British

Literature 3

From the Victorian Poets to the Twenty-First Century

Fifth Edition

TheCenterforLearning

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From the Victorian Poets to the Twenty-First Century

Fifth Edition
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This series replaces the British literature units published by The Center for Learning in 2000. Of the twenty-one chapters, eighteen are new and three are substantially rewritten, with new student activities.

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Contents

Introduction

Although people often associate the Victorian era with famous novels such as *Great Expectations* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, poetry and drama were not neglected genres. This unit begins with Oscar Wilde and goes on to cover some of the most important nineteenth-century poets. The remainder of the lessons deals with writers of many types, from World War I to the present day.

You will want to point out the continuation of both Romantic and realistic perspectives from the nineteenth century to the present day. Despite the pessimism that easily results from the horrors of economic depressions and wars, there seems to be something in the human spirit that clings to hope and beauty and refuses to abandon ideals.

Lessons focusing on the twentieth century and the opening years of the twenty-first include the stream-of-consciousness technique that originated with writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf and exerted a powerful influence on modern fiction. Mid-century the phenomenon of theater of the absurd at least temporarily revolutionized drama. The empire of which the British were once so proud was presented in a different light by writers who emphasized injustices at the heart of imperialism and consequences that have endured until the present day.

When we think about writers of recent decades, it is nearly impossible to determine whom future generations will see as great. Only time can tell which literary works will fall completely out of print and which will endure as classics. The concluding lesson encourages students to become acquainted with writers who are receiving significant critical acclaim today.

While fostering a quick acquaintance with a variety of writers is a good idea, it is usually beneficial to include major works in a study of recent literature. Your choice of specific titles will depend on your students' interests and abilities. Two strong possibilities for nearly all classes are *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. Huxley's book provokes discussion of government control, family values, and chemically induced bliss. *Lord of the Flies* leads to considerations of factors that prevent humanity from deteriorating into depravity and violence.

As your students complete their tour of the British literary tradition, you will want to emphasize shared values and concerns that transcend national boundaries.

Teacher Notes

These twenty-one lessons begin with dramatists and poets of the Victorian era and go on to major voices of the twentieth century, and well as novelists of the present day. A glance at the table of contents will provide you with an overview of the content, from Oscar Wilde to recipients of the coveted Man Booker Prize. There is no effort to be comprehensive; rather, students are encouraged to read, understand, and make personal connections with some of the great voices of the past two centuries.

The lessons address standards basic to language arts instruction at all levels. Students reach general conclusions and provide textual support; they analyze structure, themes, and figurative language. They use Internet sources to find information, and they collaborate in group presentations. All of the lessons include writing activities—some very short, others extensive.

Some literary works are included on handouts. If you are working with a British literature anthology, you will find many selections gathered for you and your students. The works are also often readily available on the Internet. Copyright laws limit publishers' reproduction of recent pieces of writing.

People concerned with gender balance may argue that more female writers should be included in the study of modern British literature. It is impossible to dispute that; however, it is equally impossible to choose one over another and to decide which of the other writers should be omitted. Your choices of major works can help to adjust the picture. If you are working with an honors or advanced placement group, you might want to consider Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dallsway*. Another option, especially if your students are beginning to flag after a term of rigorous work, is one of the many novels written by Agatha Christie.

Lesson 1

The Wit of Oscar Wilde

Objectives

- To analyze several passages that reveal Oscar Wilde's wit
- To read and respond to the opening stanzas of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*

Notes to the Teacher

Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) was a Dublin-born classics scholar who wrote poetry, fiction, and drama. Known for being a flamboyant character as well as a writer, Wilde scandalized and amazed English society with his eccentricity of dress, conversation, and conduct. He was in demand socially because of his reputation as a wit. His social and literary career ended abruptly after his conviction on charges of homosexuality, for which he spent two years in jail, an experience that was the basis of his narrative poem, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol.*

Two works by Wilde that can work well in today's high school English classrooms are his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and his comedy, *The Importance of Being Earnest.* The novel was controversial during Wilde's time because of the flagrant immorality of the title character. Dorian Gray's portrait, not the man himself, suffers all the consequences of aging and negative choices. Only after death is he "withered, wrinkled, and loathsome in appearance." In contrast, *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a witty and rollicking comedy that is still produced by community and college theaters.

In this lesson students first encounter and discuss quotations that reflect Wilde's wit and intelligence. They then read and discuss the opening stanzas of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol.* Finally, students read and discuss a short lyric poem, "Symphony in Yellow."

Procedure

1. Point out that the Victorian period included many significant writers of all kinds of works—fiction, drama, poetry, and nonfiction. Explain that one of them, Oscar Wilde, was very successful and celebrated for his wit until he got involved in a scandal that landed him in jail for two years.

2. Explain that Wilde was a playwright, a poet, and a novelist. Distribute **Handout 1,** and have small groups complete the exercise. Follow with discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The speaker does not recognize the irony in her own words. She expects the poor to behave in ways to edify the wealthy—and she sees that function as their only value. In fact, people on the lower rungs in any group tend to either imitate or revolt against those above them.
2. This cynical comment suggests that nothing is all good and everything is complicated. All stories and situations have subtle nuances.
3. This resembles the notion that there is no such thing as bad publicity. One hates to be the subject of gossip and idle rumors, but it is even worse if no one cares enough to bring you up in conversation.
4. This skeptical view of democracy states that it simply makes the citizenry a brutal tyrant rather than a protector of individuals.
5. Sometimes people become committed to falsehoods. Martyrs do not necessarily validate beliefs.
6. Art is about art, not about life. This is a kind of "art for art's sake" statement.
7. This statement places an extremely high value on uniqueness and on being one of a kind. If others agree, it is necessary to think again.
8. This utilitarian view sees errors and mistakes (results of stupidity) as the chief evils that beset humankind. Anything else is acceptable.
9. Ironically, temptation is the only thing people need to resist. Anything else is harmless. The speaker sounds naïve and self-centered.
10. This statement cuts two ways. It is true that, as time passes, women (and men) often find themselves talking and acting in ways they were sure they never would; this can cause chagrin. On the other hand, Wilde says that men never seem to acquire the wisdom and insights that their mothers had—a real put-down for men.

3. Assign students to select one of the statements from the handout and to write essays in which they argue for or against the aphorism's applicability today. (Note: You can make this a brief classroom writing or an extended piece to be completed as homework.)

4. Explain that, based on his own prison experience, Wilde wrote a long narrative poem entitled *The Ballad of Reading Gaol.* Distribute **Handout 2,** read the stanzas of the poem aloud, and conduct a discussion based on the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. The speaker is someone well acquainted with the prison and with at least some of the inmates, although the stanza does not make clear in what capacity.
2. The man killed a woman he loved, but the motive is not given. Students may guess that the cause was anger or jealousy.
3. It seems as if the man tried to seem unworried and calm despite his circumstances. Perhaps he did not want anyone to pity him or see him as weak and frightened.

4. The speaker seems to feel a kind of empathy for the man; he is aware of the longing for freedom and the open air that the man tries so hard to hide.

5. Conduct an open-ended discussion about what students think the rest of the long poem describes. If the poem seems to have grabbed their interest, you may want to devote a lesson to reading and discussing it; you can also assign it as independent study or as the basis of an extra-credit project.

6. Distribute **Handout 3**, and have small groups complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. The poem has an *abba* rhyme scheme, is written in iambic tetrameter, and includes three quatrains.
2. In a symphony, many musical instruments work together to form a single piece of music. The symphony is a metaphor for the poem, which combines many images to present a picture of a scene near the Thames River.
3. For example, there is the striking comparison of the bus to a butterfly, as well as the view of the river as a "rod of rippled jade."
4. The tone is appreciative and perceptive. The speaker seems to be completely absorbed in the sights around him, with no tendency to analyze or philosophize.
5. The poem shows that Oscar Wilde was much more than just a glib wit; it reveals his sensitivity to beauty and his artistic craftsmanship.
6. If you wish, have students use Wilde as a model and write other symphony pieces in either prose or poetic form (e.g., "Symphony in Lilac" or "Symphony in Black").

Name:

Oscar Wilde

Directions: Oscar Wilde made a career of poking fun at society and the foibles of the late nineteenth-century English. He was a master of the aphorism, a short statement that makes a single point in a memorable way. Read the following aphorisms. Think about the ways they comment on the Victorian era and apply to our own lives today.

From *The Importance of Being Earnest:*

1. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them?
2. The truth is rarely pure, and never simple.

From *The Picture of Dorian Gray:*

3. There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.

From *The Soul of Man under Socialism*:

4. Democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people.

From *Sebastian Melmoth:*

5. A thing is not necessarily true because a man dies for it.

From "The Decay of Lying":

6. Art never expresses anything but itself.

From *The Critic as Artist*:

7. Ah! Don't say that you agree with me. When people agree with me I always feel that I must be wrong.
8. There is no sin except stupidity.

From *Lady Windermere's Fan:*

9. I couldn't help it. I can resist everything except temptation.
10. All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

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Name:

The Ballad of Reading Gaol

Directions: Read the opening stanzas of Oscar Wilde's long narrative poem, and answer the questions.

He did not wear his scarlet coat,
For blood and wine are red,
And blood and wine were on his hands
When they found him with the dead,
The poor dead woman whom he loved,
And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men
In a suit of shabby grey;
A cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay;
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every drifting cloud that went
With sails of silver by.

I walked, with other souls in pain,
Within another ring,
And was wondering if the man had done
A great or little thing,
When a voice behind me whispered low,
"That fellows got to swing."

—Oscar Wilde

1. Who seems to be the speaker in the poem?

2. What crime did the man commit? Is any motive given?

3. What is the significance of the reference to the man's light step?

4. Does the speaker's attitude seem the same as the voice that says that the man has "got to swing"?

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Name:

A Lyric Poem from Oscar Wilde

Directions: Read the poem, make marginal annotations, and answer the questions.

Symphony in Yellow

An omnibus across the bridge
Crawls like a yellow butterfly,
And, here and there a passer-by
Shows like a little restless midge.

Big barges full of yellow hay
Are moored against the shadowy wharf,
And, like a yellow silken scarf,
The thick fog hangs along the quay.

The yellow leaves begin to fade
And flutter from the temple elms,
And at my feet the pale green Thames
Lies like a rod of rippled jade.

—Oscar Wilde

1. How would you describe the poem's form?

2. Why did the poet choose the title "Symphony in Yellow"?

3. The poem is highly descriptive, with many images and figures of speech. Select three that you particularly like, and explain why they are effective.

4. How would you describe the poem's tone?

5. What does the poem reveal about the poet?

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Lesson 2

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Perspectives

Objectives

- To recognize Elizabeth Barrett Browning's achievements
- To examine her feminist perspectives

Notes to the Teacher

The rise and fall of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's reputation make a dramatic case for how critical tastes change. In her lifetime (1806–1861) she was one of the most popular poets in England, so highly acclaimed that she was nominated for the honor of poet laureate. By the 1930s she was out of critical favor. After the publication of her letters at the end of the nineteenth century, interest in her love relationship with Robert Browning replaced her reputation as a poet. The popular play and movie *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* contributed to the focus on her as the heroine of a love story rather than on her career as a poet. Her greatest work, the verse novel *Aurora Leigh*, was viewed as an oddity next to the Romantic *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

Aurora Leigh was revolutionary because, by speaking confidently and without disguise, Browning rudely trampled the rigid limitations placed on women at that time. She addressed virtually all the women's roles with which the public was familiar. The poem emphasizes one female character from each of the three social classes. Lady Waldemar represents the idle aristocrat dabbling in philanthropy and affairs of the heart. Aurora Leigh is a middle-class professional who depends upon her earnings as a writer. Marian Erle, the daughter of a tramp, lives in abject poverty and works as a seamstress to avoid a life of prostitution. The three women's stories are interconnected in the work.

Only time will tell if Elizabeth Barrett Browning's works will come into critical favor once again. For everyday readers, she will probably always be best known for the famous sonnet that begins, "How do I love thee?" That is the first work students study in this lesson. They then examine and discuss excerpts from *Aurora Leigh*, which esteemed writer and literary critic Virginia Woolf once described as a "masterpiece in embryo."

Procedure

1. Introduce Elizabeth Barrett Browning with a discussion of Victorian mores regarding the roles of men and women. Make sure students are aware of the restrictions on women; attitudes toward sex, marriage, and divorce;

and the disenfranchisement of women in regard to the vote, ownership of property, and custody of children. Point out that sentimentality and hypocrisy ostensibly placed middle- and upper-class women on pedestals while routinely denying them adulthood; lower-class women were sometimes forced into prostitution.

2. Explain that a poet named Elizabeth Barrett was extremely popular during her own lifetime—so popular that she was considered for the coveted position of England's poet laureate. After she married, she was still popular under her new name, Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

3. Distribute **Handout 4,** and have students complete it individually. Follow with discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The poem is a declaration of love that can be used on any occasion connected with a beloved person—wedding, anniversary, funeral, birthday.
2. She says that her love is so great that words are not adequate to completely explain it.
3. This is a love that endures, not something ephemeral.
4. The sentence indicates that this is a love the speaker thought was lost to her forever.
5. The speaker believes in the possibility of life and love after death.

4. Explain that Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote a novel in poetic form entitled *Aurora Leigh*. Distribute **Handout 5,** and have small groups complete the reading and analysis.

Suggested Responses

1. Aurora describes the origins of her sensitivity and creativity. She spent hours observing her dead mother's picture. She may also have been inspired by the books she read as a child, or, as an only child, may have needed to entertain herself with stories.
2. She is told by Romney that women are too emotional to understand human nature enough to provide moral instruction and insight through poetry. Women are suited to nurture, not to preach.
3. Her aunt promotes the ideal woman as one who develops skills such as playing the piano and dancing, which can entertain her husband and guests. The aunt also believes that women have neither the intellect to think about world events nor the will to challenge men's opinions.
4. Women are to be seen and not heard; they are delicate, nurturing, and entertaining, but not equal to men in intellect or will. Women can offer comfort but not companionship.
5. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was critical of the social limitations placed on women. She saw the basic assumptions about gender differences to be untrue, and she believed the social norms had destructive effects.

5. Assign students to write essays in which they describe cultural forces that restrict people from reaching their full potential today. How do some individuals manage to confront or elude limitations imposed by society? How can people, men and women alike, develop as full persons?

Name:

A Declaration of Love

Directions: The following poem was included in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, first published in 1850. It stands as one of the most famous love poems ever written. Read it, and answer the questions.

Sonnet 43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning

1. Why has this poem been loved by many readers for many decades? On what special occasions might it be used?

2. How would you summarize the poem's theme?

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Name:

3. What do the images in line 6 suggest?

4. Explain the sentence in lines 11–12.

5. What conviction does the last line express?

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Name:

A Look at *Aurora Leigh*

Directions: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* has been described as a novel, a narrative poem, and an epic. Read the following background information and excerpts, make marginal annotations, and answer the questions.

The verse novel *Aurora Leigh* was written in nine books. While there is more than one plot line, the central story involves the development of the creativity of a woman, Aurora Leigh, during the Victorian era in England. The first book deals with her birth, childhood, and young adulthood and ends with her realization that, more than anything else, she wants to be a writer.

Aurora was born in Italy to an "austere Englishman / Who after a dry lifetime spent at home / In college—learning, law, and parish talk" fell in love with a Florentine woman whom he saw in a church procession wearing a white veil with a rose-crown and carrying candles. They married, but soon after childbirth she died. Aurora lived with her father, who taught his child "love and grief."

I, a little child, would crouch
For hours upon the floor with knees drawn up,
And gaze across them, half in terror, half
In adoration, at the picture there,—
That swanlike supernatural white life
Just sailing upward from the red stiff silk. . . .
For hours I sat and stared. . . .
. . . And as I grew
In years, I mixed, confused, unconsciously,
Whatever I last read or heard or dreamed,
Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,
Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,
With still that face . . .

When Aurora's father died, she was sent to an aunt in England, whom she describes this way:

. . . She had lived
A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
Accounting that to leap from perch to perch
Was act and joy enough for any bird.

Aurora becomes what her aunt expected her to be.

I, alas,
A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage,
And she was there to meet me.

Aurora was taught English and made to forget Italian. She was instructed in piety, German, a little algebra, some geography, royal genealogy, drawing, piano, and dancing.

I read a score of books on womanhood
To prove, if women do not think at all,
They may teach thinking (to a maiden aunt
Or else the author),—books that boldly assert
Their right of comprehending husband's talk

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When not too deep, and even of answering
With pretty "may it please you," or "so it is,"—
Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
Particular worth and general missionariness,
As long as they keep quiet by the fire
And never say "no" when the world says "ay,"
For that is fatal . . .

Secretly, Aurora spent a great deal of time reading, as her father taught her.

Books, books, books!
I had found the secret of a garret-room
Piled high with cases in my father's name,
Piled high, packed large,—where, creeping in and out
Among the giant fossils of my past,
Like some small nimble mouse between the ribs
Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and there
At this or that box, pulling through the gap,
In heats of terror, haste, victorious joy,
The first book first. And how I felt it beat
Under my pillow, in the morning's dark,
An hour before the sun would let me read!

Aurora also begins to write, and her aunt becomes suspicious.

She said sometimes "Aurora, have you done
Your task this morning? have you read that book?
And are you ready for the crochet here?"—
As if she said "I know there's something wrong;
I know I have not ground you down enough
To flatten and bake you to a wholesome crust
For household uses and proprieties . . .

Growing to young womanhood, Aurora is confronted by a proposal of marriage from her cousin Romney, who wants her as a partner in his schemes to bring the poor out of their low state through socialism. When she refuses, telling him of her desire to be a poet, he gives her the standard Victorian argument against it.

Therefore, this same world
Uncomprehended by you, must remain
Uninfluenced by you.—Women as you are,
Mere women, personal and passionate,
You give us doating mothers, and perfect wives,
Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!
We get no Christ from you,—and verily
We shall not get a poet, in my mind.

Rejecting him, Aurora expresses one of the central ideas of the poem.

