

THE EXPLORATION OF SELF WITHIN SOCIETY

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The great challenge which faces us is to assure that, in our society of bigness, we do not strangle the voice of creativity, that the rules of the game do not come to overshadow its purpose, that the grand orchestration of society leaves ample room for the man who marches to the beat of a different drummer.

~Hubert H. Humphrey

Rationale

Since the existence of societies, individuals have often struggled within and against them. In recent American history, there are numerous examples. In the 60s, a group of people decided that segregation and discrimination were unacceptable, so they fought for Civil Rights. In the 70s, many decided that they were opposed to a war in Vietnam, so they protested and dodged the draft. Most recently, in the aftermath of 9/11, the majority supports a war in Afghanistan, but still there exists voices of dissent. What is both equally wonderful and difficult about being American is that we are constitutionally granted the right to publicly disagree with the government and societal majorities. And while no one in his or her right mind condones murder, deciding what is right is rarely this easy. Yet, we frequently, if not daily, must choose what we believe to be right.

In the case of students, this is also true, but when they decide to take a stand it is rarely as organized as the Civil Right movement or the opposition to Vietnam. Furthermore, high school is a time when most students are trying hard to fit in and be accepted; due to this mentality, dealing with peer pressure is a constant issue. While parents and teachers can supervise and lend guidance, we are not always there, nor will our guidance always be accepted. Students must learn to think critically and on their own, so that if another offers them a joint or a beer they can respond in an informed manner. If they

can begin to learn how to do this within the walls of a public school, our hope is that they will be more self-assured when they face society in its entirety on their own. Assisting in this process is the major goal of this unit.

In this unit we intend to use literature as a way for students to practice thinking for both themselves and in terms of the greater good of society, to consider what is right, and to make educated decisions about when it is appropriate to assent and when to dissent. It should be made clear that our goal is not to dictate what is right or invalidate any beliefs our students hold. Nor are we attempting to foster subversion. Instead, we are asking our students to start thinking about their responsibilities to a society that was created so that they would have the choice to speak with their own mind and from their own heart.

The first work of this unit is Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron." This short story tells of a society that has taken terrible measures to ensure the equality of all—beautiful people wear hideous masks, the strong are handicapped with metal burdens, and the intelligent have their very thinking disrupted by earpieces that broadcast sounds so horrible they literally cannot think straight. The tragic hero of the story, Harrison Bergeron, is a handsome, intelligent, and robust young man who refuses to live according to society's wishes. He is on the run from the government and chooses, along with a beautiful, talented dancer, to briefly reinstate the world as it once was. Both he and the dancer are shot and killed by government agents on a broadcast show. All of the witnesses, including Harrison Bergeron's own parents, promptly forget the entire incident.

While some students may find Harrison's actions to be hopeful, it is also possible that some will think that they were inconsequential and pointless; that he died for nothing. Some parents may not wish their children to be exposed to such violence, especially if it is possible that their children will conclude that the violence served no purpose. Some parents may conclude that reading "Harrison Bergeron" will do nothing more than further desensitize youths already exposed to violence at every turn of media. Carey-Webb (2001) states, however, from his extensive experience in teaching difficult topics to young adults that, "careful reading, discussion, and writing about powerful subjects

increases rather than numbs my students' human sensitivity," and that students "can't participate wisely in the world unless they clearly understand it" (p. 19). As we discussed earlier, our students do have to deal with violence. Because violence is part of their world, we find it necessary for them to talk about it in a forum of critical thinking with their peers, in addition to the guidance they may or may not be receiving at home or elsewhere. Also, the reality is that the world of "Harrison Bergeron," while uncomfortably similar to ours, is not ours. As long as America continues to uphold its democratic notions, the chance is greater that individuality will persist.

Our next work is a novel, Lois Lowry's 1994 Newbery Award winner, *The Giver*. *The Giver* takes place in a seemingly utopian community, a sharp contrast from that of Vonnegut's short story. It is the tale of Jonas, a boy who finds out that his job, as determined by committee, is to become a living storehouse of all that was once painful or joyful, ugly or beautiful. Lowry, in her Newbery acceptance speech, stated that it felt good to create this world: "I got rid of all the things I fear and dislike, all the violence, prejudice, poverty, and injustice, and I even threw in good manners as a way of life because I liked the idea of it" (1994). Whereas in "Harrison Bergeron" the reader sees very clearly the restraints society places on the individual, in Jonas's community the virtue of total egalitarianism has been thoroughly indoctrinated; there is no one to rebel, because nobody remembers how it used to be, with the exception of the giver. As Jonas begins to fulfill his role as the receiver, he learns that underneath the perfectness of his community lays sinister deception—babies who are deemed unacceptable are killed, joy has been taken away with pain, and his people no longer see in color.

Again, parents might have problems with their children being exposed to a horror such as infanticide, but Lowry explains her decision to reveal this to the reader: "If I've learned anything...it is that we can't live in a walled world, in an 'only us, only now' world where we are all the same and feel safe. We would have to sacrifice too much" (1994). There are doubtless those out there that believe sameness and safety are to be strived for, that the sacrifice would be worth it, and Lowry understands this too. She, therefore, leaves the ending of the novel open for interpretation. Whether the students decide if Jonas is

better or worse off as the receiver reflects only on themselves—“there’s a right [ending] for each of us, and it depends on our own beliefs, our own hopes” (Lowry, 1994). In line with our overarching goal of this unit, the student will have to weigh on their own the pros and cons of Jonas’s community and arrive at their own definition of right.

The last major work of this six-week unit is Nobel Prize winner William Golding’s novel, *Lord of the Flies*. This work, the story of marooned British schoolboys, is one of the most frequently challenged books in America, for it delineates the descent of decent children into a savage and primitive state. Perhaps most controversial is the fact that two boys die at the hands of the others. As with both “Harrison Bergeron” and *The Giver*, some may feel that the violence is too much, but as with the other two the thinking that can emerge from reading such texts far outweighs the possibility that it might upset the student.

