

Brian Patrick
ELAN 7408
Dr. Smagorinsky
September 22, 2008

Alternate Narratives: The Revision of Cultural
Representation in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

"The last four or five hundred years of European contact with Africa produced a body of literature that presented Africa in a very bad light and Africans in very lurid terms. ... This continued until the Africans themselves, in the middle of the twentieth century, took into their own hands the telling of their story." (Chinua Achebe, ["An African Voice"](#))

Goals

Goal 1: Research Project

One of the main goals of this unit is to familiarize students with the history and culture of the Igbo people, Nigeria, and Africa, fully recognizing that the continent of Africa is a diverse, geographical space with numerous ethnic groups, cultures, and traditions. I feel that if students are able to research and explain the culture, traditions, and history behind *Things Fall Apart* and *Heart of Darkness* they will be prepared for many of the challenges in these texts. This research and presentation project will be somewhat informal in nature; I'm not looking for a well-polished, collegiate research paper. I want students to explore and investigate the background and history of these texts on their own rather than passively taking notes from a teacher-led lecture.

To help you prepare for the novels *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*, both of which represent the culture and people of Nigeria and the land surrounding the Congo River in vastly different ways, you will conduct small research projects on important historical and cultural topics. In addition, an understanding of European colonization of Africa in the late 19th

century is crucial to an adequate understanding of Achebe's cultural response in *Things Fall Apart*.

You will work in groups of 3-4 (groups will be of your own choosing) and will research a group-selected topic from the following:

European Imperialism in Africa
British Colonization of Nigeria
Ethnic Groups of Nigeria
Gender Roles in Nigeria

Congo River
Nigerian Independence
Religion in Nigeria
Art and Literature of Nigeria

Your group will then assemble a report and present your findings to the class. You will have two days to conduct your research in the media center. You will then have one day in class and one day in the computer lab to assemble presentation.

Your research presentation must meet the following requirements:

- You will each submit a proposal on your first day in the media center, outlining the jobs and duties that you will be responsible for in your group
- Your presentation **must include at least one visual** (power point slides, timeline, map, diagram, poster, etc.) that helps your audience understand your topic
- Your presentation must exhibit a clear organizational pattern that logically covers your topic
- The information you provide must come from a **minimum of two sources: one printed source and one online source**
- Sources must be accurately documented in a MLA style Works Cited page, which must be turned in at the time of your presentation

Students will be graded based on the following rubric:

	4	3	2	1
Proposal of Duties and Responsibilities	Student clearly explains what information he or she is responsible for locating, when the information is needed, and fully participates in the group's presentation.	Student clearly explains what information he or she is responsible for locating, but may not fully contribute to the group's research or presentation.	Student can somewhat explain what information he or she is responsible for locating, but does not contribute to the group's research or presentation.	Student cannot explain what information he or she is responsible for locating and does not participate in the group's presentation.
Quality of Research	Presented information is relevant, interesting, and	Presented information is interesting but brief and is presented in a	Presented information is vague or confusing and is presented in a	Presented information is not clear or is incomplete. The

	presented in a clear, logical manner that demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic.	manner that demonstrates some understanding of the topic.	way that demonstrates little understanding of the topic.	group does appear to have researched the topic.
Quality and Quantity of Sources	Researchers locate at least 2 reliable and factual sources. One is a printed source and one is an online source.	Researchers locate at least 2 reliable and factual sources.	Researchers locate 1 reliable and factual source.	Researchers do not locate any sources, or their sources appear to be inappropriate for the topic.
Quality of Visual	Visual is neat, organized, and aids the audience in the understanding the topic.	Visual is neat and organized, but does not offer any new assistance in understanding the topic.	Visual is sloppily created and does not offer any assistance in understanding the topic.	Group does not create an acceptable visual.
Works Cited and Format	Group accurately creates an MLA style Works Cited page for their research	Group creates an MLA style Works Cited page, but failed to accurately cite all of their sources.	Group lists their sources, but it is not in the style of a MLA Works Cited page.	Group does not cite their sources

*Rubric was taken from White: Journeys of Grief: the Quest of War, Inward and Out.

Goal 2: Multi-genre Writing Project

The culminating project for this unit will be a multi-genre project that has students piece together several pieces of writing—narrative, haiku, song, couplets, or signs to just name a few—into a collective whole that makes a reflective statement or argument about what they have learned. This project combines both analytical and creative skills to help students construct a uniquely personal text about their transactions with the readings.

You have read several complex texts that discuss how culture may be represented in literature. To show what you have learned from your transactions with these texts, I'm asking you to create a multi-genre writing project. **A multi-genre project is just what the term suggests: it is a non-traditional paper using many different genres. I have chosen this type of project over a traditional analytical paper because multi-genre papers allow for student**

creativity; this is your chance to think outside the box, experiment with types of writing you may never have tried. You can write in multiple voices, compare, contrast, analyze, or argue multiple points of view. Multi-genre papers challenge you to think, and hopefully it will be fun as well. **A genre is category of composition distinguished by distinctive style, form and content.** This is just a short list of examples of genres you could include in your paper:

- Advice column
 - Descriptive paragraph
 - Autobiography
 - Interview
 - Diary
 - Newspaper Article
 - Dialogue
 - Poem
 - Persuasive essay
 - Encyclopedia entry
 - Eyewitness account
 - Letter
 - Memo
 - Play
 - Advertisement
 - Resume
 - Campaign Speech
 - Informative essay
 - Song
 - Cartoon
 - Monologue
 - Eulogy
 - Photo/drawing
 - Stream of Consciousness
- (Note that many of these genres are types of writing we have constructed together in class)

In addition, I am also asking you to produce **a small reflection piece, 300 words typed**, with your multi-genre paper that asks you to reflect on how this project demonstrates what you have learned.