What you love
Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:
You want a helpmate, not a mistress, sir,

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Name:

A wife to help your ends,—in her no end.
Your cause is noble, your ends excellent,
But I, being most unworthy of these and that,
Do otherwise conceive of love . . .
You forget too much
That every creature, female as the male,
Stands single in responsible act and thought
As also in birth and death.
This poor, good Romney. Love, to him, was made
A simple law-clause. If I married him,
I should not dare to call my soul my own. . . .

Aurora's aunt becomes very angry and tells her she is penniless, thinking it will force her to marry Romney. When Aurora refuses, she spends the next few days. . . .

. . . Being observed,
When observation is not sympathy,
Is just being tortured. . . .
The very dog would watch me from his
sun patch on the floor,
In alteration with the large black fly
Not yet in reach of snapping. So I lived.

1. What factors influence Aurora to want to become a writer? Consider both obvious and subtle things in her background.

2. How is she discouraged to think of herself as a creative individual? Be specific.

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3. What Victorian ideal of womanhood does the aunt promote? What textual evidence supports your answer?

4. By implication, what seem to have been men's expectations of women during the mid-nineteenth century, when *Aurora Leigh* was written?

5. What does the poem suggest about Elizabeth Barrett Browning's thoughts regarding limitations the Victorian era imposed on women?

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Lesson 3

The Poetic Voice of Robert Browning

Objectives

- To read and analyze several short lyrics by Browning
- To read "My Last Duchess" and understand the nature of a dramatic monologue

Notes to the Teacher

Robert Browning (1812–1889) read and admired Elizabeth Barrett's poetry; they exchanged letters, met, and fell in love. Despite the objections of her father, they married and moved to Italy, where both continued to write. During their lifetime, she was the more celebrated poet. After her death in 1861, Browning returned to England and continued to write. His is a large body of work, including all kinds of poems and also plays, none of which was very successful at the time; today, however, he is viewed as one of the great Victorian poets.

In this lesson students first read and discuss two of Browning's short poems, "My Star" and "Meeting at Night," which are printed on **Handouts 6** and **7**. Students then read and analyze Browning's most famous work, "My Last Duchess," which is almost invariably included in English literature and poetry anthologies; as the quintessential dramatic monologue. It is also readily available on the Internet.

Browning's dramatic monologues established the conventions of the form. A single speaker is not soliloquizing, but rather addressing another person or group. The reactions of the listeners and the speaker's true nature are often implied. The reader's enjoyment comes from picking up subtle clues and reaching conclusions.

Procedure

1. Explain that Robert Browning and his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, were both poets and spent their married life living and writing in Italy. She was the more highly acclaimed writer; since then, their positions in critical opinion have reversed.

2. State that Browning is probably most famous today for his dramatic monologues, which are fairly long, but he wrote many other poems, and not all of them are long.

3. Distribute **Handout 6**, and ask students to complete the exercise. Follow with discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The subject is love and its subjective nature. Nobody else seems to be able to catch a glimpse of the star the speaker likes so much, which is just fine with him. The speaker seems happy and peaceful. One suspects that the star symbolizes a person whom the speaker (probably Browning himself) loves very much, even though to everyone else that person is so insignificant as to seem almost invisible.
2. The lines grow in length from beginning to end, and there is a pleasing rhythm to much of the poem, with anapests and iambs. There are end rhymes, too, and line 9 breaks the pattern. The poem shows Browning's experimentation with elements of form.
3. The poem makes it evident that the spirit of the Romantics did not die with the onset of the Victorian era.
4. Many people can identify with the experience of loving someone or something that other people tend to ignore. When we love someone, we can see that person's unique and often hidden beauty.

4. Distribute **Handout 7**, and have small groups complete it.

Suggested Responses

1. In the first stanza the speaker is traveling in a small boat; in the second, he walks on a beach and across fields until he comes to a farmhouse.
2. The poem is full of sight and sound imagery: "the long black land"; "the yellow half-moon"; "fiery ringlets"; "a tap at the pane"; "spurt of a lighted match." There are also touch images such as the boat pushing into the sand and the embrace at the end.
3. The atmosphere is peaceful, and the speaker is eager for the meeting to come, as if this journey has been undertaken many times.
4. Both poems are about love for one particular person or object.

5. State that Browning also wrote dramatic monologues, and explain that in a dramatic monologue we hear the voice of only one person, although others are present. Read "My Last Duchess" aloud, or have students listen to a recording. Ask for initial impressions.

   Example: *The speaker is a duke, and he displays a portrait of the woman who used to be his wife. Something happened to her. He seems rather possessive and quite arrogant. He obviously likes artworks.*

6. Allow students time to read the poem several times and to record observations and questions. Then distribute **Handout 8**, and ask small groups to answer the questions. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The duke values control, his family name, and beautiful objects that belong to him.
2. The duchess depicted in the portrait seems to have had simpler tastes and to have enjoyed ordinary things that bring beauty to life. She was easy to please.

3. The duke is the only one who has the right to reveal the portrait. He is a possessive and selfish man; he wanted to own his wife as if she, like the painting, were simply an object, not a person.
4. "I gave commands." The duke is vague, but the duchess clearly died as a result.
5. The duke, like marble, is hard, cold, and inflexible. He has expensive tastes and likes finely crafted art pieces.
6. The duke is in the process of trying to make arrangements for a new marriage to the daughter of a count.
7. The form reflects the duke's aloof formality and preference for the artificial to the natural.

7. Assign students to write dramatic monologues in which a noteworthy person addresses one or more other persons. Students can use prose or attempt to imitate Browning's poetic style. If necessary, suggest topics, such as a quarterback who won the Super Bowl talking to a member of the freshman football team, an actor who won an Oscar speaking with the cast of a community theater performance, or a career soldier talking to a new enlistee. When students have finished, have them perform the monologues for the rest of the class, and point out ways the students convey personal characteristics.

Name:

Robert Browning's "My Star"

Directions: Read the poem, and answer the questions.

My Star

All, that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

—Robert Browning

1. How would you describe the subject of the poem? What is the speaker's attitude?

2. Describe the poem's form.

3. Is "My Star" best classified as Romantic or realistic?

4. What is the basis for the poem's appeal?

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Name:

Another Look at Robert Browning

Directions: Read the poem carefully. Then answer the questions.

Meeting at Night

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low:
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

—Robert Browning

1. What is the speaker doing in the first stanza? In the second stanza?

2. What kinds of images dominate the poem? Give specific examples.

3. How would you describe the poem's atmosphere?

4. What does "Meeting at Night" have in common with "My Star"?

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Name:

Browning's Duke of Ferrara

Directions: Carefully read Robert Browning's famous dramatic monologue "My Last Duchess," and use the questions as tools for analysis.

1. The speaker is not the poet, Robert Browning, but an Italian duke. What does the duke value?

2. What does his wife seem to have valued?

3. Why is the picture covered with a curtain? What does that reveal about the duke?

4. What happened to the duchess?

5. Ferrara, Italy, is famous for its beautiful marble. Why is that location appropriate for this poem?

6. The ending identifies the person with whom the duke is talking. What is the occasion?

7. The poem is written in iambic pentameter with rhymed couplets, an unusually rigid form for speech. What might have been Browning's reason for this choice?

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Lesson 4

Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach"

Objectives

- To read and analyze "Dover Beach"
- To relate the poem's perspective and themes to life today
- To discuss Matthew Arnold's beliefs about creativity

Notes to the Teacher

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) was a school inspector, a poet, a literary critic, and a social critic who was well known during his lifetime. He traveled and delivered lectures in both England and the United States, and he was a professor at Oxford. Today he is best known for the poem "Dover Beach," which stands on its own as a masterpiece.

The poem reflects the religious, scientific, and social doubts characteristic of the Victorian era. Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection brought in their wake serious questions about traditional beliefs and led many people to conclude that they had to choose between science and faith, that the two were incompatible. Darwin's view of nature seemed contradictory to that of the Romantics. Faced with uncertainty, the speaker in the poem seeks solace and safety in fidelity to a personal relationship, a theme that has reverberated in many poems, stories, and songs up to the present time.

"Dover Beach" is almost invariably included in English literature anthologies; it is also readily available on the Internet. After students read and discuss the poem, they analyze an excerpt from Matthew Arnold's essay, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time."

Procedure

1. Point out that keeping up with the news could lead people to conclude that the world is in a fairly hopeless state of confusion and crime.

2. Distribute **Handout 9,** and ask students to complete it individually. Then use the items as a basis of open-ended discussion, which should lead to the realization that there is no one surefire way of coping with adversity.

3. Explain that the Victorian era of industrialization and empire building brought with it a barrage of doubts and uncertainties. Identify Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" as a famous poem that expresses the poet's and speaker's thoughts about the issues addressed in the handout.

4. Ask the students to listen carefully as you read the poem aloud or play a recording. Point out the conversational voice, as if the speaker is having a reflective chat with someone in the same room on a very pleasant evening near the English Channel. Ask for immediate impressions.

   ***Example**: The weather is nice on this evening, but the speaker seems a bit depressed and wants to feel reassured by a love relationship.*

5. Distribute **Handout 10**, and ask small groups to discuss the questions. Follow with whole-class discussion.

   Suggested Responses

   1. The speaker's contentment seems jarred by the sound of the sea throwing waves against the shore, and he feels a kind of sadness at the ceaselessness and repetitiveness of the motion over millennia.
   2. Sophocles lived during the Golden Age of Greece (fifth century BCE) and heard the same sounds from the Aegean Sea; his plays are full of the "ebb and flow / Of human misery." The sadness the speaker feels is nothing new.
   3. The Sea of Faith is Christianity, which once stretched undivided across Matthew Arnold's world. Broken by the Reformation and seemingly weakened by scientific and industrial developments, religion now seems to be ebbing away.
   4. An enduring relationship with the person he first addressed in the opening stanza seems to be the only potential source of comfort and safety. "Let us be true / To one another."
   5. It seems that the speaker once subscribed to a Romantic view of life but no longer finds an optimistic, idealistic attitude to be viable.
   6. Some students may think that today Matthew Arnold would feel even more troubled. Others may think that in today's world most people do not think so deeply about meaning. Some may suggest sources of security and comfort used by their families.

6. Ask students to describe the poem's form.

   ***Example**: There are four stanzas with different lengths. There are many rhymes, but no regular rhyme pattern. There is no regular meter. Close examination shows awareness of sounds (e.g., alliteration and assonance). Clearly the poem was carefully crafted; given the speaker's mood, the careful control of regular rhyme and meter would be incongruous.*

7. Explain that while today Matthew Arnold is best known for "Dover Beach," during his own time he was famous as a literary critic. Distribute **Handout 11**, and ask students to read the excerpt and discuss the questions.

   Suggested Responses

   1. Matthew Arnold held that creativity was a higher capability than criticism because creativity is the faculty that gives people the greatest sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.
   2. He thought that creativity is not confined to literary endeavors. For example, a person can be creative in working with clay or even in writing criticism.

3. The production of a masterpiece depends on the confluence of two things: the capability of the creator (in this case the writer) and the power of the moment, which probably has something to do with inspiration.
4. There is something mysterious and beyond human control about the creation of a masterpiece; that something is the elusive power of the moment.

8. Ask students to apply Arnold's comments about creativity to his own masterpiece, "Dover Beach."

   ***Example**: That Matthew Arnold was a gifted thinker and writer is beyond dispute; the power of the moment, however, is a kind of mystery that was beyond his control and played a major role in creating the poem.*

9. Assign students to write arguments for or against the effectiveness of one of the coping strategies described on **Handout 9**. Encourage the use of specific evidence to support generalizations.

Name:

Dealing with Uncertainty and with Difficult Experiences

Directions: When life throws you a curveball, how do you handle the situation? Sometimes we come face to face with doubts, disillusionment, and even downright evil. People react to these situations in many diverse ways. Indicate whether you think each of the following responses is effective, and explain your reasoning.

1. Some individuals try to ignore the problem entirely, to tune it out and go on as if it never occurred.

2. Others withdraw, trying to take refuge in a little cocoon of privacy and detachment.

3. Some realize that withdrawal will not work and try instead to harden themselves as a way to avoid feeling hurt.

4. Then there is the active approach of reformers, who attempt to reverse the whole problem, to make things better.

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Name:

5. For some people, the best choice seems to be to turn to religious faith for strength and consolation.

6. Others decide that the only real stability and safety in life come from long-lasting, committed relationships.

7. Another coping mechanism is the choice to simply acquire as much for oneself as possible while one still can, to use money and possessions as a personal safety wall.

8. Finally, there is the response of inertia—a paralyzing sense of meaninglessness and helplessness.

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Name:

Reflections on "Dover Beach"

Directions: Carefully read Matthew Arnold's famous poem, and respond to the following questions.

1. How do the speaker's attitude and mood seem to change in the course of the first stanza? What causes this change?

2. What is the effect of the allusion to Sophocles in the second stanza?

3. What does the speaker mean by the "Sea of Faith"?

4. In the fourth stanza, what does the speaker see as the only refuge in a troubled world?

5. What does the fourth stanza say about the views of Romanticism?

6. What do you think Matthew Arnold would have to say about the world we live in today?

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Name:

Matthew Arnold as Philosopher and Critic

Directions: The following excerpt comes from Matthew Arnold's essay, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." Read the paragraph, and use the questions to arrive at an understanding of Arnold's ideas.

> The critical power is of lower rank than the creative. True; but in assenting to this proposition, one or two things are to be kept in mind. It is undeniable that the exercise of a creative power, that a free creative activity, is the highest function of man; it is proved to be so by man's finding in it his true happiness. But it is undeniable, also, that men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of literature or art; if it were not so, all but a very few men would be shut out from the true happiness of all men. They may have it in well doing, they may have it in learning, they may have it even in criticizing. This is one thing to be kept in mind. Another is, that the exercise of the creative power in the production of great works of literature or art, however high this exercise of it may rank, is not at all epochs and under all conditions possible; and that therefore labor may be vainly spent in attempting it, which might with more fruit be used in preparing for it, in rendering it possible. This creative power works with elements, with materials; what if it has not those materials, those elements, ready for its use? In that case it must surely wait till they are ready. Now, in literature,—I will limit myself to literature, for it is about literature that the question arises,—the elements with which the creative power works are ideas; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time. At any rate we may lay it down as certain that in modern literature no manifestation of the creative power not working with these can be very important or fruitful. And I say *current* at the time, not merely accessible at the time; for creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas: that is rather the business of the philosopher. The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations,—making beautiful works with them, in short. But it must have the atmosphere, it must find itself amidst the order of ideas, in order to work freely; and these it is not so easy to command. This is why great creative epochs in literature are so rare, this is why there is so much that is unsatisfactory in the productions of many men of real genius; because, for the creation of a master-work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment; the creative power has, for its happy exercise, appointed elements, and those elements are not in its own control.

1. Why did Matthew Arnold place such a high value on human creativity?

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Name:

2. According to him, what are some ways that people use their creativity?

3. What two elements did he see as necessary to create a masterpiece?

4. How much control do artists, musicians, and writers have over their ability to create masterpieces?

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Lesson 5

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate

Objectives

- To appreciate Tennyson as the most beloved poet of the Victorian period
- To read and analyze several of his poems

Notes to the Teacher

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), did not inherit his title and in fact did not acquire it until he was well over seventy years old. He attended college at Cambridge and was part of a group there called the Apostles, one of whom was Arthur Hallam. Hallam's early death devastated Tennyson, who later wrote about the experience of grief and loss. Biographers report that Tennyson was extremely shy and felt a strong need to follow his own destiny. His poems acquired a popular reading audience, as well as critical acclaim, and in 1850, after Wordsworth's death, Tennyson was named England's poet laureate, a post he held until his death.

Tennyson was a prolific writer of poems both long and short. Students who are interested in stories about King Arthur will enjoy sampling all or part of *Idylls of the King*. This lesson first involves students with "Crossing the Bar," a short poem that Tennyson insisted should be printed last in collections of his poems. Students then discuss "Ulysses," a dramatic monologue from the point of view of the aged Odysseus as he is about to embark on another journey.

Procedure

1. Explain that the most popular poet of the Victorian period was Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who was poet laureate for more than forty years. He was read and admired not just by university teachers and students but by ordinary people as well.

2. Review the term *metaphor* (a comparison of two essentially unlike things without stating the comparison directly using the word *like* or *as*). Ask students how the following objects could be used metaphorically.

    - A roller coaster
      Perhaps as a metaphor for life, with its ups and downs, thrills and terrors, and unexpected turns.
    - A butterfly
      Could represent anything quick, fragile, and beautiful.
    - A cactus
      Perhaps as a metaphor for a person who is sort of prickly but also interesting and capable of beauty.

3. Distribute **Handout 12**, and ask students to read the poem and respond to the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. The poem deals with departure and seems to be a farewell at which the speaker wants no tears on the part of those left behind; it is, therefore, a good piece to end a book of poems.
2. The images pertain to the end of the day and demonstrate a progression into darkness. The boat is heading out into darkness and the unknown.
3. The poem uses setting off in a boat in the evening as a metaphor for the final journey that is death. The mood is thoughtful and serene, not fearful and anxious.
4. The uppercase *P* suggests that the pilot is God. Tennyson does not claim to be in control of the boat he is boarding—he is just a passenger, and someone else is in charge.
5. At least in this poem, Tennyson sounds mentally at ease and comfortable with his own beliefs and experiences. Perhaps the serenity was a product of age and experience.

4. Explain that Tennyson wrote a whole book, *Idylls of the King*, about the legend of King Arthur. A poem entitled "The Lady of Shalott" is also connected with Arthurian legends. In another poem, "Ulysses," he made use of classical mythology. Ulysses is the Roman name for Odysseus, the protagonist of Homer's *Odyssey*. If students have not read the epic, provide a brief summary.

   ***Example**: Odysseus participated in the Trojan War and then headed back home to his island kingdom, Ithaca, but all kinds of events and adventures impeded his return; in all he was gone for twenty years and, once he finally arrived home, had to fight to regain control of his kingdom.*

5. Have students read "Ulysses" (available on the Internet) silently while you read it aloud. Ask students what the poem has in common with "Crossing the Bar." Ask students what seems to be the speaker's main motivation.

