foix's [*The Last Scene*](#), translated by Amelia Parenteau
- Henry Ace Knight's [*An interview with Mario Vargas Llosa*](#)
- chalkboard, whiteboard, or copies of interview quotes

Instructions:

1. Share the following quotes from *An interview with Mario Vargas Llosa* on paper or the board. Explain that students will discuss Vargas Llosa's argument on "images" and "ideas" in the context of the Foix piece.

. Vargas Llosa:

My impression is that ideas are less important now than in the past because the images of the cinema, television, and new platforms are much more influential in society than books. And I think this is a great change from the past, in which ideas were the most important element in the transformation of values, aesthetics, and moral standards.

The influence of books, at least of ideas, has been shrinking and not only in countries of the third world, but particularly in countries of the first world. I think images can be much more easily manipulated by power than ideas. Ideas are more resistant to this kind of manipulation.

2. Conduct a discussion on Vargas Llosa's definitions of, and argument on, "images" and "ideas." Encourage students to use evidence from the rest of the interview to support their answers.

3. Discuss the relationship between “images” and “ideas” in the Foix piece. Consider asking students what “images” from the drama stood out to them, and whether those images would have been just as powerful if they had been isolated from the text. You could also ask students to consider the functions of media and screen imagery in the piece. If students are struggling, split the class into pairs or small groups and then reconvene to share findings.
4. Evaluate Vargas Llosa’s argument on images and ideas in the context of the Foix piece. To what extent is it true that “images” have become more influential than “ideas”? That “ideas” are more resistant than “images” to manipulation?

Closing Activity

Based on the discussions about *The Last Scene*, have students formulate one new question related to the drama, refine their original question, or build on a question that was raised in conversation. If time permits, encourage students to share and discuss in pairs and/or as a class. Collect questions before students leave.

Writing Assignment

Have students write a creative close-reading analysis of *The Last Scene* using one of the following prompts.

1. Conduct background research on Martin Luther King, Coretta Scott King, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Malcolm X, and carefully consider each figure’s role in Foix’s drama. Then, create an additional scene, incorporating at least two of the figures listed and one musical performance. Write an analysis of your scene and its relationship to the rest of the text.
2. Examine the structure of the interview with Vargas Llosa. Think about the following: In your view, what are the best questions and answers? Why? What additional questions would you have asked? With this in mind, create five to seven interview questions to ask Alain Foix or Amelia Parenteau. Write a reflection on how you arrived at your questions. While crafting your interview and reflection, consider the following:
 - a. Aspects of the drama that most intrigue you
 - b. The biographies of Foix and Parenteau
 - c. Cultural differences between the author, translator, and characters
 - d. The intended audience
 - e. The purpose of the drama and its translation into English
3. Choose one scene from the 2018 film *Black Panther* and one scene from *The Last Scene* that could be put in conversation with each other—for example, two scenes related to the depiction of Black women. Write a critical analysis of the scenes, comparing their form, content, and/or visions of the future.

Resources

- Mumia Abu-Jamal, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and more:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0Bz011IF2Pu9TUWlxVWxybGJ1Ync> (Charles Preston’s Black History Month Library)
- Black Panther Party:
<http://www.prattlibrary.org/research/tools/index.aspx?cat=92&id=4302>

GLOBAL LEARNING & HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In an environment where information comes from all parts of the globe, students need to learn how to put stories in context and look more deeply at the causes of current crises. They also need to develop skills in historical thinking: what transformations have led to the situations we see now? What motivations, strategies, and categories shaped the way that people in the past saw their world? *Asymptote* offers non-fiction essays, interviews, and analysis from around the globe, which can be the starting point for a discussion about different perspectives on our world today.

In this section, students are given resources to explore a part of the globe that has undergone many transformations, and therefore is the site of competing narratives. Preparatory activities help students identify the political and cultural forces that defined the region of Galicia. Viewing activities help them engage with the perspectives of those who experienced the events of the time.

From this issue: [The Empire of America](#), by Martin Pollock

Learning Objectives: from the [AACU VALUE rubrics](#) **Reading; Information Literacy; Global learning:** Perspective taking; **Intercultural Knowledge and Competence.**

Approximate Grade level: College or AP history

Approximate length:

- Can be done in a single class or spread over two sessions

Pre-reading questions as homework:

The Eastern European region of Galicia, where Pollack's history is set, no longer exists. The following questions and resources will help you understand what it was and in what ways it differed from the states around it.

