

Blue Plaid

By Janine Lim

Illustrated by Peter Paul

Curriculum developed by Katy Eyberg



OVERVIEW

Quick-Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade-Level Appropriateness	* 13+/8th+
Genre/s	* Fiction * Short story
Length	* 5,185 (20-minute read)
Content Advisories	* Suicide * Violence * Smoking * Depression

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Parental neglect * Teenage bullying * Reference to sex
One-Sentence Summary	Former Catholic school girls reflect on their adolescence, particularly their treatment of one girl, Eva, who does not fit in.
Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Money * Gossip * School * Puberty * Bullying * Religion * Materialism * Adolescence <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Living in fear * Destructive power of bullying and cruelty * Pressure to conform to societal expectations * Intolerance of cultural and religious differences * Reexamination of adolescence through the lens of adulthood
Historic Events/Time Period for Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Early-20th century Filipino migration to the San Francisco Bay Area * The introduction and expansion of Catholicism in the Philippines
Complementary Text	* Song: “Outcast” by Kerrie Roberts: https://bit.ly/2Fxc5ZD
Author & Artist Information	<p>Janine Lim is a Los Angeles-based multi-disciplinary artist. Peter Paul is a Los Angeles-based artist and instructor.</p>
Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)	<p>Grade 8 Common Core Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.8 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.9</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4</p>

	* Note: Questions recommended for assessment are marked with two asterisks.
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Author Biography

Janine Lim is a Los Angeles-based multi-disciplinary artist. Her short film, “Grandfather Clock,” and photographic work were exhibited in San Francisco and Los Angeles. She is a former student of theater and a long-time student of martial arts. Her personal essays have been published in *Youth Outlook Magazine* and *The Bold Italic*. In 2018, she co-produced the monthly reading series Drunken Masters for Writ Large Press and performed in contemporary dance piece “Solid as a Rock” as part of the REDCAT’S New Original Works Festival.

Artist Biography

Peter Paul is a story artist, animator, illustrator, and instructor. He began as a graphic designer and a freelance illustrator, but he eventually found his footing in the entertainment industry.

He has worked in both animated and live-action shows and at most major studios, including Disney, DreamWorks Animation, Universal Animation Studios, Illumination Entertainment, Warner Bros. Animation, 20th Century Fox Animation, and STX Entertainment.

He has worked in both feature and television on shows like *Space Jam*, *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*, *Lilo & Stitch 2*, *Mulan II*, *The Tigger Movie*, *Tinker Bell and the Lost Treasure*, *Phineas and Ferb*, *Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel*, *Dragons: Race to the Edge*, *UglyDolls* (forthcoming in May 2019) and *Green Eggs and Ham* (forthcoming in fall 2019 on Netflix).

He is an instructor at the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles, where he teaches storyboarding.

SYNOPSIS

A group of former Catholic school girls (identified collectively as “we” and “us”) reflect on their childhood and adolescence within the Filipino community of the San Francisco Bay Area. Amid their strict religious teaching, they remember a girl named Eva, who stuck out in her skepticism and refusal to conform to Catholicism. Although they romanticize Eva and her mother, Clio, as eccentric misfits, the family’s dysfunction, financial instability, and trauma become obvious upon reflection. Although the school girls grow up and become parents themselves, they never forget about Eva and the ways in which they added to her suffering. This 20-minute fiction story shows with painful clarity the pressure to conform and the cruelty adolescents can inflict upon those who do not.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic

Writing & Class Discussion:

In a 10-minute journal entry, respond to the following questions:

- What is your school’s dress code?
- Do you agree with it? Why or why not?
- Should students wear uniforms at school? Why or not not?
- What are the pros and cons of students wearing uniforms at school?

Share your ideas with two different classmates. How are your ideas similar and/or different? Share insights from your group's discussion with the whole class.

Main Ideas

Group Activity:

In groups of three to four students, discuss bullying at your school by responding to the following questions:

- How and why are people bullied at your school?
- How often are people bullied at your school?
- Where does it happen (e.g., the gym, the cafeteria, etc.)?
- Is bullying adequately addressed and resolved?
- Do adults know about it?

