

Naomi White  
ELAN 7408  
Dr. Smagorinsky  
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## Journeys of Grief: the Quest of War, Inward and Out

### **Rationale**

The sophomore world literature curriculum centers on the archetype of the Quest. In the fall, the students read *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *The Sword in the Stone*, all of which incorporate a quest. Through reading and analyzing these texts, I hope they have begun to understand the universal concept of a journey. They also might start to realize the allegorical meanings behind a character's journey. After spending fall semester focusing mostly on development of the literal process in a quest, spring semester, the students should have the tools to dig deeper and analyze the emotional growth process that develops through a meaningful quest.

The journey through a difficult or traumatic experience can be an important catalyst for emotional growth. Human responses to anxiety and grief manifest themselves in a multitude of ways. However, many students have not experienced the fear and grief that develops as a result of catastrophe and war. Most have lived comfortable lives and many are unaware of prevalent conditions around the world. Literature is a great way for students to experience vicariously the events and daily life of others around the world. The purpose of this unit is for students to read texts that open them up to the horrors and sorrow of war so that they can understand grief as a complex struggle that often parallels a literal journey away from danger.

*The Other Side of the Sky*, a memoir about growing up in Afghanistan by Farah Ahmed, will anchor the unit. Farah Ahmed wrote this book as an entry into Good Morning America's "Story of My Life" contest. The memoir describes how Ahmed's daily life changes as the war

between the mujahideen and the Soviets reaches its peak in Afghanistan. Her father and sisters are killed and her brothers go missing, never to be heard from again. On the way to school one day at age seven, she steps on a land mine and loses one of her legs. Eventually, through a humanitarian aid agency, Ahmedi and her mother are transported to Germany and eventually end up in the United States.

*The Other Side of the Sky* nicely shows Ahmedi's literal quest out of her home country and into a new life in the U.S. It also details her internal journey as she overcomes the death of her family, the devastating loss of her leg, and the grief of leaving her home, country, and culture behind. Because Ahmedi is a teenager, she is an empathetic protagonist that teenage readers should easily relate to. Through her memoir, I hope students will develop a greater, more benevolent understanding of another culture that has been labeled as "evil" by many Americans.

Farah Ahmedi wrote her story when she was a junior in high school. This knowledge should help the students to empathize with her as a fellow teenager and inspire them to produce their own stories of their lives. Within this unit, students will be asked to examine their own way of dealing with sorrow. By writing a personal narrative, students will use the archetype of the quest to frame their own journey of grief. In an ideal world, the process of writing will be a freeing activity that will allow students to make connections between their personal experiences and the healing power of the writing word—and I hope my students will come to appreciate the value of personal writing.

Another text that will add dimensions to students' concept of the quest and grief of war is the short story "War," by Luigi Pirandello, which examines various reactions of Italian parents whose sons are fighting in World War II. This text will present the grieving process from

various adult perspectives. Students will also read an excerpt from John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, which will, like *The Other Side of the Sky*, serve to show the "enemies" perspective.

Other texts include the poems "Sonnet 71" by Pablo Neruda and "Thoughts of Hanoi" by Nguyn Thi Vinh. Both of these poems are included in the school issued literature book. These poems will be used to reflect the themes in *The Other Side of the Sky*. Each of these poems addresses a journey of grief from a different culture (Chile and Vietnam), which will add to the universality of the themes, as well as give the students a more comprehensive exposure to various cultures' literature.

Some people might worry that a book published in 2005 has not gained enough critical or scholarly merit to be studied in high school. Proponents of canonical literature might argue that *The Other Side of the Sky* has not stood the test of time and that by teaching it, I will be doing students a disservice. However, much of the curriculum already addresses canonical literature and the Journeys of Grief unit ties *The Other Side of the Sky* to the same themes and literary techniques that are addressed with the more traditional books. By yoking canonical literature to contemporary literature, some students will gain a greater understanding of the more traditional literature they read.

My other concern about the memoir is Ahmedi's bold conversations about her religion. She often refers to the power of God in her life and her journey, which is completely genuine, but might offend students who are uncomfortable in talking about religion. When taken literally, Ahmedi's discussion of religion might be misconstrued as proselytizing the Islamic faith. Previously in the curriculum, though, we read excerpts from the Bible, the Torah, the Rig Veda, and the Koran. Ahmedi's faith ties into a discussion of comparative religion. According to Ruth Caillouet, *The Other Side of the Sky* "may help students to see some connect between the prayers

of this young Afghan girl and those of Christians and Jews. Handled delicately, the discussion of religious practice is almost essential in any study of literature from Afghanistan” (31).

*The Other Side of the Sky* is inarguably relevant to current politics and ethics. After all, September 11<sup>th</sup> occurred when my sophomores were 10 years old and is embedded in most of their memories. At the same time, the memoir is embedded in many archetypal themes that cross time and culture. If students can engage and interact with this memoir in a meaningful way, then I will be completely satisfied with this unit.

## Works Cited

Caillouet, Ruth. "The Other Side of Terrorism and the Children of Afghanistan." English Journal 96.2 (2006): 28-33.

## Goals

### Goal 1: Research Project (pre reading)

In order to prepare students to read *The Other Side of the Sky*, which delves into Afghan politics, religion, and social custom, students will work in groups to research important cultural topics. It is important for them to have background information as a framework for understanding the book. Although Ahmedī explains many of the concepts she refers to, students with an increased understanding of Afghanistan's recent history will be able to focus more on Ahmedī's experience. In addition, I feel it is important for students to have a cultural understanding of a nation that is so important to U.S. foreign policy and homeland security.

