

Friday

by **Keenan Norris**

Illustrated by **Nery Gabriel Lemus**

Curriculum developed by **Rosalind Helfand** and **Tiffany Owens**

Supplementary curriculum and copy editing by **Léna Garcia**



OVERVIEW

Quick Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade Level Appropriateness	* Ages 14 and up * Grades 9 and up
Genre/s	Fiction
Length	2,800 words
Content Advisories	Violence, Cursing, Truancy
One Sentence Summary	Coming from a poor neighborhood, Luster Little undervalues the hard work ethic of his cousin, Sharone, and instead chooses to emulate local gangster Eddie.

Lesson Planning	
Topic/s	Poverty Gang Activity Truancy Hard work in challenging circumstances Getting ahead Family structure
Key Theme/s Overview	Perseverance Longing Hope / Aspiration Choosing a path in life Respect
Historic Events / Time Period for Study	Present Day Los Angeles. Olympic Runner Marion Jones, (referenced.) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marion_Jones

Lesson Planning	
Complementary Classic and Historic Texts	<p>Excerpt(s) from <i>Amazing Grace</i> by Jonathan Kozol Excerpt(s) from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> by W.E. B DuBois- Excerpts from or articles on <i>The New Jim Crow</i> by Michelle Alexander; See also the radio documentary series available online. http://newjimcrow.com/media/bringing-down-the-new-jim-crow-radio-documentary-series</p> <p><i>Boyz in the Hood</i> , clip(s) from the film by John Singleton: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5p9rqqJmDaQ <i>Invisible Man</i> by Ralph Ellison <i>Crime and Punishment</i> by Fyodor Dostoyevsky</p>
Author and Artists Information	<p>Keenan Norris holds an MFA from Mills College and a PhD from UC Riverside and lives in San Leandro, CA.</p> <p>Nery Gabriel Lemus holds an MFA from CalArts and is a Los Angeles native.</p>

Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.A, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.A, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2</p>
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Author Biography

Keenan Norris holds an M.F.A. from Mills College and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Riverside, serves as a guest editor for the Oxford African-American Studies Center. Keenan’s first novel *Brother and the Dancer* (Heyday Books, 2013) won the James D. Houston Award for first books and he served as editor of the seminal critical work *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape* (Scarecrow Press, 2013). His short work has appeared in the *Evansville*, *Green Mountains* and *Santa Monica Reviews*, *Inlandia*, *Boom: A Journal of California*, and *New California Writing 2013*, as well as *Post-Soul Satire: Black Identity After Civil Rights*.

Artist Biography

Nery Gabriel Lemus, a native of Southern California, was born in Los Angeles, in 1977. The subjects in his work range from issues of stereotype and immigration to problems in society that can lead to the failure of families, such as poverty, abuse and neglect. Lemus received his BFA at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena and his MFA at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia. His work has been featured in exhibitions across the United States and internationally. He is a recipient of a COLA Fellowship Grant from the Department of Cultural Affairs, Los Angeles, and the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Fellowship Award.

SYNOPSIS

Living in impoverished circumstances and losing the attention of his mother to his little sister, Luster Little is drifting between the example set by his responsible cousin, Sharone, and the other adult males in his neighborhood, many of whom are engaged in various illegal activities. Without clear parental engagement and specific guidance about how to grow up and establish his own identity, Luster sees little value in regular school attendance, and his circumstances are pushing him towards short term, survival-level decision-making.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic

Throughout our lives, we may find ourselves in circumstances in which we would appreciate some helpful guidance and advice. At other times, we may find ourselves on the receiving end of too much unsolicited advice. Conversely, we may also find that the advice we think will be helpful, is neither needed or wanted by someone else.

In a thoughtful journal entry, relate a time when you needed advice about what to do. Maybe you had someone to turn to and ask, maybe someone could see that you needed help, and offered it to you without you asking, maybe there wasn't anyone available to provide you with guidance at that time. In your journal entry address the following questions:

- * What was the dilemma or problem you had?
- * Who did you ask for advice, who simply gave you advice, or who did you wish would help you but couldn't/didn't?

