

The Hero's Journey: Literature and Composition

Second Edition

Teacher Edition



Oak Meadow

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Teacher Edition Introduction

This teacher edition is written to accompany Oak Meadow's high school English course, *The Hero's Journey: Literature and Composition*. The teacher edition is designed for parents, tutors, and teachers who work with students using this course either independently as a homeschooler or as part of a school using Oak Meadow's curriculum. The course is designed to make it easy for students to work successfully on their own, but supervision, guidance, and assessment by an adult is expected. We hope you find this teacher edition helpful in guiding your student throughout the year.

*We are the hero
of our own story.*

Mary McCarthy

Working with Your Student

Every student has different strengths and challenges, and every teacher brings a unique skill set to the student-teacher relationship. This course encourages students to develop a strong sense of original thought, and the teacher's encouragement in this realm can be very beneficial. Whenever possible, initiate or participate in discussions about the readings, assignments, and issues. If possible, read the books at the same time as your student to make conversations more relevant and engaged. Encourage your student to form opinions based on their experiences and knowledge, and to express those opinions with conviction and confidence. Share your own thoughts and experiences, and demonstrate a willingness to view issues from multiple perspectives.

When assessing your student's work, it is recommended that you focus on concrete suggestions for improvement while being specific about where the student displays strong skills. This helps the student know exactly what they are doing well and what needs improvement. You will have to gauge how much praise and how much criticism to provide, based on what motivates your student. In general, it is good to keep in mind that the student has a full course of 36 lessons in which to improve skills and develop knowledge—it is often best to focus on two or three areas that need work at a time, and let others go so that the student is not overwhelmed, especially early in the course. Other areas that need attention can be emphasized as the student progresses through the year.

Depending on your student, you might ask for their input about ways you can support the learning process. Often high school students are still developing time management and organizational skills and can use help in this area. Some students benefit from having an adult take a keen interest in their

work, while others prefer to work more independently. However you support your student, your thoughtful guidance and encouraging feedback can help your student stretch and grow.

Content warning: The books in this course were carefully chosen to reflect the themes of the course and present an accurate, realistic portrayal of life. The books may contain strong language, violence, and other mature topics. You are encouraged to read these books in advance so you are prepared to support your student. While most high school students are able to process this material successfully, if you feel your student may be more sensitive or find the material too intense, you are encouraged to have your student skip problematic passages or provide alternate readings and assignments.



Coursebook Introduction

What Is a Hero?

The theme of the hero's journey is an important focus for this course, yet it is not easily defined. Is the idea of heroism even a good one to promote and study? Is promoting the idea of heroism healthy for our society? Some people equate heroism with fame, but this course looks at the idea of heroism in a larger context. What does it mean to be a hero? What is the difference between a hero and someone who is not a hero? Literature is at the root of many of these questions. As you will see in this course, heroism is a theme and a literary device across many texts, including poetry, fiction, and nonfiction writing. This course will take a deep dive into some examples and challenge you to think about the patterns of a hero's journey and how it might connect to your own life.

Human history is full of journeys taken by people who, along the way, do extraordinary things. To some, such people and their achievements are considered heroic. Take, for example, Lewis and Clark, who in 1804 undertook an expedition across the United States at a time when the majority of the country was still wild. To many, their journey is legendary, given the trials and hardships they endured in order to map uncharted lands and learn about previously unknown cultures. But to others, who believe the explorers' journeys were exploitative and destructive to nature and Indigenous peoples, Lewis and Clark are reviled.

What does it mean to be a hero and who gets to decide? Is being a hero just a matter of doing something out of the ordinary or something extreme? Is it possible for a store clerk to be a hero simply because they are able to work a long and unglamorous job to help put food on the family table? What about a shoeshine man outside a train station in New York City who is homeless and hungry but is able to greet people with a smile despite his hardship—is he a hero? This course looks at literature featuring ordinary people who find themselves in circumstances that require extraordinary acts—one way to define heroism—and examines these extraordinary acts in relation to the archetypal hero and the hero's journey.

All of the readings for this course were chosen because they explore important questions about what it means to be human. They ask readers difficult questions about the meaning of life and the way we value family and friends. They were also chosen because they embody our fascination with adventure, danger, and risk-taking. These books examine what it means to test one's strength of character through very difficult physical and emotional situations. Finally, they were chosen because they are

examples of the literary arts in their highest form in terms of the complexity, depth, and clarity of their narratives.

As you begin your exploration of the hero's journey in literature, ask yourself, "What does a hero look like? How does a hero act? Could I be a hero?"

Content warning: The books in this course were carefully chosen to reflect the themes of the course and present an accurate, realistic portrayal of life. The books may contain strong language, violence, and other mature topics. As with all material in this course, please approach the topic with sensitivity and kindness, both to the people you are studying and to yourself. If you are struggling emotionally with topics in this course, please contact your teacher or another trusted adult.

Course Materials

This coursebook contains all the instructions and assignments that you need to complete the course. In addition, the following books are used in this course:

- *The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer
- *Raybearer* by Jordan Ifueko
- *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *Where We Come From* by Oscar Cásares
- *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston
- *House of Light* by Mary Oliver
- *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers
- *Write It Right: A Handbook for Student Writers* (Oak Meadow Books)
- Two blank journals (one for each semester)

Each of the readings for this course has been chosen for its spirit, its sense of adventure, and the strength of the characters in each story. They have also been chosen to help you develop an appreciation for good literature.

You will also need a dictionary for this course. Online dictionary sources should be supplemented with a print dictionary, such as *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*; *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*; or the *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, so you can compare definitions and absorb the nuances of a particular word. Since some of the projects in this course require research, you will also want access to a library and the internet.

You will be keeping a reader's journal during this course that will be filled with your ideas, questions, sketches, and designs that have been inspired by your readings. If you aren't familiar with the concept of a reader's journal, you can do an internet search for "reader's journal images" or "main lesson book

images” to get an idea of the wide range of uses this book can have. Use your reader’s journal to record references to meaningful or pivotal passages (remember to make note of page numbers!), write down observations, note unfamiliar words and their definitions, draw maps and diagrams of story elements, illustrate scenes, and doodle relevant images. Your reader’s journal will be entirely original, created by you as you explore literary themes, settings, characters, and historical time periods. While the journal is for your own creative exploration, it is also a record of the effort you make to understand the literature you will be studying and to further discover what that literature means to you. You will be sharing your journal with your teacher at the end of each semester (after lesson 18 and lesson 36), and specific journal assignments will be copied/scanned and shared with your teacher at the end of each unit. Your teacher will be looking for regular entries, a variety of uses (e.g., vocabulary words, questions, ideas, summaries, illustrations, etc.), and overall depth. These reader’s journal assignments will be graded, but the journal is primarily a study tool for you.

Course Orientation

In this course, there are 36 lessons divided equally into two semesters. Each lesson represents one week of study (approximately five hours of work). In each lesson, you will find sections to guide your studies and deepen your understanding of the material.

Each lesson represents one week of study (approximately five hours of work).

Digging Deeper gives you background information that helps you interpret the literature within its historical and cultural context.

Along the Way helps you identify core themes and concepts. The questions asked in this section are not assignments that need to be completed. They are simply ideas to help you to reflect on the reading more fully.

What Do You Think? gives you an opportunity to discuss with someone in your family or community your thoughts and opinions about what you are reading. This section includes talking points that can help you consider alternate viewpoints, clarify your views, and practice persuasive speech and logical arguments. Usually you will need to complete the reading assignment before your discussion.

Writing Tip sections contain timely reminders to help you improve and refine your writing skills. These tips will refer you to relevant sections in *Write It Right* and *A Pocket Style Manual*, and you will be expected to demonstrate these skills and knowledge in your lesson assignments.

Definitions of unusual words can be found in the sidebar. Review these **before** each reading assignment.

An **Assignment Checklist** is included with each lesson, so you can see at a glance what is required and be able to check off assignments as you complete each one. Assignments will be fully explained in the lesson.

Share Your Work is found at the end of most lessons. This section provides reminders and information for students who are submitting work to a teacher.

The **Appendix** contains important material that you will be expected to read and incorporate into your work throughout the year. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the information in the appendix.

This course is designed for independent learning, so hopefully you will find it easy to navigate. However, it is assumed you will have an adult (such as a parent, tutor, or school-based teacher) supervising your work and providing support and feedback. We will refer to this person as “your teacher” in this course. If you have a question about your work, ask them for help.

Academic Expectations

The written work for this course includes comprehension and critical thinking questions, interpretive essays, a reader's journal, creative projects, and creative writing. Please follow the assignments in order and write out all your responses in full sentences, maintaining clear paragraph structure. Whenever possible, support your observations with examples, specific details, and direct quotations from the readings; include proper citations whenever necessary.

Please follow the assignments in order and write out all your responses in full sentences, maintaining clear paragraph structure (unless otherwise instructed).

You are expected to meet your work with integrity and engagement. Your work should be original and give an authentic sense of your thoughts and opinions rather than what you think the teacher reviewing your work wants to hear. When you use other sources, you are required to cite them accurately. Plagiarism, whether accidental or intentional, is a serious matter.

The **appendix** contains important material regarding Oak Meadow's academic expectations and original work guidelines, as well as information on plagiarism and citing your sources. It is your responsibility to make sure you understand the academic expectations and abide by them.

