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LAE4360



“Who am I, and why does it matter?”
A unit on life, death, and the meaning of it all

12th grade Honors Language Arts

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Rationale

This unit on identity is geared toward seniors who are preparing to leave high school and explore “the real world”; therefore, it is critical that they experience new and broadened horizons in order to succeed. Many students unfortunately have very limited views on themselves and the world around them. When they do in fact enter the job market or higher education, they can be shocked by new views and become defensive or closed-minded about other worldviews. Conversely, students who do not have a grounded view of who they are or what they believe about the world often simply “go with the flow” and in doing so, lose the very essence of who they are.

My intention in this unit is to give the students a wide variety of worldviews, from literature to religion to self-identity. They will keep journals throughout the unit recording their thoughts and beliefs on each piece of information, and they will later use the journals in a Self and Purpose essay, as well as a final research essay. The main text they will read is *Waiting for Godot*, the existentialist play by Samuel Becket. They will explore the tête-à-tête between Estragon and Vladimir and keep a journal documenting their thoughts on the play (e.g., Is it nonsense? Are they really just unattached? Is existentialism a valid view on life?). Other pieces of literature to be reviewed and reflected on include songs such as “Stairway to Heaven” by Led Zeppelin and “The Sound of Silence” by Simon and Garfunkel.

Along with existentialism and Beckett, students will learn and reflect on various life views according to the beliefs of Buddhism, Judaism, atheism, agnosticism, and so on. They will explore other views of life and death in order to

structure or add on to their own. Understanding the beliefs and ideas of others will help them relate to the people around them.

Students will have “home groups” of four to five students, with which they will accomplish all in-class group work (except the *Godot* performance assignment, for which they will choose their own groups). They will workshop drafts of two papers in these groups, giving constructive, specific feedback and avoiding personal opinionated comments. The first paper will be a Self and Purpose essay, in which they will explore who they are as individuals and what their beliefs are. Throughout the unit they will continue to explore new ideas, which they will incorporate in their journals and final research essay. This research essay should be a more in-depth, heavily cited essay that explores what they have learned during the unit and how it has affected or confirmed their personal beliefs.

I am excited about teaching a unit about self-discovery, because I feel it is especially crucial in the adolescent years. High school students are constantly bombarded with conflicting messages from the media and social expectations. I believe each student should feel free to be him or herself, and I want my classroom especially to be a safe area of self-expression. If the students have a handle on their identity and beliefs, they will be more successful in their education and beyond.

Goals and Objectives

SWBAT...

- Analyze a variety of literature, from plays to stories to song lyrics.
- Explore and construct their own view of life, death, and meaning.
- Maintain a reflective journal on each piece of information presented in class.
- Compose a self-reflective essay on their own beliefs.
- Perform a group scene from *Waiting for Godot*.
- Compose and share a research essay.
- Perform a literature circle.
- Reflect on new or different worldviews.
- Present and publish their research essays to the class.

Sunshine State Standards

LA.1112.1.6.2: The student will listen to, read, and discuss familiar and conceptually challenging text;

LA.1112.1.7.1: The student will use background knowledge of subject and related content areas, prereading strategies (e.g., previewing, discussing, generating questions), text features, and text structure to make and confirm complex predictions of content, purpose, and organization of a reading selection;

LA.1112.1.7.2: The student will analyze the authors purpose and/or perspective in a variety of text and understand how they affect meaning;

LA.1112.1.7.6: The student will analyze and evaluate similar themes or topics by different authors across a variety of fiction and nonfiction selections;

LA.1112.1.7.8: The student will use strategies to repair comprehension of grade-appropriate text when self-monitoring indicates confusion, including but not limited to rereading, checking context clues, predicting, note-making, summarizing, using graphic and semantic organizers, questioning, and clarifying by checking other sources.

LA.1112.2.1.7: The student will analyze, interpret, and evaluate an author's use of descriptive language (e.g., tone, irony, mood, imagery, pun, alliteration, onomatopoeia, allusion), figurative language (e.g., symbolism, metaphor, personification, hyperbole), common idioms, and mythological and literary allusions, and explain how they impact meaning in a variety of texts with an emphasis on how they evoke reader's emotions;

LA.1112.2.2.5: The student will select a variety of age and ability appropriate nonfiction materials (e.g., biographies and topical areas, such as science, music, art, history, sports, current events) to expand the core knowledge necessary to connect topics and function as a fully literate member of a shared culture.

LA.1112.3.1.1: The student will prewrite by generating ideas from multiple sources (e.g., brainstorming, notes, journals, discussion, research materials or other reliable sources) based upon teacher-directed topics and personal interests;

LA.1112.3.2.1: The student will draft writing by developing ideas from the prewriting plan using primary and secondary sources appropriate to the purpose and audience;

LA.1112.3.2.3: The student will draft writing by analyzing language techniques of professional authors (e.g., figurative language, denotation, connotation) to establish a personal style, demonstrating a command of language with conviction of expression.

LA.1112.3.3.1: The student will revise by evaluating the draft for development of ideas and content, logical organization, voice, point of view, word choice, and sentence variation;

LA.1112.3.3.3: The student will revise by creating precision and interest by elaborating ideas through supporting details (e.g., facts, statistics, expert opinions, anecdotes), a variety of sentence structures, creative language devices, and modifying word choices using resources and reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus) to select more effective and precise language; and

LA.1112.3.3.4: The student will revise by applying appropriate tools or strategies to evaluate and refine the draft (e.g., peer review, checklists, rubrics).

LA.1112.3.4.3: The student will edit for correct use of punctuation, including commas, colons, semicolons, apostrophes, dashes, quotation marks, parentheses, ellipses, brackets, and underlining or italics;

LA.1112.3.4.4: The student will edit for correct use of grammar and usage, including but not limited to parts of speech, verb tense, noun/pronoun agreement, subject/verb agreement, pronoun/antecedent agreement, parallel structure, modifier placement, comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs, and unintended shift in person or tense; and

LA.1112.3.5.1: The student will prepare writing using technology in a format appropriate to the purpose (e.g., for display, multimedia);

LA.1112.3.5.3: The student will sharing with others, or submitting for publication.

