Social Alienation and Nonconformity:

The Risks and Rewards of Journeying Beyond the Pale

An 11th Grade Unit of Instruction

5 Weeks, 90 Minutes Classes

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Rationale

Outcasts, rebels, eccentrics, loners, revolutionaries, deviants, drop-outs: our culture has a very complicated relationship with nonconformists. From utter disgust to profound respect, the mass mind is tantalized by the bellwethers and pariahs that exist beyond the pale. However, social alienation and nonconformity are not exclusive to certain groups; these are common experience amongst all human beings.

What is normal? Who decides this ideal? How do we compare as individuals? We have all asked ourselves these questions at some point in our lives. Our identity is ever-shifting, but as we grow older, we establish more core beliefs and collect more understandings of how we relate to the world at large. While enduring some enormous life changes, teens endeavor to find a social milieu in which they can dig their heels. The experience of belonging to a group helps illuminate their existing definitions of self and influences how they define themselves further. Teenaged social grouping can be an insidious game, however, and not all teens find their "place" with ease. The crossing from adolescence to adulthood is filled with jerking, jarring, and awkward experiences; it can be a very difficult and alienating time-period. In the teenaged mind, social rejection feels ever-eminent; indeed, teens can be very discriminating in their socialization preferences.

The teenaged search for peer approval has digitalized, and the effects are profound. With the arrival of the internet, bullying has become more widespread and convenient than ever. Through social networks, people can create profiles, projecting identities that become extensions of who they are and how they are perceived. This hyper-connectivity has made teens vulnerable to the oftentimes faceless jeers and insults of their peers. In an instant, information can be

relayed half-way across the world to masses of people. The broadcast of verbal abuse is much more convenient and far-reaching. Additionally, the public spectacle of the torment that victims of bullying face is no longer confined to the schoolyard. The evidence of that humiliation can be reproduced, broadcasted and saved effortlessly, prolonging the victim's embarrassment by making the experience less easily lost in the memory of onlookers.

The focus of this unit is to call attention to a variety of issues that relate to both the small and profound effects of alienation and nonconformity on an individual and societal level. Issues like bullying help make evident the present need for candid discussion on such topics, but the span of possible learning opportunities that stem from the study of social alienation and nonconformity is not confined to the negative results of social rejection. For example, the choice of nonconformity, to take the road less traveled so to speak, is a traditionally lauded notion that many men and women have embraced. The question of what makes such a philosophy seem more life-enhancing to some individuals is a worthwhile question. Alternately, attempting to understand what compels individuals to fight deviation is equally as fascinating. This unit will ask students to consider both the risks and rewards of living against the grain. What are the small and large scale implications of social rejection and nonconformity? How are these implication portrayed in art and literature?

"Us" and "Them": Social Othering

It is natural for human beings to seek out patterns to make sense of the world. We apply these patterns as paradigms for understanding; there is simply too much stuff in the universe to know first-hand. However, we are mere humans—narcissistic creatures confined to circumstances that do not allow us to build well-informed opinions about what we perceive as

unfamiliar. In relation to the vastness of what we do not know, our informed notions are tiny things; they are dwarfed by the richness of the world surrounding us. Although generalizing is an imperative aspect of how we are able to understand the world, when we apply generalization to people, it can become problematic. Instead of embracing diversity, humanity has a long history and strong habit of alienating that which exists outside the realm of familiarity and understanding. After all, cultural jingoism requires an other over which a group can claim superiority.

However, what traits determine how far we land from the accepted definitions of normalness? It could be race, social status, gender or a myriad of other factors. It can be any handle that is used to delineate between "us" and "them;" it is the way we define ourselves and the way others have defined us. Not only are these labels based on physical traits (like race-specific features, eye color, etc.), they are also based on abstract notions, beliefs and philosophies (political party, religion, etc.).

Who is "Them"? "Them" could be the Liberals, the savages, the optimists, the communists, the Catholics, the valiant, the punks, the middle-class, the Man, and so forth. It all depends on a group or individual's perspective. Although some people are inclined to believe that searching for a definition of the other is an impossible task, "because in some way we are all 'others'" depending on certain contexts, this unit serves to negate the belief that further exploration of the other is a fruitless endeavor. Indeed, "we can never fully know the other," because it is a definition that is "constantly changing" (Engelund, para. 1). However, what is important is not who exactly the other is, but what it is that othering does. The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre website defines the practice of othering as follows:

> ‘Othering’ is the process through which a dominant group defines into existence a subordinate group. This is done through the invention of categories and labels, and ideas about what characterises people belonging to these categories. The literature defines ‘othering’ as what happens when a person, group or category is treated as an ‘object’ by another group. This ‘objectification’ allows actors to break the moral rules of social relationships (2012, Labelling section, para. 1).

When a group that is in power is willing to ignore the humanity of another group by redefining them from a perspective that suggests the dominant group is innately superior to the inferior group, there are grave results. Racial, sexual, and religious discrimination are only a few of these outcomes. Colonization, subjugation and violence are, too.

In fact, our country was founded by rebels who were othered by the English empire. We were not content with being just lesser citizens under England’s dominion; we felt that our lives, our rights, and our voices deserved equal representation. As we fought for our freedom from English rule in the Revolutionary War, the so-called “savage” Native Americans, over-ridden in the midst of this white conflict, were forced to choose sides or fight to remain neutral. Their own struggle to maintain their land, culture and way of life was over-shadowed by the dilemmas of their white invaders. Without question, as both subjects and colonizers, our national histories are not unfamiliar to the implications of social alienation.

Why is it important to study nonconformity and social outsiders?

By enhancing our cultural literacy, we work towards a better understanding of the world around us. This instructional unit on alienation and social othering is designed around the following goals: to define the process of othering and how it relates to power struggle; to provide

students with a variety of outsider perspectives with which they may not otherwise be familiar; to discuss tough but critical social issues relating to cultural, social, and sexual alienation; to encourage students to think critically about their own beliefs relating to these issues; to differentiate between social alienation and purposeful nonconformity; to contemplate the implications of breaking away from the pack; to develop a more informed understanding of these texts and topics through class discussion; to consider the importance of community in relation to individual development and life enrichment.

Indeed, the study of outsiders has been a fixture in humanities and has provided us with a wealth of perspectives for interpreting and commenting on art and society (e.g., Feminism, Post-Colonialism, Queer Theory, and African American Literature). The study of traditionally underrepresented groups has helped open our minds to new perspectives and familiarize ourselves with the variety of existence that occurs outside our own experiences. This unit is focused on the belief that by countering stereotypes and ignorance with knowledge and understanding, we fight objectification and dehumanization.

Bartelby the Scrivener: A Tale of Wall Street by Herman Melville

Herman Melville's *Bartelby the Scrivener: A Tale of Wall Street* is a short story that will allow students a wealth of opportunities to explore topics surrounding social alienation. It is a work that enthralls and begs for interpretation. The short story's namesake—the inscrutable Bartelby—is a mystery wrapped in an enigma. Although the text is a challenge in terms of vocabulary level, with the scaffolding this unit provides, students will have the support they need to make sense of the story.

Bartelby's passive resistance—told exclusively from the perspective of his nameless employer—by way of his simple mantra, "I'd prefer not to," creates a huge disturbance, which generates a variety of mostly negative responses from those around him. This is a fascinating point, in particular, which provides entry into an array of topics that relate to both individual psychology and mass mind. Potentially, discussions could involve the power of language, the consequences of norm resistance, and the reliability of narrator. Passive resistance is also a gateway topic that can lead to discussion of subjects ranging from the Civil Rights Movement to Gandhi.

Melville provides little character exposition but details very thorough physical and behavioral descriptions of the characters with whom Bartelby's employer interacts. As a result, the reader becomes actively involved in the story's telling by applying this evidence to a surmised understanding of the characters including the narrator himself. Melville's omission of detail allows for ample interpretation of the motivations underlying, not only Bartelby, but also the people who respond to him. Even though he is the focus of the short story, the vast majority of these gaps in exposition relate to the character of Bartelby; the negative space fuels the fascination and intrigue surrounding him. Through an in-role writing activity, students will be given the opportunity to write from Bartelby's perspective, demonstrating theories they've formed— informed in part by class discussion— about Bartelby and his passive resistance. Students are encouraged to use textual clues to inform their interpretations, question whether or not Bartelby has endearing qualities, and decide if Bartelby is simply a product of his circumstances or, rather, a freakish anomaly.

Bartelby's end comes in the form of self-starvation—a final act of defiance against life itself. Although the narrator refrains from indulging in his highly-focused descriptiveness when

recounting the details of Bartelby's suicide, it can only do so much to blunt the emotional blow of such a sensitive topic. Some might take issue with teenagers discussing suicide, because they find it too disturbing. It is true that suicide is not a pleasant matter of discussion; however, it is a very real issue that is oftentimes the result of social rejection. Although Bartelby's deliberate nonconformity is the cause of his marginalization, his suicide creates an opportunity to discuss this topic amongst teenagers—a group that is especially vulnerable to self-defeating ideas and negative environmental influences. As the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry points out:

> Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15-to-24-year-olds...Teenagers experience strong feelings of stress, confusion, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty, and other fears while growing up. For some teenagers, divorce, the formation of a new family with step-parents and step-siblings, or moving to a new community can be very unsettling and can intensify self-doubts. For some teens, suicide may appear to be a solution to their problems and stress ("Teen Suicide," 2008).

By providing opportunities for informal discussion on issues like bullying and suicide, students who are experiencing depression and/or alienation are given an opportunity to explore these ideas in a setting where they can feel comfortable passively or actively participating. By providing an open, low-stress forum of discussion, students may realize that their feelings are not uncommon and that there are a variety of support systems available to help them cope with the emotional difficulties that surround their teenage experience.

The Heart is a Lonely Hunter **by Carson McCullers**

The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, the main text of the unit, is a moving novel that is an excellent springboard for a variety of discussions on topics relevant to 11th grade students. In beautiful yet easily readable prose, McCullers reflects an assortment of outsider perspectives focused intimately on its cast of four central characters: the deaf-mute, John Singer; the poor tomboy, Mick Kelly; the Marxist alcoholic, Jake Blunt; the African-American doctor and scholar, Dr. Copeland. These characters all belong to traditionally underrepresented societal groups, and the issues the book raises—which focus on the distinctiveness yet commonality of their individual experiences— is uniquely varied for a novel considered to be a part of the American literary cannon.

At the story's center is John Singer, a deaf-mute who becomes the confidant and close-friend of the story's other central characters. Amidst pre-Civil Rights Depression-era Georgia, Singer offers an ear to a choir of voices unheard. The novel makes clear that, despite their differences, the central characters' similarities are numerous. Their "longing for self-expression, human connection, and spiritual integration" is pronounced, and their most prominent commonalities relate to their social displacement (Whitt, 2008).Further, the poor 13 year-old, Mick Kelly, represents a segment of literary society that is often underrepresented: a central, female coming-of-age character (Simmons, 1995). Regardless of her gender, the teenaged feelings of marginalization that she experiences as she journeys through her transformation into a more mature person are universal. Although part of what gives the book such force is that it transcends the label of the "coming-of-age novel" and addresses many more perspectives than the genre suggests. *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* does, however, explore a perspective with which students can identify, making salient larger social issues on a scale that is more relatable to them.

One of the most emotionally demanding and difficult aspects of the book relates to the depiction of racial discrimination. The violence is sometimes detailed and certainly heart-wrenching, but the unfortunate truths that this fiction is based on are far worse. The power that resides in McCullers' words is all the more potent, because the purpose behind them—the point of her describing the horrors of pre-Civil Rights racial discrimination in the south— is indeed to incite a strongly negative emotional reader response. In other words, students *should* feel discomfort when reading these parts of the novel. It would be naïve to think that we are protecting students by avoiding the topic of racial discrimination. To not bring up these issues for fear of being indelicate would be a disservice to them and an elephant in the room in the study of our national history. Ignorance is an inheritance that does not offer protection. Rather, it breeds prejudice.

With that said, the subject-matter of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is not unusually violent, and the vast majority of students would not have a problem handling the content. Then again, people's levels of sensitivity vary. The book does not linger on violence and overwhelming distaste, but it does not overly censor itself, either. In terms of theme and language, the book is mature, but is also social and literarily valuable especially for students at the 11th grade level. The importance of the issues the novel discusses far outweighs instances of obscenity. Some sensitive issues include: strong language, violence, racism, alcoholism, and suicide. In case parents/guardians would rather their student not read the novel, students will complete an alternate assignment.

In response to *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and a variety of other texts that we will encounter relating to social alienation and nonconformity, students will choose two works and write a compare and contrast essay focusing on the differing perspectives of each work.

Contemplating the similarities and differences between texts—"texts" representing an array of artistic modes which range anywhere from poetry to dance performance—allows students' interpretative experiences to go beyond the analysis of words on a page. Students can practice articulating abstract thoughts to make cohesive arguments about a variety of artistic material; after all, literature and writing is a representation of life in the round. What good is it for teachers to confine students' learning experiences to the honing of skills they will hardly use outside of school? Nevertheless, the development of the skills required to synthesize abstract information into a written argument regarding the similarities and differences of multiple works is an excellent exercise in critical thinking skills.

Finally, the advantages of developing good argumentation skills are also represented in the Common Core State Standards which point to the fact that writing that is information-based and persuasive or argumentative contributes to the development of students who are college and career ready. Specifically, the compare and contrast essay satisfies 11-12.W.1 of the11th grade writing standards which requires students to "write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence" (Common Core State Standards). By applying what they have learned throughout this unit by way of daily reading journals, class discussions, textual evidence, outside references, and other previous reading/writing assignments, students will learn how to write an effective essay discussing the unit's topic of social alienation and nonconformity. Scaffolding focused on the writing of a compare and contrast essay will be provided for students as they work through this assignment, as well.

Resources

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Teen Suicide.2008. *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology*. Retrieved from http://aacap.org/page.ww?name=Teen+Suicide&section=Facts+for+Families

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Goals, Assessments and Assignment Weighting:

- Daily Grade –40 %
    - Reading Journals
    - Quizzes
    - Class Participation
- In-Role Writing—30%
- Compare and Contrast Essay—30%

Texts:

Main texts:
The Heart is a Lonely Hunter— Carson McCullers (novel)
Bartelby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street—Herman Melville (short story)

Poems:
Mending Wall and *The Road Not Taken*—Robert Frost
Prayer Before Birth—Louis Macneice

Excerpts:
"Solitude" from *Walden*—Henry David Thoreau

Interview:
Malcolm X interview with *Young Socialist m*agazine, 1965

Youtube/Film:
"Someone Like You"—Adele, Performance at 2011 Brit Awards
2008 Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony
"A Sound Beyond Sound"—Pansori Documentary
The 1968 film adaptation of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Clips from the movie are located here and here.

Visual Art:
Graffiti by the artist, Banksy
Step into your place— English Propaganda Poster

Goals:

Daily Grade

Your daily grade will be derived from three grades: **reading journal completion 40%, quizzes on the text 40%, and class participation 20%.**

- Your **Reading Journal** is of great importance. It will not only be your jumping-off point for class discussions, it will be your moment of closure and syntheses at the end of each class. Your reading journal will also serve as a valuable resource for later projects. Also, you will be able to use your reading journal for the reading quizzes. It is very important that you bring your reading journal to class **every day**. Use it consistently and thoughtfully. I will collect them once a week to be graded.
- To assure that you are reading outside of class, there will be weekly **reading quizzes**. The quizzes will consist of three identifications. They will be graded with a check plus, a check, a check minus, or a zero. Before you let out a big sigh of dissatisfaction, keep in mind that the quizzes will be as easy as pie if you've done the reading. Additionally**, you will be able to use your reading journals during quizzes; you cannot use the text**. Take good notes and read actively! To account for absences or days when our minds are out to lunch, two of the lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the unit. Additionally, if you find that you have done the reading but still cannot answer the question, write down what you consider to be your most thoughtful journal reflection on the reading in place of the answer, expand on your thought with a couple additional sentences, and I will consider giving you partial credit in place of a zero. For this, at most, you can receive a check.