   ***Example**: Both poems are about taking off on a journey on a ship or boat. The speaker in "Ulysses" has become restless and bored, feeling as if he is not really living life; he wants to set off on great and heroic adventures.*

6. Distribute **Handout 13**, and ask small groups to discuss the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. The speaker, Odysseus (Ulysses), is now an old man who feels that he is wasting what is left of his life. His years have included many adventures, but now he feels idle and restless.
2. He seems to respect Telemachus but also to see him as a rather dull and plodding sort of person, very different from himself.
3. The crew consists of old men like him, and he encourages them to approach the journey with enthusiasm, hope, and determination.

4. The poem is about a fully engaged and active life—about refusing to settle into idleness and passivity: "I am become a name / For always roaming with a hungry heart"; "As though to breathe were life!"; "'Tis not too late to seek a newer world"; "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."
5. The poem is very serious, but it also expresses a kind of Romantic idealism. If students have studied Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," point out the contrast in attitudes.
6. The poem consists of three stanzas written in blank verse—unrhymed iambic pentameter.

7. Have students complete short writings in response to the following prompt: Do you see Ulysses in Tennyson's poem as a brave hero or as a silly old man who would be better off staying home where he belongs? Explain.

Name:

"Crossing the Bar"

Directions: Read the following poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and look for its central metaphor. Note that the term "bar" refers to a build-up of sand or mud at the bottom of a body of water, which can be a hazard to watercraft. Then answer the questions.

Crossing the Bar

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

1. Tennyson directed that this poem should be printed last in collections of his poetry. Why?

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Name:

2. Why did the poet choose the images at the beginning of the first and third stanzas?

3. What is the poem's central metaphor? Does it convey a positive or a negative feeling?

4. Who is the Pilot at the end of the poem?

5. For many intellectuals, the Victorian period was a time of doubt and confusion. Does this seem to have been true for Tennyson?

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Name:

Tennyson's "Ulysses"

Directions: Read the poem carefully, and use the following questions as tools to analyze it.

1. What does the first stanza (lines 1–32) reveal about the speaker?

2. The second stanza focuses on Telemachus. What does the speaker think of his son?

3. What kind of a crew is the speaker taking for this voyage?

4. Find one or two lines that seem to express the poem's main theme. Then state it in your own words.

5. Does the poem seem to be Romantic or realistic?

6. Describe the form, including choices regarding rhythm and rhyme.

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Lesson 6

Thomas Hardy: Realist or Pessimist?

Objectives

- To recognize Thomas Hardy as an accomplished novelist and poet
- To analyze three poems that illustrate the diversity of his work

Notes to the Teacher

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was one of the great Victorian novelists, and he continued writing poetry through the first quarter of the twentieth century. Hardy began his career as an architect, and many of his works reflect the importance of structure. He then focused on writing novels, but severe criticism of what people saw as unnecessary pessimism led him later to focus only on poetry. His novels can be great choices for honors and advanced placement classes. This lesson focuses on three poems that illustrate the diversity of his work. "Neutral Tones" is included on **Handout 14**; the other two, "The Man He Killed" and "The Darkling Thrush," are readily available online and are also frequently anthologized.

"Neutral Tones" is filled with the bitter pain of a failed relationship; it is winter, the colors of nature are all washed out, and only an insincere smile connects the two people. "The Man He Killed" uses a markedly different style to present a monologue by a man remembering an event in battle when he killed an enemy soldier; the poem points out that war causes people to kill others who in regular life might actually be friends. "The Darkling Thrush" presents a speaker at the dawn of a new year in a new century; everything seems bleak and hopeless until the thrush interjects a sound of hope; the poem ends not with joyful celebration but with the faintest glimmer of hope.

Procedure

1. Explain that Thomas Hardy was one of the great novelists of the Victorian period, and he was quite successful until critics accused him of unnecessary pessimism and negativity. He then focused his attention on poetry. Conduct a discussion based on the following questions.
2. What is pessimism?

   Example: *A pessimist tends to expect the worst, not hope for the best. If a picnic is scheduled, a pessimist expects rain. Walking into an exam, a pessimist feels certain of failure.*

3. What is the disadvantage of being a pessimist?

   Example: *So much of what people do is motivated by hope, and pessimists have a very low supply of that. Pessimists might tend to be dour, unhappy individuals.*

4. What is the advantage of being a pessimist?

   Example: *If we do not expect good things, we cannot be disappointed when we do not receive them. Some people might argue that pessimism is more realistic than optimism.*

5. Distribute **Handout 14**, and ask students to read the poem carefully and make marginal notations. Then conduct a discussion based on the questions.

   Suggested Responses

   1. Neutral colors are not on the color wheel; they do not stand out. Among them are black, white, gray, beige, and tan. The poem's color images are all neutral—a bleak winter day with gray leaves underfoot.
   2. Something brought the two people together to the pond, but the occasion is anything but cheerful. Whatever relationship once existed between them is dying or dead.
   3. Answers can vary but might include the beginning of the third stanza: "The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing / Alive enough to have strength to die." The lines are full of pain and disappointment.
   4. There is certainly nothing cheerful about the poem or the speaker's experience; the perspective is not Romantic. Some students might argue that it is pessimistic, while others might see it as realistic. Sometimes relationships die, leaving one or both people disappointed.

6. Point out that Thomas Hardy wrote a lot of poems, and they do not all rehash the same themes. On the contrary, they are remarkably diverse. Distribute **Handout 15**, and have small groups complete the exercise. Follow with whole-class discussion.

   Suggested Responses

   1. Although the poems all have regular structures, they contrast vividly in their impacts. "Neutral Tones" is full of the pain one feels when love is replaced by an icy, nearly dead stare. "The Man He Killed" consists of one person talking in a kind of detached, wondering way about his experience of war. "The Darkling Thrush" is thoughtful; as with "Neutral Tones," it is winter, but the speaker is more philosophical than emotional, and the poem's conclusion admits the possibility of hope.
   2. War put him in a kill-or-be-killed situation. It amazes him that he killed a man who in other circumstances might have joined him for a pint at a pub.
   3. The poem sees war as a bizarre kind of event that forces people into enmity rather than companionship.
   4. It is New Year's Eve at the beginning of a new century. Events of the past decades give the speaker no reason to be optimistic about the future.
   5. The fact that the bird—hardly an image of robust avian health—can sing in this barren winter setting provides a hint that hope may not be entirely dead.
   6. For this one, just take a show of hands. Then have students write brief arguments that Hardy is either a realist or a pessimist. Tell them to include both a definite thesis and textual support from at least two of the poems. Collect the writings as tickets out of class.

Name:

Thomas Hardy's "Neutral Tones"

Directions: Read the poem carefully and make marginal notes about your observations and insights. Then answer the questions.

Neutral Tones

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,
—They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles solved years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro—
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing. . . .

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

—Thomas Hardy

1. How does the poem's title connect with the content of the four stanzas?

2. How would you describe the relationship between the two people in the poem?

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Name:

3. Which line(s) strike you as most forceful?

4. Some critics claim that Thomas Hardy's works are full of negativity and pessimism. Does this poem support that view? Explain.

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Name:

Thomas Hardy—Realist or Pessimist?

Directions: Read Hardy's "The Man He Killed" and "The Darkling Thrush." Then, considering those two poems as well as "Neutral Tones," answer the following questions.

1. How do the poems differ in tone and mood?

2. What amazes the speaker in "The Man He Killed"?

3. How would you articulate the poem's theme?

4. What is the occasion in "The Darkling Thrush"?

5. How does the birdsong of the thrush affect the speaker?

6. Was Thomas Hardy a pessimist or a realist? Give reasons for your decision.

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Lesson 7

The Vivid Imagery of Gerard Manley Hopkins

Objectives

- To appreciate Hopkins's uses of vivid imagery and sound devices
- To analyze three of his most famous poems

Notes to the Teacher

Despite his relatively small body of work, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) is viewed as one of the greatest Victorian poets. He invented what he called *sprung rhythm*, rather like ancient Anglo-Saxon verse with its emphasis on stressed syllables. A convert to Roman Catholicism, Hopkins became a priest and destroyed all of his earlier poems. Only later did he start writing again, apparently without aspirations toward publication.

Many of Hopkins's poems include references to God and to religion, which was as normal to him as referring to trees or seasons of the year. Depending on your students' backgrounds, you may need to point out that reading, understanding, and appreciating an author does not always mean agreeing with all of his or her beliefs. (For example, we can appreciate *Oedipus the King* without believing in oracles, and we do not have to be Hindu or Buddhist to understand *Siddhartha*.)

In this lesson, students read and discuss "Spring," "Spring and Fall," and "Pied Beauty," all of which appear on Handout 17.

Procedure

1. Point out that Romanticism did not really disappear with the Victorian era, and it still exists in today's poetry, which tends to include both realistic and Romantic strands. Among the Victorians, too, we find poems in which nature is a source of inspiration. This is certainly true of poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Provide a little of his background. (See "Notes to the Teacher.")

2. Distribute **Handout 16**, and have students complete it individually. Then take a show of hands regarding students' favorite seasons. Conduct an open-ended discussion regarding the pluses and minuses of each season.

   Example: *Winter in many areas can bring both holiday cheer and sleety road conditions; spring can bring both torrential rainfall and gorgeous blossoming trees; for many, summer includes sweltering nights as well as frolicking at the pool or shore; fall can include a panorama of color with deciduous trees as well as ominously shortening hours of daylight.*

3. Distribute **Handout 17**, and ask small groups to complete it. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The first stanza mentions the sky, a cow, fish, birds, and rural fields. It seems that all of nature tends to be pied rather than monotone. You may want to expand on this by pointing out other examples. Even something that appears at first to be monochrome on closer examination often reveals varying hues—for example, a brown dog or a blue summer sky.
2. The poem celebrates the variety and diversity of creation and of the creator. While the first stanza focuses entirely on nature, the second makes an overt shift to religious conviction. The same sense of wonder could be experienced by someone with no deep religious beliefs.
3. The poem celebrates the fecundity of spring—the proliferation of growth. Weeds spring up, birds are very busy, trees bloom, and baby animals cavort. Hopkins's poems are replete with examples: "long and lovely and lush"; "being in the beginning"; "wring . . . sing." The poem is as lush with sounds as spring is with life.
4. All of the burgeoning life of spring connects with mythic beginnings in the Garden of Eden—a kind of springtime of innocence for humankind before the perhaps inevitable arrival of experience, with the resultant loss of Eden. The conclusion stresses that we should enjoy spring for the brief time we have it.
5. Margaret is a little girl who is crying at the sight of falling and fallen leaves in a grove of trees.
6. As we mature, this kind of sensitivity fades; we lose our innocent selves, which (although necessary) is as worthy of mourning as the cyclical arrival of fall.

4. Assign students to write poems or prose passages in which they focus on a particular month or season of the year. The passages should emphasize imagery and, perhaps, figurative language; encourage incorporation of alliteration and assonance.

Name:

Seasonal Reflections

Directions: Your responses to the seasons of the year are likely to vary depending on both where you live and your personal preferences. For example, July in Tucson, Arizona, is very unlike July in Anchorage, Alaska. Use the following questions to consider your responses to the four seasons in the area where you live.

1. Identify three images that you associate with spring. Are they positive or negative?

2. Is summer a season you anticipate happily or one that you dread? Explain.

3. What images do you associate with fall? Does it usually make you feel happy with anticipation or regretful?

4. When winter comes do you haul out your skis, snowboard, or ice skates—or do you like to cocoon at home?

5. What is your favorite month or season of the year? Why?

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Name:

Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins

Directions: Read the poems, and respond to the questions.

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins

1. Pied things consist of two or more colors. What examples of pied beauty are mentioned in the first stanza?

2. What exactly does the poem celebrate?

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Name:

Spring

Nothing is so beautiful as spring—
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden.—Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins

3. What does the poem celebrate about spring?

4. How does the first part of the poem connect with the allusion to Eden?

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Name:

Spring and Fall

to a young child

Márgarét, áre you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórrow's spríngs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It ís the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins

5. Who is Margaret? Why is she crying?

6. How does the speaker think Margaret will change as the years pass?

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Lesson 8

A Look at Christina Rossetti

Objectives

- To recognize that critical opinions often vary over the course of time
- To read and analyze four poems by Christina Rossetti

Notes to the Teacher

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894) was the daughter of a poet, and her brother was also a poet as well as an artist. During her lifetime she was considered second only to Elizabeth Barrett Browning among England's woman poets. After her death, her brother edited her collected poems for publication, but in the ensuing years critical opinions were not kind, and her *Complete Poems* was not published until 1979, long after her death. By then critical opinion had done another turnaround, motivated partly by feminist critics eager to revive voices in danger of being lost. Today she is often viewed as a more accomplished poet than Browning.

Rossetti made no effort to present a single point of view or set of attitudes. Her poems reflect her in various moods and embrace a variety of forms. In some, she seems to echo strains of Emily Dickinson. In some she is joyous, in others despondent. In this lesson students read and discuss four of Rossetti's poems; since they are seldom anthologized, they are included on **Handout 18**.

Procedure

1. If your students have not already discussed the shifting winds of literary criticism, explain that, ironically, works that are highly acclaimed when they are written often fade into obscurity, while other pieces drubbed by critics later emerge as classics. Ask why this might happen.

   Example: *Sometimes writers are so far ahead of their time that critics do not know what to make of their work and therefore tend to be negative. Tastes and philosophies can change, and a new generation of critics can see value where the previous generation missed it.*

2. Identify Christina Rossetti as an example of this phenomenon. Although she died in 1894, her *Collected Poems* did not make it into print until 1979. By that time, she had been rediscovered as a voice from Victorian England, and readers have been rediscovering her ever since. During her lifetime, she was categorized as a woman poet and received considerable respect as second only to Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

3. Distribute **Handout 18**, and have small groups collaborate to complete it. When they have finished, take a show of hands to discover which poem students like the best. Then lead a discussion based on the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. She says that sometimes it might seem as if a cage is a good thing, but other times it is vividly apparent that freedom is preferable. It may be unpleasant to perch on an icy bough, but it is quite wonderful to be free on a spring day.
2. A linnet is a small songbird. The poem would be very different if it referred to a caged raven, parrot, or eagle—larger and more powerful birds.
3. The bird could symbolize a person—perhaps a child, very protected (caged) but desiring freedom to learn on its own.
4. The exuberant, vivid images convey the speaker's sense of joy in the fullness of life. There is no smudge or blot on her complete happiness.
5. She feels like royalty—enthroned, gowned, and surrounded by regal images.
6. The birthday may have nothing to do with cake, candles, and presents. It is a celebration of coming to life because of being in love.
7. The speaker is thinking about dying and leaving behind a loved one.
8. This is a nonspecific love relationship.
9. The speaker does not want to be forgotten; on the other hand, she does not want the person left behind to live a life of sadness and grief. The alternative of being forgotten would be better.
10. This playful and whimsical little poem is about people's nonliteral uses of words and phrases.

4. Ask students to create lines they could add to "A City Plum Is Not a Plum."

   Examples: *A red herring is not a fish. A cat's meow is not a sound. A doghouse is not for a pet. A crowbar is not a tavern for blackbirds.*

5. Then conduct a discussion based on students' examples. Lead students to the understanding that our uses of language can take many twists and turns. The very nature of a living language involves constant shifts in meaning.

Name:

Four Poems by Christina Rossetti

Directions: Carefully read the poems, and answer the questions.

A Linnet in a Gilded Cage

A linnet in a gilded cage, -
A linnet on a bough, -
In frosty winter one might doubt
Which bird is luckier now.
But let the trees burst out in leaf,
And nests be on the bough,
Which linnet is the luckier bird,
Oh who could doubt it now?

—Christina Rossetti

1. Birds, both caged and uncaged, are frequent references in literature. What is Rossetti's point about the linnet?

2. What is a linnet? How would the poem be different if it focused on a different type of bird?

3. To what extent do you see the bird here as symbolic?

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Name:

A Birthday

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these,
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a daïs of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

—Christina Rossetti

4. What is the effect of the similes in the first stanza?

5. What is the cumulative effect of the images in the second stanzas?

6. What kind of a birthday does the poem celebrate?

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Name:

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

—Christina Rossetti

7. What is the subject of the sonnet?

8. What seems to be the relationship between the speaker and the person to whom she is speaking?

9. What does the speaker want?

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Name:

A City Plum Is Not a Plum

A city plum is not a plum;
A dumb-bell is no bell, though dumb;
A party rat is not a rat;
A sailor's cat is not a cat;
A soldier's frog is not a frog;
A captain's log is not a log.

—Christina Rossetti

10. How does this poem differ in tone and purpose from the other three?

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Lesson 9

Britain's World War I Poets

Objectives

- To recognize the decisive impact of World War I on modern life and literature
- To read and discuss several examples of work from the World War I poets

Notes to the Teacher

The spirit of the Victorian era did not die with Queen Victoria in 1901. The killing blow was struck by World War I, the first largescale war in which industrial technology played an important role. The new weaponry made killing impersonal and possible on a scale never seen before. English soldiers fought much of the war on the fields of France, where they lived in mile after mile of trenches. The goal was to advance and push the enemy back; in reality, there were scarcely any significant advances. Waves of men were sent in to replenish the last batch of forces who had fallen to machine gunners. A large part of a generation of young Englishmen was completely wiped out.

The impact of the war on life since and on literature can hardly be exaggerated. England no longer had the finances to manage a vast empire. Survivors often came home feeling alienated and betrayed by traditional institutions. Victorianism did not stamp out the Romantic spirit, but the Great War did, at least temporarily.