LA.1112.4.1.1: The student will write in a variety of expressive and reflective forms that uses a range of appropriate strategies and specific narrative techniques, employs literary devices, and sensory description; and

LA.1112.4.1.2: The student will incorporate figurative language, emotions, gestures, rhythm, dialogue, characterization, plot, and appropriate format.

LA.1112.4.2.2: The student will record information and ideas from primary and/or secondary sources accurately and coherently, noting the validity and reliability of these sources and attributing sources of information;

LA.1112.4.3.1: The student will write essays that state a position or claim, present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support effective arguments and emotional appeals, and acknowledge and refute opposing arguments; and

LA.1112.4.3.2: The student will include persuasive techniques (e.g., word choice, repetition, emotional appeal, hyperbole, appeal to authority, celebrity endorsement, rhetorical question, irony, symbols, glittering generalities, card stacking, testimonials, bandwagon, image association, transfer).

Unit Outline

(Daily Activities)

Week 1: Existentialism 101

Monday: intro to existentialism, Samuel Beckett; outline unit

Tuesday: journal on “Stairway to Heaven”; *Waiting for Godot*

Wednesday: *Waiting for Godot*, journal

Thursday: excerpt from *Alice in Wonderland*, journal; *Godot*

Friday: finish reading *Godot*; discuss journals; sign up for performance groups

Week 2: Life & Death

Monday: journal on personal thoughts right before death, based on “Bullet in the Brain”; *Godot* performance group work

Tuesday: journal on “The Sound of Silence”; discussion on life and death according to Buddhism, Judaism

Wednesday: discussion on life and death according to atheism, agnosticism; journal on religious viewpoints

Thursday: watch video performances of *Godot*, journal on significance of at least two contrasting approaches

Friday: *Godot* performance groups

Week 3: Why?

Monday: *Godot* performance groups

Tuesday: begin *A Ring of Endless Light*, journal

Wednesday: discuss *A Ring of Endless Light*, first draft on Self and Purpose essay

Thursday: discuss *A Ring of Endless Light*; workshop draft, revise draft

Friday: journal on novel; workshop second draft, polish over the weekend

Week 4: Q & A in Literary Movements

Monday: turn in Self and Purpose essay, discuss postmodernism, begin *Catcher in the Rye*

Tuesday: journal on Chapters 1-3, read “Bananafish” in class

Wednesday: continue reading *Catcher in the Rye*, journal on prompt, “What is Holden’s purpose?”

Thursday: continue reading *Catcher in the Rye*; prepare for literature circles

Friday: literature circles on *Catcher in the Rye*, each group presents specific chapters

Week 5: Research: What do I think?

Monday: presentation on postmodernism, romanticism, Victorian era, existentialism, and how they all relate; outline of final research assignment

Tuesday: research day: trip to the library to gather information for research papers

Wednesday: draft of research papers, incorporating journals, class notes, texts, and personal findings (such as the Self and Purpose essay)

Thursday: rough draft should be presented to teacher, workshop groups for drafts

Friday: first draft of research papers due, feedback will be emailed over the weekend

Week 6: Final Presentations: What do I think?

Monday: second draft due in class, workshop groups

Tuesday: final draft due, edit and proofread in workshops

Wednesday: compose brief presentations outlining views and support

Thursday: presentations of final papers in class via PPT

Friday: finish presentations of final papers in class; upload paper to class website, read and comment on at least four papers over the weekend; turn in journals

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Cover photo taken and edited by myself.

Appendix A

“Stairway to Heaven” Led Zeppelin

There's a lady whose sure all that glitters is gold
And she's buying a stairway to heaven.
When she gets there, she knows if the stores are all closed
With a word she can get what she came for.

Ooh, ooh, and she's buying a stairway to heaven.

There's a sign on the wall but she wants to be sure
'Cause you know sometimes words have two meanings.
In a tree by the brook, there is a songbird who sings:
Sometimes all of our thoughts are misgiven.

Ooh, it makes me wonder,
Ooh, it makes me wonder.

There's a feeling I get when I look to the west,
And my spirit is crying for leaving.
In my thoughts I have seen rings of smoke through the trees,
And the voices of those who standing looking.

Ooh, it makes me wonder,
Ooh, really makes me wonder.

And it's whispered that soon if we all call the tune
Then the piper will lead us to reason.
And a new day will dawn for those who stand long
And the forests will echo with laughter.

If there's a bustle in your hedgerow,
Don't be alarmed now,
It's just a spring clean for the May queen.
Yes, there are two paths you can go by but in the long run
There's still time to change the road you're on.

And it makes me wonder.
Ooooooh...

Your head is humming and it won't go,
In case you don't know:
The pipers calling you to join him.

Dear lady, can you hear the wind blow,
And did you know:
Your stairway lies on the whispering wind.

And as we wind on down the road,
Our shadows taller than our soul,
There walks a lady we all know.
Who shines white light and wants to show...
How everything still turns to gold.
And if you listen very hard the tune will come to you at last.
When all are one and one is all, yeah, to be a rock and not to roll.

And she's buying a stairway... to heaven.

Appendix B

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

CHAPTER VII

A Mad Tea-Party

There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. 'Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse,' thought Alice; 'only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind.'

The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it: 'No room! No room!' they cried out when they saw Alice coming. 'There's PLENTY of room!' said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

'Have some wine,' the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. 'I don't see any wine,' she remarked.

'There isn't any,' said the March Hare.

'Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it,' said Alice angrily.

'It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited,' said the March Hare.

'I didn't know it was YOUR table,' said Alice; 'it's laid for a great many more than three.'

'Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.

'You should learn not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some severity; 'it's very rude.'

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he SAID was, 'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?'

'Come, we shall have some fun now!' thought Alice. 'I'm glad they've begun asking riddles.—I believe I can guess that,' she added aloud.

'Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?' said the March Hare.

'Exactly so,' said Alice.

