

# Women's Literature: Worlds of Fantasy and Science Fiction

## Oak Meadow Teacher Manual

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# Introduction

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This teacher manual is designed to help you guide students through Oak Meadow's *Women's Literature: Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. This teacher manual provides detailed answers to comprehension questions as well as tips on how to assess student responses to more open-ended assignments. You will find many suggestions for supporting learning in different ways, depending on the student's unique approach to each assignment.

You may want to look over the teacher manual answers before your student begins work on a lesson. There are notes on how to support your student while in the process of learning. Projects are found at the end of each unit, so you will also find suggestions on helping students develop organization skills in project management and time management.

In this teacher manual, you will find the full text for all assignments. Teacher manual answers are seen in color.

For obvious reasons, it is best not to share this teacher manual with your student. Each student is expected to produce original work, and any incidence of plagiarism should be taken very seriously. If you notice a student's answers matching those of the teacher manual word for word, a discussion about plagiarism and the importance of doing original work is necessary. While students in high school are expected to be well aware of academic honesty, any discussion about it should be approached as a learning opportunity. Make sure your student is familiar with when and how to properly attribute sources.

We encourage you to join your student in discussing (and, if possible, reading) the literature in this course. Taking a special interest in your student's work can result in greater engagement and effort. We hope this course introduces your student to new female authors and guides your student toward a greater appreciation of fantasy and science fiction.

# Lesson



## *Dogsbody: The Quest*

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### ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read chapters 14–16 and the Introduction in *Dogsbody*.
- ☐ Write a two-page reflective essay on the importance of names.
- ☐ Complete reader's journal assignments.

## Learning Objectives

- Introduce an essay with a clear topic statement.
- Use literary and personal examples to support ideas.
- Write a relevant conclusion.

### Lesson



## Assignments

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### Reading

This week, read chapters 14–16, plus the Introduction.

### Reader's Journal

Continue to work on your three reader's journal assignments:

1. Keep track of the episodes where celestial beings appear to either help or hinder Sirius.
2. List instances where humans treat animals with either kindness or cruelty (or a mix of the two).
3. Write down and define new words you come across.

At the end of the unit, students will turn in their reader's journal assignments. (They will need their reader's journal to use in the next unit.) The following three elements should be included in the reader's journal.

1. A list of episodes where celestial beings either help or hinder Sirius: these may include the sun using its power to save Sirius from hypothermia or to destroy Duffie's pots; the moon providing information on the whereabouts of others; and Sirius's former companion trying to have him killed. There are many other instances that students might identify.
2. A list of instances where humans treat animals with kindness or cruelty: these may include the original owner trying to drown the puppies; Kathleen rescuing Sirius from the river; Duffie striking the dog and Basil calling him names; and Mrs. Smith and other neighbors feeding Sirius.
3. A list of new words with definitions: the story includes a variety of unusual, expressive words. Students should have a list of at least ten words, along with definitions.

Students may also use the reader's journal to record their thoughts, questions, ideas, and any other elements related to the reading.

## Writing

1. Write a two-page reflective essay on the importance of names in *Dogsbody*. The names given to the characters, and what the names signify, are an aspect of the way that Jones is building the world of this novel. How do the names affect you? What do you feel about the derogatory names Sirius and Kathleen are called in the story? Why are names important in establishing one's identity? In your essay, reflect on your responses to the names as well as the name-calling in the book. Include text references to support your thoughts. (Use your reader's journal notes.)

Introduce your essay with a clear statement of your impressions, and in subsequent paragraphs, develop your ideas as you offer examples and further reflections. Conclude with a statement about how names in the story play a role in the novel and also how Jones uses names as a way of creating this fictional world. Since this is a substantial two-page essay, you may want to begin with an outline or graphic organizer like an idea web to get your thoughts ordered.

After writing your rough draft, share it with your teacher, parent, or other adult for feedback.