One thought-provoking strain of the novel is the clearly negative effects of adopting a group mentality without question. Of all the major characters in the novel, only one, Ralph, puts up a good fight. Arguable, however, is whether he does do the right thing, because he *does* help kill Simon. He feels as though he has no way out, the same sort of feeling many teens have when pressured by other students. Condemning Ralph is no easy task, for he is a young man struggling to do what is right under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. There are no grown-ups around to tell him what is right, so he must decide on his own. This lack of adult presence makes this text appropriate as a culminating work for this unit.

While the boys’ earlier experiences no doubt influence their decisions, Golding states that, “the theme is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature” (qtd. Epstein, 1954, p. 204). Unlike Harrison Bergeron or Jonas, the boys of *Lord of the Flies* do not have to work within the confines of a structured society, and, as a result, the quality of their decisions is mainly a reflection on their human nature. This is not to say that *Lord of the Flies* is a hopeless tale of doomed humankind. Instead, “the moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable” (Golding,

qtd., p. 204). The ethical person can overcome an imperfect nature, and this book is fitting for it places this enormous responsibility squarely in the hands of young people; only Ralph is even arguably victorious in his fight against evil. However, whether he should be admired in terms of his relatively successful attempts to overcome the mob and human nature can and should be debated.

We have chosen these three major texts because all of them feature young adults struggling against society in one form or another. To broaden their thinking we will also supplement these texts with a weekly poem, each dealing with the same issue of the individual and society from a different perspective. Some, like “Marks,” by Linda Pastan, “Those Winter Sundays,” by Robert Hayden, and “Theme for English B,” by Langston Hughes, depict the respective struggles of a mother, a father, and minority student in their deciding whether they are willing to sacrifice themselves in order to meet societal expectations. Others, like Langston Hughes’s “Harlem (A Dream Deferred)” and Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken,” consider the long-term consequences of answering to or deferring individual desires. Lastly, we will read Claude McKay’s “America,” which illustrates the struggle of being an American from a minority’s perspective. We find this poem to be appropriate as a final piece, for it brings to the forefront the possibility that America is at the same time good and bad, power-giving and power-taking – how America manifests is entirely up to the individuals of which it is composed.

The student’s task in this unit is not an easy one. To aid them, they will be required to keep a reading log throughout the unit. In it, they will record their thoughts and reactions to the texts, to the questions we ask, and to the poems we will be reading. At the end of the unit, we will ask them to share with us what the texts have taught them. The main purpose of this cumulative assessment is to force the student to choose what is “right” in line with their beliefs, at least in some small way, and for them to justify their decision. In the end, our hope is the student will progress, if only a little bit, in their ability to conceive of the sometimes far-reaching consequences of their choices and of their determination of right and wrong.

Goals

Our overarching goal is to bring to light, in a variety of ways, how society can affect the individual and how, in turn, the individual can influence society. Within this conceptual framework, we will use literature as examples, which we hope will lead the students to critically evaluate when, if ever, being true to self (at the expense of societal obligation) is appropriate. This thinking cannot merely be general, or philosophical in nature, but must be contextualized to each student and their respective beliefs and opinions. The main way we will assess this goal is through the reading log they will be keeping throughout the unit. In this reading log we will require:

- Conceptually relevant responses to the main reading selections, to teacher selected prompts, and to weekly poems (i.e. demonstrates reflection on the individual within society).
- Personal reactions—the reflections must demonstrate that they are developing or explicating their own stance on issues presented by the texts, the teacher prompts, and the poetry.
- Adequately fleshed out responses, turned in weekly and on time (points will be lost for each day they are late).

The reading log is a place where the student should feel free to explore and expound on difficult issues, so we feel it is not appropriate to require polished writing (in other words, we will not be weighing grammar, mechanics, or usage). The only exception will be in the case that the writing is illegible in terms of either handwriting or overall amount and severity of errors. In cases such as these, we will ask the student to re-write the entry. Students may either type or handwrite the entries. Overall, these reading logs will be written records of the students' progression in their exploration of the individual's role within society and will provide evidence that the student is doing the reading. We have chosen the written medium, because we feel that the student may be more comfortable discussing the issue of personal truth in this more private forum. Furthermore, we feel that the students should progress in their abilities to write clearly, with a purpose, and in a persuasive manner when applicable.

Whereas we will use the reading log as a process portfolio of sorts, we will use the final assessment to gauge the students' capacity to synthesize what they have been learning and to put this information into the creation of an informed presentation. This project will portray their perception of the individual's role within society and/or present specific examples of when it is appropriate to assent and when to dissent (in their opinion). We have granted them the freedom to do this in any manner they see fit, as long as they can justify that it does show critical analysis; it would be rather ironic, after all, if we disallowed personal choice. However, while we will allow freedom of choice, we do still have specific expectations:

- The project should be original and highlight their "voice."
- The project should be a clear, developed synthesis of thinking initiated by the thematic concern of the unit (in relation to the texts and prompts used to lend perspective to this concern).
- The presentation should be engaging and each student should pay attention to other students' presentations.
- The students will have the option to work in groups, and will be held accountable in terms of their responsibilities to their groups.

This final assessment is weighed the same as all of the reading log entries put together. While it may seem harsh, the final assessment should not be difficult as long as they have been putting a reasonable amount of effort into their reading logs. All told, they will have had six full weeks to consider an issue, and will have been provided with many opportunities to think about this issue from many different perspectives. Furthermore, we will be working closely with the students before hand, so our expectations will be clear and we will have a general sense of what they will be presenting.

Materials

Short Story:

Vonnegut, Kurt. "Harrison Bergeron."

Novel:

Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*.

Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*.

Poetry:

Frost, Robert. "The Road Not Taken."

Hayden, Robert. "Those Winter Sundays."

Hughes, Langston. "Theme for English B."

---- "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)."

McKay, Claude. "America."

Pastan, Linda. "Marks."

References

- Carey-Webb A. (2001). *Literature and Lives: A Response-Based Cultural Studies Approach to Teaching English*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Epstein, E. L. (1954). Notes on *Lord of the Flies*. In W. Golding, *Lord of the Flies*. New York: Putnam.
- Humphrey, H. (1966, June 29). *Address, United States Junior Chamber of Commerce*. Detroit, Michigan.
- Lowry, L. (1994). *Newbery Acceptance Speech*. Retrieved October 16, 2002. <http://www.loislowry.com/speeches.html>.