'Then you should say what you mean,' the March Hare went on.

'I do,' Alice hastily replied; 'at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know.'

'Not the same thing a bit!' said the Hatter. 'You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see"!''

'You might just as well say,' added the March Hare, 'that "I like what I get" is the same thing as "I get what I like"!''

'You might just as well say,' added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in

his sleep, 'that "I breathe when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe"!'

'It IS the same thing with you,' said the Hatter, and here the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute, while Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks, which wasn't much.

The Hatter was the first to break the silence. 'What day of the month is it?' he said, turning to Alice: he had taken his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily, shaking it every now and then, and holding it to his ear.

Alice considered a little, and then said 'The fourth.'

'Two days wrong!' sighed the Hatter. 'I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!' he added looking angrily at the March Hare.

'It was the BEST butter,' the March Hare meekly replied.

'Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well,' the Hatter grumbled: 'you shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife.'

The March Hare took the watch and looked at it gloomily: then he dipped it into his cup of tea, and looked at it again: but he could think of nothing better to say than his first remark, 'It was the BEST butter, you know.'

Alice had been looking over his shoulder with some curiosity. 'What a funny watch!' she remarked. 'It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!'

'Why should it?' muttered the Hatter. 'Does YOUR watch tell you what year it is?'

'Of course not,' Alice replied very readily: 'but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together.' '

Which is just the case with MINE,' said the Hatter.

Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. 'I don't quite understand you,' she said, as politely as she could.

'The Dormouse is asleep again,' said the Hatter, and he poured a little hot tea upon its nose.

Appendix C

Performance Group Assignment

You are to perform a scene (or scenes) from *Waiting for Godot*. You have exactly one week to assign parts, construct costumes and scenery, and learn your lines. Each group member should have a specific role from the following:

Director: You are responsible for managing practice times, interpretation of the play, and which scene to perform. Of course, all group members are encouraged to give input and choose a scene together, but you are responsible for the artistic direction the actors, costumes, and set take on.

Actor: You are responsible for memorizing the character's lines and presenting him in an original way, according to the artistic direction of the group. You are responsible for producing or wearing the costumes chosen by the costume director. You do not have to give an Academy Award-worthy performance, but you do need to know your lines and present the character to us in a convincing manner.

Costume Designer: You are responsible for designing and producing (or instructing the actors to produce) costumes that reflect the overall approach of the theme. Costumes can be as elaborate or simplistic as you wish, and they can imitate any time period. For ideas, search former productions online.

Set Designer: You are responsible for designing and constructing some sort of setting for the performance. It can be as elaborate, simplistic, or symbolic as you wish, but there must be some sort of element that tells the audience where the scene is taking place.

Good luck!

Appendix D

“Bullet in the Brain”

Tobias Wolff

Anders couldn't get to the bank until just before it closed, so of course the line was endless and he got stuck behind two women whose loud, stupid conversation put him in a murderous temper. He was never in the best of tempers anyway, Anders – a book critic known for the weary, elegant savagery with which he dispatched almost everything he reviewed.

With the line still doubled around the rope, one of the tellers stuck a “POSITION CLOSED” sign in her window and walked to the back of the bank, where she leaned against a desk and began to pass the time with a man shuffling papers. The women in front of Anders broke off their conversation and watched the teller with hatred. “Oh, that's nice,” one of them said. She turned to Anders and add, confident of his accord, “One of those little human touches that keep us coming back for more.”

Anders had conceived his own towering hatred of the teller, but he immediately turned it on the presumptuous crybaby in front of him. “Damned unfair,” he said. “Tragic, really. If they're not chopping off the wrong leg, or bombing your ancestral village, they're closing their positions.”

She stood her ground. “I didn't say it was tragic,” she said. “I just think it's a pretty lousy way to treat your customers.”

“Unforgivable,” Anders said. “Heaven will take note.”

She sucked in her cheeks but stared past him and said nothing. Anders saw that the other woman, her friend, was looking in the same direction. And then the tellers stopped what they were doing, and the customers slowly turned, and silence came over the bank. Two men wearing black ski masks and blue business suits were standing to the side of the door. One of them had a pistol pressed against the guard's neck. The guard's eyes were closed, and his lips were moving. The other man had a sawed-off shotgun. “Keep your big mouth shut!” the man with the pistol said, though no one had spoken a word. “One of you tellers hits the alarm, you're all dead meat. Got it?”

The tellers nodded.

“Oh, bravo,” Anders said. “Dead meat.” He turned to the woman in front of him. “Great script, eh? The stern, brass-knuckled poetry of the dangerous classes.”

She looked at him with drowning eyes.

The man with the shotgun pushed the guard to his knees. He handed up the shotgun to his partner and yanked the guard's wrists up behind his back and locked them together with a pair of handcuffs. He toppled him onto the floor with a kick between the shoulder blades. Then he took his shotgun back and went over to the security gate at the end of the counter. He was short and heavy and moved with peculiar slowness, even torpor. “Buzz him in,” his partner said. The man with the shotgun opened the gate and sauntered along the line of tellers, handing each of them a Hefty bag. When he came to the empty position he looked over at the man with the pistol, who said, “Whose slot is that?”

Anders watched the teller. She put her hand to her throat and turned to the man she'd been talking to. He nodded. “Mine,” she said.

“Then get your ugly ass in gear and fill that bag.”

“There you go,” Anders said to the woman in front of him. “Justice is done.”

“Hey! Bright boy! Did I tell you talk?”

“No,” Anders said.

“Then shut your trap.”

“Did you hear that?” Anders said. “‘Bright boy.’ Right out of ‘The Killers’.”

“Please be quiet,” the woman said.

“Hey, you deaf or what?” The man with the pistol walked over to Anders. He poked the weapon into Anders’ gut. “You think I’m playing games?”

“No,” Anders said, but the barrel tickled like a stiff finger and he had to fight back the titters. He did this by making himself stare into the man’s eyes, which were clearly visible behind the holes in the mask: pale blue, and rawly red-rimmed. The man’s left eyelid kept twitching. He breathed out a piercing, ammoniac smell that shocked Anders more than anything that had happened, and he was beginning to develop a sense of unease when the man prodded him again with the pistol.