- * What did you eventually do or decide?
- * Did someone's advice play an actual role in your decision-making? (Did you take advice or ignore it?)
- * Was the outcome favorable or not? Why or why not?
- * What role did the advice or the lack of advice play in the outcome?
- * What would you do the same or differently if you were facing the same problem over again?

Write for 10-15 minutes.

Main Ideas

Introduction:

It's no secret that not everyone starts out in life with the same circumstances and resources at their disposal, and that hard work, ethical behavior, and perseverance don't always earn people the same rewards. In the short story, "Friday," Luster Little is struggling to get through the challenges of day-to-day life while also establishing his identity as a young man.

Conduct the following classroom activity:

1. Divide the class into four mid-sized groups. (Teacher may assign groups by any arbitrary means – season of birth, quadrants of the classroom, ice cream flavor preference, etc.)
2. While ALL students will participate in this conversation, within each group also assign a recorder, a reporter, and a moderator.
3. Next, assign each group one of the following topics:
 - A) RESOURCES a person needs to have starting out in life to survive,
 - B) SKILLS a person needs to develop to learn to make it on their own,
 - C) OBSTACLES that can stand in the way of having a positive childhood or developing good skills
 - D) CHOICES a person makes on their own that can lead to a positive, productive life, or a negative, problematic life.
4. In 10-15 minutes, each group will brainstorm and discuss as many ideas as they can that fit into the broad category that was assigned to their group.
5. Finally, at the end of the brainstorming session, have each group report out to the whole class the ideas that their group came up with.

Ask students to keep these ideas in mind as they read through the short story. Consider the various factors that came up as they read about the protagonist in the story and think about why he is the way he is, and why he is doing the things he is doing.

After reading the story, engage in a follow-up short journaling assignment and discussion where students explore how the topics they came up with do and don't apply to the story.

Passage-Specific Themes

Read the following excerpt from “Friday”:

He saw La Raza liquor store ahead...A trash-can lay neglected, fallen to one side, its guts scattered liberally out...Luster went to pick up what all had fallen out. He set the trashcan upright and dumped the trash back in its proper place.

“Hey, you!” the store owner’s voice called at him from an invisible spot inside the store.

Luster raised up, stared at a bodiless voice.

“You see sign! No loiter.”

Apparently that included people trying to clean up his raggedy little spot, too. Luster didn’t get the logic of it, but he knew not to argue with the man, who had a notorious fierce temper.

Consider the choice Luster has made, to go and pick up someone else’s trash in a parking lot. What does an action like that say about his sense of responsibility and choices?

In a class conversation, talk about the above questions, and also, consider what you would do if you found yourself in the same situation as Luster, being yelled at for doing something good. How would you react if you reacted at all? Would you think twice about doing something good next time? Why or why not?

Universal Themes

In a short answer response (2 – 3 paragraphs), discuss what you think most people want in life. What do you think are the most universal hopes and aspirations that people share? Are those desires material, emotional, spiritual, or intellectual?

After writing, trade papers with a partner and read their response. Did you find anything in common?

Key Vocabulary

Definitions are very context-dependent. Make sure that 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
Apple	Pip	Cyanide
khakis	suspended	saturated
suburbs	process	Luster
starch	totin'	lustrous
fussiest	Rolling craps (as a phrase)	mingling
garments	stalking	improvised
huddled	wedged	flailing
prematurely	throttled	loitering
secluded	Cats (as slang)	Pythagoras
intersecting	dominion	notorious
neglected	youngblood	leafing
hallucinated	Current (as in liquid)	processional
	idling	Starshine

Vocabulary Activities

1. Look at the following vocabulary from “Friday”: intersecting, totin’ (toting,) stalking, rolling, idling, mingling, flailing, loitering, leafing. Many of the verbs are actually subtly nuanced gerunds (verbs turned into nouns by adding the suffix -ing) meant to express a very particular type of movement. Choose three of these gerunds, look them up, and make note of their exact definitions. (Be sure that the definitions you focus on are the most accurate ones for the context of this story.) Next, find each word used in the story and reread the corresponding section. Finally, briefly explain why the author chose that particular word rather than a simpler one that would have been easier to understand. What was it about each of the words you chose that helps make the story better? (Each explanation should be between approximately one and three sentences.)
2. Both Luster and his little sister, Starshine, have names that refer in some way to types of light. Look up both of their names and read through various definitions and usage examples. Although we do not learn too much about the mother, what might her choice of names for her children suggest about her? Your answer should be approximately a paragraph in length.
3. Work in teams of two or three. Work together with your partner(s) to write your own, original description of the character, Luster. Choose between eight and twelve of the vocabulary words