Throughout this course, your teacher will be looking for evidence of mastery of each of the grammar skills and writing techniques presented in the Writing Tip section of each lesson. Refer to *Write It Right* or *A Pocket Style Manual* often, as they are excellent writing resources. You'll find a helpful glossary of grammatical terms in the back of *A Pocket Style Manual* (319). Use this glossary any time you come across a literary term or technique with which you are unfamiliar.

Interdisciplinary Learning: The Cross-Pollination of Knowledge

Although this is a literature course, you will often find connections to history, science, geography, art, music, and other subjects. In the Digging Deeper section in particular, references are made to other disciplines and the way they have influenced literature and/or an author's life.

As a high school student, you may be taking world geography and environmental science courses at the same time as this course. Since literature connects to all areas of life, your experience in those courses will apply here. You are encouraged to come up with ideas for integrating what you are studying in other courses. Here are a couple examples:

- Maps are an important component of many of the literature selections you will be reading this year. You will be tracing these heroes' journeys on maps both real and fictional, and you will be making your own maps as well. As you learn how landforms and people interact in your science and geography courses, you'll have the opportunity to create a map based on the literary journeys you read about in this course. You may find your scientific and geographical knowledge dovetailing nicely with your literary explorations.
- Environmental science is an important concept in several of our selections. Nature is almost another character in works like *Kidnapped*, while *Their Eyes Were Watching God* features some extreme weather events as plot points. In addition, you will be able to apply the experimental strategies and scientific habits of thought to character and story analysis: What are the characters experiencing? What does their behavior indicate? What is their goal? What might happen next?

By integrating knowledge from your other courses, you may deepen your appreciation of literature as a window to universal experiences of life on Earth. Ideas, habits of thought, historical events, trends in art and music, and scientific breakthroughs all influence and inform one another—and all find their way into literature.

The Journey Begins

So what does it mean to be a hero? What does it mean to be on a hero's journey? This course explores the hero's journey as a path of discovery, challenge, and reward. *Your* path in life illustrates your own journey of discovery, challenge, and reward. Hopefully, you will be inspired by the lives of these heroes, both ordinary and extraordinary, and begin to see the heroism and adventure in the world all around you, as well as inside you.



UNIT I:

Call to Adventure

*A hero is no braver than an ordinary man,
but he is brave five minutes longer.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Lessons 1–2

Have you ever wondered if you have what it takes to do something really courageous? Many people who have done heroic things have said afterward that they didn't feel brave, they just acted; they just did what needed to be done. Can you be fearful and still be a hero? Do heroes know they are on a heroic journey when it is happening? Do they feel heroic? In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Frodo knows he's on a heroic journey, but he's often fearful and almost never feels heroic.

Have you ever wondered if you have what it takes to do something really courageous?

Life can be seen as a series of journeys. There are physical journeys, like a trip across the country or a hike in the woods. A career is another kind of journey, as is your education. Childhood is a journey. Relationships can be unique and varied journeys, where you always end up in a different place—emotionally, mentally, and sometimes geographically—from where you started. You'll be exploring these ideas and more in this course, beginning with the first two lessons, where you'll be introduced to the elements of the hero's journey.

Lesson

1

Arc of the Hero's Journey

How do you start a hero's journey? Or does a hero's journey find you? Is there an element of destiny involved? In this lesson, we'll analyze the archetype of the hero's journey. Make sure to read all of the sidebar sections and assignments before jumping into the reading assignment. This is a good habit to get into for all your lessons—it'll help you organize your time and clarify the goals of each lesson.

Learning Objectives

- Study archetypal elements in literature and film.
- Examine the historical and cultural relevance of the hero's journey.
- Identify the stages of the hero's journey in familiar stories.

Assignments

Reading and Viewing

To introduce the concept of the hero's journey, watch the following videos.

“Netflix’s Myths & Monsters: Joseph Campbell & The Hero’s Journey”

[youtube.com/watch?v=DwnxYXOTy94](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwnxYXOTy94)

“The Hero’s Journey and the Monomyth: Crash Course World Mythology #25”

[youtube.com/watch?v=XevCvCLdKCU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XevCvCLdKCU)

Then, read “The Arc of the Hero’s Journey” (see the reading selection).

See the infographic below for movie examples of each of the stages of the hero's journey.

“What Your 6 Favorite Movies Have in Common”

[venngage.com/blog/heros-journey](https://www.venngage.com/blog/heros-journey)

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Read “The Arc of the Hero’s Journey.”
- Write a three-paragraph narrative about your personal helpers and mentors.
- Complete journal assignments.

The course begins with an overview of the archetype of the hero's journey. Students are encouraged to read through the entire lesson, including the sidebar sections and all of the assignments, before starting their work.

Reader's Journal

You will begin using your journal book right away by writing down the stages of the hero's journey, which you'll refer to throughout this course. Often the assignments given for the reader's journal will be creative in nature, giving you the opportunity to explore what the reading means to you through drawing, creative writing, etc., but other times you'll use it for note-taking so that all your notes are in one place and easy to access.

Your goal is to create a reader's journal that is not only a helpful study tool, but also a representation of your thoughtful engagement with the course. Add color to your illustrations and maps, and keep your notes organized.

For inspiration, you can do an online image search for “Waldorf high school main lesson books.”

- Start by creating a title page in your reader's journal, recording the title of the course and the date (or school year). You are encouraged to add decorative elements to this title page over the course of the year, perhaps creating a border and meaningful designs or sketches that refer to course material. On the next page, create a table of contents that you will add to when starting each new unit.
- Your first journal assignment is to create your own visual representation of the archetypal hero's journey, as presented in “The Arc of the Hero's Journey.” Based on the reading selection below, use colored pencils, watercolor, crayons, paint, or collaged photographs and graphics to depict the stages of the hero's journey. Don't simply copy what is in this book—this will be your own interpretation. You might make a time line, or choose a different shape to visualize your map of the journey. Think about your life so far. Is there a journey you've taken that mirrors the cycle of the hero's journey? Is there a family story that you can use to depict the journey circle? If so, use that as the basis for your drawing.

archetype *n*: the quintessential example or original model from which similar things are copied.

labyrinth *n*: a maze.

myth *n*: a traditional story that contains universal elements.

psyche *n*: the human soul, mind, or spirit.

threshold *n*: the bottom of a doorframe; an entrance or point of beginning.

Students begin using their reader's journal right away by writing down the stages of the hero's journey, which they'll refer to throughout this course. They will create a title page in their journal with the title of the course and the date (or school year). They are encouraged to add decorative elements to this title page. On the next page, a table of contents will be created that will be added to when starting each new unit.

The first journal assignment is to create a visual representation of the archetypal hero's journey, as presented in "The Arc of the Hero's Journey." Students might use colored pencils, watercolor, markers, paint, or collaged photographs and graphics to depict the stages of the hero's journey. They might make a time line, or choose a different shape to visualize the map of the journey. They are instructed to create their own unique interpretation rather than copying what is in their coursebook.

Writing

Be sure to read all assignments for each lesson carefully before you begin working. Often a student misses a part of the assignment, or glances too quickly at it and misunderstands it, so take your time and make sure you know just what is expected for each assignment. Everyone appreciates work that is brilliant and creative, but it must meet the expectations of the assignment. By taking the time to review all the assignments before beginning the lesson's reading, you can read with purpose and take relevant notes.

Often a student misses a part of the assignment or glances too quickly at it and misunderstands it, so encourage your student to read everything carefully before beginning.

- Write a personal narrative about the helpers and mentors you have encountered so far on your life's journey. Who have been your own helpers, guides, or teachers? Write a three-paragraph essay on how a helper or mentor has come to your aid in facing or overcoming an obstacle in your life. Make sure to include concrete examples. Be specific! What kind of help did you receive? Why did it make such a difference? If you are writing this assignment by hand, you should expect to fill up about two pages. If you are typing it on the computer, check the word count to make sure it is approximately 500 words (it doesn't have to be exact—the 450- to 550-word range is fine). Refer to the writing tip in this lesson for more information about essay writing, formatting, and punctuation.

Students should develop their ideas in a logical sequence over the course of the essay, and include specific examples of the help or guidance they received. This is a good opportunity to assess the student's skills in paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. It's also a good time to check the ability to follow directions and stay on topic, and present ideas in a logical sequence. An excellent response will use correct form, provide specific details, and show a clear connection between the topic and the student's personal experience. Expect a three- to five-paragraph essay.

Writing Tip

In this lesson you are asked to write a personal narrative about the mentors in your life. Narratives tell a story, and personal narratives tell *your* story. Before you begin writing, read the following sections in *Write It Right*: "General Formatting," "Essay Writing," and "Punctuation Usage."

SHARE YOUR WORK

Feel free to contact your teacher at any time with questions or ideas. You will submit your work at the end of each lesson. Please label each assignment carefully. Your teacher will let you know their preferred method of sharing work and providing feedback.

If you would like to adjust the workload or make substitutions, discuss it with your teacher.

Reading Selection:

The Arc of the Hero's Journey

For each literature selection in this course, you will explore how the concept of the hero's journey applies and how it can help you expand your understanding of the literature and deepen your appreciation of it. Of course, each book also has its own themes, structure, and meaning, which you will explore as well. But the hero's journey is a very flexible, universal concept, and it can help tie each book into a larger story of human struggle, adventure, and self-discovery.