“You like me, bright boy?” he said. “You want to suck my dick?”

“No,” Anders said. “Then stop looking at me.” Anders fixed his gaze on the man’s shiny wing-top shoes.

“Not down there. Up there.” He stuck the pistol under Anders’ chin and pushed it upward until Anders was looking at the ceiling.

Anders had never paid much attention to that part of the bank, a pompous old building with marble floors and counters and pillars, and gilt scrollwork over the tellers’ cages. The domed ceiling had been decorated with mythological figures whose fleshy, toga-draped ugliness Anders had taken in at a glance many years earlier and afterward declined to notice. Now he had no choice but to scrutinize the painter’s work. It was even worse than he remembered, and all of it executed with the utmost gravity. The artist had a few tricks up his sleeve and used them again and again – a certain rosy blush on the underside of the clouds, a coy backward glance on the faces of the cupids and fauns. The ceiling was crowded with various dramas, but the one that caught Anders’ eye was Zeus and Europa – portrayed, in this rendition, as a bull ogling a cow from behind a haystack. To make the cow sexy, the painter had canted her hips suggestively and given her long, droopy eyelashes through which she gazed back at the bull with sultry welcome. The bull wore a smirk and his eyebrows were arched. If there’d been a bubble coming out of his mouth, it would have said, “Hubba hubba.”

“What’s so funny, bright boy?” “Nothing.”

“You think I’m comical? You think I’m some kind of clown?”

“No.”

“You think you can fuck with me?”

“No.”

“Fuck with me again, you’re history. Capiche?”

Anders burst out laughing. He covered his mouth with both hands and said, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” then snorted helplessly through his fingers and said, “Capiche – oh, God, capiche,” and at that the man with the pistol raised the pistol and shot Anders right in the head.

The bullet smashed Anders’ skull and ploughed through his brain and exited behind his right ear, scattering shards of bone into the cerebral cortex, the corpus callosum, back toward the basal ganglia, and down into the thalamus. But before all this occurred, the

first appearance of the bullet in the cerebrum set off a crackling chain of ion transports and neuro-transmissions. Because of their peculiar origin these traced a peculiar patter, flukishly calling to life a summer afternoon some forty years past, and long since lost to memory. After striking the cranium the bullet was moving at 900 feet per second, a pathetically sluggish, glacial pace compared to the synaptic lighting that flashed around it. Once in the brain, that is, the bullet came under the mediation of brain time, which gave Anders plenty of leisure to contemplate the scene that, in a phrase he would have abhorred, “passed before his eyes.”

It is worth noting what Ambers did not remember, given what he did remember. He did not remember his first lover, Sherry, or what he had most madly loved about her, before it came to irritate him – her unembarrassed carnality, and especially the cordial way she had with his unit, which she called Mr. Mole, as in, “Uh-oh, looks like Mr. Mole wants to play,” and “Let’s hide Mr. Mole!” Anders did not remember his wife, whom he had also loved before she exhausted him with her predictability, or his daughter, now a sullen professor of economics at Dartmouth. He did not remember standing just outside his daughter’s door as she lectured her bear about his naughtiness and described the truly appalling punishments Paws would receive unless he changed his ways. He did not remember a single line of the hundreds of poems he had committed to memory in his youth so that he could give himself the shivers at will – not “Silent, upon a peak in Darien,” or “My God, I heard this day,” or “All my pretty ones? Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?” None of these did he remember; not one. Anders did not remember his dying mother saying of his father, “I should have stabbed him in his sleep.”

He did not remember Professor Josephs telling his class how Athenian prisoners in Sicily had been released if they could recite Aeschylus, and then reciting Aeschylus himself, right there, in the Greek. Anders did not remember how his eyes had burned at those sounds. He did not remember the surprise of seeing a college classmate’s name on the jacket of a novel not long after they graduated, or the respect he had felt after reading the book. He did not remember the pleasure of giving respect.

Nor did Anders remember seeing a woman leap to her death from the building opposite his own just days after his daughter was born. He did not remember shouting, “Lord have mercy!” He did not remember deliberately crashing his father’s car in to a tree, or having his ribs kicked in by three policemen at an anti-war rally, or waking himself up with laughter. He did not remember when he began to regard the heap of books on his desk with boredom and dread, or when he grew angry at writers for writing them. He did not remember when everything began to remind him of something else.

This is what he remembered. Heat. A baseball field. Yellow grass, the whirr of insects, himself leaning against a tree as the boys of the neighborhood gather for a pickup game. He looks on as the others argue the relative genius of Mantle and Mays. They have been worrying this subject all summer, and it has become tedious to Anders: an oppression, like the heat.

Then the last two boys arrive, Coyle and a cousin of his from Mississippi. Anders has never met Coyle’s cousin before and will never see him again. He says hi with the rest but takes no further notice of him until they’ve chosen sides and some asks the cousin what position he wants to play. “Shortstop,” the boy says. “Short’s the best position they is.” Anders turns and looks at him. He wants to hear Coyle’s cousin repeat what he’s just said, but he knows better than to ask. The others will think he’s being a

jerk, ragging the kid for his grammar. But that isn't it, not at all – it's that Anders is strangely roused, elated, by those final two words, their pure unexpectedness and their music. He takes the field in a trance, repeating them to himself.

The bullet is already in the brain; it won't be outrun forever, or charmed to a halt. In the end it will do its work and leave the troubled skull behind, dragging its comet's tail of memory and hope and talent and love into the marble hall of commerce. That can't be helped. But for now Anders can still make time. Time for the shadows to lengthen on the grass, time for the tethered dog to bark at the flying ball, time for the boy in right field to smack his sweat-blackened mitt and softly chant, They is, they is, they is.

Appendix E

“The Sound of Silence”

Simon and Garfunkel

Hello darkness, my old friend,
I've come to talk with you again,
Because a vision softly creeping,
Left its seeds while I was sleeping,
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence.