This is a substantial essay that allows students to reflect on elements of the story and organize their thoughts around their own interpretation of the significance of names in the story. Students will benefit from creating an outline or other organizational structure before writing the first draft. Look for a clear statement of the thesis and for an organized development of ideas, supported by relevant examples and direct quotations, in the subsequent paragraphs. The conclusion should include the student's interpretation of story themes.

In the novel, names play an important role in understanding the characters, their relationships, and the themes that inform the entire story. For instance, the protagonist Sirius is named differently by each character. Kathleen names Sirius "Leo" (meaning "lion"), which shows she views

Sirius as her loyal friend and protector. Mrs. Smith, recognizing his unique abilities, calls him Sirius, which is his true name. Basil's name-calling shows contempt; he calls the dog "Shamus O' Rat": "Shamus" implies that he is Irish like Kathleen, which was considered bad at the time, and "Rat" means that he has no greater importance than vermin. Duffie never gives Sirius a real name, but instead refers to him as "the filthy little beast," "that creature," or "the filthy brute." This lack of a name shows how she has no regard for him or his well-being and only feels hatred toward him.

Students are given specific criteria to use in writing their essay, and are asked to share the essay with their teacher after the rough draft has been written. Here are some things to look for when providing feedback on the rough draft:

- Is the topic introduced with a clear opening statement?
- Is the topic explored and elaborated on in the body of the essay?
- Are the ideas sequenced in a coherent way?
- Are relevant story details and quotations included to support the student's ideas?
- Does the conclusion highlight insights to the essay's topic?

Once your feedback has been received, students have one more week to finalize the essay.

## Lesson



# *Dogsbody:* Creative Project

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### ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

☐ Incorporate feedback into a revised essay.

☐ Choose a creative project to complete:

Option A: The Celestial Society

Option B: Short Story Writing

Option C: The World of Sirius

Option D: The World of Colors

## Learning Objectives

- Revise, edit, and proofread an essay.
- Explore story themes in a creative, original way.

## Lesson



# Assignments

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### Writing

1. Finalize your essay from lesson 3, using the feedback you received from your teacher, parent, or other adult. After you review the feedback, revise your essay to expand ideas that need more explanation, eliminate redundancies or sentences that are off-topic, and improve the overall flow of the writing. Ask yourself:
  - Is my information well-organized? Are the main ideas and supporting details in a logical sequence?
  - Is there a beginning, middle, and an end to each paragraph and to the piece as a whole?
  - Are my sentences phrased carefully? Do I vary the sentence structure?
  - Have I stayed on topic? Have I omitted needless words and phrases?

When the essay is revised, it can help to read it aloud—this helps you identify weak spots. Edit it to strengthen word choices, adjust awkward phrasing, and add sentence variety. Once you have your final draft, proofread it to catch any lingering errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. When you submit your finalized essay, you should feel it is a strong example of your best writing.

Students are given specific criteria to use in revising and editing their essay. There should also be evidence that feedback given on the rough draft has been considered. This checklist can be used in assessing student work:

- Have ideas been fully expressed or are there areas that need more explanation?
- Is the writing free from redundancies and needless words or phrases?
- Does the writing stay on topic?
- Is there a beginning, middle, and an end to each paragraph and to the piece as a whole?
- Does the writing display intentional word choice and expressive phrasing?
- Does the writing include varied sentence structure?
- Is it free from errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar?

Students are asked that the finalized essay be a strong example of their best writing.

2. Choose one of the options below—or come up with an original idea of your own—and create a project based on the book. **You have one week to complete this project.** Read each of the options below before making your choice (or coming up with your own idea), and then spend some time brainstorming out loud and on paper about what you'd like to do. Break down your project into stages and then create a schedule that will allow you to complete it within one week. Your project could be presented through a painting, a storyboard, a sculpture, an animation, a video, or a short story—let your imagination go wild!

(If you aren't sure what to do, or would like help planning your project, contact your teacher.)

