

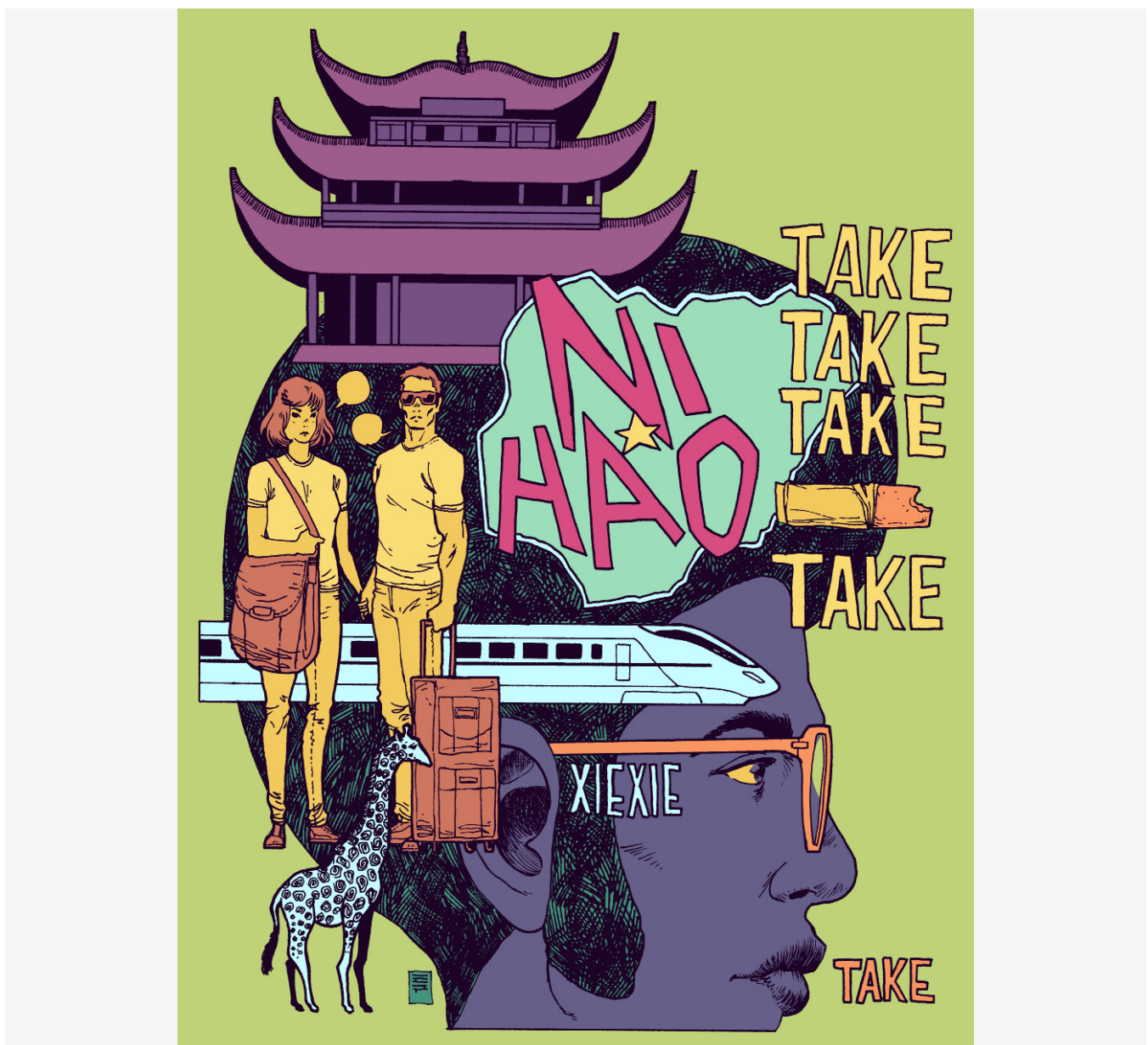
Adebowale on the Yangtze River

by **Kosiso Ugwueze**

Illustrated by **Erwin Papa**

Curriculum developed by **Tiffany Owens**

Supplementary Curriculum and Copy Editing by **Léna Garcia**



OVERVIEW

Quick Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade Level Appropriateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 14 and up • Grades 9 and up <p>(Complex themes, but completely PG. Could be used with sophisticated readers even in eighth grade. Standards-Focus optimized for ninth grade.)</p>
Genre/s	Narrative, contemporary, realistic fiction, short story, travel fiction
Length	1,064 words
Content Advisories	Ethnicity/race, languages, cross-cultural interactions, international travel, cultural insensitivity
One Sentence Summary	A traveler in China, struggling with issues of identity, experiences unexpected acceptance from strangers whose kindness transcends his expectations.

Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnicity/Race • Identity • Inclusion/Exclusion • Cross-Cultural Discovery. <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding and maintaining identity in changing circumstances • Finding community in new environments • Struggling with rejection and acceptance • Resisting stereotypes • Unexpected kindness
Historic Events / Time Periods for Study	Contemporary expansion of China; Chinese business expansion in Nigeria; China opening up to the West.

Lesson Planning	
Complementary Classic and Historic Texts	<p><i>By Any Other Name</i>, by Santha Sama Rau (Advanced short story. A good challenge for all students. See link below.)</p> <p>http://static.dpsk12.org/gems/montbello/SB9Identifying-CulturalDifferences.pdf</p> <p><i>My Name</i>, an excerpt from <i>The House on Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros, (The excerpt is simple, accessible, a quick read. Good for scaffolding with struggling readers.)</p>
Author and Artists Information	<p>Kosiso Ugwueze is a Nigerian-American writer living in Los Angeles, CA.</p> <p>Erwin Papa is an artist living in Long Beach, CA.</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.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5.A, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5.B, 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.W.9-10.4</p>

Author Biography

Kosiso Ugwueze is a Nigerian-American writer. She received her B.A. in English and International Relations from the University of Southern California. She has a professional background in consulting and public health communications. Kosiso has attended the VONA Voices Writing Workshop as well as the Community of Writers at Squaw Valley. She lives in Los Angeles, CA. This is her first publication.

Artist Biography

Erwin Papa is an illustrator and sculptor with work including comic books, character design, and toy design. He also creates abstract sculptures comprised of found objects. He lives in Long Beach, CA.

SYNOPSIS

Adebowale is a young man of multiple nationalities and cultural backgrounds, who has recently been living and working in Beijing. While aware of his own shortcomings—having failed to learn Mandarin or assimilate much into the local culture—he is nonetheless frustrated by the Chinese people’s responses to his visible physical differences, such as stature, skin color, and hair form. Repeatedly treated like an object of curiosity, he has grown touchy and easily offended. Chance places him in a train car with a young Chinese couple who challenge his expectations through an act of kindness and give him pause for reflection.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic

Journaling (10-15 minutes): This activity can be expanded or contracted to fit classroom time and other constraints.

In this story, the protagonist, Adebowale, has experienced many situations in which he felt different from people around him or was actually perceived and treated as different. Generally, most people wish to belong and to be accepted by those around them.

Journal Exercise #1: In what circumstances have you found yourself not fitting in, and how did you cope with that?

Journal or Discussion Exercise #2 (Optional): Conversely, how have you reacted to people you encountered who you felt were different from you in some way?

Did you acknowledge them? How? Why or why not? Did you make eye contact? Did you speak to them? What did you say? Describe in detail your interaction(s) with them. How would you characterize your behavior toward the person?

Reflect and describe how that person probably felt by your treatment of them. Did they likely feel better or worse about themselves or the situation? What evidence did you have from the experience that would lead you to your conclusion?

Main Ideas

Class Discussion (15-25 minutes): Timing can be expanded or contracted.

We often treat each other and react in ways that are less than ideal when we feel that someone is different or that we are different from others. Why? Do we have the ability to improve on these tendencies? What could we and, arguably, should we do when we encounter differences? What are some challenges in the way of our acting according to these ideals? (Have one or two students chart on the board some of the responses. Perhaps note factors with high agreement or dissent across the class responses.)

Passage-Specific Themes

Writing Exercise: Read the following passage from the story:

“The clerk looks at him. She looks at his dark hands, his dark face, his afro. ‘American?’ she asks. He hesitates. He nods. It’s too complicated to explain that he was born in Nigeria, that he joined his father in New York when his mother died, that he came to China to escape a growing disenchantment. The last time he visited Nigeria, he remembers how shocked he was to see Chinese characters all over the new construction sites at the international airport in Abuja. His uncle had likened it to an invasion.”

