

Am I a “Weapon of Massive Consumption”? : Learning to Fire the Canon

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LLED 7408

6 December 2010

Table of Contents

Rationale	3
Texts	15
Goals and Rubrics	16
Introductory Activity	23
Daily Lesson Plans	25
Week 2	28
Week 3	33
Week 4	36
Week 5	43
Reading Guide	46

Rationale

In her 2008 chart-topping single “The Fear,” outspoken British pop singer Lily Allen chirps with her trademark sugar and spice, “I am a weapon of massive consumption. / It’s not my fault; it’s how I’m programmed to function. / I’ll look in *The Sun*, and I’ll look in *The Mirror*. / I’m on the right track. Yeah, we’re onto a winner.”¹ Although critics could not resist bashing “The Fear” for its cliché coverage of “topics already addressed by myriad pop stars with varying degrees of self-awareness,” the song’s multilayered irony elicited compliments, however veiled, all around.² Far too explicit for analysis in a high school classroom, “The Fear,” with its cheerful nods to blood diamonds and loose credit, explicitly expresses a fear shared by many English teachers—and featured in a recent issue of NCTE’s *English Journal* themed “Teaching in a Consumerocracy”—that, more than ever before, teenagers need to be taught how to resist manipulation by corporate-produced pop culture.³ However, as “The Fear” demonstrates, today’s highly self-referential pop culture industry makes yet another show of cracking its own codes, codes in which students may be far more fluent than their teachers.

Media literacy scholar Robert Kubey warns that “more formal investigation aimed at understanding what children already know about how the media communicate is needed” if media education programs are to be implemented widely.⁴ If we bring pop culture into English classrooms with the intention of teaching students how to read sign systems they already know, we risk delegitimizing their everyday experiences, senses of identity, and “out-of-school literacies” further.⁵ The views expressed by contributors to “Teaching in a Consumerocracy” mostly fall within the “inoculationist”

¹ Allen, L., & Kurstin, G. (2009) The fear [Recorded by Lily Allen]. On *It’s not me, it’s you* [CD]. London, England: EMI Records, Ltd.

² Cinquemani, S. (2009, Feb 3) Lily Allen: It’s not me, it’s you [Review of the album *It’s not me, it’s you*]. *Slant Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.slantmagazine.com/music/review/lily-allen-its-not-me-its-you/1636>

³ *English Journal* 99(3)

⁴ Kubey, R. (1998). Obstacles to the development of media education in the United States. *Journal of Communication*, 48(1), 58-69.

⁵For the term “out-of-school literacies” see Hull G., & Schultz K. (2002) *Schools out!: Bridging out-of-school literacies with classroom practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

camp of media education, as defined by Kubey, which excludes the many, typically younger, teachers who themselves enjoy pop culture and “wish to impart a more sophisticated appreciation” of it to their students—not just moralize about resisting its replication of stereotypes and violent behaviors.

Yet the risk of delegitimizing students’ native media literacy should not be misunderstood as another reason for schools to ignore pop culture’s influence on students’ lives and self-concepts. In his history of literacy in US schools, Miles Myers argues that time is running out for literacy pedagogies born from New Criticism, for sealing texts in vacuums.⁶ A mode of literacy “broad enough” to meet the demands of our rapidly changing, global economy accounts for the fact that the “readings of [...] teenagers are a direct result of the growth of worldwide communication landing in the family living room.” This mode of literacy, specifically based neither on traditional forms nor new media, applies larger interpretive frameworks to all texts—“opens up texts to new readings and refines the distinctions between literary and non-literary readings”—through the principles of “mode or textual-modeling intelligence” and “stance intelligence.” According to Kubey’s assessment of media education pedagogies, these principles are characteristic of more sophisticated European methods descended from late 20th-century cultural criticism.

Pop culture’s influence does not limit itself to reading. In *Holding On to Good Ideas in a Time of Bad Ones*, Thomas Newkirk includes “popular culture as a literacy tool” among the good ones.⁷ He summarizes research concerning its impact on student writing, particularly young boys’, and warns that:

If these cultural resources are dismissed for whatever reason (too exploitative, too commercial, too tied to television, too “low class”), if the middle/professional-class type of book culture is perceived as the only useful literacy experience, the result is profoundly alienating and inequitable.

⁶ Myers, M. (1996) *Changing our minds: Negotiating English and literacy*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

⁷ Newkirk, T. (2009). Popular culture as a literacy tool. In *Holding on to good ideas in a time of bad ones: Six literacy principles worth fighting for*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Most notably, “boys fall dramatically behind girls in reading, and particularly writing, by third grade” partly because their quasi-picaresque tales, inspired by the episodic structure and spatial organization of video games, do not conform to traditional school narrative. Therefore, boys’ excitement for writing is quashed. The potential alienation of even White males from literacy instruction underscores the alienation that students from historically marginalized populations endure daily when they read and write about one more text by and for White males.⁸ But even the most culturally aware editors could not prevent students from associating their anthology, however inclusive, with a hostile establishment. Estrangement from the literary canon is a universal high school experience—even when the only estranging factor is youth.

In a recent *English Journal* opinion piece, Susan Spangler addresses this estrangement in reference to handling Shakespeare, figurehead of the English canon, in high school classrooms.⁹ Spangler wonders how much teachers’ “adoration prevents us from letting students engage the texts rather than simply *revere* them” for being really old and apparently important. She asks “how can we offer students the opportunity to work with and against a text, to help them develop a strength of insight and the argumentation skills to speak back to the classics?”—what she, and I, would define as genuine “appreciation.” As one half of the solution, she proposes “valuing students’ primary discourse skills” cultivated by “their casual encounters with television and film.” If, as Myers argues, today’s students, awash in mass media and enmeshed in social networks, do indeed “read traditional books differently [...] and add to their own reading new voices that describe their experiences,” then the English class that ignores pop culture silences generations of “new voices” while ceremoniously embalming itself and literature with all those dead, White males.

⁸ Smagorinsky, P. (2008) *Teaching English by design: How to create and carry out instructional units*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

⁹ Spangler, S. (2009) Stop reading Shakespeare! *English Journal* 99(1), 130-132.

For these reasons, I have designed a conceptual unit that foregrounds and, hopefully, lessens students' estrangement from the literary canon by exploring pop and high culture as parallel phenomena. I intend to reach these objectives by asking students to examine their personal experiences of both types of culture through journal entries and a multimedia literacy autobiography project—which is to validate the “new voices” they bring to their readings—while also reading poems, short stories, and a novel that explore frustration and fascination with the canon. I do not wish to excuse thoughtless irreverence for literature by teaching this unit but, rather, empower students to engage with the canon, “speak back” to it, by uncovering analogous processes of canon-making at work in their own status-driven tastes for pop culture. After exploring the functions of pop and high culture in their own lives, students will write formal persuasive essays about the goodness and/or usefulness of literary canons in general.

Taught toward the end of a general sophomore World Literature course, this unit will function as a transition from the relatively freeform first two years of high school English—the definition of “World Literature” is far from fixed—to the last two, which most often are chronological surveys of American and British literature. Ideally, students will develop some sense of connection to the concept of a literary canon before encountering texts as remote as Puritan diaries in the first days of 11th grade. Furthermore, the Georgia Performance Standards for Literature and Composition in early high school prepare students to interpret media as they do print texts:

ELA10LSV2 The student formulates reasoned judgments about written and oral communication in various media genres. The student delivers focused, coherent, and polished presentations that convey a clear and distinct perspective, demonstrate solid reasoning, and combine traditional rhetorical strategies of narration, exposition, persuasion, and description.¹⁰

The expansion of this standard for 10th grade includes analyzing the effectiveness of argument, rhetoric, and aesthetic presentation. For 11th-grade Literature and Composition, the expanded standard further

¹⁰ Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.) *Literature and Composition: Grade 10 ELA standards*. Retrieved from <https://www.georgiastandards.org/Standards/Georgia%20Performance%20Standards/Grade-Ten-with-asks.pdf>

requires students to analyze media according to their own generic conventions for such purposes as identifying the perpetuation of “positive or negative stereotypes among social groups.”¹¹ By exploring students’ regard for such media alongside the literary establishment’s regard for canonical texts, this unit initiates the two-way transfer of interpretative skills to be developed in the higher grades. In addition, this unit will address the affiliations of “social groups” with various media among the students themselves so that, in the following years, they will more readily notice those affiliations in our larger society.

My overarching analogy between teenage tastes for pop culture and academic distinctions of good literature is fundamentally informed by the work of Pierre Bourdieu. The capacity to appreciate canonical texts—what Bourdieu would call the “pure gaze” or “aesthetic disposition”—is the “paradoxical product of conditioning by negative economic necessities—a life of ease—that tends to induce an active distance from necessity.”¹² When we pressure young teenagers of all backgrounds to gaze upon Shakespeare as purely as we—who practiced self-induced detachment from necessity for years as liberal arts majors—do, we demand the unnatural and impossible, resulting in the sort of frustration Spangler describes. On the other hand, when we value students’ “primary discourse skills” and encourage them to connect to the canon through their lower-brow tastes, as this unit does, we commit:

[...] a transgression that is in no way aesthetic [...] to abolish the sacred frontier which makes legitimate culture a separate universe, in order to discover the intelligible relations which unite apparently incommensurable ‘choices’, such as preferences in music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle . This barbarous reintegration of aesthetic consumption into the world of ordinary consumption abolishes the opposition, which has been the basis of high aesthetic [...] predisposed to become a symbol of moral excellence and a measure of the capacity [...] which defines a truly human man.

¹¹ Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.) *Literature and Composition: Grade 11 ELA standards*. Retrieved from <https://www.georgiastandards.org/Standards/Georgia%20Performance%20Standards/Grade-Eleven-Writing-et-al%5B1%5D-with-tasks.pdf>

¹² Bourdieu, P. (1979) From *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. (R. Nice, Trans.). In V.B. Lietch (Ed.) (2001), *The Norton anthology of theory and criticism* (pp. 1809-1814). New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

Bourdieu refers to transgression and barbarity facetiously. The breakdown of opposition between high and low culture is actually an enlightening process that results in a broader, more critical view of all cultural products and the “truly human”—the broader, more critical view demanded by a literacy mode suited to the 21st-century economy. In addition to encouraging students to cross the “sacred frontier” and invade the “separate universe” of “legitimate culture,” this unit will also provoke them to turn their newfound critical perspectives of the canon toward their own tastes through the multimedia literacy autobiography project, thus relieving me of a certain fear.