You may be asked to apply your understanding of the in-class readings to group activities or quick-write activities. I understand that some of us are quieter than others, so as long as you participate in these daily activities, are attentive during class and make some effort to contribute to whole-group discussions regularly, I will not penalize you for not commenting every single day during whole-group discussion. However, when we work in small groups, I expect all of you to actively participate on a consistent basis.

In-Role Writing

- The first text we will investigate is Herman Melville's short-story, *Bartelby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* which will be read over the span of two days, in-class. After reading *Bartelby the Scrivener, y*ou will choose a pivotal scene from the text and rewrite it from the perspective of Bartelby, himself. In about 3 pages (750 words), I want you to explore how Bartelby would view this event. You may decide to fill in some of the gaps of Bartelby's story that the original text leaves open. You could do this by utilizing what you know of him to theorize about the cause of his peculiar behavior. For example, you could explore the question of why working in a dead letter office affects him to such a degree. Although you will be telling the story from Bartelby's perspective, try to maintain Melville's detailed writing style in your telling. Try to maintain the tone and the genre of the original text (for example, don't incorporate sci-fi elements or zombies into

your rewrite). Show me that you have thought deeply about Bartelby's mysterious story, and be creative as you do so!

Compare and Contrast Essay

- This essay is the culminating activity of the unit. You will form an argument about two pieces of artwork that illustrate differing outlooks on one or more of the following themes: alienation, isolation, loneliness, non-conformity, the value of community as experienced by the individual, the risks and/or rewards of being the same/being different, the power of singularity/community, the oppression of the dominant class, the liberation of individuality, social distrust.
- Your thesis should be focused on the differing perspectives of each work, but the works must not be so dissimilar that they are not somehow relatable. I prefer that you stick with a comparison of poems, speeches, lyrics, musical performances, or paintings, but if you have another idea for comparison (like sculptures, dance performances, etc.) be sure to clear it with me before starting your essay.

Goal 1: Daily Grade

Reading Journals 40%:

To help your understanding of the texts we cover, it is helpful to measure events in the text against your own experiences. You can also learn from the emotions a text evokes within you. To record this process, you will be keeping a reading journal in a composition book.

When you make an entry, write the title of the work you are reading and the work's author at the top of the first page. As you comment on the text, try to write down page numbers for specific examples or quotes you include. This will help you as you work toward other projects and assignments, and it will help you to use specifics as we discuss these ideas in class.
You should allow some or all of the following entry points to enhance your reflection:

- **Notable quotes**- These can come from the reading or relate to the reading.
- **Questions**- If you encounter words or references you don't understand, write them down. If you think you don't understand a character's actions or ideas, or if you find yourself confused with the plot, note your confusion in your journal and bring it up in class discussion. Questions lead to understanding, and we can help each other make sense of these texts together!
- **Doodles**- If it helps you to picture the scene, draw it out. Or, draw what you think of when you read.
- **Self-reflection**- Note your emotional reactions to the text. Feel free to write what comes to mind when you read the text. Do you find yourself relating to a character or an experience? How are your ideas about the main themes evolving and transforming through reading and class discussion?

- **Major plot points/Characterization**- If it help you keep up with characters and follow the novel's progress, jot down notes on these things for your own reference.

Use whatever formats help you to get your thoughts on paper. For example, sketches, diagrams, charts, and timelines (or plot lines). As you engage the text, think of how characters relate to their community. Are they rejected for violating social norms? Do they reject their communities willingly?

An entry should take up no less than **one page** in your composition book unless specified otherwise. Please do not just copy from the text; each entry should mostly comprise of your original thoughts—quotes from the readings do not count as original thought. If you choose to express your thoughts through drawings or charts, please spend at least half a page free writing about these contributions. **I will collect journals at the end of each week and will return them to you at the beginning of the next week.**

Additionally, at the end of class, on occasion, you will write a paragraph on your experiences during class that day. What did you learn today? What did you find most notable in today's activity/reading/discussion? Did one of your peers say something that really got you thinking? What was it?

You will have some time, on occasion, to read from the texts in-class, but I expect the bulk of your reading to be done at home.

Part of your grade for this assignment will be based on how you use this journal to **promote discussion in class.** Thus, I will ask you to pick at least one day to share an observation you have written in your journal. We will use your unique observation as a way to enter discussion. As a class, we value what you have to say from your own experience and unique perspective.

Remember: Also note that **I am required to disclose any information you share in your journal that may indicate potential harm to you or another person.**

Rubric for Reading Journal (to be completed by the teacher)

The student completes the required number of entries (3) per week.

No entries=0 points; 1 entry= 10 points; 2 entries=15 points; 3 entries=25 points

The student's completed entries reach the required length.

Never=10 points; Sometimes=15 points; Always=25 points

The student ends class daily with a one paragraph journal entry.

Never=10 points; Sometimes=15 points; Always=25 points

The student engages the reading in creative ways.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Disagree Agree (10) Strongly Agree

At some point during the unit, the student uses an example from their Reading Journal to launch or revive classroom discussion.

Agree = 10 points

Total points=____

Adapted from Hodges, H. There's No Place Like Home: Discovering Our American Home Identity, 2009.

Quizzes 40%:

Quizzes will consist of only three questions. **You may use your reading journals during quizzes, so take good notes on your questions, ideas, interpretations and reflections on the reading.** Understand that I grade these with some leniency. For example, if you find yourself stumped on **ONE** of the questions, you may choose to write down what you consider to be your most thoughtful journal reflection on the reading in place of the answer. Expand on this thought with a couple of sentences, and I will consider giving you partial credit for that question in place of a zero. Note that you can only do this for **ONE** of the questions per quiz, and the maximum you can make on this question is a check.

Two of your lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the unit which will account for absences and "off-days."

Rubric for Quizzes (to be completed by the teacher)

0 points
✓- = 25 points
✓= 75 points
✓+ = 100 points

Quiz Average = ____

Class Participation 20%:

This will be based on your participation in daily activities, group-activities and small-group activities. If you choose to not participate in your group, you are hindering your group member's performance and are making yourself an obstacle to their learning efforts. Think of your

classmates as team members. Don't be dead-weight. If you never contribute to class discussion or small-group discussion and your reading journal reflections on class discussion are off topic or minimal, then I will consider that non-participation.

Rubric for class participation (to be completed by the teacher)

The student participates regularly during whole-group and small-group discussions
Strongly Agree=25 points; Agree=15 points; Disagree=10 points; Strongly Disagree=0 points

The student pays attention during class
Strongly Agree=25 points; Agree=15 points; Disagree=10 points; Strongly Disagree=0 points

The student fulfills their fair share of work in groups
Strongly Agree=25 points; Agree=15 points; Disagree=10 points; Strongly Disagree=0 points

The student comes prepared to class every day
Strongly Agree=25 points; Agree=15 points; Disagree=10 points; Strongly Disagree=0 points

Total points=____

Goal 2: In-Role Writing

For this assignment, you will choose a pivotal scene in *Bartelby the Scrivener* and rewrite it from the perspective of Bartelby. In about 3 pages (750 words), I want you to explore how Bartelby experienced this event. You may decide to fill in some of the gaps of Bartelby's story.

Remember: Narrators are not always reliable. The original story's narrator, Bartelby's employer, could have misconstrued occurrences, exaggerated events, or misinterpreted Bartelby's actions and intentions. If you so choose, you may decide to shine Bartelby in a different light; you may choose to explain his odd behaviors from a more sympathetic standpoint with a back-story of your creation.

Rubric for your In-Role Writing

- Your writing should adhere to general conventions of Standard English as we've learned in class. Limited grammatical and structural mistakes should be present. It should fit in the length suggested above (3-4 typed pages).
- Your writing should mirror both the style and the tone of the original novel. Your assignment should fit in with the feel of *Bartelby the Scrivener*. Do your best to emulate Melville's style while still incorporating your original ideas.
- Your pieces should discuss Bartelby's experience in the dead letter office and give the reader some insight into why he ends up the way he does.

- If you decide to work together, group members should equally contribute to the creation of this piece. You have the option of working alone, but if you chose not to, you must all contribute equally.

Adapted from Dalton, K. Don't Touch That: Censorship and Literature in the High School Classroom, 2011.

Goal 3: Compare and Contrast Essay

Form an argument about two works that illustrate differing outlooks on one or more of the following themes

- Alienation
- Isolation
- Loneliness
- Non-conformity
- The value of community as experienced by the individual
- The risks and/or rewards of being the same/being different
- The power of singularity/community
- The oppression of the dominant class
- The liberation of individuality
- Social distrust

Your thesis should be focused on the differing perspectives of each work, but the works must not be so dissimilar that they are not somehow relatable.

I prefer that you stick with a comparison of poems, lyrics, musical performances, or paintings. However, if you have another idea for comparison (like sculptures, dance performances, etc.) be sure to clear it with me before starting your essay. Both works may be from texts explored in class, and you may even discuss points that we brought up in discussion, but you must elaborate with original, deep, and thoughtful insight on the topic. You are also welcome to apply what we've learned to works that we have not covered in class.

Some poetic elements you might consider when trying to analyze a poem are

- Alliteration
- Symbolism
- Imagery
- Tone
- Meter
- Rhyme

- Diction

You may think that you are more familiar with analyzing poetry than you are analyzing visual art, but the process is not dissimilar. You analyze an artistic work any time you see it whether you realize it or not. When you look at a painting, hear a piece of music, or read a poem, the work incites a certain reaction from you whether that is one of boredom, excitement, curiosity, anger, or any number of things. Consider what elements of the work move you. Which do not? Look deeper into the work, trying to identify small, telling details that you may not have noticed affected you until further examination.

Elements to consider when analyzing each piece are the artist's use of

- Shape
- Lighting
- Tone
- Movement
- Negative space
- Brush stroke (painting)
- Balance
- Abstraction
- Reality
- Symbolism

After identifying these elements, some questions to consider are

- How does the artist utilize these elements to create emotion and meaning?
- How does the artist utilize the medium itself to create emotion and meaning?
- What is the mood of the work? Does it have a positive or a negative effect on me? Why?
- What about this piece contributes to my overall interpretation of it?
- What do I think the artist is trying to achieve with this piece?

When comparing the two works. Consider the previous points and ask yourself

- Why did I choose these two pieces?
- What gave me the impression that these represented two differing perspectives? How do these elements contribute to the differing messages of these two works?
- How are these two pieces similar? How do these elements contribute to the similarities between these two works?

Overarching questions concerning your interpretation of the works are

- Is community something to be feared? To be longed for? To be weary of? To be rejected?

- Is community necessary? Is the individual able to shoulder the struggles of life alone?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the individual?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the majority?
- You can also, for example, differentiate between the themes of social alienation and nonconformity. How does this examination shed light on the differing outlooks surrounding the outliers of our community?

Finally, here are some examples of possible essay topics

- How does the narrator view community in Robert Frost's *The Mending Wall* in comparison to Louis Macneice's *Prayer before Birth*?
- How does the power of this solo performance compare to the power of this national performance?
- How does this Banksy mural compare to this English propaganda poster?

Compare and Contrast Essay Rubric

CATEGORY	4 – Above Standards	3 – Meets Standards	2 – Approaching Standards	1 – Below Standards
Purpose & Supporting Details	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly. The paper points to specific examples to illustrate the comparison. The paper includes only the information relevant to the comparison.	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly, but the supporting information is general. The paper includes only the information relevant to the comparison.	The paper compares and contrasts items clearly, but the supporting information is incomplete. The paper may include information that is not relevant to the comparison.	The paper compares or contrasts, but does not include both. There is no supporting information or support is incomplete.
Organization & Structure	The paper breaks follows a consistent order when discussing the comparison.	The paper does not follow a consistent order when discussing the comparison.	Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader.	Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized.
Transitions	The paper moves smoothly from one idea to the next. The paper uses comparison and contrast transition words to show relationships between ideas. The paper uses a variety of sentence structures and transitions.	The paper moves from one idea to the next, but there is little variety. The paper uses comparison and contrast transition words to show relationships between ideas.	Some transitions work well; but connections between other ideas are fuzzy.	The transitions between ideas are unclear or nonexistent.
Grammar & Spelling (Conventions)	Grammar and spelling conventions are mostly sound.	Writer makes some errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes frequent errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Content is obscured by the errors in spelling and grammar.

Adapted from ReadWriteThink.

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Lesson Plans

Week One_____

Day 1, Monday—Introduction to alienation vs. nonconformity

10 minutes: Attendance and welcome to the classroom. Have students make their name tents. Please have this permission slip filled out and returned before the second week of class.
10 minutes: Brief explanation of expectations concerning group work (respecting the opinions of others, allowing everyone a chance to participate, staying on task, etc.).
40 minutes: Students will participate in this introductory activity.
20 minutes: Explain how the introductory activity ties into the main topics of the unit: social alienation and nonconformity.
10 minutes: Students will write in their reading journals on the following topic: what are the risks and rewards of being different/breaking away from the pack? Journal entry should be at least one page. Have students turn in name tents.

Homework

- Finish reading journal if you didn't finish in class.

Day 2, Tuesday—Introduction to the class

3 minutes: Today, when students walk in, their name tents will be moved so that they will be sitting with different groups.
10 minutes: Pass out the syllabus and begin class by discussing the main assignments of the unit outlined on the handout. Emphasize that the classroom is a place where we should respect each other and each other's writings.
10 minutes: Explain the reading journals and reading quizzes. Emphasize that the more students use their journals, the more they will benefit from the class. In other words, they will be able to use their journals on reading quizzes and will be expected to reference them in projects later on in the unit, so they should always keep them handy. Explain that I will be grading them on a weekly basis. The first reading quiz will be next Monday on chapters 1-4 of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
20 minutes: Focus attention on yesterday's end-of-class journal entry on the risks and rewards of being different/breaking away from the pack. What are their opinions on this subject? Have students discuss their reading journal entries in their new groups.
32 minutes: Open up the small-group discussion to whole-class discussion. Write the following sentence on the board:

- Our society values individuality more than conformity.

Ask students whether or not they agree with this statement.

5 minutes: Pass out the glossary and the notes (provided below under "Scaffolding *Bartelby*") that will accompany *Bartelby, the Scrivener: A Tale of Wall Street.*
10 minutes: For homework, have students read through the scene where the narrator goes to his office on Sunday and discovers Bartleby is living there. Let them know they can continue reading after this point, too, if they choose.

Although they won't be graded, to assist in discussion the next day, tell students to—in addition to their reading—take notes on the following topics for homework:

- What does Bartleby gain in resisting as he does? What does he risk?
- What might he hope to and be able to achieve with his actions? What other actions could he take that could be more effective?

Here are some teaching tools to help you scaffold Bartelby for students.

Allow students to read in-class until dismissal.

Homework

- Read through the scene where the narrator goes to his office on Sunday and discovers Bartleby is living there.
- Take notes on the following topics for homework in your journal: What does Bartleby gain in resisting as he does? What does he risk? What might he hope to and be able to achieve with his actions? What other actions could he take that could be more effective?