If you feel comfortable sharing, talk about any personal experiences you have with bullying.

On a single sheet of paper, give your school a letter grade (e.g., "A+," "B-," etc.) for how it handles bullying. Write this grade in the center of the paper, and justify it with three to five short bullet points underneath the grade. In the remaining space on this paper, write three to five bullet points describing ways your school could earn a higher grade (e.g., "don't ignore bullies"). Write three to five bullet points with specific suggestions for how your school could earn a higher grade (e.g., "send bullies to detention").

When you finish, present your group's work to the class.

Passage-Specific Themes

Read the following passage from "Blue Plaid." Discuss the questions below in small groups:

Like the rest of us, Eva lived within arm's length of the Church her entire brief life. She had a huge family that filled about ten pews of the church if you put them all together. Though more like a tribe, they never all sat together. They were scattered about the church in different sections with no discernible pattern. None of us could quite understand who was related to whom. Eva's father always sat in the first pew of the farthest right row of the church, with his wife, who was more Catholic than most. They had one child still in the arms and another just starting to walk. Eva could always be found in the back of the church, the farthest left row, in a dark corner sitting with just her mother.

Question One: Who are "us"? How do you know?

Question Two: This passage and story are told through a plural, first-person perspective. What is the effect of this choice of narrator?

Question Three: This passage occurs on page three, near the beginning of the story. Based on this passage, what do you predict will happen to Eva in the story?

Question Four: Based on the information in this passage, pick one word to best describe Eva's family. Why did you pick this word? Discuss.

Universal Themes

Journaling & Class Discussion:

In a 10-minute journal entry, explore the idea of conformity by answering the following questions:

- What does conformity mean? Use a dictionary to define it.
- How do people experience the pressure to conform at home, school, work, or elsewhere?
- Is conformity good and/or bad? Why?
- What is your personal experience with conformity?

Interview a partner for their insight on conformity by asking the following questions:

- What do you think about the idea of conformity?
- How do you experience or observe conformity in your own life?
- Do you think conforming is good, bad, or somewhere in the middle?

Optional: Create a Venn diagram showcasing your ideas, your partner’s ideas, and the ideas you have in common. Share your Venn diagram with one or two other groups to get their feedback.

Key Vocabulary

Definitions are context-dependent. Make sure any definitions you look up or work from are the ones that most correctly fit in the context of the story.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
marred	discernible	makating paa
excommunicated	nondescript	tsismis
speculated	contraband	Tagalog
hypocrisy	impenetrable	talaga
smitten	iridescent	bruha
SoMa (South of Market, San Francisco)	tamping	naku
	vestibule	barkada
		diba
		filigree
		anointed

Vocabulary Activity Options

1. What is Tagalog? Where is it from? How did it evolve and spread to the United States? Create an infographic including the following components: a map showing the origin and expansion of Tagalog, three to five key facts about Tagalog, and statistics on its current usage worldwide.
2. Research the meaning of the following Tagalog words: makating paa, tsismis, talaga, bruha,

naku, barkada, and diba. Create a poster including the following components: each Tagalog word, its dictionary definition, the context and page number of each Tagalog word within the story, and an illustration showing the meaning of each word.

3. What is hypocrisy? Find its dictionary definition and a real-world example of hypocrisy from a current event. Share your real-world example with two to three classmates. How are your examples similar? How are they different? Discuss.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Why do you think it's so difficult for Eva to "fit in" with others at her school? Why does it matter so much for her to "fit in" in the first place? Does this story reflect reality? Why or why not?
2. ** One of this story's noticeable features is the author's use of the plural, first-person narrator we and us. What is the effect of this narrative choice? How would the story be different if the author chose a different narrative perspective? Do you think the narrator is a significant element of the story? Why or why not?
3. What challenges does Eva face at home and at school? Are these challenges within her ability to resolve? Why or why not?
4. On page 13, Rochelle irreparably breaks Eva's necklace and destroys its "power." Describe this necklace. What does it look like? What is its significance? What might it symbolize?

