



Vanishing Point



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE Fall 2020 I VANISHING POINT

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of the Asymptote Educator's Guide!

Our latest guide has lesson plans covering subjects from modernist architecture to labor studies to intertextuality to Japanese folklore. To help educators bring world literature into the classroom, each lesson is paired with poems, essays, and stories from "Vanishing Point," our Fall 2020 issue available here: http://asymptotejournal.com/oct-2020

Our first lesson, "Beyond the Façade: A Multitude of Lives," asks students to explore the relationship between architecture and society by looking at iconic modernist architecture in Amsterdam and the diverse lives of its inhabitants. "Characterization and Intertextuality in the Short Story" provides students the opportunity to delve into how writers develop characters and speak to, with, and across multiple texts to enrich their stories. "Writing about What is Lost," has students consider losses in their own lives through the lens of Japanese folklore. "Crafting as Labor: Women's Work and Its History" wraps up the Fall 2020 Educator's Guide with a lesson looking at poetry, sewing, and the history of women's labor.

We realize that the age ranges and instructional contexts for each lesson vary, and so we encourage educators to adjust these lessons to meet their needs and to record these modifications. Your classroom and teaching experience are valuable to us, and hearing about them helps us improve our formation of the next guide. Please leave feedback and suggestions here: http://tinyurl.com/asymptoteforedu.

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 which can be found here: https://www.asymptotejournal.com/blog/

We'd especially love to read and share 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.

Beyond the Façade: A Multitude of Lives

"Concrete (Ode to the Bijlmer Flats)" by Karin Amatmoekrim, translated by Sarah Timmer Harvey

https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/karin-amatmoekrim-concrete/

Students explore the relationship between architecture and society through reading and discussing "Concrete (Ode to the Bijlmer Flats)" by Karin Amatmoekrim and translated by Sarah Timmer Harvey. After learning about the history of the Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam, students research a local building and give a presentation about the characteristics of its exterior and the multifaceted use of its interior.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Identify figurative language in the reading
- Analyze the relationship between architecture and society
- Create and deliver a presentation about a local building or structure

Assessment

Comprehension questions
Participation in group discussion
Presentation assignment

Approximate Grade Level

High school students University students

Materials Needed

"Concrete (Ode to the Bijlmer Flats)" by Karin Amatmoekrim, translated by Sarah Timmer Harvey

https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/karin-amatmoekrim-concrete/

"Blood, Sweat, and Tears (City of the Future, Part 2)" https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/blood-sweat-tears-city-future-part-2/

Approximate Length

Lesson One (60 minutes) Lesson Two (60 minutes)

Lesson One

Warm up (15 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students. Give each group one of the quotations from a well-known architect and ask them to discuss the quotation. Have groups share their ideas before moving on to a whole class discussion.

What do you think about the quotation from a well-known architect? Do you agree with their ideas about architecture? Why or why not? What do you think these quotations say about the relationship between architecture and society?

• "Architecture is about people."

Francis Kere

• "I don't think that architecture is only about shelter ... It should be able to excite you, to calm you, to make you think."

Zaha Hadid

• "Architecture itself can not make a more equitable world...but we can contribute with specific actions."

Mariam Kamara

"Architecture is the stage on which we live our lives."

Mariam Kamara

• "For me, architecture is a social act."

David Adjaye

• "Buildings are deeply emotive structures which form our psyche."

David Adjaye

"Recognizing the need is the primary condition for design."

Charles Eames

 "I see my buildings as pieces of cities, and in my designs I try to make them into responsible and contributing citizens."

Cesar Pelli

• "The home should be the treasure chest of living."

Le Corbusier

"A house is a machine for living in."

Le Corbusier

Reading & Discussion (40 minutes)

Introduce the reading to students. This piece was originally written in Dutch, and the Bijlmermeer, or Bijlmer, is a district in the south-east end of Amsterdam.

Have students read "Concrete (Ode to the Bijlmer Flats)". As students read, they should look for key words that describe the exterior and interior of the Bijlmer.

