

World Literature: Africa and Beyond

Coursebook



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Introduction

Welcome to *World Literature: Africa and Beyond*. This course will explore the experience of being at home in the world as well as the experience of losing one's place. Stories are a way to explore the human experience and find connections with other people.

Each of the novels in this course is a unique coming-of-age story set in Africa and beyond. In each, there is an understanding that home is where one's childhood takes place, no matter what follows. Needing to leave home and migrate elsewhere—or being forcibly removed from one's home by war—puts one in exile and requires seeking refuge in a safe place (or at least a safer one). The themes of home, exile, and refuge are woven throughout this course and the literature you'll read. Each work of fiction is a window into the real-life issues experienced throughout the world today.

Content warning: Experiences of migration and exile are often filled with danger, sorrow, and trauma, and the stories you'll read in this course portray that in an accurate, realistic way. You will encounter disturbing material. 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

The following materials are used in this course:

- *A Story Like the Wind* by Laurens van der Post
- *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga
- *What Strange Paradise* by Omar El Akkad
- Blank journal

This course also uses numerous online resources, which can be easily accessed at oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links. Visit this page to familiarize yourself with how to locate the online resources for this course, and then bookmark the page for future reference.

What to Expect in This Course

In each lesson, you will find assignments accompanying each book. For written assignments, include examples and direct references from the text to support your observations and opinions. Sometimes you will be asked to complete all the assignments for a book; other times there will be a choice given. You will produce one unit project in the middle of the course. Your project will relate in some way to the Bushmen, who were among the earliest Indigenous people on our planet.

When you begin each lesson, scan the entire lesson first so you have an idea of what you will be doing. Take a quick look at the number of assignments and amount of reading. Having a sense of the whole lesson before you begin will help you manage your time effectively. Use the assignment checklist to keep track of your progress. Check off tasks as you complete them so you can see at a glance what you still need to do. Follow this process for each lesson.

Because the emphasis of this course is on reading and analyzing works of literature from many cultures, your reading journal will be an important tool as you study. Your notes will help you supply examples and text citations for the assignments; taking careful notes in your reading journal will make it easier to complete the assignments successfully and efficiently. You can use any blank notebook as a reading journal.

This course is divided into 18 lessons, and each lesson is designed to take about one week to complete. In the lessons, you will find the following sections:

An **Assignment Checklist** is included at the beginning of each lesson. Assignments are fully explained in the lesson. You can check off assignments as you complete them.

Learning Objectives outline the main goals of the lesson and give you an idea of what to expect.

Lesson Introductions provide background information or questions to guide your learning.

Reading sections assign the literature for each lesson.

Reading Journal prompts guide your note-taking for each novel.

Comprehension Questions and Critical Thinking sections highlight key concepts and analytical thought.

Reflect and Respond assignments help you deeply explore the concepts, issues, and connecting themes.

Share Your Work provides reminders for students who are submitting work to a teacher.

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 appendix contains important information that you will need to read and incorporate into your work throughout the year. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the resources in the appendix. You will find information about original work guidelines, tips on how to avoid accidental plagiarism, and details on citing sources and images.

A Note About the Workload

Students vary greatly in terms of reading speed, reading comprehension, and writing ability. Some may find the reading in this course takes longer than expected; others may find the writing assignments take a great deal of time. In general, you can expect to spend about five to seven hours on each weekly lesson. If you need more time to complete the work, you can modify some lessons to focus on fewer assignments or forgo the reading assignments in order to focus on your composition skills. Modifications like these will allow you to produce work of a higher quality. With your teacher's help, each lesson in this course can be customized to suit your needs.

Keep an eye on the workload as you progress through the course. Make adjustments so you have time for meaningful learning experiences rather than rushing to try to get everything done. Always consult with your teacher when making adjustments to the workload.



UNIT I: Home

. . . the moon, heavy and sullen with gold, full, swollen and overflowing with light as only a moon in the clear bushveld air could be, lifted itself ponderously above the last ink-stains of leaves and scribbles of branches of the fever trees on the fringe of the bush to show itself at last, round, perfect and immaculate in the sky. (17)

Laurens van der Post, *A Story Like the Wind*



Sunset at Kruger National Park, South Africa (Image credit: Giovanni Mastrodonardo/distributed via imaggeo.egu.eu)

At the start of *A Story Like the Wind*, François is growing up in an idyllic setting as the son of French Huguenot parents who own a large homestead in Africa. Their comfortable life is supported by the Indigenous Africans who work for his family, whom François considers extended family and from whom he receives valuable tutelage, traditional stories, and love.