The hero's journey is an *archetype*. This is an idea or structure that serves as a model for many individual figures, whether they are characters, objects, or stories. Take superheroes, for example. You are probably familiar with many stories about them. Even though these stories are all different, there are certain characteristics that you can recognize as being common to superheroes: the hero has special powers, fights evil, and often wears a fantastic costume (usually to disguise their true identity). These elements are all part of the superhero archetype. Superhero stories are often written using elements of the hero's journey, but superheroes are different because they have “super” powers; heroes are often ordinary people thrust into greatness by extraordinary circumstances.

An archetype is an idea or structure that serves as a model for many individual figures, whether they are characters, objects, or stories.

The hero's journey is an archetype introduced by the teacher and philosopher Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell's idea is that the hero's journey underlies all stories—myths, folktales, novels, plays, and movies—from all cultures in all periods of human history. According to Campbell, the hero's journey involves some very basic ideas about what it means to be human, and it can illuminate anything you read as well as help you to understand yourself and your own journey.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces

Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) was born in New York City, where he encountered many different cultures, people, and works of art. He loved to visit the American Museum of Natural History, where he encountered Native American sculptures, totem poles, and figures. He was fascinated with mythology from an early age. After many years of studying myths, legends, and stories from all over the world, Campbell published his first book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, in 1949. Within a short time, the book

achieved the status of a classic. In it, Campbell argues that there is a single story, or pattern, that lies at the foundation of every single story ever written or told. It is expressed in countless different ways and disguised in the individual cultures and histories from which it comes, but it also has several basic elements that can be recognized time and time again in stories about the human condition. Campbell called this pattern the *monomyth*.

Monomyth (literally, “one myth”) is another name for the hero's journey. In his book, Campbell outlines the structure of the monomyth, illustrating each element with dozens of examples drawn from myths throughout history and around the world.

But how can a single story, no matter how basic, lie underneath all the myths and legends of human history? Well, not surprisingly, the basis of the hero's journey theory is rooted in an experience that every human being shares: our own birth.

How can a single story, no matter how basic, lie underneath all the myths and legends of human history?

Every single human being grows inside a mother's womb. The mother protects the child within herself, while the baby's body and mind develops. After birth, a baby is protected and nurtured by adults far longer than other animal species. This nurturing caregiver becomes a symbol for everything that is beautiful, protective, and good.

In addition to the nurturer, an authoritative power figure enters the child's life.

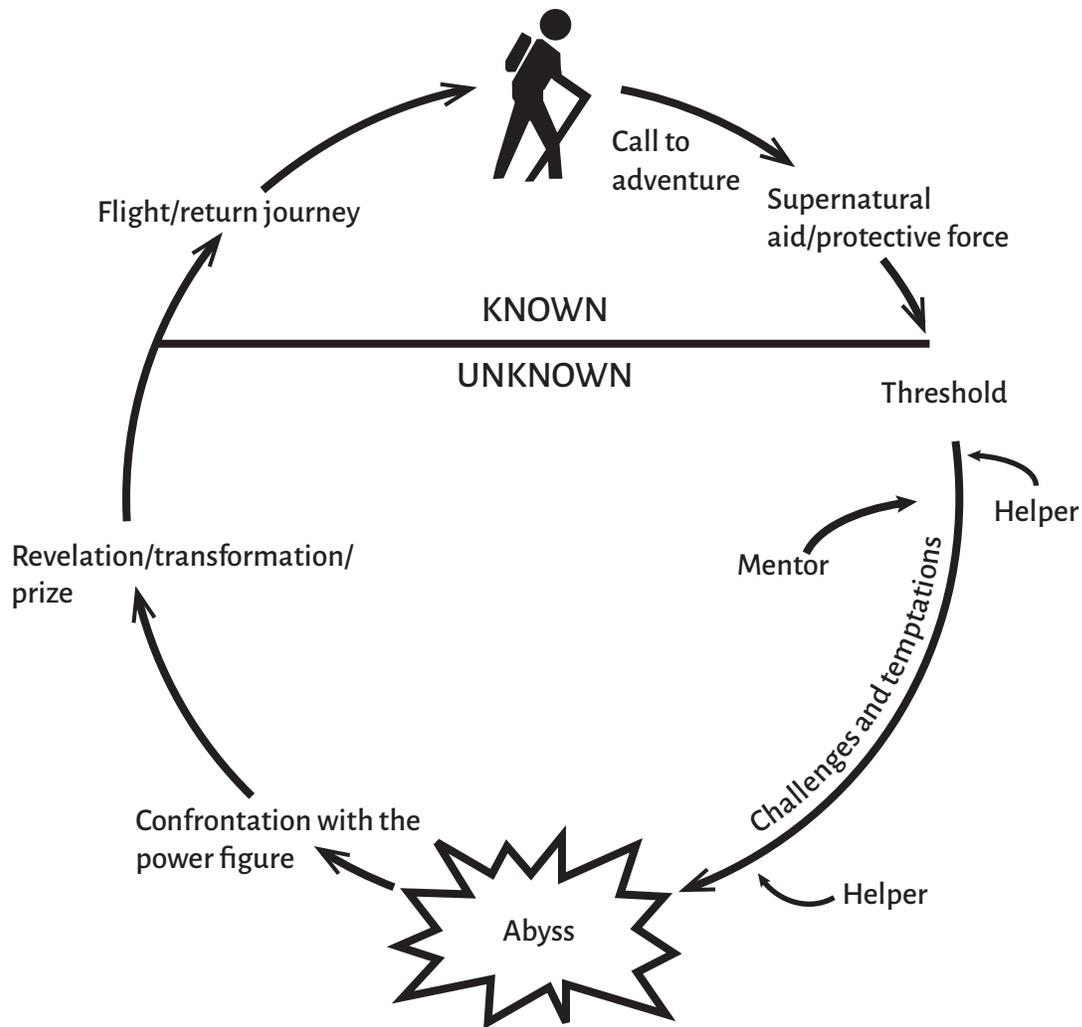
This basic triangle—mother, child, and father (or nurturer, child, power figure)—forms the basis of the hero's journey. In the journey, the child as hero must find their own way, separating from the familiar, protective force, and eventually coming to terms with, or confronting, an all-powerful force. The reward at the end of this journey is wisdom, self-knowledge, and a new beginning.

The Hero's Journey Cycle

Now that you have a basic understanding of the concept of the hero's journey, you can look more closely at the elements it contains. Not all of these elements are present in every single story; in fact, part of the fun of this course will be to see how each of our selected works of literature contains a unique mixture of these elements to create its own version of the hero's journey. But Campbell has identified these as the basic steps in the journey, common to the vast majority of human myths and legends.

Call to adventure

In the beginning, the hero lives in the “real world.” It is familiar, safe, and mundane. It can be compared to the safety of the mother's womb, which each human being must leave to venture into the world. The hero is often a figure of some notoriety. Perhaps their arrival has been foretold by a prophet or sage. Perhaps they appear to be a commoner but are secretly the heir of a powerful monarch, wizard, or god. Sometimes the hero has a peculiar attribute or quality that makes them stand out from the crowd. In cases like this, the hero will often seem destined to embark on the fateful journey.



Then something happens that reveals the existence of another world—a world of magic, fantasy, or adventure that the hero was unaware of before. It can happen as a result of an accident, a random chance, or a blunder. Often the call to adventure is accompanied by the arrival of a herald, a character who appears to summon the hero to adventure. The herald introduces the hero to the unknown world and sets a task or quest that must be accomplished.

Supernatural aid/protective force

Oftentimes, in preparation for the great journey, the hero is provided with assistance in the form of a supernatural object, magic talisman, or powerful weapon. Sometimes, protective gods bestow a gift on the hero. The hero may be given a tool or talisman to protect them on a journey through darkness, danger, and the unknown. Other times the assistance comes from a more mundane source, such as a parent or elderly figure. According to Campbell, this assistance represents the benign, protective force of destiny. The hero's life circumstances "choose" them for this journey, but there is a reason for this: they are equal to the task, whether or not they know it. The same force of destiny that propels them into extraordinary circumstances ensures that they are not without help.

Threshold

Now that they are ready to begin the journey in earnest, the hero crosses a threshold, the boundary between the familiar world and the dark, unknown world of adventure. Perhaps the hero enters a forest or sets out to sea. Or the threshold could be a cave leading to a subterranean underworld. Perhaps the hero goes to space. The unknown world could even be something more ordinary: the other side of town or the basement or attic. In all cases, a line is crossed. The hero has stepped out of normal life and into a world of new experiences, unknown dangers, and magical rewards.

Sometimes the threshold is guarded by a sentry figure or a challenge that must be overcome before the hero can cross the border. Whether guarded by a sentry or not, the threshold represents the first obstacle the hero must overcome, and it is the beginning of the difficulties and struggles that the hero will encounter on their journey.

Helpers and mentors

On the journey, the hero is assisted by various helpers and mentors. This can be one or more people who stay with the hero throughout the story or individuals who appear at different points to offer much-needed help or encouragement.

Challenges and temptations

As the hero progresses on their journey, they will encounter several challenges and temptations. These are tests of the hero's courage, resolve, and confidence. The hero may come up against monsters, traps, or puzzles. These are all obstacles that must be overcome in order to proceed on the journey.