Comprehension Questions

1. How does the author describe the Bijlmer's exterior? Which description do you think is most interesting? How has it changed over time? How has it stayed the same?

- 2. How are the young and old woman's stories similar or different? What do they tell us about the multitude of lives inside the Bijlmer? How do you think the residents have changed over time?
- 3. What examples of figurative language (e.g., simile, metaphor, personification) can you find in the piece? What images do these give readers?

Definitions and sample answers:

- Simile (when two different things are compared with like or as): "Some wore their lives like tight fitting jackets, awkwardly and too self-consciously."
- Personification (when a thing is given human characteristics or feelings or performs actions): "A building that proudly imposed itself, shoulders back, eyes on the horizon."
- More information about figurative language can be found at <u>https://literarydevices.net/figurative-language/</u>
- 4. Which quotation from a well-known architect do you think best corresponds with this piece? Why? (Refer to the quotations from the warm up activity.)

Assign Homework (5 minutes)

Depending on the aims of the class, assign students to read the show notes or listen to the recording (approximately 30 minutes) to learn more about the Bijlmer.

"Blood, Sweat, and Tears (City of the Future, Part 2)"

https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/blood-sweat-tears-city-future-part-2/

Take notes as you read or listen.

- Why did people from Suriname move to the Netherlands in the 1970s?
- How were they treated once they arrived?
- How was this mass migration related to the Bijlmer?
- What social issues were occurring during this time at the Bijlmer?
- What happened on October 4,1992?
- How was the Bijlmer redesigned?
- Based on what you have learned, what do you think about the relationship between architecture and society?

Lesson Two

Homework Review (15 minutes)

Have students check their notes with a partner. Clarify understanding of the reading or listening homework. If students read the show notes for homework, you might want to listen to an excerpt from the recording together. Finish by discussing what students think about the relationship between architecture and society.

Translator's Note (30 minutes)

Read the Translator's Note.

Freewriting & Discussion

Freewrite about your ideas in response to the following questions. Then discuss your ideas with a partner or small group.

- 1. Can you find any connections between the information in the homework reading and the translator's note? How does this information add to your understanding of "Concrete"?
- 2. What social issues affected the Bijlmer community over the years? Why do you think the author decided to write an "intimate portrait of the Bijlmer as a home and haven" rather than focus on its "social issues and negative reputation"?
- 3. According to the translator's note, "...the Bijlmer was designed as a trail-blazing 'utopian' city for the future." If you designed an ideal structure or city, which characteristics do you think would be most important? Rank the following and add your own ideas: access to public transportation, green space / light, the ability to customize the space, proximity to jobs, safety, sustainability / ecofriendly, diversity of residents, affordability, noise level, other.

Assign Presentation (15 minutes)

In the remaining class time, explain the presentation assignment. Have students brainstorm topics in class and then finish their preparations for homework.

Choose a local building that you are interested in researching for a presentation. You might choose a house, housing complex, retail outlet, office building, or other type of structure. In your presentation, describe the building in the style of "Concrete", i.e. include information about the exterior (shapes, colors, materials, purpose(s), style) and the interior (the multiple lives of residents, workers, customers). Discuss the relationship between the structure and the local community. As appropriate, use information from research, figurative language, and pictures to make your presentation come to life. Share your work with your classmates on the presentation date.

Notes

Architecture quotations from the following sources:

https://www.inspiringguotes.us/author/5172-le-corbusier

https://blueturtlemc.com/blog/40-of-the-most-famous-architect-guotes-of-all-time/

https://www.archisoup.com/architecture-quotes

Characterization and Intertextuality in the Short Story

"Staying Isolde" by Nina Polak, translated by Emma Rault

https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/nina-polak-staying-isolde/

