



Summer 2025 educator's guide



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Summer 2025 | THE ZOMBIE PROBLEM

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Summer 2025 issue of the *Asymptote* Educator's Guide!

Our latest guide contains five 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 "The Zombie Problem," our Summer 2025 issue, which is available here: <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/>

The first lesson in this guide "Metaphor as Bridge" allows students to explore the role of metaphor and imagination in poetry as tools for building emotional empathy and cross-cultural understanding. "Maternity and Monstrosity," the second lesson, provides students with an opportunity to explore fiction through the lens of literary theory. In "Currents of Connection" students will explore a non-fiction text and translate textual elements into visual-spatial form by using digital mapping tools. In "Reading EcoGothic" students will explore the links between the climate crisis, grief, and the gothic. In the final lesson in this guide, "Mapping Marginalized Histories," students will explore marginalized and decentred accounts of world history.

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/asymptote4edu>.

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.

Metaphor as Bridge: Imagination, Emotion, and Empathy in Ukrainian Poetry

“Two Poems” by Taras Malkovych translated by the

author <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/two-poems-taras-malkovych/>

In this lesson, students will explore the role of metaphor and imagination in poetry as tools for building emotional empathy and cross-cultural understanding. Through a close reading of two poems by Ukrainian poet and translator Taras Malkovych, students will analyze how metaphor constructs dreamlike landscapes to express deep emotional truths about love, fear, and survival—particularly within the context of political unrest and cultural upheaval in Ukraine. Students will examine these poems alongside short excerpts from Susan Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others* and Arundhati Roy’s *The End of Imagination*, reflecting on how poetic metaphor can translate personal and national trauma into universal emotional experiences. The culminating task is a written response that evaluates how metaphor and imagination can foster empathy in readers unfamiliar with the speaker’s world.

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify and interpret metaphorical language in translated poetry.
- Analyze how metaphor functions as a tool for emotional and cultural connection.
- Reflect critically on the ethical responsibilities of reading about the pain of others.
- Construct an analytical or creative written response that explores metaphor’s capacity to foster empathy across cultural boundaries.

Assessment

Independent reading and annotation

Comprehension and analysis questions

Creative or analytical essay

Approximate Grade Level

Advanced High School Students

University Students

Materials Needed

“I would like what binds us to always happen underwater” by Taras Malkovych, translated by the author from Ukrainian

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/two-poems-taras-malkovych/>

“The Bicycle of My Dreams” by Taras Malkovych, translated by the author from Ukrainian

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/two-poems-taras-malkovych/>

Excerpt from *The End of Imagination* by Arundhati Roy

<https://www.spokesmanbooks.com/Spokesman/PDF/68roy.pdf>

and/or

Excerpt from *Regarding the Pain of Others* by Susan Sontag

<https://archive.org/details/regarding-the-pain-of-others-by-sontag-susan/page/n33/mode/2up>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (60 minutes)

Lesson Two (60 minutes)

Pre-Lesson Preparation:

Ask students to read “I would like what binds us to always happen underwater” and “The Bicycle of My Dreams” by Taras Malkovych and excerpts from *The End of Imagination* by Arundhati Roy and/or *Regarding the Pain of Others* by Susan Sontag. Ask them to begin thinking about the role metaphor plays in their understanding of these texts.

Lesson One

Warm up (15 minutes)

Prompt students with this question on the board or a handout:

Think of a time when you experienced something new, confusing, or overwhelming—maybe your first day in a new place, learning something difficult, or witnessing something that surprised you.

Now answer: “What was that experience like?”

Try to describe it using a metaphor. You can begin with:

- “It felt like...”
- “It was as if...”
- “It reminded me of...”

Model a few examples aloud:

- “My first day in a new school felt like being dropped into the middle of a play without a script.”
- “Learning to drive was like holding my breath for an hour straight.”
- “Watching that news story was like trying to understand a dream in a language I don’t speak.”

