

Haze

By Angelina Coppola

Illustrated by Isabel Ochoa Gold

Curriculum developed by Andrew Ramirez



OVERVIEW

Quick-Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade-Level Appropriateness	* 12+/7th+
Genre/s	* Young adult literary fiction * Coming of age * Magical realism
Length	* 955 words (8-minute read)

Content Advisories	* None
One-Sentence Summary	A young girl and boy spend the day on an idyllic lake, but beneath the serene setting exists a gaping emotional distance between them—and their relationship is beginning to stretch thin.
Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nature * Magic * Theft * Summer * Pollution * Imagination * Relationships * Coming of age * Los Angeles life <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Escapism * Entrapment * Masculinity * Adolescence * Financial hardship * Emotional confusion * Familial expectations
Historic Events/Time Period for Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * History of Echo Park Lake * Gentrification of Echo Park * Contemporary Los Angeles
Complementary Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Poem: “Morning, Thinking of Empire” by Raymond Carver: https://bit.ly/2HvmDtC * Webpage: “Willow” by Trees for Life: https://bit.ly/2HAtHW1
Author & Artist Information	<p>Angelina Coppola is the journal’s In-Schools Program Coordinator. Isabel Ochoa Gold lives and works in Los Angeles.</p>

<p>Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)</p>	<p>Grade 7 Common Core Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.5</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.5</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.1.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.4.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.5</p> <p>* Note: Questions recommended for assessment are marked with two asterisks.</p>
---	--

Author Biography

Angelina Coppola grew up in Los Angeles. She is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, where she received her BA in English with a concentration in creative writing. Her writing has been covered in *Los Angeles Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, and *CNET Australia*, among others. She has extensive experience as a teaching artist and has worked for several organizations in this capacity, including South Pasadena Arts Center (SPACE), WriteGirl, Bold Ink Writers, and Day One. She currently writes and teaches in Los Angeles. She is the In-Schools Program Coordinator of *Literature for Life*.

Artist Biography

Isabel Ochoa Gold lives and works in Los Angeles.

SYNOPSIS

Linda and Edgar—a young couple—spend the morning together on a lake in Los Angeles. Edgar steers the boat toward a large weeping willow. After docking, they enter a verdant canopy. Edgar presents Linda with a necklace that he may have obtained through illegal methods. Linda refuses the gift and Edgar, feeling rejected, takes the boat to leave. As he sails away, Linda imagines the branches of the weeping willow trapping her with the fireflies.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic

Journaling:

Option One:

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

- Have you ever received a gift you didn't want? Were you surprised?
- Did you tell the person what you really felt?
- What did you do with the gift?

Option Two:

Respond to the following prompt in a 10-minute journal entry:

Think about a time when you had to decline an invitation. Maybe you said no because you didn't like the person who invited you, or maybe you didn't want to go to the place. What did it feel like to tell someone, "No, thanks"?

Optional: Share your journal entry with a partner.

Main Ideas

As you get older, not only will you change, but also those around you will change. Does this excite you or scare you? It's okay to have mixed feelings about change. If you do, what parts are you unsure of, and what parts do you look forward to? Discuss in small groups or as a class.

Next, think about parts of your life that have already changed. How do you feel about those changes? Discuss.

Follow-up Journaling:

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

- Is there a place that symbolizes your childhood? Describe it using telling details and sensory language.
- Do you still go there, or do you just remember the place? Share a memory you have of the place.

Passage-Specific Themes

Small-Group and Class Discussion:

Read the following passage from "Haze." Discuss the questions below in small groups, then share your ideas with the class:

Linda looked up. "Where you going?"
"To the tree with arms." Edgar pointed toward the small island in the middle of the lake.
"It's called a willow tree."
"I like tree with arms better."
"You think you're cute, huh?"
He shrugged. "Yeah."
"Cute isn't going to get you out of here."