Africa has been home for many different peoples throughout millennia, but after being continuously colonized by white Europeans during the nineteenth century, the nature of the continent began to change for everyone.

. . . I sit waiting for the moon to turn back, that I may listen to all the people's stories . . . For I am here—in a great city—I do not obtain stories. . . I do merely listen, watching for a story which I want to hear; that it may float into my ear . . . I will go to sit at my home that I may listen, turn my ears backwards to the heels of my feet on which I wait, so that I can feel that a story is in the wind. (viii)

Statement from a Bushman who had been sentenced to hard labor for stealing a sheep, circa 1870, from *A Story Like the Wind*



Elephant family, South Africa (Image credit: Wikimedia Commons/public domain)

Lesson

1

Home

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Identify relevant textual evidence related to specific reading prompts.
- Use intentional word choice, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of an experience.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Complete the reading assignment.
- Make notes in your reading journal.
- Complete the Reflect and Respond assignment.

Lesson Introduction

This course centers around stories of growing up. The books explore children’s experiences of home and their relationships with parents, friends, relatives, and neighbors. In each of the novels, the childhood home is lost or left behind—over time or abruptly—through war, poverty, or necessity. The protagonists, and we as readers, realize the significance and value of what has been lost. As you read, reflect on the nature of home, where you lived as a child, and how it felt growing up there.

The first book you’ll read focuses on the theme of home. *A Story Like the Wind* by South African writer Laurens van der Post takes place on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. It is about a boy growing up in a colonized land where traditional cultures still exist. The novel explores being at home in a relatively stable world, although the story slowly introduces elements of disruption.

Reading

In *A Story Like the Wind*, read the following chapter:

- Chapter 1, “Hintza’s Warning” (1–29)

Look over the reading journal instructions and assignments below so you can begin taking notes as you read.

Reading Journal

Keep your reading journal handy as you read so you can easily take notes. Read the prompts below first so you can keep them in mind while reading. You will be using information from your journal in future assignments.

1. Jot down any words you do not know. Look them up (either while reading or afterward) and write down the definitions to help enhance your understanding of the story and expand your vocabulary.
2. Keep track of the different ethnic and Indigenous groups that are mentioned in the story.
3. Notice and record the Sindabele sayings in the story. Make sure to note the page number.

Glossary

There are many unfamiliar words in this book. You will be adding new vocabulary words to your reading journal. Below are some words that are specific to the story's African setting that will help you better understand the story.

- stoep: veranda
- bushveld: area of scrub vegetation
- kraal: enclosure for cattle and other domestic animals
- assegai: slender javelin or spear
- impis: unit or regiment of Zulu warriors

Reflect and Respond

1. To a young child, home is often their entire world. What do you feel when you remember where your childhood took place?

Recalling your younger self's feelings and perceptions, write an autobiographical or fictional story based on your childhood home. You can describe a memory or write about something that is partly true or mostly imagined. Focus on a particular event, and bring your story to life with details that build a sense of where and when it happened. Write one or two pages.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback. You can use the following checklist when you are organizing your work submission:

- Reflect and Respond: story based on a childhood memory.

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.

Lesson

2

Relationships

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Interpret words and phrases used in a text to determine the literal and figurative meanings.
- Provide an objective summary of a text.
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics.

Lesson Introduction

There are many adults who help raise and teach François. In this chapter, he meets and befriends Xhabbo, who becomes an influential person in his life. As you read, consider how their friendship changes François's identity and sense of self.

Reading

In *A Story Like the Wind*, read the following chapter:

- Chapter 2, “The Coming of Xhabbo” (30–51)

Look over the reading journal instructions and assignments below so you can take relevant notes as you read.

Reading Journal

Keep your reading journal handy as you read so you can easily take notes related to the prompts below. You will be using information from your journal in future assignments.

1. Jot down any unfamiliar words. Look them up (either while reading or afterward) and write down the definitions.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Complete the reading assignment.
- Make notes in your reading journal.
- Answer comprehension questions and critical thinking prompts.
- Complete the Reflect and Respond assignment.

2. Keep track of the different ethnic and Indigenous groups that are mentioned in the story.
3. Notice and record the Sindabele sayings in the story. Make sure to note the page number. You will use your notes in an assignment in this lesson.
4. Note descriptions or passages that show an important relationship in François's life, such as his relationship with his father, his old nurse Koba, the chief herdsman 'Bamuthi, the ranger Mopani, the Bushman Xhabbo, and Ousie-Johanna, their cook. Choose one relationship to focus on; feel free to choose someone not mentioned above. For each passage you reference in your reading journal, note the page number.