Pair Share or Whole-Class Share:

Have a few students volunteer to share their metaphor and explain how it helps describe their experience more vividly. Highlight how metaphors help create *bridges*—they connect feelings and concepts we know to situations we don’t yet fully understand.

Transition:

Lead into the lesson by noting that today’s readings use metaphor in exactly this way—to help us understand the suffering, unrest, and experiences of others who live in different places and situations.

Independent Reading and Annotation (20 minutes)

Introduce Malkovych as both poet and translator. Share brief context about Ukraine’s recent history of war and displacement. A possible source for this information is the UNHCR:

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/ukraine-situation>

Students re-read both poems silently. While reading, ask them to annotate for:

- Surreal or dreamlike imagery
- Physical transformations (body, space, language)
- Emotions embedded in metaphor (fear, love, longing, hope)
- Cultural or political subtext

Small Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Divide students into small discussion groups and provide discussion questions. Options include:

1. What kind of world is created in each poem? What emotions live in those worlds?
2. How do metaphors in these poems represent invisible or unspoken feelings?
3. What political or emotional realities do the metaphors suggest (e.g., war, displacement, survival, parenthood)?
4. How do these metaphors allow a reader unfamiliar with Ukraine to connect to the speaker's experience?

Whole-Class Share and Analysis (10 minutes)

Capture key metaphors from the small group discussions on the board. Possible examples include:

- Underwater life = intimacy that requires mutual effort and sacrifice
- Gills = evolution, survival, transformation under pressure
- Eels as thermometers = the body as an emotional register of a disturbed world
- Dream-bicycles = dependence on another for movement, survival, comfort
- Boats rowing across hair = surreal combat, connection through shared vulnerability

Guiding question: *What do these metaphors let us feel that literal language might not?*

Lesson Two

Warm up (5 minutes)

Revisit the class discussion of "metaphor as bridge." Ask students:

- How can metaphor translate private emotional worlds into shared experiences?
- What risks or responsibilities come with imagining another's pain?

Essay Writing or Creative Reflection (45 minutes)

Give students the following prompt options or choose a prompt option below which best suits the needs of the class:

Option A: Analytical Essay

How does Taras Malkovych use metaphor to build emotional bridges between the speaker and the reader? How does this help us understand emotional or political unrest in unfamiliar cultural contexts? Use 2–3 specific metaphor examples and refer to either Sontag or Roy in your response.

Option B: Creative Response

Write a poem or prose piece using metaphor to describe an emotion or experience that might be hard for others to understand. Reflect at the end in 1–2 paragraphs: How did metaphor help you communicate this idea more powerfully? How did Sontag or Roy help you further your understanding of these ideas?

Plenary (10 minutes)

Ask students to share one metaphor they wrote or analyzed that most affected them. Reflect and wrap-up as a class:

- Can metaphor be a tool for cultural understanding or healing?

- How might metaphor allow us to hold complexity—joy, sorrow, resistance—all at once?

Maternity and Monstrosity

“A Child is Stolen” by Emmanuelle Sapin, translated by Michelle Kiefer

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/a-child-is-stolen-emmanuelle-sapin/>

In these lessons, students will explore the concepts of maternity and monstrous femininity. They will examine *A Child is Stolen* by Emmanuelle Sapin alongside theory from Donna Haraway’s *A Cyborg Manifesto* to explore the ways in which the texts represent the relationship between women, fertility, and maternal 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

“A Child is Stolen” by Emmanuelle Sapin, translated from the French by Michelle Kiefer

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/a-child-is-stolen-emmanuelle-sapin/>

“A Cyborg Manifesto” by Donna Haraway

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduates/modules/fictionnownarrativemediaandtheoryinthe21stcentury/manifestly_haraway_---_a_cyborg_manifesto_science_technology_and_socialist-feminism_in_the_....pdf

Approximate Length

Lesson One (60 minutes)

Lesson Two (60 minutes)

Pre-Lesson Tasks

Ask students to read Donna Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto”. Also ask them to research examples of bad mothers in literature and reflect on what makes them bad.