LESSON PLANS

Week One

Monday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

15 min: Introductory Activity--Divide the class into five groups and hand out copies of one scenario to each group. (See Appendix A.) Students should individually read the directions, read the scenario and then answer the posed question: "What would you do?", writing down their thoughts if they want to.

15 min: Discuss scenarios in small groups of other students who have the same scenario. Try and come to some consensus as to what action the scenario character should take.

15 min: Bring class back together and tell them how the scenarios are an introduction to the idea of the individual's struggle within society. Ask whether the individual opinion changed while talking in groups and attempting to come to a consensus. Give some examples of how this struggle has played out (i.e. the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, Unity--and dissent--of post 9/11 America, and peer pressure). Most importantly, point out that for the next six weeks they should keep this overarching theme in mind.

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Tuesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

10 min: Recap yesterday's discussion and encourage additional comments or questions.

35 min: Apologize for not doing "grammar issues" as per usual, but time is needed to introduce the reading log. ***Grammar issues is time spent throughout the year on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays (with occasional exception) addressing any concerns the students have about grammar, and they can come from their papers, journals, reading, something they heard on t.v. (anywhere!). In the case that the students do not have any issues, the teacher will always have a backup issue (which generally will stem from major error trends the teacher notices in their writing and possibly speaking).*** Introduce reading log and the weekly poem "Theme from English B" by Langston Hughes.

15 min: Hand out reading log instructions and rubric and go over. (See Appendix B.) Have sample copy from past years or own making to pass around as an example. Tomorrow, after the students have had some experience seeing a specific sample entry and writing in the log, there will be time to clarify questions. **Remind students that they are to bring the reading log to class every day during this unit!**

5 min: Hand out copies of "Theme from English B" and read aloud. Inform students that will be reading a poem for each week of the unit.

10 min: Hand out and read aloud your own log entry as a model for what you expect. Point out that questions are asked, direct text references that are made, and that some thinking about the unit theme is included. Remind them that grammar, usage, and mechanics are not

important, but that it should be readable and that entries are not to be summaries. Field questions as time allows.

Homework: Students should respond to “Theme from English B” in their reading logs, referring to the handout if necessary – due tomorrow.

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Wednesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: “Grammar issues”: Student Choice. Backup: Usage of effect and affect.

15 min: Open the floor to questions about the Reading Log and to discuss any difficulties they have encountered thus far. **Remind students once more that they are to bring the reading log to class every day during this unit!**

25 min: Introduce “Harrison Bergeron” (author, date of publication, genre) and read in class (silently, aloud, students reading aloud, tape, etc.) Then have students use any remaining time to respond in their logs. The focus of this log entry should be to have questions for small group discussion tomorrow. If students do not finish, they should complete it for homework.

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Thursday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students’ choice. Backup: Comma in a series

15 min: Discuss “Harrison Bergeron” and log entries in small groups. Use their log entries to jumpstart discussion.

20 min: Large group discussion. The small groups should bring up the issues they discussed. ***If the students cannot sustain conversation on own, in any large group discussion, the teacher will always prepare backup questions. The hope is, however, that the reading logs, practice with asking good questions, and practice participating in a large group discussion will make it so that most days the students can guide the conversation according to their own reactions, observations, interpretations, etc. (See Appendix G for handout given to students at the beginning of the year on “good” readership and questioning). The teacher’s role will be to focus the conversation around the literature and the unit theme with clarification or explanation requests (when necessary) and to stimulate conversation with prepared questions (when necessary). The backup questions are just that: backup; questions generated during the classroom discussion will always take precedence, as long as they are relevant to the reading and/or the unit theme. The ultimate goal is to shift the dialogue back to the students as soon and as frequently as possible. If at any point you feel, however, that a major aspect of the work is not being addressed, then you will pose the question either when the students are struggling in discussion or as a prompt in the reading log. Throughout this unit, the main backup question everyday is, “How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?” (there will also be specific, supplementary questions). If conversation is a complete flop, even with the teacher’s questions, then the time will be used to have students write in their reading log.*** Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- Why would any society take such measures to equalize its citizens?
- What is similar about this society in comparison to ours? What is different?
- Why did the ballerina join Harrison?
- Were Harrison's actions (death) in vain?

5 min: Introduce and hand out copies of The Giver. By Monday, students should have read through Chapter 8 (page 64). Take up logs. (Students should have two entries to date.) Silent reading day tomorrow.

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Friday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

45 min: Read The Giver. *Each Friday throughout the school year (with occasional exception) a chunk of time will be devoted to allowing the students time to read in class. Although generally the students will be asked to use the time to read assigned reading, there will be certain blocks of time where the time will be used for literature circles, and some for the silent reading of books chosen by the student. If, at any time, the student has completed the assigned reading, the time may be spent free-reading.*

2 min: Remind students that chapters 1-8 should be read by Monday. They should also complete a reading log entry for this reading. Give back logs. Prepare to leave.

Week Two

Monday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

15 min: Small group discussion about the beginning of the book, questions, log entries, etc.

30 min: Large group discussion. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- Define utopia, then ask students whether Jonas's community is utopic.
- How would you feel if a committee told you what your job was going to be?
- Do you think an individual ought to do the job that is most useful to society (in terms of their abilities) even if they would rather do something else?
- What does it mean to be released?
- Why do you think the community requires parents to apply for a child? What are the potentially good and/or bad aspects of such a policy?
- If it is a rule that you must apologize for rudeness and you do so, is it an valid apology?

2 min: Students should read chapters 9-11 for tomorrow and complete a log entry. Prepare to leave.

Tuesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Student's choice. Backup: Commas after introductory elements.

5 min: Recap that in last night's reading Jonas receives memories of sensations (snow, sunburn). Tell the students that their assignment is to work in groups (up to five total groups) to describe a sensation, of their own selection, to someone who has never experienced it before.

15 min: Groups work on assignment described above.

20 min: Elected group representatives present descriptions to the class.

2 min: Students should read chapters 12-14 for homework. Their log entry should center on the question "When is it ok to lie?" both in terms of Jonas's world and the student's. Prepare to leave.

Wednesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students' choice. Backup: Usage of illusion and allusion.