Nina Polak's short story "Staying Isolde" explores non-monogamy, love, sex, and guilt by deftly using intertextuality, speaking to different texts—from Mike Nichol's film "The Graduate" to David Foster Wallace's essay "Consider the Lobster" to Harry Potter. She also employs both direct and indirect characterization throughout the story. Starting with "Staying Isolde," students will explore, analyze, and reflect on the uses of intertextuality and characterization in storytelling across media.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Define characterization as a literary device
- Define intertextuality
- Compare and contrast direct and indirect characterization in "Staying Isolde"
- Write a short analysis of intertextuality and characterization in a work of their choosing

Assessment

Reading comprehension questions Written analysis

Approximate Grade Level

High school students University students

Materials Needed

"Staying Isolde" by Nina Polak, translated by Emma Rault https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/nina-polak-staying-isolde/

"Tristan and Isolde," The Encyclopedia Britannica https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tristan-and-Isolde

Definition and examples of characterization:

https://literarydevices.net/characterization/

Definition and examples of intertextuality https://literarydevices.net/intertextuality/

Supplementary Materials

The final scene of "The Graduate" by Mike Nichols

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahFARm2j38c

"Consider the Lobster": A Summary by Laurie Nesbitt https://english.umd.edu/research-innovation/journals/interpolations/interpolations-spring-2015/consider-lobster-summary

Approximate Length

Lesson One (90 minutes) Lesson Two (45 minutes) Lesson Three (2 Hours and 40 Minutes)

Lesson One (90 minutes)

Reading Comprehension

Before reading Polak's story, have students consider the title, "Staying Isolde." Elicit responses to see what students know about the legendary couple Tristan and Isolde. See this overview for more details: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tristan-and-Isolde

After discussing possible responses to the title, have students read "Staying Isolde." As they read, they can prepare responses to some or all of the following questions, to be shared inclass or on a discussion board.

- How does the narrator use the lobsters to frame the story in the opening paragraph?
- Why does the narrator say, "what's missing is the details"?
- What does the narrator mean when she says, "attachment seems to be more his [Bor's] thing"?
- Why does the narrator tell the reader about her foot injury?
- Why is the narrator growing more furious with Bor?
- What are Bor's "miserable emotions"?
- What does it mean that Bor says "guys can handle rejection? That's our evolutionary advantage"?
- What does the narrator mean by "we want each other because of what we don't want to be"?
- Why do you think the narrator doesn't rename her lobster?

Lesson Two (45 minutes)

Close Reading

Have the students read the definitions of <u>characterization</u> and <u>intertextuality</u>. Ask them to find examples of direct characterization, indirect characterization, and intertextuality in "Staying

Isolde." What do they add to the story? Share examples and ideas in-class or on the discussion board.

Possible questions to consider:

- Who is the American author the narrator refers to? (Here you may want to discuss
 David Foster Wallace, his use of footnotes. What does Bor's attraction to Wallace say
 about Bor? Is this a form of characterization? Direct or Indirect?)
- What does the narrator include references to *Electra vs Oedipus* in the paragraph about attachment?
- Why does the author have the characters watching The Graduate? (You can have the students watch the last scene of the film and discuss the related imagery of the crucifix, Dustin Hoffman's character, and the single plastic lobster in the first paragraph of "Staying Isolde" looking like "a mutated crucifix."
- What do you think the narrator is implying about Bor when she says the only "rom-com" he likes is a Woody Allen film?
- Who is Habermas? How does reading material characterize Bor?
- What does Bor's Harry Potter scarf say about him?
- What is the role of cultural studies in "Staying Isolde"? How do you define cultural studies? What does this say about Bor or the narrator?

Lesson Three (2 Hours and 40 Minutes)

Writing Exercise (Two Hours)

Elicit more examples of characterization and intertextuality across different media; you may also want to use the links to examples in the "Materials Needed" section above. Discuss the examples as a group.

Next, students write short analyses (approx. 250 – 500 words) of a work of their choosing (e.g. novel, short story) with a strong narrative and characters, looking at characterization and intertextuality.