### **Project Option A: The Celestial Society**

Reflect on the hierarchical world of the stars, planets, and moons in the story. What are the different qualities and abilities of each? How do they relate to one another in terms of power or control? First, outline how Jones imagined them, and then visually or with words (or another creative process) express your own imaginings about the relationships and natures of celestial beings.

### **Project Option B: Short Story Writing**

Write a short story based on a consciousness being put into another body. You might write about a human being transformed into a star, or about a star being transformed into a human, or an animal becoming a human, or a human becoming an animal.

**Project Option C: The World of Sirius**

Create a visual representation of the world as seen through Sirius's eyes. Try to include elements of both his dog perceptions and his star-self perceptions. Include a brief statement about your piece.

**Project Option D: The World of Colors**

Think about the role colors play in *Dogsbody*. How do colors have meaning in this story? Use colors to portray a scene from the story, or visually explore the role and meaning of colors in everyday life. Include a brief statement about your piece.

For the final project for this unit, students are given a wide range of options for exploring story themes and elements in a creative way; they are also free to come up with a project of their own design. Their work can be assessed in terms of creative engagement and originality. Students can be encouraged to discuss their work—this may give them an opportunity to explore the themes more deeply.

Students have two weeks to complete this project.



## Lesson



# *Fire and Hemlock:* A World of Heroes

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### ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read Part One in <i>Fire and Hemlock</i> .                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain character's reactions.                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete reader's journal assignments.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite examples of the character's intelligence and awareness. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identify key elements of a conversation between the two main characters. | <input type="checkbox"/> Choose a character's unique trait.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Describe what hero-training might involve.                               |   |

Among many other things, this novel is a mystery about creating stories, about discovering one's own story, and about the reality of the imagination. It is also about what Jones calls "a proper hero," which, besides being the one you identify with in the story, must have the following attributes:

- Brave
- Physically strong
- Never mean or vicious
- Willing to come to the aid of those in need when no one else will
- Have some relationship to gods or supernatural beings (usually but not always)
- Knowingly go into action when the odds are against them

In her essay following the story, Jones comments that a common folktale element is that the highest ideal, and the thing worth striving for, is love. Jones's story is, in her words, "a foray into the supernatural world of the imagination to rescue the one you love."

## Learning Objectives

- Analyze character traits and behavior.
- Support answers with textual evidence.

## Lesson



# Assignments

## Reading

This book is structured into four parts, plus a *coda* (a term for the ending passage in a piece of music). The assignment questions are designed to help you understand the complex interaction of story elements, so you might want to read them before you begin reading the novel. The notes in Along the Way will also help you get more out of your reading.

This week, read Part One: New Hero.

As you read, pay particular attention to Jones's world building process. How does this story world work? How is it like the world we live in? How is it different?

## Reader's Journal

Begin your reader's journal by noting the book's title and name of the author. Keep this journal handy so you can note observations and record significant quotations and page numbers as you read.

Here are your reader's journal assignments, which you will work on each week:

1. There are many episodes where heroic, mythical, or magical events take place in Polly's life. In your reader's journal, keep track of the episodes where "otherworldly" events seem to be taking place in the midst of ordinary life. Many of these will become important as the story comes to its conclusion.
2. Since heroism is a theme established early in the story, create a list of scenes where Polly acts heroically. Don't describe the whole scene; just describe Polly's actions and explain how they are heroic.
3. Construct a time line for story events—you will find this very helpful as the story unfolds! Pay particular attention to the chronology of events, putting them in order, time-wise, because the story sometimes jumps forward and backward in time.

You will turn in your reader's journal at the end of this unit.

## Writing

Answer the following questions using complete sentences, and, when appropriate, cite direct quotations from the text (always include the page number when making a citation).

1. The conversation between Polly and Thomas Lynn that takes place in the garden during the funeral sets in motion much of what follows. What does Polly tell Mr. Lynn she likes best? How does Mr. Lynn respond?