“What gets you out of here?” He started to paddle faster.
 “Being smart.”
 “Like you?”
 “I’m not that smart,” Linda said.
 “Yeah you are. You’re like the smartest person I know.”

The boat plunged into the side of the makeshift island. Edgar and Linda got out and stepped into the muck.

Question One: What does this conversation tell you about Linda and Edgar, not only as individuals, but also as a couple? Who do you think dominates this relationship? How do you know?

Question Two: Based on this passage alone, who do you think has more book smarts? Who might have more street smarts? How were you able to infer this?

Universal Themes

How is your life influenced by events outside of your control?

Think about your family’s expectations for you, which you may not agree with, or a struggling friend, who you can’t help as much as you’d like. Think about the traffic jam that made you late to school or work.

Reflect on what it means to not have control over certain parts of your life, or to “ride shotgun” in your own life. Think about the outside forces you have no control over and how they change your day-to-day life. Do they annoy you, or do they keep your life exciting? Discuss in small groups or as a class.

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
flecks	canopy	embedded
fireflies	squinted	demonic
muck	abuela	makeshift
dagger	willow tree	inscription
wad	whirlpool	collided

Vocabulary Activity Options

- In small groups, answer the following two-part question using reputable sources:
 - Part One: What type of tree is a willow tree?
 - Part Two: In “Haze,” what might the willow tree symbolize for the characters?

To help you answer Part Two, explore the following page published by the Scottish nonprofit Trees for Life: <https://bit.ly/2HAtHW1>

In a mini-presentation, share your findings with the class, and explain the symbolic significance of willow trees in the story.

2. ** Part One: Write a short character description of Linda's abuela. What does she look like? How do you know? What is abuela's role in Linda's life? Reference the text.

Part Two: Next, name three ways abuela is like the canopy where the story takes place. What do abuela and the canopy have in common? Share your ideas with a partner.

3. What is a whirlpool? Look up the word's definition in the dictionary. How do Linda's feelings toward Edgar and their Los Angeles neighborhood relate to the whirlpool at the center of the lake? Re-read "Haze" with a highlighter. Mark the context clues that justify your answer.

Next, write one sentence using the word whirlpool in a figurative sense. (For example, "When I opened the letter from the Air Force Academy, I was a whirlpool of emotions, because I didn't know if I'd been accepted into their fighter pilot program.") Share your sentence with a partner.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. How is the natural beauty of the willow tree juxtaposed with the urban sprawl of Echo Park? What do you think the tree means to Linda? Does Edgar change this meaning when he tries to give her the "sticky-fingered" watch? Why or why not? Discuss.
2. Do you think Linda and Edgar have a healthy or a dysfunctional relationship? How do you know?
3. Even though they do not speak in the story, how do you think Linda's family affects her life and her relationship with Edgar? Do you think this is fair to Linda? Why or why not? Discuss.
4. What do you think the fireflies symbolize to Linda? In the final paragraph, what do you make of the growing, glowing swarm of fireflies as the branches of the willow tree begin to interlock?

** Text-Dependent Question Options

1. In "Haze," Coppola writes with colorful language to paint a picture in the reader's mind. Find three metaphors in the text. What are the metaphors' effects? Cite the text.
2. What are Linda and Edgar's economic statuses? Are they rich, poor, or in the middle? How do you know? Reference the text.
3. Linda and Edgar are distinct characters. How does Coppola show their personalities in "Haze"? How are Linda and Edgar's approaches to life similar and/or different? Refer to the text.
4. Good writing develops characters and setting by showing rather than telling the reader. In what ways does this story show Linda and Edgar's age? What does the artwork show us about "Haze's" natural environment? Cite both the story and the artwork.

Writing Exercises

Descriptive

Rich in experimentation and abstraction, magical realism redefines what it means to be human and reinvigorates our fascination with the natural world. In this genre, magical elements blend with reality to create an unexpected version of the world, as we see in “Haze.”