Examples could include: “Silence” by Alice Munro and Alice Munro herself; “Die, My Love” by Ariana Harwicz; “The House of Bernarda Alba” by Federico Garcia Lorca; “Medea” by Euripides; Mrs. Bennett in Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice”

Lesson One

Warm up (10 minutes)

Write the following list of words on the board and ask students to look up the definitions in the dictionary:

- Monstrous
- Femininity
- Maternity
- Cyborg

Ask students to settle on a definition of “Monstrous Femininity”. Agree on a definition and write it on the board.

Class Discussion (10 minute)

Ask students to share their examples of bad mothers in literature and discuss what they think makes a “bad mother”. Do they see a connection between these and their definition of “monstrous femininity”?

Independent Reading and Analysis (30 minutes)

Introduce the text by reading the author’s bio.

Students read the text independently.

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

- What is the effect of the passive voice of the title: “A Child is Stolen”?
- What contrast does the active voice in the opening of the story (“I stole a child”) create? Make a note of your first impression of the narrator.
- Look at paragraphs 3 and 4. Compare the use of the semantic field of reproduction with this extract from Donna Haraway:

“A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.

Modern medicine is also full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices, in an intimacy and with a power that were not generated in the history of sexuality. . .”

Is the narrator’s identity rooted in social reality or the fiction of gender? Explain your view.

- How does the dichotomy of the ideal-mother “who has claimed her share of eternity” and the “distant vibrato, deadened note” of the narrator relate to your definition of monstrous femininity? Add to your impression of the narrator.
- How does the metaphor of the narrator’s “womb had already unfurled a protective shroud” connect to the earlier description of “empty wombs”?
- “I was a fibrous mass, the chalky smudge of a raging, clumsy hand.” What does this description suggest about the narrator’s self-image?
- In paragraph 10, how does the metaphor of the car as a uterus connect to Haraway’s definition of a cyborg?
- The narrator refers to her “barren silence”. How does this symbolically align ideas of maternity, language, and identity in the story?
- How is this extended with the line “I returned the baby because I couldn’t speak to it, name it or hear its cries”?

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 shift to active voice centralises the agency of the “bad mother”, contributing to a reading of her as monstrous. Sapin uses the clinical language of medicine and*

reproduction to emphasise an unnaturalness in conception (this can be further linked to a questioning of women's roles in reproduction and ideas of innate maternity and caregiving: if a woman cannot reproduce, what does this mean for her social and gender role?). By heightening the artifice of language, Sapin gestures towards the ways in which motherhood itself is a construct. The deathly connotations of "shroud" reinforce the subversive image of the narrator's monstrous womb. The metaphor of the car as a hostile womb reflects the narrator's infertility, while illustrating Haraway's concept of the cyborg as "lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints." The narrator's loss of language is connected to both her failure to reproduce (biologically and kidnap) and hints towards a loss of self-image; this connects to Haraway's assertion that "the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other—the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination."

Lesson Two

Warm up (5 minutes)

Remind students of key ideas from the previous lesson. Revisit the definitions of "monstrous femininity" and "cyborg".

Essay Writing (45 minutes)

Give the students a handout with the following question and supporting quotations:

"How is the narrator's self-image and sense of maternal identity fashioned by ideas of gender, motherhood and mechanical reproduction?"

Use the quotations from "A Child is Stolen" by Emmanuelle Sapin and "A Cyborg Manifesto" by Donna Haraway to guide you.

From "A Child is Stolen":

"And all I will have left is the memory of my desire to become a mother."

"I would like to let my babies float, eternally pre-born, suspended in time. A cinching pain in my stomach. Deeply stowed, no risk of detaching. Everything I have left from this disastrous adventure. A fiasco."