Students should:

- Describe and summarize both the primary text and the additional works referred to
- Analyze the role of intertextuality in the text. What does it contribute to the text? How
 does it complement or complicate the text or one's understanding of it?
- Provide examples of characterization and discuss whether they are direct or indirect
- When available, include hyperlinks to the other texts

Pair Share (20 minutes)

Students share their reflections with a partner and discuss. How do the texts speak to each other? What themes do they highlight or suggest? What examples of characterization did you find most effective? Why?

Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Select two to four reflections for group discussion focusing on intertextuality and characterization. Possible questions for group discussion:

- Why did you choose this work? How has your understanding of intertextuality affected your reading of it? Do you think the author's use of intertextuality was intentional/conscious? Why?
- What examples of characterization most stood out to you? Why? Were they direct or indirect?

Writing about What is Lost

"Living Trees and Dying Trees" by Itō Hiromi, translated by Jon L. Pitt https://www.asymptotejournal.com/nonfiction/ito-hiromi-living-trees-and-dying-trees/

Students explore Japanese folklore and immigration experiences through reading and commenting on "Living Trees and Dying Trees" by Itō Hiromi and translated by Jon L. Pitt. After researching and learning about the importance of plant life in Japanese culture, students practice close reading on this text to then write an analytical essay and finally a piece of creative writing about something they have lost or gained in their life.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Practice close reading
- Demonstrate an understanding of travelogues
- Compare and contrast Japanese folklore and their own cultural traditions
- Reflect on immigration experiences
- Identify conversational/casual tone in writing
- Write about a loss (or a gain)
- Provide constructive feedback

Assessment

Participation in group discussion Comprehension questions Forum post Writing assignment

Approximative Grade Level

High school students

Materials Needed

Itō Hiromi, tr. Jon L Pitt, "Living Trees and Dying Trees": https://www.asymptotejournal.com/nonfiction/ito-hiromi-living-trees-and-dying-trees/ and the translator's note

Appropriate learning platform with a discussion board feature

"RBMS Controlled Vocabularies: Genre Terms." Alphabetical List Literary forms https://rbms.info/vocabularies/genre/th75.htm

Approximative Length

Lesson One: 2 hours Lesson Two: 2 hours

Lesson One (2 hours)

Activity 1

Share the title of the text and the first paragraph with the students. Tell them this text has 30 paragraphs to give them an idea of the length.

Next, ask them to share/write down (depending on your learning setting) in a knowledge dump what they expect to read about in this text. The knowledge dump aims to generate ideas and mental clutter on a document visible to everyone to promote discussion and conversation.

In a forum post, ask them to answer these questions:

- What kind of literary form do you expect this text to be? Could it be in prose or verse?
- Will there be multiple characters or just one?
- What emotions will be displayed? Will it be sad or uplifting?
- From the reading of the first paragraph, which themes could be rendered in this text?

Activity 2

Tell the class that trees are prominent in Japanese culture, folklore, and mythology. To prepare for the following essay question, and Lesson Two, select excerpts of the text for the class to read about the cycle of life in relation to plant life. You can focus on the part starting at paragraph 23. They will have to research the importance and meaning of trees and plant life in Japanese culture by focusing on the following list of trees. Tell them that for some of these trees they might not find much information, but that is ok.

- Example for the Sakura cherry tree (isshingyō): symbolizes a time of harmony and love, annual tradition of hanami (cherry blossom viewing) ...
- Cedar tree (sugi)
- Pine tree
- Camphor tree
- Bead tree
- Wax tree

They should research what the tree names mean, whether they are the object of a ritual or a celebration, and if they carry a symbolic purpose (happy life, healing, etc.).

Homework

At home the students will answer this essay question (minimum of 1 page/ 500 words single spaced) and email it to their professor before the class:

Do you recognize patterns in Japanese culture and folklore when it comes to the cycle of life (life, aging, death, family) that are similar to your own culture and beliefs? If you do, explain what connections you identified. If you don't, explain how you see certain traditions and rituals as being different.

Lesson Two (2 hours) **In class**

Have the class read "Living Trees and Dying Trees" in full. Then separate the students into three groups. Have them read the translator's note as a preparation. Each group will close read a section of the text and create a minimum of ten comprehension questions focusing on areas of content identified in the following table.

