

Diversion Therapy

By Jervey Tervalon

Illustrated by Scott Gandell

Curriculum developed by Andrew Ramirez



OVERVIEW

Quick-Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade-Level Appropriateness	* 16+/11th+
Genre/s	* Fiction * Short story
Length	* 2,771 words (16-minute read)

Content Advisories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * References to marijuana, crack cocaine, and alcohol * Reference to drug and alcohol addiction * The words “hell,” “shit,” “ass,” “damned,” and “bastard” are used
One-Sentence Summary	A young teacher recounts the struggle of his drug-addicted brother and the cyclical behavior that continually lands him in trouble.
Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Addiction * Imprisonment * Los Angeles life * Diversion therapy * Financial hardship * Family support system * Differences among siblings <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Denial * Honesty * Masculinity * Marriage difficulties * Patriarchal familial roles * Cycle of anger and forgiveness
Historic Events/Time Period for Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Contemporary Los Angeles * 1992 Los Angeles Riots * 1980s and 1990s American crack epidemic
Complementary Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Book: <i>Resuscitation of a Hanged Man</i> by Denis Johnson * Article: “Incarceration gap widens between whites and blacks” by Bruce Drake: https://pewrsr.ch/1qclvUq * Webpage: “Drug Scheduling” by the U.S. DEA: https://bit.ly/2Ch25T8
Author & Artist Information	<p>Jervey Tervalon is an Los Angeles-based writer and professor. Scott Gandell is a Los Angeles-based artist.</p>

<p>Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)</p>	<p>Grades 11-12 Common Core Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.C</p> <p>* Note: Questions recommended for assessment are marked with two asterisks.</p>
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Author Biography

Jervey Tervalon, MFA, is the award-winning, *Los Angeles Times* best-selling author of five books, including *Understand This*, a novel based on his experiences teaching at Locke High School in Los Angeles, for which he won the Quality Paperback Book Club’s New Voices award. His newest novel, *Monster’s Chef*, was released by HarperCollins in 2014. He was the Remsen Bird Writer in Residence at Occidental College and is now an associate professor at National University and a lecturer at the College of Creative Studies at UC Santa Barbara. He’s lectured at USC and Occidental College. He is also an award-winning poet, screenwriter, dramatist, and the Founder and Editor of *Locavore Lit LA*. Jervey was born in New Orleans and raised in Los Angeles. He received his MFA from UC Irvine and studied with Thomas Keneally, author of *Schindler’s Ark*.

Artist Biography

Scott Gandell is a professional illustrator, print maker, curator, and entrepreneur. He is a long-time board member and the development chair of the Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles (si-la.org) where he has also served as president.

Scott is an alumni of ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena and the owner of Pop Secret Gallery in Glendale. He is the Art Director of *Literature for Life* and a contributing artist to Issues 2 through 6 of the journal. His work and studio have been featured in numerous magazines, newspapers, journals, and books.

In 2018, Scott was given the opportunity to design interiors for three different established auto manufacturers. His first project will debut during the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan. Scott is an active participant in the United States Air Force Art Program through the USAF APO. His work has been exhibited and sold in galleries across the United States and Canada, as well as displayed in collections worldwide.

He is married to his lovely wife, Anneline, with whom he has two fur babies—a male and a female. Together they share an adventurous lifestyle, which leaves little time to update online profiles and websites.

SYNOPSIS

Garvy, a young teacher, copes with the ongoing destructive behavior of his brother, Winston, a crack cocaine-addicted father. Winston exists in a bumbling world of carelessness and disregard. His addiction leaves his wife and children desolate and his family desperate for his recovery. Garvy recounts Winston's story with cutting commentary about growing up in a place where everything seems on the verge of failure.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic

Journaling:

In a 15-minute journal entry, explore the following prompt:

Reflect on a time when you experienced a loss. Rather than write about the death of a family member or friend, you might choose to focus on a time when someone close to you moved away or got sick.

How did it feel? How did you deal with it?

Main Ideas

Small-Group Discussion:

Do you think disagreements between family members can actually make the relationship stronger? Why or why not? If you feel comfortable doing so, reference your own experiences. Discuss in small groups.

Passage-Specific Themes

Small-Group and Class Discussion:

Read the following passage from “Diversion Therapy.” Discuss the questions below in small groups, then share your ideas with the class:

People knew me to be a chicken-shit skinflint. I wasn't going to lose that label for nothing less than a true crisis. For a while, I wouldn't pick up the phone. Tina did, and I'd wave it away. It was unfair, but she was the one who had to listen to the updates on the upcoming trial and Winston's doings. She had especially long conversations with Lisa, and that's where the plan backfired. Tina

ended up loaning Lisa six hundred dollars. Lisa said she'd repay us and that the bills were under control. She needed the money to finish remodeling the kitchen is what Tina told me.