From "A Cyborg Manifesto":

"The tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other—the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination."

"One of my premises is that most American socialists and feminists see deepened dualisms of mind and body, animal and machine, idealism and materialism in the social practices, symbolic formulations, and physical artifacts associated with "high technology" and scientific culture."

"A cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints."

Plenary (10 minutes)

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

Currents of Connection

“Eyes of the Ocean” by Syaman Rapongan, translated by Darryl Sterk

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/nonfiction/yaman-rapongan-eyes-of-the-ocean/>

In this lesson, students read the nonfiction piece *Eyes of the Ocean* by Syaman Rapongan. After reading, students collaboratively create a map of key locations and ideas from the piece, adding their own stories, and reflecting on their work.

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify and interpret key references to location, water, and environmental features from the selected text
- Articulate what the text conveys about history, community, and belonging
- Critically reflect on and communicate their own relationships with water, place, environment, history, community, belonging
- Translate textual elements into visual-spatial form by using digital mapping tools or analog materials

Assessment

Close reading

Short reflective writing assignments

Small group and whole class discussion

Group map project

Approximate Grade Level

University Students

Materials Needed

Eyes of the Ocean by Syaman Rapongan (Tr. Darryl Sterk)

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/nonfiction/yaman-rapongan-eyes-of-the-ocean/>

Pacific Centered Map

<https://www.natgeomaps.com/re-world-classic-pacific-centered>

Through an Indigenous Lens: Syaman Rapongan’s Rewriting of Oceanic Taiwan (China Studies Centre) [Video]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xq1MOeZsOdI>

Analog materials or digital tools for making a story map, such as StoryMaps

<https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-storymaps/overview>

Further Reading for teachers (optional)

Story Maps and the Digital Humanities by Allen Carroll <https://www.esri.com/arcgis-blog/products/story-maps/sharing-collaboration/story-maps-and-the-digital-humanities>

Digital Storytelling: What are Story Maps? (University of Dayton University Libraries)

<https://libguides.udayton.edu/c.php?g=1345985&p=9987996>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (50 minutes)

Lesson Two (50 minutes)

Lesson One

Warm up (10 minutes)

Show a Pacific-centered map to the class (see Materials Needed above). Briefly introduce the title, author, and translator of the nonfiction piece (using the author and translator bios), pointing out Orchid Island / Lanyu on the map. Ask students:

- What do you think the title “Eyes of the Ocean” means? If “Eyes of the Sky” means “stars”, how might “Eyes of the Ocean” be interpreted?

The answer is up to interpretation although the translator offers the following possibilities: mariners, islands, fish scales, and waves.

Reading & Discussion (30 minutes)

Students read *Eyes of the Ocean* from the beginning until the end of the first section (marked by an asterisk). As students read, they should highlight references to geographical locations, as well as water, natural features, and the environment.

Students pair up to compare what they have highlighted, and then discuss the following questions:

- What kind of relationship does the author have with each location? Why do you think so?
- What is the significance of water, natural features, and the environment in this piece?
- How does the author combine personal experience with ethnographic information? What effect does this have on the reader?
- What do you think the text conveys about the author’s experiences with history, community, or belonging? How do you know?

Students share their ideas with the full class.

Optional extension: Students research the locations referenced in the text (i.e., their locations, names, historical or cultural significance) or unfamiliar concepts. Potential examples: Lanyu, Nuuk, fjords of Greenland and Norway, the 66th parallel, Inuit beliefs

Assign & begin homework (10 minutes)

Finish reading the remainder of the piece “Eyes of the Ocean”. After finishing, choose one quotation or passage from the text. Craft a written response (approximately one page), analyzing its significance in the piece and then using it as a springboard for critically reflecting on your own relationship with water, place, environment, history, community, or belonging.

