A watercolor illustration featuring a door handle on the left and a book on the right. The door handle is a simple, dark, horizontal shape with a rectangular base. The book is open, showing a dark cover and a light-colored page. The background is a mix of dark and light grey washes. The text 'ASYMPTOTE' is in the top right corner.

ASYMPTOTE

Winter 2024 Educator's Guide



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Winter 2024 | ME | YOU | US

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Winter 2024 issue of the *Asymptote* Educator's Guide!

Our latest guide contains four unique lesson plans to help you bring exciting and diverse world literature into all sorts of classrooms. Each lesson is paired with poems and fiction from our Winter 2024 issue—also our milestone 50th edition!—themed on coexistence, which is available here: <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/jan-2024>

The first lesson in this guide, “The End of Childhood,” asks students to explore mood and feeling in a short story and then reflect on their own subjectivity. “Perception and Poetry,” the second lesson, allows students to consider ‘place’ in poetry while analysing the effects of poetic devices. “Exploring Imagery, Time, and Gender” uses a short story to explore the ways in which imagery creates temporal meaning, and how this is connected to ideas of female identity. In the final lesson of this guide, “How to Close Read a Text,” students explore both critical analysis and creative writing.

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 experiences are valuable to us, and hearing about them helps us improve our formation for 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.

The End of Childhood: “All Things Lovely”

“All Things Lovely” by Kristin Vego, translated from the Norwegian by Jennifer Russell

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/all-things-lovely-kristin-vego/>

In this lesson, students will first identify the feelings and mood that Vego’s short story elicits in them. They will then read the translator’s note, pick out Russell’s ideas on the same theme, and then contrast them with their own, using the blackboard and different colors to illuminate the feelings behind the story and their subjectivity. Next, the students will work in groups to analyze the story, focusing mainly on the characters and their relationships. This will be brought together by using a diagram on the blackboard to collect ideas. Finally, the students will synthesize this knowledge by writing their own creative responses to the story.

Learning Objectives

By the end of these lessons, students should be able to:

- Describe the mood and tone of a short story
- Compare their own ideas about mood and tone to the ideas of the translator
- Analyze a short story for its characters and their relationships
- Create a diagram which illuminates the characters and their relationships
- Create their own pieces of creative writing based on the mood of the story, its characters, and their relationships

Assessment

- Class discussion
- Group work
- Boardwork
- Independent writing task

Approximate Grade Level

High school students

Materials Needed

“All Things Lovely” by Kristin Vego, translated from the Norwegian by Jennifer Russell

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/from-the-book-of-sinera-salvador-esprui/>

Approximate Length

Lesson one (90 minutes)

Pre-lesson activities

Have your students read a copy of the short story before class and make a note of the emotions or general feelings that the story evokes in them.

Lesson One

Introduction (10 minutes)

As a class, discuss students' general impression of the story. Have them exchange their general feelings and emotions from the story with each other.

Students then report back to the whole class. Were their ideas largely the same, or did they differ widely? Record the words on the board and then underline which feel more positive and which feel more negative.

Reading the Translator's Note (15 minutes)

Hand out copies of the translator's note. Have the students read the note either independently or aloud as a class.

Then, ask the students to pick out the words used by Russell to describe the story (e.g., quiet, ambivalent, melancholy). Students report what they find back to the class. Were Russell's ideas similar to the ideas the class had about the story's tone? Add any of Russell's ideas not previously mentioned to the board in a new color.

Analysis/Discussion Questions (20 minutes)

Split the class into three groups (or six groups for a large class, where all sets of questions are used twice). Hand each group a copy of their questions and have them discuss and take notes on each question in their groups. The questions have been organised thematically.

Group 1 - Jon, Rose, and Julie's mother

1. How does the reader know that Julie dislikes Jon? Pick out three instances from the text and interpret them.
2. What about Jon's behaviour towards Julie feels menacing?
3. Describe the relationship between Julie and Rose.
4. Why do you think Rose introduced Julie's mother to Jon, considering what then happens?
5. Why does Julie think that the radio play was written by Rose?