	Section	Focused questions on
Group 1	Paragraphs 1 to 13	Loss, grief, the organizational pattern, the colloquial language
Group 2*	Paragraphs 14 to 22	The travelogue aspect of these paragraphs
Group 3	Paragraphs 23 to the end	The change of tone, the author's take on human and plant life, on being an immigrant

*Group 2: If the travelogue is a new notion, share this short definition from the Merriam-Webster dictionary: "a piece of writing about travel". You can also at first have them observe the word itself. What other word do they recognize? (travel)

This lesson could be conducted in small groups. The instructor would reserve 30 minutes at the end of the class to discuss the groups' answers and add on their answers if necessary. With the instructor, the group will also have to determine a research question that will be used for the homework assignment. To do so, the students could start a knowledge dump about the key concepts that describe the information found by answering the comprehension questions.

Homework

Tell the students to keep their notes and answers to the comprehension questions as they will need them for this assignment. They will have to write an analysis (3-5 pages / 1500-2500 words) of the text's main features based on the notes they took about the previous comprehension questions and the discussion that followed with the instructor. Tell the students that to organize their assignment, they will have to answer the research question designed with the instructor, and that they can follow the division made in the paragraphs for the questions. The assignment will also have a brief introduction and conclusion. The assignment will be emailed to the professor.

The students will publish them on the appropriate online platform. In the discussion board, each student will have to comment on two other essays by giving feedback. They will choose two or three elements of the essays to focus on, rather than trying to cover all area of content. They will comment on strengths as well as weaknesses (thesis, coherence, argumentation, interpretation, details of the text).

Weak Comment	Strong Comment
I didn't know what your point was until your last paragraph.	The last paragraph is a good summary of your argument. Maybe it needs to be moved to the beginning of your paper.

Final assignment / Creative writing assignment to wrap up the two first lessons Hand out the prompt of the creative writing assignment. Have them read it and ask their questions. To prepare for the following creative writing assignment, pair the students together. Let them know that before starting the creative writing assignment, they will have to brainstorm together and help each other in finding an outline for the following assignment. After 20-30 minutes, have each pair report to the class what ideas/outlines they explored together.

Prompt (min 1.5 pages / 1500 words):

Like Itō Hiromi, write about an object, plant or place you lost or gained at some point in your life and that means a great deal to you and your relatives. To do so, you will try to remain as close to the structure of the first nine paragraphs as you possibly can. This means that your text will have the following aspects: introductory paragraph that sums up the loss, a factual informative paragraph on the thing that was lost, one or more paragraphs on the emotional connection you and your relatives had with the thing that was lost, and one or more paragraphs on the day the thing that was lost vanished for good.

The assignments will be shared with the professor as well as with the rest of the class. Each student will have to read at least two essays written by other students and react/give feedback using the example in the above table.

Crafting as Labor: Women's Work and Its History

From "Diary of a Proletarian Seamstress" by Victoria Guerrero Peirano, translated by Anastatia Spicer and Honora Spicer

https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/victoria-guerrero-peirano-diary-of-a-proletarian-seamstress/

Victoria Guerrero Peirano crafted a poem that connects the individual acts of sewing and writing to the collective experience of laboring and its complex history. This lesson asks students to consider that history and how the poem represents it. Classroom discussion will focus on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire and how the tragedy changed the nature of labor for seamstresses, as well as how Guerrero Peirano represents that change in the poem. Assignments will ask students to consider their relationship to tasks and history, as well as how we commemorate victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Compare and contrast different forms of women's labor and the systemic issues surrounding them
- Connect their lives to a broader history
- Conduct research related to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

Assessment

One short creative poem assignment

One larger research assignment commemorating the victims of the tragedy (with the potential to be carried out over several class periods, time-permitting)