Day 3, Wednesday—Collaborative reenactment activity/Body biography: Honing in on Bartelby and the story's narrator

5 minutes: Attendance. Ask if students understand how to use their reading journals.
35 minutes: Explain to the class that they have just begun a story in which someone passively resists that which is expected of him, and in violating the expectations customary to his various relationships, he causes great disruption and concern. Ask students if they have any questions about the reading so far.

Hone in on the scene where the narrator finds Bartleby in the office on Sunday. Let them know you have chosen to focus on it because it is a pivotal scene to the story but also one that requires a lot of reading between the lines in order to make sense of it. Begin the collaborative reenactment activity.

25 minutes: Transition students to the body biography assignment.
25 minutes: After students finish, have them present and explain their body biographies to the class.

Day 4, Thursday—Mock trial/Introduce in-role writing activity

5 minutes: Attendance.
60 minutes: Students will participate in this mock trial activity on the text *Bartelby the Scrivener: A Tale of Wall Street.*
5 minutes: Introduce the in-role writing activity.
10 minutes: Have students journal on the following question: What do you know/What do you think of when you hear the phrase "passive resistance?" The entry should be at least one page. If you find that most of your students are unfamiliar with the idea of passive resistance or do not know what either "passive" or "resistance" mean, have a class discussion with students defining each part of the phrase, and see if the students can come up with the definition themselves through discussion.

Homework

- Finish journal entry on passive resistance.

Day 5, Friday—Passive resistance: In-role writing/Jigsaw activity on "Solitude"

13 minutes: Ask students to share what they wrote in their journals about what passive resistance means to them (or, bring up the class discussion on passive resistance from yesterday). Ask the following questions in discussion and remind them to take notes as they listen.

- If someone asks you to do something you don't want to do, how often do you do it anyway?
- When would be a good time for you to resist passively?
- How can passive resistance be more effective than violent resistance?

20 minutes: Have students work on their in-role writing activity in-class and have them complete the rest for homework.
50 minutes: Divide the class into groups of 2-3.

Jigsaw activity on Hendry David Thoreau's "Solitude" in *Walden*

- Go to this website, and separately print off each of the fifteen sections (in the column on the left-hand side) of "Solitude." Point out to your students that the original text is not divided up in this way; assigning only a single passage to each group gives them the

opportunity to focus on a portion of the text. On the back of each printed page, provide the guided notes that correspond to each section (ask students not to look at this side of the page yet); the guided notes are located in the column on the right-hand side of the website.

- Have a volunteer from each group read their section aloud. Each group will discuss the main points of their section, trying to make sense of Thoreau's language. It is important that everyone pays attention to their assigned portion of the text, because they will be responsible for explaining their section to members of a different group.
- Additionally, have students highlight/underline their favorite quotations as they read.
- As students read the text, circulate through the classroom, addressing any questions they may have with the reading. Ask students to look up any difficult vocabulary with a smart phone or a dictionary.
- Provide groups with the guided reading notes for their section after they have had enough time to discuss the assigned section as a group.
    - Did the main points you drew from the text reflect the main points in the reading notes?
- After each person in the group has a decent understanding of their section, the groups will be "shuffled" in a Jigsaw fashion, and each new group will now contain one "expert" on each section. Each expert will explain the section they had been discussing in their previous group to their current group, drawing special attention to the portions of the text they underlined/highlighted.
    - Explain why you chose those particular quotations. Why are they significant?
- After each student has had time to discuss their sections, ask students to consider the following question:

Why does Thoreau choose to separate himself from society?

5 minutes: Have students turn in reading journals to be graded.

Homework

- Over the weekend will be to read *Mending Wall* and *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost and *Prayer Before Birth* by Louis Macneice. Provide copies of these poems. Ask students to underline/highlight one word, one line and one section that they liked or that interested them. The reading quiz on Monday will be on the poems, but students are still expected to continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
- Work on in-role writing activity.

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Week Two_____
Day 6, Monday– Poetry day: Reading circle/4-square activity

8 minutes: Quiz on *Mending Wall, The Road Not Taken, and Prayer Before Birth*

Quiz on *Mending Wall, The Road Not Taken, Prayer Before Birth*

1. *(Mending Wall)* How does the speaker's opinion of the wall differ from his neighbor's opinion of the wall?

2. *(The Road Not Taken)* What could the two roads symbolize?

3. *(Prayer Before Birth)* Who is speaking in the poem and how would you describe their mood?

2 minutes: Pass back the graded reading journal and copies of the poems.
35 minutes: Ask students to sit in a circle with their journals and the poems in preparation for the reading circle activity.
43 minutes: Have students pull out a sheet of paper. Give the following directions for the 4-square activity:

4-Square Activity with *Prayer Before Birth*.

- Fold the paper into four squares.
- In the upper left-hand square, draw a picture that represents your understanding of some part of the text.
- In the upper right-hand corner, write an explanation of their drawing using language you would use to talk to a friend.
- In the lower left-hand corner, analyze your drawing by using language you would use when turning something in to a teacher.
- In the lower right-hand corner write a found poem from the text.

Have students discuss their 4-squares in small groups. Ask students to discuss what they put in each corner and why.

Move to whole-class discussion and have four volunteers share one square of their 4-square to the class explaining their rationale behind the contents of their square. Engage the class with the following question:

- Why did you choose to draw the images that you drew? How is it a symbolic representation of the text?
- Did your explanation to a friend differ very much from your explanation to a teacher? How so?
- Does your found poem have a message? It doesn't have to. Did you choose the words from Macneice's poem because of their meaning, their sound, or both? Did you chose the words from Macneice's poem for another reason?

2 minutes: Tell students that they should start reading their copies of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. They should be reading at home and should be prepared for a quiz on chapters 1-4 by Monday of next week.

Homework

- Begin reading chapters 1-4 in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

Day 7, Tuesday— Thematic analysis of texts that aren't literary: Metacognitive exercise to learn how to write a compare and contrast essay

5 min: Attendance.
20min: Tell students that today, like yesterday, they will be thematically evaluating two texts. Play students this video of Adele's moving performance of "Someone Like You" at the 2011 Brit Awards. Ask the class about their response. After a little discussion, begin the next video of Beijing's opening ceremony at the Olympics. Afterward, ask students the following questions:

- How are these two videos similar?
- How are these two videos different?
- Which one is more appealing to you and why?
- What do these two videos say to you about the power of performance?
- What does the Adele video say to you about individuality?
- What does the opening ceremony video say about community?

25 min: Ask students to think back to the introductory activity of the unit where they compared/contrasted the two pictures "New York Movie" and "Single Red Tulip in a Sea of Yellow." Ask students the following questions:

- How did our comparison of *Mending Wall* and *The Road Not Taken* compare to the activity at the beginning of the unit where we compared the two pictures? Anticipate students to point out that the poems are written and the pictures are not.
- Why are we able to compare and contrast certain things better than others? In other words, why is a comparison of the two poems more appropriate than, say, a comparison of "New York Movie" and a pony?
    - It's best to compare things that are at once similar and different.
    - When we compare characters in a short story, we do so very similarly to how we would if we were comparing musical groups, pizza restaurants, or ice cream flavors.

38 minutes: Ask students to get into groups of 3-5 to work on a compare and contrast activity. Have students complete the compare and contrast practice here.
2 minutes: Remind students that they should have started reading their copies of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. They should be reading at home and should be prepared for a quiz on chapters one through four by Monday of next week.

Homework

- Continue reading chapters 1-4 in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

Day 8, Wednesday—More practice with compare and contrast essay writing/Feedback session

5 minutes: Attendance.
58 minutes: Allow students time to finish up their essays, answering any questions they may have.
20 minutes: Conduct a feedback session. Have students go back to their small groups from yesterday to share their writing. If they aren't finished with their essay, that's fine; they'll have time over the weekend to work on it. Students will proofread the essays of their groupmates and will write a summary evaluation at the end of each draft they read. After returning the paper, students should discuss the essay with the writer and other members of the group.
5 minutes: Explain to students that the essay their peers have proofread will be due on Monday and that they should finish up their final draft over the weekend. Remind them this essay is a low-stakes grade, so they shouldn't be too stressed about it. Remember that this compare and contrast essay is preparation for their bigger essay that will be due near the end of the unit.

Adapted from Smagorinsky, P. Teaching English by Design, 2008.

2 minutes: Remind students that they should have started reading their copies of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. They should be reading at home and should be prepared for a quiz on chapters one through four by Monday of next week.

Homework

- Continue reading chapters 1-4 in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

Day 9, Thursday— Language lesson/Practice writing from sources

5 minutes: Attendance.
30 minutes: This lesson on subordinating conjunctions helps students construct complex sentences (those including both an independent and a dependent clause) by using subordinating conjunctions.
30 minutes: Practice writing from Sources.

Thus far students have been dealing with familiar topics and have been able to rely on their personal knowledge to provide the content for their essays. Now they begin working with less familiar, more complex topics that require consulting sources for information.

Nelson and Hayes (1988), investigating how college students approached writing from sources, found that weaker students went on fact-finding missions and then reproduced their sources' ideas verbatim. Stronger students found information that helped them argue a position and looked at the source material from an original perspective. Writers should not simply juxtapose pieces of information; they should use the information to draw an original and forceful conclusion.

In the following activity students use a relatively small set of sources in order to compare and contrast two singing groups with whom they are likely unfamiliar. Rather than just saying that the groups are similar and different in various ways, the students choose one singing group over another based on their comparison and contrast.

Source Writing Activity: The Bobs vs. The Persuasions

1. Give students the following task:
    - You and a group of friends are attending a small musical festival with two sound stages. The second set features two groups with which you are not familiar: the Bobs and the Persuasions. (These are real groups.) Each group sings *a cappella*—that is, without musical accompaniment. While similar in many ways, there are key differences between the two. You need to choose which of the two performances you will attend. Fortunately, the music program you bought as a souvenir includes descriptions of both bands.

2. Have students read "Who Are the Bobs?" and "Who Are the Persuasions?"
    - Tell students they may also use the internet features of their phones to get additional information to help them make their decisions.
    - As they work, circulate among the groups, monitoring their work and answering their questions.

23 minutes: Follow up with discussion.

- Using the notes they have taken, the members of each group explain to the others which performance they have decided to see.
- As students comment on or question their classmates' thinking (different groups will most likely have developed different procedures for using their source material), each group has an opportunity to rethink and revise its decision before going their separate ways to write their papers.
- Groups of students who have worked together then talk with other groups and share their thinking about the task, thus expanding everyone's ideas.
- A hallmark of a structured process approach is that students often *develop procedures inductively*. Rather than modeling a way to do things, teachers develop activities that require problem-framing and problem-solving discussions through which students develop procedures and approaches appropriate to the task.

Adapted from Smagorinsky, P. Teaching English by Design, 2008.

2 minutes: Remind students that they should be reading their copies of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and should be prepared for a quiz on chapters one through four by Monday of next week.

Homework

- Continue reading chapters 1-4 in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

Day 10, Friday—Introducing *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*/Using Webquest to learn about the Great Depression. (Meet in the computer lab.)

8 minutes: Attendance. Give students this reading schedule for their records. Make sure that students understand how to read the schedule, and remind them that after the completion of each reading section, there is a scheduled reading quiz.
27 minutes: Display the following two images on the white board: Graffiti by the artist, Banksy, and *Step into your place*, an English propaganda poster. By now, students should be getting the hang of comparing and contrasting texts thematically. Ask students to get out their writing journals to make a short entry (1 page) explaining how they would go about writing another essay comparing and contrasting these two images.

- How would you begin? Write the steps you would take.

- There is not one correct answer; everyone goes about essay writing a little differently, but show me that you know how to go about writing a compare and contrast essay by simply describing your writing process in general terms.

10 minutes: Introduction to *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Emphasize to students that it is important for students to keep up with the assigned reading. Although students will have time to read in-class, they will also be expected to read for homework. To encourage students to keep up with the reading, there will be a reading quiz at the completion of each assigned reading schedule. There will be four quizzes, total, and these dates are listed on the reading schedule.

Note that due to the sensitive social issues this novel addresses and the occasional use of strong language that some people may find offensive, I will require a signed permission slip from your parents before reading the novel.

45 Minutes: *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* touches on several sensitive issues that are unique to the time and place in which the novel is embedded, but these issues are still very much relatable to today.

The goals of this activity are

- To help students understand the historical context of the novel
- To show how societal issues the novel addresses relate to issues of today
- To give students an opportunity to practice valuable research skills

The Heart is a Lonely Hunter takes place in Georgia in 1939, an era that was very different from the one we know today. Different national and world events caused society to undergo some major changes, and it may be difficult for us to envision America and the world as it was then. However, in some ways, the text is very relatable to modern times. Who hasn't, at some point in time, felt the pang of loneliness or isolation in their hearts?

To help you understand the historical context of the novel and the societal issues it addresses, in groups of three, follow this Webquest on The Great Depression until dismissal. Not all groups will give a presentation, but a few volunteers from each group will have the opportunity to share their Webquest findings to the class on Monday.

2 minutes: Remind students that they should have read to chapter four of part one in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Monday. Explain to students that they are responsible for an average of about 65 pages a week, but be sure to mention that you will provide class-time to read on occasion. Dismiss class. Also, tell students that they will be meeting in the computer lab tomorrow. There will be a note posted on the door in case they forget.

Homework

- Finish reading chapters 1-4 in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Quiz on Monday.
- Meet in the computer lab on Monday.

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Week Three

Day 11, Monday— Finishing the Webquest in the computer lab

15 minutes: Attendance. Students turn in essays. Quiz.

Quiz #1 on *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

1. What do John Singer and Spiros Antonapoulos have in common?
   They are both deaf-mutes.

2. What does Mick Kelly keep in her big hat box?
   A cracked ukulele Mick is making into a violin (P. 54)

3. Who said this: "Resentment is the most precious flower of poverty."
   a) John Singer b) Mick Kelly c) Jake Blount (p. 77)

15 minutes: Go over the answers to the quiz with the class. Discuss the title of the book.

- What do you think it means? Why is the heart lonely?

Remind students to maintain their reading journals for quizzes on the text. Ask them to pay special attention to the story's five principal characters:

1. A teenaged girl—Mick Kelly
2. An alcoholic laborer agitator—Jake Blunt
3. A restaurant owner—Biff Brannon
4. An African American doctor—Dr. Copeland
5. A mysterious deaf-mute—Singer

Ask students to consider the following questions while reading:

- Why are all these characters outsiders of their community?
- Why they open up to Singer and why they feel that they can connect with him, but not their community.

40 minutes: Have students finish their Webquest activity from Friday.
20 minutes: Volunteers will present their chosen journal entries in a short, informal presentation at the end of class.

Day 12, Tuesday— Learning about racial prejudice through Jane Elliot's brown eyes vs. blue eyes activity

5 minutes: Attendance.
10 minutes: Make sure that students understand the reading schedule, and remind them to check it often; also remind students of the reading that is due next Monday (with a quiz this time!)
83 minutes: Students view Jane Elliot—Brown Eyes vs. Blue Eyes video answering these questions as they watch.

After the video, in groups of 4 or 5, pose the following question for discussion until the end of class:

- How did the negative and positive labels placed on a group become self-fulfilling prophecies?
- What scene or scenes do you think you'll still remember a month from now and why those scenes?
- Did any part of the film surprise you? Do you think someone of a different race, ethnicity, or religion would also find it surprising?