Keep the following in mind when producing your text:

- Your multi-genre paper **should have a central focus** about the texts we have read. You could choose to focus on the differences of cultural representation between *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*, the celebration/critique of Nigerian culture in *Things Fall Apart*, how the readings have helped you learn something about you or your culture, or a topic of your choice that pertains to what we have examined in this unit.
- The paper should make some **reference to two or more of the texts** we have read even if the paper focuses on you and your world.
- **We have constructed and discussed many writing genres in this unit. Don't be afraid to use them or adapt them as necessary; that was one of the reasons why we wrote them.**

Your multi-genre paper must include:

- Title Page: The title page should include your name, the date, class period, and the title of your project.
- Table of Contents: A list of the titles of your genres in the order in which they appear and which page they are on.

- **Preface:** This will be where you supply the reader with anything you want them to know before reading the paper, such as: how the entries are related to one another, or which parts of your paper are fiction and which are fact.
- **Genres:** I'm asking you to include a minimum of 7 genres in your paper, but feel free to add more. You are required to use a minimum of seven **different types of genres**.
NOTE: **Only ONE photo or drawing will count towards your required seven.** Any more will be welcomed, **but will not count towards your minimum requirements.** Of the 7 genres, **2 must be of greater length—at least one page each.** Therefore, 7 short genres will not allow you to receive full credit.
- **Works Cited:** For the works cited page, I will require a complete list of all the sources you used in proper MLA form. **A minimum of TWO different sources are required.**
- **Reflective paper:** This must be at least 300 words and typed in Times New Roman, 12-point font, and double-spaced.
- **Conventions:** Within the demands of the genre, you must be careful to follow the rules and conventions of Standard English

Students' multi-genre projects will be graded on the following rubric:

Features	4	3	2	1
Elements of the Form	The multi-genre paper includes a title page, table of contents, preface, and works cited page. All sources are accurately cited according to MLA guidelines.	The multi-genre paper includes a title page, table of contents, preface, and works cited page. Source citations may have some errors according to MLA guidelines.	The multi-genre paper may have a title page, table of contents, preface, and/or works cited page. Source citations have many errors according to MLA guidelines.	The multi-genre paper does not contain a title page, table of contents, preface, or works cited page. Sources are not documented.
Quantity and Quality of Genres	The paper includes a minimum of seven distinct genres that balance each other in creative and interesting ways. At least two genres were of greater length.	The paper includes a minimum of seven distinct genres, but they lack balance and creativity. At least two genres were of greater length.	The paper includes a minimum of seven distinct genres, but lack balance and creativity. All genres were of short and equal length.	The paper does not include the required seven genres.
Focus	The project clearly focuses on a unifying topic, text, or type of experience.	The project focuses on a single unifying topic, text, or type of experience, but may include drifts and off topic moments.	The project may drift often or sections may not focus on the same topic, text, or type of experience.	No identifiable focus is apparent in the collection of genres.
Development	The project stands as a coherent whole; elements in	The project stands as a coherent whole; some	The elements of the project may not cohere as a unified	The project does not cohere as a unified whole and

	paper are well ordered and tied together with genre-appropriate transitions.	elements in the paper are not well ordered or tied together with genre-appropriate transitions.	whole; elements in the paper are neither well ordered nor tied together with genre-appropriate transitions.	elements in the paper are neither well ordered nor tied together with genre-appropriate transitions.
Reflection Paper	Reflection paper clearly explains how the multi-genre paper demonstrates what the author learned in this unit. The paper follows all formatting requirements.	Reflection paper explains how the multi-genre paper demonstrates what the author learned in this unit and follows all formatting requirements.	Reflection paper somewhat explains how the multi-genre paper demonstrates what the author has learned in this unit and follows some formatting requirements.	Reflection paper does not explain how the multi-genre paper demonstrates what the author has learned in this unit and does not follow the formatting requirements.
Conventions	Within the demands of the genre, the project demonstrates careful attention to editing with no errors that impede clarity.	Within the demands of the genre, the project demonstrates some attention to editing with few errors that impede clarity.	Within the demands of the genre, the project reveals little attention to editing with several errors that impede clarity.	Regardless of demands of the genre, the project reveals little to no attention to editing with significant impediments to clarity.

Rationale

Narrative and storytelling is a ubiquitous social behavior. Whether through oral traditions, pictorial symbols, printed language, or digital encoding, every civilization and society on earth has made extensive use of narratives and stories. Narratives teach acceptable social behaviors, discuss society's morals, and satisfy the ravenous appetite of the human curiosity. They describe the complex web of human relationships, explain ideas, and create wild and fantastic worlds that sometimes vastly differ from our own. Hence, the storyteller is essentially an entertainer, a teacher, and a historian for his/her culture and society. The fundamental question that arises is this: Why do humans invariably rely on narratives to accomplish these various tasks?

The year-long course I have envisioned relies on the strategy of reading and writing narratives, a powerful way of knowing and learning (Bruner, 1986), to answer this question through a series of discrete units of instruction. The overarching concern seeks to bind the individual units through a deep study of the forms, content, purposes, and implications of narrative. Given that the practice of storytelling and narrating extends to every society on earth, this course lends itself for study in a World Literature class, traditionally taught in the 10th grade, where students are typically asked to read texts from various cultures around the world. This course asks students to understand the complex forms that narratives and stories have taken in many different parts and times of the world and to understand how their own narratives contribute to this global conversation. To do this, students must be able to “master the tools” of narrative, as stated by cartoonist and comic artist Will Eisner (1996, 3), that will allow them to create, analyze, compare, critique, and evaluate various types of narratives.

With the overarching concern of reading and writing narratives in mind, this particular unit will be used near the end of the course and will narrow its focus on the cultural implications of narratives. Through the theme of Cultural Conflict, this unit will seek to show how narratives build a distinct vision of culture that may not be politically neutral. The main focus will be the vastly different pictures of African life in the novels *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe—students will only read excerpts of the Conrad novella due to the difficulty of the text and time constraints. These major texts will be supported by various documents and letters written by European ambassadors in Africa and the Congo. Yet, this conversation on the power of narrative’s cultural representation will extend into other cultural conflicts around the world. We will also be reading shorter texts such as George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant,” the poem “A Low Temple” by Arun Kolatkar, excerpts from

Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and "Niggers, Niggas, & Niggaz" by Julian Curry. In this way, the unit will build cultural awareness in the students through the use of critical literacy.