By urging teenagers to reflect upon, write about, and discuss their own status-driven consumption of pop culture and then consider how similar forces have shaped the canon, this unit charges headlong into ugly conflicts, particularly those of class and race. Such a unit cannot eschew the uncomfortable truth, articulated here in the words of Bourdieu, that “the definition of cultural nobility is the stake in a struggle which has gone on unceasingly [...] between groups differing in their idea of culture and of the legitimate relation to culture and to works of art.” The general, nationwide push for diversifying curricula seems to suggest that confrontations with class and race issues are desirable; they help students discover what it means to be members of our society. However, when we stop containing such issues in textbooks and see cultural conflict reflected in things as simple as students’ tastes in music, the situation becomes much more complicated. Nevertheless, avoiding these issues will not make them disappear. According to multicultural education experts Sonya Nieto and Patty Bode, avoiding them only “reinforces students’ feelings that school life is unrelated to real life.”¹³ And, if curricula do not acknowledge that “dominant viewpoints” are only one of many, “students will continue to think of history as linear and fixed and to think of themselves as passive [...] in their communities and the larger

¹³ Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2008) *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

society or even their personal interactions.” They will not leave school thinking of themselves as valuable, contributing members of society.

I have chosen the texts for this unit with the aim of altering students’ sense of history as “linear and fixed” by presenting the canon as a chain of literary influence literally linked by textual intersections, instances of overtly “speak[ing] back to the classics” through the production of new texts. The unit’s central novel is Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Lavinia*, a retelling of Vergil’s *Aeneid*, itself a recasting of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which the Romans perceived as two extremely heavy cultural burdens chained to their spoils.¹⁴ Before reading the novel, however, we will compare three different reactions to high culture in three poems: John Keats’s “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer,” Rita Dove’s “Reading Hölderlin on the Patio with the Aid of a Dictionary,” and Kenneth Koch’s “Fresh Air.”¹⁵ Keats’s reaction to Homer is what English teachers want from their students when first looking into anything—but rarely get. Dove writes from the perspective of an African American, female student of German, who, reading texts so remote from her life, reflects, “The meaning that surfaces / comes to me aslant and / I go to meet it, stepping / out of my body / word for word.” In “Fresh Air,” Kenneth Koch voices the universal estrangement of youth from the canon. He humorously attacks the literary elite of the mid-20th century and their “baleful influence,” crying, “Poetry / is ruled with the scepter of the deaf, the dumb, and the creepy!” and inventing “the Strangler,” a comic book hero who “leaps through the frosty air at the maker of comparisons [...] and silently, silently strangles him.” Transitioning to *Lavinia*, we will read Katherine Mansfield’s short story “Life of Ma Parker,” which makes room in the canon for the old domestic servant of a “literary gentleman” as she unsuccessfully searches for “anywhere in the world

¹⁴ Le Guin, U.K. (2009). *Lavinia: A novel*. Boston, MA: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

¹⁵ All poems used in this unit, except for the two by Dove, are available online. Both Dove poems are from Dove, R. (1983) *Museum*. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon University Press.

where she could have her cry out—at last.”¹⁶ The story raises the issue of exclusion from high culture more plainly and prepares for Le Guin’s similar use of perspective in *Lavinia*.

We will spend most of the unit reading Le Guin’s novel, which presents the *Aeneid* through the perspective of a minor character. Lavinia, Aeneas’s new Italian wife, a virtuous Helen, sparks the massive war which comprises the epic’s Iliadic second half, but Vergil devotes very, very few lines to her. He describes her as the keeper of the household, “ripe for a man,” and then only lets her blush and get her hair caught on fire (an omen). Similarly, the *Aeneid* presents the *Iliad* according to one of its minor characters. Like a mother saving her son from a playground bully, Poseidon rescues Aeneas from a duel with Achilles in *Iliad* 20. Vergil then follows Aeneas on an odyssey that actually predates the narrative time of the *Odyssey* by some years. *Lavinia*, therefore, is far more than revisionist fiction “featuring an unlikely heroine imaginatively plucked from literary obscurity,” as one review states.¹⁷ Le Guin and Vergil are two links in a chain of literary influence united by analogous purposes. Just as Le Guin is torn between her love for Vergil’s poetry and awareness of the patriarchal structures written into and replicated through the *Aeneid*’s transmission, so is Vergil torn between his love for the simple, rustic, Italian way of life and Augustus’s perilous challenge to write Rome’s epic and thus reconcile Rome’s military dominance of Greece with Greece’s cultural dominance of Rome.

While probably the most renowned and canonical instance of “speak[ing] back to the classics,” the *Aeneid* has all but disappeared from public high schools, especially those outside of affluent suburbs where Latin programs up to the Advanced Placement Vergil level still survive. By bringing the *Aeneid* back to school through *Lavinia*, this unit presents the canon as a morphing series of textual intersections into which we all can insert ourselves through writing. Although Le Guin claims her “desire was to follow Vergil, not to improve or reprove him,” “speak[ing] back” emerges as a major theme in the novel. Telling her story from somewhere in the mists of time—“But he did not sing me enough life to die. He only gave

¹⁶ Both Mansfield stories used in this unit are available online.

¹⁷ *Booklist* review quoted in “Praise for *Lavinia*” section inside cover of novel’s Mariner edition referenced above.

me immortality.”— Lavinia frequently mentions losing her voice, being unable to speak, or having nothing to say, and Le Guin never makes her behave or think unlike the virtuous Latin princess she is. The role myth and Vergil give her always constrain her. At the same time, Le Guin weaves the novel out of a series of Lavinia’s conversations with powerful men: her king and father, Latinus; her king and husband, Aeneas; Aeneas’s successors; and even her author, Vergil himself.

Lavinia grows up accompanying her father on pilgrimages to Albunea, a holy site where the *numen*, the spiritual power of the place, inspires prophetic dreams. On one trip, Lavinia wakes up to find an equally confused Vergil, who believes his great poem is haunting him in deathbed hallucinations. Fascinated by this man who claims to sing about her future, Lavinia returns to Albunea again and again to meet him. Consequently, as he gets to know Lavinia, Vergil grows more and more anxious that his poem does not capture the full story, resolving—like the historical Vergil did—to “tell them to burn it” as he nears death. This element of time travel allows Le Guin to allow Vergil to sing an abridged *Aeneid*—often punctuated by questions and objections—to Lavinia, making the novel very accessible to those with no prior knowledge of the epic. This element also allows Le Guin to engage with another response to the *Aeneid*, an undoubtedly canonized response, and lengthen the chain of literary influence. During one conversation at Albunea, Vergil wonders, “What man did I guide? I met him in a wood, like this. A dark wood, in the middle of the road [...] Oh, this dying is a hard business, Lavinia. I am very tired. I can’t think straight anymore.” These interactions between author and character raise questions of influence, whether Vergil and his text control Lavinia (and Dante) or Lavinia (and Dante) control Vergil and his text. Such questions invite students to recognize their similar stake in the readings of “traditional books.”

True to its source on a wider scale, *Lavinia* remains a narrative of invasion, racial violence, and cultural conflict in which no one is innocent. Thus the novel explores the unit’s overarching, potentially volatile concerns, but it does so in a remote, mythical setting. While she preserves archaeological

accuracy, Le Guin deliberately makes her ancient Italy unrecognizable to those who think of Rome as “the sick, luxurious empire of the TV sagas” and foreign even to readers of Vergil.¹⁸ Since its world is so distant, *Lavinia* is a relatively safe text to study as students potentially uncover the impact of problematic social issues on their individual tastes. Although the unit’s supplementary texts reflect more familiar worlds, none turn our focus away from the task of engaging with literary tradition to raw ideology.

After *Lavinia*, we will read another Mansfield story, “The Singing Lesson,” which examines school as a site of textual transmission where meaning depends on the teacher’s power—and mood. Set at a turn-of-the-century English girls’ school, “The Singing Lesson” recounts a morning that, before the story’s opening, begins with music teacher Miss Meadows’ receiving a telegram from her fiancé breaking their engagement. Distraught, Miss Meadows leads her first class in a lament, urging the girls to sing initially “without expression” and then “as if a cold wind were blowing through it [...] you must begin to die...to fade.” Mansfield’s free indirect discourse presents the thoughts of both Miss Meadows and Mary Beazley, a pet student crushed by her teacher’s brisk manner, and exposes how the individual experiences of each affect the meaning of the song. In the middle of class, a student summons Miss Meadows to the main office, where she discovers another telegram from her fiancé disavowing the first. “On the wings of hope, of love, of joy,” Miss Meadows rushes back to her confused class and leads them in a cheerful tune, chiding them, “Don’t be so doleful, girls. It ought to sound warm, joyful, eager.” “The Singing Lesson,” then, narrows the unit’s focus to responding to “dominant viewpoints” within the context of the classroom and my teaching.

The last two texts, Langston Hughes’s “Theme for English B” and Dove’s “Grape Sherbet,” return to poetry. Students will probably encounter “Theme for English B” in their future American Literature courses in the context of the Harlem Renaissance. The context I provide will be very different. I will

¹⁸ Le Guin, U.K. (2009) Afterword. In *Lavinia: A novel* (273-279). Boston, MA: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

present a few other poems from Hughes' *Montage of a Dream Deferred* which exemplify the position of pop culture—jazz licks, neon signs, movie theaters—in the collection to show how the formality and length of “Theme for English B” make its page a unique space where Hughes engages with the literary establishment, personified by his instructor, but also a space very much shaped by Hughes' personal history and physical environment. Dove's “Grape Sherbet” appropriately closes the unit by returning to the universal estrangement of youth. It remembers a childhood Memorial Day barbecue with family at a cemetery: “we galloped / through the grassed-over mounds / and named each stone / for a lost milk tooth [...] We thought no one was lying / there under our feet, / we thought it / was a joke. As the students finish compiling their multimedia literacy autobiographies, I hope this final image of tradition lying under their feet sends them into the last two years of high school English confident in the validity of their readings even though they may be a “direct result of the growth of worldwide communication landing in the family living room.”

This unit will likely provoke criticism from those who believe pop culture is morally defective and, therefore, does not belong in learning environments. My response to such an objection is that, first of all, I will not be exposing students to pop culture in my classroom. I only want them to reference their individual experiences of it in journals, discussions, and the multimedia literacy autobiography. In class, we will be reading texts by respected writers and covering the concepts and terms appropriate to each genre as outlined in the Georgia Performance Standards for 10th grade. If certain students have grown up with little exposure to mainstream pop culture due to their families' beliefs, the assignments adapt just as well to whatever media has surrounded them in their upbringing, and the concept of estrangement from the canon due to the “struggle [...] between groups differing in their ideas of culture and of the legitimate relation to culture and to works of art” is just as, if not more, applicable.