** Text-Dependent Question Options

1. Track the narrator's opinion of Clio from the beginning to the end of the story. How does it change over time? Is it consistent with that of Rochelle on page 17? Cite the text.

Optional: Create a timeline of the narrator's opinion of Clio, featuring specific excerpts from the text and small illustrations.

2. In reflecting on their adolescent cruelty, do the Catholic school girls who ostracized Eva demonstrate maturity in adulthood? In other words, has their poor behavior changed, or are they largely the same, even in adulthood? Cite specific evidence from the text.
3. How does the author foreshadow Eva's death? Reference the text.
4. Study the story's artwork. How does artist Peter Paul's illustration represent themes and/or symbols in the text? Cite the text and the illustration.

Writing Exercises

Narrative

"Blue Plaid" discusses school from a retrospective point of view. This means the narrator describes childhood school experiences from the perspective of a group of adults, who are looking back on the past.

Consider a past experience, be it yesterday, last week, or years ago. Write a one-page essay, in which you show what happened and reflect on why you still remember the experience.

Optional: In groups of four to five students, complete this same narrative exercise for a shared experience. This experience might be one you've shared in or outside of school. Together, write a one-page essay showing what happened and reflecting on why the experience is memorable.

Descriptive

On page five, the narrator describes how Clio and Eva's home varies from clean and tidy to messy and chaotic. Think about your home or a place you consider to be your home, even if you don't live there.

Draw a picture of this place. In an eight- to ten-sentence paragraph beneath your illustration, describe the place using telling details and sensory language so your reader can visualize it.

Share your drawing and paragraph with two classmates. Ask your classmates if they think your illustration and paragraph match. Make revisions to your writing if necessary.

**** Analysis**

A story's theme answers the question, "What's the point?" A theme is a story's message about life or humanity. A theme can—but doesn't have to be—a moral or a lesson. One story can have many different themes, because they're developed through a reader's interpretation of the text. The key to identifying a story's theme is basing it on textual evidence.

Given this, what is one theme of "Blue Plaid"? What specific textual evidence supports this theme? Write a one- to two-page literary analysis in which you identify and explain a theme. Cite textual evidence.

Complementary Text Option

Read the lyrics to American singer Kerrie Roberts' 2011 song "Outcast," which speaks to the experience of feeling different than everyone else. Watch the music video.

Outcast

Written by Kerrie Roberts

Performed by Kerrie Roberts

Since I can remember, guess I been a problem
Never had a filter, never been the popular one
To sugar coat what I know is undeniable
I just can't hide it, I wear it like a letter

Everywhere I go, everyone is talking
I can feel them staring, they hope I'm just pretending
And giving up my power, caving into pressure
I'm not living for them, I live for something better

I'm not good enough, I'm not what they want
But let me tell you what, I know who I am
So just throw me out for not fitting in
I will stand my ground and be an outcast

So what if I'm an outcast?
So what if I'm an outcast?

So what if I don't look the part I'm supposed to play

What if I don't follow all the rules they make
They think I should be perfect, they love it when I mess up
No grace in case I blow it, a good girl shouldn't need it

I'm not good enough, I'm not what they want
But let me tell you what, I know who I am
So just throw me out for not fitting in
I will stand my ground and be an outcast

So what if I'm an outcast
So what if I'm an outcast
So slow and everybody's so fast
So what if I'm an outcast?

I try to play nice, I don't want to fight
But I won't be great when it sounds like I'm right
'Cause what I believe is what makes me strong
If I don't belong, I hold onto love

So what if I'm an outcast?
So what if I'm an outcast?
So slow and everybody's so fast
No matter what it costs I'll be an outcast

I'm not good enough, I'm not what they want
But let me tell you what, I know who I am
So just throw me out for not fitting in
I will stand my ground and be an outcast

I'm not good enough, I'm not what they want
And let me tell you what, I know who I am
So just throw me out, I'm not fitting in
I will stand my ground and be an outcast

Writing Exercise

In "Blue Plaid," Eva is an outcast among her peers. In a 10-minute journal entry, in which you cite both the song and the story, explore the following questions:

- What do you think it means to be an outcast?
- Do you think the song "Outcast" reflects Eva's attitude about being an outcast? Why or why not?