20 min: Discussion of "When is it ok to lie?" and Jonas's new rules to live by.

20 min: Discussion of what's going on in chapters 12-14. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- Why does Jonas start to get angry about his job as the Receiver?
- Jonas begins to see in color. How did it ever end up that no one but the Giver or Receiver could see in color?
- Would you be willing to give up seeing in color or sledding for a life with no pain, no hunger, and no sadness?

2 min: Students should read chapters 15-17 for tomorrow. Their log entry should focus on questions for discussion tomorrow. Prepare to leave.

Thursday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students' choice. Backup: Commas in compound sentences.

20 min: Small group discussion based on questions in logs.

20 min: Large group discussion based on more focused questions from the small group session. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- How is the concept of "family" different in the community than it is for us? What is better and/or worse about their families in comparison?
- Jonas says to Gabe, "There could be love." Why might he say this to Gabe?
- What predictions do you have for the novel's finish?

2 min: Students should finish the book by Monday. Log entries should focus on this question: "Did Jonas make the right decision?" Take up logs. (Student should have completed four new log entries.) Prepare to leave.

Friday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

15 min: Read and discuss “Marks,” by Linda Pastan. Log response due next week. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- How do the allusions to school work in this poem?
- How do you think the speaker feels towards her family?

25 min: Respond in logs and/or read The Giver.

5 min: Hand out body biography instruction sheet. (See Appendix D.) Tell students about the body biography of Jonas they will be working on next week – it would be advantageous for them to jot down some of Jonas’s characteristics, struggles, and quotes in their logs.

2 min: Remind students that The Giver should be completed by Monday, along with the log entry focusing on “Did Jonas make the right decision?” Give logs back. Prepare to leave.

Week Three

Monday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

30 min: Class discussion focused on “Did Jonas make the right decision?” and the book as a whole. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- What is Jonas’s major motivation(s) for leaving?
- Why would Jonas think Elsewhere was better?
- Do the benefits of the community outweigh the negative aspects?

15 min: Create 5 body biography groups and allow time to brainstorm and/or divide duties. Have available examples from past classes and/or Teaching English Through Principled Practice by Peter Smagorinsky.

2 min: Prepare to leave. Homework is to continue brainstorming for the body biography.

Tuesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping (inform students that there will be no grammar issues today).

42 min: Students work in small groups on body biographies of Jonas. Circulate class making sure students are on task and answer any questions the students might have. During class, hand out copies of Lord of the Flies. Tell students that chapter 1 will need to be read by Thursday.

5 min: Clean up and prepare to leave.

Wednesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students’ choice. If none are brought up, there will be no backup; instead, the students will use time for body biographies.

15 min: Work on and finish body biographies of Jonas.

25 min: Students present body biographies to the class.

2 min: Students' homework assignment is to read chapter 1 for tomorrow and to complete a log entry with questions about the chapter. Prepare to leave.

Thursday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students' choice. Backup: Usage of denotation and connotation.

40 min: Discussion of the first chapter. (**Lord of the Flies can sometimes be difficult to read in the beginning for students, so this large portion of time is devoted to questions, explanations, and getting students engaged in the text.**) Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- How did the boys end up on the island?
- What do you envision this island looks like?
- Who appears to be more logical at this point? Ralph or Piggy?
- Why do all the boys seem to respond to the conch shell in the manner they do?
- How does it compare when you make fun of a friend versus when someone else does?
- Is the boys' response to being deserted realistic?

Any time leftover can be used to complete log entries or continue reading. (Also, if we ran out of time on body biographies, we will first finish the presentations).

2 min: Students should read chapters 2 and 3 for Monday and complete a log entry. Collect logs. (Students should have three new log entries.) Prepare to leave.

Friday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

15 min: Read and discuss "Those Winter Sundays," by Robert Hayden. Log responses are due next week. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- How exactly does the speaker feel about his father?
- How is the contrast between cold and warm functioning in this poem?

30 min: Read Lord of the Flies and/or complete log entries.

2 min: Remind students that chapters 2 and 3 and a log entry are due for Monday. Prepare to leave.

Week Four

Monday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

35 min: Have a discussion about the next two chapters of Lord of the Flies with a conch shell. Place the shell somewhere obvious in the room. The first person to notice, pick up, or comment on the conch shell will be the discussion leader. He or she determines who speaks and in what order. If no one notices the

conch shell, have the students nominate someone to hold the conch shell and lead discussion. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- Why is Ralph so obsessed with keeping the fire lit?
- Why is obeying the rules and the conch so important to the boys? Do you think it deserves the respect that some give them?
- What might the “beastie” be?
- Are the hunters the most important members of their society?
- If you were in their situation, would you set up your society this way?
- What would be your first priorities if you were marooned?

10 min: Discuss the discussion with the conch shell. How did it feel to be lead by a peer? Did it seem fair? Did anyone want me (the teacher) to take over? Etc.

2 min: Read chapter 4 and complete a log entry for tomorrow. Prepare to leave.

Tuesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students’ choice. Backup: Usage of possessives and apostrophes.

5 min: Tell students that small groups will be gathering at the beginning of class for the duration of the book (except Fridays). ***This 10-15 minute period should be used to create and update a group map of the island (so that they might better be able to envision the setting), a character reference list (an informal list that keeps track of any details that help elucidate who is doing what), and talk through plot clarifications. This small group time is given to the students so that the whole class discussion can better focus on the larger issues at hand. The groups will be of the students’ choice, will consist of 4-5 students, and will remain together throughout the reading of The Lord of the Flies.***

10 min: Small group time. Start map of island and character reference list.

25 min: Large group discussion. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- Are the boys spending their time appropriately?
- Is Ralph justified to get so upset about the fire going out? Or is Jack’s point that they need meat more valid? Who is doing more good for the group at large (or are they merely speaking out of individual desire)?
- What do you think Jack was like before they were marooned? Do you think the circumstances on the island are leading the boys to behave differently than is normal for them?
- Is their “Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in.” chant harmless fun?

2 min: Read chapters 5 and 6 tomorrow. Complete a log entry brainstorming on the implications of this quote from Lord of the Flies: “Fancy thinking the beast is something you can hunt and kill.” Prepare to leave.

Wednesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping (no grammar issues today)

10 min: Small group time

15 min: Students should stay in small groups for the next activity. As a group, using last night's reading log entry jottings as an impetus, students should decide whether they think the beast really is something they could hunt and kill, or if it's something else altogether. Provide students with butcher paper to write down support for their decision – examples from the book, quotes, etc.

20 min: Have students present decision and brief support to the class. Remind students that it's ok not to come to a consensus and to continue thinking about it.

2 min: Students should read chapter 7 and complete a log entry. Prepare to leave.

Thursday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students' choice. Backup: Sentence fragments

10 min: Small group time

25 min: Class discussion of chapters read thus far. Bring out the conch shell if students are interested. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- What fell from the sky in chapter 6?
- Is it just a game when the boys start chanting and prodding Robert?
- What is it Ralph sees at the end of chapter 6?
- Ralph is still Chief, but what evidence is there that Jack is gaining power?

10 min: Hand out the culminating project information sheet. (See Appendix E.) Talk about the project that is due at the end of this unit and how they can complete it. Suggest that students start thinking about what type of project they might like to do.

2 min: Students should read chapters 8 and 9 by Monday. Note that the only mention of this title phrase in the book will occur in their reading tonight. Their homework is to respond in logs to the following question: "What do you think the significance of the title of this book is? Why do you think it's called Lord of the Flies?" Brainstorm as to why Golding chose to title the book this in your response. Collect logs. (Students should have five new entries.) Prepare to leave.

Friday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

15 min: Read and discuss "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)" by Langston Hughes.

Log entry due next week. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- What possibilities does the speaker present are possible if a dream is deferred?
- Why would Hughes include Harlem in the title, if he doesn't mention it or any specific place within the poem itself?

30 min: Read Lord of the Flies and/or work on log entries.

2 min: Remind students that chapters 8 and 9, along with a log entry focusing on the title of the book is due on Monday. Give logs back. Prepare to leave.

Week Five

Monday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

10 min: Small group time

35 min: Discuss chapters 8 and 9 and what students think the significance of the title is. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- How has the presence of the beast changed the dynamic among the boys?
- Should either Jack or Ralph abdicate power for the benefit of the group?
- Who is a better Chief—Jack or Ralph?
- Is there anything negative about having two Chiefs?
- What might have contributed to Simon's descent into insanity (or is he insane)?
- What possible causes contributed to the boys murdering Simon?
- Why does Ralph participate?

2 min: Students should read chapters 10 and 11 and complete a log entry for tomorrow. Prepare to leave.

Tuesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students' choice. Backup: it's and its.

10 min: Small group time

30 min: Discuss chapters 10 and 11. Bring back the conch shell if students are interested. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- Is Ralph still Chief?
- Who is responsible for Piggy's death?
- Who, if anyone, owns the fire?
- Could Samneric have resisted joining?
- Does Ralph's refusal to join them do any good, either for himself for the group at large, in the long run?

2 min: Students should read chapter 12 (finish the book) and complete a log entry for tomorrow. Prepare to leave.

Wednesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students' choice. Backup: Usage of continual and continuous

10 min: Small group time

25 min: Discuss chapter 12 and the book as a whole. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- Did the boys do the best they could?

- What could they have done differently?
- Has the function of the conch changed any throughout the novel?
- If Ralph had killed one of the other boys, in defense, would he have been right to do so?
- If you were Ralph, would you proclaim that you were boss to the rescue party?

5 min: Pass out the “And the verdict is…” handout. (See Appendix F.) Discuss tomorrow’s activity and answer students’ questions. Divide students into six groups, and assign them either Jack, Ralph, or Samneric (either guilty or innocent). Remind students of the log assignment due tomorrow.

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Thursday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

5 min: Grammar issues: Students’ choice. Backup: Misplaced and dangling modifiers

15 min: Wrap up discussion of Lord of the Flies. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- What was the beast (if it was any one thing)?
- Did Ralph assent or dissent when appropriate? Why or why not?
- Did Jack assent or dissent when appropriate? Why or why not?

25 min: Work in groups on mini-trial. Circulate, keep students on task, answer any questions. The students should have their case ready to be presented in class tomorrow. Each group should appoint a lawyer, and they should be reminded that they will have no more than four minutes to present their case (this time limit will be strictly enforced).

2 min: Collect logs. (Students should have five new log entries.) Prepare to leave.

Friday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

15 min: Read and discuss “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- When the speaker says, “And that has made all the difference” does he mean this is a negative or positive way?
- Does one road seem better than the other?

Log entry due next week.

30 min: Mini-trials. Each group has only four minutes (one minute will be to vote).

2 min: Give back logs. Prepare to leave.

Week Six

Monday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

45 min: Project workday. The teacher will circulate the classroom, keeping students on task, and answering any questions. Also, the teacher will schedule who will present on which day.

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Tuesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

15 min: Read and discuss “America” by Claude McKay. Backup questions:

- **How does this (character, conflict, work, etc.) respond to or further your understanding of the struggle between self and society?**
- How does the speaker feel about America?
- Why would McKay choose the Shakespearian Sonnet as the form for this poem (Go over sonnet if necessary).

Log entry due Friday.

30 min: Project workday. The teacher will circulate the classroom, keeping students on task, and answering any questions.

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Wednesday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

45 min: Project presentations. Keep presentations to 5 minutes per student (a group of three, therefore, would get 15).

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Thursday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

45 min: Project presentations.

2 min: Prepare to leave.

Friday

3 min: Attendance, housekeeping

45 min: Project presentations.

2 min: Collect logs. (Students should have two new log entries.) Prepare to leave.

What Would You Do?

Please read the following scenario silently. Write a reaction to it on the back of this sheet or in your journal: If you were in this person's shoes, what would you do? Once you have completed this, join the other class members who have your same scenario. Discuss the situation and what you would do with your group members. Please make sure that everyone has the opportunity to share. At the end of the period we will come together as a whole class and briefly discuss the five different scenarios.