Furthermore, research conducted since Kubey's admonition suggests that young people consume pop culture more intelligently than we assume. Newkirk summarizes these findings to say that

children often “recontextualize, modify, subvert, parody, and combine the ‘languages’ available to them” from mass media in the course of developing their own ideas through unlimited “fictional improvisations.” This behavior is nothing new. Recalling her own pop culture consumption as a child in the 1940s, Le Guin describes one such instance:

[...] we looked for the trashiest magazines, mostly, because we *liked* trash. I recall one story that began, “In the beginning was the bird.” I really dug that bird. And the closing line from another (or the same?)—“Back to the saurian ooze from whence it sprung!” Karl [my brother] made that into a useful chant: The saurian ooze from whence it sprung, unwept, unhonor’d, and unsung. I wonder how many hack writers who think they are writing down to ‘naïve kids’ and ‘teenagers’ realize the *kind* of pleasure they sometimes give their readers. If they did, they would sink back into the saurian ooze from whence they sprung.¹⁹

Le Guin eventually stopped reading science fiction because she grew tired of its formulas, but her early experiences of “trash” helped her to become one of the most celebrated science fiction novelists—and novelists in general—of the 20th century, renowned for making a pulp genre truly literary. As Newkirk explains, defenders of “authentic” literary experience often criticize “inauthentic” popular forms for being “derivative” when “all writing is, in sense, derivative”:

The argument [...] fails to recognize the ways in which memoirs and poetry [and other school-sanctioned forms] themselves are derived from models. Teacher modeling is a major part of this traditional writing process pedagogy. [...] To assert that some genres are, by their very nature, “authentic” and others are “inauthentic,” is, at its root, simply disguised censorship. It is an arbitrary assertion of literary preference, though framed as a concern for individual development and the nurturing of an “authentic” self. [...] How do we locate this “authentic” self so that we might gauge authenticity?

Today’s high school students locate their identities at the juncture of many media forms, high and low. For evidence, just look at a random Facebook profile’s “likes” spinning off into every sphere of culture. Sifting through the “authentic” and “inauthentic” makes no difference when the process of self-definition is one of reaction and intersection. By recognizing this phenomenon in students’ daily lives and its parallel in the literary canon, this unit hopes to empower at least one classroom of “new voices” to speak life into dead words. What do we have to fear about that?

¹⁹ Le Guin, U.K. (1979). *Language of the night: Essays on fantasy and science fiction*. New York, NY: Berkley Books.

Texts

Poems

Rita Dove, "Reading Hölderlin on the Patio with the Aid of a Dictionary" and "Grape Sherbet"

Langston Hughes, "Theme for English B" and other selections from *Montage of a Dream Deferred*

John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"

Kenneth Koch, "Fresh Air"

Short Stories

Katherine Mansfield, "Life of Ma Parker" and "The Singing Lesson"

Novel

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Lavinia*

Supplementary Texts

Barbara Osborn, "Violence Formula: Analyzing TV, Video and Movies"

Vergil, selection from *Aeneid* Book VIII

Goals and Rubrics

Permission Slip

Some assignments we will complete during this unit ask you to reflect on your personal experiences. If you or your caregivers are uncomfortable with or opposed to this practice, I will be happy to meet with you and/or them to arrange alternative assignments. Please review the assignments and accompanying rubrics with your caregivers. If they sign this permission slip, you will be expected to complete all assignments as outlined below. If you become uncomfortable at a later point, let me know, and we can make adaptations then. Remember, you control what you write and don't write.

I, _____, caregiver of _____, acknowledge that my student will be asked to engage in reflective writing as part of Ms. Galloway's English 10 course. At this time, I do not foresee having any objection to the assignments and agree to contact Ms. Galloway directly if one arises.

Signature _____

Assignment Weighting

The assignments for this unit carry the following weight in your total unit grade:

- Journal 20%
- Mini research presentation 10%
- Reading guide homework 10%
- Persuasive essay 20%
- Creative project 30%
- Participation 10%

Journal

About twice a week throughout the unit, I will assign journal prompts asking you either to describe personal experiences or to comment on our readings. You will have 15 minutes to write your journal entries on these days, but feel free to tinker with them outside of class. Keep in mind:

- Since I intend for the personal prompts to lead to discussion, you might want to stick to shareable subjects. If you write something you do not want me to read, mark an X at the top of the page. *I am required to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behaviors with the school counselors.*
- Do not stress yourself out about writing with perfect grammar and stunning style in 15 minutes. If you think you can, go for it. The rest of us will get our thoughts out in words and down on paper.
- Entries should run about three quarters to one written page.

Rubric for Assessing Unit Journals

	4	3	2	1	0
Relevance	Nearly all entries respond to the prompts directly. Digressions are meaningful in context and/or demonstrate attempts to connect prior knowledge with anticipated topics.	A few entries stray from the prompts, but key thoughts remain relevant to overall unit topics.	Although relevance may be unclear at times, entries suggest some thoughtful engagement with overall unit topics.	Nearly all entries relate only remotely to overall unit topics.	Entries do not exist.
Detail	Details are consistent, effective, and original.	Details are consistent and often effective but may be imprecise. Details display some originality.	Details are present but may be superficial, clichéd, inconsistent, and/or distracting.	Entries are vague and abstract.	Entries do not exist.

Mini Research Presentation

To build on our existing knowledge of ancient Rome as we read Ursula Le Guin's *Lavinia*, you will give brief research presentations of 5 to 7 minutes in groups of three or four. Your groups will choose from the following list of topics, and every topic must have a group:

Vergil's Life and Poetry	Greek Rhapsodes
Myths of Aeneas	Roman versus Greek Gods
Other Myths and Legends of Early Rome	Greek Culture in Roman Education
Augustus Caesar	Roman Marriage and Divorce
Famous Roman Women	Roman Symbols and Modern Governments

These topics are broad, so I strongly encourage you to come to me for guidance in focusing your presentations. As you work, keep in mind:

- We will devote one block to becoming experts on these topics and developing our presentations. I do not intend for your groups to have to meet outside of school.
- A group project requires group members to share not only credit but also responsibility, so play nice. If your group has significant trouble working together, please come talk to me.
- Even one practice run-through makes an oral presentation exponentially better.
- The presentation will count for 10% of your unit grade.

Rubric for Assessing Oral Presentations

	4	3	2	1	0
Relevance	Information gives overview of topic with appropriate and interesting details.	Information gives overview of topic but remains general.	Information gives inadequate overview of topic, suggesting poor preparation.	Information gives inadequate overview of topic, suggesting poorer preparation than a 2.	Information is completely off-topic, or presentation does not occur.
Delivery	Group clearly has rehearsed. Delivery is smooth and organized. Group members take even turns speaking.	Delivery is organized but not as smooth as a 4. Group members contribute somewhat unevenly.	Delivery is organized but choppy, suggesting group did not rehearse. Group members contribute unevenly.	Group clearly has not rehearsed. Delivery is disorganized and may be dominated by one group member.	Presentation does not occur.

Reading Guide Homework

As you read *Lavinia*, you will be assigned reading guide questions for homework. I intend for these questions to function as reading quizzes and keep us all up to speed on what's happening in the novel. Every day, we will devote time to reviewing the questions together. As you work on your reading guides, keep in mind:

- Reading guide answers are easy to copy, and copied answers are easy to spot.
- Quality answers will range from one to a handful of complete sentences.
- For each day's assignment, you will receive a check plus, check, or zero. Checks roughly translate to a B.
- I want to know if my questions are helpful questions; helping you understand the novel is the point of this assignment. For each round of homework, you can substitute one question with a question you wish I had asked or an explanation of why one of my questions isn't helpful.

- It could be so much worse! We could be having daily quizzes!

Rubric for Assessing Reading Guide Homework

	Check Plus	Check	0
Completion and Quality	All questions are answered in sentence form.	A question or two may not be answered, and/or the answers consist of short fragments.	Assignment is not turned in for that day.

Creative Project: Multimedia Literacy Autobiography

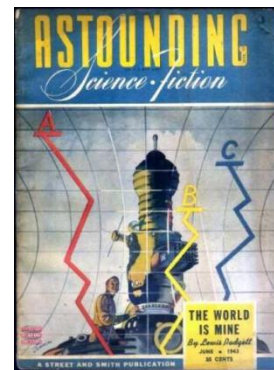
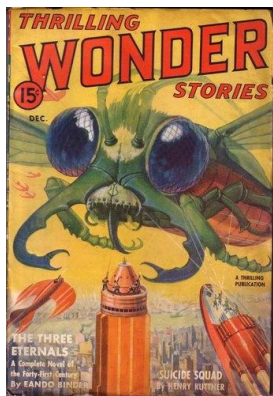
Your final creative project for this unit will be a multimedia literacy autobiography in which you trace the lifelong development of your taste in books, comics, TV, movies, music, magazines, newspapers, video games, online media, or any other texts that are important to you. The project has two goals: to unearth the personal standards you use to evaluate quality texts as well as establish *your* canon, into which the big names of English literature may or may not find their way. As you design your projects, keep in mind:

- The project divides your life into stages. For each stage, compile the requested number and type of text. The minimum number of total texts is 10, and it is possible to receive full credit for just 10 texts.
- For each text, you must write a short reflection of 100-200 words about why it is meaningful to you, the context of your experience (How did you come upon the text? Where and how did you read/watch/listen?), and *how it shaped your future tastes*. Examine your tastes critically. Why do you like the sort of thing you like? If you like something because it's cool, think about *what makes it cool* to you.
- The format of this project is completely up to you. You can make a poster, a scrapbook, a PowerPoint presentation, a (private) website, whatever, but you must clear your chosen format with me first. Include at least reference information for the text if not also a picture, excerpt, video or sound clip, etc.

Stage of Life	Number of Print Texts	Number of Other Texts	Total Texts
Birth to 1 st Grade	≥0	≥1	≥1
2 nd to 5 th Grade	≥1	≥1	≥2
6 th to 9 th Grade	≥1	≥3	≥4
10 th Grade	≥1	≥2	≥3
All	≥3	≥7	≥10

For your inspiration:

“We kids read science fiction in the early forties: *Thrilling Wonder*, and *Astounding* in that giant format it had for a while, and so on. I liked “Lewis Padgett” best and looked for his stories, but we looked for the trashiest magazines, mostly, because we *liked* trash. I recall one story that began, “In the beginning was the bird.” I really dug that bird. And the closing line from another (or the same?)—“Back to the saurian ooze from whence it sprung!” Karl [my brother] made that into a useful chant: The saurian ooze from whence it sprung, unwept, unhonor’d, and unsung. I wonder how many hack writers who think they are writing down to “naïve kids” and “teenagers” realize the *kind* of pleasure they sometimes give their readers. If they did, they would sink back into the saurian ooze from whence they sprung.”



From “A Citizen of Mondath” in *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasies and Science Fiction* by Ursula Le Guin

Rubric for Assessing Multimedia Literacy Autobiography Project

	4	3	2	1	0
Completeness	Project meets or exceeds text requirements, and all reflections fall within word count.	Project meets or exceeds text requirements, but some reflections fall short of word count.	Project meets text requirements, but reflections consistently fall short of word count.	Project lacks up to 2 required texts, and reflections consistently fall short of word count.	Project is not turned in or lacks 3 or more required text/reflection pairs.
Elaboration and Detail	Reflections address provided questions, demonstrate critical thinking, and draw connections across texts.	Reflections address provided questions and demonstrate critical thinking.	Reflections address provided questions but only superficially.	Reflections do not address provided questions and discuss texts superficially.	Reflections do not exist.
Presentation	Format suits texts involved, making the pattern of organization easy to follow and the project aesthetically appealing.	Format does not suit texts as well as a 4 although the project is still organized and appealing.	Format does not suit texts, disrupting organization and appeal somewhat.	Format is sloppy and difficult to follow.	Project is not turned in.