Abyss

The unknown world of adventure through which the hero travels can come in many different forms. This could be a true underworld, a sort of hell, below the surface of the Earth. Or it could be a dark forest, a magical fantasyland, or even the belly of a whale. In every case, the underworld represents the land of the unknown through which the hero must travel to attain the ultimate wisdom.

Confrontation with the power figure

The climax of the hero's journey comes when all the trials, ordeals, and barriers have been overcome. The hero reaches the heart of the underworld and confronts the chief villain of the story, which could be represented by a fearsome monster, an angry god, or some other mysterious figure. In almost all cases, this figure represents the all-powerful authority figure. Whatever form the power figure takes, it represents the crucial point of the journey. The hero must stand their ground, overcome this powerful figure, and then reconcile with them in order to achieve the ultimate prize.

Revelation/transformation/prize

And what is the ultimate prize? Sometimes it is a treasure or an object of great power. It could be a charm, a weapon, or a medicine. It could be the saving of the world from some global catastrophe or

the attainment of inner peace or true love. No matter what the symbol is, it represents wisdom and revelation. By overcoming all their trials, the hero has proven themselves strong, confident, and worthy, and is rewarded with self-knowledge and the freedom to forge their own life. Campbell calls this prize the ultimate boon. (If you're not familiar with the word *boon*, look it up!)

Flight/return journey

After being granted the ultimate boon, the hero must leave the underworld and return to the “normal” world. This is not always easy: Sometimes the hero must steal the boon and flee back to the normal world, chased by monsters and guardians. Sometimes the hero encounters more trials and obstacles on the return journey. Sometimes they choose not to return at all. In any case, there is another threshold where the hero will cross from the underworld back into the world of light, and there is often another guardian that must be overcome to cross this second threshold.

Return

Once the hero overcomes the return threshold, they have mastered both worlds and often earn the right to come and go between them at will. Carrying the prize earned in the confrontation with the power figure, the hero makes the triumphant return to the familiar world of family and friends. The journey is complete, and they have been transformed in the process. The challenge here is to keep the wisdom gained and incorporate it into normal life.

The hero's journey is really a journey of self-discovery. We must all leave the familiar, comfortable world of our birth and explore strange, and sometimes dangerous, places in order to gain the ultimate prize: knowledge of ourselves. As the old saying goes, *you've got to go there to come back*. In this sense, we are all the hero of our own lives.

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Hero's Journey Archetype: Theseus and the Minotaur

To illustrate the structure of the hero's journey archetype, we will look at a familiar story from Greek mythology, the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. It does not follow every element of the monomyth structure—no story does—but it will serve as a good example of how the hero's journey plays out.

Theseus was a demigod (half god, half human), whose father was the sea-god Poseidon. But the king of Athens, Aegeus, was also his father (according to the legend, his mother Aethra mated with both Aegeus and Poseidon in the same night). Theseus was raised in Athens by his mother. When he came of age, he recovered the sandals and sword of his father, Aegeus, from underneath a huge rock, thus proving his royal blood and divine strength. Theseus struck out to seek his destiny and found his way to Crete.

Crete was being threatened by a hideous beast called the Minotaur. The Minotaur was a huge, powerful man with the head of a bull who was born as a punishment to Minos, King of Crete. Minos had prayed to Poseidon for a snow-white bull to sacrifice. He was given a bull, but, instead of sacrificing it, he decided to keep it, which angered the gods, who caused the king's wife Pasiphae to fall in love with the bull. Soon after, Pasiphae gave birth to the Minotaur.

To protect the people of Crete from the Minotaur, Minos imprisoned it in a huge labyrinth underneath the palace in the city of Knossos. To placate the beast, Minos sacrificed seven youths and seven maidens every year by sending them into the labyrinth. They would get lost and be devoured by the Minotaur.

Theseus, discovering this situation on his arrival, vowed to rescue the people of Crete by slaying the Minotaur. To get into the labyrinth, he took the place of one of the sacrificial victims. But Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, had fallen in love with Theseus and had given him some special tools to help him: a sword and a ball of thread. He would unwind the thread as he traveled deeper into the labyrinth, so that after he had slain the Minotaur he would be able to find his way out. In this way, Theseus triumphs in the end, showing that he is able to do what no one else has.

As you can see, the story of Theseus clearly shows many of the elements of the hero's journey. Theseus is both god and man and is of royal blood. The labyrinth is the underworld, a dark unknown realm of danger and reward. Ariadne represents his supernatural aid, helping him with special tools that allow him to overcome the obstacles of the labyrinth. And the all-powerful Minotaur is his final confrontation. The half-man, half-god hero meets the half-man, half-beast enemy and defeats him, thus coming into his own as hero and conqueror. Then he makes his return journey out of the labyrinth and back into the world of light with the assistance of his supernatural aid.

Modern Manifestations of the Hero's Journey

You can probably think of many stories that share elements of the hero's journey. To help illustrate these connections, let's look at some contemporary films and books that demonstrate each of the stages of the hero's journey.

- **Magical/universal birth:** In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (J. K. Rowling), we find out that, as a baby, Harry Potter was marked with a lightning bolt scar, an indication of his magical birthright. In George Lucas's *Star Wars* saga, Luke Skywalker and his twin sister, Leia, are likewise hidden at birth to safeguard their lives.
- **Call to adventure:** In *Star Wars: Episode IV*, Luke Skywalker is first called to adventure by the arrival of the droids C-3PO and R2-D2 who bring news of the galactic war and of the princess in need of



Theseus and the Minotaur in the Labyrinth
by Edward Burne-Jones, 1861
(Image credit: preraphaelites.org)

rescue. The droids represent the heralds, introducing Luke to the unknown, dangerous world that is his destiny. In *The Hunger Games* (Suzanne Collins), Katniss Everdeen is abruptly called when her sister's name is drawn for the "games," and, in an instinctive move to protect her sister, Katniss volunteers as tribute.

- **Supernatural aid/protective force:** In L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy meets the good witch Glinda shortly after her arrival in Oz. Glinda bestows on Dorothy the magical slippers. Throughout her adventure, these slippers protect Dorothy from the Wicked Witch of the West and also provide her with the means to get home at the end of the story.
- **Threshold:** In the Wachowskis' film *The Matrix*, Neo must become disconnected from the Matrix to learn his true nature. This represents an interesting twist in the hero's journey: his threshold is the departure *from* the Matrix *into* the "real world." Once he is there, he can reach his full potential and return to the Matrix as a powerful figure. In J. K. Rowling's first Harry Potter story (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*), Harry needs a strong dose of courage and faith in the train station to cross the threshold onto Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$.
- **Helpers and mentors:** In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy finds friends and helpers in the Scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion, and her dog, Toto. In the Harry Potter stories, Harry finds allies and mentors among his friends and teachers.
- **Challenges and temptations:** In the film *Finding Nemo*, the clownfish Marlon encounters perilous obstacles in the form of deadly sharks, explosive mines, and stinging jellyfish in order to rescue his son, Nemo. A great example of a temptation can be seen in the Rick Riordan book *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*, when Percy and his friends enter the Hotel Lotus and become seduced by the lights, excitement, and the special food (the lotus flower) that hypnotizes them into complacency. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis, Edmund is unable to resist the temptation of Turkish delight and falls under a spell that leads everyone into great danger.
- **Underworld:** *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll) is a fantastical, magical representation of the underworld. Alice spends most of the story in Wonderland, an unpredictable fantasy realm that she reaches by falling down a rabbit hole. In Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series, Bella finds her way into the world of vampires and werewolves, and her journey through that world is fraught with danger. The macabre arena of *The Hunger Games* (Collins) is the underworld through which Katniss journeys.
- **Confrontation with the power figure:** Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars: Episode V* must confront the villain Darth Vader, who turns out to be his father. In the film *Tron: Legacy*, Sam Flynn must travel into the computer "grid" that his father created in order to rescue him and defeat the evil avatar Clu, a character based on and resembling his father. In James Cameron's movie *Avatar*, Jake Sully must defeat his former Marine commander in a fierce final battle to save the planet of Pandora. The deadliest adversary for Harry Potter (Rowling) is Lord Voldemort, the wizard who killed Harry's father and mother.

- **Revelation/transformation/prize:** The idea of a prize or treasure is common to many adventure stories. King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table searched for the Holy Grail, the cup that Jesus drank from at the Last Supper. Pirate stories, like the film series *Pirates of the Caribbean*, usually feature actual treasure, often buried or hidden. In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series, we have a twist: Frodo's objective is to *get rid of* the prize, the One Ring, by destroying it in the fires of Mount Doom. Instead of a physical treasure, the hero may also win knowledge, often in the form of self-revelation. In *The Matrix Reloaded* (Wachowski), Neo finally comes face-to-face with the Architect and learns the true nature of the Matrix. In the film *The Sixth Sense*, the hero (played by Bruce Willis) learns something amazing about himself.
- **Flight/return journey:** Homer's classical epic poem *The Odyssey* is all about a return journey: Odysseus's return home after the fall of Troy. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum), Dorothy must click her heels together three times and repeat, "There's no place like home," to be transported back to Kansas. Sometimes monsters or other adversaries chase the returning hero as he attempts to get home with the prize. In the film *Independence Day*, the two heroes (played by Will Smith and Jeff Goldblum) must plant a computer virus in the alien mother ship and then get out before it explodes. Oftentimes, the underworld environment is in the process of destroying itself as the hero escapes. This is the case in *Star Wars: Episode IV* as well as in Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher."
- **Return:** In the book *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Tolkien), the hobbits must overcome a new challenge as soon as they return home: Saruman, a former minion of Sauron's, has taken over the Shire and must be routed before peace can be restored. In *Ender's Game* (Orson Scott Card), Ender successfully completes his hero's journey by committing to finding a new home planet for the nearly extinct foes.