Each group of 3-4 students will research a different topic:

Islam (Religion)

Islam (Traditions/Women's Roles)

Soviet Control of Afghanistan

Mujahideen in Afghanistan

Taliban in Afghanistan

Landmines

World Relief Organization

Students will spend two days in the media center, gathering research. They must use at least one print source and one on-line source. After the first day in the media center, students will turn in a proposal, outlining the jobs and duties of each member. Students will have one day in class and one day in the computer lab to assemble their presentation. Each student must present information to class and each group must have at least one visual (power point, timeline, map, poster, etc).

Students will be graded based on the following rubric:

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Delegation of Responsibility	Student can clearly explain what information s/he is responsible for locating, when the information is needed, and s/he participates in the presentation.	Student can clearly explain what information s/he is responsible for locating, but may not contribute fully to the group's research or presentation.	Student can, with prompting from peers, clearly explain what information s/he is responsible for locating, but does not contribute to the group's research or presentation.	Student cannot clearly explain what information s/he is responsible for locating and does not participate.
Quality of Research	Information presented is relevant, interesting, and presented in a clear, logical manner than demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic.	Information is interesting and but brief and is presented in a manner that demonstrates some understanding of the topic.	Information presented in vague or confusing and is presented in a manner that demonstrates the group does not have a solid understanding of the topic.	Information presented is not clear or is incorrect. The group does not appear to have researched the topic.
Quality of Sources	Researchers locate at least 2 reliable, interesting information sources. One is a print source and one is on-line.	Researchers locate at least 2 reliable information sources.	Researchers locate at least 1 reliable information source.	Researchers do not locate any sources or their sources appear to be inappropriate for the topic.
Quality of Visual	Visual is neat, organized, and aids the audience in understanding the topic.	Visual is neat and organized, and pertains to the topic, but does not offer any new assistance in understanding the topic.	Visual is sloppily created and does not offer any assistance in understanding the topic.	Group does not create an acceptable visual.

Works Cited	Group accurately creates an MLA style works cited page for their research.	Group creates an MLA style works cited page, but works are not accurately cited.	Group lists sources, but they are not in an MLA style works cited page.	Group does not cite their sources.
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Goal 2: Reader Response Journal (during reading)

The memoir structure of *The Other Side of the Sky* provides a nice format for students to reflect on their own experiences and to empathize with Farah and her family. While the students read the memoir, they will maintain a reader response journal. On the days that they read at home for homework, they will have ten minutes in class the next day to reflect upon what they read. Most days I will ask them to write about anything in the story that they think is important, and they may use the journal as a space to ask questions, relate the story to a personal experience, or just talk about how the reading makes them feel.

Other days I will give them prompts to reflect upon:

- Pick one word from last night's reading that you feel is the most powerful. Why does this work stand out to you? Explain its significance.
- How would you handle this situation if you were Farah? What could you do if you were her?
- What do you think Farah is the most afraid of at this point in her journey? Why? What might happen to her?
- Do you empathize with Farah's mother? What parts of her character are sympathetic and what parts are hard to understand?

The journal will consist of about 15 entries. I will take the journal up halfway through our reading, just to check on their progress and to get an idea of how they are each related to the



story. This will just be a daily/completion grade. When we are finished with the book, I will grade their journals based on this rubric:

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Connections/Inquiry	Shows a high to very high degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with respect to the novel and supplemental materials.	Shows a moderate degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with respect to the novel and the supplemental materials.	Shows little reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with respect to the novel and supplemental materials.	Shows an insufficient degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with respect to the novel and supplemental materials.
Communication	Every journal entry is at least two paragraphs and clearly communicates the student's thoughts and questions.	Almost all journal entries are at least two paragraphs and clearly communicate the student's thoughts and questions.	Most journal entries are at least two paragraphs, although many do not communicate the student's thoughts and questions.	Almost all journal entries are not two paragraphs and do not communicate the student's thoughts and questions.
Completion	All 15 journals are completed, showing time, thought, and effort.	11-14 journals are completed, showing time, thought, and effort.	8-10 journals are completed, showing time, thought, and effort.	Less than 8 journals are completed.

### Goal 3: Interview and In-role Writing

*The Other Side of the Sky* depicts Farah's journey to the United States as a refugee. I hope that students will wonder if Farah's immigration experience typical? What do other immigrants go through?

The students' tasks:

**1. Conduct an interview with someone who immigrated to the United States** (at an old enough age that they remember it. Don't interview someone who moved here as a two year old—interview that person's mom!). The interview should last approximately 20-30 minutes. I suggest they record the interview on a tape or CD, so that they can focus on the interview and not have to write as they talk.

Some suggested topics:

- Why did you move to the US?
- How did you get here?
- Where did you first live? How did you end up where you live now?
- What was the hardest thing to leave behind?
- How did you feel about immigrating? Sad? Excited? Nervous? Angry?
- What kind of paperwork did you have to deal with?
- Did you have to learn a new language?
- What did you think the US would be like? How was it different than you expected?
- What surprised you to the most when you moved to the US?
- What do you miss the most about your home country?

**2. Write an In-Role Writing.** In an in-role writing, you assume the persona of another person. In this case, the student will write from the person they interviewed's point of view. They will write in first person, embodying the spirit, tone, and opinions of the person.

The in-role writing should be about two to three pages, typed and double spaced.

The interview and in-role writing will be graded based on this rubric:

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
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Quality of Interview and Preparation	The interview demonstrated many thoughtful, in depth questions. The student clearly prepared for the interview.	The interview demonstrated some thoughtful, in depth questions. The student prepared for the interview.	The interview demonstrated a couple in depth questions. The student did not show that he/she was prepared for the interview.	The student did not prepare any questions before the interview.
In Role Writing Tone	The student clearly embodied the tone and feelings of the interviewee based on the language used in the in-role writing.	The student somewhat embodied the tone and feelings of the interviewee based on the language used in the in-role writing.	The student didn't really embody the tone and feelings of the interviewee because the language of the in-role writing was flat and mechanical.	The student did not used tone or language to embody the interviewee.
Evidence of Effort	The student clearly put effort into the interview and writing. The in-role writing was interesting, creative, and informative.	The student put some effort into the interview and writing. The in-role writing was somewhat interesting, creative, and informative.	The student put little effort into the interview and writing. The in-role writing was not interesting, creative, or informative.	The student put no effort into the interview and writing. The in-role writing was not interesting, creative, and informative.
Followed Directions	The student followed all directions with regard to length, requirements, and due date.	The student followed most of the directions with regard to length, requirements, and due date.	The student followed some directions with regard to length, requirements, and due date.	The student did not follow the directions of length, requirements, and due date.