Comprehension Questions and Critical Thinking

Laurens van der Post named each chapter with a significant event, name, or phrase that occurs within that chapter. As you read, find the reference to the title of the chapter. This ongoing exercise will help you focus on the essence of each chapter.

For each chapter, you will answer the following questions:

- a. Is the title a name, a place, or an event?
- b. Where is the title referenced in the chapter? (Include the page number and relevant quote.)
- c. Why do you think the author chose that particular chapter title?

For instance, here are the answers for chapter 1, "Hintza's Warning":

- a. This is an event described in the opening paragraph of the novel, when François's dog, Hintza, wakes him in the middle of the night.
- b. While the title isn't specifically named in the chapter, it is referenced when François wakes up because Hintza has made a noise that seems to say, "I don't know what it is but something strange and desperately important is happening outside" (22).
- c. The title announces one of the most important moments in this chapter, and it begins the book. Everything that happens in the story follows from Hintza's warning to François that something is happening outside. The warning is a precursor to one of the most significant events in the book, when François meets Xhabbo. Much later in the story, the narrator refers to "the secret self of François which had been born with the coming of Xhabbo" (205).

1. Answer the following questions about chapter 2, "The Coming of Xhabbo."

- a. Is the title a name, a place, or an event?
- b. Where is the title referenced in the chapter? (Include the page number and relevant quote.)
- c. Why do you think the author chose that particular chapter title?

2. Reread the discussion of languages on pages 12–16. Summarize the ideas presented regarding the origins of language. Use your own words to explain your understanding of this section. Include one quote from the text to illustrate your ideas.

Write one or two well-organized paragraphs. (See the guidelines for writing strong paragraphs in the accompanying box.)

Guidelines for Writing Strong Paragraphs

Use the following format to write paragraphs that coherently communicate your ideas in an expressive and organized way.

- Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that gives an overview of the main subject of the paragraph.
- In the middle sentences of your paragraph, expand on your main idea. Cite specific textual evidence (with page numbers), and use your own words to analyze that evidence to show how it supports your ideas.
- End each paragraph with a concluding sentence that sums up what you expressed, states its significance, and/or connects it to ideas in subsequent paragraphs.

Reflect and Respond

1. In your reading journal, you've written down some of the Sindabele sayings in the story. Choose one of these sayings and compare it to a folk saying or proverb you are familiar with. Explain what each saying means. How are they alike? Do you think these sayings are good teaching tools? Why or why not?

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback. You can use the following checklist when you are organizing your work submission:

- Comprehension Questions and Critical Thinking: analysis of chapter title; paragraph about language.
- Reflect and Respond: comparison of Sindabele and folk sayings.

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.

Lesson

6

Influences

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Analyze how and why individuals interact over the course of a text.
- Cite specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Lesson Introduction

As the bond between François and Luciana grows, he realizes he has found a kindred spirit. He takes on new responsibilities at Hunter’s Drift and spends time teaching his new friend about living in the bush.

Reading

In *A Story Like the Wind*, read the following chapters:

- Chapter 9, “Lady Precious Stream” (281–308)
- Chapter 10, “Finishing School of the Bush” (309–333)

Reading Journal

1. Notice and record descriptions or passages that show an important relationship in François’s life. You will use your notes in an assignment in this lesson.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Complete the reading assignment.
- Make notes in your reading journal.
- Answer comprehension questions and critical thinking prompts.
- Complete the Reflect and Respond assignment.
- Complete the next steps of your unit project.

Comprehension Questions and Critical Thinking

1. Answer the following questions about chapter 9, “Lady Precious Stream.”
 - a. Is the title a name, a place, or an event?
 - b. Where is the title referenced in the chapter? (Include the page number and relevant quote.)
 - c. Why do you think the author chose that particular chapter title?
2. Answer the following questions about chapter 10, “Finishing School of the Bush.”
 - a. Is the title a name, a place, or an event?
 - b. Where is the title referenced in the chapter? (Include the page number and relevant quote.)
 - c. Why do you think the author chose that particular chapter title?

Reflect and Respond

1. In your reading journal, you have kept track of an important relationship in François’s life. In your own words, describe what makes this relationship special and how François is influenced by it. Cite passages from the novel (with page numbers) to support your ideas.

Unit Project

This week, you will complete the following steps of your project:

- Step 4: Conduct research to gather the information you need.
- Step 5: Refine your project proposal based on your research.
- Step 6: Create a project design plan.
- Step 7: Solicit feedback on your project plan.