Adapted from PBS.org

2 minutes: Tell students to keep today's activity in mind as they read *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter.* Remind students that Part I, Ch. 5- Part II, Ch. 1 of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is due next Monday. Dismiss class.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter.*

Day 13, Wednesday—The music of language: 4-square activity #2/Descriptive language activity

5 minutes: Attendance.
35 minutes: Play this reading of the poem hyperlinked here: *The Lonely Hunter* reading by William Sharp. Ask students to close their eyes and meditate as they listen to the poem. After they are done listening to it, have volunteers read each stanza aloud. Most of us have to read a

poem several times before we can start making sense of it, but that doesn't mean that the words do not affect us anyway.

Ask the class

- Do all of you understand every word of this poem? (Go over difficult vocabulary.)
- Even if you didn't understand each word of the poem, did it make you think of anything in particular or entice a certain mood? (If a student responds with, "It didn't make me feel anything," then respond with, "Boredom or apathy is an appropriate response." Follow up with, "Why did the poem bore you?")

After some discussion, play the following poem: *Prayer Before Birth* reading by Louis Macneice.

- Did the background music and visuals help you with your understanding of the poem?

What are some ways that feelings, moods, and ideas are expressed without words? What languages do all people speak? Can you think of any examples of this?

- Body language—Physical expressions manifest themselves in how we move, the facial expressions we make, etc. For example, think of all the ways we can walk into a room silently, showing that we are angry, confused, sad, or happy. Dance is another form of body language, as well. The movements and rhythms of our body can speak volumes.
- Music—Sounds create mood, too. For example, although traditionally sung in Italian, opera has been a widely popular form of entertainment across the globe for hundreds of years. The sound of a brisk pop song may make us feel happy, while the sound of a slow march may make us feel contemplative and serious.

Explain to students

- It's true that certain groups use expression in different ways, but we are often able to recognize the mannerisms or clues that reveal what a person—regardless of background or race—is feeling or trying to express. In poetry, too, we may not know all the words in a poem, but we can still gain understanding through the reading of it or through hearing it read aloud.

50 minutes: Have students pair up in preparation for this following 4-square activity:

4-Square Activity #2: Illustrating sounds with words and language

Play the following video in class: Pansori singers of Korea. Stop at 2:15.

- In the top left corner, draw a picture of the sound that the Pansori singers evoke within you. It can be a simple shape, line, or picture. Pretend that your hand is connected to your

heart and draw whatever you feel coming out of you in response to the Pansori singers. Try to depict the sound as best as you can.
- In the right corner of the 4-square, explain your drawing in relation to the music.
- In the bottom left corner, write down a word that reminds you of the music. It can be any word (that is not inappropriate language).
- In the bottom right corner, write down your explanation of the word. For example, when I think of the sound of an ice-skater's heel sliding against the ice, I think of the word "sweep." The s-sound makes me think of the sound of the blade against the ice, hissing, and the breathy, "hwee" sound in the middle of the word makes me think of the snow gently falling to the ground and the delicate elegance of the skater moving like a dancer on the ice.

Students share their 4-squares with partners. Continue playing the video until it is finished.

Have students work on the following journal entry for homework:

- What did the Pansori singers communicate to you? What do you think the narrator means when he calls Pansori singing the "sound beyond sound?" What about Pansori is familiar to you? What about it is unfamiliar?

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter.*
- Journal entry on Pansori singers.

Day 14, Thursday—Practicing figurative and descriptive language

5 minutes: Attendance.
20 minutes: Recapping yesterday's activity and setting up today's practice of figurative and descriptive language.

Explain to students

- Yesterday, we learned about a kind of singing style that, for many Westerners, seems very unusual and even discomforting to listen to. As the video continued, however, did you find yourself growing more accustomed to the singing? Was it as shocking to hear five minutes in as it ways on the outset? Why or why not?
- If I were to play a blues song and a Pansori song, would you be able to pick out which one's which? How are you able to tell the difference between the two? What kind of language would you use to describe each type of music to differentiate between the two?

By asking students these leading questions, you are encouraging them to use figurative language to describe abstract concepts. When students describe music, they are using language in nonconventional and colorful ways; this will aid students in their discussion of other abstract topics like those that relate to text. In particular, this activity will help students prepare for writing their compare and contrast essay.

Practicing Figurative and Descriptive Language to Portray Abstract Ideas

30 minutes: Play this clip from the 1968 adaptation of the book *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* clip where Mick Kelly is describing what music sounds like to the deaf-mute, John Singer.

50 minutes: Have students get into groups of 3-5.

Assign one of the following sounds to each group:

- A duck quacking
- The ocean
- A person crying
- A door shutting
- A pan sizzling
- A clock ticking
- A car starting
- A bee buzzing
- An alarm clock
- Rain falling

1. Have group discuss how they should describe their assigned sounds. They will write down these descriptions. Students turn in their descriptions.
2. Project the list of sounds on the board.
3. Read each description to the class and have students match each description with a sound. Whenever a group successfully describes a sound, that group gets a point. The group with the most successful descriptions and the individual with the most successful guesses win.

10 minutes: For homework, assign the following to assess what students already know about narrative:

- Write two pages in your journal about an event (a personal experience) when you felt or witnessed social alienation and discuss its consequences. How did it have an impact on you or someone you know? Be as specific as you can in describing the event and its consequences. Try to write so that a reader will see what you saw and feel what you felt.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
- Journal entry on a personal experience you felt/witnessed involving social alienation and its consequences.

Day 15, Friday— Personal experience narratives

5 minutes: Attendance.
20 minutes: Have students arrange themselves in pairs to read their journal entries to their partner; have them comment on each other's writing. Remind students to be respectful of each other.
63 minutes: Teaching personal experience narratives activity.
2 minutes: Remind students of the reading quiz on Monday.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
- Reading quiz on Monday.

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Week 4

Day 16, Monday—Teaching personal experience narratives, continued/Reinforcing the procedures: A more complex descriptive task

15 minutes: Attendance. Quiz.

Quiz #2 on *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

1. Portia's father, Benedict Copeland, is in what profession?

   Doctor

2. Who do Mick, Jake, and Mr. Copeland visit often?

   Singer

3. Why do they visit?

   They are all outsiders who are lonely, and Singer listens to them without judgment.

10 minutes: Go over answers to the quiz.
65 minutes: To help students learn how to improve their skills in observation and use specific sensory details and figurative language in their descriptions, have them complete the seashell activity.

Day 17, Tuesday—Personal experience narratives, continued/Revisiting previous writing to apply what we've learned

5 minutes: Attendance.
10 minutes: Ask students to reread the journal entries they wrote from last Thursday where they described a time when they felt or witnessed social rejection and how this experience impacted them.
75 minutes: Ask students to think about how they could apply what they've learned about figurative and descriptive language to their writing; then, ask students to either rework or rewrite their journal entry, circulating through the class to answer any questions. After students are done, allow them to read in class until dismissal.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

Day 18, Wednesday—Assigning the compare and contrast essay

5 minutes: Attendance.

30 minutes: Introduce the final major assignment of the unit—the compare and contrast essay—to students.

The essay will be

- 4-5 pages
- double-spaced
- Times New Roman font
- have 1-inch margins
- in MLA format

Rough drafts will be due Thursday of next week, and final drafts will be due on the last day of class. Point out that students' journal entries are a great starting point for this essay. The previous night's journal assignment, for example, would be a good topic for their paper. Print off the information on writing a compare and contrast essay. Go over these handouts with students. The rubric for the compare and contrast essay is located here.
30 minutes: Have students write an in-class journal entry on possible ideas for essay topics.
25 minutes: In-class reading until dismissal.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
- Work on rough drafts. Due next Thursday.

Day 19, Thursday—Memorizing the Bill of Rights/Learning a handy technique for memorization

15 minutes: Attendance.
10 minutes: During the 1930's, when *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* takes place, the violation of certain people's rights by the majority was the stuff of everyday life. Although a work of fiction, the issues the novel brings to light are not. What, in fact, are our inviolable rights?

Explain to students

- Today, we will discuss what the first ten amendments of our constitution guarantees us as citizens of the United States, and we will work together to learn them by heart.

45 minutes: Bill of Rights Activity.
20 minutes: In-class reading until dismissal.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
- Work on rough drafts. Due next Thursday.

Day 20, Friday—In-class reading

5 minutes: Attendance.
20 minutes: Review Bill of Rights.
65 minutes: In-class reading.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
- Work on rough drafts. Due next Thursday.

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Week Five_____

Day 21, Monday—Why is it important for us to know our rights?/Malcolm X

15 minutes: Attendance. Reading quiz.

Quiz #3 on *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

1. What angers Dr. Copeland at the family reunion?

   Grandpapa's religious speech (p.175).

2. Why does Dr. Copeland think Singer is different from other white people?

   Dr. Copeland thinks Singer is Jewish (p.224).

3. What competition does Dr. Copeland put on every year at the Christmas party?

   Essay writing contest

15 minutes: Project the Bill of Rights on the board and ask students to write half a page in their journals on the following questions

- Why is it important to know what our inalienable rights are as citizens of the United States if our Constitution guarantees protection of these civil liberties? Isn't a guarantee a promise?
- Relate this question to what you know about the Civil Rights Movement and/or the reading.

20 minutes: Students break into groups of 3 and discuss their journal entry with peers.
20 minutes: Ask volunteers from each group to relate their group's main points to the class.

Some possible responses to the previous questions are

- Although the Constitution guarantees these civil liberties, these liberties have been violated in the past (i.e. slavery, institutionalized racism, sexism, classism).
- The Constitution can be interpreted differently by different people. Therefore, the ruling class could interpret the Constitution in ways that benefit them and disenfranchise others.
- The Civil Rights Movement took place due to the fact that certain groups of people's inalienable rights were in fact being violated.
- Certain characters' inalienable rights are, in fact, violated. Most notably, Dr. Copeland, Portia, and Willy.

20 minutes: Ask students to read this Malcolm X interview in-class. For homework, have students write a journal entry that outlines what Malcolm X's beliefs are, and ask them to consider his beliefs in relation to Dr. Copeland's and/or Jake Blount's. Students should be prepared to discuss their entries in class the following day. Remind students to keep up with the reading, as well.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
- Journal entry outlining beliefs of Malcolm X, Dr. Copeland and/or Jake Blount.
- Work on rough drafts. Due Thursday.

Day 22, Tuesday—Belief comparison: Malcolm X vs. Dr. Copeland vs. Jake Blount. Differences in protest.

5 minutes: Attendance.
20 minutes: Ask the class to name the main beliefs that Malcolm X outlines in the interview. Write them in bullet points on the board as volunteers name them.

40 minutes: Ask students to get into groups of 3- 5. Assign each group with either Jake Blount or Dr. Copeland. Have each group refer to their texts in order to outline the character's key beliefs on a sheet of butcher paper.
20 minutes: After students are done, have each group compare the beliefs of their assigned character to the beliefs of Malcolm X listed on the board. Have a representative from each group relay their group findings to the whole-class. Between Jake Blount and Dr. Copeland, whose beliefs more closely align with Malcolm X's?
5 minutes: For homework, have students relate their findings on one of these three characters to the beliefs of Bartelby. Tell students that this can possibly be their essay topic. They can outline the likenesses/differences between the characters in their journals within some sort of graphic organizer, or they may simply write about the likenesses or differences.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
- Relate beliefs of Malcolm X/Dr. Copeland/Jake Blount to Bartelby.
- Work on rough drafts. Due day after tomorrow.

Day 23, Wednesday—Brainstorming essay topics/Start rough drafts

5 minutes: Attendance.
40 minutes: Have students arrange the classroom for fishbowl discussion. Introduce the fishbowl discussion to students (Smagorinsky, 2008) and explain that today's fishbowl will focus on last night's journal topic. Have volunteers seat themselves in the center of the class and proceed with the discussion.
43 minutes: Steer the fishbowl discussion to essay topic ideas in general. Topics may include any text we have covered or any works that reflect the theme of the unit. Encourage students to take notes if something strikes them as useful for the essay.

Be prepared with more specific questions like how the journal entry from last night could be turned into an essay topic.

Students may respond with the following:

- These characters are all similar enough to compare in an essay, because they are all alienated individuals from disenfranchised social groups who are discontent with society.
- However, these characters' beliefs diverge enough to create some interesting differences. Whereas Jake Blount is a violent protestor, Dr. Copeland and Malcolm X are non-violent protestors. Additionally, Dr. Copeland and Malcolm X are distinguished African American men in their community, while Jake Blount is not as respectable in his own racial community due to his raucous and drunken behavior. Based on these differences, do you believe that Jake Blount and Dr. Copeland are equally as alienated from society? Why or why not?

2 minutes: Remind students to keep reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. There will be a final quiz on Monday of next week.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter.*
- Work on rough drafts. Due tomorrow.

Day 24, Thursday—Writing a good thesis statement/Rough drafts due

5 minutes: Attendance. Rough drafts due. Check for completion, but have students hold on to their drafts for tomorrow's peer review.
58 minutes: Teach writing a thesis statement with this activity.
25 minutes: Allow students time to work on rough drafts.
2 minutes: Remind students to keep reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. There will be a final quiz on Monday of next week.

Homework

- Continue reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter.*
- Finish rough drafts for tomorrow's peer review if you haven't already.

Day 25, Friday—Peer editing rough drafts

5 minutes: Attendance.
85 minutes: Have students get into groups of 3-4 and peer edit each other's papers using these workshop guidelines.

Homework

- Finish reading *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter.*
- **Final reading quiz on Monday**

Day 26, Monday— Work on final drafts

15 minutes: Attendance and final reading quiz.

Final Quiz on *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

1. Who is always in Singer's thoughts?

   Antonapoulos (p.244)

2. When all four visitors coincidentally meet Singer all at the same time, how did the visit go?

   It was awkward and something was not right. Dr. Copeland does not sit down and they barely speak.

3. How do we finally "hear" Singer's voice?

   In a letter to Antonapoulos (p. 255).

75 minutes: Allow students time in-class to work on their final drafts. Circulate through the class and have 2-3 minute mini conferences with students, checking on their progress and addressing any problems or questions they may have.

Day 27, Tuesday—Work on final drafts/Begin the film *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

5 minutes: Attendance.
40 minutes: Allow students time to work on final drafts.
45 minutes: Begin the movie *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

Homework

- Students will have time in-class to work on the final drafts of their essays, but they can also work on them at home.

Day 28, Wednesday—Work on final drafts/Continue the film *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

5 minutes: Attendance.
40 minutes: Allow students time to work on final drafts.
45 minutes: Continue *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

Homework

- Students will have time in-class to work on the final drafts of their essays, but they can also work on them at home.

Day 29, Thursday— Work on final drafts/Finish the film *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

5 minutes: Attendance.
52 minutes: Allow students time to work on final drafts.
33 minutes: Finish *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.

Homework

- Students will have time in-class to work on the final drafts of their essays, but they can also work on them at home.

Day 30, Friday—Turn in final drafts of essays/Final discussions

5 minutes: Attendance.
25 minutes: Have a whole-class discussion on the movie in comparison to the book.
50 minutes: Have students discuss the texts of the unit as a whole. Ask students what they have taken away from the unit as a whole.

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Appendix

Dear Parents,

I am asking your permission to allow your child to read a novel entitled *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers. Set in a working class Georgia town during the Great Depression, the story tells the struggles of its four main characters. All of these characters, in some capacity, are outsiders of their community due to several factors that include race, socioeconomic level, personal beliefs, and/or physical handicaps. The book deals with some sensitive issues like violence, poverty, alcoholism, depression, suicide and racial discrimination. I am forewarning you that some "adult language" is used in the novel. Further, it is important for you to understand that there are instances when characters use racial slurs; however, please understand that there will be ample class discussion surrounding the topic of racial discrimination, and all will be done to ensure that these sensitive topics are handled thoughtfully and considerately.