Damon's father, an African-American man, is very active in fighting for the rights of the African-Americans everywhere. His father's organization seeks out instances of social injustice against African-Americans and makes them public – sending a clear message to society. Damon knows his father does good work, but he is not fond of all the public attention his family gets as a result of his father's public image. Now, as high school graduation looms, his father wants him to attend a very liberal college as an African-American Studies major. Damon wants to attend a local public college, get lost in the crowd for a while, and study math, but he feels obligated to do work that benefits his race like his father. What should he do?

What Would You Do?

Please read the following scenario silently. Write a reaction to it on the back of this sheet or in your journal: If you were in this person's shoes, what would you do? Once you have completed this, join the other class members who have your same scenario. Discuss the situation and what you would do with your group members. Please make sure that everyone has the opportunity to share. At the end of the period we will come together as a whole class and briefly discuss the five different scenarios.

You are the mayor of your town. Unemployment is high, and the people in your town are desperate for work. You have the final say on whether or not a nuclear power plant should be built in your area. This plant would provide many jobs and give your town a much-needed economic boost. But personally, you feel that the nuclear power plant will cause long-term damage to the town's natural resources, and you agree with the small contingent of folks outside your office protesting the building of the plant. However, you also have an obligation to the economic survival of your town and the people in it. What are you going to do?

What Would You Do?

Please read the following scenario silently. Write a reaction to it on the back of this sheet or in your journal: If you were in this person's shoes, what would you do? Once you have completed this, join the other class members who have your same scenario. Discuss the situation and what you would do with your group members. Please make sure that everyone has the opportunity to share. At the end of the period we will come together as a whole class and briefly discuss the five different scenarios.

Michael is a college student and has a photographic memory. He can remember *everything* he sees and reads. While studying in the library one day, Michael sees two men in suits coming toward him. "We work for the CIA, Michael," said the younger of the two men. "We have heard about your special abilities. We have come to offer you a position with the CIA because we feel that you could serve your country by helping us fight the war on terrorism." Michael is taken aback. He had never considered working for the government, and is adamantly opposed to war of any kind. He considers himself to be a patriotic American citizen, but he feels he must also consider his heritage as a second generation Saudi-American. He knows that he could be a great help to his country and fellow citizens, but wonders if he would be helping to start a war or helping to prevent one if he said yes. The two CIA men are waiting for his answer, and they said they have to have his answer today. What should he say and do?

What Would You Do?

Please read the following scenario silently. Write a reaction to it on the back of this sheet or in your journal: If you were in this person's shoes, what would you do? Once you have completed this, join the other class members who have your same scenario. Discuss the situation and what you would do with your group members. Please make sure that everyone has the opportunity to share. At the end of the period we will come together as a whole class and briefly discuss the five different scenarios.

You are a new lawyer and you have been assigned to your first client, Tom Gray. He is accused of kidnapping and brutally murdering a 10-year-old little girl. The more time you spend with Tom, the more disgusted you are by him. He convincingly professes his innocence to everyone, claiming it's a case of mistaken identity. However, to you Tom proudly recounts as many grizzly details as possible. You know that the parents of the little girl are distraught and starting to doubt themselves, afraid that the real killer is still out there. You are beginning to really feel for them just imagining what they are going through. In your heart you want to tell the parents that he really is the one that killed their daughter in order to put their minds at ease a little, but you know you are bound by attorney-client privilege. If you tell them, you will lose your job and will probably be disbarred. What do you do?

What Would You Do?

Please read the following scenario silently. Write a reaction to it on the back of this sheet or in your journal: If you were in this person's shoes, what would you do? Once you have completed this, join the other class members who have your same scenario. Discuss the situation and what you would do with your group members. Please make sure that everyone has the opportunity to share. At the end of the period we will come together as a whole class and briefly discuss the five different scenarios.

Rebecca loves being a nurse. She was sad when her husband told her he was being transferred to another state, but her sadness was somewhat relieved when she was hired at a doctor's office near her husband's new workplace. At first she loved her job and thought that Dr. Smith was really friendly and nice. However, when she and Dr. Smith were alone, he turned into a different person. He stood too close, made suggestive comments, and tried to touch her without her permission. The sexual advances escalated into threats of losing her job if she did not do as he said. Rebecca had had enough and was headed toward Dr. Smith's office with her resignation in hand. When she burst into his office, she walked in on him threatening and sexually harassing one of the young interns. The girl looked at Rebecca with frightened and grateful eyes. Now Rebecca faces a difficult dilemma. If she turned in her resignation and walked away, many other young girls might suffer the same sexual harassment she had – or worse. But, if she pressed charges against Dr. Smith, it would be her word against his, a long and emotionally draining court case, and every aspect of her personal life would be displayed for all to see. Do you think Rebecca is obligated to help out the young interns, or is she right to want to avoid the potential exposure involved in going public? What advice would you give Rebecca if she were your friend?

The Reading Log

Throughout this unit, we will be reading several works while exploring the struggle of the individual within society. In order to keep you reading and reflecting on what you are reading (*and so that I won't have to give you pop quizzes*), one of your requirements will be to write entries in a reading log. Your entries, which should be a minimum of approximately 100-200 words, should show evidence of your reading, and should explore each reading in light of the question that we will be contemplating throughout this unit: How do you navigate through society as an individual?

Category	3	2	1
Well-developed response	The response meets minimum length requirements and is clear and organized.	The response meets minimum length requirements but may lack clarity and/or organization.	The response does not meet minimum length requirements and lacks clarity and/or organization.
Voice/Depth	Entries show insight, introspection, and contemplation about the reading/prompt. Your voice shines through – it sounds like “you.”	Entries are adequately contemplative, but you haven't reached far enough. Sounds generic and somewhat voiceless.	Entries are superficial, sketchy, and/or show that you haven't read or reflected on the prompt. Voiceless.
Relevance	Entry responds to the reading or prompt. Entry is focused on personal and theme-related reaction.	Entry responds to the reading or prompt. Entry mainly focuses on personal reactions.	Entry responds to the reading or prompt, but really only summarizes the material or wanders off-topic.

The total number of points for each log entry is 10. In addition to the nine points listed in the rubric above, one point will be awarded to responses that are legible. Entries that I cannot decipher will lose that point, and you will have to write the essay over to receive the possibility of the nine remaining points. Please note that legible only means readable – entries do not have to be grammatically correct.