Notice how the willow tree canopy comes to life at the end of the story. It’s almost like the willow tree is a character lying in wait until the final moment, when it traps Linda and confines her to a figurative prison, where the air glows golden with fireflies.

Now, describe a moment when a place made you feel happy, sad, trapped, curious, inspired, or some other way. You may wish to write about the peaceful stillness of your room at night, the tense feeling in the air at the start of a swim race, or the hypnotizing hum of traffic on the freeway.

In a 250- to 300-word response, briefly describe the place using concrete details and sensory language, and explore how it made you feel. Don’t sweat it; your writing does not have to be perfect.

Narrative

In the story, Edgar and Linda ride a boat across the lake to the willow tree. By the time they arrive at the island, they have entered new emotional, as well as physical, territory. Consider how the setting matches the characters’ emotions.

With this in mind, write the first draft of a 300-word short story in which you, the main character, take a similar journey. It doesn’t have to be a boat ride. You may wish to write about a bike, car, or plane trip. Follow your imagination.

Be sure to include how the journey changes you and brings you to new territory, both physically and emotionally, by the end of the story.

Optional: If writers seem proud of their work, you may wish to call on volunteers to read their short stories to the class.

** Analysis

In “Haze,” Coppola draws a divide between the city and the island Linda and Edgar visit at the center of the lake. She then draws a divide between Edgar and Linda, pitting Edgar’s easy charm and questionable behavior against Linda’s pragmatic demeanor.

In a 700-word analysis, respond to the following prompt:

Which character resembles the city, and which character resembles the island? First, define the city’s significance in the story. Then, draw a connection to either Linda or Edgar. Do the same for the island.

Share your analysis with a partner in a peer edit. Ask them to write down three strengths of your paper and three places where you can improve. Revise your analysis and turn it in to your teacher.

Complementary Text Option

Read American short story writer and poet Raymond Carver's poem "Morning, Thinking of Empire." The poem is about an older couple who has been together for many years. Consider Carver's precise language and how the couple's relationship might relate to Linda and Edgar's.

Morning, Thinking of Empire **By Raymond Carver**

We press our lips to the enameled rim of the cups
and know this grease that floats
over the coffee will one day stop our hearts.
Eyes and fingers drop onto silverware
that is not silverware. Outside the window, waves
beat against the chipped walls of the old city.
Your hands rise from the rough tablecloth
as if to prophesy. Your lips tremble . . .
I want to say to hell with the future.
Our future lies deep in the afternoon.
It is a narrow street with a cart and driver,
a driver who looks at us and hesitates,
then shakes his head. Meanwhile,
I coolly crack the egg of a fine Leghorn chicken.
Your eyes film. You turn from me and look across
the rooftops at the sea. Even the flies are still.
I crack the other egg.
Surely we have diminished one another.

Writing Exercise

Set a timer for three minutes, and sit in a quiet place. Close your eyes and focus on the silence. Take deep breaths in and out. If you want, stretch your neck by rolling it in slow circles. Try to clear your mind.

Journaling:

Both "Haze" and "Morning, Thinking of Empire" invite the reader to consider the silence of moments and the deeper meaning behind them.

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

- What is your relationship to silence?
- Do you enjoy it, find it unsettling, or feel somewhere in between? Why?

In small groups, share your journal entries.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

In "Haze," Coppola creates a feeling of magical realism, especially at the end of the story, when the canopy traps Linda, and she is surrounded by a swarm of fireflies.

Four-Minute Quick Write:

Write down three adjectives that come to mind when you think of Edgar. Then, write three adjectives that you think might come to Linda's mind when she thinks of Edgar.

Follow-up Activity:

Read your six adjectives aloud to the class. Then, write them on the board. If a word is repeated, simply write it again on the board to emphasize its importance. How much of the board can you fill with different adjectives describing Edgar?