With the diversity of voices and perspectives in American society, cultural awareness should help students to understand how they are situated amidst social, political, cultural, and historical tensions. In far too many schools, multicultural education morphs into a simplistic showcase of superficial features e.g., having an Ethnic Night at the school gym for people to taste different types of ethnic cuisine. In the area of English/Language Arts, this limited view of multicultural education often asks students simply to read a work by a woman or an African American author. Yet, this limited understanding of multicultural education does nothing to reveal the complex tensions involved in such an endeavor. In fact, such events and inclusion of texts often dichotomize the differences between "us" and "them" even further and create unwanted binaries of power. Multicultural education and this unit on cultural conflict must do more. They must try to dissolve the binaries that are the fundamental issues of discrimination and stereotypes. They must attempt to reveal and critique the cultural, political, and historical messages in texts about societies and their people.

A unit on cultural conflict seeks to answer a broad range of questions—how are the cultures different, is one culture more powerful than another, how do characters change as a result of their experience with another culture—to build positive, cultural relationships among students, teach respect between ethnic groups, and promote positive self-esteem for one's culture. Given that the average American classroom is becoming more and more diverse, now more than ever, students need to learn how to read and critique texts to foster a clear understanding of tolerance and equality (hooks, 1994; Gere et al., 1992). As students learn to

critique the cultural conflicts of other parts of the world, they can begin to see how our own cultural conflicts in America are related. They can begin to understand how narratives in TV ads, books, and newspaper articles build, resist, or perpetuate stereotypical pictures of various cultural groups. In turn, understanding how stereotypes are created and perpetuated leads students to build positive, cultural relationships with their classmates. Such discussions open up the classroom to teach students how to respect the ethnic groups of their peers.

Rather than reading the same old list of works by dead, white men, English classes that read various cultural texts also builds positive self-esteem for one's culture. The supplemental texts I've chosen for this unit are somewhat arbitrary. Depending on the cultural make-up of my class, any cultural text can be substituted to allow the cultures of my students to have a voice in the classroom. For instance, the Indian poem "A Low Temple" could be substituted for a Hispanic text to allow the voice and perspective of this growing minority group. Knowing that students' cultures are given voice in my classroom, it is my hope that students will begin to see the positive value in their heritage (Delpit, 1988). Students can begin to see how their perspective enters into the class conversation and see how it changes the conversation for the better.

Critical literacy will be used and taught extensively throughout this unit. Although critical literacy is somewhat difficult to grasp at first, I believe that students need to become critically aware of the way in which culture is and can be represented in narratives. By doing so, they come to understand the different viewpoints, ideas, and experiences that are explicitly and implicitly espoused in the stories of the world; they learn what Freire means when he advocates learning to read the world and the word (1970). They come to understand the power of language in relation to cultural stereotypes and discrimination. With an understanding of how narratives

depict a particular version of culture, students begin to realize how such texts are a product of the cultural, political, and historical environment in which they were written (Wink, 1997; Apol, 1998; hooks, 1994). They became aware that one culture can be represented in different ways through narrative depending on how and when the authors wrote the texts. As students transact with these texts, they create newly constructed meanings that enter into a dialogue with the world.

To illustrate the power of critical literacy, I will explain why I am using *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad paints a very lurid picture of Africans living around the Congo River. He has speakers use the word “nigger” in several sections, and describes them as primitive, lazy, and mindless servants to the Belgium regime. He even highlights the fact that many of the Africans around this region were cannibals and sharply contrasts them with the moral decency of the occupying Europeans. Because of this picture, Chinua Achebe has frequently called Joseph Conrad a “racist” (Achebe, 1977) not because Achebe knew that Conrad hated Africans or because he was xenophobic, but because Conrad was complicit in perpetuating the stereotypes that were created in much of the colonial discourse of the time. These colonial texts—“The African Character” (Hegel, 1830) for instance—built a false picture of the Africans to justify Europe’s imperialism and trade. Because Conrad chose to go along with these characterizations, Achebe calls his text racist and attempts to tell a story of Africa in more realistic terms in his novel. By having students identify the textual and cultural ideology in texts such as these, they learn how cultural, religious, social, historical, and psychological codes compete in the reader and the text (Apol, 1998).

The theme of cultural conflict and the stance of critical literacy lend themselves to the investigation of colonial and postcolonial texts. This is the reason why I want to anchor this unit

around the cultural conflict in *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*. Colonial texts, texts written by authors of the colonizing country e.g., the English in Nigeria, often describe the people of the colonized region in ways that tend to qualitatively polarize their differences. Some even contest that the colonizers purposefully polarized the differences between the colonizing and the colonized in order to justify the occupation. As postcolonial writer and critic Homi Bhabha states, “The *objective* of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (1994, 70, italics added).

This type of discourse that Bhabha describes leads to what Edward Said called cultural hegemony, the systemic notion that identifies a group of people as superior to other peoples and cultures (Said, 1978). The power of cultural hegemony does not just take place in political or expository writing; it reveals itself in all forms of discourse. For example, Said discusses how cultural hegemony becomes apparent in the works of Flaubert because rather than letting an Egyptian courtesan speak for herself, Flaubert “spoke for and represented her” (Said, 1978, 6). In this case, the Egyptian woman had no voice or perspective from which to speak. Flaubert had direct power over what was or was not said in the text. Such textual representations quickly become the basis for racial stereotyping and discrimination. As such, inclusion of these types of texts foster critical discussions of the cultural awareness advocated earlier in this rationale.