In restless dreams I walked alone
Narrow streets of cobblestone,
'Neath the halo of a street lamp,
I turned my collar to the cold and damp
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light
That split the night
And touched the sound of silence.

And in the naked light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more.
People talking without speaking,
People hearing without listening,
People writing songs that voices never share
And no one dared
Disturb the sound of silence.

"Fools" said I, "You do not know
Silence like a cancer grows.
Hear my words that I might teach you,
Take my arms that I might reach you."
But my words like silent raindrops fell,
And echoed
In the wells of silence.

And the people bowed and prayed
To the neon god they made.
And the sign flashed out its warning,
In the words that it was forming.
And the sign said, the words of the prophets are written on the subway walls
And tenement halls.
And whisper'd in the sounds of silence."

Appendix F

"A Perfect Day for Bananafish"

J. D. Salinger

There were ninety-seven New York advertising men in the hotel, and, the way they were monopolizing the long-distance lines, the girl in 507 had to wait from noon till almost two-thirty to get her call through. She used the time, though. She read an article in a women's pocket-size magazine, called "Sex Is Fun-or Hell." She washed her comb and brush. She took the spot out of the skirt of her beige suit. She moved the button on her Saks blouse. She tweezed out two freshly surfaced hairs in her mole. When the operator finally rang her room, she was sitting on the window seat and had almost finished putting lacquer on the nails of her left hand.

She was a girl who for a ringing phone dropped exactly nothing. She looked as if her phone had been ringing continually ever since she had reached puberty. With her little lacquer brush, while the phone was ringing, she went over the nail of her little finger, accentuating the line of the moon. She then replaced the cap on the bottle of lacquer and, standing up, passed her left--the wet--hand back and forth through the air. With her dry hand, she picked up a congested ashtray from the window seat and carried it with her over to the night table, on which the phone stood. She sat down on one of the made-up twin beds and--it was the fifth or sixth ring--picked up the phone.

"Hello," she said, keeping the fingers of her left hand outstretched and away from her white silk dressing gown, which was all that she was wearing, except mules--her rings were in the bathroom.

"I have your call to New York now, Mrs. Glass," the operator said.

"Thank you," said the girl, and made room on the night table for the ashtray.

A woman's voice came through. "Muriel? Is that you?"

The girl turned the receiver slightly away from her ear. "Yes, Mother. How are you?" she said.

"I've been worried to death about you. Why haven't you phoned? Are you all right?"

"I tried to get you last night and the night before. The phone here's been--"

"Are you all right, Muriel?"

The girl increased the angle between the receiver and her ear. "I'm fine. I'm hot. This is the hottest day they've had in Florida in--"

"Why haven't you called me? I've been worried to--"

"Mother, darling, don't yell at me. I can hear you beautifully," said the girl. "I called you twice last night. Once just after--"

"I told your father you'd probably call last night. But, no, he had to--Are you all right, Muriel? Tell me the truth."

"I'm fine. Stop asking me that, please."

"When did you get there?"

"I don't know. Wednesday morning, early."

"Who drove?"

"He did," said the girl. "And don't get excited. He drove very nicely. I was amazed."

"He drove? Muriel, you gave me your word of--"

"Mother," the girl interrupted, "I just told you. He drove very nicely. Under fifty the whole way, as a matter of fact."

"Did he try any of that funny business with the trees?"

"I said he drove very nicely, Mother. Now, please. I asked him to stay close to the white line, and all, and he knew what I meant, and he did. He was even trying not to look at the trees--you could tell. Did Daddy get the car fixed, incidentally?"

"Not yet. They want four hundred dollars, just to--"

"Mother, Seymour told Daddy that he'd pay for it. There's no reason for--"

"Well, we'll see. How did he behave--in the car and all?"

"All right," said the girl.

"Did he keep calling you that awful--"

"No. He has something new now."

"What?"

"Oh, what's the difference, Mother?"

"Muriel, I want to know. Your father--"

"All right, all right. He calls me Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948," the girl said, and giggled.

"It isn't funny, Muriel. It isn't funny at all. It's horrible. It's sad, actually. When I think how--"

"Mother," the girl interrupted, "listen to me. You remember that book he sent me from Germany? You know--those German poems. What'd I do with it? I've been racking my--"

"You have it."

"Are you sure?" said the girl.

"Certainly. That is, I have it. It's in Freddy's room. You left it here and I didn't have room for it in the--Why? Does he want it?"

"No. Only, he asked me about it, when we were driving down. He wanted to know if I'd read it."

"It was in German!"

"Yes, dear. That doesn't make any difference," said the girl, crossing her legs. "He said that the poems happen to be written by the only great poet of the century. He said I should've bought a translation or something. Or learned the language, if you please."

"Awful. Awful. It's sad, actually, is what it is. Your father said last night--"

"Just a second, Mother," the girl said. She went over to the window seat for her cigarettes, lit one, and returned to her seat on the bed. "Mother?" she said, exhaling smoke.

"Muriel. Now, listen to me."

"I'm listening."

"Your father talked to Dr. Sivetski."

"Oh?" said the girl.

"He told him everything. At least, he said he did--you know your father. The trees. That business with the window. Those horrible things he said to Granny about her plans for passing away. What he did with all those lovely pictures from Bermuda--everything."

"Well?" said the girl.

"Well. In the first place, he said it was a perfect crime the Army released him from the hospital--my word of honor. He very definitely told your father there's a chance--a very great chance, he said--that Seymour may completely lose control of himself. My word of honor."

"There's a psychiatrist here at the hotel," said the girl.

"Who? What's his name?"

"I don't know. Rieser or something. He's supposed to be very good."

"Never heard of him."

"Well, he's supposed to be very good, anyway."

"Muriel, don't be fresh, please. We're very worried about you. Your father wanted to wire you last night to come home, as a matter of f--"

"I'm not coming home right now, Mother. So relax."