When all students have written their adjectives on the board, break into small groups. Ask student groups to work for 20 minutes to visually represent the adjectives in a creative way. (For example, students might draw a willow tree and write the words as if they are fireflies trapped inside the canopy with Linda.) Ask students to incorporate elements of the story into their visual representation.

Optional: Post students' artwork around the classroom, and hold a galley walk, in which students are asked to reflect on their classmates' work.

Suggested materials: poster board and colored markers or colored pencils

Follow-up Journaling:

In a 10-minute journal entry, reflect on what it feels like to look at the visual representations of the adjectives describing Edgar. How many words have a positive or negative connotation?

Note: A word's connotation is how it makes you feel. For example, when you say the word selfish three times slowly, what images come to mind? Are they happy or sad? Now, say the word cozy three times. Do you notice a difference? These images that come to mind are the word's connotation.

With this in mind, look at the adjectives describing Edgar. Do you think Edgar is accurately described in this "canopy connotation" of words? Why or why not? Explain.

Classroom Activity Two

In groups of three, students will pretend to be Clarissa, Sofia, or abuela. In each group, make sure no two students chose the same character to embody.

In 10 minutes, write a paragraph from the point of view of your character. How does your character feel about Linda and Edgar? What worries you about their relationship? Explain.

Remember, based on the context of the story, your character loves to gossip. In your paragraph, don't hold back. Next, ask each group member to read their paragraph to the class.

Follow-up Discussion: How was everyone's gossip similar and/or different? What was the most unexpected? Discuss in small groups.

Home Activity**Journaling:**

Find a spot in nature where you can sit and write for at least 10 minutes.

In at least a one-page journal entry, write about how it feels to be in a natural setting, as are Linda and Edgar in the story. Your setting doesn't have to be a magical willow tree canopy. You may wish to describe how it feels to sit at your neighborhood's park, your school's sports field, or your building's front porch.

What sounds do you hear? Do you feel a breeze on your shoulders? Turn your writing in to your teacher.

Guest Speaker

Option One: Invite the author, Angelina Coppola, to speak to the class about her story and her experience studying English and creative writing at UC Berkeley. Ask her to lead a writing workshop.

Option Two: Invite the artist, Isabel Ochoa Gold, to speak to the class about her inspiration for creating the story's artwork, as well as her artistic process. Ask her to lead an art workshop.

Note: *Literature for Life* helps coordinate and facilitate author and artist visits. Coppola is the journal's In-Schools Program Coordinator.

Field Trip

Visit Echo Park Lake (751 Echo Park Lake Avenue, LA). Although it doesn't have the canopy island depicted in "Haze," the lake radiates natural beauty juxtaposed against the urban sprawl of Los Angeles.

At the lake, imagine you are walking in Linda or Edgar's shoes. What do you see, smell, and hear? Does being at Echo Park Lake make you feel at ease? Why or why not?

Onsite Writing Activity:

Find a comfortable place to sit and write. Imagine how Edgar feels paddling the boat to shore alone. Then, imagine how Linda feels when she's stranded on the island.

Write a new creative ending to the story. Start from the last sentence of the story:

"And how the willow tree filled with fireflies, thousands of them, and how even though it was LA in the dead of summer, with the cars roaring and the smog from downtown filling up the sky, you could see, from across the lake, the glow of all those hovering fireflies."

Optional: Plan ahead to schedule paddle boat rentals for your students: <https://bit.ly/2XUDj3r>

Note: When paddle boating, students younger than 15 years old must be accompanied by an adult.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

This story and its exercises are appropriate for 7th-12th grade. Seventh-grade standards are cited.

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3: 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.7.3.B: Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D: Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.5: Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.A: Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.1.A: Explain the function of phrases and clauses in general and their function in specific sentences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.4.A: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1.A: Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3: 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.7.3.A: Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.C: Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3.D: Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.5: With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Complementary Reading Text (Comparative Writing Exercise)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3: Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.