While I have my own justifications for teaching this unit, many people may dispute the need for cultural awareness through the use of multicultural texts. They may even cite E.D. Hirsch’s claim that students need to learn the literature, art, and history of Western civilization in order to succeed in the U.S. (1983). Such teaching involves the memorization of terms and concepts directly related to the development of Western art and literature, terms like catharsis or

events such as the Peloponnesian War. Although knowing these things could greatly increase reading comprehension and related skills, such claims often require minority students to assimilate into the mainstream Western European culture. Doing so, puts minority students into further disadvantage by not recognizing the knowledge and values with which they come into the classroom. It creates an environment of intolerance because mainstream students will view any deviation from their set of beliefs and culture as wrong and abnormal, something that is already too persistent. I understand the benefits behind such a claim—helping students enter the mainstream for future success. But as Lisa Delpit argues, we are teaching other people’s children, and to mold every child into the same culture as Procrustes would do is beyond our call as teachers (1988).

Other critics of this unit may claim that 10th grade is too early to begin teaching critical literacy. To counter this argument, I turn to the work of Laura Apol, who in “But what does this have to do with kids?” argues that even elementary teachers should and could teach their students critical literacy (1998). Apol claims that even the innocuous seeming children books are laden with ideology. They reflect and teach particular forms of socialization and moral education in both explicit and implicit ways. Learning to interrogate cultural messages should begin as soon as reading is learned to help readers understand how to maintain power over texts. Although many of the students in my classes will not have had this type of instruction from 1st grade, high school is an appropriate time to begin learning critical literacy. It is a skill that has relevance in post-secondary education and in the world. As I said earlier, this unit will come at the end of the year to allow students to mature for the complexity of themes and stance. To avoid teaching critical literacy in the 10th grade because students may be too young sacrifices much needed practice and experience with the skill.

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Daily Planning

Week 1

Day 1(Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

10 minutes: Pass out and review the following introductory assignment:

For the next several weeks we are going to explore how cultures can come into conflict through written and verbal narratives. We are going to be talking about the different ways narratives can represent cultures and how those representations can form the basis of stereotype and discrimination. To begin this investigation, I want you first to pretend that you are a famous newspaper columnist who gives advice to people who write letters to you. Often their problems concern crucial moments in their lives that they need advice about. What kind of guidance would you give to the following person? Make sure that when you write your response you are supportive of the person's problems and give a thoughtful answer. Make sure too that whatever your advice is, you give several reasons that the person should follow it. Also make sure that you explain why your recommended course of action is better than others that the person might follow. (Quoted directly from Smagorinsky, 2008, 181-82)

Dear Student Helpline,

I am in need of some advice. I turn to you because I'm not sure that anyone else can help me. I would ask my parents for advice, but I don't want to burden them with what they may see as a trivial problem. Please help me.

My parents and I recently moved from Athens, GA to Portsmouth, NH because my mother won a new job that the family could not pass up. I, of course, didn't want to move away from my friends and high school in Georgia. I protested many times, saying that I wasn't cool or social enough to start a new high school in a different part of the country, but my parents made

me move anyway. On the first day in my new school, my fears were somewhat alleviated. Many of the students were nice and inviting and some even went out of their way to show me around the school. They made fun of my Southern accent and cracked jokes about me being a country bumpkin, but I blew it off.

Until, however, the school newspaper published a short story written by a fellow student that represented people from the South in very humiliating ways. The story made Southern citizens look stupid, racist, and backwards. All the people in the story from the South spoke nearly unintelligible English, ate collard greens and giblets, and wore straw hats while walking around bare-foot. The story seemed to make every known stereotype about the South real and true.

Normally I wouldn't care so much about a story such as this; I mean after all, the author was just poking fun at the region. On the other hand, the story has begun to be seen as the gospel truth in my school. Fellow students and teachers are beginning to laugh at me as if I were inferior; what I have to say doesn't matter compared to someone else since I'm from the South. Teachers even talk to me as if I'm stupid and ignorant. In my English class, asked us about the novel we were reading. When I stated what I thought about the book, my teacher just looked at me as if I had just spoken gibberish and moved on to someone else. I'm now sitting by myself at lunch, and I've become the school joke.

I don't know what to do, and I need help. I'm afraid that if I say something to teachers they'll just laugh at me or not take my concerns seriously. If I try to tell my fellow students how I feel, I'm afraid they'll just say that I can't take a joke, that I'm too sensitive.

What should I do?

Sincerely,

Pained in Portsmouth

35 minutes: Students work on their assignment until the bell rings. I will circulate the room making sure that students stay on task and answering any questions students may have.

2 minutes: Exeunt

Day 2 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

25 minutes: Students form into groups of 4-5 students and discuss their responses to the previous day's assignment with the teacher circulating around the room to make sure students stay on task. For each group, students are to decide on one or two courses of action to discuss as a whole class, answering the following questions:

1. Is what Pained in Portsmouth describes in her letter discrimination?
2. What particular type of discrimination is this -- Cultural, gender, age, race, or some other discrimination?
3. How did this discrimination arise?
4. How might Pained in Portsmouth correct these stereotypes?

10 minutes: Each group presents their course(s) of action for Pained in Portsmouth with an opportunity to raise and ask questions about stereotypes and discrimination:

10 minutes: Students briefly write down an example of cultural stereotypes or discrimination in their lives and how they might change this problem.

2 minutes: Return desks to their original positions; exeunt.

Day 3 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

10 minutes: Pass out and silently read the following excerpt from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

“Oh, yes, this is a wonderful govment, wonderful. Why, looky here. There was a free nigger there, from Ohio; a mulatter, most as white as a white man. He had the whitest shirt on you ever see, too, and the shiniest hat; and there ain't a man in that town that's got as fine clothes as what he had; and he had a gold watch and chain and a silver-headed cane—the awfulest old gray headed nabob in the State. And what do you think? They said he was a p-fessor in a college, and could talk all kinds of languages and knowed everything. And that ain't the wust. They said he could vote, when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks I, what is this country a-coming to? It was 'lection day, and I was just about to go and vote myself, if I warn't too drunk to get there; but when they told me there was a State in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote agin. Them's the very words I said; they all heard me; and the country may rot for all me—I'll never vote again as long as I live. And to see the cool way of that nigger—why, he wouldn't a give me the road if I hadn't shoved him out o'the way. I says to the people, why ain't this nigger put up at auction and sold?—that's what I want to know. And what do you reckon they said? Why, they said he couldn't be sold till he'd been in the State six months, and he hadn't been there that long yet. There, now—that's a specimen. They call that a govment that can't sell a free nigger till he's been in the State six months. Here's a govment that calls itself a govment, and lets on to be a govment and thinks it's a govment, and yet's got to set stock-still for six whole months before it can take ahold of a prowling, thieving, infernal, white-shirted free nigger....”

