

Fall 2025 educator's guide



EDUCATOR’S GUIDE

Fall 2025 | PALIMPSEST

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Fall 2025 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, fiction, and non-fiction from "Palimpsest," our Fall 2025 issue, which is available here:

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/>

The first lesson in this guide "Exploring Endangered Alphabets" allows students to explore endangered alphabet by examining the cultural, historical, and personal aspects of their disappearance. "Perspective and Persona," the second lesson, provides students with an opportunity to explore the cultural impact of mythology as well as the genre of persona poetry. In "Sigmund Freud: Analyse This" students explore concepts of doubles and the uncanny in gothic literature. In the final lesson in this guide, "Does Athens Exist?" students will apply historical theory to a literary text.

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 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.

Exploring Endangered Alphabets

“An Interview with Tim Brookes” by Steven G. Kellman

<https://www.endangeredalphabets.net/alphabets/>

Students explore endangered alphabets by examining cultural, historical, and personal aspects of their disappearance through “An Interview with Tim Brookes”. They discuss ideas presented in the text and then apply their insights by designing an awareness campaign for endangered alphabets.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the connections between endangered alphabets and broader issues, such as colonialism, globalization, and technological exclusion
- Evaluate definitions of the word “writing” and how these reflect power and cultural bias
- Design an awareness campaign (paper poster or social media post) on endangered alphabets

Assessment

Close reading

Small group and whole class discussion

Paper poster or social media post on endangered alphabets

Approximate Grade Level

High school students

University students

Materials needed

An Interview with Tim Brookes by Steven G. Kellman

<https://www.endangeredalphabets.net/alphabets/>

Signature Moves: are we losing the ability to write by hand by Christine Rosen (The Guardian)

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2025/jan/21/signature-moves-are-we-losing-the-ability-to-write-by-hand>

Additional Materials

Endangered Alphabets

<https://www.endangeredalphabets.net/alphabets/>

Omniglot

<https://omniglot.com/>

Poster making supplies, if desired

Approximate Length

Lesson One (50 minutes)

Lesson Two (50 Minutes)

Pre-lesson Task

Students read *Signature Moves: are we losing the ability to write by hand* before class.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2025/jan/21/signature-moves-are-we-losing-the-ability-to-write-by-hand>

Lesson One

Warm up (10 minutes)

In the article *Signature Moves*, Christine Rosen writes, “We are far more likely to use our hands to type or swipe than pick up a pen. But in the process we are in danger of losing cognitive skills, sensory experience – and a connection to history”

- What do you think of Rosen’s idea? What would happen if handwriting disappeared altogether? Do you think cursive is an endangered script?

Briefly connect this discussion to the text, *An Interview with Tim Brookes*. Writing systems around the world face similar fates, but with much higher stakes.

Reading (40 minutes)

Students read *An Interview with Tim Brookes*. While reading, they mark at least one sentence or passage for each of the following:

- Something that relates to your own experiences
- Something that connects with larger social issues (e.g. colonialism, globalization, and technological exclusion)
- Something you find confusing; terms or concepts to look up later
- Something you think is especially convincing or interesting

After reading, students share the passages they highlighted with a small group. Share out with the full class. The teacher answers any remaining questions about the text.

Lesson Two

Warm up (5 minutes)

What alphabets were mentioned in the text? Which ones are you most interested in? Why?

Questions for writing and discussion (40 minutes)

Students brainstorm or free write their answers to the following discussion questions (10 minutes).

Then students discuss their answers to the questions, making sure to reference ideas from the article. (20 minutes)

1. The text discusses different definitions of writing, with Brookes advocating for a wide interpretation. In your opinion, what counts as real or valuable writing, for example, does it include Adrinka, Braille, and Quipu? Why have some been prioritized over others? How does the definition of writing affect cultural survival and recognition?
2. Brookes mentions the Red List of Endangered Species. Should endangered alphabets be protected like endangered species? Should preservation be the goal, or is the disappearance of scripts a natural part of cultural change? What do you think people could do to raise awareness or support endangered alphabets?
3. How have new technologies throughout history influenced writing (pencil, printing press, typewriter, computer, AI)? In modern society, what are the advantages and disadvantages of handwriting? What is similar about cursive and endangered alphabets? What is different?

Groups share their answers with the whole class. (10 minutes)

Assign project work (5 minutes)

Students choose one endangered alphabet and research it (who uses it, unique features, historical or cultural context, threats to its survival). Use the Endangered Alphabets webpage and omniglot.com for more information about the alphabets (see Additional Resources above). Students design a mini-awareness campaign in the form of a paper poster (handwritten content) or social media post (digital content).