Joseph Campbell believed that because the hero's journey structure is an integral part of human psychology, it is present in *all* stories, whether the writer intends it or not. This is the central revelation of Campbell's work: that our myths and stories all share a deep symbolic structure and can tell us something about ourselves, simply because we created them. They resonate with us.

The hero's journey is an additional prism through which we are looking at literature. It is our hope that it will deepen and enrich your appreciation of literature while also allowing each book's own brilliance to shine.

Lesson

2

House of Light

Do you sometimes ask yourself questions that are difficult to answer? Often a journey begins by looking inward: the drive to move forward, to take the path into the unknown, comes from within, often prompted by soul-searching questions. Poetry is sometimes called the language of the soul, so you'll begin your journey with a poem from Mary Oliver's luminescent and lyrical collection, *House of Light*.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze a poem.
- Understand figurative language.
- Explore literary terms: metaphor, personification, imagery.

Digging Deeper

Mary Oliver is widely regarded as one of the most talented American poets of our time. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984 and won the National Book Award for Poetry in 1992. She was the recipient of many other awards as well as several honorary doctorates.

Oliver was born in 1935 and spent a great deal of her life in Provincetown, Massachusetts. She was known to be an avid walker, taking daily walks along the shores and wild places of Cape Cod. Nature inspired her work, as you will discover as you read her poems. Oliver was adept at evoking the beauty of the very ordinary. She died in 2019, leaving behind a powerful literary legacy.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Read “The Buddha’s Last Instruction” in *House of Light*.
- Answer questions in complete sentences.
- Write one to two pages on the phrase “make of yourself a light.”
- Complete journal assignments.

Along the Way

Learning how to read and understand a poem takes practice. It helps to approach poetry with an open mind and no prior expectations.

Most readers make three false assumptions when addressing an unfamiliar poem. The first is assuming that they should understand what they encounter on the first reading, and if they don't, that something is wrong with them or with the poem. The second is assuming that the poem is a kind of code, that each detail corresponds to one, and only one, thing, and unless they can crack this code, they've missed the point. The third is assuming that the poem can mean anything readers want it to mean. (Edward Hirsch, "How to Read a Poem.")

As you read, work with, and hopefully enjoy Mary Oliver's poems throughout this course, you'll find guidelines and leading questions to help you develop skills in interpreting poetry.

Assignments

Reading

Read "The Buddha's Last Instruction" in Mary Oliver's *House of Light* (4) according to the guidelines below.

Read the section on literary devices in *Write It Right*. This will help you better recognize and understand figurative language and use it in your writing.

Guidelines for Reading Poetry

Billy Collins, an American poet who served as the Poet Laureate of the United States from 2001–2003, has this to say about poetry:

The way poetry is taught is with great emphasis on the interpretation. So we have this thing, the poem, and we want to create this other thing called the interpretation of the poem, which then almost begins to compete with the poem, and in the worst cases, replaces the poem. So once we have the interpretation we can actually discard the poem. . . . The question, what does a poem mean, is a deadening question. . . . A better question, I think, than what does a poem mean, is how does a poem get where it's going. So instead of seeing it as something to be reduced to some other text, to see a poem as a journey . . . to

figurative *adj*: a nonliteral representation; symbolic.

imagery *n*: visually descriptive language; mental pictures used to describe things or ideas.

metaphor *n*: a figure of speech in which two dissimilar things are shown to have something in common, or in which one thing is symbolic of something quite different.

personification *n*: the attribution of human characteristics to something nonhuman.

notice where it turns, and how it expands or contracts, or becomes funny or serious, how it moves around through itself . . . (“How have your teachers shaped you?” *Big Think*).

There is no one right way to approach a poem, but if you are new to poetry, these guidelines may be helpful.

- First, read the poem once before you continue on to the instructions below. Read it aloud, just experiencing the sound and rhythm of the words as a kind of music. (Stop here, and read the poem before going on.)
- Next, read the poem aloud several more times, speaking slowly. This helps you attend to each carefully chosen word. Use a natural tone of voice—no need to give a dramatic reading like an actor on stage. Let the words “speak” for themselves. Pause only when punctuation dictates, not at the end of each line break (which can interrupt the flow of the words).
- Now read the poem again, this time paying attention to how the line breaks encourage you to phrase things or pause. You don’t have to pause at the end of each line; instead, pause when you feel it fits or emphasizes the meaning of the words. Remember to read slowly. Notice whether reading according to line breaks gives the poem a different feel or changes your understanding.
- Number each line for easy reference. Read the poem again, with a pencil in hand, and identify and define any words you do not know.
- Read the poem one more time. These techniques allow you to gain a strong sense of the poem as a whole before you continue studying, analyzing, or interpreting it.

As you work with Mary Oliver’s poetry throughout this course, we’ll provide more tips and techniques for understanding poetry. You’ll find the full guidelines in *Write It Right*.

Poems are like dreams; you put into them what you don't know you know.

Adrienne Rich

Reader’s Journal

In your reader’s journal, illustrate an image from the poem, or design/doodle a graphic that somehow relates to it. Choose an image that resonates with you, and write a descriptive caption beneath it.

Students are asked to illustrate an image from the poem that resonates with them and to write a descriptive caption beneath it.

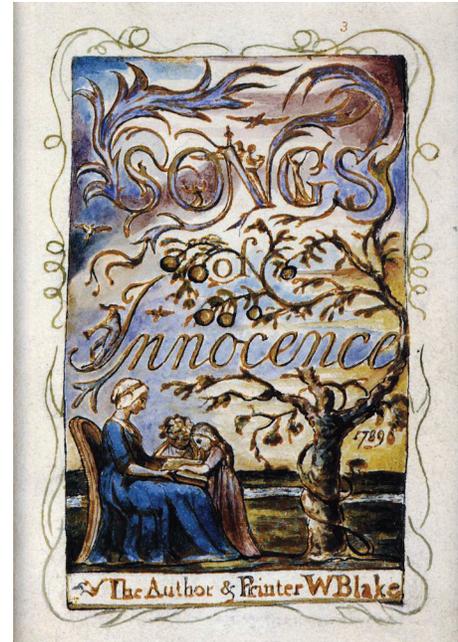
Writing

Remember to read through all the assignments first so you have a full sense of your lesson goals. For all writing assignments, keep in mind that the most important part of the writing process is **rewriting**.

After you have finished writing your responses, read over your work carefully and critically. Did you express yourself clearly and fully? Revise your work to improve clarity and depth, and then *proofread* for spelling errors, grammar mistakes, and anything that doesn't say what you mean it to say.

Always use the spellchecker on your computer, but don't let it become your only means of proofreading. The computer is clever, but not half as intelligent as you are. For example, if you misspell *from* as *form*, the computer will not flag it because it knows that *form* is a word; the computer doesn't know that it isn't the word you meant. Always proofread your document carefully, using the most powerful tool available to you: your own brain.

Students are asked to keep in mind that the most important part of the writing process is rewriting. Encourage your student to read over all work carefully and critically, revise to improve clarity and depth, and then proofread for spelling errors, grammar mistakes, and awkward phrasing.



Songs of Innocence, from an illustrated collection of poems by William Blake, 1794 (Image credit: Web Gallery of Art)

1. Answer the following questions in complete sentences. Some questions have multiple parts and require several responses. In this course, you will often be asked to “support” your thoughts or answer—this means to explain yourself by using information and specific details (usually from the reading assignment) to justify your response and show the logic or reasoning behind it.
 - a. What is the Buddha's last instruction? How might the Buddha's last instruction be a call to adventure?

In this poem, the Buddha's last instruction is “Make of yourself a light.” Students may see this as an encouragement for people to do something with their lives to light the way or lead others. Students may compare it, as Oliver does, to the light of a new day and the new beginning it signifies.

- b. Explore the literal and figurative meaning of the word *light*. Write down the multiple meanings. Which definition of *light* do you think fits the poem best? Why?

Students may list words like *strong*, *role model*, *moral*, and *universal good* as figurative meanings of light. Students will give individual opinions about how literal and figurative meanings fit the poem, and why.

- c. Examine the imagery in lines 4–10. See if you can identify an instance of personification in these lines. Give examples.

Examples of personification are found in the phrases “tear off its many clouds of darkness” and “send up the first signal” to describe the coming of dawn. These actions

are attributed to “the east” as though this quadrant of the sky was a being capable of tearing and sending signals.

- d. See if you can identify in which line the poem takes a turn and shifts from an exposé of the scene to something more introspective. Support your thoughts with examples and details.

Shifts in tone are felt in line 21 (“I am touched everywhere by its yellow waves”) and then again in line 28 (“clearly I’m not needed, yet I feel myself turning into something of inexplicable value”) as the focus of the poem turns inward.

- e. Who is/are the hero/es of the poem? The Buddha? The narrator? The members of the crowd? Support your answer.

This question asks students to choose the poem’s more influential character. Answers will vary and should include a clear explanation of how this person influences the poem or leaves an impression on the reader.