We will also watch the 1968 film adaptation of the novel (rated G) to help illustrate certain scenes from the text. If you are interested, you can watch these clips from the movie on Youtube by following these URLs:

http://youtu.be/9qrp7t69tSU & http://youtu.be/JmLRvkafqpE

I strongly encourage you to address some of these sensitive topics with your child as the novel may bring up some moral challenges that may be emotionally demanding or difficult for your child to confront. It would be beneficial to take the time to talk about our discussions and lectures. You may even decide to read along. Understand, however, that if you choose to not allow your child to read the novel, an alternative assignment may be made.

Thank you for your participation!

Helen Rhinehart

I, _____ do / do NOT give _____ permission to read *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers.

Comments:

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Introductory Activity: Chalk Talking/Discussing Images Thematically

Purpose

By chalk talking on the two images "New York Movie" and "Single Red Tulip in a Sea of Yellow," students introduce themselves to the unit's central themes while exploring the differences between alienation and nonconformity. Through comparison, students will discover how the topics of alienation and nonconformity converge and diverge laying the foundation for their exploration of these themes within the unit.

Through class discussion in a chalk talk format, all students are given the opportunity to generate their own thoughts on the images within a low-stress environment, and teachers are able to make a loose assessment of what their students already know. Students are encouraged to converse with their fellow classmates through piggy-backing off their peers' commentary or responding to ideas that others have written. After students finish chalk talking, they will return to their seats and discuss their individual commentary within small groups. The activity will end with a general class discussion on the activity as a whole, drawing comparisons between the two images, and discussing how they both relate to the topics of nonconformity and social alienation.

Preparation/Viewing (17 min)

A chalk talk is an activity that allows students to explore their ideas surrounding a given topic. As students enter the room, they will notice two things: (1) there will be two pictures on the board and a vertical line dividing the board in half; (2) they will see their seating assignment marked by a name tent, and the desks will be clustered in groups of four.

The first image on the board is a reproduction of the painting by Edward Hopper entitled "New York Movie" and the other image is called "Single Red Tulip in a Sea of Yellow." Students may be familiar with the second picture as it is a stock image that is a popularly used as classroom décor.

Once students have taken their seats, they will be asked to approach the board quietly in groups of no more than four to take the time to observe each picture individually as if they were viewing a painting in a museum. Students will be asked to begin writing their thoughts in the space on the board surrounding the first picture. The chalk talk is an open discussion, so students may begin writing without asking for permission. After several students have written on the first subject, students will return to their seats to discuss their comments within their small assigned groups (for approximately three minutes) before shifting attention to the next image and repeating the process.

Chalk Talk Details

In the case of Hopper's "New York Movie," students may write any number of ideas that the painting evokes, which may range from the subject's internal dialogue to the painting's general mood. Students may write words like, "Sad," "Lonely," or "Depressed" to describe the

somber tone of the painting; they may even discuss why the painting's subject has isolated herself from the other audience members in the theater.

Through close examination of "New York Movie," students may recognize the solemn moment the woman is experiencing as a moment that they themselves have personally experienced. The painting references, "the essential sense of alienation in contemporary life that, paradoxically, connects us all." The poignancy of Hopper's painting also gives students and teachers "a place to begin discussion of what it means to be a human being in our modern world, and there begins the development of empathy" (Read, Write, Think). Through texts like Robert Frost's poem *The Mending Wall*, Herman Melville's *Bartelby the Scrivener*, and Carson McCuller's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, students will study the topic of isolation and social alienation even further. However, alternative thematic interpretations or understandings of these texts beyond the unit's topics will be valued, as well. Once students have finished writing on the first image, begin a discussion based on the ideas the students have generated.

Next, ask students to observe the second image, "Single Red Tulip in a Sea of Yellow," before allowing them to write their thoughts on the board in the area surrounding the picture. Possible commentary may include subjects related to nonconformity, rebelliousness, and uniqueness. Students may wish to personify the red tulip by writing any phrases that they imagine the tulip speaking or thinking; alternately, students may personify the thoughts or words of the yellow tulips in response to the uniqueness of the red tulip. Are the yellow tulips impressed, confused, inspired, or angered by the red tulip?

With "Single Red Tulip in a Sea of Yellow," students are encouraged to discuss the positive aspects that surround notions of nonconformity. Students may wish to discuss the perks of thinking for one's self, living an examined life, and noticing the downfalls of prescribing to a mass mind. This idea may be further explored in examination of texts like "Solitude" in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, Robert Frost's poem *The Road not Taken*, and the main text, Carson McCuller's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. However, alternative thematic interpretations or understandings of the unit's texts will be valued, as well.

Image Analysis/Class Discussion (23 minutes)

After students have finished writing, have them take their seats in preparation for their discussion of the chalk talk experience. Initiate the discussion by asking students what general observations they uncovered during the chalk talk activity and what common themes they picked up on during their discussions of these two images. "New York Movie" and "Single Red Tulip in a Sea of Yellow" have many similarities, yet they may also be interpreted as having some major distinct differences in tone and meaning. The goal is to introduce common notions of isolation, nonconformity, alienation, and independence between the two pictures, but be sure to adjust your commentary based on what the students have discovered on their own. What differences did the student notice between the two pictures?

It would be beneficial to briefly mention the compare and contrast essays students will write as the culminating activity of the unit, because this introductory activity also serves as practice for students in critiquing artistic works thematically. Once student discussion begins to wane, pose this final question: what are the risks and rewards of being different/breaking away

from the pack? Students will spend the last 10 minutes of class responding to the question in their reading journal.

Adapted from Rubenstein, S. Outside In: Finding A Character's Heart Through Art.

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Vocabulary for "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street"

Vocabulary (words are in the order they appear in the text)
(**): indicates that the word is important for understanding the story

1. **Avocations (3): Noun: A hobby or minor occupation. noun. A hobby or minor occupation
2. **Scriveners (3): Noun. A professional or public copyist or writer : scribe.
3. Imprimis (3): in the first place
4. Orbicular (4): Adj. Having the form of a circle or sphere
5. Chancery (4): Also called court of chancery. A court having jurisdiction in equity; court of equity.
6. Arduous (4): Adj. Involving or requiring strenuous effort; difficult or tiring
7. Remunerative (4): Adj. Paying somebody or rewarding somebody with money
8. Abrogation (4): Transitive verb. To end an agreement or contract formally and publicly; do away with something
9. Pursy (4): Adj. Short-winded, especially from corpulence or fatness.
10. Meridian (4): of or pertaining to midday or noon: the meridian hour.
11. John Jacob Astor (5): (1763-1848), a German immigrant, arrived in New York penniless and became fabulously wealthy as a result of his fur trade monopoly.
12. Piratical (6): Adj. Reckless, ungoverned.
13. **Tombs (7): Maximum-security prison in New York City. Melville gives us the definition of page 31: "I went to the Tombs, or, to speak more properly, the Halls of Justice."
14. Dun (7): (1) Verb. To bother a debtor for payment repeatedly; to make repeated and insistent demands, especially concerning an overdue payment, (2) Noun. One who duns.

15. Execrable (7): Adj. Extremely bad, or of very low quality.

16. Obstreperousness (7): adj. Noisy and difficult to control.

17. Pernicious (7): Adj. Causing great harm, destruction, or death.

18. Vintner (7): Noun. Wine merchant.

19. Potations (7): Noun. The act of drinking.

20. Paroxysms (8): Noun. A sudden and uncontrollable expression of emotion.

21. Alacrity (8): Noun. Eager readiness; promptness or eager and speedy readiness.

22. Byron (9): English Romantic poet and satirist.

23. **Prefer (10): Transitive Verb. (1) To like or want something/somebody more than something/somebody else.

24. **Cicero (10, 19): Roman statesmen, orator and author.

25. **Hermitage (11): Noun. A building or shelter where a hermit lives or where a group of people live an isolated religious life.

26. Ignominious (11, 14): Adj. Deserving or causing public disgrace or shame.

27. Dyspeptic (12): Adj. Having acid indigestion.

28. **Reveries (12): Noun. A state of idle and pleasant contemplation; daydream.

29. Mulish (13): Adj. Stubborn; Obstinate and unwilling to cooperate or listen to suggestions.

30. Vagary (13): Noun. An unpredictable change.

31. Pugilistic (13): Adj. A pugilist is a boxer, esp. professional one. So being “pugilistic” means being “like a boxer”

32. Inveteracy (14): Noun. Something habitual; fixed in a habit or practice, especially a bad one.

33. Wight (14): Noun. A living being, especially a human being.

34. Dissipation (15): Noun. (1) Overindulgence in the pursuit of pleasure, (2) the squandering of resources such as money or fuel, (3) the scattering or dispersal of something

35. Inadvertence (15): Adj. Resulting from carelessness; done unintentionally or without thinking.

36. Dishabille (16): Noun. State of casual dress.

37. Decorous (16): Adj. (1) Conforming to what is acceptable or expected in formal or solemn settings, especially in dress or behavior, (2) dignified.

38. Marius (17): a Roman general (157-86 B.C.)

39. Carthage (17): Marius, the Roman general, was part of the army that destroyed the commercial empire of Carthage.

40. Chimeras (17): Noun. In Greek mythology, a female fire-breathing monster, typically represented as a combination of a lion's head, goat's body, and serpent's tail.

41. Pigeonholes (17) Noun. A place to put messages.

42. Refectory (17) Noun. A dining hall.

43. Pallid (18): Adj. Pale.

44. Efficacy (20): Noun. Effectiveness.

45. Ascendancy (24): Noun. A position of power or domination over others.

46. Cadaverous (24): Adj. Resembling a corpse in being very thin, bony and pale.

47. **Edwards (26): Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), American theologian.

48. **Priestley (26): Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), English clergyman and chemist who discovered oxygen.

49. Incubus (27): Noun. (1) something that causes somebody much worry or anxiety, especially a nightmare or obsession, (2) a male demon

50. ** Particular (29) Adj. Realting to one person or thing out of several.

51. Omnibus (30) Noun. Another word for a bus.

52. Quiescent (30): Adj. Inactive or at rest.

53. Rockaway (30): Noun. A horse-drawn carriage.

54. **Forgers (32): Noun. Someone who commits the act of forging or producing a copy of a document, signature, banknote, or work of art.

Adapted from Draeger, G. Millstone Education.

Allusions and Definitions in Bartelby

Adam: First man in the Bible's Book of Genesis. The narrator refers to himself and Bartleby as "sons of Adam" to point out that they are, in a sense, brothers.
Astor, John Jacob: Famous financier and industrialist who was the world's wealthiest man at the time of his death. Astor (1763-1848) was a real historical personage. He plays no role in "Bartleby the Scrivener," but the narrator refers to him as a former client, saying Astor praised him for his business qualities.
Adams: See Colt.
Byron: George Gordon Lord Byron (1788-1824), one of the great English romantic poets.
Cicero: Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC), Roman statesman, writer, and scholar who attempted to preserve the republican government (in which citizens elected their representatives) during civil wars that culminated in the replacement the Roman republic with a government ruled by an emperor.
Colt: John C. Colt. In a sensational trial in New York City, Colt was convicted in January 1842 of murdering printer Samuel Adams in 1841 after the latter attempted to collect money Colt owed him. Adams had printed textbooks that Colt used to teach bookkeeping. Colt was sentenced to hang on November 18, 1842, but committed suicide shortly before the scheduled execution.
Edwards: Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), American theologian, philosopher, and fiery preacher. Edwards, a Puritan, espoused a form of determinism arguing that a human being cannot act in contradiction to the will of God. He explained his opposition to the concept of free will in his book *A Careful And Strict Enquiry Into The Modern Prevailing Notions Of That Freedom Of Will Which Is Supposed to Be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame.*
Edwards, Monroe: Notorious Kentucky-born forger. After Edwards (1808-1847) was tried and convicted in New York City, he was sentenced to the Tombs prison, where he died after prison guards beat him.
Kings and Counselors: This phrase, which appears in the last sentence of the story, alludes to the Old Testament's Book of Job, Chapter 3, Verses 13-14.
Marius: Gaius Marius (157-86 BC), Roman general and consul who had won great military victories for Rome. In a political struggle, Marius fell from power and was exiled for a time to Africa. He stayed briefly in Carthage before sailing to an island to escape his enemies.
new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another: Allusion to words spoken by Christ, as reported in the New Testament in John, Chapter 13, Verse 34.
Petra: Ancient capital of a Middle Eastern Semitic people known as Nabateans. The remains of the city are in present-day Jordan. Petra is famous for its beautiful structures carved from rose-red rock.
Priestley: Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), English clergyman and scientist best remembered as the discoverer of oxygen. He rejected many orthodox Christian beliefs, earning a reputation as radical religious thinker. In "Bartleby the Scrivener," the narrator's phrase "Priestley on Necessity" may be a reference to one of Priestley's books, *The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity*, published in London in 1777.
Sing-Sing: Prison established in 1824 at Sing Sing (a town now known as Ossining), about thirty

miles north of New York City.
Spitzenbergs: Spitzenburgs. A spitzenburg (or *esopus spitzenburg*) is a variety of apple prized for its exceptional taste.
Tombs: A Manhattan prison and court complex known officially as The New York Halls of Justice and House of Detention. The granite structure was modeled after an Egyptian mausoleum.

Adapted from Cummings Study Guides.

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Given that *Bartelby the Scrivener: a Tale of Wall Street* will certainly provide a challenge for at least some students, student reading will be scaffolded with the following supports:

Scaffolding *Bartelby*

Materials:

- The **glossary** of difficult vocabulary words is here. The glossary should be provided for students in hardcopy form to account for those students without computer/internet access. For those students with internet access, the internet address will be provided on the hardcopy, as well.
- **Explanatory notes** are hyperlinked here. These notes correspond with the hardcopy of the text that students will be provided (linked in the Goals and Rubrics section).
- Their **journals** and **reading notes** will serve as a handy resource to reference in class discussion the following day; they can revisit these to remind them of what they struggled with and what they wanted to discuss. Incentive to read could spring from the reminder that you may feel compelled to assign a reading quiz the following day.

Method:

- Be optimistic in challenging your students! Encourage students that the glossary and the notes will prove helpful in their reading.
- Remind students that we will work with the text as a group the following day (through the collaborative reenactment activity and the body biography activity), but it is still important that they finish the assigned reading at home, even if they don't understand all of the text completely.
- Remind students to write on their hardcopy of the text, highlighting/underlining/circling the areas that interested or confused them.
- Students should also use their reading journals to take notes and address the questions on Bartleby's resistance that are outlined earlier in today's lesson. These notes won't be graded, but they will be expected to discuss their responses in class the next day.

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Collaborative Reenactment Activity

Purpose

By having the teacher read this pivotal scene from the text, the focus is on the volunteers as they inhabit and flesh out the characters. In so doing, students fill out multiple gaps in the text. The audience takes a stance toward those decisions and can further explore them in the interviews afterward.