Suggestions for an awareness campaign:

- A “save this endangered alphabet” paper poster or carousel social media post
- An infographic about endangered alphabets
- A paper poster or short video / reel about endangered alphabets
- A mock-up of corporate partnerships (e.g. goods featuring endangered alphabets)

Tips for making an effective awareness campaign:

- Make your message clear so that it can be understood immediately

- Use a logo, slogan or hashtag to make it memorable
- Add visuals or use storytelling techniques to capture the viewers' interest
- Get inspiration from endangered species campaigns

Students share their paper posters in the classroom or their social media posts on the learning management system or class Padlet. Then students view and comment on 2-3 of their classmates' work, highlighting the effective or interesting points.

Note

For a lesson plan on endangered languages, see the Winter 2020 Educators' Guide

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/assets/educational/asymptote-guide-for-educators-2020-winter.pdf>

It is based on *Uok Phlau* by Olavo Amaral, translated by Isobel Foxford

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/olavo-amaral-uok-phlau/>

Perspective and Persona

From “No One’s Woman” by Barbara Köhler

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/no-ones-woman-barbara-kohler/>

In the first lesson, students will explore the cultural impact of mythology and the genre of persona poetry using selections from “No One’s Woman” by Barbara Köhler. After closely reading and discussing Köhler’s work, students will begin drafting their own persona poems. In the second lesson, students will present their poems to the class and reflect on the role that persona poetry can play in complicating inherited narratives from myth, folklore, and epic storytelling.

Learning Objectives

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

- Examine the use of perspective in a piece of creative writing
- Analyse persona, voice, and tone in a poem
- Explore the significance of epic storytelling traditions and contemporary reinterpretations
- Write a persona poem

Assessment

Close reading

Group discussion

Creative writing assignment

Student presentations

Approximate Grade Level

High School Students

University Students

Materials Needed

From “No One’s Woman” by Barbara Köhler

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/no-ones-woman-barbara-kohler/>

“What the Retelling of Myths Reveals of the Teller” by Jennifer S. Cheng

<https://lithub.com/what-the-retelling-of-myths-reveals-of-the-teller/>

Additional Resources

1. “What is a Persona Poem? How to Write Persona Poetry.”
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-a-persona-poem>
2. “Two Poems by Jennifer S. Cheng”
<https://hyphenmagazine.com/blog/2017/11/december-poetry-two-poems-jennifer-s-cheng>
3. “A Long and Difficult Journey, or The Odyssey: Crash Course Literature 201”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MS4jk5kavy4>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (75 minutes)

Lesson Two (75 minutes)

Preparation

Students read the four poems from “No One’s Woman” by Barbara Köhler before class.

Lesson One:

Warm up (10 minutes)

Read the translator’s note by Monika Cassel and Christopher Nelson aloud to the class. Discuss the following questions:

- Who are some of the female characters from the *Odyssey*? What do you know about them? What cultural values or narratives around womanhood do these characters seem to embody? As an optional exercise, students can look up a few of the female figures in the *Odyssey* to gain a general impression of their characterizations.
Note: if the class is unfamiliar with the broad narrative of the Odyssey, the teacher may set aside extra time to provide this context, making use of the additional resources above where necessary.
- How do the voices in these poems align with your impressions of these female characters? How do these poems interact with narratives around womanhood?
- Can you think of any modern retellings of epics, myths, and folktales from literature, film, television, music, or other popular culture? Name a few examples and describe how these reinterpretations interact with the original stories. Do any of these examples adopt the perspective of a particular mythic character? *Encourage a wide range of examples here, across media forms.*
- Why do you think we return to these stories so frequently?

Class discussion (20 minutes)

Introduce the genre of persona poetry to students, wherein a poet takes on the voice of a particular character or entity. Discuss the following as a class:

- Have you read a persona poem before? Who wrote it and whose perspective did they adopt?
- Would you characterize the first poem (“Tissue Sample: Penelope”) as a persona poem? Why/why not?
- What do you think of the voice(s) Köhler makes use of across the poems? Do they feel like distinct characters? What sets the poems apart from one another? What ties them together?
- Display the following quote from “What the Retelling of Myths Reveals About the Teller” by Jennifer S. Cheng:

Retellings and persona poems not only allow the writer to discover what utterances emerge in the dark, but they relish in all the shadowy details—things hidden, things forgotten, things unsaid.

How does this quote relate to Köhler's poems, and the translator's note? What unsaid or shadowy details does Köhler make apparent in her poems?

- What role do you think persona poetry can play in the context of reinterpreting myths and re-evaluating the cultural values and narratives they carry?