Among the soldiers on the battle lines and the nurses who cared for the injured were poets who continued to write. In many cases, they knew and befriended one another. Among those who are most famous today are Rupert Brooke (1887–1915), Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967), and Wilfred Owen (1893–1918), whose works are the subjects of this lesson. If you wish, you can easily find pictures of all three as young men on the Internet. The suggested responses are based on the most frequently anthologized poems: "The Soldier," "Dulce et Decorum Est," and "Base Details." These poems are also readily available on the Internet. You will need a copy of Wilfred Gibson's poem entitled "Back," which is available at many websites, for **Handout 19**.

Procedure

1. Ask students what they know about World War I from history classes and from movies they have seen.

   Example: *It was the first war on a big enough scale to be called a "world war." Extreme nationalism was a major cause. The industrialization of the previous century produced weapons like machine guns and poison gas. The*

United States was very late getting into the war, which officially started in 1914, when an archduke was assassinated, and ended in 1918.

2. Ask students to recall what they know about Victorian culture and to imagine the effect of the war on social patterns in England.

   Example: *The realities of trench warfare and the fact that many young men were involved—more than a million from the British Empire were killed, and another two million were injured—must have made the emphasis on propriety and manners seem unimportant. With so many men away, women had to move into the workforce, so expectations regarding gender roles were bound to change.*

3. **Distribute Handout 19**, and have students complete it as you read aloud "Back" by Wilfred Gibson (1878–1962) several times. When they have finished the handout, ask volunteers to read aloud their responses to question 6. Then conduct a discussion based on the first five questions.

   Suggested Responses

   1. The speaker is someone who is back from military duty in a faraway place.
   2. People probably know he was off at war and are curious about his experiences.
   3. He has been in combat in another country, where he killed people.
   4. This is not a case of mistaken identity. The speaker just feels as if the person who went off to war was not really himself, as if some stranger were inside his body the whole time.
   5. For the speaker, the experience of war has a kind of unreality about it. This distancing himself from the events in which he was involved is a kind of coping mechanism that is not uncommon when people are in very stressful circumstances.
   6. Have the class discuss how they would respond to the speaker of this poem: Some might offer sympathy, whereas others might be concerned about stirring painful memories.

4. Distribute **Handout 20**, and ask students to read the information. Explain that the three poets who are most famous today are Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon.

5. Divide the class into small groups, and assign each group one of the poets. Have students use the Internet or print materials to sample poems by the assigned author, to select one poem connected to war, and to prepare to present it to the class. You may want to point groups to Brooke's sonnet "The Soldier," Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est," and Sassoon's "Base Details."

6. After each presentation, conduct a discussion based on the following questions.

"The Soldier"

1. What does the sonnet show about the speaker/poet?

   The speaker is patriotic, idealistic, gentle, and appreciative. It is evident that he is motivated by love of country.

2. Would you classify the poem as Romantic or as realistic?

   The idealism makes the poem's view seem quite Romantic. Although the poem mentions death, it does not visualize wounds from machine guns or the effects of mustard gas.

3. Do you think the poem was written before or after a battle?

   It is much easier to speak of death with the kind of images included in the poem when death is an idea, not an impending reality. Perhaps the speaker has not yet been engaged in actual warfare.

"Dulce et Decorum Est"

1. How does the poem differ in attitude from "The Soldier"?

   This poem is devoid of idealism and stresses the ugly carnage of war.

2. What kinds of images are dominant?

   Especially striking are visual and tactile images. We can almost feel the men's exhaustion, and we share with them the sight of a dying friend.

3. Would you describe this as an antiwar poem?

   The poem does not deny that sometimes war is necessary; it does deny that it is sweet and just.

"Base Details"

1. Why is the word *if* at the beginning so important?

   It stresses that the speaker is not an old military man. He is young, and he resents the willingness of military officials to send young men to death.

2. Does the speaker seem angry? Explain.

   We hear both anger and mockery in his voice. He satirizes the "guzzling and gulping" military brass.

3. Explain the poet's choice of title.

   Sassoon made effective use of various denotations of the word base *and the word* details.

7. Explain that World War I had a devastating effect on the English. Within a period of three days, 300,000 English soldiers were killed at the Battle of the Somme in November 1916. This was devastating for families at home as well as on the battlefront. Suddenly, life as most people knew it seemed over forever. The war would not end for two more years, and life appeared to be cheap and futile.

8. Ask students why people involved in war sometimes want to write about their experiences. Ask students if wars since 1918 have also led to literary output.

   Answer: *War is intense, and people often desire to communicate intense experiences. War stories are as old as civilization; Homer wrote the* Iliad. *Few wars have led to more writing than the American Civil War. From 1918 up to today's military actions, people write about their experiences. Sometimes the goal is to find the right words to share experiences with others. Sometimes the goal is healing, a kind of self-therapy.*

9. If you wish, have students use the Internet to find poems that came out of other war zones such as Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Ask students to select a poem and to write a reflection about the poet's beliefs and attitudes. Emphasize the use of textual evidence to support generalizations.

Name:

A Message from an Ex-Soldier

Directions: Carefully consider "Back" by Wilfred Gibson, and answer the following questions.

1. Who is the speaker in the poem?

2. What do you think motivates people to ask the speaker about his past experiences?

3. Where has the speaker been, and what has he done?

4. Does the speaker mean that the questioners have made a mistake about his identity?

5. How does he feel about his experiences?

6. If you could talk to the speaker about this poem and about his experiences, what would you say to him?

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Name:

World War I Poets

Directions: Many people wrote poems related to World War I. Some of those poems probably remained private pieces; some were published in magazines and journals; some were presented in the context of entire books of poetry. Read the brief descriptions of the most well-known poets of what was often called the Great War.

Vera Brittain (1893–1970) came from a wealthy family and worked as a nurse during the war. She came in contact with men wounded in a variety of ways, including mustard gas, and she knew many men, including her brother, who served on the battlefield. After the war she became a writer of fiction, nonfiction, and a few poems.

Rupert Brooke (1887–1915) began writing poems as a boy and, by the time he was a young man, was already famous. He enlisted in the navy in 1914 and died in 1915 while on shipboard heading for Gallipoli. The cause of death was blood poisoning as a result of an insect bite.

W. N. Hodgson (1893–1916) was an Oxford classics scholar. He enlisted in the army in 1914 and after training was sent to the trenches in France. He was also a poet who wrote about his experiences. He was killed by machine-gun fire at the Battle of the Somme.

Wilfred Owen (1893–1918) enlisted in 1915 and was wounded in battle in 1917. While recovering in the hospital, he became acquainted with Siegfried Sassoon, who influenced his poetry. Owen returned to the frontlines after his recovery and was killed in action in November, 1918, a matter of days before the war ended.

Jessie Pope (1868–1941) was a journalist and a poet. During World War I she was well known for her patriotic war poems, intended to support the war effort. Her view was quite different from that of the men who actually experienced battle.

Herbert Read (1893–1968) was an army captain during World War I. He wrote two books of poems related to his war experiences. He later worked at the Victoria and Albert Museum. He was also a fine-arts professor, editor, and literary and art critic.

Isaac Rosenberg (1890–1918), the son of Jewish immigrants who escaped pogroms in Eastern Europe, grew up in poverty. He first studied painting and then became increasingly interested in poetry. In 1915, after spending time in South Africa, he enlisted in the army. He was killed while on night patrol at Arras in April of 1918.

Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967) attended college in Cambridge but did not graduate. In 1915 he was commissioned into the army. Involved in trench warfare, he was wounded in action. He became highly critical of government policies regarding the war. Before, during, and after the war he was a poet, and he later wrote both autobiography and fiction.

Edward Thomas (1878–1917) was first a journalist specializing in reviews. Later, encouraged by American poet Robert Frost, he turned his hand to poetry. Despite poor health, he enlisted in the army in 1815 and after training volunteered for overseas duty. He was killed at Arras by a shell blast in April 1917.

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Lesson 10

George Bernard Shaw's Critical Comedies

Objectives

- To understand the nature and purposes of comedy and satire
- To read and analyze an excerpt from *Pygmalion*
- To recognize that Shaw's goal was not just to amuse but to criticize

Notes to the Teacher

Dublin-born Shaw (1856–1950) was a writer by trade: first a novelist, then a music and drama reviewer, then ultimately and most famously a playwright. He was a socialist and an avid reformer; his plays take on issues such as prostitution (*Mrs. Warren's Profession*) and poverty (*Major Barbara*). Today his most famous work is *Pygmalion*, better known in its musical adaptation, *My Fair Lady.*

Shaw lived a long life, spanning the Victorian period, World War I, the worldwide Great Depression, and World War II. He was something of an iconoclast, saying things that went against mainstream thinking. Often reflection shows that his seemingly outrageous comments are, after all, true and realistic. Shaw's plays continue to be popular among community, college, and high school theater groups, and he is the featured playwright at the annual Shaw Festival in Ontario, Canada.

In this lesson, students first read and discuss a variety of quotations from Shaw. They then read, perform, and discuss an excerpt from *Pygmalion*. Finally, they read an excerpt from Shaw's "apology" for *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. You may want to include an entire play in your curriculum. *Pygmalion* is a good choice; students often recognize the story line from having seen *My Fair Lady* on stage or via television reruns of the 1964 film. *Major Barbara* can also be an interesting choice since it deals with youthful idealism and the exigencies of the real world. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* provokes discussion of social issues and moral judgments.

Procedure

1. Explain that every summer there is a Shaw festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake in Ontario, Canada, and visitors from around the world arrive to see a variety of plays, including comedies written by George Bernard Shaw. Ask students to identify elements that they associate with comedy (e.g., laughter, slapstick, wit, happy endings, coincidences, social criticism, and romance).

2. Distribute **Handout 21**, and have students complete the exercise. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The statement criticizes those who back off helplessly from challenges. Shaw's comment can be applied in all sorts of arenas—the speed at which a person can run a mile, the ability of humans to achieve flight, a vaccine to prevent polio.
2. You may need to explain the idiom "a skeleton in the closet," which means hidden evidence of some wrongdoing or embarrassment. Secrets have a way of coming out of hiding; Shaw suggests that instead of cowering in shame, we ought to derive entertainment from them.
3. In a sense we both find and create ourselves. Introspection is not enough; people have to act, and our actions shape what we become.
4. This ironic statement means that the common language is actually a barrier to communication. Shaw was notoriously derisive of American English.
5. This statement goes against the popular sayings "Money is at the root of all evil" and "Money can't buy happiness." In Shaw's view social injustices and personal unhappiness can usually be traced back to poverty.
6. The statement provokes a smile, but students might agree that our love for pizza often outlives our love for another person.
7. Chess players seem to take great pride in mastering a game with complicated rules. The statement would be equally true if *chess* were replaced with many other choices—*Sudoku, crossword puzzles, computer games.*
8. Traditionally self-sacrifice has been regarded as noble and virtuous. Shaw points out that it makes people feel less guilty for the injustices they impose on others.
9. You might have to explain the idiom "rob Peter to pay Paul." It pertains to a situation in which taking care of one problem involves causing another one—e.g., paying for new computer equipment and reducing the hourly pay of all employees. Shaw's statement is a humorous commentary on politicians' maneuvers.
10. Here Shaw takes a shot at university education, which does not always produce wisdom when applied to unworthy subjects.
11. Many people appreciate the relative security, high energy level, good looks, and optimism associated with youth only much later in their lives, when all those qualities are greatly diminished or gone.
12. At first students might see this as a jibe at social studies courses. The insight is serious, though, as history shows that we are no closer to a world of peace and cooperation than we ever were.

3. Distribute **Handout 22**, and read the directions with the class. Assign the four roles to students who demonstrate some acting ability, and read the stage directions yourself, or ask another student to read them.

4. Ask for initial impressions of the four characters.

   Example: *Mrs. Pearce is very proper. The flower girl is lower class but aspires to more. Pickering is inclined to be kind. Higgins is rude, but not with malicious intent; it just seems not to occur to him that the girl has normal human feelings.*

5. Have students use the questions to discuss the excerpt.

   Suggested Responses

   1. The girl wants to take speaking classes so that she can qualify to work in a flower shop rather than sell flowers on the street. This would be a step up for her financially and socially.
   2. She is brave, feisty, proud, and determined.
   3. The elements of caricature add humor to the scene, as does the flower girl's accent.
   4. The excerpt shows the great gap between the middle class and the working class; assumptions of superiority are evident, especially from Higgins and Mrs. Pearce. Even the language patterns of the two classes differ.
   5. The flower girl is clearly about the task of creating herself (Handout 21, item 3). Language is an important factor (4). She is very poor; elsewhere in the play we see some of the negative results of poverty (5). Mr. Higgins is clearly superbly educated, but he lacks empathy (10).

6. Ask partners or small groups to collaborate to recast the excerpt in a twenty-first-century situation. After they have written the scenes, have them prepare dramatizations, and use them as the basis for discussion. If necessary, provide suggestions, such as a high school thespian who wants to succeed on Broadway; a recent graduate who wants to make it big on the NASCAR circuit; or a college freshman aspiring to be a pharmacist.

7. Explain that another play by Shaw is entitled *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. It took years for him to get anyone to produce it on stage, as the profession in the title is prostitution. He also wrote an "apology" (defense) for the content of the play. Distribute **Handout 23,** and ask students to read the paragraph. Then ask: Is the paragraph really an apology? (No—Shaw was far from sorry for the content of the play.) Ask small groups to answer the questions.

   Suggested Responses

   1. Critics seem to have been completely aghast at what they saw on the stage. They were shocked, even outraged.
   2. Students may need some Internet time for this one. Henrik Ibsen was a Norwegian poet whose plays also aroused controversy because they faced serious societal issues.
   3. Shaw was frankly delighted to have stirred up such heated controversy. He found the critics' reactions to be more satisfying than placid praise.
   4. Shaw often aimed to unmask the hypocrisy of society with regard to the class system and capitalism.

Name:

Quotations from George Bernard Shaw

Directions: Read the following statements, interpret them, and indicate whether you agree or disagree.

1. "People who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it."

2. "If you can't get rid of the skeleton in your closet, you'd best teach it to dance."

3. "Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself."

4. "England and America are two countries separated by a common language."

5. "Lack of money is the root of all evil."

6. "There is no love sincerer than the love of food."

7. "Chess is a foolish expedient for making idle people believe they are doing something very clever when they are only wasting their time."

8. "Self-sacrifice enables us to sacrifice other people without blushing."

9. "A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul."

10. "A fool's brain digests philosophy into folly, science into superstition, and art into pedantry. Hence university education."

11. "Youth is wasted on the young."

12. "Hegel was right when he said that we learn from history that man can never learn anything from history."

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Name:

An Excerpt from Shaw's *Pygmalion*

Directions: The following excerpt comes from act 2 of the play and involves four characters. One, referred to here as the flower girl, is a young Cockney woman in London. She speaks with a strong regional accent, is very poor, and ekes out a living selling flowers on the street. Mrs. Pearce is the housekeeper in a moderately wealthy professor's house. The professor, Henry Higgins, is an English-language expert. Colonel Pickering, a new friend, has just arrived from India, where he became an expert on Indian dialects. Read the passage, and answer the questions. The flower girl's opening statement is addressed to Higgins.

The flower girl: Don't you be so saucy. You ain't heard what I come for yet. *[To Mrs. Pearce, who is waiting at the door for further instruction]* Did you tell him I come in a taxi?

Mrs. Pearce: Nonsense, girl! What do you think a gentleman like Mr. Higgins cares what you came in?

The flower girl: Oh, we are proud! He ain't above giving lessons, not him: I heard him say so. Well, I ain't come here to ask for any compliment; and if my money's not good enough I can go elsewhere.

Higgins: Good enough for what?

The flower girl: Good enough for ye—oo. Now you know, don't you? I'm come to have lessons, I am. And to pay for em too: make no mistake.

Higgins: *[stupent]* WELL!!! [*Recovering his breath with a gasp*] What do you expect me to say to you?

The flower girl: Well, if you was a gentleman, you might ask me to sit down, I think. Don't I tell you I'm bringing you business?

Higgins: Pickering: shall we ask this baggage to sit down or shall we throw her out of the window?

The flower girl: [*running away in terror to the piano, where she turns at bay*] Ah—ah—ah—ow—ow—ow—oo! [*Wounded and whimpering*] I won't be called a baggage when I've offered to pay like any lady.

Motionless, the two men stare at her from the other side of the room, amazed.

Pickering: [*gently*] What is it you want, my girl?

The flower girl: I want to be a lady in a flower shop stead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road. But they won't take me unless I can talk more genteel. He said he could teach me. Well, here I am ready to pay him—not asking any favor—and he treats me as if I was dirt.

Mrs. Pearce: How can you be such a foolish ignorant girl as to think you could afford to pay Mr. Higgins?

The flower girl: Why shouldn't I? I know what lessons cost as well as you do; and I'm ready to pay.

Higgins: How much?

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Name:

The flower girl: [*coming back to him, triumphant*] Now you're talking! I thought you'd come off it when you saw a chance of getting back a bit of what you chucked at me last night. [*Confidentially*] You'd had a drop in, hadn't you?

Higgins: [*peremptorily]* Sit down.

The flower girl: Oh, if you're going to make a compliment of it—

Higgins: [*thundering at her]* Sit down.

Mrs. Pearce: [*severely*] Sit down, girl. Do as you're told. [*She places the stray chair near the hearthrug between Higgins and Pickering, and stands behind it waiting for the girl to sit down*].

1. Why has the flower girl come to the professor's home?

2. What personal characteristics does she reveal?

3. What elements of humor are present in the scene?

4. What does it show about social classes?

5. What quotations from **Handout 21** connect with this scene?

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Name:

Handout: Shaw's "Apology" for *Mrs. Warren's Profession*

Directions: The following comments begin a preface to the printed edition of the play. Read the paragraph, and answer the questions.