Preparation and Method

1. In pairs, have students take 10 minutes to review the scene as if they were going to turn it into a play. They should visualize the settings the characters are in, the physical actions they make, and the artifacts/props that they use.
2. Ask students to arrange their seats in a partial circle around a large, clear space in the room.
3. Let students know they are going to do a collaborative reenactment to help them use what they have just done to deepen their understanding of this scene and their understanding of Bartleby's perspective.
4. Ask for two volunteers—one to play the narrator in the scene and one Bartleby. Tell them that you will read while the actors pantomime relevant physical and facial movements of the characters. Let students know that after the performance, they will be able to interview the two characters as well as the actors.
5. Read the scene here as it is from the text, and as you read, the volunteers will pantomime the scene. Stop where indicated on the handout to ask the actor playing Bartleby to consider what his character was doing while the narrator was walking around. Let both actors know they should continue to pantomime what they think the characters did during this time (e.g., Bartleby tidying up, the narrator walking around the neighborhood).

After the pantomime is over, discuss the following:

- Ask the audience, "What questions would you like to ask these characters?"
- Allow students to ask the actors about the choices their characters made (for example, how they felt or their perspectives about the other, why they made certain decisions).
    - If this does not happen spontaneously, you can start the discussion by asking, "Bartleby, how did it feel when you heard the Narrator's key in the lock? Where did you go after?"
- Interview the actors on their experience by asking questions like, "What did it feel like to be the Narrator? To be Bartleby? When you were playing this character, what did you notice about the other person?"

Adapted from Simon, L. Reaching Across Time: Scaffolded Engagements With a 19th-Century Text, 2008.

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Body Biography Assignment

For the body biography, students work in groups to fill in the outline of a human body with images and language that depict the experiences and relationships of a literary character on a large sheet of butcher paper with markers or crayons.

Assignment

For your chosen character (either the narrator or Bartelby) your group will create a *body biography*—a visual and written portrait illustrating several aspects of the character's life within the play. The body biography should:

- Review significant events, choices, and changes involving the character
- Communicate the full essence of the character by emphasizing the traits that make her/him who s/he is
- Promote discussion of the character

The body biographies should include

- A review of significant happenings in the story
- Visual symbols
- An original text
- The character's three most important lines from the story

Remember

- Be deliberate with you placement of the body biography elements
    - For example, employ the character's spine symbolically
- Depict the character's distinctive qualities and flaws
- Use color as a symbol
- Consider additional symbolic possibilities
- Consider both the surface and inner dimensions of the character's psyche

Adapted from Smagorinsky, P. Teaching English by Design, 2008.

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Mock Trial Activity

The ghost of Bartelby has returned, and he has been put on trial for his insubordination. The defendants of the trial are Bartelby and his lawyers while the plaintiffs are the narrator, Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut and their lawyers. The rest of the students will make up the jury, and one student in particular will be the judge. Have students draw roles from a hat to determine the roles they will play. Pass out these handouts which explain the student's roles more thoroughly.

- Roles of the members of the mock trial.
- General rules for attorneys
- For the Defense Attorneys
- For the Prosecution Attorneys

Mock Trial Presentation Rubric

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Evidence of Persuasion	Speaker maintains a clear position throughout presentation. Opposing view mentioned and then refuted, making case stronger.	Speaker maintains a clear position throughout presentation. Opposing view not mentioned or mentioned but not well refuted.	Speaker moves from one side to the other, never maintaining a solid position.	Speaker does not establish a clear position.
Quality of Information	Examples and references are well chosen to best exemplify main points in defense or prosecution of the character. All points are well supported.	References support the main point. Research is used to support defense or prosecution of the character. Main points are adequately convincing.	References are not connected to research or the reading. Arguments are random and unconvincing.	Information is not based on research or book or is unrelated to the main points.
Group Cooperation	Group works together to share speaking time and information equally. Information references and compliments that of other group members.	Time allotted to each member is somewhat uneven. Information connects to that of other group members.	Time allotted to each speaker is imbalanced. Information conflicts with or repeats that of other group members.	No evidence of group planning or cooperation.
Understanding of the Issue	Presentation uses quotations and examples (with page references so the jury can follow along). Examples are applied to the main points. Actions of character are evaluated against issues raised in the trial.	Presentation uses quotations and examples that connect to the main point. The information shows how actions in the reading contribute to the character's guilt or innocence.	Presentation includes few references to the text. Attempts to connect actions of the character to the issues or the trial are awkward or unconvincing.	Presentation includes no references to the text. Group speaks in generalizations about issues disconnected from the reading.
Delivery and Presentation	Speaker makes frequent eye contact with the jury. Volume and pace reflect intensity of main points. Movement and gestures add emphasis to main points.	Speaker uses notes but maintains adequate eye contact with the jury. Volume and pace are consistent with main points. Gestures and movement are used hesitantly.	Speaker uses note cards to avoid making eye contact. Volume and pace are difficult to follow. Movements are not related to speech and reflect nervousness.	Speaker never looks up, cannot be heard, moves nervously, or stands rooted to one spot.

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In-Role Writing Activity

For this assignment, you will choose a pivotal scene in *Bartelby the Scrivener* and rewrite it from the perspective of Bartelby. In about 3 pages (750 words), I want you to explore how Bartelby experienced this event. You may decide to fill in some of the gaps of Bartelby's story.

Remember: Narrators are not always reliable. The original story's narrator, Bartelby's employer, could have misconstrued occurrences, exaggerated events, or misinterpreted Bartelby's actions and intentions. If you so choose, you may decide to show Bartelby in a different light; you may choose to explain his odd behaviors from a more sympathetic standpoint with a back-story of your creation.

Rubric for your In-Role Writing

- Writing should fit the length suggested above (3-4 typed pages).
- Your writing should mirror both the style and the tone of the original novel. Your assignment should fit in with the feel of *Bartelby the Scrivener*. Do your best to emulate Melville's style while still incorporating your original ideas.
- Your pieces should discuss Bartelby's experience in the deadletter office and give the reader some insight into why he ends up the way he does.
- If you decide to work together, group members should equally contribute to the creation of this piece. You have the option of working alone, but if you chose not to, you must all contribute equally.

Adapted from Dalton, K. Don't Touch That: Censorship and Literature in the High School Classroom, 2011.

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Reading Circle Activity

Students will go around reading the single word they picked out, circle around the group, then read the line they chose, circle around again, and end reading the entire section that interested them. After everyone has finished reading, ask the students their thoughts on the activity.

- Did they notice any patterns? Did some choose the same parts?
- What did they notice about the uninterrupted reading from person to person?
- Which passage/line/word stuck out the most?

Ask students to volunteer speaking about why they chose the particular word, line, or phrase they selected; what was special about it?

While still sitting in a circle, have volunteers read *Mending Wall* and *The Road Not Taken* back to back. Ask the following questions:

- How are these two poems similar?
- How are they different?
- What do these two poems say about individuality?

Keep these as backup questions

- Do you think the speaker in the *Mending Wall* wants to be cut off from his neighbor? Why or why not?
- In *The Road Not Taken*, why does the speaker choose to take the path that is less traveled? What could this represent?
    - Is there another way of interpreting this poem? Is the narrator perhaps being sarcastic? (This is a possible opportunity to talk about narrator reliability and incorporate the narrator from Bartelby.)
- How do these perspectives of nonconformity differ to the ideas you encountered in *Bartelby*?

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Subordinating Conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction connects two types of clauses:

- An independent clause (one that can stand on its own as a complete sentence).
- A dependent clause (one that cannot stand on its own and must be attached to an independent clause).

Common subordinating conjunctions include the following words:

after	if	till
although	once	until
as	since	when
because	than	where
before	that	whether
how	though	while

Here are some examples of these words acting as subordinating conjunctions. Note that either the independent or the dependent clause may come first in the sentence.

- *Until* someone convinces me otherwise, I'll take Oat Loops over Fruit Boops any day.
- I prefer Fruit Boops over Oat Loops, *though* some days their sugary sweetness makes my teeth ache.
- *After* I eat dinner, I often eat a giant bowl of Oat Loops for dessert.

- Fruit Boops—flavored Toast-R Tarts are delicious *because* they have so much extra sugar in them.

In the exercise that follows, you are provided with two clauses. Connect them using one of the subordinating conjunctions from the list in order to form a complex sentence.

Subordinating Conjunction Exercise

1. Some people prefer listening to the tenor saxophone.
   I would rather hear the soprano.

2. El Toro serves its chips hot and crisp.
   At Los Compadres the chips are served cold and soggy.

3. The Times New Roman font is a big favorite.
   I like Ariel much better.

4. The Jack Russel Terrier is a very popular breed of dog.
   I find them to be rather nippy, yippy, and zippy.

5. Olson's Hardware Store carries many types of hex nuts.
   Generic Tools only has the standard sizes.

6. The red buckeye flowers early in the spring.
   White buckeyes flower in mid-summer.

7. Bill Cosby talks a lot about his family in his comedy.
   Eddie Izzard talks more about history.

8. Truck commercials seem targeted to tough guys.
   Minivan commercials are designed for family consumers.

9. Chinese egg rolls are filling and come in a wheat dough wrapper.
   Vietnamese egg rolls are wrapped in rice paper and are lighter.

10. In Season One of *24*, Jack Bauer was married to Terri.
    In Season Two Jack's girlfriend was Kate Warner.

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Assigned reading schedule for *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

Average: About 55 pages per week over a course of 4 weeks.

Week 2
Week 3
Week 4
Week 5

Part I

- Ch. 1, p. 3 – 15 (12 pages)
- Ch. 3, p. 40 – 64 (24 pages)
- Ch. 4, p. 64 – 84 = 56 pages by Monday of **Week 2**
  ***Quiz on this section, Monday, Day 11.**
- Ch. 5, p. 84 – 108 (24 pages)
- Ch. 6, p. 108 – 114 (6 pages)

Part II

- Ch. 1, p. 117 – 145 (28 pages) = 58 pages by Monday of **Week 3**
  ***Quiz on this section, Monday, Day 16**
- Ch. 3, p. 162 – 179 (17 pages)
- Ch. 4, p. 179 – 192 (13 pages)
- Ch. 6, p. 217 – 236 (19 pages) = 49 pages **by Monday of Week 4**
  ***Quiz on this section, Monday, Day 21**
- Ch. 7, p. 237 – 268 (15 pages)
- Ch. 9, p. 285 – 301 (16 pages)
- Ch. 14, p. 366 – 383 (17 pages)
- Ch. 15, p. 383 – 391 (8) = 56 pages **by Monday of Week 5**
  ***Final quiz, Monday, Day 26**

Part III

- None

Note: All page numbers are based on the 1993 Modern Library edition of the book. All other versions may differ in pagination. In that case, go by Part and Chapter number.

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Questions during the video:

1. What spurred Jane Elliot to create the blue-eyed/brown-eyed lesson?

2. Why does Elliot claim that blue-eyed people are better than brown-eyed people?

3. According to the former students of Elliot, why did some of the students enjoy being the superior group?

4. How did the blue-eyed vs. brown-eyed activity affect student's academic ability?

5. How do the adults react differently from the children? How do they react similarly to the students?

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Learning the Bill of Rights

- Direct students to identify ten physical "hooks" in the classroom; hooks can be any physical item in the classroom that is prominent, permanent, and stationary. For example, start with the overhead projector cart and work clockwise around the room, identifying and memorizing all ten objects before moving on to the next step. Some examples of hooks are as follows:
    - Hook # 1 Overhead projector cart
    - Hook # 2 Electric fan
    - Hook # 3 White board on the side of the room
    - Hook # 4 Window
    - Hook # 5 Book case
    - Hook # 6 U.S. flag
    - Hook # 7 Wall-mounted television
    - Hook # 8 Wall-mounted public address system speaker
    - Hook # 9 Floor
    - Hook # 10 Ceiling
- Working with the class as a whole, drill the students several times on what object they had picked for each number. Encourage choral responses. It's important for each student to be sure of the object that represents each number before moving on to the next step.
- Pass out this handout to students. Explain the main idea of the protections guaranteed by each Amendment.
- Ask students how they could associate the protection with its corresponding "hook." It's important that the students themselves have time to reflect and suggest the connection between each physical hook and the guarantee(s) contained in the Amendment. In this manner, the students "own" the connection and the memory device will be much more effective than if the teacher chooses the method of association. This process takes some time, but time spent in this activity is an investment that pays lasting dividends in terms of academic understanding as well as rapport in the learning community of the classroom. If the method of association is humorous, or uses rhyme, rhythm, or music, so much the better! The most memorable and effective associations were those that were silly and unique. Below are some possible examples.
    - **Hook # 1**: How do we use the projector cart in ways that will remind us of the First Amendment, which guarantees freedoms of religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly?
        - Religion: Projector bulb: "I have seen the light!"
        - Speech: The projector cart is sometimes used as a podium, which is where people give speeches.
        - Press: We write on transparencies to "publish the news" for the class each day.
        - Petition: If a student wants to find me to request (petition for) a change in classroom rules, the projector cart is the most likely place in the room where he can find me. Imagine running into the room and sliding on one's knees to beg for the change!
        - Assembly: The classroom is often cold; if we all assemble around the projector, we'll stay warmer. Imagine warming hands around a "fire".

- Once students have had enough time trying to memorize all ten Amendments, give volunteers an opportunity to try to name all ten Bill of Rights. Reward the winner with a few extra points toward their final project. If no students are successful at naming all ten, reward the student with the highest number of Amendments memorized or allow students more time to try to learn the Bill of Rights for homework and quiz the students the following day

Final Notes on the Activity

- Give some advance thought to the possible hooks that students may identify in your classroom, but let students take the initiative as much as possible in making the actual selections.

Adapted from Tricks for Teaching the Bill of Rights.

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Workshop Guidelines

Answer each of these questions on a separate sheet of paper for at least three of your peers. Be certain to list both your name and the author's name, distinguishing the reviewer from the writer.

1. Is the introduction at least three to five sentences? How does the writer set up the thesis?
2. Write out the thesis of the essay. Considering the points made in class and explained on your handouts, what problems (if any) do you see with this thesis?
3. Which body paragraphs are missing main ideas and/or topic sentences? Which have topic sentences that do not relate either to the thesis or the information provided in the paragraph?
4. Writers need to make links between paragraphs, using transition words or repeating key concepts or words. What words in the first sentence of each paragraph help make transitions?
5. Between which paragraphs does the writer need to incorporate better transitions? Look at all three body paragraphs and the conclusion in answering this question.
6. Body Paragraphs—Answer for each body paragraph.
    a. Concrete, specific examples?
    b. Thoughtful subpoints?
    c. Unified around topic sentence (no digressions)
    d. Flows smoothly from sentence to sentence
    e. Uses sources well
        i. Material cited is a good choice for developing the topic sentence?
        ii. All material makes sense with what's around it?
        iii. Introduced with signal phrases?
        iv. Good choice about quoting vs. paraphrasing?
        v. Quotations copied exactly?
        vi. MLA parenthetical citations used correctly?

    Which of the paragraphs are best developed? Which paragraphs need more thorough or better organized development? How could they be further developed? If needed, where could another secondary source be added? If needed, where can another real world example be added?
7. Sometimes students write paragraphs that digress--where the discussion wonders away from the main idea of the paragraph. Or sometimes it is just one sentence that doesn't really belong in a paragraph. Which sentences in which paragraphs do not help develop the main idea of that paragraph?
8. Find two places (one to three sentences) where the writer needs to work on style, either combining sentences or smoothing out awkward working.

Adapted from Buxton, D. & Kramer, P. Unit Plan: Educational Issues as a Medium through Which We Educate,2004.