Goal 4: In-class activities to aid in and assess students' reading

- Vocabulary: Students will be asked to skim through what they have already read and pull out ten words they are unfamiliar with. They will come up with definitions for these words,

based on how they are used in the book, so that they can practice using context clues. I will then draw on these words for the weekly vocabulary lists and quizzes.

- Timeline and Map: Students will create and maintain a timeline and a map of Ahemedi's quest as we read. They will be able to refer back to this if they get confused along the way.
- Found poem: Students will create and decorate with images (either drawn or cut from magazines) a found poem to describe an aspect of Ahemedi's life or quest.
- Coat of arms: Based on Ahemedi's description of her family, students will create a coat of arms, depicting four elements of Ahemedi's family and their experiences.

## **Daily Lesson Plans**

### **Day 1: Intro Activity**

5m: DLP, house keeping

15m: Pass out the opinion survey (Handout 1) to the students for them to read, answer, and respond to three questions.

5m: Break the class up into groups of four.

35m: Students are to fill in the chart (Handout 2), which I hope will give the students a structure to aid in discussion. They will pick the three issues where there is the most disagreement and write a paragraph explaining the differences in their belief. Each group will turn in a completed chart and three paragraphs. (I expect this to take more than 35 minutes.)

### **Day 2: Finish Intro Activity**

5m: DLP, housekeeping

5m: Break into previous groups.

10m: Finish up the previous day's group discussion.

30m: Each group will come to the front of the room. They will place their chart on the overhead and explain the three paragraphs they wrote.

5m: The teacher will explain the main plot of *The Other Side of the Sky* and how it relates to the thematic points of the questionnaire.

### **Day 3: Read "Prologue" and "The Gondola"**

5m: DLP, housekeeping, pass out copies of *The Other Side of the Sky*

10m: Read aloud the "Prologue" and "The Gondola," pages 1-12

5m: Ask students what they think this book will be about. Students might respond with immigration, losing her leg, fear, nightmares, etc. Remind them to continue to make predictions about what might happen.

10m: Put students into 7 groups of 3-4 students and pass out Group Research Project assignment (Handout 3). Explain expectations and go over timeline.

20m: Give students the rest of the period to create their Delegation of Responsibility Proposal. **Proposal is due at the end of the period.**

#### **Day 4: Media Center, Begin Research Project**

10m: Students will sit at assigned tables based on their group. Go over Media Center policies, show appropriate databases, show cart of pulled sources. Remind them to use one print and one electronic source. Pass out bibliographic handouts (Handout 4) to record sources.

40m: Students will begin to collect research and sort through information. Make sure all students are participating and staying on task.

#### **Day 5: Media Center, Continue Research Project**

50m: Students will have all period to continue to research their topics. Teacher should meet with each group to check on their progress and aide them if they are stuck. If they feel like they have gathered all they need, they may work as a group to begin their presentation.

#### **Day 6: Computer Lab, Assemble Presentation**

10m: Remind students of project expectations and timeline. Pass out/show them resources: art supplies and useful computer programs (PowerPoint, Publisher).

40m: Students will put together their presentation (make note cards, create power point, create a poster, practice lines, etc). Again, teacher will meet with each group individually to check on their progress.

\*\*Ideally, Day 6 would be a on a Friday, so that students would have the weekend to tie up any loose ends before they begin presenting on Monday, Day 6.

#### **Day 7: Present Presentations**

5m: Warm Up Questions:

What are the expectations of a polite audience at a football game?

What are the expectations of a polite audience at a concert?

What are the expectations of a polite audience in a classroom?

45m: Groups 1-4 present

#### **Day 8: Finish Presentations**

5m: DLP

40m: Groups 5-7 present

5m: Pass out Self Reflection handout (Handout 5) and explain. For homework, each student will fill out a self and group reflection handout.

### **Day 9: Begin Reading**

5m: DLP, **collect Self Reflection Handout**

30m: Read aloud as a class “Where I Came From” and “When I Was Very Little” pages 13-34.

Passages to address/reflect upon:

\*\*How did yesterday’s presentations aide in your understanding of these chapters?

\*\*How is Farah’s family history different from yours?

\*\*What does it mean to be a “modern woman”?

\*\*What do you make of Farah’s childhood?

10m: Assign Journal Project (Handout 6). Due Day 26.

### **Day 10: Read “Going to School” and begin “The Shortcut”**

5m: DLP

30m: Read aloud as a class “Going to School” and the beginning of “The Shortcut,” pages 35-50.

15m: Directions on Board: Fold a sheet of paper in half. On one side, create a found poem describing Farah’s experience at school. Then on the other, write your own poem (in a similar style) describing your experience at school. Students who don’t finish can turn it in tomorrow.

### **Day 11: Losing Farah’s Leg**

5m: DLP, **collect Found Poems**

10m: Mini Class Discussion (follow up to Found Poem)

\*\*Why do you think Farah’s experience with school is so different from ours?

15m: Finish the “The Shortcut” and begin “Alone in Germany” (pages 51-61) aloud as a class.

20m: Journal: Write a diary entry from Farwah’s perspective. Explain in 8-10 sentences how she is feeling and what she is going through. Predict what might happen to her next.