Persuasive Essay

The final assignment of the unit is a two- to three-page persuasive essay (typed, 12-point font, double-spaced, 1" margins). Imagine that our school's English department has decided to adopt a curriculum of purely canonical texts based on recommendations from local college and university professors. With the department chairperson as your audience, compose an essay in support or protest of this decision. When formulating your argument, you might want to consider the following questions:

- Are literary canons good things? If not, could they ever be?
- Does society benefit from having a set of texts we all encounter or are expected to encounter?
- Do those without experiences of or representation in canonical texts suffer from being left out?
- What forces determine or should determine what makes it into the canon?

Looking through your journal entries may help you decide how you want to answer these questions. In addition, toward the end of the unit, we will have a fishbowl discussion to get you thinking and persuading.

Keep in mind that a good persuasive essay includes the following parts:

- A thesis
 - A supporting set of claims extending from your thesis
 - Evidence backing up each claim
 - A counterargument
 - A rebuttal to the counterargument
- } Your thesis and claims will be answers to the above—and perhaps other related—questions.
- Your evidence should come from your experiences and observations as well as our readings.

Since this is a formal piece in specific genre, we will use our standard rubric for persuasive essays, which is on the following page.

Finally, I define **participation** as wakefulness, respectfulness, thoughtful contribution to discussion, and timely completion of daily activities, will count for 10% of your unit grade.

COMPONENT	6	5	4	3	2	1
Focus	Takes a clear position and supports it consistently with well-chosen reasons and/or examples; may use persuasive strategy to convey an argument.	Takes a clear position and supports it with relevant reasons and/or examples through much of the essay.	Takes a clear position and supports it with some relevant reasons and/or examples; there is some development of the essay.	Takes a position and provides uneven support; may lack development in parts or be repetitive OR essay is no more than a well-written beginning.	Takes a position, but essay is underdeveloped.	Attempts to take a position (addresses topic), but position is very unclear OR takes a position, but provides minimal or no support; may only paraphrase the prompt.
Organization	Is focused and well organized, with effective use of transitions.	Is well organized, but may lack some transitions.	Is generally organized, but has few or no transitions among sections.	Is organized in parts of the essay; other parts are disjointed and/or lack transitions.	Is disorganized or unfocused in much of the essay OR is clear, but too brief.	Exhibits little or no apparent organization.
Sentence Fluency and Word Choice	Consistently exhibits variety in sentence structure and word choice.	Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and uses good word choice; occasionally, words may be used inaccurately.	Most sentences are well constructed but have similar structure; word choice lacks variety or flair.	Sentence structure may be simple and unvaried; word choice is mostly accurate.	Sentences lack formal structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.	Sentences run-on and appear incomplete or rambling; word choice may be inaccurate in much or the entire essay.
Conventions	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.	More frequent errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but they do not interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the essay.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation prevent reader from fully understanding essay.

From ReadWriteThink

Introductory Activity

General 10th grade; 90 minute blocks.

Day 1 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

5 minutes: Teacher passes out and explains rubric for unit journal assignment.

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt: Describe a time when someone made you feel self-conscious for your taste in music (or television, movies, etc.). In your entry, you might want to:

- Describe the person and how you knew them—this does not mean you have to reveal his or her identity.
- Explain whether you were you outed for your tastes or kept your opinion to yourself when someone criticized what you liked without knowing how you felt.
- Describe the music, how you had gotten to know it, why you liked it, etc.
- Explain the critic’s view and why it affected you. (For example, the critic, who was more popular than you, thought the band had sold out after their first album. You had similar suspicions but still like their sound.)

Before students write, teacher models by sharing prewritten entry about a related memory from high school.

15 minutes: Students choose small groups (three to four students) they feel comfortable sharing with and discuss their entries. Teacher guides their discussion as follows:

Today we’re beginning a unit on encountering canons, society’s standard sets of “good” literature. Many forces go into determining what is and is not in the canon. For example, if so many writers take inspiration from another writer who came before them, that older writer’s prestige increases. He or she becomes more canonical. More importantly, if those in control of university English departments and literary publications approve of something, society tends to trust their opinion because they have the most education and authority on the topic. The real question, then, is who controls universities and literary publications.

We make personal canons whenever we pronounce a book, pop star, TV show, blog, viral video, or whatever else “good” or “bad” and further develop our tastes. However, our personal canons are still influenced by external judgments of quality. When discussing your entries, think about whose opinion matters to you when it comes to pop culture. Who made you feel self-conscious? Why did they have power to do so?

5 minutes: Teacher asks students to write down characteristics of powerful critics from their journal entries (e.g. more musical, older, leader of the clique, etc.) on anonymous slips of paper and collects them.

2 minutes: Students return to original positions.

5 minutes: Teacher asks students to brainstorm lists of sources they trust to inform them about cool or interesting music, movies, TV shows, books, magazines, websites etc.

20 minutes: Whole-class discussion. Teacher asks students to volunteer sources for each category and writes them on the board. If students are very reluctant, teacher offers personal examples:

When I was in high school, I listened to music my brother and sister gave to me. I trusted their opinions because they played in rock bands. I also read *Teen Vogue* and a celebrity gossip blog. In addition, my grandparents had given me a subscription to *Time*, which contained reviews of more 'respectable' pop culture like novels and nonfiction books. For other books, I saved what my older sister had bought for her AP classes and wandered the school and public libraries.

In the next part of the discussion, teacher asks what our trusted sources say about us. Do they lead to stereotypes? If students are very reluctant, teacher invites students to discuss what her sources say about her high school self and then transitions back to the students' sources. Teacher webs judgments about sources in different colors on board.

10 minutes: Modified chalk talk over what teacher has already written on board. To start the chalk talk, teacher passes out slips of paper from day before. Teacher takes one and models how to position it on the board near associated ideas. When all characteristics are on the board, teacher encourages students to write other thoughts.

10 minutes: Whole class debriefs from chalk talk. Teacher asks how everything on the board might represent forces that shape canons of pop culture, focusing on statuses signaled by certain tastes and the possible influence of the past (like teacher's grandparents). Discussion continues until bell rings.

Day 2 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt 1: Reflect on yesterday's chalk talk and discussion. Consider the following questions:

- Did you feel stereotyped or that you were stereotyping others?
- How are your tastes more complex than the stereotypes they suggest? (For example, your teacher liked reading both *Teen Vogue* and library books. Was she materialistic or nerdy?)
- How do your tastes contribute to your image?

Prompt 2: Why do we make you read Shakespeare? How do you feel when reading something by him? Who likes him? Describe his biggest fan.

15 minutes: Teacher divides class into small groups determined by chosen prompt, and groups discuss their entries.

25 minutes: Teacher shifts discussion to how students' entries relate to the prompt they did not choose and circulates to help groups by asking more specific questions:

- How did your description stereotype Shakespeare's biggest fan? Can you still like Shakespeare and not be that fan? Can Shakespeare's biggest fan like pop music?
- Would your tastes and sources for those tastes lead anyone to expect that you might read and like Shakespeare? How would you surprise, or not surprise, them?
- How does a taste for pop culture or taste for Shakespeare give someone a certain status? When would it be advantageous to possess one status or the other? Is it possible to possess both?

2 minutes: Students return to original positions.

15 minutes: Class reconvenes as a whole and discusses findings from group work.

10 minutes: Teacher redirects discussion to the Shakespeare prompt and students' thoughts associated with his standing as figurehead of the English canon.

5 minutes: Teacher passes out copies of *Lavinia*, reading guide, and rubrics for daily reading guide homework. Teacher advises students to get a head start for next week because, although they'll usually be reading 20-30 pages per day, the first chunk for Wednesday of next week is 47 pages.

Daily Lesson Plans

Day 3 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

15 minutes: Teacher leads discussion connecting introductory activity to first reading, John Keats' "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," as follows:

Keep in mind how we said we felt when reading Shakespeare. Now think back to last year, when many of you read Homer's *Odyssey*, another staple of the canon. Was reading the *Odyssey* a similar experience to reading Shakespeare? How so or how not?

Teacher lists common feelings and reasons for those feelings on board.

2 minutes: Teacher introduces Keats' poem by giving short biography of poet and description of "Romanticism." Teacher explains that Keats and his mentor stayed up all night reading Chapman's translation of Homer and that, after walking home in the wee hours, Keats sent this poem back by mail by 10:00 in the morning. Teacher also warns history buffs who know their conquistadors that there is a historical mistake somewhere in the poem.

10 minutes: Teacher displays poem on projector or similar device. Due to the poem's challenging vocabulary, teacher leads whole class in reading poem together and takes care to highlight imagery, for

example, breathing fresh air, hearing a great voice, making an astronomic discovery, reaching the Pacific Ocean, etc.

15 minutes: Students divide into small groups (three or four students) of their choosing. Teacher asks students to compare Keats' reaction to their own, which has been recorded on the board, and pick out images that support their inferences about Keats. Small groups compose paragraphs. Teacher uses these paragraphs as an inventory of students' familiarity with argumentative writing, especially the use of textual evidence.

1 minute: Students turn in paragraphs and return to groups.

14 minutes: Teacher asks how many lines are in the poem (14) and if that number tips anyone off to the kind of poem it is, its *form*. If no one offers *sonnet*, teacher explains that virtually all English poems of 14 lines are playing on a variation of the sonnet, which is traditionally associated with love poetry. Teacher asks how Keats' poem might be a love poem and allows that point to spur discussion for a moment. Teacher then takes a poll:

How many of us think that Keats wrote a love poem about reading poetry because he was a poet and that's how poets feel?

Teacher admits she was being misleadingly simplistic, that not all poets—not even Keats—always feel that way. Teacher says she has two poems in which the poets, who are making their way into the canon, express very different reactions to reading poetry. Each group will read one of the two poems and present their readings of the poems tomorrow through either visual art or dramatic performance. The only requirements are that:

- You consider these poems thoughtfully, keeping in mind the reactions you have to “great” literature.
- You incorporate lines from the poems in your performances or explanations of the artworks.

Teacher informs students that they will have 30 minutes to work today and 15 tomorrow.

To decide which groups read which poem, teacher takes another poll: who likes or dislikes comics? Groups with heavy concentrations of comic fans read the excerpted first two sections of Kenneth Koch's “Fresh Air” while the other groups read Rita Dove's “Reading Hölderlin on the Patio with the Aid of a Dictionary.” Assuming more boys than girls read comics, this division should work out well because Dove's poem suggests the complexities of reading as a female while Koch's poem generally rebels against tradition (partly through the creation of a comic book character). Teacher will provide brief biographies of each poet with the poems.

30 minutes: Students read poems and work on skits or artworks until bell rings. Teacher circulates to answer questions about poems.