> *Mrs. Warren's Profession* has been performed at last, after a delay of only eight years; and I have once more shared with Ibsen the triumphant amusement of startling all but the strongest-headed of the London theatre critics clean out of the practice of their profession. No author who has ever known the exultation of sending the Press into an hysterical tumult of protest, of moral panic, of involuntary and frantic confession of sin, of a horror of conscience in which the power of distinguishing between the work of art on the stage and the real life of the spectator is confused and overwhelmed, will ever care for the stereotyped compliments which every successful farce or melodrama elicits from the newspapers. Give me that critic who rushed from my play to declare furiously that Sir George Crofts ought to be kicked. What a triumph for the actor, thus to reduce a jaded London journalist to the condition of the simple sailor in the Wapping gallery, who shouts execrations at Iago and warnings to Othello not to believe him! But dearer still than such simplicity is that sense of the sudden earthquake shock to the foundations of morality which sends a pallid crowd of critics into the street shrieking that the pillars of society are cracking and the ruin of the State is at hand. Even the Ibsen champions of ten years ago remonstrate with me just as the veterans of those brave days remonstrated with them. Mr. Grein, the hardy iconoclast who first launched my plays on the stage alongside *Ghosts* and *The Wild Duck,* exclaimed that I have shattered his ideals. Actually his ideals! What would Dr Relling say? And Mr William Archer himself disowns me because I "cannot touch pitch without wallowing in it". Truly my play must be more needed than I knew; and yet I thought I knew how little the others know.

1. How did the reviewers who saw the first performance of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* react to the play?

2. Shaw mentions Ibsen several times. Who was Ibsen? Why did Shaw refer to him?

3. How did Shaw respond to critics' reactions?

4. What seems to have been Shaw's goal in writing the play?

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Lesson 11

James Joyce and Stream of Consciousness

Objectives

- To become introduced to James Joyce and the stream-of-consciousness technique
- To recognize the experimental nature of twentieth-century writing

Notes to the Teacher

James Joyce (1882–1941) was one of the most influential figures in the development of modern literature. Born and educated in Ireland during a time of rising nationalism, he later repudiated that heritage and moved to the European continent. By many standards, he was not a prolific writer, but his exploration of stream-of-consciousness writing had an enduring impact on writers of subsequent generations. Although he wrote in other genres, including poetry, drama, and nonfiction, Joyce today is usually associated with four fictional works of escalating levels of difficulty. *Dubliners* is a collection of short stories; "Araby," one of them, is frequently included in British literature anthologies and deals with a young adolescent's first experience of infatuation and disillusionment. This lesson focuses on "Eveline," another story that is very useful with high school students. The protagonist, a young woman, faces a choice between a whole new life and the safety of her dull past.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, a semiautobiographical novel, is a good choice for advanced placement classes. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are beyond the reach of nearly all high school students—in fact, some would argue, beyond the reach of nearly all readers of any age except the literati.

In this lesson students become acquainted with stream-of-consciousness techniques. They ponder several situations in which young people have to make significant decisions. They then read and discuss "Eveline," which is readily available on the Internet (key words: author's name and story title).

Procedure

1. Explain that we often describe the 1800s as the Victorian era, one preoccupied with industrial advancement and proper appearances. The 1900s, in contrast, tended to be a century of experimentation in all of the arts. Use the nature of short stories as an example. In a "well-made" short story, there is a clear exposition, followed by rising actions that culminate in a high point or climax, followed by a short section tying loose ends together. Ask students if they see anything wrong with that plan.

***Example**: Real life is not nearly as tidy. There are usually many loose ends, and events seldom arrange themselves without deviations and distractions. We do not think linearly; instead we experience perceptions, feelings, and thoughts simultaneously and sometimes in random patterns.*

2. Distribute **Handout 24**, and ask students to complete it individually.

Suggested Responses

1. A stream never stops moving. It may widen and narrow, increase or decrease in depth, and be split into several streams. A stream is a diverse ecosystem with rocks, sand, water, fauna, insects, fish, frogs, and mammals.
2. Consciousness is awareness. After people are anesthetized for surgery, they gradually recover consciousness but have little or no memory of what just occurred. At any given moment our consciousness operates on many levels. We might simultaneously see clouds scudding across the sky and hear a tick in a radiator; we might think of three causes for World War I; we might remember a quarrel that morning at breakfast; we might feel a jolt of anger or sorrow.
3. Like a stream or a river, consciousness keeps moving and may be diverted in various directions; it is full of many things that roil around together.

3. Explain that stream of consciousness became an important innovation in fiction early in the twentieth century, and one of the leaders in the movement was James Joyce, a writer with roots in Dublin, Ireland. Explain that stream of consciousness can become so dense that the reader can hardly understand it. Read aloud the following brief passage from the Anna Livia Plurabelle section of *Finnegans Wake*.

> Can't hear with the waters of. The chittering waters of. Flittering bats, fieldmice bawk talk. Ho! Are you not gone ahome? What Thom Malone? Can't hear with bawk of bats, all thim liffeying waters of. Ho, talk save us! My foos won't moos. I feel as old as yonder elm. A tale told of Shaun or Shem? All Livia's daughter-sons. Dark hawks hear us. Night! Night!

4. Prompt responses with questions: Did you feel hungry or thirsty? Did you wonder how long it would be until class or this school day is over? Did you worry about something at home or on the job? Were you particularly aware of another person in this room or elsewhere in the building?

5. Ask volunteers to read paragraphs aloud; point out the intermingling of sense impressions, thoughts, and feelings.

6. Point out the disjointed sentences, nonsense words, and images that appear in a kind of tumble that can leave the reader at least as bewildered as the narrative voice. Explain that stream of consciousness is not always this obscure.

7. Distribute **Handout 25**, and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with open-ended discussion. Emphasize the following questions.

    1. Is it important to be able and willing to take risks?
    2. Is it good for people to move far away from their families?
    3. Should young adults be responsible taking care of their parents?
    4. Do people sometimes attempt actions that exceed their personal limitations?

8. Distribute copies of "Eveline," or ask the students to read it on the Internet. When they have finished, conduct an open-ended discussion in response to the following prompt: *Does Eveline Hill make a good choice or a bad choice?* Insist that students give reasons and provide textual support for their opinions.

9. Distribute **Handout 26**, and have small groups discuss the questions. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. It would seem that embarking on this great adventure should be exciting, even exhilarating. Eveline is only tired. From the beginning she seems to lack the vitality necessary for the experience.
2. The tone seems mildly depressed. "Rather" qualifies the notion of happiness; she thinks of death, and the last two sentences seem fatalistic.
3. Eveline's life has been characterized by hard work, responsibility, and some abuse. She lacks close friends, and there has never been much to celebrate. Yet, looking back, she feels that it has not been too bad.
4. Eveline's thoughts about Frank center on herself. Her entire focus is on what he can do for her.
5. Eveline is preoccupied with duty and responsibility. In this story, ordinary sacrifices result in insanity.
6. She prays to know her duty—not for a safe trip or a happy life with Frank. Eveline focuses not on the wide horizons of life, but on its limits.
7. The epiphany seems to be the realization that she is incapable of choosing to escape drudgery and seek a happy life. Instead, she chooses to follow in her mother's footsteps.
8. The story immerses readers in Eveline's consciousness as she anticipates and then rejects the idea of going to Argentina with Frank.

10. Ask students to write in response to the following prompt and collect writings as tickets out of class:

    Is Eveline unique to James Joyce's story, or do we meet people very much like her in our world today? For example, a person might have an opportunity to spend a semester studying at a university in Germany or England, but choose instead to spend it at a local community college. Explain your views.

Name:

What Is Stream of Consciousness?

Directions: Use the questions to come to an understanding of the literary style referred to as *stream of consciousness*.

1. What are the characteristics of a stream or river?

2. How would you define *consciousness*?

3. In what ways is a person's consciousness similar to a stream?

4. Record all of the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings you have experienced in the last ten minutes? How orderly were they?

5. Write a paragraph that reflects the stream of your own consciousness. Include thoughts, feelings, and vivid sense impressions.

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Name:

What Do You Think?

Directions: The following questions serve as the basis for a pre-reading activity before you discuss a story by James Joyce. Write your answers, and be prepared to discuss them.

1. Carole lives with her parents and two younger siblings in a run-down house a few miles inland from the coast of North Carolina. She finished high school two years ago and has had a part-time job at a gas station ever since. Her boyfriend, Matt, has an opportunity for a new job in Mexico City. He is very excited, and he wants Carole to go with him, even though neither of them knows any Spanish. Do you think she should go?

2. Taylor has been living at home, helping to support and care for his parents. He was fortunate enough to get a good entry-level job with a local business, and his employers have been pleased with his work and with his attitude. They want him to go to Dallas, many miles away, for a six-week training session. His parents are complaining that they cannot possibly survive without him. Do you think Taylor should go for the training experience?

3. Terry saved money for two years for her coming month-long vacation in Australia. Now that her departure is only one month away, her friends are very excited about her trip. They admire her adventurous spirit in going so far away all by herself. Lately, though, Terry just feels tired, as if she hardly has the energy to pack her suitcases and apply for her passport. Do you think Terry should cancel her plans and put her money in a savings account instead of taking the trip?

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Name:

James Joyce's "Eveline"

Directions: Carefully read the story, which is part of *Dubliners*, and use the following questions as tools to analyze it.

1. At the beginning of the story, Eveline anticipates a whole new life. How should she feel? What are her emotions at the end of the first paragraph?

2. What is the tone in the second paragraph? Identify phrases that convey that tone.

3. What do we learn of Eveline's past? Do her attitudes toward her past experiences seem appropriate?

4. What is the central focus of all of Eveline's thoughts about Frank?

5. Eveline thinks about her promise to her dying mother. Is there anything troubling in her views?

6. What is the significance of Eveline's prayer toward the end of the story?

7. In literature an epiphany is a moment of realization or insight. What is Eveline's epiphany?

8. How does stream of consciousness function in "Eveline"?

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Lesson 12

Virginia Woolf: Perception and Imagination

Objectives

- To explore Virginia Woolf's experimentation with perception and stream-of-consciousness writing
- To recognize the impact of individual perceptions

Notes to the Teacher

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) was one of the most influential writers in the development of stream-of-consciousness writing. She was also a journalist and cofounder of a publishing house that worked with some of the most important writers of the first half of the twentieth century. Highly regarded and successful, she was nevertheless troubled with bouts of mental illness; her suicide seems to have been less an act of despair than a refusal to be plunged once again into psychosis. She is regarded as part of the vanguard of the feminist movement. Much of her writing, especially the fiction, has an impressionistic feel.

Postmodern writing is often preoccupied with the fact that simple realism leaves out a good deal of experience. Writers in the movement owe a debt to Woolf, one of the first British writers to work with this concept. Her stream of consciousness explores the impressions and associations of ideas that make up reality for both fictional characters and real people.

If you are working with an honors or advanced placement class, you may want to have students read and discuss *A Room of One's Own* (nonfiction) or *To the Lighthouse* (a novel). In this lesson students work with three short pieces that reflect Virginia Woolf's interest in perception and the power of imagination. All three pieces ("Three Pictures," "A Haunted House," and "The Lady in the Looking-Glass") are available on the Internet through Project Gutenberg, as well as at other sites. The second procedure suggests that you stage an event for the class as an experience in perception. For example, you might have two individuals (either students or adults) enter your classroom, walk over to look out the window, and rummage through a trash basket, whispering all the while, before turning back to exit.

Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 27**, and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with open-ended discussion.

2. Review the nature of stream-of-consciousness writing (immersion in the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of a character in a nonlinear fashion, as they occur).

3. Ask students to define the term *perception*. Lead them to see that perception is subjective; it involves both the senses and the imagination. Three people who observe the same incident may describe it in quite different ways. Have students witness a staged event (see "Notes to the Teacher"); then ask them to write descriptions and explanations of what they observed. Follow by having small groups share results, and invite a few volunteers to read to the whole class.

   ***Examples**: Maybe a rainbow off to the west drew the people to the window; maybe they were looking for a missing wallet in the trash basket; maybe they were checking security and verifying that paper is being separated for recycling purposes.*

4. Explain that Virginia Woolf, one of the most influential British writers of the first half of the twentieth century, is especially noteworthy for her emphasis on perception, imagination, and stream of consciousness. Divide the class into groups, and assign each group to read one of the following short pieces:

   - "Three Pictures"
   - "A Haunted House"
   - "The Lady in the Looking-Glass"

5. Direct the groups to prepare summaries, statements describing the author's purpose, and explanations of observations regarding perception and stream of consciousness.

6. When groups have finished, have them read the selections to the class as a whole and share information. Distribute **Handout 28** for note-taking purposes, and use it as the basis for discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. "Three Pictures," as much an essay as a story, emphasizes the mind's tendency to create fictions about everything it sees. Woolf begins by stressing the difficulty involved in really understanding others, especially if they do not share our cultural background. She then focuses on a scene she observed: Apparently a sailor had just returned home to a celebratory welcome from his family. Her mind creates a fiction from the observation, but she finds in the end that her imaginings are very different from the facts: The sailor died soon after his return from a disease he contracted while he was away on duty. Throughout the piece we are in the speaker's consciousness as she both observes and creates fictions.
2. "A Haunted House" is a short story about a couple who lives in a nice house in the country; the house is also the habitat of two ghosts who lived there long ago. The narrator is vividly aware of her surroundings

and of the searching but not frightening ghosts. She seems a bit distracted, even absentminded, and she is very aware of safety. In the end she understands—and so do we—that the ghosts are not seeking treasure chests. Rather, they would love to rediscover what they shared when they were alive—the same things that the narrator and her husband now share.

3. "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" is a short story in which an unidentified narrator observes and comments on a middle-aged woman, Isabella Tyson, who is outside working in the garden. At first the narrator speaks in tones of high admiration; it seems that Isabella Tyson is rich, has had many wonderful experiences, and is befriended by many. Then the mail arrives, and the speaker concludes that, on the contrary, Isabella Tyson is a lonely and unhappy woman who receives no personal mail at all. The story actually reveals almost nothing about Isabella; it presents the narrator's mind trying to figure her out. The whole point is that when we observe others we create fictions about them that may be very remote from reality.

7. Assign students to take a mental snapshot of any scene they observe during the rest of the day and to write a literal description of it. Explain that this is similar to the speaker's view of the sailor at the welcome home party in "Three Pictures." Ask students to write their own three pictures related to the scene. Assign a deadline, and use the results to discuss perception, reality, and the nature of fiction.

Name:

A Pre-reading Exercise

Directions: Before reading work by Virginia Woolf, answer the following questions.

1. Have you ever observed something, reached a conclusion about it, and later discovered that your conclusion was totally inaccurate? Give a specific example.

2. In interviews people who have witnessed an accident or a crime often give quite different accounts of the event. Why?

3. Have you ever been in a place that felt eerie, as if it were somehow haunted? Give a specific example, and describe it.

4. Is it possible to completely misjudge someone based on appearances? Give reasons to support your answer.

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Name:

Focus on Virginia Woolf

Directions: Use the chart to record information and observations.

	Summary of plot	Perception
"Three Pictures"		
"A Haunted House"		
"The Lady in the Looking-Glass"		

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Lesson 13

William Butler Yeats, Leader of the Irish Literary Revival

Objectives

- To recognize Yeats as the leader of the Irish Literary Revival
- To analyze several poems that reveal his themes and stylistic devices

Notes to the Teacher

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was a leader and the greatest poet of the Irish Literary Revival, which accompanied a period of fervor for political independence and enthusiasm about artistic development. After years of domination and repression by England, Ireland was seized by new interest in Celtic myths and a desire to liberate itself from British control. Yeats and other writers and artists rediscovered the Gaelic language and Celtic mythology. Yeats's work reflects a combination of the kind of mysticism associated with William Blake, the idealism of the Romantics, and the aesthetic ideas that led to the modernist movement in poetry.

Yeats was the first Irish writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. In 1923 the committee praised him for his "always inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation." He was not only a celebrated poet but also a dramatist and cofounder of The Abbey Theatre.

Yeats's works are quite diverse. Today the greatest interest generally focuses on his poems, which vary in the amount of challenge they pose to high school readers. For many, Celtic mythology is a totally unexplored topic. In some poems, the themes are highly sophisticated. Often the emphasis on art that fascinates scholars eludes the understanding of youth. In this lesson, students first read and discuss "When You Are Old," an early piece. Most critics see it as one of many poems inspired by Yeats's nearly lifelong fascination with Maud Gonne, a celebrated beauty and Irish nationalist who consistently refused his marriage proposals. Next students discuss "The Wild Swans at Coole," which reflects both the Romantics' love for nature and a somber realization of the losses associated with age. Students read and discuss "The Second Coming," a dire prophecy of chaos and confusion (if your students have low tolerance for poetry, you may want to omit this part of the lesson). Finally, students study "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." These four poems are often included in British literature anthologies, and they are readily available on the Internet.

Procedure

1. Explain that William Butler Yeats was the first Irish writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, and remind students that for centuries Ireland was part of the British Empire. For this reason, writers who originated in Ireland are usually classified as part of the British literary tradition. Read aloud the Nobel Prize committee's commendation of Yeats's "always inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation." Ask students what the comment leads them to expect in his poems—profound ideas, artistry, and a distinctly Celtic feel, for example.

2. Have the students read "When You Are Old," and ask who seems to be the speaker and to whom he seems to be speaking.

   ***Answer**: The speaker seems to be the poet, and he is talking to someone he loves. The two are young people, and he seems to have been rejected.*

3. Distribute **Handout 29**, and ask small groups to complete Part A.

   Suggested Responses

   1. The first word, *when,* shows that the woman is not old now. The effect resembles the implications when a speaker begins with the word *if.*
   2. The word probably refers to the book of poetry in which "When You Are Old" first appeared (*The Rose,* 1893).
   3. He seems to see old age as a time when people drowse near the fire and think about the past, perhaps with regret.
   4. Others love her for her grace and beauty, but he feels that his love is deeper and includes an awareness of both her search for meaning and her sorrows.
   5. He thinks that she will regret missing out on the love she could have had. He does not promise that he will still be around waiting for her then.
   6. The speaker is thoughtful and melancholic, but he also seems to accept the situation. We hear regret, but neither anger nor a desire to punish.

4. Explain that Yeats wrote "The Wild Swans at Coole" many years later when he was no longer a young man. Have students read the poem to themselves silently as you read it aloud or play a recording. Then ask students to complete Part B of the handout.