5 minutes: Watch the spoken word poem *Niggers, Niggas, and Niggaz* by Julian Curry found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wD-UpHIB9no>.

5 minutes: Pass out and review the following handout for students to complete in class:

Form into groups of 4-5 students and write an imaginary dialogue between Mark Twain and Julian Curry in which they talk about Twain's decision to use the word "nigger" in his book *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Write what you think each would say to the other if they were able to meet. You will be acting out these dialogues in class so you need to decide who will be speaking what part. Consider the following when creating your dialogue:

- Write a dialogue that fills one and a half to two pages
- Describe the setting of where the conversation occurs. What time of day is it, are there many other people around, what is the weather, etc? The setting could be a park, a restaurant, or some other public/private location.
- Use the following format for dialogue:

Julian Curry:

Mark Twain:

25 minutes: Students will work on their group dialogues until the bell rings.

2 minutes: Return desks to their original positions; exeunt.

Day 4 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

15 minutes: Students will continue working on their dialogues if they have not finished.

30 minutes: Students will act out their written dialogues. Each of the groups in the audience should prepare one question for each of the presenting groups.

2 minutes: Return desks to their original positions, exeunt.

Day 5 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

45 minutes: Depending on whether or not all groups have presented their dialogues and answered the student-generated questions, we will use this day to teach vocabulary using a game called Etymology, which can be found at

http://www.coe.uga/~smago/Vocabular_Games/Etymology.htm.

Week 2

Day 6 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

10 minutes: Pass out and review the Group Research Project assignment (listed under the Goals and Rubrics section).

45 minutes: Students will work on their Research Proposal, outlining each group member's role and responsibilities for the rest of the class; proposal is due at the end of the period. I will be circulating the room to make sure students stay on task and to answer any questions.

2 minutes: Return desks to their original positions; exeunt.

Day 7 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

5 minutes: Walk to the Media Center and get settled.

10 minutes: Go over Media Center policies, review databases, and point out pulled sources (pulled ahead of time). Remind them to use one print and one electronic source. Pass out the following bibliographic handouts to record sources:

Bibliographic Record

Book:

Title _____

Author _____

Publisher _____

City of Publication _____

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Magazine/Newspaper

Title of Article _____
 Author _____
 Journal Name _____
 Date of Publication _____
 Pages Used _____

(Taken from White, "Journeys of Grief")

32 minutes: Students will collect research and sort through information until the bell rings. I will make sure all students stay on task. I will remind the students that we will be meeting in the Media Center for the entire class tomorrow.

Day 8 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

45 minutes: Students will have all period to continue to research their topics. Teacher should meet with each group to check on their progress and aide them if they are stuck. If they feel like

they have gathered all they need, they may work as a group to begin their presentation. This is the final day to work in the Media Center. Students must complete their research by the end of the period.

Day 9 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping

10 minutes: Remind students of project expectations and timeline. Go over helpful visual aids and resources: art supplies and useful computer programs (PowerPoint, Publisher).

35 minutes: Students will put together their presentation (make note cards, create power point, create a poster, practice lines, etc). Again, teacher will meet with each group individually to check on their progress.

2 minutes: Return desks to their original positions; exeunt.

Day 10 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

47 minutes: Students presentations of their research project. More than likely, this will be carried over into the following week.

Week 3

Day 11 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

47 minutes: Continue research presentations.

Day 12 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

47 minutes: Assignment of the following two in-class readings with the expectation that we will be discussing them on Wednesday and Thursday of this week:

George Washington Williams: “An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo” taken from The Norton Critical Edition of *Heart of Darkness*, edited by Paul B. Armstrong

Chinua Achebe: An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, produced in The Norton Critical Edition of *Heart of Darkness*, edited by Paul B. Armstrong

Day 13 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

25 minutes: Students will be creating their own found poem based on the Williams letter to King Leopold II. After passing out and reviewing the following handout, students will work in groups to create their found poem:

In small groups of 3-4 students, create a *found poem* based on the letter written by George Washington Williams. A found poem is a poem made up of significant words and/or phrases in a text. In this case your poem will consist of words and/or phrases from Williams’ letter to King Leopold II. Your poem should discuss the main topic of the letter by identifying the letter’s most significant words and/or phrases. All words or phrases should come directly from the letter. You will write your found poem on a transparency, which you will be sharing with the class. Your poem can be written in different colors or include shapes, images, or other ways to convey the meaning of the text.

22 minutes: Students present their found poems to the class with time for questions.

Day 14 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

25 minutes: To discuss the Achebe essay, students will create a conceptual map that relates what they believe the essay means. After passing out and reviewing the following prompt, students will work in groups to create a conceptual map of Achebe's essay:

Working in groups of 3-4 students, you will produce a conceptual map of Achebe's essay "An Image of Africa." Conceptual maps are diagrams of relationships in a text. The idea is to identify and represent how characters, themes, events, or points are related to each other. In this case, try to identify and represent how Achebe's points relate to each other and to his central thesis or main point. Your conceptual maps can be labeled boxes connected by lines or they can be more creative in appearance by using a symbol—tree, river, question mark, etc.—as the outline of your map. You will create your conceptual map on a transparency and present it to the class.

22 minutes: Students present their conceptual map to the class with time for questions. Students will be assigned to read chapters 1-4 of *Things Fall Apart* for tomorrow.

Day 15 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

10 minutes: Introduce Chinua Achebe and the novel *Things Fall Apart*.