Focus on content, reflection, and interpretation. Entries may be hand-written or typed.

Your log is due every Thursday unless I inform you otherwise. For each day your log is late you will lose one point (for a maximum of 5 school days). This may not sound like much, but each point lost correlates to a lowering by one letter grade! Also, you are expected to bring you reading log to class with you every day during this unit. If I find that you are not bringing it to class, then a point may be deducted from that week's point total.

In addition, from time to time I may provide you with a writing prompt or a poem for you to respond to in your reading log. These entries will be weighted and graded the same as your reading responses.

Remember, your entries should not only be your personal reaction, **but a reaction with the theme of this unit in mind.** I may also ask you to propose questions for the next day's discussion in your log. This does not mean that you are relieved of having to do a 100-200 word response. Please incorporate questions for discussion *into* your response. ***And please do not summarize your readings in your log!***

Finally, please know that I am bound by law to report any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the appropriate personnel.

Sample Reading Log Entry

11/17/02

Why does he say "I guess?" Is he not sure? I think he is being polite to the professor. It mentions twice that he is 22. Again, I think he is just trying to be diplomatic, saying that he's young, so maybe he doesn't know everything—that way it's not so rebellious when the speaker says "it's not easy to know what is true" even though the professor apparently thinks it is (because his instructions make letting "the page come out you" seem easy).

The speaker finds that he cannot easily identify with either group (whites or blacks). He lives in the Y in Harlem, but he goes to Columbia. And he listens to all kinds of music--Bessie, bop, and Bach. For him being American means that we are all apart of each other. We all influence and learn from each other. So, does that mean that we can never be individual? It seems like the speaker is an individual, since he can't be fit into any category easily, but does that make a person individual or just a part of everybody else?

The speaker says that he isn't as free as the professor, and maybe that the professor doesn't learn too much from him and he isn't free to teach too much either. I thought it was interesting that the last line says page for English B and the title is "Theme for English B." I'm wondering what the difference between the two is.

Body Biography

Your group will be creating a body biography—a visual and written portrait illustrating several aspects of Jonas’s life within The Giver. Class time will be limited, but your group should divide duties such that you may do some of the work as homework.

You have many possibilities for filling up your giant sheet of paper. I have listed several, but please feel free to come up with your own creations. As always, the choices you make should be based on the text, for you will be verbally explaining (and thus, in a sense, defending) them at a showing of your work. Above all, your choices should be creative, analytical, and accurate.

After completing this portrait, you will participate in a showing in which you present your masterpiece to the class. This showing should accomplish these objectives. It should:

- Review significant events, choices, and changes involving Jonas.
- Communicate the full essence of your character by emphasizing traits that make him who he is.
- Promote discussion of Jonas (especially in terms of his decisions he made throughout the novel).

Body Biography Requirements

Although I expect your biography to contain additional dimensions, your portrait must contain:

- A review of significant happenings in the novel
- Visual symbols
- Jonas’s three most important actions
- Evidence of Jonas’s world (the world of *Sameness* and/or the new community)

Body Biography Suggestions

1. Placement – Carefully choose the placement of your text and artwork. For example, the area where Jonas’s heart would be might be appropriate for illustrating the important relationships in his life.
2. Spine – What is the most important goal for Jonas? What drives his thoughts and actions? This is his spine. How can you illustrate it?
3. Virtues and Vices – What are Jonas’s most admirable qualities? His worst? How can you make us visualize them?
4. Color – Colors are often symbolic. What color(s) do you most associate with Jonas? Why? How can you effectively work these colors into your presentation?
5. Symbols – What objects can you associate with Jonas’s essence? Are there objects mentioned within the novel itself that you could use? If not, or if you choose others, have them correspond with Jonas.
6. Changes – How has Jonas changed within the novel? Trace these changes within your text and/or artwork.
7. Environment – Depending on what community you depict Jonas in, have the biography reflect that setting.

Your Culminating Project

We've explored multiple texts and discussed some difficult topics throughout this unit. This culminating project is your chance to show off what you've learned in the way that's most appealing to you – writing, painting, sculpting, acting, singing, etc. There is a list of ideas below that you can choose from, but you can also choose to design your own project. Please just make sure to *run it by me for approval before you begin working*. You will be asked to do a 3 to 5 minute presentation of your project in class in which you explain how your particular project represents your understanding of the texts we've discussed and the exploration of self in society.

This freedom of choice does not mean “easy.” Your project *must* show understanding and reflection on the concepts and conversations in this unit. This may be done individually or with a group, whatever works best for you. However, group projects have to be worthy of having multiple students working on it. Please let me know the following before you begin working: your project idea, how it will represent your understanding and knowledge gained, your project members, if any, and any potential difficulties you might encounter. **You will have some class time to work on this project, but the majority will need to be done outside of class.**

Here are some possible projects ideas:

- Prologue to a story or stories
- Newspaper editorial
- Art project
- Short story or poem
- A body biography
- Song
- Skits:
 - Public service announcement (PSA)
 - Speech
 - Dramatic sketch
 - Character role-play
- Anything else you think up and get approved by me

On the back of this sheet is a rubric that will be used to evaluate your project. Please keep these criteria in mind when creating your project. **Grading procedures are explained below:**

The total number of points for each project is 12 for individual projects and 15 for group projects. Keep in mind that this is your culminating project and will be weighted heavily in your overall grade. How many log entries we have will be how many times the project counts. So, say we end up with 12 journal entries for this unit, then your grade on this project will count 12 times.

Every person in a group project will evaluate all the members of the group, including themselves. These peer evaluations will be given on the day that the project is due. I will take an average of the peer evaluation scores and provide you with your grade in this category accordingly.

Please come to me with questions that come up along the way. Good luck!