Compare and Contrast Practice

Learning how to conduct a compare and contrast inquiry:

1. Brainstorm for two things to compare and contrast.
    a. Here are some possibilities:
        i. Two athletes or athletic teams. Pick two that are reasonably similar, such as two goalies or two gymnastics teams; don't choose an ice hockey goalie and an equestrian rider, or a jailai team and a bowling team.
        ii. Two restaurants. Pick two of the same type, for example, two Mexican restaurants or two pizza parlors.
        iii. Two social groups in you school.
        iv. Two musical groups of relatively similar types, such as two gospel choirs or two calypso bands.
        v. Two TV shows or movies of the same type, such as two "odd couple" stories or two police dramas.
        vi. Two clothing stores of the same type, such as two department stores or two military surplus stores.
        vii. Other comparisons of your choice.
2. Think of areas in which you can compare and contrast the two items.
    a. For instance, let's say that your parents play music by both the Beatles and the Rolling Stones around the house. You have acquired their music for your own collection and so are familiar with both groups. You decide to compare and contrast them because you wonder which is the better band. What *categories* might you use for points of comparison? These categories should be aspects of musicianship that are important to you. You might, then, rule out eye color because no matter what color their eyes are, their music still sounds the same. Categories that matter could include songwriting ability, singing ability, virtuosity on their instruments, influence on other musicians, and longevity in the music business. What areas of comparison can you think of for the two items that you are focusing on?
3. Think about how your two items measure up in each of the areas of comparison you have identified, and begin writing the categories for comparison in all caps with the two comparative items listed under each category. For the two comparison items you have selected, think of examples you can give for each in all of the categories you have identified and write those on your sheet of paper, too.
    a. For example, using the Beatles vs. Rolling Stones comparison, your paper may look something like this:

SONGWRITING ABILITY

Beatles: Lennon and McCartney the primary songwriters' early in career, recorded rhythm and blues songs by other writers; toward the end of the band's life, often the songs had nonsensical lyrics; wrote many classics

Rolling Stones: Jagger and Richards the primary songwriters; early in career, recorded rhythm and blues songs by other writers; wrote songs that generally made sense; wrote many classics.

SINGING ABILTIY

Beatles: All four members sang 'Starr rarely sang lead and had a not unpleasant voice; Harrison sang more often and was OK but too nasal; Lennon or McCartney sang most leads and had strong voices; McCartney best on "pretty" songs; great harmonies

Rolling Stones: Jagger sang lead on all songs; sassy, edgy voice; not always quite in tune; decent harmonies.

Continue in this way until all categories are completed.

4. Then, begin to assemble this information into a written comparison. After looking over your notes, you might discuss them with your group or free write about the similarities and differences between the two things you are comparing and contrasting. You should also begin to think about the conclusions you could draw from your inquiry.
    a. For instance, for the Beatles-Rolling Stones comparison, you might develop the thesis that the two groups are both highly influential and talented, but that you prefer the Beatles because they were more innovative in developing new directions for rock and roll music, while the Rolling Stones mainly stayed within the rhythm and blues genre for more than forty years.

20 minutes: Students will break out of groups and continue with the activity independently by beginning to draft their essays based on the information that they have assembled; they will have ample time to complete this tomorrow:

1. The thesis you developed previously.
    a. For example, that the Beatles and Rolling Stones were both popular, influential bands but that the Beatles were more innovative because their music crew beyond their rhythm and blues roots— could provide the basis for an introductory paragraph to an essay comparing and contrasting two items.

2. Next, try to develop a paragraph for each area of comparison.
    a. For example, if you were comparing the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, you might start by comparing and contrasting them according to their singing ability. However, instead of just listing the illustrations from your notes, think of examples that would support the major points youare trying to make. You might say that because all four Beatles could sing, they were able to produce better harmonies than the Rolling Stones and so had more flexibility with their song arrangements, which allowed them to develop more complex songs. By doing so, you are providing evidence in support of your thesis that the Beatles were a better band because their sound took new directions over time. When possible, give specific evidence to support you claims such as that the Beatles' harmonies and multiple singers gave their albums a divergent sound, while the Rolling Stones' reliance solely on Jagger gave all of their music a similar sound. Further, provide a *warrant*—that is, an explanation (often beginning with "Because…") of why the evidence supports the claim.
3. Finally draw some sort of conclusion based on your comparison and contrast, possibly developing the ideas you stated in your thesis.
    a. You might conclude, for instance, that songs recorded by the Rolling Stones across four decades all have a very similar sound, while songs recorded by the Beatles during the 1960s show a radical change from derivative rhythm and blues to highly sophisticated acid rock, incorporating influences from multiple cultures and sources.

Adapted from Smagorinsky, P. Teaching English by Design, 2008.

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Who are the Bobs?

The Bobs are a "new wave" a cappella group that originally came from San Francisco. At the time of their formation, the members of the band delivered singing telegrams, but when Western Union folded in 1981, they became unemployed. Gunnar Madsen and Matthew Stull were among these now out-of-work singers. They loved singing together and wanted to form an a cappella singing group so they could continue singing for a living. They placed a small classified advertisement looking for a bass singer and got one call, from Richard "Bob" Greene, who not only sang bass but also wrote songs and had experience as a recording engineer.

Their first show was an open mike in a Cuban restaurant where they sang "Psycho Killer" by the Talking Heads, "Helter Skelter" by the Beatles, and other songs rarely sung by a cappella groups. The audience found them different and amusing and responded enthusiastically. In their other early shows they sang other popular songs with new and innovative arrangements, but soon they began writing their own material, also with unusual arrangements. These new songs often required an additional voice. As they began writing their own songs, they realized that they

needed to add another singer. They held auditions and discovered Janie "Bob" Scott, who joined the group and helped to polish their performances.

The name Bobs is of uncertain origin. It might be an acronym for Best of Breed, which is an award given out at dog shows for the overall winner of the show. Or it might be a short version of the Oral Bobs. Or it might be something else. In any case, although none of the singers is actually named Bob, all use Bob for a middle name.

Kaleidoscope Records in San Francisco produced their first album, *The Bobs*. They got a Grammy nomination for their version of "Helter Skelter," which also won a Contemporary A Cappella Recording Award (CARA) in 1996. Their award was presented with the following comments: "Rather than translating instrumental parts to voices or relying on clichéd syllables and voicings, Gunnar and Richard created a new vocabulary of sounds and textures. The arrangement deconstructs the song line by line, transforming the Beatles classic into an a cappella, post-modern performance art piece." This recognition helped launch a national tour; they also received exposure on radio and television, and embarked on tours across the U.S. and Europe, including performances at major music festivals. They have since won numerous CARA awards.

Since their early success, the Bobs have written songs on many odd and witty topics. These include cattle farming on the moon, doing laundry, Watergate villains, graffiti, security guards at shopping malls, cats who want to conquer the world, tattoos, spontaneous human combustion, heart transplants, bus drivers, violence at the post office, and other amusing curiosities. Furthermore, their a cappella arrangements are very unusual. Some have called their performances a cross between the Barenaked Ladies and Manhattan Transfer.

While most of their music is a cappella, they have included toy drums, technology that distorts their voices, a piano, clapping, and occasional rock band accompaniment. But since they formed in 1981they have primarily sung a cappella music. While never a widespread commercial success, they have developed a healthy cult following that has kept them performing and recording for over 25 years. Their fans rewarded them by attending several concerts in 2006 to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Bobs, in which seven of the eight singers from the band's history performed. A documentary film about their first quarter century together, *Sign My Snarling Movie: 25 Years of the Bobs*, was released in 2007.

The Bobs have not been content simply with singing. They have also worked with dance companies. They wrote a series of songs, "The Laundry Cycle," for the Oberlin Dance Collective in 1987. At around the same time they met the dance troupe named Momix, later known as ISO. Their collaboration was known for its improvisation and creativity. This work attracted the attention of the Lincoln Center, which resulted in a show on public television and recognition in the Smithsonian Institute Museum of American History. They have also provided the majority of the soundtrack for the 1996 film *For Better or Worse*, and during the televised Emmy Award program, they performed a medley of television themes with former *Seinfeld* co-star Jason Alexander.

The band's membership has completely turned over since the original quartet. Co-founder Gunnar "Bob" Madsen retired in 1990, and was replaced by Joe "Bob" Finetti for a thirteen-year run with the band. Other changes in personnel occurred as well. The group has therefore both evolved and remained true to its core principles of performing musically adroit yet wacky lyrics, sound effects, and arrangements for a highly entertaining effect. The *Bergen (NJ) Record/Home News Tribune* has described the Bobs as "One of the most entertaining acts on the live circuit today."

Who are The Persuasions?

The Persuasions are an a cappella singing group that formed in Brooklyn in 1966. The group has had a very stable membership over the years, although the personnel have changes as the band has aged (and in one case, died). Jerry Lawson, who left the group in 2003 to do charitable work and perform solo, was a founding member and sang lead vocals for over four decades. Second tenor "Sweet" Joe Russell has sung the high range of the arrangements for most of the group's history, although he took a leave of absence due to illness at one point and presently is the Persuasions' lead singer. Jimmy Hayes has been a stalwart as the group's bass singer and has occasionally sung lead vocals on songs such as "Sixty Minute Man." Jayotis Washington sings tenor and occasional lead and has also been with the group since its founding, with a brief departure from which he returned. Herbert "Tuobo" Rhodes, an original Persuasion who sang harmonies in the baritone range, died in 1988 while the band was touring.

During the core members' absences from the band, others have filled their roles in the group's harmonies. Temporary Persuasions have included Bernard Jones, Willie C. Daniels, and Beverly Rohlehr, the band's only female member, who briefly filled in for Joe Russel. For the most part the Persuasions have included five singers, but have toured and recorded albums with four during various members' leaves of absence from the band and following Toubo Rhodes' death.

The Persuasions have released about twenty albums over the course of their 45+ year history and have performed on stages all over the world. They have performed concerts on their own and have also opened for Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, Joni Mitchell, Ray Charles, Bill Cosby, Richard Pryor, and other major stars. And early in their careers, Roseanne Barr and Bruce Springsteen opened for the Persuasions. They have also recorded and performed with a diverse array of musicians, including Stevie Wonder, Bette Midler, Liza Minelli, Van Morrison, Lou Reed, Gladys Knight, Patti LaBelle, Little Richard, Nancy Wilson, the Neville Brothers, Country Joe McDonald, B.B. King, and Paul Simon. Not only have they kept distinguished company, they have performed at levels at least as high as those of their friends and collaborators.

The Persuasions' music is grounded in gospel, soul, doo-wop, and rhythm & blues music, although they have also performed music from other genres. They have written little music of their own, choosing instead to interpret songs from other composer's catalogues. Their songs have come from the African American church, Motown, soul artists such as Sam Cooke (their most important influence), Elvis Presley, and others. Even when the song they sing was originally not soulful, their performance of it always is, artists, including CDs featuring the music of the Beatles, Frank Zappa, U2, and the Grateful Dead. They have also released albums centering on gospel music and children's songs. In every case their music is inspired, soulful, and filled with energy and humor.

The Persuasions are considered by many to be the epitome of a cappella music, especially in the arena of doo-wop, soul, and gospel-inspired music. Many groups list them among their most important influences, including Take 6, the Nylons, Rockapella, and Boys II Men. In many ways they are responsible for the survival of a cappella music outside the confined of barbershops and college choral groups. The secret to their success is that they have not sold out. They did record one album with musical accompaniment but abandoned the experiment and returned to their roots for the remainder of their history. No matter what the source of their

music—Rodgers and Hammerstein, Bob Dylan, Clyde McPhatter, or children's songs—they infuse the music with their wit, charm, energy, and soaring harmonies. They have taken songs from across the musical spectrum and reinvented them as pure Persuasion creations.

In the 19902 Persuasions admirer Fred Parnes produced the documentary film *Spread the Word: Their Persuasions Sing A Cappella,* which has been warmly embraced by the Persuasions' many admirers. Their music has appeared in film soundtracks as a diverse as *Joe Versus the Volcano, The Heartbreak Kid, Streets of Gold,* and *E.T. the Extraterrestrial*. They have also appeared on several television specials, including Spike Lee's *Do It A Cappella* (in which they were described as "the godfathers of a cappella") and the public television special *Music of the Late Kurt Weil*. They have additionally sung on *Good Morning America,* the *Today Show,* the *Tonight Show, Saturday Night Live!,* and *Late Night with Conan O'Brien.*

The Persuasions keep on keepin' on, weathering changes in personnel and the ever fickle public taste in music. They have endured because of their love for their work and their talent in choosing material, arranging it, and singing it with gusto. They are truly the Godfathers of A Cappella, the Kings of A Cappella, and every other accolade bestowed upon them since the early 1960s. May they sing forever.

Adapted from Smagorinsky, P. Teaching English by Design, 2008.

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Teaching Personal Experience Narratives

Promoting Attention to Detail

- Have students take out a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil. Next, in order to match papers to their authors without revealing the students' identities, ask them to number the papers consecutively, one through the number of students in the class. Tell them to make sure both feet are under their desk and out of sight. Without looking, they are to write a detailed description of their left shoe, including as many details as they can remember and being as specific as they can. Someone else in the class should be able to pick out their shoe from a group of similar shoes using their description.
- Patrol the classroom for ten or fifteen minutes as students write their descriptions, making a great show of not allowing students to peek at their left shoe. Collect the compositions as students finish them or when time is up.
- Once all the shoes are in the center of the room, mix them up into a giant "left-shoe salad." Redistribute the compositions the students wrote so each students gets someone else's. Tell them they are to read the composition they have been given and then see whether they can find the shoe that matches the description. (If someone blurts out, "But so many of them are just alike; how are we going to pick out the right one?" you can teasingly remind them to pick the *left* one, not the right one!) Point out that if their partner has written a good, specific description of the shoe, they should have little difficulty picking the correct one. Have the students read the compositions silently, looking carefully at the details the writer provided. Then, in groups of four or five, have them look through the shoes for the one that matches the description. When they think they have found the correct shoe, they return to their desk and write the number of the

shoe on the composition they were given. (Keep this part of the activity moving along; it should last no more than three or four minutes.)

- Once all the students have had a chance to find a matching shoe, ask volunteers to read their composition while you hold up the shoe they've identified as matching the description. Point out key details that help identify the shoe: prominent cuff marks, discolorations, stains, patterns of wear on the soul, and other identifying characteristics.
- Some compositions will offer few if any specific details that help identify the shoe. For example, the student who reads, "It's a white athletic shoe, and it is fairly new. It is a size 9 I think. There is like a black band around the side of the shoe. I think the shoe probably has some scuff marks on it, "will probably not be able to pick out the corresponding shoe, since a number of shoes will fit this vague and general description.
- After confirming which shoe corresponds to which description, spend a few minutes discussing why some students found the matching shoe and others did not. Most often the reason is the writer's use of specific details.
- If students complain that the activity isn't fair because they were not allowed to look at their left shoe, remind them that when they write about a personal experience, they have to be able to remember specific details related to it, just as you asked them to remember specific details about the shoe they put on their foot that morning and have worn all day. Memory plays an important role in generating specific details that will make a past experience come alive for readers.

Adapted from Smagorinsky, P. Teaching English by Design, 2008.