37 minutes: Students will create a study guide for each of the first four chapters. I will also assign the next 4 chapters to be read at home over the weekend.

To talk about the first four chapters of *Things Fall Apart*, I want you to individually create study guides for each chapter. Your study guides should include the following:

- A title for each chapter, something other than "Chapter 1"
- A brief summary of each chapter (3-4 complete sentences)
- A list and description of each main character's function in the chapter (1-2 sentences each)
- A response to what you saw as the most significant quotation from the chapter

We will be using these study guides as the basis of our discussions tomorrow. If you are unable to finish in class, you are expected to finish them at home over the weekend.

Week 4

Day 16 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

20 minutes: Use the study guides as the basis for a whole-class discussion of the first four chapters. I will use the following questions as a base-line:

- What are your first impressions of African society that is described in the novel?
- Why is Okonkwo's life "dominated by fear?"
- What do we learn about Okonkwo's early years as a farmer?
- What is Okonkwo's attitude toward men who are less successful than he is?
- Why is the Week of Peace an important custom in this society?

27 minutes: Students will participate in a four-square activity to prepare them for tomorrow's discussion of chapters 5-8. I will assign chapters 9-13 for homework reading.

To help you process and think about last night's chapters, I want you to individually make a four-square diagram. This will begin by taking a sheet of notebook paper and folding it to make four equal squares. In the upper left-hand corner, you should draw a picture that represents your understanding of chapters 5-8. In the upper right-hand corner, write an explanation of your drawing, using language that you might use when talking to a friend. In the lower left-hand corner, analyze your illustration, using language that you might use when talking to a teacher. Finally in the lower right-hand corner, write a found poem derived from the language of the novel. You don't have to condense all four chapters into a single illustration. Just pick one event, character, or theme that you think is important in these chapters on which to focus.

Day 17 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

20 minutes: Use the four-square diagrams as the basis of a whole class discussion. I will use the following questions as a base-line in the discussion:

- What is the Feast of the New Yam and the Wrestling Match in this society?
- What effect does Ikemefuna's death have on Nwoye?
- How does Okonkwo react to Ikemefuna's death?
- What are the customs involved in preparing for a wedding in this society?

10 minutes: Students will form into groups of 3-4 students and pick one of the following social customs to describe: farming, food, marriage, or religion. Students will need to use all relevant information on these topics found in the first 13 chapters of the novel.

17 minutes: Student groups will present their information on the Igbo social customs to the class.

Homework reading will be for the next six chapters (The chapters are very short).

Day 18 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

20 minutes: Students will work individually to complete a text-rendering assignment. Students will choose one word, one phrase, and one sentence from the six chapters that they find most compelling, provocative, or meaningful.

27 minutes: Students will arrange the desks so that they form a large circle. Then each student will read his/her single word in the first round. In the second round, students will read their single phrase, and their single sentence in the third round. I will be writing these words, phrases, and sentences down to form a basis for whole-class discussion. Students should finish the rest of *Things Fall Apart* for homework.

Day 19 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

10 minutes: Pass and review the following handout on analyzing Okonkwo's character:

Analyzing Okonkwo's Character

Find a quotation from the novel to match each of the following strengths and weaknesses in Okonkwo

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
• Hardworking	• Impatient
• Physically strong	• Violent
• Well known	• Intolerant
• Pleased with his daughter	• Dissatisfied with his son
• Concerned about Ezinma's Illness	• Careless and Impetuous
• A Warrior	• Afraid to show his feelings
• Determined	• Won't admit to being wrong

37 minutes: Students work on completing the above character analysis chart. I will circulate the room to make sure students stay on task and to answer any questions.

Day 20 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

5 minutes: Pass out and review the following handout:

To conclude our reading of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, I want you to consider what might happen next in the novel if it were to continue. I want you to think about what a sequel to this novel might look like, paying particular attention to Achebe's reasons for writing the novel in the first place. In groups of 3-4 students, come up with an idea for a sequel to *Things Fall Apart*. Be sure to include old and new characters, a central conflict, and a description of the setting (Is the setting the same or has it changed and how?). Think about the following question

in determining your sequel: What might happen to the Igbo tribe after the publication of the Commissioner's book *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*? Your ideas for a sequel to *Things Fall Apart* need not be more than 2-3 well developed paragraphs. You will be sharing your sequels with the rest of the class.

20 minutes: Students work in groups to write their idea for a sequel. I will circulate the room to help students and answer questions.

12 minutes: Groups present their ideas for a sequel to *Things Fall Apart*

Week 5

This week I will begin to scaffold the students' writing of multi-genre papers. Because many students may be unfamiliar with this type of writing, I will introduce the concept of a multi-genre paper in such a way that will provide systematic scaffolding. This will allow all students to both understand and create the summative assessment for this unit.

Each student will eventually write a multi-genre paper on a topic related to the unit's theme and texts for the culminating assessment. Rather than having students work on this project immediately, I have planned for students to write an initial collaborative multi-genre paper on a topic with which they should be familiar. This preliminary multi-genre paper gives the students much needed practice in the procedures and characteristics of multi-genre projects. It allows students to explore creatively the possibilities, advantages, and disadvantages of writing in multiple genres without the complexity of the unit's themes and content. This practice also gives the students opportunity to work collaboratively with other students as they murk through this new and unconventional type of writing.

The student-friendly topic for this collaborative project is celebrities. I chose this topic because I know that students are very familiar, sometimes obsessively so, with the stars of

popular culture. In this context, celebrities can be actors and actresses, musicians, models, television stars, artists, writers, or any other person in popular culture. I have not met a teenager who could not talk ad nauseam about a celebrity of their choice, and I hope that this fascination with the stars of popular culture will give the students something interesting to write about. Because the focus of the course is narrative, writing a multi-genre paper on a celebrity – their claim to fame, biographical events, or lifestyle – fits perfectly with this concept. It also gives the students the opportunity to see how narratives, even multi-genre narratives, create a specific representation of its subject(s).