Polly says she likes “being things” (20), such as making up heroes and then acting out the heroes’ adventures. Mr. Lynn encourages her by asking her questions as she makes up a hero, Tan Coul, who is Mr. Lynn’s true identity. Polly says she is his assistant. Together, they discuss details of their hero characters.

2. What does Polly’s early hero-training involve? If you were to become a hero-in-training, what might you do to prepare?

Polly joins the Athletics Club to work on her physical fitness. She tests her strength by lifting her bed each night. She decides she also needs “courage and good skills and timing” and “something to make the adrenaline really flow”(103), so she joins the boys’ football games at school. Finally, she tests her bravery by stopping the school bully from attacking a small child. Polly’s hero training also involves self-discovery. She discovers “an unheroic soft-heartedness in her which she later learned was part of her, and which no amount of reproaching herself seemed to get rid of” (106).

Students are asked to imagine what they might do for hero training. Creative thinking is encouraged.

3. How do Polly and Mr. Lynn feel when they discover Thomas Piper Hardware? Why?

They are shocked to discover the store is very much like they had imagined it when making up their hero story for Tan Coul. This makes them uncomfortable to think their imaginations might have created something in reality.

4. At the reading of the will, Polly is shown to be intuitive and perceptive in the way that she senses the feelings of the silent listeners around her. And, despite her challenging homelife, there are certain things Polly decides to do that show her ingenuity and independent mind, as well as her interest in not being bullied or tricked; these are qualities that are instrumental in developing her capacity to become a hero. Some of these come into play when she becomes aware that she is being warned off from Mr. Lynn by Seb.

Describe some of the actions Polly takes that demonstrates her intelligence and awareness. Include specific examples from the text (make sure to include the page number for each). Write one or two fully formed paragraphs that begin with a focused thesis statement, include relevant details and examples, and end with a clear conclusion based on your exploration of the question.

Motivated by a sense of injustice and a fierce determination not to be controlled, Polly does things to assert her own power. First, because she feels Laurel is bullying him, Polly arranges for Mr. Lynn to gain possession of several valuable paintings (34). Then, after receiving Mr. Lynn’s first letter with the story of the giant, in which she is portrayed as bold and bloodthirsty, Polly wants to prove to herself that she really is hero material, so she confronts

Seb to find out why he and his father are following Nina (64). When Seb threatens to tell Laurel about Polly's actions at Hundson House unless she promises not to have anything to do with a "certain person," Polly manages to avoid making any promises by distracting Seb (66). Polly has a strong sense that Laurel could cause serious problems for Mr. Lynn—and maybe for herself—so she takes great pains to hide her association with Mr. Lynn so that Seb, his father, and Laurel don't find out.

The student's response should be formed into a well-organized paragraph with a clear introductory statement, supporting details with specific references from the text that provide evidence of Polly's actions, ingenuity, and motivation, and a conclusion that connects her motivations and actions to the plot.

5. Polly writes a letter to Mr. Lynn telling him about Tan Coul's three friends. Tan Thare can make music to frighten his enemies and Tan Hanivar is a shape-shifter, but she isn't sure what Tan Audel is like. If you were the author, what would you choose for Tan Audel's unique gift? Why?

This is a creative assignment that also asks students to predict what might happen. Students might take into consideration the abilities of the other heroes when coming up with an imaginative way to make Tan Audel stand out.

## Lesson



# *The Left Hand of Darkness:* Trust and Betrayal

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### ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read chapters 8–14 in *The Left Hand of Darkness*.
- ☐ Complete reader's journal assignments.
- ☐ Identify instances of simile and metaphor and explain their relevance.
- ☐ Creatively expand on a story element.

## Learning Objectives

- Identify and interpret examples of simile and metaphor.
- Write a science fiction scene.