Share your writing with two classmates. After discussing with them, write a brief reflection. Do your classmates share your ideas? Do you agree and/or disagree? Explain.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

Mini-Research Project:

In small groups, discuss and explore answers to the following questions:

- How can bullying be stopped?
- How can school be better for all students?
- What is mental health?
- What mental health issues do teenagers have, and how should adults respond?
- How can all students feel included in school?

Optional: As a group, create a visual spectrum of teenage mental health issues, ranging from relatively minor (e.g., test anxiety) to severe (e.g., contemplating suicide).

As a group, pick one of these questions or create a topic inspired by these questions. Prepare a poster and class presentation answering the question and/or discussing your topic. Each group member will assume one of the following roles:

- Researcher: find relevant and reliable background information on your question or topic
- Writer: compose written material for your group's poster and presentation
- Editor: check written material for proper grammar, spelling, and citations, as well as plagiarism
- Designer: create the poster; collaborate with the writer to lay out written materials and images
- Manager: ensure other team members are working diligently, meeting assignment requirements, and preparing for the in-class presentation

Your poster must include easy-to-read written information, charts or graphs, and images. Rehearse your presentation, during which each group member must speak. You may wish to use technology, like Prezi or Google Slides, in lieu of a paper poster.

Five-Minute Quickwrite:

In your journal, reflect on the experience of working with your group. How well did you work together? How did you contribute to the project? Did the division of labor through specific roles help your group? Why or why not? If you were to do this project again, what would you do differently? Why?

Classroom Activity Two

Writing & Discussion:

In small groups, pick one scene from the story. Rewrite this portion of the story from a different character's perspective, like Eva, Rochelle, Clio, Ms. David, Ailyn, Father Stephen, or Letti's.

When you finish rewriting your chosen excerpt, create a visual representation of your writing. For example, you may wish to illustrate Eva's character by depicting both her toughness and her vulnerability. Share your story and artwork with the class.

In your group or as a class, discuss how changing the story's narrative perspective alters the story itself. Which story do you prefer, the original or your group's version? Why?

Home Activity

Interview a trusted adult about their adolescence. Did they struggle to fit in? Why or why not? If they could go back in time and change one moment in the past, what would they do differently and why?

Transcribe the interview, which you will turn in to your teacher.

Guest Speaker

Option One: Invite the author, Janine Lim, to answer questions about her story and her experiences as a multi-disciplinary artist and trained martial artist. Ask her to lead a writing workshop.

Option Two: Invite the artist, Peter Paul, to speak to the class about his inspiration for creating the story's artwork, as well as his current animation projects. Ask him to lead an art workshop.

Option Three: Invite a speaker from the nonprofit Painted Brain to discuss how bullying impacts adolescent mental health, as well as how teenagers can improve their mental health.

Please contact Painted Brain co-founder David Israelian at david@paintedbrain.org to arrange a classroom visit.

Note: *Literature for Life* helps coordinate and facilitate author and artist visits.

Field Trip

Visit the Philippine Heritage Center of Historic Filipinotown, located on Alvarado Street in Los Angeles. The history museum features interactive activities designed to preserve the cultural identity of first-, second-, and third-generation multi-ethnic Filipino Americans.

Prior to the trip, ask each student to write one to two questions about Filipino life and/or culture based on their understanding of "Blue Plaid."

Note: You may wish to call the Philippine Heritage Center at (626) 823-6363 for its exact location, which isn't listed online.

Follow-up Writing Activity:

In a 10-minute journal entry, explore the following questions:

- What are the answers to your questions? Do they surprise you? Why or why not?
- What is the most interesting fact you learned at the history museum?
- How does your visit influence your understanding of "Blue Plaid"? Why?

Share your ideas in small groups or as a class.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

This story and its exercises are appropriate for 8th grade and above. Eighth-grade standards are cited.

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6: Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Complementary Reading Text (Comparative Writing Exercise)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.5: Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.