The closer Winston's court date got, the better Winston became at finding money to catch up with bills. Lisa remarked he was spending time around the house playing with the kids.

Maybe everything wasn't going to go to hell for him, I told myself, but it was just wishing and hoping.

Question One: What do you think Garvy means when he says, "The closer Winston's court date got, the better Winston became at finding money to catch up with bills"? Is Garvy speaking literally or figuratively? How do you know?

Question Two: Do you think Garvy takes Winston's issues seriously? Why or why not? Cite the excerpt.

Universal Themes

What do you think the story's title suggests about dealing with problems? When you face tough times, do you tend to confront the problem directly? Why or why not?

Think about the last time you were in an argument. What was the argument about, and was it resolved? If so, how? Do you regret anything about the argument? If so, why? Discuss with a partner.

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
husks	controlled substance	arraignment
humbug	disoriented	testimony
crisis	humility	excruciating
gumbo	YTS	contingent
dingy	unscathed	entrapment
half-witted	skinflint	gump
sting (v.)	glum	

Vocabulary Activity Options

- Using reliable sources, research the term controlled substance. You may wish to start at the following webpage from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA): <https://bit.ly/2Ch25T8>

According to the webpage, how many drug classifications exist, and under what schedule does crack cocaine fall? Take notes on your findings.

Follow-up Discussion: How, exactly, does Winston's behavior reflect the psychological and/or physical dependence created by crack cocaine? Use precise language and cite the text. Discuss in small groups.

2. Research Youth Training School (YTS) programs. Be sure to refer to reliable sources. Take notes on your findings.

In small groups, discuss whether these programs, overall, have positive and/or negative effects on young adults. Do you think Winston was made better or worse by his experience in a YTS? How do you know? Cite the text and your research.

Optional: Imagine your group must design a new program to improve a YTS in Los Angeles. Present your plan to the class, stating exactly how your plan would improve the program.

3. Using the dictionary, define the word humbug.

In a one-page response, respond to the following questions:

- What can we infer about Winston's character, based on his calling his situation a humbug?
- In what ways does Winston's attitude set the tone, or feeling, of his life?
- How does Garvy feel about Winston's attitude? How do you know?
- By the end of the story, is Garvy optimistic and/or pessimistic about Winston's future? Cite the text.

Share your ideas with a partner.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Although they are brothers, Winston and Garvy are starkly different characters. Winston struggles to stay clean and appears to have trouble keeping a job. Garvy works as a teacher and maintains a steady home. Despite these differences, how are Garvy and Winston similar? Discuss.
2. How does each family member react to Winston's legal problems and subsequent fall into addiction? How are their reactions similar and/or different? Whose reaction, if any, seems the most productive? Whose reaction seems the most dysfunctional? Why?
3. Describe Garvy's relationship with Winston. The story purposely does not tell you who is the oldest brother. How does not knowing affect your understanding of the brothers' relationship?
4. At the end of the story, Garvy says, "You know Winston's a happy man." Do you think Garvy is jealous of Winston? If so, how do you know? Have you ever felt jealous of someone who is struggling? Why or why not? Discuss.

** Text-Dependent Question Options

1. What is Winston's relationship like with his wife, Lisa? How does it differ from his relationship with Garvy and the rest of the family? Cite the text.
2. Do you think Winston will change, or do you think he will continue down the same path? Why?

3. Examine the dialogue in “Diversion Therapy.” In what ways does Garv’s style of speaking differ from that of his family members? What does this show us about Garv? Do you think he’s aware of this difference? If so, how do you think it makes him feel? Cite the text.
4. Consider the story’s art. What do you notice first about the art? How does the art build upon the story’s themes? Refer to the art and the text.

Writing Exercises

Narrative

Pacing is an essential part of any story, whether the tone is comic or serious. “Diversion Therapy” fast forwards and slows down at various moments, offering both pinpoint images of emotional accuracy and large, booming sweeps of life for Garv, his family, and the people he knows. Re-read the story and find moments when the narrative takes places in real time and when it takes place over longer periods of time.

As Tervalon does in his story, use telling details and realistic dialogue to write at least a one-page short story in response to one of the following prompts:

Option 1: Write a short story that starts from the first day of summer break until now.

Option 2: Write a one-page story about a moment that was three seconds long.

Share your first draft with partner.

Descriptive

“Finally Winston’s turn came up and Tina pulled me away from the ping pong game I was playing with little Win. She wanted us to watch Winston’s testimony.... It felt like church. Church always made me feel crazy, as though the priest or minister were talking directly to me about my shortcomings.”