Look at this short [history of Galicia in the YIVO Institute website](#) and answer the following questions:

1. The region formerly known as Galicia is now part of what countries? What are some of the main cities?
2. What empire did Galicia formerly belong to? How long did this territory exist?
3. How did the Empire treat the Jewish population living in Galicia in terms of education, religious practice, and political representation? What was the relationship between the Emperor in particular and the Jewish population?
4. What were the Russian [pogroms](#) and what effect did they have?
5. What view might Galician Jews have had of the Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire? How did his decisions affect their lives?

Reading Questions for the translators' note

1. What myths was the author, Martin Pollack, trying to dispel with his book?
2. The text was translated from German, but Pollack used many sources. How many different ethnic groups lived in this region -- and how many different languages would you need to read in order to consult sources from all the different groups and nations involved?
3. What, according to Pollack, made his topic difficult to research, and why does he think it is still relevant today?

Reading Questions for *The Emperor of America*

1. Why does Pollack focus on Oswiecim/ Auschwitz? What time period does he focus on and what is special about this place during this time period?
2. How would you characterize the city and the region during the period he describes? Who lives here?
3. When describing the movement of immigrants and refugees, people talk about "push" factors, things that push people out of their original home, and "pull" factors things that pull them toward a new place. What are the push and pull factors for those moving through this region?
4. A visitor from an aid organization, Moritz Friedländer, was sent to this area. When did he visit, what was his purpose, and what did he observe?

In-Class Activity

Warm up: Review homework questions and student responses

In-Depth exploration:

- What story is Martin Pollack attempting to tell?
- Whose voices does he want to include?
- What does it mean when we talk about historical "myths"? Are myths untrue? What are some examples of national myths? Are they helpful or unhelpful when imagining history?
- What challenges do we face when we tell the story of a nation or a region, as opposed to recounting one person's biography or the history of an object?

Option 1, film excerpt:

["Ochberg's Orphans"](#): this history of an organized effort to rescue Jewish children orphaned in Russia details the waves of pogroms in the region. Students could usefully view the first 11 minutes. [Note: The excerpt includes many disturbing images of the injured and dead. Later parts of the film include first-hand accounts of the "blood libel" against Jews]

- What story is this film telling?
- How does that affect its choice of subjects?
- What images in the film affect our understanding? What images have an emotional impact?

- Consider the narrative and the interviews: whose perspectives are presented in this film?
- Whose point of view is foregrounded?

Option 2, photo exhibit:

Roman Vishniac Rediscovered. [Jewish Life in Eastern Europe, ca. 1935-38](#)

Discuss the project Vishniac undertook: what did he seek out, what guided his choice of subjects? What part of the population does he focus on? What general impression do his photographs create?

Expansion Assignment Options:

1. Exploring the borderlands. The beginning of the 20th century and the period after World War II saw enormous numbers of displaced people moving across national borders. According to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, we're seeing another peak in the number of displaced people. Where are the new "borderlands" through which these people are passing?
 - a. Identify two new "borderlands" through which displaced people are passing in large numbers.
 - b. Find photographs of the people in these places. What subjects are featured? What do you think guided the choice of images? Whose point of view is represented here?
 - c. Look at news stories about these places. What ideas are associated with them? How are the places characterized?
2. Language across borders. Pollack describes a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environment. Look at the work being done by "[Translators without Borders](#)" and consider:
 - a. Identify 3 places where translation is being done to serve communities. Why is there a need for translation in these places?
 - b. How are translation needs different when there is a [response to a crisis](#)?
 - c. Refer back to Pollack's essay. What kind of questions might those passing through Oswiecim have had? How might language barriers have kept them from getting the information they needed?

Teaching Resources

Pollack's text would be complemented by other historical texts, such as:

- ***The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture*** by Larry Wolff

Other Galician writers whose work connects to Pollack's themes:

- ***Red Cavalry*** by Isaac Babel

- "Two Saviors of the People" from ***The Jews of Barnow*** by Karl Emil Franzos.

- selections from ***Joseph Roth: A Life in Letters***, translated and edited by Michael Hofmann

APPENDIX 1

Girl Reading A Letter By An Open Window



Woman Reading A Letter



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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