Group 2- Julie - For the fastest/strongest students

1. How does Julie describe the pain of her cramps? What does this imagery evoke?
2. When and how do you get a sense of Julie's feelings of abandonment?
3. Why don't you think Julie wants to go swimming?
4. Why doesn't Julie confront Rose and Jon?
5. Why does Julie hide her period from the others?
6. Why does Julie grieve when she is no longer a child?
7. What could be the cause of Julie's rage?

Group 3- Setting/Themes

1. Which time frames are in the story? How do we know?
2. How is the rain described? Is this surprising at all?
3. How and why does Julie link starting her period with her discovery of the affair?

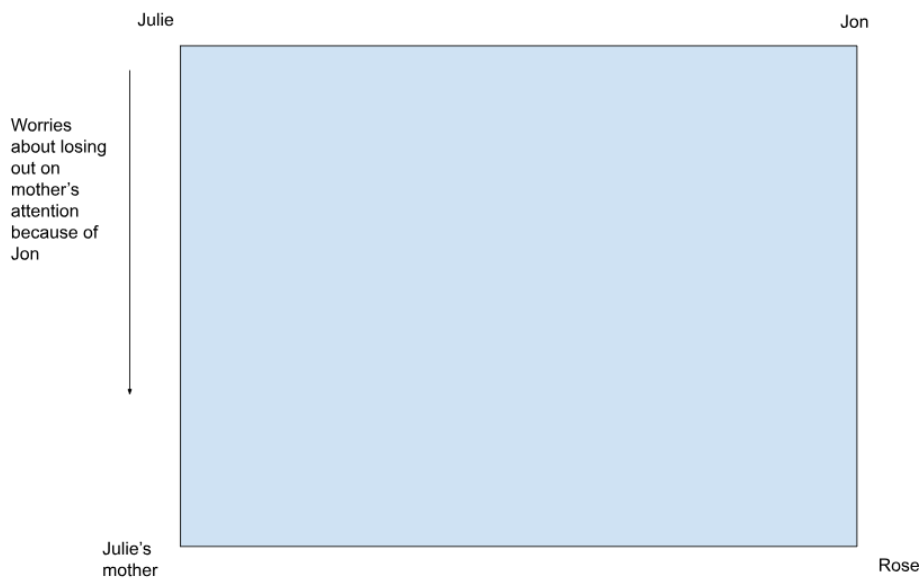
4. Why do you think the narrator puts loneliness on the same level as contentment?
5. What would you say is the main theme of the story, and why?

Feedback: Group 3 (10 minutes)

Ask group 3 to report back their answers to the class first. Their questions pertain to the structure and themes of the story, rather than the characters. This will help the students secure their overview of the story before taking a deeper dive into the characters.

Feedback/Characterisation (35 minutes)

Draw a large square on the board, with each character's name at one corner, like so:



The students copy the diagram on a new piece of paper. Collect the students' ideas on each character from the group work stage by asking them their questions. Organise the notetaking on the board like so:

- Information on the characters themselves to be recorded in each corner, in one colour.
- Information on how the characters relate to each other in another colour and recorded between the characters, with an arrow to show the direction of relation: from one character to another, or in both directions?

One point has been added to the table as an example. Other aspects of the characters and relationships could include, but are not limited to:

Julie

- *Grief for her loss of childhood innocence*
- *Wary of and resents Jon*

- *Wants to break free from her mother, but also feels anxious about being left behind*

Jon

- *Exhibits menacing behavior towards Julie*
- *Appears to be in love with Julie's mother and is very physical, yet is having an affair with Rose*
- *According to Julie's mother has 'an artist's sensibilities'*

Julie's mother

- *Has a very close relationship to Rose*
- *Thinks about others: Doesn't want Rose to arrive at the cabin first and be locked out.*
- *May not be very close to Julie (why wouldn't Julie tell her mother about her period, or trust her mother not to talk about it with her friends?)*

Rose

- *Is having an affair with Jon*
- *Is possibly vain (reapplying makeup between swimming sessions)*
- *Is generous, at least on the surface ('help yourself')*

Homework/Writing Tasks

These exercises are designed for students to transfer their gained understanding of the tone of the piece and the main characters into their own creative writing. Students choose one of the tasks below, either as a quiet, in-class task or as homework.