Adebowale has complex feelings about his identity. What are those feelings and how are they revealed in this passage?

Universal Themes

Small Group Discussion: This could also be done as an individual writing exercise.

In groups of three to five people, discuss the following: Our identity is tightly bound to factors such as our language and our appearance. How do you think your own ascribed characteristics affect your interactions with peers, authority figures, strangers, family, and friends? How do you feel about yourself with regard to your language and appearance and other ascribed characteristics?

(Ascribed characteristics include those characteristics that we did not choose or achieve, that we were born into or that came to us involuntarily such as age, ability, sex, socioeconomic position, education, religion, appearance, etc. You did not choose these things. You were born with them.)

Key Vocabulary

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
scan	retrieve	meander
muggy	invasion	compelled
glance	overwhelmingly	bustling
companion	despite	expatriates
blur	commotion	disenchantment
unaccustomed	briskly	unnerved
apologetically	fiddles	presence
hesitates	intricate	expansive
overcast		Beijing
ghostly		Shanghai
train compartment		Nigeria
		ni hao
		xie xie

Vocabulary Activity Options

1. First, choose three to five words from the vocabulary lists (in teams or individually—teacher’s choice). Choose words that seem conceptually related. Second, look up and define these words. Next, pick two of the vocab words that seem the most connected conceptually, and explain that connection, either conceptually or linguistically/etymologically. This can be done individually, orally in small groups, or shared out loud with the whole class. It could also be done as a written assignment and turned in or posted in an online conceptual dictionary. (Again, it’s the teacher’s choice, tailored to best suit the needs of students in the class.)
2. **Expatriate** is a term that describes Adebowale’s role in Beijing, and in other places he has lived. Research the term “expatriate” and look up several well-known expatriates. What, if anything, do they have in common? Are there similarities in the reasons why expatriates move to other countries? What do you think it really means to be an expatriate?
3. Work in teams of two to four people to act out the meaning of Level Two or Three words, or create tableaux (staged pictures with your bodies) that illustrate the meaning.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. In the beginning of the story, Adebowale gives the taxi driver more money than he should have. Did he get cheated? Does he know he overpaid? Why does he give more money than necessary? Do you think this incident is representative of his overall experience in Beijing? How? Why or why not?
2. What is Adebowale's mood? How does he seem to be feeling? What experiences and environmental factors may be affecting his feelings? (Cite the text to support your answers.)
3. Throughout the story, and particularly in the train compartment, Adebowale finds himself in close physical proximity to other people with whom he has little in common. How does this circumstance affect people in general, and how specifically does it affect Adebowale?

Text-Dependent Question Options

1. What are the many cultural intersections in Adebowale's life? (Cite the text directly.)
2. Is Adebowale responsible in any way for his frustrating situation (i.e., not learning Mandarin)? For which parts is he or isn't he responsible? Are some of his feelings paranoia? Explain.
3. Adebowale feels himself to be an outsider. Where does the author reveal this in the text, both implicitly and explicitly? (Cite the text directly.)
4. What are some plausible reasons why the young Chinese couple chose to interact with Adebowale as they did?
5. Why is the story told from an omniscient third-person perspective? What does that do for the story? How would the story change if told from first person?
6. Why do you think the illustrator chose to superimpose images from the story on Adebowale's head? What does this choice symbolize? Explain your answer and include evidence from the text to support your ideas.
7. Where does Adebowale feel he belongs?
8. Why is Adebowale's sense of relief so "deep?"
9. What does the sentence, "This time he is not troubled by the fact that he cannot understand them," reveal about Adebowale's state of mind by the end of the story? How might his experience with the couple on the train alter his perspective moving forward?
10. Compare Adebowale's feelings from the beginning of the story to his feelings at the end. How does Adebowale change?

Bonus: Do you think the change will last? Why or why not?

Writing Exercise Options

Narrative

Place yourself in Adebowale’s position, and imagine what it would be like to go through his experiences. Pretending you are him, write a one-page-or-longer letter to a friend or family member back home about your experiences and feelings. Address the following two questions in your letter: How has your [Adebowale’s] sense of identity been shaken by most of the experiences in Beijing? How has your [Adebowale’s] sense of identity been affected by the interactions with the young couple on the train? Reference specific places in the text to guide your writing.