Approximate Grade Level

High school

University students

Materials Needed

from "Diary of a Proletarian Seamstress" by Victoria Guerrero Peirano, tr. Honora Spicer and Anastatia Spicer

https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/victoria-guerrero-peirano-diary-of-a-proletarianseamstress/

"The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire" by The History Channel https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FquWSsW21CQ

"A Stitch in Time: Sewing & The Evolution of Labor" by Amanda Driggs https://www.dutchlabelshop.com/en_us/blog/sewing-history-labor-reform/

Supplementary Materials

"Remembering the 1911 Triangle Factory Fire" by the Kheel Center https://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/index.html
"Resources" by the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/

"100 Years Later, the Roll of the Dead in a Factory Fire Is Complete" by Joseph Berger https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/21/nyregion/21triangle.html

Approximate Length

Lesson One (40 - 50 minutes) Lesson Two (40 - 50 minutes)

Lesson One (40 - 50 minutes)

Pre-Class Activity

Have students read the poem from the "Diary of a Proletarian Seamstress" several times and answer the following questions:

- How does the speaker view the act of sewing?
- How does the speaker view the act of writing?
- What does the speaker believe about seamstresses?

In-Class Activity I

If time allows, have students share their answers to the pre-class activity questions with the whole class.

Read the poem aloud. Next, read the first paragraph of the translator's note aloud. Then, watch this video as a class ("The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire" by The History Channel): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FquWSsW21CQ

Have students consider the following questions in a discussion format, which can differ based on your course modality:

- How does Guerrero Peirano represent this tragedy in this poem?
- How does learning about this tragedy change your answers to your pre-class activity questions?
- What kind of statement is Guerrero Peirano making about the history of sewing?

In relation to the last question, pick a line that your class keeps coming back to in order to support their answers and close read it together. If your students are not pointing out lines from the text, use the line "I've often thought of jumping out the window/ But then I get to writing or cutting paper and forget about it."

Homework

Ask students to pick an activity that they have done with someone special in their lives. It could be an activity they share with a parent, a tradition passed down from another relative, or a task they learned from a mentor. Have students craft a poem in whichever style they feel suits this activity best. Ask students to consider the following questions as they write their poems:

- How is this activity or task connected to a broader history?
- What does this activity say about your relationship with the person you have chosen?
- How does the style of the poem represent the activity or task?

Lesson Two (40 - 50 minutes)

In-Class Activity II

If time allows, students can share their poems with the class and discuss their creative choices.

Read the poem aloud once more. Next, read the second paragraph of the translator's note aloud. Then, have students form pairs or groups and read "A Stitch in Time: Sewing & The Evolution Of Labor" by Amanda Driggs: https://www.dutchlabelshop.com/en_us/blog/sewing-history-labor-reform/

Ask students to discuss the following questions with their partner or group:

- How has the nature of labor changed for seamstresses over the course of history?
- How have the relationships between individuals and systems changed over time for seamstresses?
- What is Guerrero Peirano saying about different types of labor in this poem? What are
 the translators trying to say about different types of labor in the translator's note? How
 are these things similar or different?

Next, discuss these questions as a class. Ask students to point to specific passages in either the poem, the translator's note, or the selected reading to support their answers.

Homework

Assign each student the name of a victim of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. In the event that you have more students than names, begin pairing students together for the activity. Have students construct a creative project to commemorate that particular individual respectfully. This project could take many forms, including but not limited to, a musical performance, a podcast, and even, topically, a sewing piece. Dependent upon the course, the project could be subject to instructor approval. The medium can showcase students' creative talents. Ask students to consider the following questions as they construct their project:

- What basic information is important about her life?
- What were the conditions of her life like?

• How can her life speak to labor conditions or the role of women's work in the economy at the time?

See the **Supplementary Materials** section above for online resources to help students get started.

FEEDBACK

Thanks for taking the time to read our Fall 2020 Educator's Guide. We hope you found it useful and engaging.

Have questions, comments, critiques, or testimonials?

Please leave your feedback at http://tinyurl.com/asymptoteforedu. We look forward to hearing from you!

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