- f. In lines 28–29, the narrator states, “Clearly I’m not needed, yet I feel myself turning into something of inexplicable value.” Why might the narrator say this? How might this connect to the unique yet universal birth of the hero archetype?

This line points to the experience of rebirth felt by the narrator, influenced by the combination of the Buddha’s words and the beauty of the dawn sky. A strong response will draw a clear parallel between this sense of rebirth or newness and the concept of birth as a universal experience and as part of the archetypal hero’s journey.

- g. In the last line, why are the members of the crowd frightened? What might this be a metaphor about?

The “frightened crowd” may refer to the lost souls looking to the Buddha for guidance, or may refer to the fear and uncertainty the listeners feel when charged by the Buddha to “Make of yourself a light.” Students may have a different impression of this sense of fear, perhaps seeing it as a metaphor for self-doubt, death and rebirth, or the struggle between good and evil within us.

2. Write one to two pages on how you would live your life if your goal was to “make of yourself a light.” What does that mean to you? What would it look like? What would you do? There are no right or wrong answers here. Your goal is to explain your ideas in a thoughtful, organized way. You will be assessed on the care you take in crafting your answer. See the writing tip for ideas on how to get started.

Students are encouraged to write a personal reflection that incorporates the poem’s theme in a relevant way. It may be helpful to have your student discuss ideas before writing. You might suggest looking at future goals or possibilities within the larger context of the kind of person they would like to become. A strong response will emphasize specific correlations between the figurative meaning of the phrase “make of yourself a light” and the ethical, social, or spiritual aspects of future possibilities. Evidence that students completed the prewriting exercises as directed may include a well-organized essay and a logical connection between ideas.

Writing Tip

You have a challenging writing exercise in assignment 2 of this lesson. A pre-writing exercise can help you organize your thoughts before you begin. Freewriting, clustering, outlining, and using the journalistic method are pre-writing techniques that you can experiment with. See “Prewriting Exercises” in *Write It Right* for guidelines on how to use these techniques to get your writing project off to a good start.

SHARE YOUR WORK

Share your work with your teacher. If you have any questions about the assignments, please let your teacher know.

Lesson

6

The House of the Scorpion: Age 14 and La Vida Nueva

Have you ever wondered why you were born or what your purpose is here on Earth? When Matt turns 14, El Patron falls ill and Matt finally finds out the real reason he was created. Unexpected help arrives from his mentors, Celia and Tam Lin, and Matt is forced to journey forth on his own in search of his freedom and *la vida nueva*—a new life.

Learning Objectives

- Explore the figurative use of language.
- Write a story summary.
- Make a comparative list.

Digging Deeper

When Matt reaches puberty, he finds himself confronting El Patron—the power figure—by questioning the old man’s actions for the first time. Once Matt understands everything, he knows what he must do. However, fleeing to Aztlan doesn’t bring the immediate relief and rescue Matt had hoped for. It’s a bit like the expression “out of the frying pan and into the fire” as things go from bad to worse.

Matt goes through the hero’s journey archetypal stages of abyss and death while in the hands of the Keepers at the plankton factory. True to form, Matt’s hero’s journey concludes with a return home, as he cannot truly complete his heroic journey without returning and using his new knowledge to right what is wrong.

Assignments

Reading

1. Read chapters 23–38 in *The House of the Scorpion* (230–380).
2. Read pages 59–69, 85–86, and 88–93 in *Write It Right*.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Read chapters 23–38 in *The House of the Scorpion*.
- Use vocabulary words figuratively.
- Write a story summary.
- Make up a moralistic story, and refute it as if you were Matt.
- Make a two-column list comparing Matt’s “prisons.”
- Complete journal assignments.

principle *n*: a rule or fundamental truth that governs one’s actions.

prominent *adj*: important; outstanding or notable.

subservient *adj*: submissive; acting in a servile or subordinate manner.

Reader's Journal

Make your final additions to your illustrated poem, list of questions, and comparisons. You will use these in your final project in the next lesson.

Students will make their final additions to their journal assignments.

What Do You Think?

Matt's personal code of honor comes into play prominently during his time at the plankton factory. He speaks up when he feels something is wrong even though he knows he would be treated better if he kept silent. He refuses to falsely confess to things he hasn't done or doesn't believe are wrong, but then reverses himself and "confesses" in order to save his friend Fidelito from punishment. Do you think you would act as Matt did, or would the drive for self-preservation be stronger than the urge to stand on principle? Find someone older than you, someone with a bit of life experience, with whom to discuss this topic. Ask if they have ever had to choose between principles and self-preservation. Has this person ever taken the easy path to avoid trouble? Have you?

Writing

1. Define each vocabulary word and then write sentences about the story using the vocabulary words figuratively instead of literally. Feel free to use different forms of the word. For instance, *anemic* doesn't always refer to iron-deficient blood and *ravenous* doesn't always refer to food. You might say a word was lost in the *crevices* of your brain—this is a figurative use of the word since words don't really fall into steep, narrow openings in your brain. Be as creative as you like! See the writing tip to learn more about how to use figurative language effectively.

Students may struggle with figuring out how to use the words figuratively at first, but with some help, they should be able to come up with some creative uses of these words. Examples are included below for inspiration, if necessary.

anemia (231) *n*: a deficiency of hemoglobin in the blood, which causes fatigue.

Matt felt so disturbed and worried about El Patron's health that, when he sat down at the piano, his playing sounded anemic.

treachery (241) *n*: betrayal of trust; deception.

When he was hiding in the dusty secret passages, Matt's treacherous asthma threatened to betray him with a sneeze at any moment.

ravenous (248) *adj*: extremely hungry.

Ravenous for knowledge of Dreamland, the Lost Boys peppered Matt with questions.

machete (250) *n*: a broad, heavy knife used as a tool or weapon.

I love writing. I love the swirl and swing of words as they tangle with human emotions.

James A. Michener

Like a vicious machete, the brain implants hacked and slashed connections in Rosa's brain.

crevice (251) *n*: a long, narrow opening, especially in a rock.

The Lost Boys would never be able to climb out of the dark crevice of ignorance and compliance with which the Keepers maintained order.

2. Answer all of the following questions in one paragraph summarizing the details of this section of the book. Remember to begin your paragraph with a topic sentence and to support this sentence with details. For instance, your topic sentence might be something like, "As Matt moves into his fourteenth year, his life is more in jeopardy than ever." Answers to the following questions will provide the details to support this claim and give you the direction of your paragraph. (If you can't fit everything into one paragraph, you may write two.)

A strong paragraph will show clear structure (topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion), and include specific references to the story points below. Students may need feedback before making final revisions in order to produce a cohesive, comprehensive summary.

- a. How does Celia use her *curandera* training to help Matt?

Celia begins to slowly poison Matt with foxglove in order to damage his heart enough to make it unsuitable for a transplant. She is very careful not to overdose him or cause damage that would endanger Matt's life, although he does get very sick as Celia experiments with the right dosage.

- b. What does Mr. Alacran tell Tam Lin to do with Matt after El Patron dies?

After El Patron dies, Mr. Alacran orders Tam Lin to kill Matt and dispose of him. Tam Lin agrees and ties Matt up and takes him away, but he is really helping Matt escape.

- c. What is the "dirty little secret" Tam Lin shares with Matt at the oasis?

Tam Lin says that no one can tell the difference between a human and a clone because there is no difference. He says clones are just as good as anyone else. This knowledge is life-changing for Matt.

- d. Does Matt find freedom in Aztlan?

No, Matt is confined in an orphan's home where he is worked like a slave and mistreated. However, he manages to escape with the help of some friends and goes to find Maria. When he finds Maria, her mother is with her, and Esperanza proves to be a powerful ally by saving Matt from being taken back to the orphan's home.

- e. Why does he return to the Alacran estate?

Esperanza and Maria tell him that no one has heard from the estate since El Patron's death, and Matt finds out that, as El Patron's clone, he is the only one who can get past the security shield. Esperanza also convinces Matt that the law is on his side and that he now owns all of El Patron's estate and interests. Matt returns to the Alacran estate to dismantle the drug empire and free the slaves.

3. Write a scene with the Keepers telling a moralistic story, and have Matt contradict the lesson. The Keepers tell “inspirational” stories meant as moral instruction, which Matt recognizes as thinly veiled attempts to keep the workers subservient. Matt’s keen intellect often trips up the small-minded Keepers. Now it is your turn to make up a heavy-handed moral tale (one that is overly obvious about what it is trying to teach) and let Matt reveal the flaws in it. Feel free to use the plot and characters of a familiar story, such as Little Red Riding Hood or Cinderella.

This assignment may be challenging as the student is asked to think metaphorically, rather than just literally. The simplistic stories that the Keepers tell usually use physical metaphors (such as ten fingers playing a piano or a five-legged horse) to teach a lesson that reinforces their rules of socialist behavior (for example, all fingers must work together to play a tune, and if a fifth leg tries to go in another direction it keeps the horse from getting to its destination). If students need help coming up with an idea, they might be steered toward using the animal kingdom as the foundation of their parable, or using a skill they know well. When writing the story in a scene, the student can be encouraged to have Matt’s character point out the flaw in the simplistic logic of the tale.