**Turn in at the end of the period.**

### **Day 12: “Alone in Germany;” get started in journals**

5m: DLP

15m: Read end of “Alone in Germany” (pgs. 62-70) aloud as a class.

20m: Students have the remainder of the period to work on their Reader Response Journal. This is an opportunity for them to get help and feedback from the teacher. In addition, I hope this time in class will encourage them to get started and keep working on the project early, without leaving it all to the last minute.

### **Day 13: Father-Daughter Scripts**

5m: DLP

30m: Read aloud “Back Home?” (pgs. 70-87).

\*\*What was coming home so hard for Farah?

\*\*How does her family feel?

\*\*Who do you empathize more with—Farah or her family?

15m: Begin Father-Daughter Script

Assign students into groups of two. Pass out “Father-Daughter Script” handout (Handout 7). Help students to imagine what that conversation on page 85 might sound like. Help students to draw on their own experiences with their parents and to put themselves in both the father and Farah’s place.

### **Day 14: Finish Father-Daughter Scripts**

5m: DLP

20m: Students will get back into their pairs and finish composing their Father-Daughter Scripts.

25m: Present Scripts

Each pair will come to the front of the class and perform their dialog for the class.

### **Day 15: “Losing My Family”**

5m: DLP

15m: Finish presenting scripts.

**Turn in scripts.**

30m: Read aloud “Losing My Family” (pgs. 88-102).

### **Day 16: Coat of Arms**

5m: DLP



5m: Present Coat of Arms Activity

Pass out “Farah’s Coat of Arms” Handout (Handout 8). Put students in groups of three. Explain concept of a coat of arms and show examples.

40m: Students will work in groups to design a coat of arms for Farah’s family.

**Turn in Coat of Arms Activity at the end of the period.**

### **Day 17: “Living as a Refugee”**

5m: DLP

15m: Chalk Talk: Refugee

Teacher will write the word “Refugee” in the middle of the board. Students come up silently and construct a web outlining their individual (and thus collective) understanding of what a refugee is.

30m: Pass out “Escape from Afghanistan” Worksheet (Handout 9). Students are to read “Escape from Afghanistan” and “Living as a Refugee” (pgs. 103-124) silently and answer the questions on the handout.

### **Day 18: Finish independent reading**

5m: DLP

20m: Finish independent reading from yesterday.

**Turn in “Escape” Handout**

10m: Mini Class Discussion

\*\*Fawah mentions how much she related to Cinderella. What movies do you think relate to your life?

\*\*What would you do if you were in Farah’s place?

15m: Assign Interview Project (Handout 10). Show examples of in-role writing and help students brainstorm potential people to interview. Due Day 27

### **Day 19: Read Read Read!**

5m: DLP

45m: Read aloud “Talking to God” and “Making the List” (pgs. 125-149) aloud as a class.

### **Day 20: Impact of 9/11**

5m: DLP

20m: “Sojourn to Islamabad” (pgs. 150-165) aloud as a class.

15m: Journal—Think back to September 11, 2001. Where were you? What do you remember thinking and feeling? Were you scared, angry, upset, confused??? Why? Then think about how September 11<sup>th</sup> affected Farah. Does that surprise you? Why or why not?

10m: Begin reading “Arrival in America” (pgs. 166-180) aloud in class.

### **Day 21: The Daily Difficulties of an Immigrant**

5m: DLP

20m: Finish “Arrival in America” and read “Discovering America” (pgs. 181-193).

10m: Read “Thoughts of Hanoi” by Nguyn Thi Vinh

15m: Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting the speaker in “Thoughts of Hanoi” with Farah in *The Other Side of the Sky*.

### **Day 22: Alyce**

5m: DLP

20m: In groups of 3-4, read aloud “Enter Alyce Litz” (pgs. 194-213).

25m: After students finish the chapter, they will work together as a group to create a collage characterizing Alyce Litz and describing Farah’s relationship with Alyce. Students can use magazines, markers, and clip art off the computer.

### **Day 23: High School**

5m: DLP

35m: Read “High School in America” (pgs. 214-227) aloud as a class.

10m: Write a journal entry from Farah’s perspective, explaining her thoughts about entering high school. Use your imagination as well as evidence from the text.

HW: Read “Sonnet 71” by Pablo Neruda. Write a paragraph relating this poem to Farah’s journey. Pull out lines and explain how they can connect to *The Other Side of the Sky*.

## **Day 24: Body Biography**

**Turn in “Sonnet 71” paragraph.**

5m: DLP

10m: Put class into groups of three. Pass out Handout 11 and explain the concept of a body bio. Show the class an example.

35m: Students will work in groups to create a body bio for Farah.

## **Day 25: Body Bio Day 2**

5m: DLP

45m: Students will have the rest of the period to finish their body biography.

**Turn in Body Biographies**

## **Day 26: Present Body Bios and Finish the Book!**

**Turn in Journal Projects**

5m: DLP

35m: Present Body Biographies

10m: Read “Looking Back, Looking Ahead” (pgs. 228-232) aloud.

## **Day 27: Immigrant Experience**

5m: DLP

25m: Final Assessment: Write a one page summary, comparing and contrasting the experience of the immigrant you interviewed with Farah’s experience. In detail, explain the similarities and the differences.

20m: Students who would like to read their in-role writing aloud to the class may present them.

**Turn in Interview In-role Writing**

Appendix: Handouts Used

Handout 1

Journeys of Grief: The Quest of War, Inward and Out

Opinion Survey—Circle the response that most closely describes how you feel. For three of the questions, please write a brief (2-3 sentence) explanation of your view on the back of this handout.