Students will initially work together to find information on their chosen topic in the computer lab. The rest of the week will be devoted to giving students time to assemble, review, and revise their group papers. I will also devote some time to examining some examples of multi-genre papers. Students will see what genres are useful and how multi-genre papers are commonly constructed according to a set of traits or criteria.

Day 21 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

10 minutes: Before proceeding to the computer lab to research the students' topics, I will need to introduce the activity and provide a set of instructions for what I want them to do. I will present them with the following handout:

Celebrity Search

Nearly every teenager can name a current celebrity from popular culture – actors, actresses, models, television stars, or musicians. Most teenagers can even list biographical events from these celebrities' lives or enumerate a list of films, songs, or television shows associated with a particular celebrity. Yet, many older adults have no idea who these celebrities

are or why they're famous in the first place. Feeling uncool and out of touch with today's popular culture, a group adults from this community has asked to be educated on today's popular celebrities. Knowing that many teenagers are the best informants for this type of education, they have asked you to help them out. The task for this activity is to work in small groups of 3 to 5 students to select a single celebrity to research. The information that you research should create a simple narrative of that celebrity's life, desires, accomplishments, and/or ideas about the world. It is fine if more than one group chooses the same celebrity.

I have provided a list of famous celebrities for you to choose from. Choose one from this list, or you may choose to research a celebrity that I have not included. After choosing a celebrity, do some research on this person that will allow you to create a narrative for him/her. You need to find enough information that would allow you write a small 500 word paper. Some examples of what you might want to look for are these:

- Names of films or TV shows in which they appeared
- Song titles or lyrics that they performed
- Direct quotes from interviews
- Biographical events
- Ideas about life, art, politics, family, etc.

For your search, you need not have more than three sources, but remember to jot down where you found your information! You will need to cite any information you obtain in your research.

Here are some celebrities to consider. Remember that you can research someone not in this list.

Angelina Jolie
Paris Hilton
Janice Dickinson
Matt Damon
Dwayne Johnson

Kanye West
Beyonce Knowles
Tina Fey
Jennifer Anniston
Lauren Conrad

Tom Cruise
Jennifer Lopez
Lindsay Lohan
Toby Maguire
Brittany Spears

5 minutes: Walk to the computer lab and get seated.

32 minutes: Students work in groups researching their selected topics until the bell rings. I will float around the groups to ensure they understand and are accomplishing the task.

Day 22 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

25 minutes: I will begin to introduce multi-genre writing by discussing some examples with the class. These examples are too lengthy to produce here, but they exhibit all the characteristics and traits of a multi-genre paper. We will discuss the idea of an anchor piece or theme that brings the paper together as a whole, the use of a preface where the author(s) can give their readers any information they deem pertinent to understand the paper, and the use of a variety of genres.

After we have examined several examples, I will pass out and review the following handout:

Celebrity Multi-genre Paper

Rather than just reading a straightforward biography about these celebrities, the group of adults who are asking for your help would like to read a more interesting and creative type of narrative. Specifically, they have asked you to write the celebrity's narrative in the form of a multi-genre paper.

Here is a definition of a multi-genre paper that Tom Romano gives to his students:

A multigenre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images, and content. In addition to many genres, a multigenre paper may also contain many voices, not just the AUTHOR'S. The trick is to make such a paper hang together. (Introduction x-xi)

In the small groups you formed yesterday, you will create a multi-genre narrative on your chosen celebrity. The multi-genre paper will include the following:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents, listing the title of each genre
- Preface, explaining how the pieces fit together to form a narrative whole
- A larger anchor piece or theme that connects the different genres and gives the piece unity (Hint: Themes that anchor the piece may correspond to what the person is famous for. For example, a paper about a famous actor could be organized by scenes or tableaux.)
- Four different genres, one of which must be moderate in length (one page)
- Works Cited page, listing the sources of your information

You may use any genre in this project. You can even use the genres we've studied in previous weeks. The following sheet is a list of useable genres

Genres

Ads	Advice columns	Allegories
Anecdotes	Announcements	Anthems
Appendices	Applications	Apologies
Autobiographies	Awards	Ballads
Bedtime stories	Beginnings	Billboards
Biographies	Bloopers	Blurbs
Books	Book reviews	Bumper stickers
Cartoons	Captions	Character sketches
Charms	Cinquains	Collages
Comics	Couplets	Conversations
Dedications	Definitions	Descriptions
Dialogue	Diaries	Directions
Dual Thoughts	Editorials	Epilogues
Epitaphs	Endings	Essays
Explanations	Fables	Fairy tales
Fantasies	Feature articles	Folklore
Game	Ghost stories	Greeting cards
Gossip	Haiku	Headlines
History	Horoscopes	How-To's
Information Guides	Inquiries	Insults
Interviews	Introductions	Invitations
Jingles	Jokes	Journals

Labels	Legends	Letters
Lists	Love notes	Lyrics
Magazine articles	Map	Memoirs
Memories	Metaphors	Menus
Memos	Monologues	Movie Reviews
Mysteries	Myths	News articles
Obituaries	Odes	Opinions
Orders	Pamphlets	Parables
Parallel Poetry	Parodies	Photo Captions
Plays	Poems	Prologues
Proverbs	Puns	Questions
Reactions	Rebuttals	Reports
Requests	Requiems	Resumes
Reviews	Rhymes	Riddles
Satires	Sentences	Sequels
Serenades	Serials	Sermons
Signs	Similes	Slogans
Soap Operas	Songs	Sonnets
Speeches	Spoofs	Spoonerisms
Sports articles	Superstitions	Stories
TV commercials	Tall tales	Telegrams
Thank-you notes	Theater Programs (Playbills)	Thumbnail sketches
Titles	Travel brochures	Travel logs
Tributes	Trivia	Vignettes
Want Ads	Warnings	Wedding Invitations
Wills	Wishes	

20 minutes: Students will work in their groups to write a draft of a multi-genre paper on their chosen celebrity. They will begin to decide what information to use and which genres would be beneficial, interesting, and informing for their celebrity narrative.

2 minutes: Return the desks to their original positions; exeunt.