Lesson Two

Warm up (5 minutes)

Review the reading in broad strokes and show students an excerpt from the video “Through an Indigenous Lens: Syaman Rapongan’s Rewriting of Oceanic Taiwan”, an academic presentation by a scholar about the author’s work (see Materials Needed above). Five minutes of the video, from approximately 27:00-32:00, are most relevant to *Eyes of the Ocean*.

Whole class discussion (20 minutes)

As a class, discuss the students’ chosen passages from the text and their homework reflections. In addition, ask if they can make any connections between their homework and the information from today’s video. Explore the additional context provided by the video.

If additional quotations are needed, consider the following:

- *Like my cousin, who is three years older than me, or my uncle Zomagpit, who is sixty-six, the old man of the sea, they have given up learning new things, such as using a smartphone or reading online news. ... After the legendary oral stories are forgotten, the experiential ocean philosophy discarded, and the maritime literature that was once written with the body becomes fiction, the news introduced through the Internet and the facts inscribed in multiple written languages will convolute the world.*
- *There is a saying in the Tao language, “Mapa ka dehdehdeh.” It means “to act like a Han Chinese when you clearly aren’t one,” when you’re a wild horse running around in the paddock pretending to be tamed. We all had to ride the Han Chinese around on our backs in those days. Passing the test of tameness was called graduation. Failing it was called termination of studies or suspension.*
- *Back on my ancestral island, where I lived a Tao-style “maritime” life, I was the mastermind of the antinuclear Exorcize the Anito! movement.*
- *When I heard of an occupation called “writer,” I knew that this was the path I should take, that a writer was what I would become. Only then did I realize that my island literature would embrace the sea. It would be about the diving environment, about talking fish, and about canoe construction and navigation. It would be a literature of discrimination, but not a literature of colonization. It would be a translational ocean-island literature of my own creation.*

Small group discussion (15 minutes)

Put the students into groups, ideally in groups with those they will collaborate with on the project work, and have them discuss the following questions:

- Name one location from the text that stood out to you while reading. Why did it stand out to you (e.g., imagery, story, emotions)? Why is this location important to the author or the themes of the piece?
- How are the different locations in the piece connected? What kind of relationships—between people, places, and histories—do they suggest?
- Can you think of a place from your own life that holds a similar kind of meaning (personal, political, cultural, historical significance)?

Assign project work (10 minutes)

Students will work collaboratively in groups to build a map of the story using online tools (Google slides or Padlet with a map background, or a dedicated tool such as ArcGIS StoryMap) or analog tools (a bulletin board or poster). The map will be shared and discussed in a subsequent class. Each group member should contribute two annotated pins to the map:

Map location #1

This pin should include the location, a quotation from the text, an explanation of the quotation's significance, and relevant information from research.

- Location

Example: fjords of Nuuk, Greenland

- A quotation from the text

Example: *Along the western shore, there are countless fjords, as they call them, which remind me of the trenches, as I call them, on my home island.*

- An explanation of the quotation's meaning or significance

Example: The author finds similarities between distinct geographic locations and reflects on the use of language to describe them.

- Information from research

Example: Global warming affects the oceans. In fact, "...many Arctic settlements are located near glacial fjords that, through their ecosystems, support hunting and fishing and contribute to the regional economy. As the Arctic warms, however, glaciers are melting and retreating, and ocean waters are expected to warm, thus affecting these glacial fjord ecosystems and the human communities they support." From ARCUS

<https://www.arcus.org/nna/projects/1928007>)

Map location #2

This pin should include a location and a personal place-based reflection:

- A place-based reflection from the student's own life which is in conversation with the author (such as a relevant personal story or memory about water, place, environment, history, community, belonging)

Reflection Homework:

After sharing and discussing the map in class, students prepare a one-page written reflection on the following questions:

- How do maps affect our worldview? (e.g., our perception of locations, cultural connections, geographic relationships) Did mapping the text change your understanding of the text or of the world? If so, how?
- Through reading and mapping the text, what have you learned about the relationship between people and any of the following: water, place, environment, history / education, community, or sense of belonging? Did any new connections surface?

