

Big Head

By Patrick O’Neil

Illustration by Christian Meesey

Curriculum developed by Kate Kesner



OVERVIEW

Quick-Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade-Level Appropriateness	* 15+/10 th +
Genre/s	* Personal essay
Length	1,489 words (5-minute read)
Content Advisories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Minor swear word * Mention of underage drinking * Mention of cigarettes * Complementary text “Persimmons”: mention of sex * Complementary historical text “19th Century Criminology”; mention of sexual violence (not within the excerpt cited within the curriculum)
One-Sentence Summary	The narrator looks back on how having a large head has impacted his life.
Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Image * Inclusion * Illness * Loneliness * Family <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sticking out * Self-consciousness versus focusing on others * Internal experience versus how one is perceived
Historic Events/Time Periods for Study	* 19th Century Italian Criminology & Its Influence on Fascist Italy (trigger warning: mention of sexual violence within the full text; excerpt listed within the curriculum does not include it.)
Complementary Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Short story: The Eyes Are Not Here by Ruskin Bond * Poem: Persimmons by Li-Young Lee (Content Advisory: mention of sex)

Author & Artist Information	<p>Patrick O’Neil participated in LitFest in the Dena 2022 as a panelist for the “The Uncaged Voice: Transcending Bondages” at the Altadena Library, with Luis Rodriguez, Jasmine Williams, and Joe Loya (moderator). Luis and Patrick were contributors to the book <i>The Sentences that Create Us: Crafting a Writer’s Life in Prison</i>. He also teaches at Los Angeles community college and speaks and leads workshops at various rehab facilities and correctional institutions. His book <i>Gun, Needle, Spoon</i> reflects on his successful career as a road manager for punk rock bands such as the Dead Kennedys, his descent into heroin addiction, his turn to crime as a ring-leader of a group of armed banker robbers, followed by his incarceration, getting clean, and his effort for redemption.</p> <p>Christian Meesey’s offbeat cartoons and caricatures have been displayed on walls and in rubbish bins worldwide for over 20 years! Meesey is known for his line work, as well as the ability to capture a likeness.</p>
Key Common Core Standards	<p><u>Grades 11-12 Common Core Standards:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.11-12.6 • CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1 • CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3 • CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5 • CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7 • CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9 • CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10

Author Biography

Patrick O’Neil is the author of the memoirs *Anarchy at the Circle K* (Punk Hostage Press, 2022), *Gun, Needle, Spoon* (Dzanc Books, 2015), and *Hold-Up* (13e Note Editions, 2013). He is the co-author on two instructional writing manuals, *Writing Your Way to Recovery: How Stories Can Save Our Lives* (Independent Press, 2021), with the author James Brown. And PEN America’s Prison and Justice Writing Program’s, *The Sentences that Create Us: Crafting a Writer’s Life in Prison* (Haymarket Books, 2022). His writing has appeared in numerous publications including: Juxtapoz, Salon, The Fix, Decible, and Razorcake. O’Neil is a contributing editor for *Sensitive Skin Magazine*, a Pushcart nominee, a two time nominee for Best Of The Net, and a PEN Center USA Professional and former Emerging Voices Mentor. O’Neil holds an MFA from Antioch University Los Angeles where he is adjunct faculty for their Continuing Education program. He also teaches at a Los Angeles community college and various rehabs, correctional facilities, institutions, and workshops. Author’s website: <https://patrick-oneil.com/>.

Artist Biography

Christian Meesey’s offbeat cartoons and caricatures have been displayed on walls and in rubbish bins worldwide for over 20 years! Meesey is known for his line work, as well as the ability to capture a likeness. His distinctive art is instantly recognizable as his own, no matter how hard he tries to rip off other

cartoonists (such as MAD Magazine luminaries Jack Davis, Mort Drucker, and Hermann Mejia). Meesey's work combines the foundational structure and methods of his mentor, Tom Richmond, with the sensibilities of underground comic books. The illustrator has worked with such clients as Disney, Warner Brothers, IDW, Dynamite, Blind Ferret, Cosmic Lion, his aunt Petunia, and others. Artist's website: <http://meesimo.com/>.