## Lesson



## Assignments

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### Reading

Read chapters 8–14 in *The Left Hand of Darkness*:

- Chapter 8. Another Way into Orgoreyn
- Chapter 9. Estraven the Traitor
- Chapter 10. Conversations in Mishnory
- Chapter 11. Soliloquies in Mishnory
- Chapter 12. On Time and Darkness
- Chapter 13. Down on the Farm
- Chapter 14. The Escape

### Reader's Journal

Continue to work on your three reader's journal assignments:

1. Keep track of the character names, roles, and relationships.

2. Keep track of the place names and Genly's travels.
3. Choose one Gethenian myth (found in chapters 9 and 12 this week) and explain its meaning as it relates to the story. Explain your thoughts about its purpose and relevance in the story.

## Writing

1. In chapter 10, Genly describes his gift of farfetching as "the intuitive perception of a moral entirety, and thus tends to find expression not in rational symbols, but in metaphor." (146) Notice how often Genly uses metaphor and simile to explain his experiences. For instance, he describes Estraven this way: "The man was like an electric shock—nothing to hold on to and you don't know what hit you." (131) Find at least two other instances of metaphor or simile and explain how each one works. Why is it an effective way to describe the experience?

There are many metaphors in the story, so answers will vary. Look for the student response to show how the metaphor is apt or effective. Some responses are below:

- "It was all golden, all benign, that week of walking" (106): The metaphor likens the golden color of the fields to a pervasive haze of happiness that engulfed him during this time.
  - "the sinuous Orgota language that made Karhidish sound like rocks rattled in a can" (110): The simile aptly conveys a sense of the language of Karhide being full of sharp, abrupt sounds.
  - "clean air that cut my throat and lungs like a razor" (171): The bitter cold temperature is compared to the sharpness of a razor.
2. In chapter 10, Genly realizes he has little evidence to convince the local population of his claims because of an Ekumen rule: "The old Law of Cultural Embargo stood against the importation of analyzable, imitable artifacts at this stage . . ." (135) (Star Trek fans may recognize some parallels with the Prime Directive.) Why is the Law in place? Use your imagination to create a scenario where one artifact from an advanced alien culture is introduced into a society with profound results (either profoundly beneficial or profoundly catastrophic). You can write your scenario in story form, if you'd like.

This assignment asks students to imagine a scenario where an artifact from an advanced civilization can have a profound impact on a culture. Common themes might include a culture gaining the capability to alter human life or environmental factors without realizing how far-reaching the consequences of the actions may be, or gaining a powerful tool that can be used for good or evil, depending on who is wielding it.

When assessing the student's response, look for lively, expressive language and a direct cause-and-effect relationship as well as original thinking.

## Lesson



# *The Left Hand of Darkness:* The Gobin Ice

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### ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

☐ Read chapters 15–20 in *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

☐ Complete reader's journal assignments.

☐ Give your personal response to story themes.

## Learning Objectives

- Formulate and clearly express your opinion.
- Reflect on story elements as they relate to your own life.

## Lesson



## Assignments

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### Reading

Read the final chapters in *The Left Hand of Darkness*:

- Chapter 15. To the Ice
- Chapter 16. Between Drumner and Dremegole
- Chapter 17. An Orgota Creation Myth
- Chapter 18. On the Ice
- Chapter 19. Homecoming
- Chapter 20. A Fool's Errand

### Reader's Journal

Continue to work on your three reader's journal assignments:

1. Keep track of the character names, roles, and relationships.
2. Keep track of the place names and Genly's travels.

3. Explain the purpose and relevance of the Gethenian myth (found in chapter 17). Did you find it an effective enhancement of the story? Why or why not?

Students will submit their reader's journal at the end of this unit. Check that the student has used it to keep track of relevant story details. Their responses about the relevance of the myths will vary; some may find parallels with the story while others may suggest the myths only serve to provide additional general background about the culture.

## Writing

In this lesson, students have a choice of options for each of the three assignments. Information is given for each option, but students will only be doing three assignments in all.