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Seashell Activity

- Put together a set of fifteen or sixteen similar seashells. (Try using small conch shells, each one between three and five inches in length and characterized by brightly colored spirals and a smooth inner surface.) Place a small piece of tape on each shell and number them consecutively. Although all the shells are the same type and have similar colors and spirals, each one is unique in some way. It might be the particular colors or shades of color, the size or exact shape, a chip on one edge, the particular texture, or even the way the spiral is shaped (or misshapen). When students first see the set f shells, they often comment that they all look the same; however, on closer examination, each one is unique.
- Begin by showing a single shell of a different type from the ones you will use later (We often use a scallop shell.) Hold it up for everyone to see. Point out that if asked to describe it, many people would probably say something like, "It is kind of flat and kind of a half circle shape. It has ridges and it is sort of pink." Then take out a second scallop shell and hold it up next to the original one. "But, as you can see, that description also matches the other shell I just put right next to it. In fact , you probably can't tell which one I was holding first. I f you want to describe that shell in such a way that someone would be able to pick it out form another similar shell, you have got to be more specific than I just was."

- Next offer some details a writer might focus on to distinguish one shell from the other: a difference in exact color or shape or in the particular textures and colors that make up the unique radiating fluted pattern.
- Give each group of three or four students one seashell. Ask them to write a group composition (not a list) describing their shell so that another group will be able to pick it out from all the other shells. The opportunity to work with peers throughout the instructional sequence characterizes a structured process approach. In the early stages of a sequence of activities, the peer groups encourage students to talk through their process of describing things in detail; they learn through articulating their ideas and also from their classmates' contributions. They also critique one another's ideas, providing immediate feedback and receiving recommendations for how to do their work better. Composing a description as a group enables students to pool their knowledge; later, they will independently apply what they learn to new tasks.
- Remind the students that they will probably want to spend some time discussing their shell and taking notes and then write a coherent composition. Give each group a number and tell them to write it at the top of their final composition.
- Tell them they may not identify the number taped to their shell or describe the piece of tape; they may not write or make marks on their shell; and they may not drop their shell or in any way cause it to have a distinctive chip or crack that is not already there.
- Give them twenty or thirty minutes to write their compositions. While they are working, make a two-column list for yourself aligning the number on each of the shells with the number of the group describing it so you'll knew which group has which shell. As students finish their descriptions, collect the shells and the compositions.
- Mix up the shells on a table in front of the classroom (to make the problem more interesting, include any leftover shells), and give each group a composition written by another group. Have the groups read the composition they have been given and, two groups at a time, come to the front of the room, pick the shell they think is being described, write the number of that shell on the composition, and return to their seats.
- While the groups are examining shells in the front of the room, ask groups that have already identified their shell, "Do you think you found the right one? What details were most important in helping you pick it out?" If a group seems unsure, as, "What made it so difficult to find the right shell? What could the writers have done to help you pick it out?" Questions like these keep students focused and prompt them to be more reflective about what is necessary to write an effective description of the shell.
- Once all the groups have had an opportunity to pick out the correct shell, ask each group in turn to read aloud the composition they were given and identify the number of the shell they picked out. The group that wrote the composition then says whether or not his shell is correct.
- When all compositions have been read, asses the results. Usually, about half of the groups will have picked the correct shell. Ask those groups to explain what qualities in the composition enabled them to do so. They will identify specific details that enabled them to distinguish the correct shell from all the others. Point out and emphasize particularly effective specific details. Reinforce their use of figurative language (reference the previous activity). Hold up the shells so that the entire class can see how the writers used specific sensory details, including figurative language, to differentiate their shell.

- Before the groups return their compositions to the writers, ask them to underline the best specific detail, circle one part that was vague or confusing and writer one things that could be done to improve the composition. This final step encourages students to reflect about what they have learned and practiced. (P 62)

Adapted from Hillocks, G. Jr., *Narrative Writing: Learning a New Model for Teaching,* 2007 as cited in Smagorinsky, P., Johannessen, L.R., Kahn, E.A., & McCann, T.M., *The Dynamics of Writing Instruction: A Structured Process Approach for Middle and High School,* 2008.

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Procedures for Writing a Compare and Contrast Essay

Remember, this is not a strict sequence; just be sure to include each of these procedures somewhere along the way.

1. Identify the points of comparison and contrast between the two items
2. Characterize each item in relation to the points of comparison and contrast
3. Create priorities among the points of comparison and contrast.
4. Compare and contrast the two items
5. Make a value judgment.

Compare and Contrast Essay

Form an argument about two works that illustrate differing outlooks on one or more of the following themes

- Alienation
- Isolation
- Loneliness
- Non-conformity
- The value of community as experienced by the individual
- The risks and/or rewards of being the same/being different
- The power of singularity/community
- The oppression of the dominant class
- The liberation of individuality
- Social distrust

Your thesis should be focused on the differing perspectives of each work, but the works must not be so dissimilar that they are not somehow relatable.

I prefer that you stick with a comparison of poems, lyrics, musical performances, or paintings. However, if you have another idea for comparison (like sculptures, dance performances, etc.) be sure to clear it with me before starting your essay. Both works may be from texts explored in

class, and you may even discuss points that we brought up in discussion, but you must elaborate with original, deep, and thoughtful insight on the topic. You are also welcome to apply what we've learned to works that we have not covered in class.

Some poetic elements you might consider when trying to analyze a poem are

- Alliteration
- Symbolism
- Imagery
- Tone
- Meter
- Rhyme
- Diction

You may think that you are more familiar with analyzing poetry than you are analyzing visual art, but the process is not dissimilar. You analyze an artistic work any time you see it whether you realize it or not. When you look at a painting, hear a piece of music, or read a poem, the work incites a certain reaction from you whether that is one of boredom, excitement, curiosity, anger, or any number of things. Consider what elements of the work move you. Which do not? Look deeper into the work, trying to identify small, telling details that you may not have noticed affected you until further examination.

Elements to consider when analyzing each piece are the artist's use of

- Shape
- Lighting
- Tone
- Movement
- Negative space
- Brush stroke (painting)
- Balance
- Abstraction
- Reality
- Symbolism

After identifying these elements, some questions to consider are

- How does the artist utilize these elements to create emotion and meaning?
- How does the artist utilize the medium itself to create emotion and meaning?
- What is the mood of the work? Does it have a positive or a negative effect on me? Why?
- What about this piece contributes to my overall interpretation of it?

- What do I think the artist is trying to achieve with this piece?

When comparing the two works. Consider the previous points and ask yourself

- Why did I choose these two pieces?
- What gave me the impression that these represented two differing perspectives? How do these elements contribute to the differing messages of these two works?
- How are these two pieces similar? How do these elements contribute to the similarities between these two works?

Overarching questions concerning your interpretation of the works are

- Is community something to be feared? To be longed for? To be weary of? To be rejected?
- Is community necessary? Is the individual able to shoulder the struggles of life alone?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the individual?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the majority?
- You can also, for example, differentiate between the themes of social alienation and nonconformity. How does this examination shed light on the differing outlooks surrounding the outliers of our community?

Finally, here are some examples of possible essay topics

- How does the narrator view community in Robert Frost's *The Mending Wall* in comparison to Louis Macneice's *Prayer before Birth*?
- How does the power of this solo performance compare to the power of this national performance?
- How does this Banksy mural compare to this English propaganda poster?

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Guidelines for writing a good thesis statement

1. A good thesis states the writer's clearly defined opinion on some subject. It should state your topic plus some attitude or opinion concerning that topic. For example, you are asked to write your opinion on the national law that designates 21 as the legal minimum age to purchase or consume alcohol.

Poor: Many people have different opinions on whether people under twenty-one should be permitted to drink alcohol, and I agree with some of them. [writer's opinion is not clear to

reader]

Poor: The question of whether we need a national law governing the minimum age to drink alcohol is a controversial issue in many states. [might introduce the thesis, but the writer has avoided stating a clear opinion on the issue]

Poor: I want to give my opinion on the national law that sets twenty-one as the legal age to drink alcohol and the reasons I feel this way. [What is the writer's opinion? The reader still doesn't know.]

Better: To reduce the number of highway fatalities, our country needs to enforce the national law that designates twenty-one as the legal minimum age to purchase and consume alcohol. [writer clearly states an opinion that will be supported in the essay]

Better: The legal minimum age for purchasing alcohol should be eighteen rather than twentyone. [writer has asserted a clear position on the issue that will be argued in the essay]

2. A good thesis asserts one main idea. Many essays drift into confusion because the writer is trying to explain or argue two different, large issues in one essay. Don't ride two horses at once; pick one main idea and explain or argue it in convincing detail.

Poor: The proposed no-smoking ordinance in our town will violate a number of our citizens' civil rights, and no one has proved secondary smoke is dangerous anyway. [thesis contains two main assertions—the ordinance's violation of rights and secondary smoke's lack of danger—that require two different kinds of supporting evidence]

Better: The proposed no-smoking ordinance in our town will violate our civil rights. [this essay will show the various ways the ordinance will infringe on personal liberties]

Better: The most recent U.S. Health Department studies claiming that secondary smoke is dangerous to nonsmokers are based on faulty research. [essay will focus on one issue: the validity of the studies on secondary smoke]

Poor: High school athletes shouldn't have to maintain a certain grade-point average to participate in school sports, and the value of sports is often worth the lower academic average. [essay moves in two different directions]

Better: High school athletes shouldn't have to maintain a certain grade-point average to participate in school sports. [essay will focus on one issue: reasons why a particular average shouldn't be required]

Better: For some students, participation in sports may be more valuable than achieving a high grade-point average. [essay will focus on why the benefits of sports may sometimes outweigh those of academics]

3. A good thesis has something worthwhile to say. Avoid the "so what" thesis. While some

things can be made interesting with the right treatment, some are simply lost causes because they are predictable and therefore boring to others (abortion, drinking age, etc.). Before you write your thesis think hard about your subject: does your position lend itself to stale or overly obvious ideas?

Poor: Dogs have always been man's best friends. [probably full of clichés about dogs' faithfulness to their masters]

Poor: Friendship is a wonderful thing. [states the obvious]

Poor: Food in my cafeteria is horrible. [subject is ancient]

4. You will frequently be asked to write about yourself in composition classes. Some of the topics you may consider may not appeal to other readers because the material is too personal or restricted to be of general interest. In these cases, it often helps to universalize the essay's thesis so your readers can also identify with or learn something about the general subject, while learning something about you at the same time:

Poor: The four children in my family have completely different personalities. [statement may be true, but would anyone other than the children's parents really be fascinated with this topic?]

Better: Birth order can influence children's personalities in startling ways. [Writer is wiser to offer this controversial statement, which is of more interest to readers than the preceding one because many readers have brothers and sisters of their own. The writer can then illustrate her claims with examples from her own family, and from other families, if she wishes.]

Poor: I don't like to take courses that are held in big lecture classes at this school. [why should your reader care one way or another about your class preference?]

Better: Large lecture classes provide a poor environment for the student who learns best through interaction with both teachers and peers. [thesis will allow the writer to present personal examples that the reader may identify with or challenge, without writing an essay that is exclusively personal]

5. A good thesis is limited to fit the assignment. Your thesis should show that you have narrowed your subject matter to an appropriate size for your essay. Don't allow your thesis to promise more of a discussion than you can adequately deliver in a short essay.

Poor: Nuclear power should be banned as an energy source in this country. [can the writer give the broad subject of nuclear power fair treatment in three to five pages?]

Better: Because of its poor safety record during the past two years, the Collin County nuclear plant should be closed. [writer could probably argue this in a short essay]

Poor: The parking permit system at this college should be completely revised. [revising the system would involve discussion of permits for various kinds of students, faculty, administrators,

visitors, staff, delivery personnel, disabled persons, and so forth]

Better: Because of the complicated application process, the parking permit system at this university penalizes disabled students. [thesis is now focused on a particular problem and can be argued in a short paper]

Poor: African-American artists have always contributed a lot to many kinds of American culture. [“African-American artists,” “many kinds,” “a lot,” and “culture” too broad, cover more ground that can be dealt with in a short essay]

Better: Scott Joplin was a major influence in the development of the uniquely American music called ragtime. [thesis is more specifically defined]

6. A good thesis is clearly stated in specific terms. A vague thesis reflects lack of clarity in the writer’s mind and almost inevitably leads to an essay that talks around the subject but never makes a coherent point. Try to avoid words whose meanings are imprecise or those that depend largely on personal interpretation, such as “interesting,” “good,” and “bad.”

Poor: The women’s movement is good for our country. [what group is the writer referring to? how is it good? for whom?]

Better: The Colorado Women’s Party is working to ensure the benefits of equal pay for equal work for both males and females in our state. [tells who will benefit and how—clearly defining the thesis]

Poor: Registration is a big hassle. [no clear idea is communicated here—how much trouble is “hassle”?]

Better: Registration’s alphabetical fee-paying system is inefficient. [the issue is specified]

Poor: Living in an apartment for the first time can teach you many things about taking care of yourself. [“Things” and “taking care of yourself” are both too vague—what specific ideas does the writer want to discuss? and who is the “you” the writer has in mind?]

Better: By living in an apartment, freshman can learn valuable lessons in financial planning and time management. [thesis is now clearly defined and directed]

7. A good thesis is easily recognized as the main idea, usually located in the first or second paragraph.

Avoiding Common Errors in Thesis Statements

1. Don’t make your thesis merely an announcement of your subject matter or a description of your intentions. State an attitude toward the subject.

Poor: The subject of this theme is my experience with a pet boa constrictor. [this is an

announcement not a thesis statement]

Poor: I'm going to discuss boa constrictors as pets. [statement of intention, but not a thesis statement]

Better: Boa constrictors do not make healthy indoor pets.

Better: My pet boa constrictor, Sir Pent, was a much better bodyguard than my dog, Fang.

2. Don't clutter your thesis with expressions such as "in my opinion," "I believe," and "in this essay I'll argue that…" These unnecessary phrases weaken your thesis statement because they often make you sound timid or uncertain. This is your essay; therefore, the opinions expressed are obviously yours. Be forceful: speak directly, with conviction.

Poor: My opinion is that the federal government should devote more money to solar energy research.

Poor: My thesis states that the federal government should devote more money to solar energy research.

Better: The federal government should devote more money to solar research.

Poor: In this essay I will present lots of reasons why horse racing should not be legalized in Texas.

Better: Horse racing should not be legalized in Texas.

3. Don't be unreasonable. Making irrational or oversimplified claims will not persuade your reader that you have a thorough understanding of the issue. Don't insult any reader; avoid irresponsible charges, name calling, and profanity.

Poor: Radical religious fanatics across the nation are trying to impose their right-wing views by censoring high school library books. ["radical," "fanatics," "right-wing," and "censoring" will antagonize many readers immediately]

Better: Only local school board members—not religious leaders or parents—should decide which books high school libraries should order.

Poor: Too many corrupt books in our high school libraries selected by liberal, atheistic educators are undermining the morals of our youth.

Better: To ensure that high school libraries contain books that reflect community standards, parents should have a voice in selecting new titles.

4. Don't merely state a fact. A thesis is an assertion of opinion that leads to discussion. Don't select an idea that is self-evident or dead-ended.

Poor: Child abuse is a terrible problem. [of course, who wouldn't agree?]

Better: Child-abuse laws in this state are too lenient for repeat offenders.

Poor: Advertisers often use attractive models in their ads to sell products. [true, but obvious]

Better: A number of liquor advertisers, well known for using pictures of attractive models to sell their products, are now using special graphics to send subliminal messages to their readers.

Better: Although long criticized for their negative portrayal of women in television commercials, the auto industry is just a soften guilty of stereotyping men as brainless idiots unable to make a decision.

5. Don't express your thesis in the form of a question unless the answer is already obvious to the reader.

Poor: Why should every college student be required to take two years of foreign language?
Better: Chemistry majors should be exempt from the foreign language requirement.

Adapted from Smagorinsky, P. Teaching English by Design, 2008.

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