**1. I have experienced a great loss in my life.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**2. I would be able to be completely normal if I lost my leg.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**3. The U.S. should restrict the number of immigrants who come to this country.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**4. People who are being persecuted by their government should be allowed to move to the U.S.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**5. The U.S. has an obligation to help other countries in need.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**6. I am (or I have a close friend who is) an immigrant.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**7. All people who live in Afghanistan are terrorists.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**8. Most Muslims hate the United States.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**9. I have been to a country where English is not the primary language.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**10. The story of my life could be an interesting book or movie.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Not Sure      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Handout 2 (on a transparency)  
 Journeys of Grief: The Quest of War, Inward and Out

1. As a group, tally up your responses in the chart.
2. Pick the three question that your groups disagrees most on. For those three issues, write a paragraph as a group that outlines the differences in your opinions. Explain each person's point of view and describe what makes them different.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I have experienced a great loss					
2. I'd be normal if I'd lost my leg					
3. The U.S. should restrict immigrants					
4. Refugees should be allowed to come to U.S.					
5. The U.S. needs to help other countries					
6. I know what it's like to be an immigrant					
7. People who live in Afghanistan are terrorists					
8. Most Muslims hate the U.S.					
9. I have been to an non-English speaking country					
10. My life could be a book or a movie					

Handout 3  
Group Research Project

*The Other Side of the Sky* delves into Afghan politics, religion, and social custom. In order to develop a framework for understanding this memoir, we will research important background information that pertains to Afghanistan.

**Each group of 3-4 students will research a different topic:**

Islam (Religion)  
Islam (Traditions)  
Soviet Control of Afghanistan  
Mujahideen in Afghanistan  
Taliban in Afghanistan  
Landmines  
World Relief Organization

**Timeline:**

Day 1: Meet with group; develop proposal outlining duties.  
Day 2: Media Center for Research  
Day 3: Media Center for Research  
Day 4: Day in the Classroom to work on project  
Day 5: Presentations

**Research and Preparation:**

- First, your group will create a **Delegation of Responsibility Proposal**. In this proposal, your group will decide what responsibilities each group member will assume.
- You will spend two days in the media center, gathering research. Each member must participate in acquiring and assembling information. You must use at least one print source and one on-line source.
- Record all of your sources.
- You will have one day in the computer lab work on your presentation. If you do not finish then, you must complete the project at home.

**Presentation:**

- Each student must present information to class.
- You may make notes to refer to during your presentation, but they must be written on note cards
- Each group must have at least one visual (power point, timeline, map, poster, etc).
- Your presentation should be about 10 minutes long. You should explain to the class general information about your topic and how it applies to this unit.
- Make sure to turn in a Works Cited list of all your sources used (Refer to Appendix B in your literature book.)

Category	4	3	2	1
Delegation of Responsibility	Student can clearly explain what information s/he is responsible for locating, when the information is needed, and s/he participates in the presentation.	Student can clearly explain what information s/he is responsible for locating, but may not contribute fully to the group's research or presentation.	Student can, with prompting from peers, clearly explain what information s/he is responsible for locating, but does not contribute to the group's research or presentation.	Student cannot clearly explain what information s/he is responsible for locating and does not participate.
Quality of Research	Information presented is relevant, interesting, and presented in a clear, logical manner than demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic.	Information is interesting and but brief and is presented in a manner that demonstrates some understanding of the topic.	Information presented in vague or confusing and is presented in a manner that demonstrates the group does not have a solid understanding of the topic.	Information presented is not clear or is incorrect. The group does not appear to have researched the topic.
Quality of Sources	Researchers locate at least 2 reliable, interesting information sources. One is a print source and one is on-line.	Researchers locate at least 2 reliable information sources.	Researchers locate at least 1 reliable information source.	Researchers do not locate any sources or their sources appear to be inappropriate for the topic.
Quality of Visual	Visual is neat, organized, and aids the audience in understanding the topic.	Visual is neat and organized, and pertains to the topic, but does not offer any new assistance in understanding the topic.	Visual is sloppily created and does not offer any assistance in understanding the topic.	Group does not create an acceptable visual.
Quality of Presentation	Presentation includes all members, follows directions, and presents information in an interesting manner.	Presentation includes all members, but may skip on the length or it may not engage the audience.	Presentation does not include all members, and is too short or does not engage the audience.	Presentation does not follow any directions and is unacceptable.

Works Cited	Group accurately creates an MLA style works cited page for their research.	Group creates an MLA style works cited page, but works are not accurately cited.	Group lists sources, but they are not in an MLA style works cited page.	Group does not cite their sources.
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Handout 4

Bibliographic Record

**Book:**

Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Author \_\_\_\_\_  
Publisher \_\_\_\_\_  
City of Publication \_\_\_\_\_ Pages Used \_\_\_\_\_

**Book:**

Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Author \_\_\_\_\_  
Publisher \_\_\_\_\_  
City of Publication \_\_\_\_\_ Pages Used \_\_\_\_\_

**Website:**

Author of Article \_\_\_\_\_  
Title of Article \_\_\_\_\_  
Website \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Published \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Accessed \_\_\_\_\_  
URL \_\_\_\_\_

**Website:**

Author of Article \_\_\_\_\_  
Title of Article \_\_\_\_\_  
Website \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Published \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Accessed \_\_\_\_\_  
URL \_\_\_\_\_

**Magazine/Newspaper**

Title of Article \_\_\_\_\_  
Author \_\_\_\_\_  
Journal Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Publication \_\_\_\_\_  
Pages Used \_\_\_\_\_

## Handout 5

### Reflection on Group Project

Think back on your research project experience. **Write a page** detailing your creative process. This reflection will be 20% of your project grade. Please be honest, but polite.

Some ideas to respond to:

- What were some of the difficulties you had in negotiating with your group?
- How you achieved or did not achieve consensus?
- How did your group divide up the work?
- Did everyone equally participate?
- What would you have done differently if you had to do it again?
- What did you learn through this project?
- What do you think was the point of this project?
- Describe the most difficult part.
- Describe the most enjoyable part.

Please use a conversational tone in this piece, so the use of “I” is most certainly welcome.