from the list, and incorporate them into your description. Your description should be about a paragraph long, and it should tell us something about Luster's appearance, and his character.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Luster's family is struggling financially. In a class conversation, talk about the details in the story that reveal his economic situation to the reader. What do we see in his environment, and what does Luster do, that reveals to the reader that his family faces financial challenges? Cite all the specific places in the text that will support your answer(s).
2. Why do Eddie and the liquor store owner go into a room at the back of the store? What might they be doing? What was the whole sequence of action in that paragraph about?
3. Considering the people and circumstances in Luster's life, and based on what is explicitly and implicitly told in the story, what possible futures can you envision for him? Imagine him one year from now, and five years from now. What possible ways might Luster's life go, and where do you see evidence in the story to support some of your theories about his future?

Text-Dependent Questions

1. What details in the story show the reader that Luster's cousin, Sharrone, has aspirations beyond his current circumstances?
2. Note two places in the text that show us that Luster is conflicted between making good choices and making negative choices.
3. Why does Luster's process of washing his pants irritate Sharrone?
4. At what moments in the story, do we see Luster beginning to think things through in a more adult-like way? List two or three places that show Luster considering things from an emerging, grown-up perspective.
5. How does the author of "Friday" use the literary device of foreshadowing? Cite at least one example.
6. Why did the artist, Nery Lemus, choose to illustrate the story with two silhouettes of (presumably) male haircuts? Who are the two people depicted by the silhouettes? What type or style of haircut is in the picture and what might that style of haircut possibly represent?
7. In the scene inside the liquor store, what have Eddie Richmond and the store owner assessed and decided about Luster? What does their assessment mean for him right now, and what might it mean for him in the future?

Writing Exercises

Narrative

Imagine you are 25-year-old Luster writing a letter to himself at the age he is in the story. What advice and guidance should he give himself about his life? Write young Luster a letter from older, grown-up Luster.

Descriptive

The author provides a great deal of information about Sharone. Write a one-page description of the person you most admire and look up to in life. Be sure your description includes sensory details and is rich in a way that reveals their character as well. Think about appearance, facial expressions and habits, gestures, the way they speak, what they say, and anything else that will give the reader a feeling of who they truly are.

Analysis

Reread the following paragraph from “Friday”:

Sure as sunrise, this was the routine. Sharone’s schedule was rolling craps: 7 to 11 in the a.m. he worked a day job at the downtown bakery, then 7 to 11 in the p.m. he delivered pizzas in Suerte’s North side suburbs and the ranches above. Wedged in between, no siesta, the brother was busy with a day class at community college, stalking down that barber’s license one unit at a time. Hard as it was, it wasn’t all the work that got to him, even though it throttled him out of bed in the mornings and numbed him into sleep at night; it was school that cut him like a knife edge; it forced him to hope, it filled him with the world and its possibilities.

In a well-reasoned, short essay, explain why hope is the thing that is difficult here for Sharrone, much more so than working two jobs in a split-shift. Consider also addressing in your paper how having hope might be difficult in general, not just in this story.

Complementary Reading Text

Writing Exercise

In the short story, “Friday,” the author paints a picture of the setting for Luster’s world, which shows a variety of factors and elements. Luster’s circumstances are challenging in many ways. He is struggling to get by, to grow up, and he’s beginning to think about the choices he makes in his life.

Read the excerpt from the novel, *The Outsiders*, then, in a short essay, compare Luster's world to the world described in the excerpt. What similarities lie in the descriptions of the two worlds, and how do they make it challenging for young people who are trying to grow up?