   Suggested Responses

   1. The poems share a melancholy mood, as well as concern with beauty and the effects of time.
   2. The poem expresses the Romantics' awed appreciation of nature in its wild state. If students have read Wordsworth's "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," point out the parallel return to a beautiful spot visited previously.

3. The first stanza focuses on images of the fall seasons—woodlands, paths, twilight, water, stones, and many swans.
4. The speaker first visited this place nineteen years ago. He is aware of effects of the years and of sorrows that have made him heavyhearted.
5. The swans just go on with being swans—paddling in the water, flying, and nesting. They have undiminished energy. (Of course, they may not be the same swans he saw nineteen years ago.)
6. He seems to expect that sometime in the future, the swans will abandon Coole and settle elsewhere. The already melancholy sense of loss is intensified with the idea that this beauty, too, will disappear.

5. Ask students to read "The Second Coming" and complete Part C of the handout. Follow with discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The first lines present an image of a falcon flying in widening circles until it is so high and far away it can no longer perceive signals from the falconer. In such a case, the falcon is completely out of control. In light of the rest of the poem, it seems that the whole world has gone completely out of control.
2. Yeats was writing about what is frequently referred to as "the lost generation." According to the poem, the people with the most potential for achievement are completely unmotivated, while those most likely to go bad are busy and active. Only people with ideals, after all, can be disillusioned.
3. The phrase "the Second Coming" usually refers to the return of Jesus as the Messiah at the end of the world. The poem also mentions Bethlehem and the passing of twenty centuries.
4. The prophecy is not good news. The poem predicts anarchy and a kind of reign of evil. Some might read the beast heading toward Bethlehem as an Antichrist figure. Perhaps Yeats had a sense that another world war loomed a few decades in the future.

6. Ask students to decide which of the three poems they find most interesting and to write paragraphs explaining their choices and relating them to life today, many years after Yeats wrote them.

7. Read aloud "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," which is readily available on the Internet and in anthologies. Then distribute copies or have students find it on the Internet. Distribute **Handout 30**, and ask students to complete it individually.

Suggested Responses

1. Innisfree seems to be a small, rustic place in which people live simple lives in close contact with nature.
2. Yeats mentions a cottage, bean plants, bees, morning mist, crickets, the night sky, and the sounds of ripples on the lake.

3. Answers can vary widely for this one, depending on personal taste. Some people might want a week, but not a lifetime, at Innisfree.
4. In all four poems we hear a voice tinged with regret and perhaps fatigue or disillusionment. We get the feeling that Yeats was an intelligent and reflective person, but not a particularly happy one.
5. The references to nature are a Romantic touch, but the speaker seems less interested in inspiration than in rest and peace. We hear the voice of someone who just wants to escape the hassles of dealing with other people and life's demands.

Name:

A Look at Poems by W. B. Yeats

Part A

Directions: Read "When You Are Old," and use the following questions to analyze it.

1. How do we know that the speaker is not talking to an old woman?

2. What is the book referred to in the second line?

3. How does the speaker envision old age?

4. How does the speaker differ from others in his attitude toward the woman?

5. What does the speaker think the woman will feel in the distant future?

6. Describe the speaker's mood and tone.

Part B

Directions: Read "The Wild Swans at Coole," and answer the questions.

1. At first glance, this poem seems quite different from the first one. What do they have in common?

2. What Romantic elements does the poem display?

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Name:

3. What poetic device dominates the first stanza? What does the stanza stress?

4. What does the speaker reveal about himself?

5. How does he perceive the swans in contrast to himself?

6. In the final stanza, what does the speaker expect? What mood does this create?

Part C

Directions: Read Yeats's "The Second Coming," and use the questions to get a sense of its artistry and meaning. The poem was written in the years immediately after the conclusion of World War I.

1. What image opens the poem? How does that image emerge as a metaphor?

2. How does the poem present people in the aftermath of the Great War?

3. What is the meaning of the phrase "the second Coming"? What other elements of the poem echo the allusion?

4. The poem is often described as prophetic. What does it predict or prophesy?

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Name:

Yeats and "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"

Directions: Carefully read the poem, and use the following questions to think about it.

1. What kind of a life does the speaker envision in Innisfree?

2. What specific images are included to describe the island?

3. Would you like to live in a place like Innisfree? Why or why not?

4. In what ways does the voice in the poem resemble the one in the other poems you have read by Yeats?

5. Do you think the poem is Romantic or realistic? Give reasons for your answer.

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Lesson 14

Themes in "The Rocking-Horse Winner"

Objective

- To analyze the story's themes and symbolism

Notes to the Teacher

D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930) was controversial in every way. He grew up in the poverty in a coal-mining family and an atmosphere filled with friction. He was a freethinker who refused to go along with traditional views. His novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was censored as pornography in both England and the United States. His political views and his attitudes toward World War I led to ostracism and exile. There is no doubt that his major writings are beyond the interests and abilities of most high school students; nonetheless, the story "The Rocking-Horse Winner" is so unusual and impactful that it appears in nearly all British literature collections of "greatest short stories."

The story has relevance to today's students because the theme hits so close to home. When there is not enough money, the atmosphere among family members can become tense and quarrelsome. In a strained economic environment, love can fade and families can become dysfunctional. Young Paul's magical ability to sometimes predict race winners seems like a great gift, but it costs him his life. The story leads readers to rethink values and make choices. If the story is not available in your textbook or anthology, you can easily find it on the Internet.

Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 31,** and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with open-ended discussion.

   Example: *In a capitalistic society, competition for profits is the basis for much activity. Idealists generally believe that money cannot buy happiness and that money is not everything. On the other hand, lack of money can leave one homeless and hungry. In areas where manufacturing has shut down and companies have headed south or outsourced to developing countries, the consequences of a shortfall of money are painfully obvious.*

2. Explain that in the 1920s a British writer named D. H. Lawrence published a short story that deals with the importance of money. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the first two paragraphs of "The Rocking-Horse Winner." Then ask students to respond.

Example: *The story begins like a fantasy, with an almost fairy-tale feeling. The setting is obviously prosperous and upper-middle-class, but the people are not happy in this loveless atmosphere.*

3. Ask students to finish reading the story. Then distribute **Handout 32**, and have small groups discuss the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. Paul seems to begin the story as earnest and concerned; he clearly wants to please his mother. As time goes on, he rides the rocking horse obsessively, hoping to know the name of the next winner, and his health fades to the point that at the end he drops dead from exertion and stress.
2. The story is a fantasy in story line. No one can ride a rocking horse to discover the name of a derby winner or the winning lottery number ahead of time. The story is realistic in its treatment of people's preoccupation with the need for money.
3. Somehow, when Paul rides the rocking horse, the name of a winning horse sometimes (but not always) comes into his head.
4. Paul wants to be lucky so that he can please his mother. Then he wants to pick horse-race winners so that he can give her money. He loves her and wants to make her happy (an impossible task).
5. The mother is so unmotherly that it is hard to like her. Her coldness and focus on luck and money have placed an emotional vise on the entire family. However, her concern at the party toward the end belies the opening denial of her capacity to love. She is worried about Paul, so she cannot be entirely heartless.
6. The symbolism resides in Paul's obsessive riding of the rocking-horse (which incidentally never moves for Ward but stays in place): His relentless effort to satisfy his mother mirrors people's relentless efforts, both successful and unsuccessful, to obtain money.
7. The story points out that the single-minded pursuit of money can result in the loss of even more important things like love and relationships. The need for money appears impossible to satisfy; the obsessive pursuit of it can be painful and even lethal. In a way the story seems to support ideals of socialism.

4. Ask students to look through the story for specific textual evidence of Lawrence's purposes. Have volunteers read their choices aloud.

5. Assign students to write essays that argue a central point about money in today's world. Ask them to think about topics and formulate thesis statements that express their views. Then have them share ideas to stimulate creative thinking. Distribute **Handout 33**, and explain that this is the rubric that will be used for evaluation. Knowing criteria in advance can help to improve writing. Set a date for peer conferencing and one for submission of final products.

Name:

The Importance of Money

Directions: The English playwright George Bernard Shaw once wrote, "Lack of money is the root of all evil." Use the following questions to think about the importance of money.

1. How much money are you carrying with you today? Why?

2. When you think of future careers, how important are issues regarding wages or salary? Why?

3. Why do so many people buy lottery tickets and eagerly watch drawings or scrape away at the opaque surfaces of tickets?

4. Is there anything you would *not* do for money?

5. What is enough money? We can easily say, for example, that we do not want any more ice cream. At what point would we say we do not want any more money?

6. In most urban areas, rush hours occur in the morning and late afternoon. What does money have to do with those rush hours?

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Name:

Analyzing "The Rocking-Horse Winner"

Directions: Use the questions to discuss characters, events, symbols, and themes in the story. Provide textual support to validate your ideas.

1. What happens to Paul in the course of the story? Why?

2. Would you describe the story as a fantasy, or is it realistic?

3. What exactly goes on with the rocking horse?

4. What motivates Paul? Why?

5. How do you respond to the mother? Why? Are the generalizations in the opening paragraph supported by the rest of the story?

6. In what ways is the story symbolic?

7. State a central theme that you think D. H. Lawrence wanted to convey.

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Name:

The Importance of Money: Evaluation Rubric

Directions: Use the following criteria as tools in writing and revising your essay.

	Central Claim	Organization	Supportive Evidence	Diction and Syntax	Style	Conclusion
5	The essay presents a clear central claim in a well-written thesis statement.	The supportive paragraphs are logically organized to persuade the reader to accept the central claim.	The paragraphs present specific evidence that solidly supports the writer's views.	The essay reflects attention to precise diction; the syntax is correct and varied.	The essay maintains a professional, competent tone from beginning to end.	The essay achieves closure in a way that follows logically and convincingly from the content.
3	The essay does present a thesis, but clarity could be improved.	The connections between the supportive points are not clear.	The essay presents supportive evidence, but it could be more specific.	While there are no major language errors, the diction could be less colloquial and/or sentence structures could be more varied.	The essay occasionally seems to veer toward informal or colloquial wording.	There is a clear conclusion, but it could be phrased more convincingly.
1	The essay does not seem to be motivated by a central idea.	The essay seems to be a random series of comments with little attention to logic.	The essay consists of generalities with little or no attention to supportive evidence.	The essay includes substandard diction and/or is seriously grammatically flawed.	The essay lacks characteristics of serious academic and professional writing.	The essay seems to stop rather than to conclude.

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Lesson 15

Winston Churchill: Statesman, Orator, and Writer

Objectives

- To recognize Churchill's gifted use of words
- To study rhetorical devices in action

Notes to the Teacher

Winston Churchill (1874–1965) is seldom represented in British literature textbooks. Students will probably recognize him as the English prime minister during World War II; they are usually surprised to find that he served actively in the British army, was a painter, and wrote many books, including histories, memoirs, and one novel. In a departure from the usual focus on poets, novelists, and dramatists, in 1953 the Nobel committee awarded Churchill the prize for literature "for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values."

The first procedure suggests that you show the class some of Churchill's paintings. (The Museum Syndicate website is a good source.) In this lesson students then read and discuss a selection of quotations from Churchill; they describe the voice they hear behind the statements. Students then read and analyze an excerpt from one of his famous speeches near the beginning of World War II.

Procedure

1. Without identifying the artist, use the Internet to show students some of Winston Churchill's paintings. (For variety you might select *Trees by a Stream in Norfolk*, *Town on the French Riviera*, and *At the Pyramids*.) Explain that they are the work of an extremely famous Englishman, and ask students to share observations and conjectures about who the artist might be. Explain that they are the work of Winston Churchill, perhaps best known today for his leadership as prime minister of the United Kingdom both during World War II and in the early 1950s.

2. Explain that writing does not flourish only as imaginative works such as poems, plays, and fiction. Nonfiction, decades ago as today, is an important form. Besides being a statesman and an artist, Churchill was a writer. His first significant writings were descriptions of military campaigns when he was in the army. He later wrote biographies and multi-volume histories.

3. Distribute **Handout 34**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. Churchill used parallel structure to express the contrast between two types of people; the statement encourages people to see difficulties as challenges rather than as hindrances.
2. Parallel structure is again evident. In discussions, one needs both to speak and to listen.
3. There is wry humor here; a fanatic just will not stop harping on the same subject even when others are sick of it.
4. Humor is evident here, too. Anyone who has ever written a book can verify Churchill's statement.
5. The pile-driver metaphor indicates that when we have something to say, we need to say it loudly, clearly, and repeatedly.
6. The grammatical rule about not ending a sentence with a preposition is the target here, as Churchill made fun of the consequences of avoiding that construction at all costs. Perhaps someone criticized him for this so-called error. Again, the quotation demonstrates Churchill's humor.
7. This is a great metaphor to describe those who try to coexist with destroyers.
8. Voters sometimes act based on the silliest reasons and without really knowing much about candidates or issues.
9. This is a serious reflection on weighty responsibility.
10. This is a frequent theme with Churchill—the ability of persistence and doggedness to prevail in the end.

4. Ask students what the quotations, taken as a group, reveal about Churchill.

   Example: *He believed in optimism, persistence, and prudence. He was realistic about human nature, and he had a sense of humor. He advocated plain speaking as opposed to efforts to be subtle and clever.*

5. Explain that Churchill was the prime minister from 1940 to 1945, during the years of World War II. He recognized the threat of Adolf Hitler early on, and England was one of the first countries to be at war with Germany. Distribute **Handout 35**, and have students complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. Churchill was asserting clear and determined leadership in a war that was a long way from over. He could not promise a quick and painless victory; he wanted the other members of Parliament to cooperate.
2. It is evident that he was busy and pressed with many responsibilities that left him little time to worry about protocols. He spoke with honesty and conviction and expressed serious confidence in the victory of good over evil.
3. The speech did not invite quibbling or discussion. The members of Parliament must have thought seriously and deeply about the "blood, toil, tears and sweat" to come in the ensuing years.

4. Parallel structures are most important. Note the things that must be remembered in the opening compound-complex sentence. "I hope" is repeated. What Churchill offered is expressed in a series of four nouns. The second paragraph repeats, "We have before us." There are rhetorical questions. "To wage war" is repeated. The sentence about victory is heavy with parallelism. "No survival" is repeated, another example of parallelism. The speech ends with an invitation.

6. Tell students that Churchill also said, "The farther back you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see." Ask them to select any passage from the handouts and use it for discussion of any issue in the current international, national, or regional news. Tell students that their essays should clearly explicate the quotation, describe the issue at hand, and argue implications based on Churchill's views. Set a date for peer conferencing and one for submission of final essays.

Name:

Observations from Winston Churchill

Directions: Read the following quotations, and record your insights into and observations about them.

1. "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

2. "Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; it is also what it takes to sit down and listen."

3. "A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject."

4. "Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with it is a toy and an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, then it becomes a master, then it becomes a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster and fling him to the public."

5. "If you have a point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time—a tremendous whack."

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Name:

6. "From now on, ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with which I shall not put."

7. "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile—hoping it will eat him last."

8. "The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter."

9. "The price of greatness is responsibility."

10. "Continuous effort—not strength or intelligence—is the key to unlocking our potential."

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Name:

Winston Churchill's Oratory

Directions: In May of 1940 Winston Churchill, prime minister of the United Kingdom, delivered a speech to the House of Commons in Parliament. It is frequently titled "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat." Read his concluding paragraphs, and answer the questions.

> . . . it must be remembered that we are in the preliminary stage of one of the greatest battles in history, that we are in action at many points in Norway and in Holland, that we have to be prepared in the Mediterranean, that the air battle is continuous and that many preparations have to be made here at home. In this crisis I hope I may be pardoned if I do not address the House at any length today. I hope that any of my friends and colleagues, or former colleagues, who are affected by the political reconstruction, will make all allowances for any lack of ceremony with which it has been necessary to act. I would say to the House, as I said to those who've joined this government: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."
>
> We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: victory. Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realised; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal.
>
> But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, "Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength."

1. What was the central purpose of the speech?

2. What attributes of the speaker are evident in his words and phrases?

3. How do you think the speech affected the listeners in the House of Commons?

4. What rhetorical devices are evident?

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Lesson 16

Dystopias of George Orwell and Aldus Huxley

Objectives

- To understand the nature and purposes of dystopian literature
- To compare and contrast the futures foreseen by George Orwell and Aldous Huxley

Notes to the Teacher

Thomas More coined the term *utopia* early in the sixteenth century to designate a perfect human society, unflawed by the ills that have plagued humankind in all times and places. Historically, there have been many attempts to create utopias in both literature and real life. None of the real-life efforts have succeeded in the long run. Perhaps the reason for that is also the reason for the prolific genre of dystopian writing, which foresees a future antithetical to the highest values and abilities of human beings.

Two of the most famous dystopian novels ever written are *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The first, written by Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) predicts a future world state in which everything is genetically programmed and love is nonexistent; drugs keep everyone in a state of pleasure and contentment. The second, by George Orwell (1903–1950), foresees a world of complete government control and ruthless state domination of the individual. The books share a view of an undesirable future, but the worlds they foresee are diametrically opposed.

In this lesson students first engage in an effort to predict what life will be like a hundred years from now. They then define the term *dystopia* before reading and discussing excerpts from both of the novels. You may want to follow with the whole class reading one or both of the books or by encouraging those who wish to read the books to do so and to write about them for extra credit.

Procedure

1. Tell students that one popular type of fiction involves the writer in an effort to predict what life will be like sometime in the future, usually based on logical or imaginative extensions of what life is like right now. Distribute **Handout 36**, and ask students to read the directions. Point out that a century ago people used manual typewriters, not computers, to produce documents. They did not carry cell phones around in their pockets. The Internet was not a handy source for information; usually a trip to the library was necessary. Have students complete the handout

individually, but allow free exchanges of ideas as they do so. Some students may focus on proliferation of technological capabilities; others may expect a reactionary swing in the opposite direction. Follow with open-ended discussion.

