

The background of the entire page is a vibrant, high-angle photograph of a city skyline at night. The lights from the buildings are reflected in the water in the foreground, creating a shimmering, multi-colored effect. The colors range from deep blues and purples to bright oranges and yellows. The overall atmosphere is one of a bustling, illuminated urban environment.

A
DIFFERENT
LIGHT

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE
WINTER 2018



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WINTER 2018 | A DIFFERENT LIGHT**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Winter 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 five different sections. Each section contains activity suggestions that can be used in conjunction with each other to form complete lessons, or separately to complement lessons on other content.

Asymptote's [Winter 2018 issue](#), "A Different Light," clusters all its pieces around "light," either in a thematic and content-based way, or a formal and representational way. This Educator's Guide borrows from that expansive frame, and features lessons that highlight the importance of literary voice. A different light, understood as a new perspective, asks a literary voice to be the vehicle of that perspective. Voice is what guides us in the text: thematically, formally, representationally, functionally, and effectively. It is, after all, the dominant frame of engagement. All the lessons in this guide are created to shed light on the many ways in which narrative voices illuminate, display, and lead us as readers through literature.

We realize that the age ranges for each lesson might 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 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 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.

PERSONAL VOICE, COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Analyze elements of a text (point of view, characters, setting, etc) and how they impact a reader's understanding of the central theme or idea
- Compare and contrast two or more texts
- Cite textual evidence to support analysis
- Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature

Approximate Grade Level(s):

- Advanced middle school
- Lower-level high school

Materials Needed:

- Iris Hanika's [*The Essential*](#), translated by Abigail Wender
- Erika Kobayashi's [*Sunrise*](#), translated by Brian Bergstrom
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or projector
- Writing materials

Activity One – Analysis of Literary Elements

Approximate Length: 45 minutes

Context: In each of these stories, the narrator explores the relationship between the individual and the community through the lens of communal tragedy. In this lesson, students will consider the ways in which a text uses point of view and other literary elements to make this exploration vivid to the reader. This lesson assumes that students already have an understanding of point of view, setting, character, and imagery, and that they have read both pieces for homework.

Instructions:

1. Tell students that they will analyze the literary elements of [*The Essential*](#) using the following chart (can be projected or reproduced on a white/chalkboard).
2. Complete the first line of the chart yourself as a demonstration. Then work together to complete the rest.
3. If necessary, briefly define each literary element before analyzing it, or call on a student to provide a definition.

Literary Element	Description of the Literary Element in this Text	Examples from the Text that Support your Description
Point of View		
Plot		
Setting		
Character		
Imagery		

4. Conduct a brief class discussion on the following question: How does the main character, Hans, feel about his nation’s tragedy, the Holocaust? How do the literary elements we just discussed work together to help form your answer?

5. Split the class into small groups and have them fill in the same chart for [Sunrise](#) and discuss the question: How does the narrator feel about her nation’s nuclear tragedies? How do the literary elements we just discussed work together to help form your answer?

Activity Two - Class Discussion

Approximate Length: 15 minutes

Instructions:

Conduct a class discussion on the following questions. Encourage students to cite evidence from the text to support their answers:

- Compare and contrast the narrators of the two texts. How are they the same and / or different?
- Compare and contrast the main characters of the texts? How are they the same and how different?
- How does each narrator help you understand each main character?
- Describe how the main characters relate their nation’s traumatic experiences to their own lives and identities.

Homework:

Have students write a short story or essay about something that happened in their community and how it affected them from their own point of view. It doesn't have to be tragic or traumatic, just something that everyone experience(s/d) together. Have them consider the way their own voice and their use of plot, setting, characters, and imagery will affect their readers' understanding of their piece.

HISTORICAL FICTION: WRITING HISTORY IN LITERATURE

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Interpret literary elements to analyze the purpose and effect of narrative elements
- Recognize the formal elements of the historical fiction genre
- Demonstrate familiarity with historical fiction elements through creative rewriting

Approximate Grade Level(s):

- Middle-level high school (English class writing section)
- Adult-level writing workshop designed to develop formal knowledge and technique alongside content

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper for class discussion or whiteboard/chalkboard
- Choi Suchol's [Dance of the POWs](#), translated by Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton (online or printed)
- Maxim Osipov's [The Mill](#), translated by Alex Fleming (online or printed)
- The following contextual resources (online or printed)
<http://alphahistory.com/russianrevolution/russian-industrialisation/>
<http://www.history.com/topics/korean-war>
<https://hapsekorea.com/geoje-islands-pow-camp/>
- T-Chart Templates (see the appendix to this lesson)

Activity:

Approximate Length: 60 – 90 minutes

Context: Historical Fiction as a genre allows us to creatively access history and interact with historical events in a personal way. Literary narratives allow us to connect with characters and often gain access to their interiorities. This proximity gives us a different perspective on a historical event that we may learn about, but not connect with on a personal level. Both of these short fiction pieces have characters in dynamic relationships to their worlds, allowing readers to ask: Who are they? Why do the events of history affect them in that specific way? How does this unfold in the story through events, and also through the characters' emotional arcs? How does a character's emotional arc impact us as readers?