In the next lesson, you could have the students read their own pieces to others or to the class or have them swap their texts in pairs or groups to then give each other feedback.

1. Rewrite the story from another character's perspective. Choose either Jon, Rose, or Julie's mother.
2. Write a drama script or a short story detailing the revelations between Jon, Rose, and Julie's mother involving Rose's pregnancy and her affair with Jon.
3. Write a personal account of the last summer of your childhood. Where did you go? Why do you remember it as the last summer of your childhood?
4. Write a diary entry by Julie in the cabin on the day that her period starts/she discovers Jon and Rose's secret.

Perception and Poetry

“Along the Border” by Eva Ribich, translated by Julian Anderson

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/along-the-border-eva-ribich/>

Eva Ribich’s *Along the Border*, translated from the Swedish by Julian Anderson, is the focus of this lesson on poetry. During the first class, students discuss the imagery and emotions evoked by the poem. Then during the second class, students turn their attention to the rich use of poetic devices: repetition, assonance, alliteration, and meter. As an extension activity, students write their own poems centered on a place or read another poem written in trochaic meter.

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify how language is used in the poem to convey imagery and emotions
- Explore the impact of poetic devices, such as repetition, assonance, alliteration and meter, on the sound and effect of the poem
- Make connections between the poem and personal experiences with a place

Assessment

Class participation

Written homework assignment

Approximate Grade Level

High school students

University students

Materials Needed

“Along the Border” by Eva Ribich, translated by Julian Anderson

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/along-the-border-eva-ribich/>

Additional Materials

Glossary of Poetic Terms

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms>

“The Song of Hiawatha” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19/19-h/19-h.htm>

“The Raven” by Edgar Allen Poe

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48860/the-raven>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (60 minutes)

Lesson Two (60 minutes)

Lesson One

Warm up (15 minutes)

Think of a place that is important to you or somewhere you enjoy spending time. Without saying the name of the place, write down a few key words or phrases to describe the sensory or emotional experience of spending time there. Share your ideas with a partner or small group. Can your partner guess the place?

Have a few students share their key words or phrases as a way to preview some of the ways language can be used to convey imagery or emotion in writing.

Reading (20 minutes)

Introduce basic information about the poem (e.g., title, author, translator). Have students share their thoughts on the following question: When you think of Sweden, what kind of landscape comes to mind?

The teacher reads the poem aloud. Students reread the poem individually. While reading, students should highlight words or phrases that interest or confuse them.

After reading, students should pair up to discuss their selections, considering their possible meanings. Then call on a few students to share their selections in order to address student questions and transition to a discussion of the poem.

Discussion (25 minutes)

Have students discuss the following questions:

1. Is the image of Sweden's landscape depicted in the poem similar or different to what you imagined before reading? Why do you think the author chose to write about a field?
2. How is language used to convey imagery in the poem? What was most surprising about how the author could bring the meadow to life?
3. What emotions are conveyed in the poem? How is language used to convey these emotions?
4. Why do you think the poem is titled "Along the Border"? What could the word "border" refer to?

Homework

Write a paragraph to answer either question two or three from the discussion questions above.

Lesson Two

Review (10 minutes)

Students discuss the written homework assignment in pairs or small groups. Pair students by having them find someone who answered the same question.

Translator's Note (20 minutes)

Students read the translator's note individually. Then they reconvene with their partner or small group to discuss how the information in the translator's note further informs their answers to the homework assignment. Have a few students share their thoughts with the class.

Poetic Devices (30 minutes)

As a class, work together to find examples of the points mentioned in the translator's note. If students are unfamiliar with the poetic terms, sample answers are given below, and definitions can be found at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms>.

Have students reread the poem aloud with a partner, paying attention to the sounds of the poem and looking for examples of the following. Students should highlight or mark each of the following with a different color.

- Repetition: Repetition of words, such as “field, free, see how”
- Assonance: Repetition of vowel sounds within words, such as the o sound in “field torques up toward heaven” or the long e sound in “see how free that meadow is”.
- Alliteration: Repetition of consonant sounds, such as the f sound at the beginning of words in the following lines “in freedom from its fetters / and setting itself free”.
- Rhythm: The translator mentions the use of trochaic meter, which, according to the Poetry Foundation, is “A metrical foot consisting of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable”.