"Muriel. My word of honor. Dr. Sivetski said Seymour may completely lose contr--"

"I just got here, Mother. This is the first vacation I've had in years, and I'm not going to just pack everything and come home," said the girl. "I couldn't travel now anyway. I'm so sunburned I can hardly move."

"You're badly sunburned? Didn't you use that jar of Bronze I put in your bag? I put it right--"

"I used it. I'm burned anyway."

"That's terrible. Where are you burned?"

"All over, dear, all over."

"That's terrible."

"I'll live."

"Tell me, did you talk to this psychiatrist?"

"Well, sort of," said the girl.

"What'd he say? Where was Seymour when you talked to him?"

"In the Ocean Room, playing the piano. He's played the piano both nights we've been here."

"Well, what'd he say?"

"Oh, nothing much. He spoke to me first. I was sitting next to him at Bingo last night, and he asked me if that wasn't my husband playing the piano in the other room. I said yes, it was, and he asked me if Seymour's been sick or something. So I said--"

"Why'd he ask that?"

"I don't know, Mother. I guess because he's so pale and all," said the girl. "Anyway, after Bingo he and his wife asked me if I wouldn't like to join them for a drink. So I did. His wife was horrible. You remember that awful dinner dress we saw in Bonwit's window? The one you said you'd have to have a tiny, tiny--"

"The green?"

"She had it on. And all hips. She kept asking me if Seymour's related to that Suzanne Glass that has that place on Madison Avenue--the millinery." "

What'd he say, though? The doctor."

"Oh. Well, nothing much, really. I mean we were in the bar and all. It was terribly noisy."

"Yes, but did--did you tell him what he tried to do with Granny's chair?"

"No, Mother. I didn't go into details very much," said the girl. "I'll probably get a

chance to talk to him again. He's in the bar all day long."

"Did he say he thought there was a chance he might get--you know--funny or anything? Do something to you!"

"Not exactly," said the girl. "He had to have more facts, Mother. They have to know about your childhood--all that stuff. I told you, we could hardly talk, it was so noisy in there."

"Well. How's your blue coat?"

"All right. I had some of the padding taken out."

"How are the clothes this year?"

"Terrible. But out of this world. You see sequins--everything," said the girl.

"How's your room?"

"All right. Just all right, though. We couldn't get the room we had before the war," said the girl. "The people are awful this year. You should see what sits next to us in the dining room. At the next table. They look as if they drove down in a truck."

"Well, it's that way all over. How's your ballerina?"

"It's too long. I told you it was too long."

"Muriel, I'm only going to ask you once more--are you really all right?"

"Yes, Mother," said the girl. "For the ninetieth time."

"And you don't want to come home?"

"No, Mother."

"Your father said last night that he'd be more than willing to pay for it if you'd go away someplace by yourself and think things over. You could take a lovely cruise. We both thought--"

"No, thanks," said the girl, and uncrossed her legs. "Mother, this call is costing a for--"

"When I think of how you waited for that boy all through the war--I mean when you think of all those crazy little wives who--"

"Mother," said the girl, "we'd better hang up. Seymour may come in any minute."

"Where is he?"

"On the beach."

"On the beach? By himself? Does he behave himself on the beach?"

"Mother," said the girl, "you talk about him as though he were a raving maniac--"

"I said nothing of the kind, Muriel."

"Well, you sound that way. I mean all he does is lie there. He won't take his bathrobe off."

"He won't take his bathrobe off? Why not?"

"I don't know. I guess because he's so pale."

"My goodness, he needs the sun. Can't you make him?"

"You know Seymour," said the girl, and crossed her legs again. "He says he doesn't want a lot of fools looking at his tattoo."

"He doesn't have any tattoo! Did he get one in the Army?"

"No, Mother. No, dear," said the girl, and stood up. "Listen, I'll call you tomorrow, maybe."

"Muriel. Now, listen to me."

"Yes, Mother," said the girl, putting her weight on her right leg.

"Call me the instant he does, or says, anything at all funny--you know what I

mean. Do you hear me?"

"Mother, I'm not afraid of Seymour."

"Muriel, I want you to promise me."

"All right, I promise. Goodbye, Mother," said the girl. "My love to Daddy." She hung up.

"See more glass," said Sybil Carpenter, who was staying at the hotel with her mother. "Did you see more glass?"

"Pussycat, stop saying that. It's driving Mommy absolutely crazy. Hold still, please."

Mrs. Carpenter was putting sun-tan oil on Sybil's shoulders, spreading it down over the delicate, winglike blades of her back. Sybil was sitting insecurely on a huge, inflated beach ball, facing the ocean. She was wearing a canary-yellow two-piece bathing suit, one piece of which she would not actually be needing for another nine or ten years.

"It was really just an ordinary silk handkerchief--you could see when you got up close," said the woman in the beach chair beside Mrs. Carpenter's. "I wish I knew how she tied it. It was really darling."

"It sounds darling," Mrs. Carpenter agreed. "Sybil, hold still, pussy."

"Did you see more glass?" said Sybil.

Mrs. Carpenter sighed. "All right," she said. She replaced the cap on the sun-tan oil bottle. "Now run and play, pussy. Mommy's going up to the hotel and have a Martini with Mrs. Hubbel. I'll bring you the olive."

Set loose, Sybil immediately ran down to the flat part of the beach and began to walk in the direction of Fisherman's Pavilion. Stopping only to sink a foot in a soggy, collapsed castle, she was soon out of the area reserved for guests of the hotel.

She walked for about a quarter of a mile and then suddenly broke into an oblique run up the soft part of the beach. She stopped short when she reached the place where a young man was lying on his back.

"Are you going in the water, see more glass?" she said.

The young man started, his right hand going to the lapels of his terry-cloth robe. He turned over on his stomach, letting a sausaged towel fall away from his eyes, and squinted up at Sybil.

"Hey. Hello, Sybil."

"Are you going in the water?"

"I was waiting for you," said the young man. "What's new?"

"What?" said Sybil.

"What's new? What's on the program?"

"My daddy's coming tomorrow on a nairiplane," Sybil said, kicking sand.