Read through all the steps before you begin so you have an idea of the scope of the project from beginning to end. Every project is unique, and not every project will need every step, but this gives you a good sense of how to proceed.

Step 4: Conduct research to gather the information you need.

Based on your questions, what do you need to know in order to create your project? You might need to gain content knowledge, find ideas or instructions related to the creative elements, or talk to people who can provide information or guidance.

As you conduct your research, keep track of your sources and take notes in your own words to avoid plagiarism for any written elements you might produce. You might have a lot of information and

details to keep track of as you develop your project, so begin organizing your sources, notes, and ideas right away. This will save you time, effort, and frustration in the long run.

Here are some resources related to Bushmen history and culture that you might find useful:

“The Digital Bleek and Lloyd”

lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za

“Specimens of Bushman Folklore”

sacred-texts.com/afr/sbf

The Heart of the Hunter by Laurens van der Post

The Lost World of the Kalahari by Laurens van der Post

“The Intense 8 Hour Hunt”

youtube.com/watch?v=826HMLoiE_o

What sources did you use in your research?

Step 5: Refine your project proposal based on your research.

After your teacher has given feedback on your project, make any necessary changes and write a final project proposal that incorporates any new elements you plan to include.

Based on your research (and any feedback you may have received from your teacher), decide if you need to clarify, focus, or shift your plan for your project topic and what you will create. Keep in mind that your project needs to be achievable—try to be realistic about what you can do in terms of your skills, available resources, and the project time frame. You should have a solid idea of your project by now. (If you are still unsure, discuss it with your teacher.)

Write a detailed description about the scope of your project and the final form it will take.

Step 6: Create a project design plan.

Once you have decided on what you will create, you can design a step-by-step plan. Picture your final goal, and then figure out the steps needed to get there. Below are some of the questions you might need to answer—the questions will vary based on what you are doing.

- What supplies will you need?
- Where will you get these resources?
- Do you need anyone's help, such as someone with certain skills or someone to photograph or video your project as you are doing it?
- How long will it take to create your project? (Projects often require a lot more work than initially expected.)
- How will you share your project with others? Who will you share it with?

Think of your project design plan as creating a recipe: What are the materials (ingredients)? What will you do with them? What happens first? What comes next? How long will you spend on each step? Write everything down, and keep your notes organized. You are the one who will benefit most from being organized.

Here's an example of a design plan for a research paper to be completed in two weeks.

Week One

Day 1

- Conduct research on _____, _____, _____, and _____.

Day 2

- Create an outline around the key ideas of _____, _____, _____, and _____.
- Organize research notes, and insert them into the outline.

Days 3 and 4

- Write the rough draft.

Day 5

- Conduct additional research on _____ to fill in gaps.

Week Two

Day 1

- Locate relevant graphics (illustrations, maps, graphs, photographs, videos, etc.) to enhance the reader's understanding of _____ and _____.

Day 2

- Create graphics related to _____ and _____. Types of graphics needed:

- Write a caption for each graphic and include an image credit.

Day 3

- Create section headers in the rough draft to divide the information into clearly labeled sections.
- Revise the rough draft, incorporating notes from additional research.
- Share the rough draft with others for feedback.

Day 4

- Incorporate revisions based on feedback.
- Read the paper aloud to hear what still needs work.
- Edit the paper.

Day 5

- Create a title page with graphics.
- Compile a works cited page in MLA format.
- Proofread the paper and make any final changes.
- Share the paper with the target audience (teacher, family, special interest group, community, etc.).

A creative project will have different steps, but can be organized in much the same way. Your design plan should be detailed and unique to your project.

If you are unsure of how to manage the tasks in the time frame allowed for this project, consider scaling things back so that the project feels more realistic and doable. A realistic time line gives you a greater chance of a successful and satisfying experience.

Break down your project into individual action steps, and write them down in a detailed action plan that you can follow.

Step 7: Solicit feedback on your project plan.

Show your design plans to several peers and adults to get their feedback, and then refine your design or make adjustments to the plan or time line as necessary. By discussing your plans with others, you will be able to identify missing steps, possible obstacles and solutions, what kind of assistance you might need, and other essential details.

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback. You can use the following checklist when you are organizing your work submission:

- Comprehension Questions and Critical Thinking: analysis of chapter titles.
- Reflect and Respond: analysis of an important relationship between characters.
- Unit Project: list of research sources; refined project proposal; design plan.

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.