1. Choose one of the following assignments:

- a) In chapter 15, Estraven asks, "How does one hate a country, or love one? . . . What is the love of one's country; is it hate of one's uncountrry? . . . Is it simply self-love?" (212) This theme is revisited by Genly in chapter 19: "And I wondered, not for the first time, what patriotism is, what the love of country truly consists of, how that yearning loyalty that had shaken my friend's voice arises, and how so real a love can become, too often, so foolish and vile a bigotry. Where does it go wrong?" (279) What is patriotism? Respond to the issues that Genly raises in the form of a conversation between yourself and Genly in which you present your view of love of country (or your home planet) and he presents the view of an intergalactic citizen.

The goal of this assignment is two fold. First, students will consider the concept of patriotism and how it can have both negative and positive elements, depending on how the feeling is expressed. Second, students will use the character of Genly, representing an intergalactic diplomat, to have a conversation about love of one's country or home planet. Look for ideas that are fully supported in debate form (point/counterpoint) and a balanced treatment of both points of view. Also look for correct use of punctuation and capitalization in dialogue format.

- b) In chapter 7, "A Question of Sex," the first Investigator is appalled to not have gender-identity as an anchor for relating to others and Genly has a similar experience. By the end of the story, Genly has come to appreciate the equalizing force of androgyny. After Genly sees his crewmates, he is shocked by their faces, voices, and demeanor that is so gender-specific: "But they all looked strange to me, men and women . . . Their voices sounded strange: too deep, too shrill. They were like a troupe of great, strange animals, of two different species . . ." (296) When he sees a Karhider again, he is relieved to see a "human face," neither man nor woman. If you had a choice of living in a gender-neutral world, or a world in which gender was a choice that was presented anew each month, would you? Why or why not?



Students will respond to this question in any number of ways. Some may have a clear idea of the type of world they would prefer, while others may suggest that a happy medium would best suit humanity. Look for students to support their ideas with clear reasoning.

2. Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- a) In chapter 16, Estraven has questions about the nature of a woman: “Do they differ much from your sex in mind behavior? Are they like a different species?” (234) Genly has trouble answering. How would you answer the question “What is a woman?” or “What is a man?”

Students may have specific ideas about the nature of man or woman (they may choose just one to consider), some of which may seem stereotypical: women are more empathetic, men are more goal-oriented. Others may take the stance that there is no single archetype that covers every man or every woman, and that individuals have a mix of characteristics that is independent of gender. Any statements made should be supported by sound reasoning and examples.

- b) Do you agree or disagree with Genly's statements about gender in chapter 16, when he says, “I suppose the most important thing, the heaviest single factor in one's life, is whether one's born male or female. In most societies it determines one's expectations, activities, outlook, ethics, manners—almost everything. Vocabulary. Semiotic usages. Clothing. Even food . . . It's extremely hard to separate the innate differences from the learned ones.” (234) Give your own opinion, based on your experiences in life so far.

Students will give their opinion about how gender influences opportunities, actions, and other facets of society. Their own personal experiences will provide the basis for their opinions. Responses should be thoughtful and expressed in clear writing.

3. Choose one of the following assignments to respond to:

- a) In chapter 18, Genly muses on the nature of happiness: “Happiness had to do with reason, and only reason earns it. What I was given was the thing you can't earn, and can't keep, and often don't even recognize at the time; I mean joy.” (242) What are your thoughts on the matter? Support or refute Genly's statements about happiness and joy using specific examples from your own experience.

In order to uphold or refute the character's statements about the nature of happiness and joy, students will need to provide evidence using specific examples from their own life. Look for relevant examples that directly relate to points the student is making. For instance, a student might agree that happiness is earned through reason because you have to recognize that the state of pleasure is brought about by certain circumstances, without which happiness would be elusive. This is just one example of a possible response.