SYNOPSIS

The author and narrator, Patrick, struggles with issues of identity, inclusion and loneliness as he thinks of how having a big head has impacted his life.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Pre-Reading

10-Minute Warm-up Activity:

Option #1: Think of a way in which you stand out. Do you think about it often? Does it impact the way you present yourself in public? Please journal your answer.

Option #2: Have you ever felt obligated to act a certain way because you thought people expected it of you? When has that felt enjoyable and when has it felt upsetting? Please write down your answer and/or share it with a partner.

Main Ideas

5-Minute Writing Activity: Provide an objective summary of the text, focusing on the action rather than what you like or dislike about it.

10-Minute Partner Discussion: Identify two central themes of the text. How does Patrick's views on these ideas seem to change over time?

Passage-Specific Themes

Partner Discussion:

Talk to the person next to you about the following passages from "Big Head."

"I have this big head. I was born with it. I see it in every mirror, darkened store window, even in the dull reflection of a car's windshield. When I'm standing in line at a convenience store, I helplessly stare at the surveillance monitor hovering behind the counter and see myself squished up in grainy digitized color – my head so ridiculously big you can't miss it. With all my blonde hair sticking out all over the place it almost glows in the dark like a plastic Jesus nightlight. Look at any photo that's ever been taken of me and you'll see. There's this big block of a head on my shoulders – a big, big, big head just sitting there.

It's so big only half my face fits on my driver's license. My passport photo is all chin, nose and a couple of eyes – it could be any freckle-faced Irish guy named Patrick O'Neil. My profile photo for Facebook doesn't work either. My head won't fit in that little frame they give you. But what do I care? Nearly everybody in the entire universe is leaving tired old Facebook for TikTok. Only TikTok is just as bad. My enormous head won't fit in their profile photo restrictions either. And don't even talk to me about YouTube, Instagram, or Snapchat. I really don't need another social network, to post every mundane moment of my life on. But I'd be happy if just one of them was big head friendly."

- A hook is an opening statement in an essay that attempts to grab a reader's attention. Do the opening two sentences grab your attention? Why or why not?
 - Optional follow-up writing exercise: Please write a strong hook. You don't have to know the content of the rest of the story yet; just begin with a sentence or two that might captivate someone.
- Hyperbole is an exaggerated statement or claim not meant to be taken literally. What examples of hyperbole can you identify in this passage? What about strong imagery?
- Can you identify a moment in which the narrator contradicts themselves? What does this show about his personality?

"The curse of the big head," I mumble, and then stare directly into your eyes and say, "My head look big to you?"

- Why do you think the author uses second person, or writes directly to the reader, here? What point is he trying to make?

Complementary Text #1:

From "The Eyes Are Not Here" by Ruskin Bond:

I had the compartment to myself up to Rohana, and then a girl got in. The couple who saw her off were probably her parents; they seemed very anxious about her comfort, and the woman gave the girl detailed instructions as to where to keep her things, not to lean out of windows, and how to avoid speaking to strangers. They said their goodbyes; the train pulled out of the station.

As I was totally blind at the time, my eyes sensitive only to light and darkness, I was unable to tell what the girl looked like; but I knew she wore slippers from the way they slapped against her heels. It would take me some time to discover something about her looks, and perhaps I never would. I liked the sound of her voice and even the sound of her slippers.

"Are you going all the way to Dehra?" I asked.

I must have been sitting in a dark corner because my voice startled her. She gave a little exclamation and said, "I didn't know anyone else was here."

Well, it often happens that people with good eyesight fail to see what is right in front of them. They have too much to take in, I suppose, whereas people who cannot see (or see very little) have to take in only

the essentials, whatever registers most tellingly in their remaining senses.