Descriptive

Pretending that you are one of the two young people Adebowale eventually shares a train compartment with, write a pretend journal entry describing your impressions of Adebowale, from the first time you see him on the train platform to the time he goes to sleep at the end of the story. (You may even choose to extend the story and write about the rest of the journey, including when you and he wake up in the morning and what happens when you exit the train and say your goodbyes. Remember to keep most of your focus on describing Adebowale (rather than plot points). Focus on his personal characteristics and personality traits as you perceive them.

Analysis

Adebowale feels that the people of Beijing have been insensitive and somewhat disrespectful to him. In what ways has he perhaps been culturally insensitive?

Complementary Reading Text Option

1.

Santha Sama Rau’s short story *By Any Other Name*: <http://bit.ly/2cYzN3d>

Read *By Any Other Name* carefully. In a thoughtfully constructed one- to two-page response, answer the following question:

Both Adebowale and the sisters, Premila and Santha, find themselves outsiders within a dominant cultural group that views them as strange and curious. They each feel misunderstood and, to an extent, disrespected by this dominant cultural group. How is the sense of exclusion and

disrespect similar in both stories? How are their circumstances similar, and how are the characters' responses similar?

2.

My Name, an excerpt from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

Read the passage below. Write a two- to four-paragraph response to the following question:

In both *My Name* and *Adebowale on the Yangtze River*, the protagonists face preconceived expectations from other people in their lives. How are the two protagonists similar?

Excerpt:

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse—which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female—but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild, horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name Magdalena—which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real

me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

Have students work in small teams or as a whole class to design a welcome center for expatriates and transplants coming to live in the United States. Set up the welcome center and staff it with class members taking on various roles, leading various activities, and producing guides or apps for the expatriates. Invite students from other classes, grade levels, or other adults from the school community to come to the welcome center and experience it as if they were newly arrived.

Teacher’s Note: This exercise is not intended to have the same focus as working at a refugee center would have. While there may be some overlap in needs, the experiences and needs of refugees are often borne out of war, violence, persecution, and other political instability. Have students focus on someone like Adebowale, who has had the luxury of choosing to move to another country rather than having to flee.

Classroom Activity Two

Have students create a kit and preparation program for people planning to move to another country. In this activity, students will need to answer the following:

What does a person need to know? What kinds of things will they need to research? What will they need to get or do before moving? Do they need paperwork, documents, visas, etc.? Will they need to get certain shots or vaccinations before they go? What must they take with them? What do they need to learn and practice before they go? What customs, laws, and social expectations should they be especially aware of?

1. Begin by getting into small teams of three to five people. (Teacher may decide to assign groups or let students choose their own.)
2. Assign areas of focus based on the questions above, and have each person take ownership of one or two main questions, conducting the research, note-taking, and decision-making regarding what information and materials are needed.
3. Have the team come together and create a timeline and checklist for people planning to move to another—any other—country. Design a practical set of directions with a schedule that a person could use in real life as they plan an international move.

4. Conduct an in-class gallery walk of all the preparation programs with their documents and see what they all have in common. Discuss as a class which team's plan might be most practical and yield the smoothest, most successful outcome.

Home Activity

Choose any specific, populated foreign country to move to. (The teacher may also decide to assign countries to individual students so no one overlaps.) In order to have the smoothest transition and ideally integrate into your new society, implement the preparation program from the class activity above for yourself, as if you were actually going to your chosen country. (See above.)

Have students conduct a second gallery walk, this time, looking at each individual student's chosen country and information from their preparation plan. Discuss who in the class might actually have the smoothest and easiest transition and who might have a more challenging time. Why do you think so? Discuss.