2. Distribute **Handout 37**, and have students complete Part A. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The babies develop without physical closeness to a mother; this could have long-term consequences with regard to human connections.
2. Conditioning involves training a person or animal through repeated behaviors. It is also referred to as behavior modification. For example, if someone experiences an electric shock every time he or she eats a cookie, the person is likely to come to despise cookies.
3. The director's statement indicates that lack of freedom brings happiness, which is the exact opposite of the philosophy basic to democracy. On the other hand, the people conditioned in this way are unlikely to experience the frustrations of conflict with the way things are.
4. Freedom and the ability to choose of one's own free will are is lost, as well as the idea that people should strive to reach their maximum potential. The fetuses are deliberately limited in potential by the ways they are designed and handled.
5. The main problem with drug-induced happiness is that it is not real; such a state resembles the effects of pain-killers, which are sometimes necessary but are also deceptive because the pain and whatever causes it are still very much present. It today's environment, however, it might not be unusual for readers to think, that soma sounds appealing.

3. Have students complete Part B of the handout, and follow with discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. Orwell's view of the future was based on the idea that the Cold War would end with the victory of communism and totalitarian governments.
2. The three slogans all express contradictions and seem a form of brainwashing, of making people incapable of clear and logical thought. The slogans can easily make people opt for war, slavery, and ignorance.
3. The attitude seems to be one of mindless and emotional adulation. Big Brother has made himself a kind of cult figure.
4. Orwell saw people completely in awe of the political leader, imprinted like little ducklings following their mother no matter what.

4. Point out that the visions in both books see individual freedom as the root problem in society and suggest that if governments can eliminate personal liberty, it will be a simple matter to maintain control. The books differ in the means the governments use. In *Brave New World* officials use soma to induce a feeling of contentment; because the people feel happy, they do not cause trouble. In control is maintained through power tactics.

The government is not concerned with people's happiness but believes they can be controlled through their fears.

5. Point out that leaders in all kinds of situations are concerned with security, order, and productivity. This usually necessitates some sense of being in control. Ask students to write essays, stories, or poems in which they deal with the best ways of maintaining cooperation and respect in any organization—school, workplace, family, social organization, military group. Was Huxley right—that the important thing is to induce feelings of happiness? Was Orwell right—that the government can impose order through fear of consequences? Allow considerable latitude in how students approach the assignment, and encourage them to seek responses and suggestions based on early drafts of the project. Set a date for submission of final results.

Name:

Looking into the Future

Directions: Answer the following questions regarding what you think life will be like a century from now. Include reasons to support your ideas.

1. During much of the nineteenth century women fancied extremely elaborate hats. By the end of the twentieth century, hats were rare except for headgear designed to provide warmth in the winter and protection from the sun. What role do you think hats will play a century from now?

2. Think about the opportunities available for students to complete school from kindergarten through high school. What do you think will be the norms for schooling a century from now?

3. What new technologies do you think will be available for common use by then? Will these technologies be good for or detrimental to people's welfare?

4. What countries will emerge as world powers and assume the leadership in international relationships?

5. What role do you think religion will play in society as a whole in a hundred years?

6. What will be the most typical modes of transportation—getting from one place to another—a century from now?

7. How do you think the area where you live will change during the next one hundred years?

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Name:

Two Contrasting Dystopian Views

Part A

Directions: Read the information about and the excerpt from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, which was published in 1932. Then answer the questions.

Huxley's famous novel presents a society in which humans are born as test-tube babies, conceived and cared for in a large institution with nurses and technicians on hand. The embryos and fetuses are gentically engineered and carefully conditioned to place people in specific social groups, the lowest of which is the Epsilons, the highest the Alphas. As the novel begins, a director is guiding a group of children on a field trip to the incubation facility.

> Their wanderings through the crimson twilight had brought them to the neighborhood of Metre 170 on Rack 9. From this point onwards Rack 9 was enclosed and the bottles performed the remainder of their journey in a kind of tunnel, interrupted here and there by openings two or three metres wide.
>
> "Heat conditioning," said Mr. Foster.
>
> Hot tunnels alternated with cool tunnels. Coolness was wedded to discomfort in the form of hard X-rays. By the time they were decanted the embryos had a horror of cold. They were predestined to emigrate to the tropics, to be miner and acetate silk spinners and steel workers. Later on their minds would be made to endorse the judgment of their bodies. "We condition them to thrive on heat," concluded Mr. Foster. "Our colleagues upstairs will teach them to love it."
>
> "And that," put in the Director sententiously, "that is the secret of happiness and virtue—liking what you've got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny."

1. The bottles mentioned in the first paragraph contain little human embryos. What is lost in this way of making babies?

2. What is conditioning? Why are these babies being conditioned?

3. Is the director correct in his idea that happiness comes from liking what we have to do?

4. What human values seem lost in this world?

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Name:

5. Later in the novel, it becomes evident that drugs are routinely used to induce a state of contentment, even euphoria. Does this seem like a good or a bad way to build a happy citizenry?

Part B

Directions: George Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* near the end of the 1940s and envisioned a society of unmitigated government control through fear and a cult of personality. Read the excerpt from the first chapter, and answer the questions.

> . . . Nobody heard what Big Brother was saying. It was merely a few words of encouragement, the sort of words that are uttered in the din of battle, not distinguishable individually but restoring confidence by the fact of being spoken. Then the face of Big Brother faded away again, and instead the three slogans of the Party stood out in bold capitals:
>
> WAR IS PEACE
> FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
> IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH
>
> But the face of Big Brother seemed to persist for several seconds on the screen, as though the impact that it had made on everyone's eyeballs was too vivid to wear off immediately. The little sandy haired woman had flung herself forward over the back of the chair in front of her. With a tremulous murmur that sounded like 'My Saviour!' she extended her arms towards the screen. Then she buried her face in her hands. It was apparent that she was uttering a prayer.
>
> At this moment the entire group of people broke into a deep, slow, rhythmical chant of 'B-B! . . . B-B!'—over and over again, very slowly, with a long pause between the first 'B' and the second—a heavy, murmurous sound, somehow curiously savage, in the background of which one seemed to hear the stamp of naked feet and the throbbing of tom-toms. For perhaps as much as thirty seconds they kept it up. It was a refrain that was often heard in moments of overwhelming emotion. Partly it was a sort of hymn to the wisdom and majesty of Big Brother, but still more it was an act of self-hypnosis, a deliberate drowning of consciousness by means of rhythmic noise.

1. What does the reference to "the Party" suggest to you?
2. What do the three slogans have in common? What is their purpose?
3. Describe the people's attitude toward Big Brother.
4. What sort of a society did Orwell anticipate in the future?

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Lesson 17

The Phenomenon of Theater of the Absurd

Objectives

- To understand characteristics of Theater of the Absurd
- To experiment with playwriting and acting

Notes to the Teacher

The term *Theater of the Absurd* comes from critic Martin Esslin's comments about characteristics of some plays written and staged in the aftermath of World War II. These works defied the limits of the "well-made" dramas favored in the past; instead, the playwrights aimed to startle the audience, to disturb people's complacency. Absurdist plays often appear purposeless; they focus on the human condition as absurd; reality is unexplainable and disorderly, and people's conversations are disjointed. In Theater of the Absurd, language is no longer reliable for communication.

Theater of the Absurd is not solely a British phenomenon, but some of its greatest playwrights were Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, and Tom Stoppard, all of whom represent the British literary tradition. Beckett won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969, Pinter in 2005. The awards reflect the Swedish Academy's awareness of a certain emptiness in much of modern life.

If you are teaching an honors or advanced placement class, you may want to use this lesson to introduce a unit on a play such as Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Otherwise, the lesson provides a brief taste of the nature of Theater of the Absurd. Procedure 2 suggests that you show students a picture that depicts Sisyphus pushing his huge boulder uphill; you can find many useful images on the Internet.

Procedure

1. Explain that during the 1950s a new form of drama emerged, and it is frequently called "Theater of the Absurd." Ask student to brainstorm about the connotations and denotations of the word *absurd*.

   Example: *Something that is absurd is illogical, unreasonable, foolish, ridiculous, and incongruous. It is more than just strange or silly.*

2. Show students a picture of Sisyphus, rolling his boulder uphill. Then explain the myth of Sisyphus, and ask them to discuss the significance of what they see on both literal and symbolic levels.

3. Distribute **Handout 38**, and have students complete it individually. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. There is no practical purpose to rolling the boulder up the mountain; it is meaningless work ordered by the gods. Sisyphus must keep trying even though it is evident that he will never get that boulder to stay at the top.
2. The story indicates that efforts are often completely futile, but people keep trying anyway. The gods, fate, and reality inflict great burdens with no real rationale.
3. Sisyphus is often seen as a symbol of diligence, responsibility, and perseverance despite obstacles. For some people he becomes almost like a patron saint. When people keep working at a task despite repeated failures, they behave like Sisyphus. For example, a person might keep slaving away to try to keep a small business afloat in a terrible economy.
4. Sometimes responsibilities are so important that we dare not abandon them. Other times, though, people need to leave the boulder at the bottom of the hill and move on. In this view, life is also about freedom and letting go.
5. Responses tend to depend on what the boulder represents and on whether it is ever best simply to give up.

4. Distribute **Handout 39**, and have students complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. In Theater of the Absurd, both dialogue and events tend to be illogical. Characters are often confused about who and what they are, as well as about their purposes. There are no clear resolutions to conflicts.
2. The dialogue reflects the fractured and distorted relationships among the characters. Genuine communication is impossible.
3. All three plays have enjoyed considerable popularity, although they tend to appeal more to a kind of intelligentsia than to the general public. On the other hand, when *Waiting for Godot* was performed at a prison, the prisoners expressed complete understanding and appreciation of the plot and themes. The inmates found it easy to identify with Vladimir and Estragon.
4. Most of the time we do not think of language as terribly dangerous. The quotation emphasizes that it involves a transaction that can be fatal. That transaction, like quicksand, can suck one down into inevitable suffocation; like a trampoline, it can bounce one completely out of control; it can crack like a lake with a thinly frozen surface, causing disaster.

5. Direct students to work with partners to create mini Absurdist plays. Tell them to use no more than three characters and to place those characters in a very specific and quite ordinary situation. Emphasize that the plays should express absurdity as the essence of the human condition. If necessary, suggest scenarios.

Examples: *second-string basketball players on the bench waiting for the game to start; people in an elevator that has jammed somewhere between the sixth and seventh floors of an office building; or a middle-aged husband and wife drinking coffee at the breakfast table.*

6. When students have finished, have them dramatize the mini-plays for the class as a whole, and point out disjunctions in the dialogue and absurd events

7. Conclude by emphasizing that Theater of the Absurd does not advise us to be absurd; rather it points out ways people allow their lives to become ridiculous. It is then possible for us to reject absurdity in favor of meaningful dialogue and actions.

Name:

The Myth of Sisyphus

Directions: The classical myth about Sisyphus illustrates some aspects of Theater of the Absurd. Read the summary of the story, and answer the questions.

> In Greek mythology Sisyphus is condemned in the afterlife to unending futile labor of the most intense kind. He has to roll an enormous boulder to the top of a mountain; every time he nearly achieves his objective, the boulder rolls back to the bottom, and he has to start all over again. The result is an unending cycle of enormous physical exertion followed by the frustration of failure.

1. How does the myth demonstrate absurdity?

2. What does the story of Sisyphus suggest about human life?

3. In what ways do ordinary people sometimes behave like Sisyphus?

4. Do these people have any alternatives?

5. Some people see Sisyphus as a heroic figure who keeps on trying no matter what; others see him as foolish. What do you think?

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Name:

Examples of Theater of the Absurd

Directions: Read the following thumbnail sketches of three representative plays, and answer the questions.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a two-act play about two old men, Vladimir and Estragon, who live in an isolated spot near a single tree. They have known each other for a long time, and their dialogue is often filled with non sequiturs. They are expecting to meet a man named Godot at this spot, but it is apparent that they have been waiting for a long time. Godot never appears, so the two men hang around waiting for him to come the next day. Samuel Beckett was born in Dublin, Ireland; he received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969.

In Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* two minor characters from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* assume major roles. Largely befuddled by the events around them, the two are mired in constant confusion and uncertainty. Stoppard includes moments from Shakespeare's play in juxtaposition with experiences of the two courtiers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Tom Stoppard was born in Czechoslovakia but moved to England, where he was knighted in 1997; he is considered a British playwright.

Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* takes place in a boardinghouse and centers on Stanley Webber's birthday, which turns into a nightmare with the arrival of two strangers. The play is full of inane conversations and includes a vague sense of danger and uncertainty. Harold Pinter received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2005 and is often considered the greatest representative of English Theater of the Absurd.

1. Based on the three summaries, how would you describe the general nature of Theater of the Absurd?

2. In plays in this tradition, we often find serious failures in communication; language itself becomes an object of mistrust. Why?

3. Of the three plays described above, which would you most like to see on stage? Explain.

4. During his speech at the Nobel Prize award ceremony, Harold Pinter said, "So language in art remains a highly ambiguous transaction, a quicksand, a trampoline, a frozen pool which might give way under you, the writer, at any time." Interpret the metaphors.

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Lesson 18

Postcolonial Perspectives

Objectives

- To understand the perspectives of both postcolonial writing and critical theory
- To read and respond to several excerpts from writings about areas that were once part of the British Empire

Notes to the Teacher

The far-flung British Empire engendered a lot of national pride, especially during the nineteenth century. In time, it also led to a deep awareness of injustices involved in seizing the territory of other, weaker countries and making indigenous people second-class citizens. Postcolonial perspectives are based on keen insights into the dynamics of power and the short-term as well as long-term consequences of political domination.

Students are sometimes surprised to find that some of the writers they study in a British course are, in fact, Nigerian, Indian, or South African. The answer is that those writers come from countries that were part of the British Empire, English was the language of their education, and they used English in their writing.

This lesson provides a brief introduction to postcolonial perspectives. If you have an honors or advanced placement class, you might want to assign a full-length piece such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Jean Rhys), *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Alan Paton), *Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe), or *A Passage to India* (E. M. Forster). This lesson includes excerpts from the last two titles. Forster's book emphasizes the cultural gap between the English in India and the local people. Achebe vividly depicts the destructive impact of British imperialism on traditional Nigerian culture.

Procedure

1. Remind students that the British Empire was once a huge global reality that imposed the English language and customs on indigenous peoples who were accustomed to entirely different ways of living and thinking. Explain that many writers have adopted postcolonial viewpoints, which emphasize the arrogance and greed behind imperialism and the injustices it spawned.

2. Explain that the queen of England was also the queen of India until after World War II, when India acquired independence. Distribute **Handout 40**, and ask students to read the excerpt. Then conduct a discussion based on the questions. Emphasize the use of textual evidence.

Suggested Responses

1. The ex-nurse sees herself as vastly superior to and apart from the people of India. She has always tried to stay aloof and totally separate. Her comments reflect her arrogance and assumption of racial superiority.
2. To her, Indians are not individuals with families and goals of their own, but just unappealing creatures who would be better off dead. She feels no connection with them as human beings.
3. The Collector exudes confidence in his ability to manage the system of how things are run in India. He has access to everything.
4. When she first arrived, Miss Quested was amazed at the exotic sights she encountered. Now she wants—or thinks she wants—closer contact with the people and cultures around her.

3. Point out that the passage emphasizes the attitudes of the British toward the local people. Ask students to brainstorm about what the Indians would have to say about the British.

   Example: *To the Indian people, the British must have seemed arrogant and aloof, part of a totally separate world that existed in their midst.*

4. Explain that *Things Fall Apart* was written by a Nigerian who was educated in English and whose writings are in English. The novel deals in part with the effects of imperialism on Nigerian culture.

5. Distribute **Handout 41**, and have small groups complete the exercise. Follow with whole-class discussion. Again, require textual evidence to support generalizations.

Suggested Responses

1. To the villagers, the white man is an object of curiosity and entertainment. They are in a leisure period, and they exhibit no fear. They are confident that this is their village.
2. The iron horse was a bicycle. Its being attached to the tree demonstrates ignorance about the people's beliefs and culture.
3. The villagers recognize the interpreter as a fellow tribesman, but they are also amused at his use of a different dialect of their language.
4. This was probably early in the British incursion, before the people had any reason to fear the power and impact of the culture that was about to engulf them.

6. Ask students to write a response to the following prompt: *How can postcolonial perspectives be applied to other places and times in history?* If students seem confused, add a few more questions. *How did colonialism affect the United States? What happened to the indigenous people of New Zealand and Australia? How did the arrival of European explorers affect the natives of the islands off the coast of Central America?*

Name:

An Excerpt from *A Passage to India*

Directions: In *A Passage to India* novelist E. M. Forster explores some of the tensions caused by Britain's rule in India. Read the following excerpt from chapter 3, and answer the questions.

> "What I mean is, I was a nurse before my marriage, and came across them a great deal, so I know, I really do know the truth about Indians. A most unsuitable position for an Englishwoman—I was a nurse in a Native State. One's only hope was to hold sternly aloof."
>
> "Even from one's patients?"
>
> "Why, the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die," said Mrs. Callendar.
>
> "How if he went to heaven?" asked Mrs. Moore, with a gentle but crooked smile.
>
> "He can go where he likes as long as he doesn't come near me. They give me the creeps."
>
> "As a matter of fact I have thought what you were saying about heaven, and that is why I am against Missionaries," said the lady who had been a nurse. "I am all for Chaplains but all against Missionaries. Let me explain."
>
> But before she could do so the Collector intervened.
>
> Do you really want to meet the Aryan Brother, Miss Quested? That can be easily fixed up. I didn't realize he'd amuse you." He thought a moment. "You can practically see any type you like. Take your choice. I know the Government people and the landowners. Heaslop here can get hold of the barrister crew, while if you want to specialize on education we can come down on Fielding.
>
> "I'm tired of seeing picturesque figures pass before me as a frieze," the girl explained. "It was wonderful when we landed, but that superficial glamour soon goes."