Reading the EcoGothic

“Anthropocene” by Carolina Brown, translated by Jessica Powell

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/anthropocene-carolina-brown/>

This lesson introduces students to Carolina Brown’s *Anthropocene*. In the first lesson, students will read the text and understand it through the lens of EcoGothic. They will close-read the text, navigating the ways through which environmental crisis and personal affects are interlinked. In the second lesson, students will attend to the discussions from the first class to compose a piece of their own that may be read as a connection between the piece and their personal experience.

Learning Objectives

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

- Close read a text through specific theoretical lens
- Discuss ideas related to climate crisis, grief, and the gothic in the story
- Compose an original creative piece as a response to Brown’s story

Assessment

Independent Reading

Class Participation

Independent Writing Task

Approximate Grade Level

University Students

Materials Needed

“Anthropocene” by Carolina Brown, translated by Jessica Powell

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/anthropocene-carolina-brown/>

“Theorising the EcoGothic” by Simon C. Estok

https://gothicnaturejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Estok_34-53_Gothic-Nature-1_2019.pdf

Approximate Length

Lesson One (75-90 minutes)

Lesson Two (60 minutes)

Lesson One

Warm-up (15 minutes)

Write the title “Anthropocene” on one side of the board and prompt the students to respond to it based on their prior knowledge of the word or their impressions from the story. On the other side, write “Ecology” and “Gothic”, and prompt them to think of images that first click when they read the mentioned words. Gather their answers and write them on the board.

Introduce the story and the author by reading out the translator’s note. Ask for first impressions of the story and integrate these with the prompts written on the board.

The instructor introduces the students to EcoGothic as a genre and uses these points from the reading to enter the story.

1. "An EcoGothic approach poses a challenge to a familiar Gothic subject (nature) taking a nonanthropocentric position to reconsider the role that the environment, species, and nonhumans play in the construction of monstrosity and fear" (pp. 10-11).
2. "Certainly, we see associations in the popular imagination between monstrosity and madness in the early modern period, showing how fears about madness represent a larger concern about the intrusion of the undomesticated natural world into the controlled spaces of human civilisation" (p. 11).
3. "Conjuring up images of plants that stalk people for food, on the other hand, is a perfect example of the ecophobic imagination. The EcoGothic imagination itself is under the rubric of ecophobia; it is difficult, though perhaps possible, to imagine otherwise" (p. 16).

Independent Reading (35 minutes)

The students delve into the text and close read the same. They may want to read the text with special attention to the concept of EcoGothic. The following questions may be used to aid their close-reading and note-making process:

1. How does the title convey the mood of the story?
2. What is the role of journal entries?
3. What elements of EcoGothic can you recognise?
4. How does the narrator make sense of their being by the end of the story?

Students may be asked to think about the translator's note as they close-read the text. They may be given the liberty to draw from relevant readings they may have read previously as they segue into making sense of the text.

Possible answers include:

- *The title brings to one mind the current geological age that humans inhabit and possibly indicates a signature of human interaction with the non-human world.*
- *The journal entries may be read as the original working of the narrator's mind. The readers get access to the precarious conditions – not only of the humans but also the non-human world.*
- *The figure of the "human adult male, dressed in rags" may be read as a zombie-figure, a Frankenstein of the Anthropocene.*
- *The narrator seems to be disoriented after their uncanny experience with the zombie-figure, and the eventual death of Octavio. Moreover, the ending is ominous not only for what has happened to the narrator but also how it may be understood as an allegory for what is to come for us – the boundary between reality and fiction blurs as we spiral into eventual environmental decay.*

Class Participation (30 minutes)

Students share their notes as part of the class discussion. The discussion may be guided by dovetailing the prompts above and the possible answers from the warm-up activity. The students should be nudged to think critically about how elements in the story are employed to convey the urgency of climate change.