Instructions:

1. Spend some time **reading** through the [Choi](#) and [Osipov](#) pieces round robin style (one student reads a paragraph, then the next takes over).
2. As a class, briefly **outline the historical context** for each piece by reading together the informational resources provided in the **Materials Needed** section above.

3. **Introduce** the genre of Historical Fiction by sharing the following characteristics with students. Be sure to write or project them on the board so students can refer to them throughout your discussion:
 - Setting – An authentic historical period and a real historical place
 - Conflict – Main characters are involved in a dilemma relevant to the historical time period
 - Dialogue – Words spoken are an accurate representation of the period
 - Description – Vivid imagery and detail often used to make the narrative environment specific
 - Plot – Based on real events but mixed in with fictional elements that make sense in the time period
 - Characters – Can be based on real people or can be fictional people inserted into real events
4. Divide your class so that each half takes on one piece. Have each group fill in the **T-Chart** template in the appendix about their assigned piece. You can help students get started on the right track by giving an example from each text or coming up with one as a class.
 - Left: List out narrative moods and emotions that show up in the text.
 - Right: Cite examples from the text, details that help to enforce the mood. Use the six literary elements we discussed as a class to help you look for clues.
5. Prompt **reflection** by conducting a class discussion that connects the students' knowledge of the Historical Fiction genre and literary elements with the tone of the piece and its commentary on the historical events. Using the T-Chart as reference, ask students the following questions:
 - Do the stories end on hopeful or despairing sentiments, and why?
 - How does this make you feel toward the historical event that frames the story?

Homework:

Have students choose a supporting character in the short story and write a paragraph from their point of view about something that happens in the story. They should think intentionally about the literary elements discussed in class, and consider how a different character might have a different mood or emotion in the story.

APPENDIX

Name:

Date:

Close Reading T-Chart

Mood/Emotion	Example from Text

INTERTEXTUALITY AND INTERPRETATION: FORM AS DESTINATION

Learning Objectives

Students will

- Demonstrate close-reading skills through critical engagement with the texts
- Create thematic intertextual conversations between different writers
- Analyze personal reader responses and exercise appropriate language to describe effect

Approximate Grade Level(s): Upper-level high school and older

Materials Needed:

- [Tsipi Keller reviews *Incest* by Christine Angot](#)
- Henry Ace Knight's [An Interview with Daniel Mendelsohn](#)
- José Vicente Anaya's [from *Hikuri \(Peyote\)*](#), translated by Joshua Pollock
- Writing tools for annotation: colored pencils, differently-colored pens
- Notebooks or paper for brainstorms
- Projector (optional)

Activity One

Approximate Length: Scalable from 60 - 90 minutes

Context: Literary work is best read in a wider ecosystem of other literature. This exercise builds students' abilities to read literary texts against each other and apply the thematic interests of each piece as frameworks of interpretation toward the other texts. Angot's approach to literature, drawing from the raw material of autobiography and details of real life filtered through the forms of fiction, can be read in contrast to Mendelsohn's literary construction of autobiographical non-fiction. This activity assumes that students have read the [Tsipi Keller](#) and [Henry Ace Knight](#) pieces for homework.

Instructions:

1. Split students into small groups. **Share the following quotes** with them (on paper or the board) and have them briefly discuss what each quote means. For example, Keller's quote highlights how Angot's writing has a strong auditory interest, while the Mendelsohn quote is a response to how the non-fiction form is actually a literary genre, and not something like a report. Make sure to emphasize that the purpose of these quotes is to create a frame of awareness, evaluating the given texts by standards which can be applied equally to other texts.
 - a. [Keller on Angot:](#)

“Her books are an incantation, biblical in their onrush of verbs, nouns, names, and deliberate repetitions (yes, I, too, repeat myself) in the service of rhythm and camouflage, compelling you to read on, for sound, for cadence, for poetry.”

b. [Mendelsohn](#):

“What I’m interested in creating is something that combines all the things that I do in my life as a reader and writer and teacher—thinking about ancient texts, and thinking as a critic, and being a memoirist who thinks about the past and how it impinges on the present—and I suppose I’ve just tried to create a form that allows me to do all three things in the same text.”