Day 4 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

15 minutes: Students put finishing touches on skits and artworks.

40 minutes: Groups present their readings. Teacher encourages students to question the presenting groups about specific factors they felt affected Dove’s and Koch’s readings, such as race, gender, or age.

2 minutes: Students return to original positions.

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt: Think about the factors that we saw keeping Dove and Koch from reading high-brow literature with the same reaction as Keats. Remember that “Chapman” in Keats’ poem refers to a translation of Homer into English. Many people judged Keats for not being able to read Homer in Classical Greek because he didn’t have the “right” education and thus viewed his reaction as unsophisticated and embarrassing. Do you identify with any of these factors when reading “great” literature? How so or how not?

15 minutes: Teacher introduces multimedia literacy autobiography project and makes sure students know when the two updates are due. For the first update (Day 10), students turn in working lists of texts so that teacher knows they are progressing. For the second update (Day 17), students turn in an idea for their format and a sample reflection. Teacher also reviews the rubric for the project.

Day 5 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

10 minutes: The following activity is adapted from the ReadWriteThink lesson “Spend a Day in My Shoes: Exploring the Role of Perspective in Narrative” written by Traci Gardner. Teacher connects previous discussions to introductory activity for Katherine Mansfield’s *Life of Ma Parker* as follows:

Yesterday, how did we see that we approach ‘great’ literature with our whole identities, that who we are affects how we read?

Teacher builds on student remarks concerning distance between the conditions of our lives and the worlds reflected in literature to say:

Fiction writers make choices to focus on certain characters and their realities and not on others. Sometimes they do this by writing from certain characters’ perspectives. When using third-person narration, writers just choose to focus their narration on the actions and thoughts of certain characters. Today we’re going to explore why certain kinds of characters might be written about more than others. How often do we hear or say that to understand another person we need to ‘walk a mile in their shoes’? Writers must do something similar when creating characters, and today we are going to create characters out of the pictures of shoes I have up here.

Students come to the front of the class and choose a shoe. The teacher has provided a variety of shoes—expensive, cheap, new, worn, fashionable, unfashionable—for students to choose from. There should be far more shoes than students—enough for everyone to pick a stylish, new, or expensive shoe.

25 minutes: Students work on ReadWriteThink handout, which guides them through creating a character who might wear such a shoe.

10 minutes: Teacher tells students to imagine they were to write stories about the characters they have created and asks who thinks they have the best shoes for stories. A few students share their characters with the class.

2 minutes: Teacher displays an expensive men’s shoe and an old woman’s ratty boot and asks which shoe the class would like to read about. If students pick the men’s shoe, teacher says no wonder and points to all the ugly leftover shoes. If students pick the boot, teacher claims to be surprised considering all the similarly ugly shoes they didn’t pick. Teacher continues:

Even though the life of this expensive shoe may be unfamiliar to us, we want to hear about it more than the life of this ratty boot. Throughout history, writers and other artists have felt pressure to focus on the beautiful and wealthy. Why? Is art supposed to be beautiful, or is art supposed to tell us some truth about life? Both? Why might it be controversial to narrate or depict the gritty details? Let’s keep that question in mind as we read this next story. Both of these shoes feature in it, but the writer focuses on the boot instead.

25 minutes: Students read “Life of Ma Parker.”

15 minutes: Teacher encourages students to respond to the story in whole-class discussion with questions such as:

- Who found it unpleasant to read about Ma Parker’s life? Why? What other sensations did you have while reading? Do you think Mansfield wanted to make us uncomfortable?
- Knowing the “literary gentleman” as you do, would you care to read something he wrote? What do you think he writes about?
- Why do you think it is significant that Ma Parker is from Shakespeare’s hometown?
- Did Mansfield, a member of the literary elite, have a right to put words in Ma Parker’s mouth and thoughts in her head? Why or why not? If Mansfield didn’t write about her, who would?
- How do Mansfield’s descriptions of Ma Parker’s boots contribute to our answers to these questions?

Week 2

Day 6 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt: Think back to the shoe activity and “Life of Ma Parker.” How did we continue or change our thinking about stereotypes by creating characters out of shoes? Did Mansfield’s story make it difficult to equate one kind of shoe with the “literary”?

5 minutes: Volunteers share journal entries.

5 minutes: Teacher reintroduces *Lavinia* and explains that, like “Life of Ma Parker,” the novel focuses on an unlikely character. It retells the *Aeneid*, the most famous Roman epic, from the perspective of the epic hero Aeneas’s new wife.

17 minutes: Chalk talk. Teacher writes “ANCIENT ROME” in the middle of the board. Presumably, students associate topic with war, gladiators, emperors, etc. 12 minutes into chalk talk, teacher writes, “What about Roman women?”

20 minutes: Teacher opens discussion by asking how the saying “History is written by the victors” explains our lack of knowledge about Roman women and also relates to the development of the canon. Teacher then asks what Le Guin might have wanted to accomplish by rewriting a canonical epic from a female perspective.

5 minutes: Teacher (or volunteer) reads the two-page *in medias res* opening of *Lavinia*.

10 minutes: Teacher introduces background information presentation assignment as a way to build on our existing knowledge about epic poetry and ancient Rome as we read *Lavinia*. Groups of three or four students will become experts on topics chosen from a list and give short presentations (5 to 7 minutes) on days when topics correspond to assigned reading. These dates are included on the pacing guide. Teacher asks what the disadvantages and advantages of going early or late might be given that the class will spend the next day doing research in the library.

10 minutes: Students choose their groups and topics. Teacher encourages them to delegate responsibilities for tomorrow’s research day.

Day 7 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

5 minutes: Class walks to library.

82 minutes: Groups research topics and design presentations until the bell rings. Teacher circulates. If any groups finish early, they are encouraged to read *Lavinia*.

Day 8 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

27 minutes: Group presentations: “Greek Rhapsodes,” “Vergil’s Life and Poetry,” and “Myths of Aeneas.”

9 minutes: Whole-class discussion drawing connections between the presentations and reading of *Lavinia* so far. Teacher’s questions emphasize that Aeneas myths existed before Vergil and that Roman epics were composed differently than Greek ones (written versus orally generated) but performed similarly (sung). Teacher also encourages students to discuss their thoughts about Latin. Do they know anyone who studied it in school? Are they all old people? Teacher builds on students’ suggestions to inform the class that, until the late 19th century, English was not viewed as an appropriate school subject. Instead, students learned Latin and maybe Greek. Teacher explains that “learning” Latin often

involved chanting and being physically beaten for mistakes. Teacher asks why Latin’s status as a “dead” language and these practices might have contributed to the decline of its presence in schools.

6 minutes: Whole-class review and discussion of reading guide questions and answers. In this and future reviews of reading guide assignments, teacher is sure to ask students how the specific questions relate to their understanding of the whole novel.

15 minutes: Teacher introduces ekphrasis activity first by asking the class what we have learned about perspectives on art so far from the poems and short story. After a few students contribute, teacher says that one common feature of ancient Greek and Roman literature is ekphrasis, which has to do with perspectives on art. Teacher writes the word on the board, separating *ek* from *phrasis*, and asks class if our knowledge of roots can help us understand what this word might mean.

ek/ec/ex “out, beyond” – e.g. extraterrestrial, ectoplasm

phrasis “speak” – e.g. phrase

ekphrazein – Classical Greek for “to proclaim or call an inanimate object by name”

Thus, ekphrasis refers to an instance when one form of art “takes over” the function of another. Teacher assures students that scholars debate exactly what this tricky definition entails and asks for possible examples of ekphrasis in contemporary culture. For example, the opening credits of “Shrek” suggest that we are reading a storybook rather than watching a movie, but then the storybook turns out to be Shrek’s toilet paper!

Teacher explains that, in reference to epic poetry, ekphrasis usually means a verbal description of a visual work of art. In Book VIII of the *Aeneid*, Vergil imitates the *Iliad*’s ekphrasis of Achilles’ shield with his own description of Aeneas’s shield fashioned by Vulcan, the god of metalsmiths and husband of the hero’s mother, Venus.

Teacher asks where we’ve seen an instance of ekphrasis so far in *Lavinia*. On pages 23-26, Lavinia performs her own ekphrasis of Aeneas’s shield.

2 minutes: Students divide into small groups of their own choosing. Teacher reminds them to pick partners they trust to be responsible because they will have to complete an assignment together about Lavinia’s ekphrasis.

28 minutes: Students read the passage aloud in small groups and answer the following questions, which the teacher displays using a projector or similar device, on one sheet of paper:

1. What does Lavinia see?
2. How does she feel about what she sees?
3. How does Aeneas feel about what he sees?
4. If you have enough time, draw what Lavinia sees. Please don’t draw it in a way that would embarrass the teacher and your classmates and/or require the teacher to call your parents.

Students work in small groups and teacher circulates until bell rings. Teacher collects group work at the end of class. Teacher reminds students that the first update of the multimedia literacy autobiography project is due Friday.

Day 9 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide answers.

27 minutes: Group presentations: “Roman versus Greek Gods,” “Other Myths and Legends of Early Rome,” and, “Augustus Caesar.”

9 minutes: Whole-class discussion drawing connections between presentations and Lavinia. If students do not suggest the connection themselves, teacher refers class to pages 64 to 66, when Lavinia and Vergil disagree about the nature of the gods. The other presentations relate directly to the pictures carved on Aeneas’s shield and, thus, the rest of the ekphrasis activity.

6 minutes: Class reviews reading guide questions and answers.

1 minute: Teacher explains that the rest of today’s period will continue the ekphrasis activity begun the previous day. Today the class will look at the shield from Vergil’s perspective in the *Aeneid*.

Before class, teacher will have prepared and reproduced an annotated handout of the *Aeneid* passage. Notes should include briefly summarized legends and historical events suggested by the names referenced in the passage. Warning: Dryden’s 17th-century translation is most available online and most impenetrable to 10th-graders. A free, modern translation of the *Aeneid* by A.S. Klein is available at <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/VirgilAeneidVIII.htm>. A suggested passage from the Klein translation is from “Aeneas, the leader, and the young men chosen for war...” about halfway through the section “Book VIII 585-625 Venus’s Gift of Armor” to the end of the book. Teacher could also create a labeled version of an illustration of the shield available from the University of Reading at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/SerDepts/vl/classicsexhibition/shieldofaeneas.html>. Alternatively, teacher could create a slideshow of artworks depicting the events as virtually every single one has inspired art.

9 minutes: Teacher or volunteer(s) read(s) passage from the *Aeneid* aloud.

5 minutes: Clarification of passage and notes.

20 minutes: Students get into same groups as yesterday and discuss the following questions, which teacher displays on a projector or similar device:

1. How does Aeneas feel about what he sees?
2. Does Vergil seem to feel the same way as Aeneas or differently? How so?
3. Match three descriptions of a character or event from the *Aeneid* passage to the passage from *Lavinia* we studied yesterday. Which passage presents the characters or events more approvingly or disapprovingly? How so?