Group discussion (30 minutes)

Divide the class into four groups and assign one of Köhler's poems to each group. Ask students to read their assigned poem aloud and discuss the following questions, which could be included on a worksheet:

- How would you characterize the speaker of this poem? Write down a few adjectives or phrases to describe this poem's persona or tone.
- In this poem, what aspects of syntax, grammar, and diction does Köhler make "wild and surprising," as the translators observe? Circle any moments where Köhler deviates from or reinvents conventional language, eg. unusual punctuation, distinct vocabulary, word fragments, line breaks, etc.
- What do you think these choices convey about the character(s) referenced in this poem? How do these choices shape the speaker's voice?
- Do you notice any of these strategies and devices in the other poems?
- How does this shift in perspective impact your own understanding of the character(s) referenced as compared to their depiction in the original epic, or even in other forms of media?

Each group presents their analysis of the assigned poem to the whole class. As the groups present, encourage all students to ask questions and discuss their own interpretations of the poems' use of persona and voice.

Writing activity (15 minutes)

Students spend some time individually brainstorming their own persona poems using the following questions:

- Choose a myth, a folktale, or an episode from an epic to write about. This could be a story you heard in your childhood or a text that you've studied before but be sure to choose a narrative that holds some significance to you.
- Choose a character or entity whose voice you'll be adopting. Who are the central characters in this story? From whose perspective is the story told? Are there any characters who are sidelined, victimized, or villainized in traditional versions of the story? Are there any characters who would tell the story in a completely different way? This is also an opportunity to do some research and learn more about the details of the original story.
- What kinds of cultural values and narratives does the original story convey? Is there anything about the story or character that you'd like to challenge in your poem?

- Keeping in mind some of our reflections from the group discussion, are there ways you can play with or reinvent language to better reflect your persona's voice and tone? What kind of diction would they use? Would they speak in full sentences? How would they use punctuation?

Homework

Students write their own persona poems based on myth, folklore, or epics, and they bring a copy to the next class.

Sigmund Freud: Analyse This

“The Double and Singular Woman” by Pablo Palacio, translated by Thomas Taylor

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/the-double-and-singular-woman-pablo-palacio/>

In these lessons, students will explore the concepts of doubles and the uncanny. They will examine “The Double and Singular Woman” by Pablo Palacio, Sigmund Freud’s essay “The Uncanny” and gothic literature to explore the ways in which the texts represent the relationship between self, other, and identity. They will then write an evaluative essay.

Learning Objectives

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

- Make inferences about a text
- Analyse a text for wider meaning
- Evaluate concepts in an essay

Assessment

Independent Reading
Comprehension Questions
Essay Writing

Approximate Grade Level

University Students

Materials Needed

“The Double and Singular Woman” by Pablo Palacio, translated from the Spanish by Thomas Taylor

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/the-double-and-singular-woman-pablo-palacio/>

“The Uncanny” by Sigmund Freud

<https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (60 minutes)

Lesson Two (60 minutes)

Pre-Lesson Task:

Ask students to research examples of doubles in gothic literature.

Possible examples include: Frankenstein and his monster; Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; Dorian Gray and his portrait.

Lesson One

Warm up (10 minutes)

Write Freud's definition of the "Uncanny" on the board:

Uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression.

Ask students to unpack this. What does Freud mean? How would they define "uncanny"?

Capture their ideas on the board.

Class Discussion (10 minute)

Ask students to share their examples of doubles in gothic literature. Do they see a connection between these and Freud's definition of the "uncanny"?

Independent Reading and Analysis (30 minutes)

Introduce the text by reading the translator's note.

Students read the text independently.

Once students have read the text, give them a handout with the following questions:

- What is the effect of beginning the story in parenthesis?
- What do you think is the relationship between "I-the-first" and "I-the-second"? Make a note of your first impression of the narrator.
- How is the transmutation of language in "permits me to speak of myself as of us" connected to the narrator's identity?
- Look at paragraph 8. How does the power hierarchy of the self/other dichotomy work?
- How does the phrase "between me" create an image of self-separation?
- How does the narrator use narrative and family biography to define the self?
- In paragraph 13, how does the tale of the narrator's birth conform to conventions of the gothic genre? How far is the narrator a fictive creature?
- Look at paragraph 18, how does the narrator's self become object?
- What does the narrator mean by "I form part of that object which serves me and that it cannot in any moment have whole or independent life"? How does this reflect the narrator's own identity?
- How does desire disrupt the self's unity?
- What effect does the comparison of sexual pleasure with childbirth have regarding complete selfhood?

- “No one can love me, because I have been forced to carry this burden, this shadow; I have been forced to carry my double.” Comment on the narrator’s self-image here and draw any comparisons with Freud’s ideas of the uncanny and doubles.
- At the end of the story, what is the sore a metaphor for?