The translator states, “Recognizing how central the meter was, I was careful to recreate it as fully as possible, so often disregarded the definitive article and shifted word order around instead.” What do you think about this decision to prioritize the poem's meter? What effects do you think the trochaic meter has on the reader? How does it support the form and meaning of the poem?

Extension Activities

Reading: Read another poem (or excerpt from a poem) written in trochaic meter: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's “The Song of Hiawatha” or Edgar Allen Poe's “The Raven”, for example. Comment on the effect of this meter on the reader and how it supports the form and meaning of the poem.

Writing: Write a poem about a place where you enjoy spending time or a place where you might feel emotions similar to those expressed in “Along the Border”. In your poem, use two or more of the poetic devices that were studied in the lesson (e.g., repetition, assonance, alliteration, meter).

Exploring Imagery, Time, and Gender

“The Week of Colors” by Elena Garro, translated by Christine Legros

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/the-week-of-colors-elena-garro/>

In the first lesson, students will explore the relationship between the themes of time and gender and the author’s use of imagery. They will examine *The Week of Colors* by Elena Garro, exploring the ways in which the story’s imagery both creates temporal meaning as well as functioning as a gendered critique. In the second lesson, students will create and evaluate images of time. They will use these images to write a creative description that contrasts two different days.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the lessons, students should be able to:

- Identify literary techniques in a short story
- Analyse a story for literary devices including personification and metaphors
- Make inferences about a story’s meaning
- Write an original description

Assessment

Independent Reading

Comprehension Questions

Creative Writing

Approximate Grade Level

High School Students

Materials Needed

“The Week of Colors” by Elena Garro. Translated from the Spanish by Christine Legros

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/the-week-of-colors-elena-garro/>

<https://www.yourdictionary.com/articles/examples-personification-kids>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (60 minutes)

Lesson Two (60 minutes)

Lesson One

Warm up (10 minutes)

Introduce the author and story by reading the author bio and the first paragraph of the translator's note to the class.

Write the word 'Personification' on the board with a few examples. Ask the students for a definition and examples of their own. Why might a writer use personification in their work? (See <https://www.yourdictionary.com/articles/examples-personification-kids> for reference) Ask students for their feedback. Collect ideas on the board.

Independent Reading (20 minutes)

Students read the story independently.

As they read, they should make notes.

Display the following questions on the board to guide their notation:

- Look at the title of the story. What do you think it symbolises?
- Highlight examples of personification and comment on its effects.
- Highlight similes and metaphors and comment on their effects.
- Re-examine the examples you have highlighted. What ideas of gender can you infer from these examples?

Students read the third paragraph of the translator's note, returning to the story to add to their notes.

Class Analysis (20 minutes)

Students share their notes as part of a whole-class analysis. Guide the analysis using the following prompts:

- In the paragraph beginning *Weeks did not actually follow each other*, how does the writer disrupt the notion of linear time? How is time rendered as cyclical?
- What effect does the personification of Friday have in the description *The purple and silent Fridays*?
- What impression does the personification of Tuesday as *skinny and transparent* give?
- What effect does the shift in pronouns from *it* to *she* to describe the days have?
- What idea of gender do we get from the description of the girls' *Male eyes*?
- How does the writer create a gendered sense of time? Look at the juxtaposition of Don Flor as *master of the Days* and the personification of the Days as women.

Plenary (10 minutes)

Students use the whole-class analysis to answer the following question:

How does the writer use imagery to evoke a symbolic sense of Time?

Possible answers include: The repetition of Fridays creates a recursive and cyclical sense of time that disrupts conventional understanding of time as linear. The personification of the Days as different women creates a gendered sense of time.

Lesson Two (60 minutes)

Warm up (15 minutes)

Recap learning from the previous lesson. Ask students to share their answers from the plenary. Collect their answers on the board.

Class Discussion (15 minutes)

Ask students what they think *Blue Monday* means. What do they think is the connection between colours, feelings, and days of the week?