1. How would you describe the former nurse's attitudes toward the people of India?

2. What are the implications of her statements that it is kindest to let Indians die?

3. About what does the Collector seem confident?

4. Miss Quested, a young woman, is a visitor who has never been to India before. How would you describe her attitudes?

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Name:

An Excerpt from *Things Fall Apart*

Directions: This novel by Chinua Achebe describes the impact of British imperialism on traditional, rural Nigerian culture. Read the excerpt from chapter 16, and answer the questions.

> The arrival of the missionaries had caused a considerable stir in the village of Mbanta. There were six of them and one was a white man. Every man and woman came out to see the white man. Stories about these strange men had grown since one of them had been killed in Abame and his iron horse tied to the sacred silk-cotton tree. And so everybody came to see she white man. It was the time of the year when everybody was at home. The harvest was over.
>
> When they had all gathered, the white man began to speak to them. He spoke through an interpreter who was an Ibo man, though his dialect was different and harsh to the ears of Mbanta. Many people laughed at his dialect and the way he used words strangely. Instead of saying "myself" he always said "my buttocks." But he was a man of commanding presence and the clansmen listened to him. He said he was one of them, as they could see from his color and his language.

1. Describe the attitude of the villagers to the white man. Do they fear him? Why or why not?

2. What do you think the iron horse was? What is the significance of the detail about the sacred tree?

3. How do the villagers react to the translator?

4. Do you think this event occurred early or late in the British occupation of Nigeria? Explain.

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Lesson 19

Ted Hughes, Long-Term Poet Laureate

Objectives

- To understand the distinction associated with being named poet laureate
- To read and respond to selected poems by Ted Hughes

Notes to the Teacher

A poet laureate is officially named by the government as a writer of great distinction and can be called upon to write for and read at special occasions. Other countries, including the United States, have poet laureates, but the honor is most often associated with England. In the early seventeenth century, Ben Jonson was the first unofficial English poet laureate. In 1669 John Dryden was the first official one, and since then there has been a succession of poets laureate, including Wordsworth and Tennyson. Ted Hughes held the position—by then known officially as Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom—from 1984 until his death in 1998.

Hughes (1930–1998) was an editor as well as a poet, although his career as a poet had a long hiatus after the suicide of his wife, poet Sylvia Plath. He grew up in Yorkshire, and many of his poems are dominated by imagery of that area and express the raw power of nature. His writing is more realistic than Romantic.

Hughes is usually represented in British literature and poetry textbooks. His work is under copyright, but many of the poems can be found on the Internet by using the key words "Hughes" and titles. In this lesson students discuss "Hawk Roosting," "Pike," "Thistles," "View of a Pig," and "Wind."

Procedure

1. Explain the term *poet laureate,* and point out that England has a long tradition of having an official poet laureate. Traditionally, poets honored with the position held it until death. Among the most famous are the Romantic William Wordsworth and the Victorian Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Introduce Ted Hughes as a post–World War II writer who was poet laureate from 1984 to 1998, and explain that many of his poems deal with aspects of nature.

2. Divide the class into groups, and assign each group one of the poems listed in the teacher notes. Ask students to examine the poems carefully, to prepare effective oral readings, and to identify speakers, purposes, and poetic devices. If you have assigned students to find the poems on the Internet, assist them in doing so, if necessary.

3. When groups have finished, have them share results with the class as a whole. Distribute **Handout 42** for note-taking purposes.

Suggested Responses

1. "Hawk Roosting": In this free-verse poem the speaker is the hawk, roosting high in a tree. The hawk is every inch a predator, solitary and with an air of near omnipotence. The poem uses imagery to convey the raw power of the hawk, to whom empathy is utterly alien. The hawk's talons grip a branch, and it muses on flight over the panorama below as well as on a sure attack on a hapless victim below. The last line has wry humor. Why would the powerful hawk want any of this to change?
2. "Pike": The pike, too, is all predator, but the speaker here is a human observer. The poem begins with tiny pike and builds up to the huge fish anglers like to catch. The poem is filled with images and emphasizes that, from the moment it hatches, a pike seeks prey, including other pike. The poem repeats the reference to the apparent grin on the pike's face. The fish shares the complacency of the hawk, but its very voraciousness can pose danger. In the end, the pike seems an ominous threat.
3. "Thistles": This free-verse poem switches the focus to flora and deals with thistles, weeds that can quickly take over a garden that is not cared for and that leave hikers' clothes filled with tiny prickles. The poem emphasizes their endurance—mown down, they quickly reseed and proliferate. Although thistles are not useless, no gardener wants them, and eliminating them is an unending task.
4. "View of a Pig": Free verse again, in this poem the speaker muses on a huge dead pig; the sixth stanza suggests that it has just been slaughtered, and people are ready to proceed with their work. Humans, too, are predators. To the speaker the pig is more a huge and amorphous object than a pig, and the work involved in preparing the meat seems more trouble than it is worth. For some reason the speaker is mesmerized by the carcass.
5. "Wind": The speaker talks about a house, the fields surrounding it, and gale-force winds. The house feels like a ship tossing around at sea; the speaker goes outside and sees the fields shaking and bending before the force of the wind. Back inside, the speaker feels that the wind is on the verge of destruction—as if the house cannot withstand its pressure. The people inside, mesmerized by the wind, can concentrate on nothing else and must wait it out. Some people read the wind in the poem as symbolic.

4. Ask students, based on the five poems, how they would describe Hughes's work. Lead them in a discussion of his use of free verse with stanza divisions and his focus on remorseless and sometimes violent aspects of life. Although Hughes often wrote about nature, it was not nature in the Wordsworthian sense—not a source for rejuvenation of spirit. Instead, nature seems to represent awesome power.

5. Ask students to imitate Hughes and to write free-verse poems about some aspect of nature that can seem dangerous, powerful, or threatening. Direct students to emphasize imagery, and encourage the use of similes and metaphors. If necessary, suggest possible topics, such as a wasp, vulture, pit bull, poison ivy, or tarantula. When students have finished, ask them to print and display copies of their work. Allow the class to go on a gallery walk to read and respond to the poems.

Name:

A Look at Poems by Ted Hughes

Directions: Ted Hughes is generally seen as one of the most important poets of post–World War II England. Fill in the chart with information and responses. Think about the extent to which you find the poems interesting or troubling.

Poem	Summary	Response
1. "Hawk Roosting"		
2. "Pike"		
3. "Thistles"		
4. "View of a Pig"		
5. "Wind"		

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Lesson 20

Nobelists from the British Literary Tradition

Objectives

- To recognize British writers who had the distinction of winning the Nobel Prize in Literature
- To complete a close textual analysis

Notes to the Teacher

The title of this lesson itself poses a problem. Human mobility often makes describing a writer in terms of nationality difficult. While some writers (for example, William Golding) can clearly be described as British, others can be claimed by more than one country. William Butler Yeats, usually read in courses on British literature, was militantly Irish. Nadine Gordimer lived and wrote in South Africa, which was once a British possession. V. S. Naipaul, descended from Indian peasants, was born and raised in Trinidad and became a citizen of the United Kingdom.

During the course of their study of British literature, students have no doubt already encountered some of the great writers who won the Nobel Prize. During this lesson, you will first discuss the nature and purpose of the prize. Students will learn a little about some of the authors who received it: Rudyard Kipling, William Butler Yeats, John Galsworthy, Winston Churchill, William Golding, Nadine Gordimer, V. S. Naipaul, and Doris Lessing. Students need access to the Internet; you may want to recommend the Nobel Prize Web site.

Procedure

1. Ask students what they know about the Nobel Prize. Lead them to understand that it is given in a variety of categories, including literature, physics, and medicine. Alfred Nobel, a wealthy chemist and inventor who was also successful in business, established the Nobel Prizes in his will, and they were first awarded in 1901. The award involves a substantial amount of money. It is not limited to any nationality and is one of the most coveted honors available.

2. Ask students what would make it very difficult for the Nobel committee in their annual mission to name prize recipients.

   Example: *With all the world as a stage, there are many, many worthy candidates.*

3. Explain that it is not always a simple matter to identify a person's nationality. (See "Notes to the Teacher.")

4. Divide the class into small groups, and assign each one or more of the authors listed in the "Notes to the Teacher." Distribute **Handout 43**. Stress that students need to accomplish two tasks.

    a. First, they will identify when and why the writers received the Nobel Prize and learn a little about them. Insist that students both quote and paraphrase/explain the statements made by the prize committee.
    b. Second, they will locate excerpts of writings and prepare to present the quotations with the rest of the class, including an explanation of stylistic devices. If students seem confused, offer examples. How do the opening sentences of a short story or novel establish mood and tone? To what extent do the closing sentences make matters clear or leave them ambiguous? How is a character vividly depicted through only a few short lines? How do figures of speech enhance communication?

5. When the groups have finished their work, distribute **Handout 44**, and have students use it for note-taking purposes. Choices of excerpts can vary enormously, as can information about the authors themselves.

Suggested Responses

1. Rudyard Kipling (1907): Kipling received the award in 1907, when he was still a relatively young man and had established his home in England. The Swedish Academy praised his attention to detail, original ideas, and creative storytelling, as well as his global fame. Kipling produced a wide variety of kinds of writing.
2. William Butler Yeats (1923): Yeats was the winner late in his career. An Irish nationalist, he was praised for poetic artistry, embodiment of national ideals, and inspirational power. Yeats was a poet and was actively involved in the Dublin theater world.
3. John Galsworthy (1932): Galsworthy won praise for his storytelling ability. In an unusual move, the Academy mentioned a specific title, *The Forsyte Saga*. Galsworthy wrote both fiction and drama and often dealt with injustice in the treatment of people in the lower social classes.
4. Winston Churchill (1953): Churchill won for his powerful and convincing rhetoric during the course of World War II, as well as for his work as a biographer and historian. He was prime minister during World War II, when he demonstrated powerful leadership.
5. William Golding (1983): Golding was praised for fiction that is realistic with mythic dimensions. The Academy recognized his works' focus on human nature and universal relevance. Golding was in the military during World War II and today is most well-known for *Lord of the Flies.*
6. Nadine Gordimer (1991): Gordimer a South African writer, won for the scope of her writing, which the Academy praised as beneficial to the world. She wrote fiction about South Africa and opposed the system of apartheid.

7. V. S. Naipaul (2001): Naipaul was recognized for both powerful storytelling and representation of voices that some might want to suppress. The descendant of farmworkers from India, he grew up in Trinidad and later settled in England.
8. Doris Lessing (2007): Lessing won very late in her career and was recognized for feminist perspectives and powerful scrutiny of the social climate in Zimbabwe and South Africa. When her strong political views made her unwelcome in her homeland, she relocated to England.

6. If you wish, assign students to independent reading of and writing about a selection by one of the writers.

Name:

A Look at a Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature

Directions: Use the following questions to focus your investigation of a winner of the prestigious award.

1. When did the writer receive the award, and what reason did the committee give for selecting him or her? Quote that reason, and then put it into your own words.

2. At what point in the writer's career was the award given? What kinds of writing did he/she produce? Which works are most notable?

3. Where did the writer live? What beliefs are evident in the writings?

4. What were some of the most significant events in the writer's life?

5. Select a brief sample of the writer's work—no more than a few sentences or lines. What choices did the writer make in crafting those lines, and what are the effects of those choices?

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Name:

Some Nobel Prize Winners

Directions: Fill in the chart with information about when and why the writers received the Nobel Prize in Literature and with one or two sentences that demonstrate the writer's style.

Writer	Nobel Prize Information	Sample Writing
1. Rudyard Kipling		
2. William Butler Yeats		
3. John Galsworthy		
4. Winston Churchill		
5. William Golding		
6. Nadine Gordimer		
7. V. S. Naipaul		
8. Doris Lessing		

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Lesson 21

The Man Booker Prize

Objectives

- To recognize efforts to encourage and support today's writers
- To understand the British view of the Commonwealth

Notes to the Teacher

Students are probably aware of the Nobel Prize in Literature and perhaps are acquainted with Pulitzer Prizes in the United States. They may not know that there are many prestigious awards for writers of all kinds. Yale issues the Bollingen Prize for poetry. The Edgar Awards focus on detective fiction. For writers of children's literature, the Newbery Medal is a coveted honor.

The Booker-McConnell Prize, now called the Man Booker Prize, was established in 1968 to honor one full-length novel each year. The first award was given in 1969. To be eligible, the book must be in English and by a writer in Great Britain, the British Commonwealth, Canada, or Zimbabwe; in other words, the author must represent a country in the previous British Empire. Man Booker Prize winners therefore form an ethnically diverse group. The judges are highly regarded scholars and writers.

It is impossible to tell from this close vantage point which of today's gifted writers will tomorrow be viewed as great. One of the lessons of history is that some novels regarded as great in their own time later disappear into obscurity, while others that receive nothing but scorn are later rediscovered as works of genius by writers way ahead of their time. As students complete their course in British literature, this lesson invites them to investigate some of the writers who either won or were short-listed for the Man Booker Prize. The names listed on **Handout 38** are intended to show the diversity of the winners, not necessarily to signify those of most-lasting literary merit.

Procedure

1. Ask students to define the term *starving artist*. (The term reflects the idea that it is very difficult for artists to earn enough money by their arts to support themselves.) Point out, for example, that if students declared that their main ambition is to become novelists, their parents might be less than delighted. Questions would probably emerge about who is going to pay the rent and utility bills, let alone provide the money for groceries.

2. Explain that awards are given by a variety of different groups to encourage writers and artists, and competition can be intense.

3. Describe the Man Booker Prize, and ask students to define the term *British Commonwealth*. Lead students to see that many countries that were once part of the British Empire are now independent, but also consider themselves part of the Commonwealth; they thus maintain some affiliation with the United Kingdom. Novelists from England, the Commonwealth, Ireland, and Zimbabwe (the last two were once part of the empire but not members of the Commonwealth) can be considered for the Man Booker Prize. The judges provide a long list of candidates, then a short list, and finally each year a winner is announced.

4. Explain that the Man Booker Prize Web site is a good source of information about both the winners and the writers on the short list. Ask students to review the lists and look for promising areas of research. For example, they might note names of writers who have appeared repeatedly on the short list. They might note surnames that do not sound British. They might note the relative balances of male and female writers.

5. Distribute **Handout 45**, and have students use the Internet to complete the chart.

Suggested Responses

1. Aravind Adiga (2008): Adiga won the prize in 2008 for his first novel, *The White Tiger*. He was born in India in 1974, immigrated to Australia with his family, and attended both Columbia University in New York City and Magdalen College in Oxford, England. As an adult he moved back to India, and he is considered an Indian writer.
2. J. M. Coetzee (1983, 1999): Coetzee was on the short list in 2009. He won the prize in 1983 for *Life & Times of Michael K.* and in 1999 for *Disgrace.* He was born and educated in South Africa, attended graduate school in Texas, and taught at a variety of prestigious universities in the United States. He returned to South Africa and later immigrated to Australia. In 2003 he received the Nobel Prize in Literature.
3. Nadine Gordimer (1974): Gordimer won for *The Conservationist*. She was born in South Africa in 1923 and lived there all her life. She attended college but did not graduate, received honorary degrees from prestigious schools such as Yale and Harvard, and published many novels and short stories. She received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1991.
4. Kazuo Ishiguru (1989): Ishiguru won for *The Remnants of the Day* and was on the short list in 1986, 2000, and 2005. He was born in Japan and moved with his family to England as a young child. He became an English citizen.
5. Penelope Lively (1987): Lively won for *Moon Tiger* and was on the short list in 1977 and 1984. She was born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1933 and spent her childhood there until she was sent to boarding school in England, where she later became a writer.
6. Hilary Mantel (2009, 2012): Mantel won for *Wolf Hall* and in 2012 for *Bring Up the Bodies*. She was born in England in 1952 and educated there. As a young woman, she moved with her husband to Botswana (southern Africa) and later to Saudi Arabia, after which they returned to England.

7. Yann Martel (2000): Martel won for *The Blind Assassin*. Martel is a Canadian writer who was born in 1963 in Spain and spent his growing-up years in Costa Rica, France, Mexico, and Canada. As an adult, travels took him to Iran, Turkey, and India.
8. Iris Murdoch (1978): Murdoch made frequent appearances on the short list—1969, 1970, 1973, 1985, and 1987—and she won the prize in 1978 for *The Sea, the Sea*. An extremely prolific writer, she was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1919, but her parents soon moved to London, where Murdoch grew up. As a young woman, her job took her to Belgium and Austria. She died in 1999.
9. V. S. Naipaul (1971): Naipaul won for *In a Free State* and was on the short list in 1979. He was born in 1932 in Trinidad (southern Caribbean), the descendant of laborers from India. He attended university in Oxford, chose English citizenship, and eventually was knighted. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001.
10. Salman Rushdie (1981): Rushdie won for *Midnight's Children* and was on the short list in 1983, 1988, and 1995. He was born in Bombay, India, in 1947 and sent to England as a young teenager to go to school. Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses* was extremely controversial and forced him into hiding for years. In 2007 he came to the United States for a five-year term at Emory University (Atlanta).

6. Ask students to share observations about winners of the Man Booker Prize.

   Example: *They are diverse in age and background; they range from extremely prolific writers to those relatively new on the scene. It is evident that worldwide critics have a sense of writers that are important to watch. Committee members have to be extremely well read.*

7. Have students formulate plans for projects spinning off from the Man Booker Prize information. These projects can be as extensive as independent reading of novels and written critical interpretations; if time is limited, students can focus on short stories, journalistic pieces, or excerpts from novels or memoirs.

Name:

A Diversity of Man Booker Prize Winners

Directions: Find and note information about the backgrounds of the following writers. In the right-hand column, list the year(s) they won the prize and the title(s) of the book(s) for which they won the prize.

Author	Background	Booker Prize
1. Aravind Adiga		
2. J. M. Coetzee		
3. Nadine Gordimer		
4. Kazuo Ishiguru		
5. Penelope Lively		
6. Hilary Mantel		
7. Yann Martel		
8. Iris Murdoch		
9. V. S. Naipaul		
10. Salman Rushdie		

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