"Not in my face, baby," the young man said, putting his hand on Sybil's ankle.

"Well, it's about time he got here, your daddy. I've been expecting him hourly. Hourly."

"Where's the lady?" Sybil said.

"The lady?" the young man brushed some sand out of his thin hair. "That's hard to say, Sybil. She may be in any one of a thousand places. At the hairdresser's. Having her hair dyed mink. Or making dolls for poor children, in her room." Lying prone now, he made two fists, set one on top of the other, and rested his chin on the top one. "Ask me something else, Sybil," he said. "That's a fine bathing suit you have on. If there's one

thing I like, it's a blue bathing suit."

Sybil stared at him, then looked down at her protruding stomach. "This is a yellow," she said. "This is a yellow."

"It is? Come a little closer." Sybil took a step forward. "You're absolutely right. What a fool I am."

"Are you going in the water?" Sybil said.

"I'm seriously considering it. I'm giving it plenty of thought, Sybil, you'll be glad to know."

Sybil prodded the rubber float that the young man sometimes used as a head-rest. "It needs air," she said.

"You're right. It needs more air than I'm willing to admit." He took away his fists and let his chin rest on the sand. "Sybil," he said, "you're looking fine. It's good to see you. Tell me about yourself." He reached in front of him and took both of Sybil's ankles in his hands. "I'm Capricorn," he said. "What are you?"

"Sharon Lipschutz said you let her sit on the piano seat with you," Sybil said.

"Sharon Lipschutz said that?"

Sybil nodded vigorously.

He let go of her ankles, drew in his hands, and laid the side of his face on his right forearm. "Well," he said, "you know how those things happen, Sybil. I was sitting there, playing. And you were nowhere in sight. And Sharon Lipschutz came over and sat down next to me. I couldn't push her off, could I?"

"Yes."

"Oh, no. No. I couldn't do that," said the young man. "I'll tell you what I did do, though."

"What?"

"I pretended she was you."

Sybil immediately stooped and began to dig in the sand. "Let's go in the water," she said.

"All right," said the young man. "I think I can work it in."

"Next time, push her off," Sybil said.

"Push who off?"

"Sharon Lipschutz."

"Ah, Sharon Lipschutz," said the young man. "How that name comes up. Mixing memory and desire." He suddenly got to his feet. He looked at the ocean. "Sybil," he said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll see if we can catch a bananafish."

"A what?"

"A bananafish," he said, and undid the belt of his robe. He took off the robe. His shoulders were white and narrow, and his trunks were royal blue. He folded the robe, first lengthwise, then in thirds. He unrolled the towel he had used over his eyes, spread it out on the sand, and then laid the folded robe on top of it. He bent over, picked up the float, and secured it under his right arm. Then, with his left hand, he took Sybil's hand.

The two started to walk down to the ocean.

"I imagine you've seen quite a few bananafish in your day," the young man said.

Sybil shook her head.

"You haven't? Where do you live, anyway?"

"I don't know," said Sybil.

"Sure you know. You must know. Sharon Lipschutz knows where she lives and she's only three and a half."

Sybil stopped walking and yanked her hand away from him. She picked up an ordinary beach shell and looked at it with elaborate interest. She threw it down. "Whirly Wood, Connecticut," she said, and resumed walking, stomach foremost.

"Whirly Wood, Connecticut," said the young man. "Is that anywhere near Whirly Wood, Connecticut, by any chance?"

Sybil looked at him. "That's where I live," she said impatiently. "I live in Whirly Wood, Connecticut." She ran a few steps ahead of him, caught up her left foot in her left hand, and hopped two or three times.

"You have no idea how clear that makes everything," the young man said.

Sybil released her foot. "Did you read 'Little Black Sambo'?" she said.

"It's very funny you ask me that," he said. "It so happens I just finished reading it last night." He reached down and took back Sybil's hand. "What did you think of it?" he asked her.

"Did the tigers run all around that tree?"

"I thought they'd never stop. I never saw so many tigers."

"There were only six," Sybil said.

"Only six!" said the young man. "Do you call that only?"

"Do you like wax?" Sybil asked.

"Do I like what?" asked the young man.

"Wax."

"Very much. Don't you?"

Sybil nodded. "Do you like olives?" she asked.

"Olives--yes. Olives and wax. I never go anyplace without 'em."

"Do you like Sharon Lipschutz?" Sybil asked.

"Yes. Yes, I do," said the young man. "What I like particularly about her is that she never does anything mean to little dogs in the lobby of the hotel. That little toy bull that belongs to that lady from Canada, for instance. You probably won't believe this, but some little girls like to poke that little dog with balloon sticks. Sharon doesn't. She's never mean or unkind. That's why I like her so much."

Sybil was silent.

"I like to chew candles," she said finally.

"Who doesn't?" said the young man, getting his feet wet. "Wow! It's cold." He dropped the rubber float on its back. "No, wait just a second, Sybil. Wait'll we get out a little bit."

They waded out till the water was up to Sybil's waist. Then the young man picked her up and laid her down on her stomach on the float.

"Don't you ever wear a bathing cap or anything?" he asked.

"Don't let go," Sybil ordered. "You hold me, now."

"Miss Carpenter. Please. I know my business," the young man said. "You just keep your eyes open for any bananafish. This is a perfect day for bananafish."

"I don't see any," Sybil said.

"That's understandable. Their habits are very peculiar." He kept pushing the float. The water was not quite up to his chest. "They lead a very tragic life," he said. "You know what they do, Sybil?"

She shook her head.

"Well, they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas." He edged the float and its passenger a foot closer to the horizon. "Naturally, after that they're so fat they can't get out of the hole again. Can't fit through the door."

"Not too far out," Sybil said. "What happens to them?"

"What happens to who?"

"The bananafish."

"Oh, you mean after they eat so many bananas they can't get out of the banana hole?"

"Yes," said Sybil.

"Well, I hate to tell you, Sybil. They die."

"Why?" asked Sybil.

"Well, they get banana fever. It's a terrible disease."

"Here comes a wave," Sybil said nervously.