2. Using these two quotes as a starting point, students should individually read and **annotate** [Anaya’s poem](#), paying attention to how and where it performs in relation to Angot’s auralty and Mendelsohn’s multifunctionality. In their annotations, students should mark:
 - Poetic techniques that work or that miss the mark
 - Formal or syntactical choices that are accessible or inaccessible
 - Elements they enjoyed or did not enjoy
 - The intertextual references that create context and subtext in the stanzas
3. Together as a group, have students **share their observations** based on their annotations. Take notes on the board as they speak.

Activity Two

Approximate Length of Activity: 60 minutes

Context: This activity is a reflection on what it means for writers and readers to experience poetic form as journey. As opposed to prose fiction, many forms of poetry privilege form over content, focusing instead on the combination of stylistic nuances, sound, rhythm, and frame construction that evoke an effect. For budding poetry writers or readers, how is it possible to understand and experience the combination of all these literary decisions in the performative moment of a poem?

Instructions:

1. Have students read through the [Anaya poem](#) and individually take note of their **reading experience** of the poem according to the following question:
 - What parts move or confuse you?
2. Split students into groups of two or three to **compare and contrast** elements of the poem that they personally engaged with or felt disconnected from. Have them ask each other the following questions (have these questions available visually on the board):
 - What kind of emotions did the poem trigger? Which lines/images evoke these emotions in you?

- Did you identify with anything because of a personal experience? If so, what and why?
 - Did you respond to anything because of a literary preference? If so, what and why?
 - What did you like most / least about this poem? Why?
 - If you had to pick a color to describe your experience reading Anaya's [Hikuri \(Peyote\)](#), what would it be and why?
3. Come back together to **discuss** the students' answers as a class. Explain that it is okay to have positive and negative responses to the text, but that it is important to have specific textual references as support when expressing those responses. This discussion also serves as a warmup for the writing assignment, which will utilize a similar skill but ask for it in the written form.

Homework:

From the Translator's Notes of [Hikuri \(Peyote\)](#): *"Alongside Roberto Bolaño and Mario Santiago Papasquiaro, José Vicente Anaya was one of the founders of Infrarealism in Mexico in the 1970s. Infrarealism was a post-communist avant-garde movement that existed in opposition to a complacent Mexican literary status quo... After Infrarealism dissolved as a coherent milieu José Vicente Anaya traveled around Mexico, going back to his native Chihuahua where he connected with Rarámuri culture and partook in peyote ceremonies."*

Have students research the Infrarealism movement in Mexico and Chihuahua's Rarámuri culture, which conducts the peyote ceremonies. Using their research, have them reread Anaya's [poem](#) and write a short, three-paragraph response. They should be sure to cite examples of these thematic and cultural influences in the text and discuss what kind of effects they produce.

OR

Have students pair two new quotes of their own choice, one from the [Keller review](#) and one from [Knight's interview](#), and write a response paragraph on why these two quotes are relevant to each other thematically.

ALLEGORY AS SOCIO-POLITICAL COMMENTARY

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Analyze allegory in a text
- Discuss the function of allegory in social/political commentary

Approximate Grade Level(s): University level

Materials Needed:

- Marta Zelwan's [The Human Species](#), translated by Victoria Miluch (printed or online)
- Chawki Amari's [Lethal Parallax](#), translated by Lauren Broom (printed or online)
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or projector
- Writing materials

Activity One – Analyzing the Allegory

Approximate Length: 45 minutes

Context: Both of these pieces use allegory for the purpose of social / political commentary. In this lesson, students will be expected to read and annotate both pieces for homework and to have been previously introduced to the concept of allegory.

Instructions:

1. Provide students the following definition of an allegory:
“A literary device in which an abstract idea takes concrete form in characters and events.”
2. Split students into pairs or small groups and have them map out the allegory in each story. Have them list each character and event, and describe the abstract idea that it embodies. Encourage students to cite evidence from the text to support their analyses and to use the bios / Translators' Notes that they read for homework.

Activity Two - Class Discussion

Approximate Length: 20 minutes

Instructions:

Conduct a class discussion on the following questions. Encourage students to cite evidence from the text to support their answers:

- In what way did each character and event contribute uniquely to your understanding of the abstract idea? Were there any superfluous elements? If so, how?

- Are there any incongruent elements, or elements that don't map easily with your comprehension of the allegory? If so, try to tease them out. Why do you think they were included in the text?
- Chawki Amari, the author of [Lethal Parallax](#), has been imprisoned and forced into exile for the political commentary in his art. Discuss the role of art and allegory in expressing dangerous ideas. Does allegory make the expression of disruptive ideas more safe or more dangerous for the person trying to express them? How? Zelwan has not been persecuted for her art. Why do you think this is the case? Are her ideas less disruptive? Was she born in a more tolerant country?