Plenary (10 minutes)

Students may be prompted to think how they have experienced climate change as their homework.

Lesson Two**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.

Independent Writing Task (50 minutes)

Ask the students to step into the feet of any character from the story. It may be the penguin, the man in rags, Octavio, or even the dewlap!

Remind the students that they have to think through the original story by placing special focus on employing elements of the EcoGothic.

Plenary (15 minutes)

Ask the students to read excerpts from their write-ups. They may be uploaded and saved digitally for easier access.

Suggested Further Reading:

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
The Road by Cormac McCarthy
Animal's People by Indra Sinha

Mapping Marginalized Histories

“Private Goordial Seeraz” by Vedita Cowaloosur

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/private-goordial-seeraz-vedita-cowaloosur/>

In the first lesson, students will explore narratives that are often decentred from global history using Vedita Cowaloosur’s piece *Private Goordial Seeraz* as a point of departure. After closely reading and discussing the text, students will frame questions to explore connected histories and case studies, and work to identify research topics related to the text’s themes. In lesson two, students will present their research individually or in groups to build alternative accounts to linear, Eurocentric narratives of world history.

Learning Objectives

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

- Explore marginalized and decentred accounts of world history
- Conduct and present research on a topic of historical significance
- Examine the significance of personal accounts in creating alternative historical narratives

Assessment

Close reading
Group activity
Class discussion
Student presentations

Approximate Grade Level

High School Students

Materials Needed

“Private Goordial Seeraz” by Vedita Cowaloosur

<https://www.asymptotejournal.com/special-feature/private-goordial-seeraz-vedita-cowaloosur/>

Archival photographs:

- “Mauritians Serving in the British Army”
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/33043>
- “World War One, Senegalese Skirmishers at Rest”
<https://www.gettyimages.dk/detail/news-photo/world-war-one-senegalese-skirmishers-at-rest-news-photo/159147259?adppopup=true>
- “Egypt Takes Suez”
<https://www.gettyimages.dk/detail/news-photo/the-egyptian-prime-minister-gamal-nasser-is-cheered-by-a-news-photo/613468378?adppopup=true>

Additional Resources

Historical context around colonial troops from the British Empire

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zgjff82#zc7vwwx>

BBC: “France to rename streets after African WW2 heroes” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53261948>

Middle East Monitor: “Remembering the Suez Crisis and the tripartite invasion of Egypt”

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20221029-remembering-the-suez-crisis-and-the-tripartite-invasion-of-egypt/>

Approximate Length

Lesson One (75 minutes)

Lesson Two (75 minutes)

Preparation

Students read the piece “Private Goordial Seeraz” before class.

Lesson One

Warm up (15 minutes)

Display the photographs of Private Goordial Seeraz included at the end of the piece, as well as the archival photographs (listed under “materials needed” above). Provide some historical context about the role that colonial troops played in British and French Imperial armies during and after the two world wars, as well as the Egyptian nationalisation of the Suez Canal, making use of the “additional resources” where necessary.

Discuss the following questions as a class:

- What major events in world history do you associate with the 1940s, '50s, and '60s? Which geographical locations do these narratives tend to centre?
- How do the photographs displayed and the events they document interact with those major historical narratives? In what ways do they converse with or challenge these narratives? In what ways do they relate to Private Goordial Seeraz's account?