“I didn’t see you, either,” I said. “But I heard you come in.”

I wondered if I would be able to prevent her from discovering that I was blind. I thought to myself, *Provided I keep to my seat, it shouldn’t be too difficult.*

The girl said, “I’m getting down at Saharanpur. My aunt is meeting me there.”

“Then I had better not get too familiar,” I said. “Aunts are usually formidable creatures.”

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“To Dehra, and then to Mussoorie.”

“Oh, how lucky you are, I wish I were going to Mussoorie. I love the hills. Especially in October.”

“Yes, this is the best time,” I said, calling on my memories. “The hills are covered with wild dahlias, the sun is delicious, and at night you can sit in front of a log-fire and drink a little brandy. Most of the tourists have gone, and the roads are quiet and almost deserted. Yes, October is the best time.”

She was silent, and I wondered if my words had touched her, or whether she thought me a romantic fool. Then I made a mistake.

“What is it like?” I asked.

She seemed to find nothing strange in the question. Had she noticed already that I could not see? But her next question removed my doubts.

“Why don’t you look out the window?” she asked.

I moved easily along the berth and felt for the window-ledge. The window was open and I faced it, pretending to be studying the landscape. I heard the panting of the engine, the rumble of the wheels, and in my mind’s eye, I could see the telegraph-posts flashing by.

“Have you noticed,” I ventured, “that the trees seem to be moving while we seem to be standing still?”

“That always happens,” she said. “Do you see any animals?” Hardly any animals left in the forests near Dehra.

I turned from the window and faced the girl, and for a while we sat in silence.

“You have an interesting face,” I remarked. I was becoming quite daring, but it was a safe remark. Few girls can resist flattery.

She laughed pleasantly, a clear ringing laugh.

“It’s nice to be told I have an interesting face. I am tired of people telling me I have a pretty face.”

Oh, so you do have a pretty face, I thought. Aloud, I said, “Well, an interesting face can also be pretty.”

“You are a very gallant young man,” she said, “but why are you so serious?”

I thought then, that I would try to laugh for her, but the thought of laughter only made me feel troubled and lonely.

“We’ll soon be at your station,” I said.

“Thank goodness it’s a short journey. I can’t bear to sit in a train for more than two or three hours.”

Yet, I was prepared to sit there for almost any length of time, just to listen to her talking. Her voice had the sparkle of a mountain stream. As soon as she left the train, I knew, she would forget our brief encounter; but it would stay with me for the rest of the journey and for some time after.

The engine’s whistle shrieked, the carriage wheels changed their sound and rhythm. The girl got up and began to collect her things. I wondered if she wore her hair in a bun, or if it was braided, or if it hung loose over her shoulders, or if it was cut very short.

The train drew slowly into the station. Outside, there was the shouting of porters and vendors and a high-pitched female voice near the carriage door, which must have belonged to the girl’s aunt.

“Good-bye,” said the girl.

She was standing very close to me, so close that the perfume from her hair was tantalizing. I wanted to raise my hand and touch her hair, but she moved away, and only the perfume still lingered where she had stood.

‘You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, but the scent of the roses will linger there still...’

There was some confusion in the doorway. A man, getting into the compartment, stammered an apology. Then the door banged shut, and the world was shut out again. I returned to my berth. The guard blew his whistle and we moved off. Once again, I had a game to play with a new fellow traveler.

The train gathered speed, the wheels took up their song, the carriage groaned and shook. I found the window and sat in front of it, staring into the daylight that was darkness for me. So many things were happening outside the window. It could be a fascinating game, guessing what went on out there.

The man who had entered the compartment broke into my reverie.

“You must be disappointed,” he said. “I’m not as attractive a traveling companion as the one who just left.”

“She was an interesting girl,” I said. “Can you tell me – did she keep her hair long or short?”

“I don’t remember,” he said, sounding puzzled. “It was her eyes I noticed, not her hair. She had beautiful eyes – but they were of no use to her. She was completely blind; didn’t you notice?”