4. Make a two-column list of the similarities and differences between “prisons” where Matt was confined. Matt is as much a prisoner at the plankton factory as he was on the Alacran estate. Think of as many ways to compare the two locations as you can. For instance, you can compare the food, chores, treatment, environment, sights, smells, etc. Keep your lists parallel—that is, first compare food, then chores, then treatment, etc., using the same order in each list.

In list format, students will find ways to compare these two places. They might focus on how Matt had plenty of good things to eat and privileges of wealth in Opium (he was given music lessons and extravagant gifts), but little respect, and he was intended as a transplant donor. In Aztlan, Matt had the respect and friendship of his peers but the life of an indentured servant. He was held captive, and those in charge of both places felt they were treating him well. Check the student’s use of consistent parallel construction in both lists.

Writing Tip

Figurative language falls under the category of literary devices, which are techniques writers use to produce a certain effect. Many literary devices use figurative language and symbolism to increase the expressiveness of a phrase. Analogies, hyperbole, personification, and metaphors are a few examples of effective literary techniques. See “Literary Devices” in *Write It Right* for more details, examples, and ideas that you can use in your assignments this week.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher.

Lesson

17

Kidnapped: Return Journey

Has there ever been a time when you felt like all hope was lost? What was your darkest moment? As David's journey draws to a close, he continues to face challenges and temptations. When he is literally within sight of his destination, he experiences one of his darkest moments. True to the hero's journey, the return flight holds its own perils.

Learning Objectives

- Compose a poem about the story's setting using vocabulary words.
- Analyze paragraph construction.
- Create a visual presentation of the story theme.

Digging Deeper

There is a great deal of wry humor in the way the characters speak to one another in this story. Much of it comes from veiled insults that are hidden in flowery speech. As you read, think about how this style of communicating reflects the pride and loyalty of the Highlanders, which is as much a part of their culture as the tartans and clan chiefs.

Assignments

Reading

Read chapter 25 through the end of *Kidnapped* (224–277).

Reader's Journal

Make the final additions to David's route on your map, and complete your list of how weather and geography affect the story.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Read chapter 25 to the end of *Kidnapped*.
- Use vocabulary words in a poem about the Highlands.
- Analyze two paragraphs.
- Answer comprehension questions.
- Choose one project to complete.
- Complete journal assignments.

You will find these words in your reading this week:

benignity *n*: state of being kind and gentle.

blackguard *n*: scoundrel; person who behaves dishonorably.

burgher *n*: citizen of a town, especially a member of the middle class.

Students will complete their map of David's journey and finish the list of how weather and geography affect the story.

What Do You Think?

Is there someone with whom you enjoy trading good-natured insults? If so, has either one of you ever crossed the line and said something that was truly hurtful? Has there been a time when you felt you had to defend your honor? Talk with your friend or a parent about the unspoken rules of friendly insults.

Writing

1. Use the following vocabulary words to write a poem about the wild countryside of the Scottish Highlands and its native inhabitants. First, write down your guess of the word's meaning, and then define it. Instead of using it in a sentence, you will use it in verse. You might want to look up some photos of the Highlands—doing an internet search for “images Scottish Highlands” brings up dozens of stunning images. Having an image in front of you as you write can be an inspiration! If you'd like to use a specific poetic structure, such as a limerick, haiku, or sonnet, you are welcome to do so.

Here, too, were many of that old, **proscribed**, nameless, red-handed clan of the Macgregors. (224)

For though I had changed my clothes, I could not change my age or person; and Lowland boys of eighteen were not so **rife** in these parts of the world, and above all about that time, that they could fail to put one thing with another, and connect me with the bill. (226)

At this the lass turned and ran out of that part of the house, leaving us alone together. Alan in high good humour at that furthering of his schemes, and I in bitter **dudgeon** at being called a Jacobite and treated like a child. (242)

At this appeal, I could see the lass was in great trouble of mind, being tempted to help us, and yet in some fear she might be helping malefactors; and so now I determined to step in myself and to allay her **scruples** with a portion of the truth. (243)

. . . it was by his means and the procurement of my uncle, that I was kidnapped within sight of this town, carried to sea, suffered shipwreck and a hundred other hardships, and stand before you to-day in this poor **accoutrement**. (250)

Students are free to write in any form of verse they choose as long as the subject of the poem is the Scottish Highlands and they include the following words in context.

proscribe **v: forbid or denounce.**

rife **adj: commonplace or abundant.**

dudgeon **n: a feeling of deep indignation or offense.**

dyke *n:* wall built to hold back a sea or river.

firth *n:* narrow inlet of the sea; estuary.

malefactor *n:* criminal; a person who does harm.

pedantic *adj:* nit-picky; overly concerned with formal rules.

prodigal *adj:* spending money recklessly; extravagantly wasteful.

scruples **n: conscience or principles.**

accoutrement **n: accessories of clothing or equipment.**

2. Analyze the two paragraphs below, and provide the following information for each:

- What is the topic or theme expressed in the first sentence?
- What are the specific points related to the theme that are explored in the paragraph?
- What is the conclusion?

For each one, you can write your response in a list (you do not have to use complete sentences if you are making a list) or paragraph form.

a. Paragraph 1: *Kidnapped*, chapter 25, page 224:

At the door of the first house we came to, Alan knocked, which was of no very safe enterprise in such a part of the Highlands as the Braes of Balquhidder. No great clan held rule there; it was filled and disputed by small sects, and broken remnants, and what they call “chiefless folk,” driven into the wild country about the springs of Forth and Teith by the advance of the Campbells. Here were Stewarts and Maclarens, which came to the same thing, for the Maclarens followed Alan’s chief in war, and made but one clan with Appin. Here, too, were many of that old, proscribed, nameless, red-handed clan of the Macgregors. They had always been ill-considered, and now worse than ever, having credit with no side or party in the whole country of Scotland. Their chief, Macgregor of Macgregor, was in exile; the more immediate leader of that part of them about Balquhidder, James More, Rob Roy’s eldest son, lay waiting his trial in Edinburgh Castle, they were in ill-blood with Highlander and Lowlander, with the Grahames, the Maclarens, and the Stewarts; and Alan, who took up the quarrel of any friend, however distant, was extremely wishful to avoid them.

Paragraph 1:

- **This part of the Highlands is unsafe.**
- **The paragraph explores what makes the region unsafe: no clan rule, “chiefless folk,” ill-considered, broken clans that are at odds with Highlander and Lowlander both.**
- **Out of loyalty to friends in other clans, Alan wishes to avoid Macgregors since a quarrel would certainly result.**

b. Paragraph 2: *Kidnapped*, chapter 25, page 225:

The soldiers let us be; although once a party of two companies and some dragoons went by in the bottom of the valley, where I could see them through the window as I lay in bed. What was much more astonishing, no magistrate came near me, and there was no question put of whence I came or whither I was going; and in that time of excitement, I was as free of all inquiry as though I had lain in a desert. Yet my presence was known

before I left to all the people in Balquhiddar and the adjacent parts; many coming about the house on visits and these (after the custom of the country) spreading the news among their neighbours. The bills, too, had now been printed. There was one pinned near the foot of my bed, where I could read my own not very flattering portrait and, in larger characters, the amount of the blood money that had been set upon my life. Duncan Dhu and the rest that knew that I had come there in Alan's company, could have entertained no doubt of who I was; and many others must have had their guess. For though I had changed my clothes, I could not change my age or person; and Lowland boys of eighteen were not so rife in these parts of the world, and above all about that time, that they could fail to put one thing with another, and connect me with the bill. So it was, at least. Other folk keep a secret among two or three near friends, and somehow it leaks out; but among these clansmen, it is told to a whole countryside, and they will keep it for a century.

Paragraph 2:

- **The soldiers do not capture David and Alan, even though they are nearby.**
- **The paragraph explores the paradox that they are known to be there by many people, yet stay undisturbed, even though money has been offered for information leading to their arrest.**
- **A secret among clansmen, known throughout the whole countryside, could be kept for a century.**

HINT: Each conclusion provides a different look at clan traditions, which at the time were dying out due to laws and military force imposed by the British government. Stevenson provides evidence of the steadfastness of clan traditions when faced with a situation that in some ways resembled the situation the Native Americans faced with the European settlers who displaced them.

3. Choose one of the following options: write a reading narrative or answer comprehension questions.

Option A: Reading narrative

Write a 500-word reading narrative, which can include both analysis of the reading for the week as well as personal reflection about what the reading means to you. Be sure to include specific textual evidence and analysis in which you explain why those passages are important.

Here are some questions that might be useful to consider:

- What passages stood out to you and why?
- What new insights did you develop through the reading?
- Are there passages in which the main character seems particularly heroic?
- Are there places where you don't think the idea of the hero's journey connects to the story?
- How do you connect the reading to your own life?

You won't be able to respond to all these questions in 500 words, so choose what interests you the most. Regardless of which questions you answer, try to supply specific examples from the text

(citing the page numbers) and explain your reasoning fully in complete paragraphs. If other questions inspire you, feel free to incorporate them into your response.

Option B: Comprehension questions

Answer each of the following comprehension questions in complete sentences:

- a. On what is the tension between Alan and Robin based, and what resolves it?

The tension between them is based on a clan rivalry between the Stewarts and the Campbells, and the two men almost fight, but Duncan intervenes and suggests a piping contest instead. Both men are excellent musicians, but Robin proves to be the better piper, and Alan acknowledges Robin's mastery. Robin ends the contest by playing a traditional theme, with variations and improvisations, which is one of Alan's favorites, and their quarrel is mended. It is resolved by their shared love of music.