Students write down a colour and feeling for each day of the week. They will evaluate their choices by explaining the reasoning behind the allocations.

Independent Writing Task (25 minutes)

Students will use the examples of personification and metaphors they highlighted in the previous lesson and attempt to create their own imagery for each day of the week. They then use these examples of personification to write a description that juxtaposes two different days of the week.

Extension: Students write gendered descriptions of their chosen days and reflect on how this changes the portrayal.

Plenary (5 minutes)

Ask students to read their descriptions aloud to the class.

How to Close Read a Text with Anusorn Tipayanon's 'The Snow Girl'

From "The Snow Girl" by Anusorn Tipayanon, translated by Noh Anothai

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/the-snow-girl-anusorn-tipayanon/>

This lesson will focus on introducing students to critical analysis and then helping them write a creative short story based on their analysis of *The Snow Girl*. They will develop an understanding of what critical analysis is, how to critically analyse a text, and how to begin writing creative short fiction.

Learning Objectives

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

- Understand what close reading and critical analysis are
- Critically analyse short fiction
- Gain an introduction to translated fiction
- Discuss ideas related to the short story

Assessment

Participation in group discussions

Independent reading tasks

Homework, including creative writing

Approximate Grade Level

University Students (undergraduate first year students)

Materials Needed

From *The Snow Girl* by Anusorn Tipayanon, translated by Noh Anothai

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/the-snow-girl-anusorn-tipayanon/>

Close Reading Texts

Yale-NUS Close Reading Text

<https://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/academics/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/12/Close-Reading-Literature-LH2-Team.pdf>

Haverford Close Reading Text

<https://www.haverford.edu/sites/default/files/Office/Writing-Center/How-to-Write-a-Close-Reading.pdf>

Harvard Writing Centre Packet

<https://www.bls.org/ourpages/auto/2013/5/24/41631204/Harvard%20Writing%20Center%20packet.doc?rnd=1369416499623>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (In class 135 minutes)

Lesson Two (In class 70 minutes)

Lesson Three (Take-home assignment 60-120 minutes)

Lesson One – Introduction to Critical Analysis and Close Reading (135 minutes)

Teacher led discussion (45 minutes)

Introduce students to the concept of critical analysis. The points below may be used to guide the discussion:

- Observations: So what? and Implications & Conclusions
- Turning observations into interpretations
- Observing patterns in the text
- Asking the questions ‘So What?’ Why is this point important?
- What new information can you infer from the observations and patterns?
- Grouping observations
- How different would the topic be without it?
- Are there any theories that you can apply to it?
- Remember to always back up your points with evidence

Individual Reading & Think Pair Share (30 minutes)

- Ask the class to first read (individually) the Yale-NUS close reading text and then the Haverford Close Reading Text.
- Ask students to underline the important points in each text.
- Then allocate students into pairs and ask them to discuss the texts together.

Teacher led Class Discussion (30 minutes)

- As a class discuss the concept of close reading and how they can close read a text.
- Discuss each point in the Yale-NUS text and point out the importance of close reading.
- Come back to the concept of critical analysis and tie-in the concept of close reading.

An Example of Close Reading (30 minutes)

- Direct students towards the first part of the Harvard Writing Centre Packet – How to do a Close Reading by Patricia Kain.
- Ask them to read it by themselves first and then have a class discussion, in particular directing students towards how the author has analysed the text.

Lesson Two – Close Reading *The Snow Girl* (70 minutes)

Individual Close Reading (40 minutes)

- Distribute print outs of *The Snow Girl* and ask students to read the text carefully, taking into consideration the concept of close reading.
- Ask the students to read the Yale-NUS text again, and then annotate their copy of *The Snow Girl*.

Class Discussion of the Close Reading (30 minutes)

- Ask students to first bring their observations to the class and then discuss the text by following the structure mentioned in the Yale-NUS Close Reading Text.

Lesson Three – Homework (60-120 minutes)

- Ask students to write a short story based on *The Snow Girl* and share it with the class the next week.

FEEDBACK

Thanks for taking the time to read our Winter 2024 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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