- In “Big Head,” the narrator talks about his own perceived deficiencies rather than focusing on the people around him. In “The Eyes Are Not Here,” the narrator does the same. Do you think the narrator of “Big Head” is missing out on anything in the same way the narrator of “The Eyes Are Not Here” is? In what ways is hiding difference advantageous? Disadvantageous?
- In what ways are the cat in “Big Head” and the girl in “The Eyes Are Not Here?” foils, or devices used by writers to contrast with another character, for the narrators? How do they cause reflection in the main character?
 - Optional Follow-Up Question: how do Patrick from “Big Head” and the narrator from “The Eyes Are Not Here?” learn from their foils? In what ways do they miss the mark?

Universal Themes

Write down your responses to the following question for 5 minutes. Then discuss with the class Socratic Seminar-style.

- Think about a marginalized group in your community or within the media you watch. What are the accepted forms of behavior or roles that group is expected to play? Do you think someone not of a marginalized identity would be expected to behave that way? If not, why are the standards of behavior stricter for some groups and looser for others?
- Do you think Patrick is overthinking his big head? Do you think there are things he could be doing instead to be a happier person? Why do you think he’s not particularly relieved when he learns he doesn’t have a difficult disease?

Key Vocabulary

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
vacant	holistic	segues
deformed	extremities	“magnus caput capitis”
burden	prominences	anomalies

Vocabulary Activity Options

- 1) What do you assume “magnus caput capitis” means, based on the context clues? Why do you think the author chooses to use a Latin phrase instead of writing it in English? Do you think it adds anything to the story?
- 2) Look up the word “segues.” How does this choice of word, combined with the use of the word “we,” contribute to a casual tone within the piece?

Complementary Text #2:

“Persimmons” By Li-Young Lee

In sixth grade Mrs. Walker
slapped the back of my head
and made me stand in the corner
for not knowing the difference
between persimmon and precision.
How to choose

persimmons. This is precision.
Ripe ones are soft and brown-spotted.
Sniff the bottoms. The sweet one
will be fragrant. How to eat:
put the knife away, lay down newspaper.
Peel the skin tenderly, not to tear the meat.
Chew the skin, suck it,
and swallow. Now, eat
the meat of the fruit,
so sweet,
all of it, to the heart.

Donna undresses, her stomach is white.
In the yard, dewy and shivering
with crickets, we lie naked,
face-up, face-down.
I teach her Chinese.
Crickets: chiu chiu. Dew: I've forgotten.
Naked: I've forgotten.
Ni, wo: you and me.
I part her legs,
remember to tell her
she is beautiful as the moon.

Other words
that got me into trouble were
fight and fright, wren and yarn.
Fight was what I did when I was frightened,
Fright was what I felt when I was fighting.
Wrens are small, plain birds,
yarn is what one knits with.
Wrens are soft as yarn.
My mother made birds out of yarn.
I loved to watch her tie the stuff;
a bird, a rabbit, a wee man.

Mrs. Walker brought a persimmon to class
and cut it up
so everyone could taste
a Chinese apple. Knowing
it wasn't ripe or sweet, I didn't eat
but watched the other faces.

My mother said every persimmon has a sun
inside, something golden, glowing,
warm as my face.

Once, in the cellar, I found two wrapped in newspaper,
forgotten and not yet ripe.
I took them and set both on my bedroom windowsill,
where each morning a cardinal
sang, The sun, the sun.

Finally understanding
he was going blind,
my father sat up all one night
waiting for a song, a ghost.
I gave him the persimmons,
swelled, heavy as sadness,
and sweet as love.

This year, in the muddy lighting
of my parents' cellar, I rummage, looking
for something I lost.
My father sits on the tired, wooden stairs,
black cane between his knees,
hand over hand, gripping the handle.
He's so happy that I've come home.
I ask how his eyes are, a stupid question.
All gone, he answers.