- b. What does the lawyer call David's story, after David has told it?

Rankeillor calls David's journey "a great epic, a great Odyssey" (253).

- c. What trick do Mr. Rankeillor, David, Alan, and Torrance play on Mr. Ebenezer, and why? What agreement is come to?

They trick Mr. Ebenezer into admitting that he does not want David back and that he had paid money to have him kidnapped. They do this in order to restore David's fortune as heir to the House of Shaws. This results in a yearly income for David of two-thirds of Shaws's annual income.

- d. When David returns to Shaws, he reflects, "So the beggar in the ballad had come home, and when I lay down upon that night in the kitchen chests, I was a man of means and had a name in the country" (272). Even though he has gained so much, what still weighs on David's conscience so that he remains "nearer tears than laughter" (276)?

David is saddened by the parting with Alan and his uncertainty about Alan's safety.

- e. After his adventures at sea and in the Highlands, how does the city of Edinburgh strike David?

David feels his senses assaulted by Edinburgh: "The huge height of the buildings . . . the narrow arched entries that continually vomited passengers . . . the foul smells . . . struck me into a kind of stupor and surprise . . ." (276).

4. Choose one of the following projects to complete:

- a. Illustrate a scene from the story. Choose one of your favorite scenes or one that was pivotal to the plot. Here are some ideas: the piping contest in Duncan Dhu's house between Robin Oig and Alan; David and Alan hiding in the moonlight near Stirling Bridge as the old woman crosses; Alan convincing the lass in the changing house to help them as David feigns illness.

Look for students to include historical detail in their illustration and to make an effort to recreate the scene accurately. A student doesn't necessarily have to be a good artist to take on this project. Their work should be judged on their knowledge of the story line and setting, as expressed visually.

- b. Create an annotated visual presentation on the Scottish Highlands. You can use photographs, illustrations, maps, etc., and include a brief description of each visual element. This can be done by hand or digitally. Create a logical sequence to your visuals so that the presentation flows smoothly. Give some thought as to how the presentation can be introduced (your first slide) and concluded (your final slide) in a satisfying way.

Each visual element should be described briefly. Look for a good variety of visual subjects (geographical features, flora and fauna, waterways) as well as a sense of the atmosphere and scope of the Highlands. The presentation should flow from one element to the next in a coherent manner and contain captions that demonstrate the student's knowledge of the topic.

- c. In the style of a graphic novel, draw one scene where the characters are trading elaborate, eloquent insults. Write the dialogue in your own words, but keep to the style and tone of the speech and historical setting. Draw at least 12 frames or panels. Scenes with lots of funny insults include the piping contest in chapter 25 and David and Alan's discussion about how to cross the river in chapter 26.

Drawing in the style of a graphic novel (comic book style) requires the student to distill the dialogue and action of a scene into a series of "snapshots" of key elements. The scene needs to provide enough information to make sense and use the visuals to tell some of the story.

- d. Write a letter from David to Alan in which David expresses his feelings about all they have been through. At the end of the story, David feels "a cold gnawing" inside "like a remorse for something wrong" (277). He has everything he sought on his journey—his fortune, his lands and title restored to him, his safety ensured—yet is he satisfied? How has his time in the Highlands changed him? Write at least one page in letter format. Writing in letter format means you should allow David's voice to come through in a natural, relaxed way, the way you would write a letter or an email to a friend. You don't necessarily have to use complete sentences all the time, but keep in mind the rhythm and style of David's speech, and try to emulate that. Remember to include a salutation (such as "Dear Alan") and a closing (such as "Your friend always, David").

This is an open-ended assignment. Students might focus on how David longs for the Highlands in the face of the crowded bustle of the city or express his concern for the fate of the Highland clans. Students are encouraged to write in David's voice, but are free to imagine any emotion or sentiment that he might have expressed.

Writing Tip

In assignment #4, you may be doing a multimedia presentation. If so, you may want to review the section on multimedia presentations in *Write It Right*.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher.

Lesson

23

Where We Come From: Choices

Learning Objectives

- Consider the impact of an author’s stylistic choices.
- Analyze a major theme in relation to specific characters.
- Make a personal connection between the text and your own life.

Throughout this unit, you have been tracking the choices made by the heroes in *Where We Come From* as well as considering what forces lead to those choices and how much freedom to choose the characters have. In the final pages of the book, Nina thinks about the relationship between the past and the future:

Nina wanted to show him where they came from, but where they came from is nothing more than that—where they came from. It isn’t where his story ends, only where it begins. (250)

These sentences affirm that our future is in our hands, despite the constraints of the past. To conclude your study of *Where We Come From*, you will explore these themes in the book and in your experience.

Assignments

Writing

1. Choose one element of Oscar Cásares’s writing style and describe how it contributes to your reading experience. Why might it have been an effective choice given his goals as an author? For example, you may write about his conversational style, his use of italicized portions to represent the experience of minor characters, his use of Spanish, or the way he represents Orly’s text messages. You may also choose another element that stands out for you.

Explain your thoughts in one paragraph. Include at least one example from the book that illustrates this aspect of the author’s style and how it helped him tell the story.

Answers will vary depending on what students choose. Look for them to cite one or two specific examples and explain how they advanced the story and/or impacted the reader’s experience. For example, students might note that the italicized sections help the author

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Write one paragraph on an element of the author’s style.
- Write an argumentative essay on choices in the novel.
- Write a reflective essay on choices in your life.

reach beyond the limitations of telling stories about individuals by providing more backstory for minor characters such as Orly's teacher, Mr. Dominguez, who gets deported, or the husband of the first woman who Nina hides. These passages help give a broader perspective on immigration issues.

2. Write an essay about the choices made by Nina, Orly, and Daniel. You've been keeping track of these choices in your reader's journal. When are their choices constrained by "where they come from"? When are they free to make choices that allow them to craft their own future? What is the relationship between constraints and freedom in *Where We Come From*? Write a relevant thesis statement, and then select two or three significant choices made by each character to help you answer these questions; focus on choices that are most important to their development.

Write at least three pages, using the writing tips in the accompanying boxes. Include specific text references (remember to include page numbers).

The essay should include a clear thesis statement about the relationship between constraints and freedom in the novel, and their examples should support this thesis statement. Look for students to supply specific examples and explain how they relate to their overall argument. When assessing the student's writing, refer to the "Writing Tip" and "Guidelines for Writing an Organized Essay" in this lesson as well as the "Revision Checklist" in lesson 21.

3. Write a short reflective essay on your choices in life. Think about the choices you've made. What shaped how you made those choices? Did other people play a role in your choices? Did your circumstances contribute to your choices? Did your choice allow you some freedom to chart your future?

Using one or two particularly formative choices, discuss the impact specific choices have made in your life. Write at least one page.

Look for students to include specific details about a choice in their life. They should connect these specific experiences to the larger thematic issues in this question: freedom, constraints, and the role of other people in forming choices. A strong response will develop a more general claim about these issues based on the student's experience.

Guidelines for Writing an Organized Essay

An essay is an organized piece of purposeful writing that focuses on a specific topic or theme. Begin by creating an **outline** to organize your main ideas and the examples from the text that you will use to support each idea. An outline will give you a solid structure for your essay and sufficient textual evidence before you begin writing your rough draft, which will save time in the long run.

There are three main parts to an essay:

- The **introductory paragraph** gives an overview of the topic or theme. What is the purpose of the essay? What are the important issues, concepts, or ideas that it explores? What message do you want readers to take away from it?
- The **body paragraphs** are used to introduce, analyze, explore, and/or provide evidence for your main ideas. Each of your main ideas will be discussed in a separate paragraph, and the paragraphs should flow in a logical manner. Cite specific evidence from sources, using your own words to interpret their meaning and explain how they connect to the theme. Each paragraph will have its own topic sentence to introduce the paragraph's main idea, detailed sentences that expand on the idea, and a concluding sentence to emphasize the main takeaway.
- The **concluding paragraph** of the essay highlights the significance of the topic by summarizing your main ideas and how they connect.

After writing your rough draft, follow the remaining steps of the writing process—revising, editing, and proofreading—to create a polished piece of work. (See the appendix for details about the writing process.)

Writing Tip

When writing a reflective essay, the goal is your thoughtful exploration and clear expression of your ideas. This includes the following important points:

- **Deliberate organization of your thoughts.** You may want to brainstorm by jotting down a list of first thoughts or freewriting to figure out how you want to present your idea.
- **Form and structure.** Pay attention to each sentence. Do your sentences make sense on their own and in relation to one another? Is there a logical flow to your ideas? How do your paragraphs fit together?
- **Clarity.** Have you succeeded in clearly conveying your thoughts to the reader? Have you done this in a powerful and convincing way?
- **Honesty.** Does this essay demonstrate your original thoughts in your unique voice? Do you write in a style that is clearly your own? Reading your work aloud (or having someone read it to you) will help you hear how the reader will experience your piece and will help you fix any unclear ideas and clunky language.
- **Economy.** Have you eliminated all unnecessary words and phrases? Remember, this is your paper—phrases like “I think” are unnecessary; eliminate them to make your statements stronger.
- **Polish.** Have you proofread your paper to correct any errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and spelling?

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher.



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