**This is to be done tonight and is due tomorrow.**

## Handout 6 Reader Response Journal

The memoir structure of *The Other Side of the Sky* provides for you to reflect on your own experiences and to empathize with Farah and her family. While you read the memoir, you will maintain a reader response journal.

On the days that you read at home for homework, will use your journal to reflect upon what you read. You may write about anything in the story that you think is important, and you may use the journal as a space to ask questions, relate the story to a personal experience, or just talk about how the reading makes you feel.

If you are stuck, you may use the following prompts as starting points:

- Pick one word from last night's reading that you feel is the most powerful. Why does this work stand out to you? Explain its significance.
- Describe a journey you have been a part of.
- What has been the most difficult challenge you've faced? How have you overcome it (or how will you overcome it)?
- How would you handle any situation in the story if you were Farah? What could you do if you were her?
- What experiences do you have that would relate to that of an immigrant's experience?
- What do you think Farah is the most afraid of at this point in her journey? Why? What might happen to her?
- Do you empathize with Farah's mother? What parts of her character are sympathetic and what parts are hard to understand?
- Has this book changed your understanding of anything? How?

You will complete 15 entries. Each should be at least 10 sentences and show evidence of time and thought. Your journal is to be completed at home.

DUE DATE \_\_\_\_\_

I will grade your journals based on the rubric on the other side of this handout.

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
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Connections/Inquiry	Shows a high to very high degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with respect to the novel and supplemental materials.	Shows a moderate degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with respect to the novel and the supplemental materials.	Shows little reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with respect to the novel and supplemental materials.	Shows an insufficient degree of reflection, thoughtfulness, questioning, and analysis with respect to the novel and supplemental materials.
Communication	Every journal entry is at least two paragraphs and clearly communicates the student's thoughts and questions.	Almost all journal entries are at least two paragraphs and clearly communicate the student's thoughts and questions.	Most journal entries are at least two paragraphs, although many do not communicate the student's thoughts and questions.	Almost all journal entries are not two paragraphs and do not communicate the student's thoughts and questions.
Completion	All 15 journals are completed, showing time, thought, and effort.	11-14 journals are completed, showing time, thought, and effort.	8-10 journals are completed, showing time, thought, and effort.	Less than 8 journals are completed.

## **Father-Daughter Script**

“I could not reconcile myself to this way of life. I talked to my father about it. I said, ‘This way of life is not for me. I don’t want to live like this. I want to leave Afghanistan.’” And what could my poor father say? He worked his heart out and risked his life each day to make a life for his family. ‘Well my child, this is the world,’ he would say with a sigh. ‘We just have to live in it and get by as best we can’” (Ahmedi 85).

Surely there were more words exchanged between this father and daughter. **With a partner, expand upon this conversation and imagine how it would go.** Think about the father’s perspective and consider Farah’s point of view. Also, it might be helpful to draw upon what you learned about life in Afghanistan in the research presentations.

**Your conversation should be written in script/drama form and should be about one page (single spaced) long.**

**After you create your scripts today, we will act them out tomorrow!**

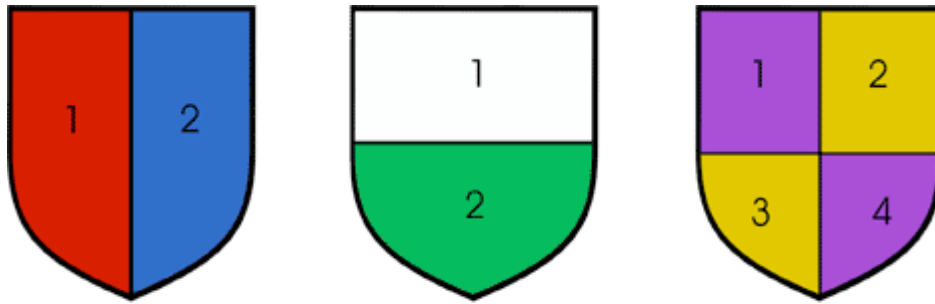


## Create Farah's Coat of Arms


A Coat of Arms is a family's symbol to represent the unique aspects of the family.


Your task is to create Farah's family's Coat of Arms. Think back and decide on some important aspects of her family. You must use at least seven symbols to represent her family. You also need to explain each symbol, color, and design on the back of your coat of arms.




Start with a shield:



Consider your Colors and Pick your Symbols:

<b>COLORS</b>	
Gold	Generosity and elevation of the mind
Silver or White	Peace and sincerity
Red	Warrior or martyr; Military strength and magnanimity
Blue	Truth and loyalty
Green	Hope, joy, and loyalty in love
Black	Constancy or grief
Purple	Royal majesty, sovereignty, and justice
Orange	Worthy ambition
Agricultural Tools 	Labouring in the earth and depending upon providence; see also Scythe and Sickle
Anchor	Hope; religious steadfastness

Angels	Dignity, glory, and honour; missionary; bearer of joyful news
Ant	Great labour, wisdom, and providence in one's affairs
Antlers	Strength and fortitude
Arm	An industrious person
Arrow or Dart	Readiness (for battle); if depicted with a cross, represents an affliction
Bear	Strength, cunning, ferocity in the protection of one's kindred
Beaver	Industry and perseverance
Bee	Efficient industry
Bells	Power to disperse evil spirits; a hawk's bells denotes one who was not afraid of signaling his approach in peace or war
Bow and Arrow	War, power, ability to hit a target
Butterfly	Psyche or Soul
 Caduceus	Homeopathic medicine; medical profession; balance and the union of opposing forces
Church	Religion; faith; community
Column	Fortitude and constancy; with serpent coiled around it, wisdom with fortitude
 Cornucopia (horn of plenty)	The bounty of nature's gifts
<b>Cross</b>	Faith; Christianity; Service in the Crusades
 Decrescent	One who has been honored by the sovereign; hope of greater glory (crescent with horns to the sinister)
Deer	One who will not fight unless provoked; peace and harmony
Dragon	Valiant defender of treasure; valour and protection
Elephant	Great strength, wit, longevity, happiness, royalty, good luck, and ambition
Eye	Providence in government
Falcon	One who does not rest until objective achieved
Feathers	(usually ostrich feathers) Sign of obedience and serenity
Finger, pointing	Direction; correct route
Fire	Zealousness