UNIT III: Refuge

Amir shivered. What had started as a light snowfall now turned to dousing sleet that seemed to come from all directions; his clothes and his life jacket became soaked once more. He put his arms around his knees and became as small as he could muster. The dark, near-total, lulled his eyes into following the jagged run of the hanging flashlight, and this, coupled with the wild rocking of the boat and the chaotic shouts of its passengers, quickly brought about nausea. He burst into a heaving cough but there was nothing in him to vomit.

Even in the chaos that overwhelmed the upper deck, he could hear the sounds of the people trapped below. Earlier, when the snow first fell and the sea started turning violent, their shouting had come through the boards muffled and distant. But it was clearer now, so much so that Amir could differentiate between the voices, and in doing so imagined those beneath him not as a single impossible organism but as individual people, bound by their confines but solitary in their fear. (190)

What Strange Paradise by Omar El Akkad

The final book in this course, *What Strange Paradise*, is a story about migration—a journey of leaving home—which is often so dangerous that survival is not a given. When people are willing to go to such lengths to leave a place in their search for refuge, it is indicative of the desperate circumstances they are fleeing.



The MV Sea-Watch surrounded by refugee boats and life rafts waiting for assistance on July 5, 2015. (Image credit: Sea-Watch.org)



Refugees on a boat crossing the Mediterranean Sea, heading from the Turkish coast to the northeastern Greek island of Lesbos, 2016. (Image credit: Mstyslav Chernov/Unframe)

Lesson

14

The Journey

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Read closely to determine the metaphorical meaning of a text.

Lesson Introduction

What Strange Paradise by Omar El Akkad follows the experiences of a migrant child from Syria who is shipwrecked and washed ashore on a small Mediterranean island. In flashback format, it tells the story of his earlier journey, on land and then at sea, and his attempt to reach safety and begin again.

The loss of home can be a loss of one's place in the world in every sense. Losses of land and one's possessions are compounded by the obliteration of one's language, culture, beliefs, myths, and art.

It is this specter of complete loss that looms over anyone who faces the need to migrate from their home and seek refuge elsewhere. And there are also questions. Will they find a new home? Will they be welcome or chased away? Will they survive? These fears and questions are addressed fictionally in *What Strange Paradise*.

Reading

In *What Strange Paradise*, read the following chapters:

- Chapters 1–12 (3–111)

Look over the reading journal instructions and assignments below so you can begin taking notes as you read.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Complete the reading assignment.
- Make notes in your reading journal.
- Answer comprehension questions and critical thinking prompts.
- Complete the Reflect and Respond assignment.

Reading Journal

1. In your reading journal, note the different stops Amir takes on his journey and the significant events that occur in each place. Events include not only what happens to Amir, but also what happens within him, emotionally, as he processes what is happening.

When you complete the book, you will chart Amir's entire journey on a map.

Comprehension Questions and Critical Thinking

1. Answer the following questions about the story and the characters. Write two or three sentences for each, and include an example from the text to help explain each answer.
 - a. The author, Omar El Akkad, is both a novelist and journalist by profession, and you will find elements of both kinds of writing in the book. Identify sentences or phrases that are more journalistic in style and ones that are more artistic, lyrical, or philosophical.
 - b. What do we know about Vänna through her observations and imaginations about the flight of the birds (21–22) the day the novel begins? How do these observations reveal the theme of the novel? Does this bring to mind the events of the chapter “The Birds Change Their Tune” in *A Story Like the Wind*?
 - c. When they are living in Alexandria, what are Amir's impressions of his mother?
 - d. As Amir witnesses his mother adapting to her new life, he observes that, “In moments such as these it was difficult to think of her as a single person, the same person he'd known all his life” (33). Compare this with how Vänna sees her mother. How are Amir's and Vänna's perceptions alike? How are they different?
 - e. What perspective did Amir's father have about what happened to his family and to his people? What does he believe is the root of the turmoil?
 - f. The group of people crossing the Mediterranean on the *Calypso* are on a perilous voyage. What phrases from the text best describe their desperate circumstances and their vulnerability?

Reflect and Respond

1. The prevailing metaphor of chapter 7 is found at the end:

With utter confusion, he tries to make sense of the baffling play he's just witnessed, performed with such intensity by a troupe whose actors were barricaded from one another by walls of language and place and purpose, two opposing scripts come alive on one shared stage, its director absent or impotent or wholly uncaring. (67)

Analyze this sentence. How do you interpret it? How does the metaphor of the play help you better understanding the scene and Amir's experience?

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback. You can use the following checklist when you are organizing your work submission:

- Comprehension Questions and Critical Thinking: answers to prompts related to story details.
- Reflect and Respond: analysis of a metaphor.

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.



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