10 minutes: Class reconvenes for whole-class discussion of findings. Teacher asks three follow-up questions to spur discussion:

- How does it change your understanding of Vergil’s perspective to know that his immediately preceding work, the *Georgics*, a long poem about farming, mourned the destruction that civil wars had wrought on the Italian land and the Italian people’s simple way of life?

- How does it change your understanding of Vergil’s perspective to know that Augustus, who, as we know from the presentations, charged Vergil to write the *Aeneid*, seemed to promise an end to the violence, “a war to end all wars”?

At the very end of class, teacher reminds students that the first update for the multimedia autobiography project is due the next day.

Day 10 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects project updates and reading guide homework.

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt: Imagine you are someone who dislikes your favorite band, movie, TV show, etc. What do they criticize about your choice of favorite? How do they understand it differently than you do?

2 minutes: Teacher explains that today we are going to continue thinking about differing perspectives by producing our own ekphrastic writing. Teacher distributes numbered pairs of inkblots. Each pair should be split between students on opposite sides of the classroom. (This activity was designed with inkblots from the board game ThinkBlot™ in mind, but inkblots also can be found through an online image search.)

This activity comprises the first stage of a structured process approach for argumentative writing because the students interpret simple visual data, argue in favor of their interpretations, offer counterarguments to their partners, and consider the constraints of audience when addressing the teacher’s “authoritative” interpretations.

15 minutes: Students examine their inkblots and draft paragraphs describing what they think their blots resemble.

2 minutes: Students find the other members of their pairs by matching the numbers on their blots.

13 minutes: Pairs read each other’s paragraphs and respond to their differing interpretations. Teacher encourages students to try to convince each other of their own interpretations.

2 minutes: Teacher reveals “authoritative” (i.e. randomly made up by the teacher) interpretations of each pair of inkblots and challenges students to draft paragraphs in support of them.

13 minutes: Pairs examine their inkblots for evidence of the “authoritative” interpretations and draft paragraphs.

15 minutes: After the students return to their original seats, the class debriefs from the inkblot activity as a whole. Teacher spurs discussion with the following questions:

- Did partners come up with conflicting individual interpretations?
- Did anyone succeed in convincing his or her partner?
- How difficult was it to come up with support for the “authoritative” interpretations?

- How did our treatment of the inkblots resemble the two ekphrastic passages we read about Aeneas's shield?
- How did the teacher's "authoritative" interpretations resemble Augustus's influence on the *Aeneid's* interpretation of Roman history?
- How might LeGuin be treating the *Aeneid* like we treated our inkblots?

10 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

Week 3

Day 11 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

15 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt: Do we control our tastes, or do our tastes control us? Are both statements true to some degree? For example, does someone end up in a certain social group because they choose to like and wear certain clothes, or do they like and wear certain clothes because they belong to a certain social group? (If the socioeconomic status of the school or class makes this topic too insensitive, something like music can be substituted for clothes.)

10 minutes: Teacher asks for three students to share entries in favor of each possibility and asks the rest of the class to respond.

5 minutes: Teacher transitions from journal topic to issues of control in *Lavinia* by asking whether Vergil controls Lavinia or the other way around. Where and when is Lavinia narrating the novel? Teacher admits that she cannot wrap her head around these questions and wants to devote today to trying on different answers. Teacher explains the definition of a found poem (Smagorinsky, 2008, pg. 40) and models the composition of one using the opening section of *Lavinia*.

27 minutes: In groups of their own choosing, students generate found poems exploring the relationship between Lavinia and Vergil. Teacher circulates, directing students to appropriate passages in the novel.

10 minutes: Groups present their poems and thoughts about who controls whom.

5 minutes: To prepare for the next day's activity, teacher asks students to take out separate sheets of paper, label them with their names, identify their favorite genre of movie, and list their top five must-see movies of all time. Teacher should encourage students to be as specific as possible when choosing a genre, e.g. Do they really mean just plain action or end-of-the-world catastrophe? Teacher collects the movie ballots and found poems at the end of class. Tomorrow, using the ballots, the teacher will organize the students into small groups with the same favorite genre and will generate the class's list of five must-see movies.

Day 12 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

17 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

5 minutes: Teacher splits students into groups determined by their favorite movie genre and introduces the day's activity, saying that we are going to think more about canon-making by forming our own canon of movies. Teacher writes on the board the names of the genres represented by the groups.

This activity comprises the second step of a structured process approach for argumentative writing. The students will argue about subjects more complex than inkblots but still very familiar. This activity continues the earlier focus on counterarguments while introducing a topic similar to the final essay's.

30 minutes: Groups discuss the following questions, which are displayed on the board, and record their answers well enough to present orally to the class:

- What makes our genre good?
- What are its criteria for membership?
- What movies provide examples of these criteria?
- Why is this genre universally appealing (or why should it be)?
 - Why does this genre deserve to be represented in a top five list of must-see movies?
- On separate sheets of paper, compose objections to the other groups' genres. Respectfully explain why your group thinks their genres are not universally appealing or should not be represented in a list of must-see movies.

1 minute: Teacher distributes objections to appropriate groups.

9 minutes: Groups devise counterarguments to objections.

20 minutes: Groups present their arguments.

3 minutes: Class informally votes on which genres should be represented in a list of must-see movies.

2 minutes: Teacher unveils list generated from their earlier ballots. The list should be on chart paper or board space where it can be left until the next day.

Day 13 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt: Do you agree with the canon of movies the class voted for? Why or why not? Did your group discussion change your thinking in any way?

5 minutes: Two volunteers present entries that agree and disagree.

5 minutes: Teacher transitions back to discussion of *Lavinia* by asking what factor determined which movies made it onto the list. In response, the teacher says:

As the list was generated from a vote, the determining factor was simply numerical. Our decisions to vote for one movie or another, however, were influenced by a variety of factors that are much harder to uncover, such as whether or not our families and friends watch a lot of movies, what kind of movies they watch, why they watch them, etc. Oftentimes, these decisions are made by the person who has access to the movies, the money to obtain them, and the power to make everyone else agree to watch them. Today, we're going to focus on the characters in *Lavinia*, thinking about who has power, what kind of power they have, and where their power comes from. First, we have to review our reading.

17 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

5 minutes: Teacher explains the definition of a body biography (Smagorinsky, 2008), using an example she created for a character from a text read earlier in the year. Teacher explains that, working in groups, the class will make body biographies for characters from *Lavinia*, but each group should have a different character.

2 minutes: Whole class brainstorms list of characters to choose from.

3 minutes: Students divide into groups. Groups choose characters.

35 minutes: Students work on body biographies until bell rings. Teacher circulates, reminding students to think about how their characters influence the others and exert power.

Day 14 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

12 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

10 minutes: Group presentation: "Greek Culture in Roman Education."

10 minutes: Groups put finishing touches on body biographies.

45 minutes: Groups present their body biographies.

10 minutes: Teacher reminds class that their second update for the multimedia literacy autobiography project is due next Tuesday and reminds them that this update consists of a sample reflection on a text. Teacher reviews guiding questions and rubric for reflections with class.

Day 15 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

12 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

15 minutes: Group presentations: "Roman Marriage and Divorce," "Famous Roman Women."

5 minutes: Teacher announces that, today, the class is going to focus on power struggles a little closer to home by thinking about which social group in the school has the most power. Teacher then leads the class in brainstorming ground rules for respectful discussion of today's sensitive topic. If not suggested by the students as a rule, teacher makes sure the class knows that the identification of specific people will not be tolerated.

3 minutes: Students divide into groups of their own choosing, but teacher explains that students should not arrange themselves into socially homogeneous groups (and defines *homogeneous*) if they want to avoid stereotyping each other and have the most interesting discussions possible.

7 minutes: Teacher presents discussion questions and assignment guidelines, which will be displayed on a board, projector, or a similar device. Each group will outline an essay arguing why a certain social group is the most powerful in the school. In addition, each group will pitch its essay towards an audience drawn at random from a basket. When introducing possible audiences, teacher asks students to suggest what concerns each audience might have and writes the suggestions next to the audience name.

- Questions to consider:
 - Is there a single group of trendsetters or many trends being set by many groups?
 - Who acts as the school's public representatives most often?
 - Who is in charge of the school's publications? Are the same kinds of students in charge of all the publications? Which publication is the most influential?
 - Does sheer number count for anything?
 - Are clubs dominated by certain groups, or are different clubs different? Are the most influential clubs dominated by the same groups?
 - What advantages do athletes receive? Band members? Student council representatives? Upperclassmen? Freshmen?

- Audiences to address:
 - Principals
 - Coaches and club sponsors
 - Teachers
 - Other students
 - Parents

15 minutes: Whole-class review of elements of an argumentative essay, especially claims, evidence, and warrants. Teacher models warranting in particular and leads the class through warranting exercises adapted from Smagorinsky et al. (2010). Thus, this activity comprises the third step of a structured process approach for argumentative writing.

30 minutes: Groups work on their outlines until bell rings. Teacher circulates, focusing on the use of claims, evidence, and warrants. At the very end of class, teacher reminds students that they should probably start working on their reflections for the multimedia literacy autobiography project because the second update is due Tuesday. Teacher collects outlines as students leave.

Week 4

Day 16 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

12 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

10 minutes: Group presentation: “Roman Symbols and Modern Governments.”

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt:

1. How do you react to violence in movies or on TV? Are you squeamish? Are you enthralled? Does it depend on the movie or show? Why does violence entertain us? Is violent entertainment an inherently bad thing? Do you think violent entertainment is a modern phenomenon, or do critics tend to demonize the present and romanticize the past?
2. Respond to the group presentation. Were you surprised by the various meanings attached to Roman symbols or their prevalence in our world? Why or why not?

5 minutes: Volunteers share their entries. Teacher especially encourages discussion of whether or not violent entertainment is a modern phenomenon, reminding the class of the role of violence in *Lavinia* and its source text, the *Aeneid*.

2 minutes: Students divide into discussion groups of their own choosing.

18 minutes: Groups read “Violence Formula: Analyzing, TV, Video and Movies” by Barbara Osborn from the Center for Media Literacy, available at <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/violence-formula-analyzing-tv-video-and-movies> and discuss whether or not they agree with the writer’s formula. In addition, teacher asks groups to brainstorm examples or counterexamples from their own experiences of pop culture.

5 minutes: Teacher refocuses the class’s attention on Osborn’s third criterion that media violence justifies itself with caricatures of clear-cut “good” and “bad” guys. Teacher asks a spokesperson from each group to summarize his or her group’s opinion of this criterion.

3 minutes: Teacher shifts focus to how well this criterion applies to violence in *Lavinia*, which is as graphic as it is only because ancient Western epics, the foundations of the canon, are themselves extremely violent. Vergil, who could take his sweet time as a writer rather than a spontaneously composing rhapsode, one-upped his Greek models’ flagrant violence but not without reason. In fact, a major theme of the epic (and *Lavinia*) emerges from it.