- b) While on the Goblin Ice, Genly teaches Estraven mindspeech. Would you learn this skill if you could? What would be the potential benefits? What would be the drawbacks? Your response can be in essay or story form.

Answers will vary and may include benefits such as ease and privacy of communication, and drawbacks such as the lack of privacy or a feeling of being invaded by others' thoughts. If students respond in story form, look for direct references to both the benefits and drawbacks.

- c) In chapter 16, Estraven quotes a poem "Light is the left hand of darkness and darkness the right hand of light" (233). Later, in chapter 19, Genly realizes they need the shadows in order to walk on the snow, and he remembers the quote about darkness and light being connected. Genly shows Estraven the yin yang symbol, saying, "Light, dark. Fear, courage. Cold, warmth. Female, male. It is yourself, Therem. Both and one. A shadow on snow." (267) What is he saying about Estraven? Is this a compliment?

This passage can be seen as complimentary in that Genly sees Estraven as the perfect balance of attributes. Others may feel this is not meant as a compliment, merely a statement of fact, one that could be seen as unflattering; he is neither one thing or another, but something in between. Based on the story reference about "shadow on snow," which was acknowledged as a life-saving (or sanity-saving) essential—without shadows, the snow became two-dimensional and nearly impossible to navigate—it is likely that Genly was paying Estraven a heartfelt compliment.

- d) How would you describe *shifgrethor*? What role might it play in our lives in personal relationships? In international diplomacy? Give specific examples in your response.

In the story, *shifgrethor* is a type of respect, a way to save face and balance power between individuals (or nations). Students may see parallels with common behavior that involves "dissing" (insulting) people or brinkmanship in politics. Look for students to include specific examples in their response.

## Lesson



# *Binti*: Leaving Home and Finding the Self

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### ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- ☐ Read the novella *Binti*.
- ☐ Address the issue of discrimination in a literary analysis or creative way.

## Learning Objectives

- Write a literary or creative essay exploring the topic of discrimination.
- Demonstrate skills in revision, editing, and proofreading.

## Lesson



## Assignments

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### Reading

Read *Binti* by Nnedi Okorafor. The book is 90 pages long, so you will be able to complete it in a week.

### Writing

1. This book explores racial discrimination from different perspectives. Binti experiences it as someone whose minority race is routinely denigrated on her home planet. She also experiences it from the other side, as she struggles to understand and accept beings who are very different than she is. When Binti is transformed by her contact with the Meduse, she faces the challenge of seeing herself as both self and other.

What do you think about how the story addresses the issue of discrimination? Does the dual perspective the author uses—having Binti experience both sides of discrimination—present an effective way to explore the topic?

Either explore this topic in essay form or in a creative way by imagining yourself meeting an alien race for the first time, one with whom you have trouble relating to, not only in terms of communication but in terms of appearance, abilities, lifestyle, etc.

Write at least one page. Take your time to express your thoughts clearly and with your best writing. This means following the writing process. First, write a rough draft. Revise your rough draft to improve the overall content and flow of ideas. Edit the revised draft to increase its clarity and effectiveness. Have you used careful word choices? Is there any awkward phrasing? Is there a variety of sentence types and lengths? Finally, proofread the polished version to catch any lingering errors.

The topic of discrimination is a central theme of this story, although some students may be more focused on the action-adventure elements of the story. The main character is from a group of people who have experienced discrimination and misunderstanding their whole lives. When an alien species attacks, Binti finds herself facing beings who have been misunderstood by others as well. This assignment draws the students' attention to this parallel, and student responses should reflect the overall theme of being treated differently because of being "other."

Students are given the choice of responding to the prompt above in essay form or as a creative writing assignment. Regardless of the form, students should express their thoughts about how effectively the story addresses the themes of discrimination and acceptance of differences.

Students are instructed to write a rough draft, revise it, and then edit the revised draft. Look for effective sequencing of ideas, careful word choice, sentence variety, and evidence of proofreading. This should be a polished piece of writing.