Class Analysis (10 minutes)

Students share their notes as part of a whole-class analysis. Capture their ideas on the board.

Possible answers include: *The parenthesis acts as a literal representation of enclosed and multiple selves. The narrator seems to have contingent, multiple selves. The plurality of self is made evident by the shift in pronouns. The narrator’s other self is externalised and seemingly dependent on the speaking/thinking self. The narrator charts their lineage, conforming to conventional notions of biography and self-definition. The mother’s gruesome imaginings are brought to life in childbirth; the narrator is the product of imagination. The narrator embodies both self and object; their relationship to objects mirrors the relationship with the second self. Desire makes the self riven. Sexual pleasure and childbirth create unity of the flesh and unity of the self. The narrator believes that there is something inherently repulsive about baring the hidden self or ‘other’. The sore is a metaphor for the irruption of the ‘other’ and obliteration of selfhood.*

Lesson Two

Warm up (5 minutes)

Remind students of key ideas from the previous lesson. Revisit the definition of “uncanny”.

Essay Writing (45 minutes)

Give the students a handout with the following question:

“How does the writer present the narrator’s relationship with their second self?”

Plenary (10 minutes)

Ask students to share their thoughts and capture them on the board.

Does Athens Exist? Fictive Landscapes & Myth-Making

“Desert” by Amanda Michalopoulou, translated by Joanna Eleftheriou & Natalie Bakopoulous

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/desert-amanda-michalopoulou/>

In this lesson, students will explore the concepts of the past, memory, and reality. They will examine “Desert” by Amanda Michalopoulou alongside “What History Is” by Keith Jenkins to explore the ways in which the texts upend the idea of History.

Learning Objectives

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

- Make inferences about a text
- Analyse a text for wider meaning
- Apply historical theory to a literary text

Assessment

Independent Reading

Comprehension Questions

Writing Assignment

Approximate Grade Level

High School Students

University Students

Materials Needed

“Desert” by Amanda Michalopoulou, translated from the Greek by Joanna Eleftheriou and Natalie Bakopoulous

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/desert-amanda-michalopoulou/>

“What History Is” by Keith Jenkins

<http://www.historymuse.net/readings/Jenkins-WhatHistoryIs.pdf>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (60 minutes)

Pre-Lesson Task

Ask students to read “What History Is” by Keith Jenkins.

Lesson One

Warm up (5 minutes)

Write the first line of the story on the board: "Athens doesn't exist."

Ask students if this is empirically true or false? Why?

What could the writer mean by this statement?

Class Discussion (10 minute)

Introduce the text by reading the translator's note.

What do they think Freud was expressing when he exclaimed "It exists!". Does this change their earlier answer?

Independent Reading and Analysis (30 minutes)

Students read the text independently.

Once students have read the text, give them a handout with the following questions:

- Jenkins argues that history is made up by historians. How does "Desert" reflect this argument? Give examples to support your answer.
- How is Athens presented as a fictive landscape?
- What is the relationship between History and myth-making in the story?
- How does the narrator's lived experience challenge the historical discourses about Athens?
- How would you describe the tone of the piece? What do you think this conveys?
- How does the pun "fabricators" and the metaphor of weaving in "the great fabricators of Athenian history weave and unravel their myths of grandeur" reinforce the idea that Athens doesn't exist?
- The narrator refers to a "they" that built the idea of Athens. What effect does the ambiguous plural pronoun have?
- How does the narrator's assertion "When I say step by step, I mean one invention emerged from the one that came before, just as one lie leads to the next" relate to Jenkins' theory of history?
- How does the metaphor of writing in "As though the world had suddenly cracked open and you could see the paper onto which it has been written" support this?
- What does Michalopoulou argue about the connection between Ancient Greek myth and contemporary history?

Class Analysis (15 minutes)

Students share their notes as part of a whole-class analysis. Capture their ideas on the board.

Possible answers include: *Michalopoulou argues that Athens is a fictional construct. Ancient myth-making and historical discourse have been interwoven to create a city in the image of the 'other'. The elegiac tone conveys the narrator's grief at the dissonance between the imagined reality and the desert she occupies. She feels alienated from the rhetoricians who have made*

Athens a false democratic utopia. She also illustrates the irony of the male exclusion of women from the process.

Homework Task:

Students write a 1000-word essay answering the following question:

Does Athens Exist? Refer to “Desert” by Amanda Michalopoulou and “What History Is” by Keith Jenkins in your response.

FEEDBACK

Thanks for taking the time to read our Fall 2025 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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