In a one-page response, describe a moment when you felt nervous or uncomfortable, either for yourself or for someone else. How did you feel, both physically and mentally? Use telling details and sensory language so your reader can visualize your experience.

** Analysis

When analyzing a piece of writing, it can be helpful to remember that writers make artistic choices for a reason. Characters act a certain way because the writer wants the reader to feel a certain way. Similarly, writers make decisions in regards to setting, pacing, and dialogue. However, writers might choose to leave certain details off the page. This, too, affects the reader.

In a two- to three-page analysis, respond to the following prompt:

In “Diversion Therapy,” we are offered very little physical description of Garv, Winston, or the other characters. What is the effect of this? Consider why Tervalon chose to omit these physical details.

Share your first draft with a partner. Ask them to write down three strengths of your analysis, as well as three places where you can improve. Revise into a final draft to turn in to your teacher.

Complementary Text Option

Read the final paragraph from American writer Denis Johnson's novel *Resuscitation of a Hanged Man*. It's about a man, Leonard English, who is serving time in prison.

English felt hungry every minute. Baloney sandwiches on Wonder Bread with Campbell's soup for lunch. Cereal and reconstituted milk for breakfast, one piece of white toast. Potatoes and ground-beef gravy for supper, Wonder Bread on the side. "This is the stuff," English said, shaking his piece of bread at the man across from him. It flopped back and forth like a pancake. "I really like this stuff," he said. And he did. He liked being hungry and in prison.

** Writing Exercise

In the final moments of "Diversion Therapy," Garvy says of Winston, "My stupid ass brother didn't even have the sense to know he was miserable. In fact I suspected he was happy... the bastard."

10-Minute Quick Write: Do you think Leonard and Winston are similar and/or different? Why? Do you think Garvy would call Leonard too stupid to know he's miserable? Why or why not?

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

Creative Writing:

In groups of two, assign one student to be little Win and one student to be big Winston's elderly grandfather. Ask each student to write a 10-minute, first-person account, or testimony, of Winston's situation as their character understands it. Read your testimony duos aloud to the class.

Journaling:

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

Do you have more in common with a two-year-old child or a centenarian (someone who is 100 years old)? Why?

Share your ideas with a partner.

Classroom Activity Two

Class Discussion:

Arrange the class in a circle. Then, ask each student to stand up and discuss two parts of the story they enjoyed and one part they didn't enjoy. The teacher, as a moderator, may ask questions.

Journaling:

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

How is Winston lacking in "humility," as Garv puts it? Do you think you need to be humble to be a good person? Why or why not?

Share your ideas with a partner.

Home Activity

In “Diversion Therapy,” Tervalon uses dialogue to propel plot. Sit in a public place, and write down a conversation you overhear. The conversation can be between friends, family, or strangers.

Next, write a two- to three-page short story inspired by the conversation you overheard. Turn your story in to your teacher.

Guest Speaker

Option One: Invite the author, Jervey Tervalon, to speak to the class about his story and his experience teaching creative writing to high school and college students. Ask him to lead a writing workshop.

Option Two: Invite the artist, Scott Gandell, to speak to the class about his inspiration for creating the artwork, as well as his career as an artist. Ask him to lead an art workshop.

Note: *Literature for Life* helps coordinate and facilitate author and artist visits. Tervalon is the journal’s Founder and Editor. Gandell is the journal’s Art Director.

Field Trip

Visit Glendale’s Brand Park (1601 W. Mountain Street). The park has a beautiful library, teahouse, and scenic gardens backed by hiking trails that wind up the mountain. Take a short hike up the mountain to overlook the city below.

From the mountain, you can see Los Angeles, from Santa Monica, located on the edge of the Pacific, all the way to Pasadena and beyond. Notice the different cities. Count all the downtowns you can see. Using a map, identify each neighborhood or city. What differences do you notice between the places?

Suggested materials: paper or digital maps of Los Angeles

Onsite Writing Activity:

Consider the locations mentioned in “Diversion Therapy.” Garvy’s home is located in Pasadena, which you can see from the mountain. What other areas are mentioned in the story? Can you see them?

Then, find a comfortable place to sit and write for 15 minutes. What does being able to see most of the Los Angeles area add to your understanding of the story? Do you think setting plays a major role in the story, or could “Diversion Therapy” take place in any town, big or small? Cite the text.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

This story and its exercises are appropriate for 11th grade and above. Eleventh- and twelfth-grade standards are cited.

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.C: Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.B: Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11-12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.11-12.4.C: Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.A: Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.C: Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D: Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

Complementary Reading Text (Comparative Writing Exercise)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B: Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.