Day 23 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

45 minutes: Students continue working in small groups on their celebrity multi-genre papers. I will float around to each group giving suggestions, answering questions, and making sure the students stay on task.

2 minutes: Return the desks to their original positions; exeunt.

Day 24 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

25 minutes: Students will provide feedback on another group's multi-genre paper. I will provide them with the following directions and questions to answer:

Peer Editing Activity

For this activity, you will need to exchange multi-genre papers with another group. Your group will then read the other group's paper carefully and answer the following questions. Any negative answers to these questions must be followed with specific feedback that should be written in the margins of the paper you are evaluating or on the back of the page.

1. Are there at least 4 distinct genres represented in the paper? Is one of the genres of longer length (one page)? Is the choice of genre appropriate to the content or idea being presented? Are the choices of genre appropriate for the purposes of the paper?
2. Does it have a table of contents? Does it have a preface telling the reader how to read your paper? Did it include a works cited page? Does the layout of the paper help guide the reader through the paper?
3. Does the paper flow smoothly? Is the language used appropriate to the genre and to the overall paper? Is the paper free of unintentional spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors that would make the paper hard to read or that would be distracting to the reader? (Remember that intentional errors should be explained in your notes pages.)
4. Do the genres work together to provide support for the overall meaning and purpose of the paper? Do all of the genres work to support the central focus of the paper? Is the focus or connective thread of the paper clear? Does the paper display unity and create tension or interest that makes the reader want to continue reading?
5. Is it apparent that you have read and researched your topic? Does your work provide a synthesis of research and an analysis of ideas? Does the paper incorporate specific details to back

up and support your assertions? Are the details appropriate to the genre? Are the details appropriate to the paper?

20 minutes: Students receive their peer feedback and begin to revise their multi-genre paper.

2 minutes: Return the desks to their original positions; exeunt.

Day 25 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

15 minutes: Pass out and review the following rubric for evaluating multi-genre papers:

Features	4	3	2	1
Elements of the Form	The multi-genre paper includes a title page, table of contents, preface, and works cited page. All sources are accurately cited according to MLA guidelines.	The multi-genre paper includes a title page, table of contents, preface, and works cited page. Source citations may have some errors according to MLA guidelines.	The multi-genre paper may have a title page, table of contents, preface, and/or works cited page. Source citations have many errors according to MLA guidelines.	The multi-genre paper does not contain a title page, table of contents, preface, or works cited page. Sources are not documented.
Quantity and Quality of Genres	The paper includes a minimum of four distinct genres that balance each other in creative and interesting ways. At least one genre was of greater length.	The paper includes a minimum of four distinct genres, but they lack balance and creativity. At least one genre was of greater length.	The paper includes a minimum of four distinct genres, but lack balance and creativity. All genres were of short and equal length.	The paper does not include the required four genres.
Focus	The project clearly focuses on a unifying topic, text, or type of experience associated with the celebrity.	The project focuses on a single unifying topic, text, or type of experience, but may include drifts and off topic moments.	The project may drift often or sections may not focus on the same topic, text, or type of experience associated with the celebrity.	No identifiable focus is apparent in the collection of genres.
Development	The project stands as a coherent whole; elements in paper are well ordered and tied together with	The project stands as a coherent whole; some elements in the paper are not well ordered or tied	The elements of the project may not cohere as a unified whole; elements in the paper are neither well	The project does not cohere as a unified whole and elements in the paper are neither well ordered nor

	genre-appropriate transitions.	together with genre-appropriate transitions.	ordered nor tied together with genre-appropriate transitions.	tied together with genre-appropriate transitions.
Conventions	Within the demands of the genre, the project demonstrates careful attention to editing with no errors that impede clarity.	Within the demands of the genre, the project demonstrates some attention to editing with few errors that impede clarity.	Within the demands of the genre, the project reveals little attention to editing with several errors that impede clarity.	Regardless of demands of the genre, the project reveals little to no attention to editing with significant impediments to clarity.

I will also pass out and discuss the handout for the unit's final assessment (See handout in Goals and Rubrics section). Students will need to come to next Monday with an idea for their final multi-genre paper.

30 minutes: Students work on their revisions, using the rubric and peer feedback as guides.

2 minutes: Students submit their multi-genre papers; return the desks to their original positions; exeunt.

Week 6

I am devoting most of this week to holding student-teacher writing conferences. I know that doing this takes up valuable instruction time, but I honestly believe that student-teacher writing conferences are crucial to helping students feel like writers. This is especially true when students are asked to write in a genre with which they may not be familiar such as a multi-genre paper. To accomplish this mammoth task, I'm going to ask the students who will be in conference with me on Monday to come to class with an idea for their paper and a general idea for what genres they will want to use. Since they will not have had much time to work on their paper, this will help them start on the right track. For students who will be holding conferences on Tuesday through Thursday, I will be asking them to bring a portion of their paper to class for me to go over with them. They will have the entire class on Monday to do this.

I'm going to try and hold a conference with each student in four days, giving each student between 5 and 10 minutes of my time. This may prove difficult, but I'm also going to try to schedule conferences before and after school. I want devote Friday for peer editing and revision. Friday will also give me time to circulate around the room, making sure students are successful in this paper. Papers will be due on the following Monday.

Day 26 (Monday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

47 minutes: Student-teacher conferences. Those not in conferences will be working on their multi-genre papers.

Day 27 (Tuesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

47 minutes: Student-teacher conferences. Those not in conferences will be working on their multi-genre papers.

Day 28 (Wednesday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

47 minutes: Student-teacher conferences. Those not in conferences will be working on their multi-genre papers.

Day 29 (Thursday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

47 minutes: Student-teacher conferences. Those not in conferences will be working on their multi-genre papers.

Day 30 (Friday)

3 minutes: Attendance, housekeeping.

25 minutes: Students will share their paper with at least one other student, answering the editing and revision questions from the previous week's handout.

22 minutes: Students continue working on their multi-genre paper and revisions. Papers are due on Monday.