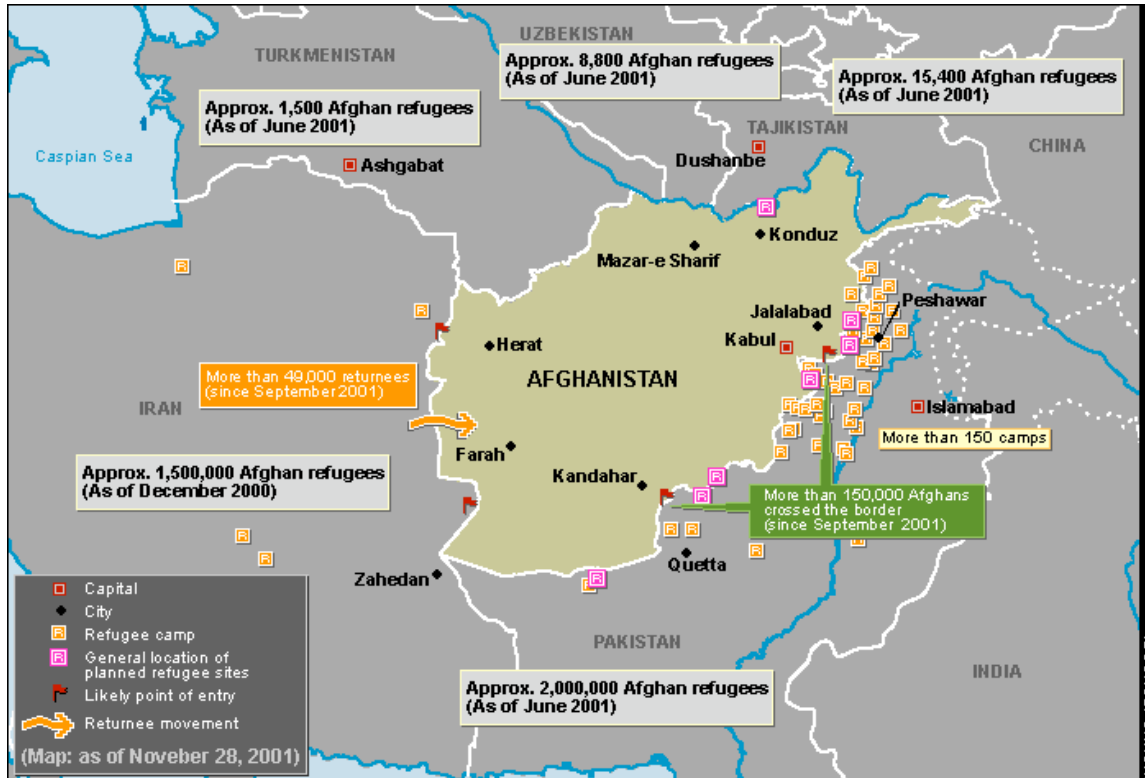
Flowers	Hope and joy
Fruit	Felicity and peace
Globe	Worldliness; world travel
Hand	Pledge of faith, sincerity, and justice; two right hands conjoined represent union and alliance
Horns	Strength and fortitude
Horseshoe	Good luck and safeguard against evil spirits
Keys	Guardianship and dominion
Leg	Strength, stability, and expedition
Level	Equity and upright action; virtuous person
Lightning Bolt	Swiftness and power
 Lion	Dauntless courage
Moon	Serene power over mundane actions
Olive Branch or Leaves	Peace and concordance
Palm Tree	Righteousness and resurrection; victory
 Peacock	Beauty, power, and knowledge
Pen	Art of writing and educated employment
Phoenix	Symbol of resurrection
Pig	Fertility
Plant	Hope and joy
 Quatrefoil (Primrose)	Brings good tidings
Rainbow	Good times after bad
Ram	Authority
Rose, Red	Grace and beauty
Rose, White	Love and faith
Ship	Ancient sea voyages
Snake	Wisdom
Star	Celestial goodness; noble person
Sun	Glory and splendor; fountain of life
Table	Hospitality
Vine	Strong and lasting friendship
Wheel	Fortune; cycle of life
Wings	Swiftness and protection



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Escape from Afghanistan and Living as a Refugee

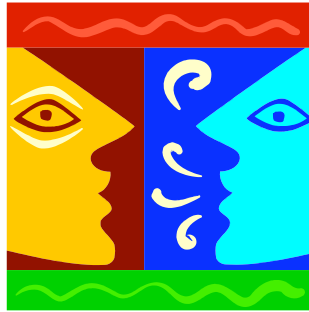
Independently read “Escape from Afghanistan” and “Living as a Refugee” (pages 105-124) and answer the following questions.



1. Look at this map of Afghanistan. Using pages 105-106, draw Farah and her mother’s route from their house in Kabul, Afghanistan to her mother’s cousin in Quetta, Pakistan.
2. Describe why they are fleeing Afghanistan.
3. Describe their trip to the Pakistani border.
4. What do you think was the hardest part?
5. Why couldn’t they go through the gate into Pakistan?

6. How did they get into Pakistan?
7. How did Farah and her mother feel when they got into Pakistan? How do you know?
8. What was so scary about the train ride from Peshawar to Quetta?
9. Describe Farah's "victory" with the cab on page 118. What is ironic about this incident?
10. What was the first thing Farah and her mother did when they got to Quetta?
11. Why didn't they stay with her mother's cousin?
12. Describe the refugee camp in Quetta. Why couldn't they stay there?
13. Where do Farah and her mother end up living at the end of the chapter?
14. Based on what you've read, how would you now describe Farah?