Class discussion (20 minutes)

Gather students' initial impressions of the text. This could include portions that illustrate historical events in a new or different manner, instances of striking dialogue or phrasing, or questions that came up while reading the piece. Discuss the following questions as a class:

- What do you make of Private Goordial Seeraz's relationship to the British Empire? How would you characterize his attitude towards the British army? Note specific places in the text that indicate his perspective.
- How would you describe the tone of the piece? Does it feel consistent, or does it shift/vary over the course of the account? Note down a few key words you might use to describe the tone and share your answers with the class. *Answers may include diary, anecdote, reportage, historical analysis, oral history, nostalgic, memoir, etc. Encourage a range of responses.*
- Are there particular moments in the text that speak to contradictory feelings on the part of the narrator? What do you make of these contradictions and dichotomies? What do you think informs or motivates the narrator's choices?
- Note any places in the text where the author makes use of multiple languages. What do you think of these choices? What does this tell you about the context/s in which this account takes place?
- Where in the text do we first encounter the narrator's name? What is the significance of this moment, and of the choice to introduce his name here?
- What sort of insight does this personal narrative provide to our understanding of world history?
- What do you think of the exchange that concludes the piece?

Group activity (20 minutes)

Working in groups, ask students to read through the piece paragraph by paragraph, and note down as many questions as possible about the historical context that frames the narrative. Encourage them to lean into their curiosity, using specific details as a jumping-off point to think about related histories and events outside of/on the margins of imperial centres of power. Demonstrate one or two example questions that might arise from specific paragraphs as outlined below:

- Paragraph 8 (“Dharam Bhaiyya, my cousin, was my hero...”) – What role did soldiers conscripted from British colonies play in the world wars?
- Paragraph 21 (“Still, she sneaked me off...”) – What social and economic impact did the world wars have on the inhabitants of British colonies?
- Paragraph 37 (“After about a year of serving...”) – How did the various nationalist movements against British rule after the second world war influence one another? What kind of solidarities existed between peoples of different lands resisting colonial rule?

Depending on the geographic location of the classroom and the course being studied, teachers can also guide students to connect this narrative to histories they may already be familiar with. Invite groups to share their questions with the whole class. Teachers could use a mind map to track common themes across students’ questions on the board, demonstrating how one personal account can shed light on and invoke curiosity about various intertwined aspects of history.

Introducing assignment and preparing for research (20 minutes)

Introduce the following assignment, to be completed individually or in groups depending on class size:

Students will choose a research topic arising from the questions posed in the previous activity: this could be any specific historical figure, event, or phenomenon that relates to the various themes explored by the text. For the following class, students should prepare a 5-7 minute presentation on their topic of choice.

Instruct students to spend some time narrowing down and identifying their research topics, using one or two of their articulated questions to guide them. During this time, they may conduct some preliminary research, and teachers should encourage students to focus on specificity and scope as they identify topics. It may be useful to demonstrate with an example as below:

Question: What kind of solidarities existed between peoples of different lands resisting colonial rule? > International solidarities between French-ruled colonies > Frantz Fanon and the Algerian War of Independence

Question: What social and economic impact did the world wars have on the inhabitants of British colonies? > Redirecting resources from the colonies toward imperial troops > The Bengal famine of 1943

During this preliminary research or while completing the assignment, students will likely be confronted with accounts of violence in these histories. Encourage them to work slowly through their research and take space where and when they need to. Towards the end of the lesson, it may be useful to make space for their responses to the violence embedded in these histories.

Homework

Instruct students to complete the assignment outlined above for next class.

Lesson Two

Warm up (5 minutes)

Return to the final discussion question from last class – what do you make of the exchange that concludes the piece? Focus on the last sentence: “Besides, I missed my mother.” Discuss the author’s choice to end the account on this personal note.

Research presentations (60 minutes)

Students present their research to the class. During this time, teachers should draw connections between different presentations, as well as Cowaloosur’s text, and encourage students to do the same. Allow a few minutes after each presentation to articulate these connections and for students to ask questions.

Reflection (10 minutes)

Discuss the following questions as a class:

- How did these presentations impact your understanding of world history?
- What do you make of this approach to history? (i.e. examining multiple stories and case studies around a particular set of events, as opposed to a linear timeline)
- In what other ways can we complicate Eurocentric narratives of world history?

FEEDBACK

Thanks for taking the time to read our Summer 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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