2 minutes: Teacher introduces how the class will read Vergil’s “hideous chant of slaughter,” pg. 86-89, aloud “popcorn” style. Teacher asks class to pay attention to their emotional responses to written violence. How does reading violence differ from seeing it on TV or in a movie or video game?

10 minutes: Class reads together.

5 minutes: Whole class debriefs from reading, the guiding question being whether or not they share Lavinia's horrified reaction. At the very end of class, teacher reminds students that their second updates for the multimedia literacy autobiography project are due the next day.

Day 17 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework and multimedia literacy biography project updates.

12 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

5 minutes: Teacher explains that today's class continues yesterday's focus on violence and its significance in *Lavinia* and the *Aeneid*. Teacher asks class to silently reread the passage they read together yesterday and recall how it made them feel.

This class period and the following one wrap up the novel, so they are more teacher-centered than usual.

5 minutes: Teacher calls attention to the end of Lavinia and Vergil's conversation on pg. 89:

"[The poem will end] With the triumph of the glorious hero over his enemy, of course. He will kill Turnus, lying wounded and helpless, just as he killed Mezentius."

"Who is the hero?"

"You know who the hero is."

"He kills like a butcher. Why is he a hero?"

"Because he does what he has to do."

"Why does he have to kill a helpless man?"

"Because that is how empires are founded. Or so I hope Augustus will understand it. But I do not think he will."

Teacher then explains that the students will now discuss this passage in a discussion web (Smagorinsky, 2008, pg. 43) focusing on the following questions:

- What is the difference between a butcher and a hero?
 - Do you buy Vergil's reason that a hero performs a duty by killing?
- Do you agree with Vergil's reasoning that empires are founded through violence against the helpless, that only the disorder of war can create the order of civilization? Why or why not?
 - How does your knowledge of history help you answer this question?

20 minutes: Students form discussion webs. First, they ponder the questions on their own. Then, they share their thoughts with a partner. Next, the pairs of students form groups with other pairs and have small-group discussions. If time allows, spokespeople from each group summarize their thoughts for the rest of the class.

10 minutes: With the students remaining in their groups, the teacher says that the class will now review some of LeGuin's answers to these questions. Teacher leads class in reading of pg. 187-190, with two student volunteers reading Lavinia and Aeneas's dialogue.

5 minutes: Teacher asks small groups to briefly discuss the final paragraph in this passage, which describes Aeneas's dismay that battle fury might be part of his true nature and the order of things. Teacher asks small groups specifically to discuss how external conflict affects Aeneas's internal state.

2 minutes: Teacher asks for a volunteer to explain their group's answer to the question.

8 minutes: Teacher builds on volunteer's answer to say that the external conflict of war, while it has created peace for the region, has put Aeneas at war with himself, divided him in two parts. Teacher reads the following description from pg. 213 of Aeneas's reaction to the news of countryside skirmishes that threaten Lavinium's peace:

"I watched Aeneas master his bitter, disappointed anger. He was like a man mounted on a powerful horse that fights the reins and plunges, nose to feet, and kicks, twisting its body, and finally is brought to stand white with sweat, shaking, ready to obey."

Teacher explains that scholars of the *Aeneid* tend to fall into one of two camps, one that says the poem is a bunch of propaganda churned out to please Augustus and another that, like LeGuin, thinks the *Aeneid* quietly indicts Rome's imperial turn for its violent nature. But even if the *Aeneid* doubts the goodness of Roman glory, Vergil still makes the ideal Roman hero a warrior. However, he's a very introspective one who understands the terror of war. He makes the ideal Roman character a dual, conflicted one that, skewed to one side or the other, becomes less than heroic.

Teacher asks the class how Latinus and Ascanius not quite as heroic as Aeneas.

10 minutes: Teacher asks students to turn to the bottom of pg. 207, the description of the Ambarvalia festival, and to read the passage aloud with their groups, focusing on Aeneas's unfamiliarity with the war god Mars as the "power that holds the thin boundary between the tame and the wild." Teacher asks the groups to discuss how the experience of this festival might help calm the conflict in Aeneas.

7 minutes: Whole-class discussion of the passage and guiding question.

3 minutes: Students return to their original positions. Teacher announces that tomorrow's class will be a day to work on multimedia literacy autobiography projects or to catch up on reading *Lavinia*, so the students might want to bring some materials they need for their projects.

Day 18 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

12 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

10 minutes: Teacher reviews the general quality of the second multimedia literacy autobiography updates in terms of the rubric and offers some suggestions for everyone. Teacher again explains that today's class period will be time for students to either work on their projects or catch up on their reading.

65 minutes: Students work independently until the bell rings. Teacher circulates to confer with individual students about their projects.

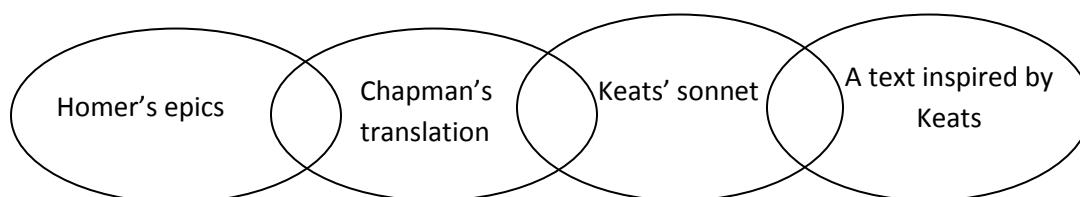
Day 19 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Teacher collects reading guide homework.

7 minutes: Class discusses reading guide questions and answers.

5 minutes: Teacher explains that today the class will back up to take a big-picture view of *Lavinia* and think about the novel in reference to the larger unit topics of forming and encountering canons. Teacher says that this will require us to make some analogies between Vergil and LeGuin and between the events of the novel and the processes of canon-making. Teacher gives basic examples of analogies to clarify the term and the kind of relationship it signifies.

10 minutes: Teacher asks the class how the literary canon could be like a chain. If the students have trouble with this question, the teacher encourages them to think back to Keats' relationship to Homer. As students suggest possibilities, teacher draws on the board a chain depicting the relationship between Keats and Homer:



5 minutes: Teacher explains this chain of influence:

Chapman's appreciation for Homer led him to translate the epics and share them with others, such as Keats, who was so inspired by Homer that he wrote one poem directly about encountering the epics and entwined Greek mythology into many of his other poems. In turn, other writers throughout history have found inspiration in Keats and responded to his texts by creating their own. For example, we responded to Keats' poem "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" by creating texts that compared our experiences of Homeric epics and other "great works" to his.

But what about dislike? Could it link up a chain? Have we seen an example of it? (Kenneth Koch's "Fresh Air) Right, Koch was so tired of reading poems that imitated the "great" poets of the past century and seeing young poets "trembling" under their influence that he devised the Strangler to get rid of them and their influence, even going back to Homer and "annihilating the students of myth." Since then, a great many young poets have been inspired by Koch and his cry "Is there no one who feels like a pair of pants?"

So, readers who end up becoming writers read something they love or hate, and they adapt what they like and discard (or sometimes mock) what they dislike to create new texts for new readers, some of whom become new writers. It's a huge chain reaction! And it's pretty common for the writers of one literary movement, like Koch, to hate the immediately preceding movement and to look farther back for inspiration. It's the same way that retro '80s fashions are cool but fashions from just a few years ago look outdated.

If the teacher knows that some students are involved in rock bands or other artistic groups, she might also ask:

Do any musicians or other artists in here want to describe the feeling of trying to hone the sounds and techniques already out there into the sound and technique you want to have?

3 minutes: Teacher tells the class that they now are going to split up into groups and, using butcher paper and markers, create a chain depicting LeGuin and Vergil. In addition to simply drawing the links, illustrate or describe the nature of the link. How did LeGuin feel about Vergil? How did Vergil feel about his inspiration? How do LeGuin’s readers feel inspired or uninspired by her text?

27 minutes: Students work in their small groups, and teacher circulates.

10 minutes: One spokesperson from each group remains behind while the other members view the rest of the class’s posters.

2 minutes: Students leave their small groups and return to their original positions.

8 minutes: Whole-class discussion about the relationship between Homer, Vergil, and LeGuin.

- How was Vergil under pressure to adapt the Homeric epics?
 - What was the relationship between Greece and Rome during Vergil’s time? (Members of the “Greek Culture and Roman Education” presentation group, at least, should be able to answer this question.)
 - How was the *Aeneid* supposed to settle this relationship?
- How does LeGuin feel about Vergil?
 - What about the *Aeneid* dissatisfied LeGuin?
 - How likely is it that a woman could have responded to the *Aeneid* in this way before 2008?

10 minutes: Teacher transitions to the dark side of canons:

We’ve settled that LeGuin felt that something was left out of the *Aeneid*: Lavinia wasn’t given the significance LeGuin thought the character’s position deserves. We also know that, until not too long ago, Latin was the language of male institutions—the Church, higher education, and, for a while, diplomacy—that controlled everyone (in Europe)’s ways of life. For thousands of years, the *Aeneid* anchored the canons of various European cultures, but something—and someone—was always being left out.

As you know from designing your projects, by choosing one thing, you reject many other possibilities. In the same way, by raising up a canon, the judges of high culture lower the status of so many other texts and traditions. Remember, the judges of high culture tend to come from privileged backgrounds and be members of a powerful group, so they make tend to make choices that preserve their group’s power.

So, there’s one more analogy I want to us to make between *Lavinia* and canon-making, and it’s based our topic from two days ago, the significance of violence both in the *Aeneid* and in *Lavinia*. How is violence both positive and negative according to these two texts? (It may be necessary to for the teacher to reread a relevant passage from *Lavinia*.)

How might the process of canon-making be analogous?

This question is quite difficult, and the teacher should encourage many students to wonder aloud about it before launching into an explanation. The intended analogy is one between violence and “symbolic violence,” a term the teacher probably won’t find helpful to introduce to the students. Like violence in *Lavinia* and the *Aeneid*, establishing a canon brings about order for a population—a civilization and culture for them to share—but only by heaping more disadvantage on those without power. Again, the teacher should refrain from explaining this analogy but, instead, guide a whole-class discussion toward it.

At the very end of the period, the teacher reminds the class that, since they have no reading to do for homework, they should work on their projects, which are due the following Monday.

Day 20 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

15 minutes: Students write in journals.

Prompt: “When I can tell a teacher is in a bad mood, I...”

- Please don’t identify specific teachers in your entry, especially if you plan to share it with the class.

7 minutes: Volunteers share journal entries.

10 minutes: Teacher introduces Katherine Mansfield’s story “The Singing Lesson,” reminding the class that Mansfield also wrote “Life of Ma Parker.”

Today we’re going to think about control, specifically the control a teacher has over the way students understand things. As we learned from your journal entries, teachers’ moods occasionally affect your decisions and experiences. These moods usually depend on external circumstances or events that you individually have nothing to do with, but, unfortunately, you have to deal with their consequences. This story, as you might have guessed, is about a teacher in a bad mood.