Handout 10  
**Interview Project**



Is Farah's immigration experience typical? What do other immigrants go through?

Your tasks:

**1. Conduct an interview with someone who immigrated to the United States** (at an old enough age that they remember it. Don't interview someone who moved here as a two year old—interview that person's mom!). Your interview should last approximately 20-30 minutes. I suggest you record your interview on a tape or CD, so that you can focus on the interview and not have to write as you talk.

Some interview suggestions: Start generally with open ended questions. Make the interview feel like a conversation, not an interrogation. Encourage them to talk freely and tell stories.

Some suggested topics:

- Why did you move to the US?
- How did you get here?
- Where did you first live? How did you end up where you live now?
- What was the hardest thing to leave behind?
- How did you feel about immigrating? Sad? Excited? Nervous? Angry?
- What kind of paperwork did you have to deal with?
- Did you have to learn a new language?
- What did you think the US would be like? How was it different than you expected?
- What surprised you to the most when you moved to the US?
- What do you miss the most about your home country?

**2. Write an In-Role Writing.** In an in-role writing, you assume the persona of another person. In this case, you are going to write from the person you interviewed's point of view. You will write in first person, embodying the spirit, tone, and opinions of your person.

Your in-role writing should be about two to three pages, typed and double spaced.

DUE DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# Farah Ahmed

## Body Biography

Your group will be creating a body biography of Farah—a visual and written portrait illustrating several aspects of the character's life within a literary work.

Begin by drawing in the outline of the body. I have listed some possibilities for your body biography, but feel free to come up with your own ways of representing Farah. As always, the choices you make should be based on the text; for you will be verbally explaining (and thus, in a sense, defending) them. Above all, your choices should be creative, analytical, and accurate.

After completing this portrait, you will participate in a low key presentation in which you will present your work to the class. In your presentation you will....

- Review the memoir, *The Other Side of the Sky*
- Communicate to us the full essence of your character by emphasizing the traits that make the character unique

### Body Biography Requirements

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

- A review of the work's events
- At least seven representations of the character
- Three important quotes relating to your character (be sure cite them in MLA format)

### Body Biography Suggestions

- **The Heart:** Where should it be placed to best represent what this character loves most? What should it look like and what shape, color, pictures, or symbols should be included in it? If the character's love changes, find a way to represent this visually.  
Example: Shrek—his swamp, slime, Fiona, donkey
- **The Backbone:** This should be represented in a way that visually conveys what motivates the character most. What gives him/her purpose or holds them up emotionally?  
Example: Atticus Finch—the law, the truth, his family
- **The Hands:** What does the character hold in her or his hands? What things are important to the character? Items that are associated with the character either literally or figuratively should be included.  
Example: Juliet—bottle of poison, wedding band
- **The Feet:** On what is the character standing? This should a symbolic representation of the character's most fundamental beliefs about life.  
Example: Odysseus—knowledge, going home
- **The Background:** What element show the character's environment, background, or predicament.  
Example: Elie Wiesel—the Torah, Sighet, Moishe the Beadle, Kabala

Other suggestions:

- **Virtues and Vices** - What are your character's most admirable qualities? His/her worst? How can you make us visualize them?
- **Color** - Colors are often symbolic. What color(s) do you most associate with your character? Why? How can you effectively weave these colors into your body biography?
- **Symbols** - What objects can you associate with your character that illustrate his/her essence? Are their objectives mentioned within the work itself that you could use? If not, choose objects that especially seem to correspond with the character.
- **Mirror, Mirror** - Consider both how your character appears to others on the surface and what you know about the character's inner self. Do these images clash or correspond? What does this tell you about the character? How can you illustrate this mirror image?
- **Changes** - How has your character changed within the work? Trace these changes within your text and/or artwork.

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Graphics – Originality and Relevance	Several of the graphics used on the poster (including symbol, phys. traits, personality traits) are relevant and reflect a exceptional degree of group creativity in their creation and/or display.	One or two of the graphics used on the poster (such as symbol, phys. traits, personality traits) are mostly relevant and reflect group creativity in their creation and/or display.	The graphics (such as symbol, phys. traits, personality traits)are somewhat relevant and are made by the group, but are based on the designs or ideas of others.	No graphics (such as symbol, phys. traits, personality traits) made by the group are included.
Use of Class Time	Used time well during each class period. Focused on getting the project done. Never distracted others.	Used time well during each class period. Usually focused on getting the project done and never distracted others.	Used some of the time well during each class period. There was some focus on getting the project done but occasionally distracted others.	Did not use class time to focus on the project OR often distracted others.
Content - Accuracy	At least 7 accurate facts are displayed on the poster.	5-6 accurate facts are displayed on the poster.	3-4 accurate facts are displayed on the poster.	Less than 3 accurate facts are displayed on the poster.
Support for Graphics in Presentation	Explanations during presentation are clearly explained, specific, and accurate.	Explanations during presentation are accurate but do not contain enough detail or examples.	Group has attempted to explain the graphics but has not done so clearly, specifically, or accurately.	Group has made little or no attempt at explaining the graphics.
Knowledge Gained	Student can accurately answer all questions related to facts in the poster and processes used to create the poster.	Student can accurately answer most questions related to facts in the poster and processes used to create the poster.	Student can accurately answer about 75% of questions related to facts in the poster and processes used to create the poster.	Student appears to have insufficient knowledge about the facts or processes used in the poster.
Graphics - Placement	All graphics are placed in meaningful areas on the Body Bio.	Most graphics are placed in meaningful areas on the Body Bio.	1-2 graphics are placed in meaningful areas on the Body Bio.	Graphics are haphazardly placed on the Body Bio.