Guest Speaker

1. Have a sociocultural anthropologist, sociologist, linguist, or psychologist come to speak to the class about how we form identity, social norms, and customs, or how we form stereotypes, and how those stereotypes can be shifted and changed.
2. Invite the author, Kosiso Ugwueze, to come and speak with the class about the difference between fictional and experientially influenced, or memoir, writing. You may want to begin the conversation by asking her what about the piece she wrote is inspired by her own experiences and what is entirely fictional. You may also want to ask her if she has had the kinds of identity and belonging challenges that Adebowale faced and how she feels about where she lives now.
3. Invite the artist, Erwin Papa, to come and speak the class about his artistic process and about how and why he chose to work in a collage style for the illustration of Adebowale. Additionally, if time and resources permit, and if the artist is willing, invite Erwin to come and lead the class in their own collage-making process, similar to that of the illustration for the story. What would students choose to put in their heads in collage form? Which experiences in our lives become most significant and representative of who we are? What would you choose to highlight in the collage in your head?

Field Trip

As a class, take the Metro light rail to Union Station in downtown Los Angeles. Spend time walking up and down the crowded central corridor, as well as the famous main entrance waiting area. Exit the main entrance, and walk across the street to Olvera Street, through the plaza, and through Olvera Street itself. Next, walk up to Spring or Broadway Streets and head north

toward Chinatown station. Stop and look at the shops, businesses, and—most importantly—the people along the route. Think back to your pre-reading journal exercise, and make notes about how many different cultural groups you encounter just between Union and Chinatown Stations. Consider yourself as the visitor to these environments. In a second journal entry write about how you might seem to the people in these neighborhoods. What about you might seem different or unusual?

Teacher’s Note: If it is not possible for the class to take this trip together, students could possibly make this into an own-your-own, at home, or after-school activity.

SUPPLEMENTARY CURRICULUM FOR TEST PREPARATION

Story

Adebowale on the Yangtze River, by Kosiso Ugwueze

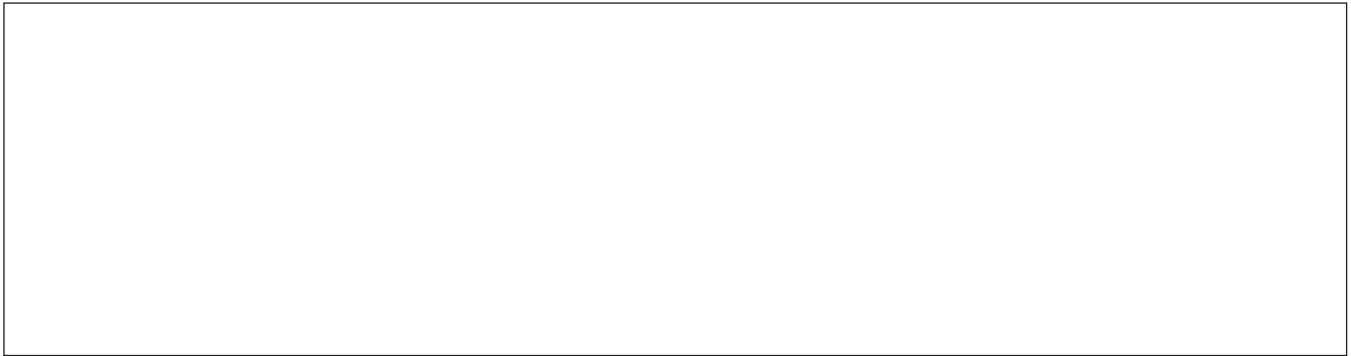
Writing Exercise

When Adebowale is gifted a sweet candy bar on the train to Beijing, it’s a step toward letting down his guard around the couple. What does gift giving signify in “Adebowale on the Yangtze River”? What is the significance of gift giving in Chinese, Nigerian, and American cultures? Write a one- to two-page mini-research paper incorporating at least two sources from the Internet and evidence from the story.

Online Component

Before the next class meeting, ask students to post their response on the class website or turn in the assignment on Turnitin.com.

If handwriting your mini-research paper, please use the box below:



Pre-Editing Activity

Students exchange digital or hard-copy papers.

Editing Activity

At your peer tutoring job, a student asks you for feedback on this mini-research paper. Focus on the student's use of textual evidence to support their analysis. Are the evidence and analysis integrated? Are the quotes introduced and contextualized? If not, write a brief email to the student discussing areas in which the response needs revision. Be sure to address the response's overall strengths, as well as one area in which the writer could improve.

Core Standards

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

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.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.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

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.9-10.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5.A: Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5.B: Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

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.

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.

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.

Complementary Reading Text Writing Exercise

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.