"We'll ignore it. We'll snub it," said the young man. "Two snobs." He took Sybil's ankles in his hands and pressed down and forward. The float nosed over the top of the wave. The water soaked Sybil's blond hair, but her scream was full of pleasure.

With her hand, when the float was level again, she wiped away a flat, wet band of hair from her eyes, and reported, "I just saw one."

"Saw what, my love?"

"A bananafish."

"My God, no!" said the young man. "Did he have any bananas in his mouth?"

"Yes," said Sybil. "Six."

The young man suddenly picked up one of Sybil's wet feet, which were drooping over the end of the float, and kissed the arch.

"Hey!" said the owner of the foot, turning around.

"Hey, yourself We're going in now. You had enough?"

"No!"

"Sorry," he said, and pushed the float toward shore until Sybil got off it. He carried it the rest of the way.

"Goodbye," said Sybil, and ran without regret in the direction of the hotel.

The young man put on his robe, closed the lapels tight, and jammed his towel into his pocket. He picked up the slimy wet, cumbersome float and put it under his arm. He plodded alone through the soft, hot sand toward the hotel.

On the sub-main floor of the hotel, which the management directed bathers to use, a woman with zinc salve on her nose got into the elevator with the young man.

"I see you're looking at my feet," he said to her when the car was in motion.

"I beg your pardon?" said the woman.

"I said I see you're looking at my feet."

"I beg your pardon. I happened to be looking at the floor," said the woman, and faced the doors of the car.

"If you want to look at my feet, say so," said the young man. "But don't be a God-damned sneak about it."

"Let me out here, please," the woman said quickly to the girl operating the car. The car doors opened and the woman got out without looking back.

"I have two normal feet and I can't see the slightest God-damned reason why anybody should stare at them," said the young man. "Five, please." He took his room key out of his robe pocket.

He got off at the fifth floor, walked down the hall, and let himself into 507. The room smelled of new calfskin luggage and nail-lacquer remover.

He glanced at the girl lying asleep on one of the twin beds. Then he went over to one of the pieces of luggage, opened it, and from under a pile of shorts and undershirts he took out an Ortgies calibre 7.65 automatic. He released the magazine, looked at it, then reinserted it. He cocked the piece. Then he went over and sat down on the unoccupied twin bed, looked at the girl, aimed the pistol, and fired a bullet through his right temple.

Appendix G

Literature Circle Roles

Discussion Director

- creates questions to increase comprehension
- asks who, what, why, when, where, how, and what if

Vocabulary Enricher

- clarifies word meanings and pronunciations
- uses research resources

Literary Luminary

- guides oral reading for a purpose
- examines figurative language, parts of speech, and vivid descriptions

Checker

- checks for completion of assignments
- evaluates participation
- helps monitor discussion for equal participation

Literature Circle Roles

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

The "Discussion Director" asks questions to increase comprehension.

Name _____

Book _____

1. Why do you think the author had _____ happen in the story?
2. How is _____ alike/different from _____ ?
3. If you had been _____, how would you have _____ ?
4. How did you feel about _____ ?
5. What do you think caused _____ ?
6. How would the story have been changed if the author had not let _____ happen?
7. Tell a short summary of _____ .
8. Predict: _____ .
9. Do you think _____ happening will be important later on? Why do you think so?
10. How?
11. Why?

Literature Circle Roles

VOCABULARY ENRICHER

The Vocabulary Enricher clarifies word meanings and pronunciations. In this role, the person writes how the word was used in the story and looks up each word in the dictionary. This person would also find the correct definition of the word.

Page #, Paragraph #	Word	Sentence from book	Definition	Plan

Group finds words and figures out meaning from context. Group chooses correct definition from dictionary. Group uses thesaurus to find a synonym to substitute in the sentence.

Literature Circle Roles

LITERARY LUMINARY

The Literary Luminary locates 4 sections of text to share with the group and states the reasons for choosing the selections.

Name _____ Book _____

Possible reasons for picking a passage to be shared aloud:

good dialogue, surprising, tells about characters, well-written, figurative language, funny, confusing, sets a mood, thought-provoking

Passage #1

Why did you pick this passage?

How will you share it with the group?

Passage #2

Why did you pick this passage?

How will you share it with the group?

Passage #3

Why did you pick this passage?

How will you share it with the group?

Passage #4

Why did you pick this passage?

How will you share it with the group?

Literature Circles Roles CHECKER

The Checker “checks” for completion of assignments, evaluates participation, helps monitor discussion for equal participation.

Name _____

Book _____

Name	Job	Done?	Participation	Read Assignment

Self-Reflection: Taking Part in a Group

1. Did I understand what my role was in the group?
2. Did I complete my task to the best of my ability?
3. Did I have my turn speaking?
4. Did I let others have a turn at speaking?
5. Did I listen while others were speaking?
6. Did I offer to help when it was needed?
7. Did I enjoy taking part in the group work?
8. Did I enjoy working with the others in my group?

What are three things that you enjoyed about your role in the group?

What is something that you want to do differently next time?

Appendix H

Final Research Paper Assignment

Throughout this unit we have explored a variety of interpretations of life, death, and the meaning of it all. From literary movements to song lyrics to religion, you have constructed meaning and opinions on each piece of information thus far. In your personal essay you explored who you are and what you believe. In this assignment, you are to construct a heavily researched essay explaining your views on existence and what you agree or disagree with. Your essay should answer the following questions:

Who am I?

Why does it matter?

What does life and death mean to me?

What do I believe about existentialism? Religion?

Make sure you reference each idea you discuss in your essay. It's completely okay to not agree with anything we've discussed; just explain why you disagree and cite what you disagree with.

Your reading journals will be extremely helpful to you as you write this essay. You will also workshop each draft with your home group in order to ensure its credibility and quality.

Your essay will not be graded according to your personal opinions; on the contrary, it will be graded according to how effectively you present and support your beliefs. If you have any questions regarding the assignment, or if you would like me to review a draft to see if you're heading in the right direction, feel free to contact me.

Good luck!