Excerpt link here: <http://www.teenreads.com/reviews/the-outsiders/excerpt>

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

Work in small teams of 3 – 5 people to research and write a mid-length (2 – 5 pages) newspaper, news magazine, or other factually supported article on factors that affect one's socio-economic, social, and professional success in the contemporary United States. Your group may choose to focus on socio-economics, education, gender, ethnicity (race,) ability, or other similar factors. While ALL team members will work on the research portion of the activity, select one person to serve as content editor of the piece, another to serve as proofreader/copy-editor, and a third to serve as formatting designer.

Classroom Activity Two

Using your article from the activity above, storyboard, script, film, and edit your piece, making a video-report. Present your original storyboard art and screen your video for your class.

Home Activity

In "Friday," Luster's circumstances require that he does a few things that could possibly be viewed as atypical when compared with the cultural norms that are held up in American novels, TV shows, and films. For example, he washes his khaki pants in the bathtub following a particular method he has developed, and he sleeps in a sleeping-bag sometimes inside a large closet or in the kitchen instead of a standard bed.

Think of something that you may do on a regular basis at home and then do it in a very different way. Pay close attention to your five senses as you do the activity and the thoughts and feelings that might come up from doing something in a completely new and different way.

Finally, write a follow-up journal entry about what you did, recoding your sensory experiences and your thoughts and feelings. What would life be like if you had to do this activity in the experimental way all the time?

Here are some examples of things you might try to do differently:

1. If you have a washing machine and dryer at home, try washing an outfit by hand in the sink or bathtub as Luster did. Then, hang it up to dry, maybe on a clothesline if you have one, or on a chair on the patio or in the backyard. How much time does it take? How hard was it to do? How messy? Did the clothes eventually turn out the same way as from the washer? Describe the experience in your journal. (Do NOT try to dry clothes over an open flame on the stove or in the oven. Although we see Luster do this in the story, it is not safe.)
2. Where do you normally sleep every night? Pick a different spot in the house to sleep, maybe in the closet like Luster, on the floor in a sibling's room, or maybe on the couch. What do you hear and maybe see that is different from your regular sleeping place? Is it easier, harder, or the same, trying to sleep somewhere else? What do you notice? What keeps you awake or helps you drift off? What is comfortable or uncomfortable about changing sleeping locations?

Guest Speaker

1. Invite author, Keenan Norris, to come and speak to the class about the experiences and observations that led him to write this story. Ask him about his graduate studies and the topics that contributed to the perspective from which he writes.
2. Invite the artist, Nery Lemus, to come and speak to the class about his choice in the cover artwork. Ask him to discuss which elements stood out to him when he read the story, and how they inspired his piece.
3. Invite the leader of a local nonprofit (such as Homeboys in LA) that assists teens with opportunities to learn skills and prepare for higher education to come and speak about their work.

Field Trip

Luster's cousin, Sharrone, is completing a program to get his barbering license and certification. He's doing the program one class at a time. With your teacher's assistance, make arrangements to visit a local community college, or vocational college and interview and talk with some of the instructors and students about their experiences going through programs like the one Sharrone is in. Seek out a program that might allow you to try your hand at some skilled work such as what Sharrone studies. (You might look into barbering programs, mechanical, medical programs such as nursing, radiology, phlebotomy, or laboratory technician, welding, etc.)

TEST PREPARATION COMPONENT

Activity:

Use the "double-bubble map" below to compare and contrast Luster Little's life experiences and way of looking at the world with that of his cousin, Sharone Bonilla. You may wish to focus on each character's perception of the morning described in Keenan Norris's "Friday."

Instructions for double-bubble map: In the five bubbles connected only to Little's name, bullet note the key elements of his character. In the five bubbles stemming only from Bonilla's name, bullet note the key elements unique to his character. Use the center five bubbles to note the similarities of both cousins.

Writing Prompt:

In one paragraph, write a diary entry describing the morning from Sharone Bonilla's perspective. In another paragraph, write a diary entry describing the same morning from Luster Little's own perspective. Be sure to draw on concrete details from the story, as well as the observations from your double-bubble map.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

This story and its exercises are appropriate for 9-12th grade. Ninth-grade standards are cited.

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4: 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.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when

appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9-10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.A Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4: 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.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4: 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.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.A: Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.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.9-10.4: 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 Writing Exercise

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4: 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.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6: Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2: Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4: 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.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.