Teacher then explains that “The Singing Lesson” takes place in roughly the same historical period and geographical setting as “Ma Parker” and asks students to describe that period and setting (turn-of-the-century England). Teacher then asks students to imagine (out loud) what a school of that period and setting was like. To set the mood, the teacher could also display an appropriate photo or illustration on a projector.

15 minutes: The class reads “The Singing Lesson” together.

3 minutes: Teacher explains and models four-square activity (Smagorinsky, 2008, pg. 39).

22 minutes: Students individually work on four-square activities. Teacher also creates one.

15 minutes: Volunteers share four-square activities. Teacher also shares hers, which focuses on a moment when Miss Meadows is directing the students to sing with specific emotions. Teacher concludes as follows:

When we read a text together, no matter how hard I try not to, I always control your interpretation of that text to some degree. It's troubling but inevitable, and it's particularly challenging when we read a very canonical text. I want you to think for yourselves, and, obviously, I want to think for myself. But, when so many "experts" throughout history have agreed that a certain text means this or that and fixes on these or those themes, I find myself slipping under their influence, and then I'm in danger of dragging you under. But, in "The Singing Lessons," Miss Meadows simply makes the girls sing a lament very sadly and a joyful song very cheerfully, so is her control over their interpretations unjustified? Is the interpretation of a novel or poem quite as simple?

Brief whole-class discussion until bell rings. At the very end of class, teacher reminds students that their multimedia literacy autobiography projects are due Monday.

Week 5

Day 21 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping. Students turn in their projects.

2 minutes: Class votes on whether to share their projects with each other during the second half of Friday's period. Class may also elect to bring snacks and drinks.

2 minutes: Teacher introduces today as the last day of unit readings, and the final two poems shift focus from responding to the canon to claiming a place in it. Teacher explains that the class will read the two poems together and then split up into small groups. In their groups, the students will choose to focus on one poem.

8 minutes: Teacher distributes and reviews handout with short biography of Langston Hughes and selection from *Montage of a Dream Deferred*. Go to <http://www.redhotjazz.com/hughes.html> for a good biography. Suggested selection from *Montage* extends from "Jam Session" to "Boogie: 1 a.m."

5 minutes: Teacher asks students to respond to the visual appearance of the poems. ("Theme for English B" is much longer than the others.) Teacher then asks students to scan the poems and find other ways the short poems differ from the long poem, e.g. formality, content. Teacher could record these differences on the board in a T-chart.

2 minutes: Teacher explains that most poems in *Montage of a Dream Deferred* are like the short ones with jazz licks, pop culture references, and images of life in Harlem, but then, in the middle of it all, there's "Theme for English B," an assignment for class.

10 minutes: Class reads "Theme for English B."

3 minutes: Teacher refreshes students' memories on Rita Dove.

8 minutes: Class reads “Grape Sherbet.”

2 minutes: Students divide into groups determined by which poem they choose.

5 minutes: Teacher explains that the groups’ task is to discuss how the speakers of their poems see themselves in relation to the past and future. This is a heady task intended as a warm-up for the final essay. Specific discussion questions should be displayed on a board or projector:

- What images or people in the poem represent the old and traditional?
 - What happens to them? Are they powerful? Are they ignored?
- What significance does setting, specifically location, bring to the poem?
- Imagine the poem from someone else’s perspective, such as the teacher in “Theme” or the grandmother in “Grape Sherbet.”
- For groups reading Hughes: Why does the speaker worry that his page is not “true”?
- For groups reading Dove: What do you think the speaker means by “Now I see why you bothered, father?”

Teacher should assure students that she does not have right answers in mind for these questions and that the interpretation of poetry is always open-ended. Teacher explains that the groups must write a paragraph together answering one of the questions.

30 minutes: Students work in groups.

10 minutes: Teacher introduces essay assignment and explains that the rest of the week will be devoted to thinking, drafting, and reviewing. Teacher invites students to ask questions and share concerns about the assignment. Finally, teacher advises students to think about the topic, perhaps by looking through their journal entries, and maybe even write down some ideas before tomorrow’s class.

Day 22 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

7 minutes: Teacher introduces fishbowl discussion (Smagorinsky, 2008, pg. 33) and explains that today’s fishbowl will focus on the essay topic, which encompasses everything from the past couple of weeks. Teacher then encourages students to take notes if something strikes them as useful for the essay. Lastly, a group of student volunteers is arranged in the center of the classroom.

60 minutes: Fishbowl discussion. Teacher is prepared with more specific questions, such as how examples from our readings support a position or how examples from personal experience support a position, in case the students start talking in circles.

20 minutes: Students begin outlining or drafting their essays. Teacher assigns them to give her some evidence of thought about the topic by the end of the period, whether that is a formulated thesis or freewriting. Students work until bell rings.

Day 23 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

87 minutes: Students draft their essays. Teacher circulates to confer with individual students. Teacher specifically reminds students to warrant their claims and evidence as they did in earlier activities.

Day 24 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

7 minutes: Class walks to computer lab and gets settled.

80 minutes: Students continue working on their essays. Teacher circulates to confer with individual students.

Day 25 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

2 minutes: Students divide into peer review groups made up of themselves and two to three classmates of their own choosing.

5 minutes: Teacher lays ground rules for peer review:

1. Be respectful!
2. Be bold enough to make suggestions and open enough to receive them. Remember, you can always choose not to follow a suggestion. It's your essay.
3. Unless someone asks you to focus on grammar, don't nitpick grammar mistakes. We have bigger fish to fry.

40 minutes: Students review group members' essays using the following guide (adapted from Smagorinsky et al., 2010, pg. 154-155):

1. Does the essay's introduction catch the reader's interest and present the thesis of the argument to follow?
2. What evidence (examples from life and literature) does the writer provide in support of the thesis and claims?
3. Is this evidence organized effectively?
4. What evidence is difficult to understand or confusing?
5. How do you suggest improving the evidence?
6. Does the writer use a warrant for each piece of evidence to explain how it supports a claim?
7. Does the writer include a counterargument and a rebuttal to that counterargument?
8. How does the writer conclude the essay?
9. What part of the essay is clearest? Why?
10. What suggestions can you make for the writer?

Teacher should circulate among groups. If the students voted to share their projects, then the teacher should also use this time to set them up for display and prepare the snacks and drinks.

40 minutes: If the students voted to share their projects, then they use this time to visit their classmates' displays. If the students voted not to share their projects, they can use this time to work on final drafts of their essays. At the very end of class, teacher reminds students that their final drafts are due the following Monday.

Reading Guide

This guide tells you which pages of *Lavinia* to read for each class period, which questions to answer for homework, and which presentation groups present on which days. Please answer homework questions on loose leaf pieces of paper so that they are easy to turn in.

Remember, every day, you can substitute one question with a question you wish I had asked or an explanation of why one of my questions was unhelpful to you. A substitution, however, cannot count for a one-question challenge.

Day 8 (Wednesday)

Presentations: "Greek Rhapsodes," "Vergil's Life and Poetry," "Myths of Aeneas."

Read to pg. 47 and answer the following questions:

1. Describe Lavinia's relationships with her parents.
2. Why is Albunea a significant place?
3. Is Latinus a good king? Why or why not?
4. Either:
 - a. Illustrate a scene from today's assigned reading.
 - b. Or explain why the political relationship between Laurentum and Ardea is uneasy.
5. What happened to Aeneas's first wife?

Day 9 (Thursday)

Presentations: "Roman versus Greek Gods," "Other Myths and Legends of Early Rome," "Augustus Caesar."

Read to pg. 69 and answer the following questions:

1. Who is Dido?
2. How do Lavinia and Vergil understand the gods differently?
3. Where is Aeneas during Lavinia and Vergil's conversation on pg. 60-69?

Day 10 (Friday)

Read to pg. 90 and answer either the first three or only the last question:

1. Why is it so important for Lavinia's betrothal to be set?
2. What were the two omens and what were they interpreted to mean?
3. On pg. 87, Vergil says that a war will begin "with a boy killing a deer in the woods." What deer's death do you think he's foreshadowing?

4. Keep track of the word “voice” in this passage. How does the pattern that emerges inform your opinion of Lavinia’s strength or power?

Day 11 (Monday)

Read to pg. 114 and answer the following questions:

1. What do Latins think of Etruscans?
2. What does Amata plan to accomplish by holding Lavinia hostage in the woods?
3. How is Lavinia “free”? (Hint: Focus on pg. 100.)

Day 12 (Tuesday)

Read to pg. 139 and answer either the first three or only the last question:

1. How does Aeneas feel about war?
2. In what ways does Lavinia become an outsider?
3. How does Ascanius lead the Trojan troops while Aeneas is finding allies?
4. How does the wave metaphor on pg. 117 suggest fate? What forces combine in these figurative waves?

Day 13 (Wednesday)

Read to pg. 160 and answer the following questions:

1. What new metaphor does Lavinia use to describe Vergil’s words (instead of the wave metaphor)?
2. How do Drances and Lavinia feel about each other?
3. Why do some consider the war *nefas*?

Day 14 (Thursday)

Presentation: “Greek Culture in Roman Education.”

Read to pg. 177 and answer the following questions:

1. What do the two sides agree to in the treaty?
2. What interrupts the treaty?
3. On pg. 173-174, what new metaphor does Lavinia use to describe her relationship with Vergil?
4. Why doesn’t Aeneas spare Turnus?

Day 15 (Friday)

Presentations: “Roman Marriage and Divorce,” “Famous Roman Women.”

Read to pg. 196 and answer the following questions:

1. Why is Aeneas trouble to think it was *fas* for him to kill Turnus?
2. Does Ascanius seem like good king material?
3. How does Ascanius interpret his father’s shield?

Day 16 (Monday)

Presentation: "Roman Symbols and Modern Governments."

Read to pg. 212 and answer the following questions:

1. How do battles and ceremonies unite the people of the new city?
2. How do Diomedes and Aeneas know each other?
3. What does Aeneas decide to do with Ascanius?

Day 17 (Tuesday)

Read to pg. 240 and answer the first three or only the last question:

1. What is the cause of disputes between the Lavinians and their neighbors?
2. Compare Aeneas's death to Turnus's.
3. What is the source of conflict between Ascanius and Lavinia?
4. What does Lavinia's thought "So long as Achates told me the story, Aeneas was not dead" (pg. 227) suggest about Lavinia as a narrator, living or dead?

Day 18 (Wednesday)

Read to pg. 265 and answer the following questions:

1. What do Aeneas's old advisors think of Lavinia's decision to remove Silvius from Ascanius's court?
2. How does Lavinia respond to their opinions?
3. What does Lavinia hear at Albunea? Why didn't she think she would hear anything?
4. How does Ascanius's power decline?

Day 19 (Thursday)

Read to the end, including the Afterword, and answer the following question:

1. Lavinia says she never dies, but she also says she's no longer human. What do you think she becomes? Why?