Culminating Project Rubric

Category	3	2	1
Originality/Creativity	Project shows imagination and depth of thought.	Project shows some imagination and/or some depth of thought.	Project does not show imagination or depth of thought.
Relevance	Project shows understanding of texts and contemplation of theme. Evidence of growth and knowledge gained throughout the unit is clear.	Project shows some understanding of texts and/or some lack of contemplation of theme. Occasionally wanders off topic. Evidence of growth and knowledge gained throughout the unit is sketchy.	Project does not show understanding of texts or any contemplation of theme. Mostly off-topic. No evidence of growth and knowledge is apparent.
Oral Presentation	Was prepared for the oral presentation, spoke clearly, and attempted to engage class members in project. Paid attention to other projects.	Was somewhat prepared for the oral presentation, did not speak clearly, and/or did not attempt to engage class members in project. Paid attention to other projects.	Was not prepared for the oral presentation, did not speak clearly, and did not attempt to engage class members in project. Did not pay attention to other projects.
Quality/Effort	Obviously put forth great effort in designing and completing this project and preparing for the presentation. Full use of resources available is evident.	Put forth minimum effort in designing and completing this project and preparing for the presentation. May or may not have taken advantage of all available resources.	Did not put forth minimum required effort into the project. Did not take advantage of available resources.
Peer Evaluation <i>(for group projects only)</i>	All peer evaluations were completed and you received high marks from your peers.	All peer evaluations were completed and you received average marks from your peers.	All peer evaluations were not completed and you received low marks from your peers.

And the Verdict is...

At the end of The Lord of the Flies, when the remaining boys are rescued, both Simon and Piggy are dead. We are going to imagine that we are lawyers and juries in a court that must decide whether Ralph, Jack, and Samneric are guilty. The class will be divided into six groups; two groups will be assigned respectively either Ralph, Jack, or Samneric – one of the groups will argue that he is guilty, the other that he is innocent.

Tonight, I want you individually to jot down some ideas in your reading log about your specific character. We have been talking this entire unit about the individual's role within and against society. Look at your character's actions, thoughts, and changes throughout the book, bearing in mind our unit theme. Consider such questions as:

- Should your character be held accountable?
- Did he do the best he could within the circumstances of the story?
- Could an individual have made a difference in this situation?

You are not required to do a full analysis, but you should have some specific examples and/or justifications for why your character is guilty or innocent (as assigned).

Tomorrow, you will join your group and together you will continue the thinking you started in your reading logs. You will then appoint a lawyer who in only four minutes will present the reasons behind your appointed plea of guilty or innocent. We will proceed so that the guilty and innocent groups of each character present back-to-back, and after both positions have been presented, the class, excluding the members of that character's group, will put their heads down and vote for the verdict they find appropriate by raising their hand. I will tally the votes and present the class decision.

Remember, a young boy's life is on the line, so your reasoning should be solid and accurate!

BECOMING “GOOD” READERS WHO ASK “GOOD” QUESTIONS

As a reader, your experiences will vary from text to text. Depending on how you are feeling, what you are thinking, or the kind of day you are having, your reading will be different. While it is always valid to have an initial reaction to a text or issue, a “good” reader moves beyond a knee-jerk response and attempts to get a better, more complete understanding of the text or issue at hand. Overall, there are four stages, which you as a reader may move through:

1. **Being out and stepping into a text**—in this stage, you are adjusting to what is going on in the work. Generally, you are compiling factual information—an understanding of who the characters are or what the setting is, etc.—in this stage. Here, the goal is to get an overall impression of what is happening.
2. **Being in and moving through a text**—in this stage, you start responding individually to the text or issue(s) at hand, taking ideas or beliefs you have or taking information you know and applying it to the work. Here, the goal is to make connections with the text or issue(s) at hand.
3. **Stepping out and rethinking what you know**—in this stage, you reverse what you did in the last stage. You take what the text has discussed and apply it to your life, your experiences, and your ideas. You should think about how, or if, the text has added to or changed your previous understanding of the issue(s) at hand. Here, the goal is to seek out similarities and differences between your world and the world of the text.
4. **Stepping out and objectifying the experience**—in this stage, you analyze the interactions that have taken place between the text and you and start to draw conclusions about any questions that have arisen in the process. Here, your goal is to answer the question, “So what? What has reading this work done to better my understanding of the issue(s) at hand?”

It should be emphasized that by no means are you expected to proceed through these stages in order, nor are you expected to experience each stage each time you read. You will have stronger responses to some works than others. For instance, I’m sure you have tried to read a book before and become so bored that you never really focused enough to find out what was going on; you started in Stage 2 (**Being in and moving through the text**) and never got to any of the other stages. We will work together, however, to have you encounter as many of these stages as possible each time you read; in doing so, the reading experience will more interesting and meaningful to you.

The main means by which we will work to get you involved in the reading is through discussion—most specifically by a process of inquiry. What this means is that the questions we ask are those that come from you as an individual and from your class as a whole. **While there are better and worse readings of texts, there is no right answer that I am looking for you to find.** This means that you are responsible for asking good questions.

So, what is a good question? A good question is:

- **Open-ended**—it is arguable, even if *you* feel there is a correct answer.
- **Honest**—you are asking because it is interesting to you or is of central importance to your understanding of the text or issue(s) at hand.
- **Relevant**—builds on an ongoing discussion or begins a new one that is appropriate in terms of the text or overarching theme, or is a request for clarification or explanation of another student’s remark.

Your question can be one you want to know the answer to or one that you want to present to your classmates in order to engage them in discussion of that question. This does not mean that you are never allowed to ask clarification questions (for example, what is the main character’s brother’s name?). We will read complex works in which you will need to ask many of these questions; therefore, I will give you small group time devoted mainly to answering Stage One questions. But as you become better readers, it is my expectation that you grow in your ability to answer Stage One questions on your own. Large group discussions, for the most part, should be the forum where you ask mainly “good” questions. The point of these discussions is to facilitate your ability to become a better reader. It is to your benefit that you put forth the effort required, for class discussions promise to be much more interesting if you are bringing good questions.

Remember, I do not expect you to ask a “good” question every time you speak, nor do I expect you to quickly become a “good” reader. Growing in your ability will take time and effort. You should never feel as though you cannot ask questions you do not know the answer to; knowing which questions to ask is much more important than knowing the answers to the questions you ask. The point of discussion is to get input from your classmates and to inquire together in order to enrich your experiences both as a group and individually. I will be working closely with you during this process. Please always feel free to come to me with any questions.

Modified from:

Langer, J. (1995). Envisioning Literature: Literary Understanding and Literature Instruction. New York: Teachers College Press.