Homework:

Have students choose something they dislike in their culture and write a short story in which they use allegory to explore the complexities of this cultural or political element.

Alternatively, in preparation for this assignment, you can brainstorm topics as a class and begin to discuss some of the complexities about which students will write.

THE DISTANCE OF DIRECT ADDRESS – “YOU”

Learning Objectives:

Students will

- Apply close reading skills to literary material
- Analyze technical elements of a literary text, such as syntax and imagery
- Practice the basic steps of the writing process from drafting to peer review and editing

Approximate Grade Level(s): Amateur writers, high school-aged and older

Materials Needed:

- César Moro’s [“Oh Fury the Dawn Emerges from Your Lips,”](#) translated by Leslie Bary and Esteban Quispe (printed or online, including the Translator’s Note)
- Khal Torabully’s [from Cargo Hold of Stars](#), translated by Nancy Naomi Carlson (printed or online, including the Translator’s Note)
- Hubert Maitúwàa’s [Earthen Skin](#), translated by Paul Worley (printed or online, including the Translator’s Note)

Activity One: The Plural “You” // Moro and Torabully

Approximate Length: 45 - 60 minutes

Context: Both these poems invoke the “You” address in a way that makes it hard to pinpoint who exactly is being addressed. Communal, metaphorical, or gesturing to a personified addressee, the “You” in the [Moro](#) and [Torabully](#) pieces functions more as invocation to a large introspection than as direct speech to an intended receiver. The “You” does not reveal so much about the addressee as it does about the narrator’s interiority and emotional universe.

Instructions:

1. **Read** through both poems as a class, asking for a volunteer to read out loud.
2. Have students perform an **independent close reading** by individually highlighting or underlining images and lines in the poems that offer information or insight into the relationship between the “I” speaker and the “You” addressee.
3. Have students pair up with a partner. Each pair will use their close reading annotations to **brainstorm characteristics** or identifiable traits of the intended “You” in each poem. Then have them do the same for the “I” speaker in each poem.
4. **Discuss** together as a class the following question: What are some key differences between the [Torabully](#) and the [Moro](#) pieces in the way each “I” speaker addresses the

“You?” Take notes on your class discussion by creating bullet-point profiles of each “You.”

5. Have students individually read through the Translator’s Notes for the [Torabully](#) and [Moro](#) pieces. You might have to define the term “coolie.” (A derogatory and/or a [racial slur](#) referring to unskilled native laborer in India, China, and some other Asian countries.) Still on their own, have them revisit the two poems with the new **contextual information** and add notes to each “You” profile.
6. Split students into groups of three or four to compare their updated notes on the “You” profiles, discussing **new observations or insights**, and come up with a one-sentence description that explains the “You” in each poem.

Reference Sentences:

- *The “You” in the [Torabully piece](#) gestures to a historical and ancestral community that is represented as alienated and distant, but also loved and celebrated by the “I” speaker.*
- *Although [Moro](#) writes about a real individual, the stylized and fantastic imagery creates a “You” that is actually a representation of the “I”’s romantic emotion and sensibility.*

7. **Share** these sentences as a class.

Activity Two – The Absent “You” // Maitúwàa

Approximate Length: 60 to 90 minutes

Context: The tension in this piece is between the large expanse of world created by the poem and the solitary voice of the “I” speaker addressing a “You” who is gone. Distance is most articulated in the negative sound space created around the speaker and the isolation evoked through intentional landscape images.

Instructions:

1. **Read** through [Earthen Skin](#) together as a class and discuss the following questions:
 - Identify the language in the poem that evokes a sense of loss.
 - List details about the setting of the poem. What kind of space does the text create?
 - What language clues indicate that the addressee of the poem is absent?
 - How does the speaker feel toward the addressee? How do you know this? Underline examples in the poem.

2. **Read** through Translator's Notes together. Discuss how this new information affects students' understanding of the poem. Revisit the discussion questions above and note down any changes.
3. **Have students individually write** a short paragraph in the second person, addressing somebody who is absent. Before they begin writing, ask students to choose an emotion and a subject. Instruct them to consider imagery, syntax, rhythm, and vocabulary when constructing this paragraph.
4. **Pair share: Have students** exchange their pieces with another person and build a few-sentence response to their partner's piece, discussing who they think the "You" is and how the speaker feels toward the addressee.
Bonus: Ask students to share suggested edits with the other person to strengthen their paragraph emotively, or to make the "You" more focused.

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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