Under some blankets, I find a box.
Inside the box I find three scrolls.
I sit beside him and untie
three paintings by my father:
Hibiscus leaf and a white flower.
Two cats preening.
Two persimmons, so full they want to drop from the cloth.

He raises both hands to touch the cloth,
asks, *Which is this?*

This is persimmons, Father.

*Oh, the feel of the wolftail on the silk,
the strength, the tense
precision in the wrist.
I painted them hundreds of times
eyes closed. These I painted blind.
Some things never leave a person:
scent of the hair of one you love,
the texture of persimmons,
in your palm, the ripe weight.*

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

- 1) Read the text above. In what ways does the narrator, Li-Young, struggle with difference throughout his life?
 - a. Follow-Up Question #1: How does Li-Young find solace from exclusion at school through connections with his family members? How does not having family members with big heads make Patrick in “Big Head” feel more isolated? Please cite the texts.
 - b. Follow-Up Question #2: Does the persimmon represent difference in the same way Patrick’s head does within “Big Head?” What other meanings does it hold? Share with your partner.
- 2) “Big Head,” “The Eyes Are Not Here,” and “Persimmons” all include physical differences in the narrators or their family members; in “Big Head,” it’s the narrator’s big head, and in “The Eyes Are Not Here” and “Persimmons” it’s the narrator’s and the narrator’s father’s blindness, respectively. How does a big head impact Patrick? How does blindness impact the narrator and the narrator’s father in the last two pieces?

** Text-Dependent Question Options

- 1) In “Persimmons,” Li-Young Lee recalls that in sixth grade,
“Mrs. Walker brought a persimmon to class
and cut it up
so everyone could taste
a *Chinese apple*. Knowing
it wasn’t ripe or sweet, I didn’t eat
but watched the other faces.”

Similarly, the narrator in “The Eyes Are Not Here” has a moment of worry. When the girl asks him why he is so serious, he thinks “I thought then, that I would try to laugh for her, but the thought of laughter only made me feel troubled and lonely.”

Finally, in “Big Head,” Patrick tells a joke. He thinks, “So, little Johnny comes home from school crying and says, ‘Mommy all the kids at school say I’ve got a big head.’ And his mother says, ‘No you don’t, Johnny. You have a hideously deformed head. The other children are merely hiding the truth to protect your feelings.’”

All these points in the texts tell of a time when the author or a character in their story felt separate from another person or group. In what ways do the authors or characters act similarly? Differently?

Writing Exercises

Narrative

In “Big Head,” the author uses a combination of first- and second-person by using the terms “we” and “you.”

Think of a scenario (realistic or fantastic) in which you have something that makes you stick out, like Patrick does with his big head. Write a page or more about the thing that makes you stick out and what it makes you feel.

Afterwards, rewrite the page from a second-person point of view, replacing “I” with “you.” How does this generate a different impact? How does the story’s tone change?

Descriptive

Even though “Big Head” is mostly the internal monologue of the narrator, the author punctuates his thoughts with strong dialogue and scenes, such as his visit to the doctor’s office, arguing with Anthony Fragamini over being the goalie in 8th grade soccer, and his “conversation” with his cat.

In 500 words or more, write about a character trying to make a big decision (such as whether or not to get married, to move to another country, or to engage in espionage.) What thoughts and memories come up as the character is considering the decision? Do they talk to anyone about it?

Please include dialogue and vivid description, noting the setting and some sensory details such as sight, hearing, and smell. Have the character come to a decision at the end.

Optional Challenge: Make it difficult to tell what the character will decide. Add some stakes that make the wrong decision cost something to the character. (For example, if they move to another country, they could be pursuing their dream job but leaving a best friend behind, or vice versa.)

Optional Take-Home Activity: Bring your story home and expand it to a 1,000 word – 3,000 word narrative. Print out copies for each person in your small group. The next day, take home all your group members’ stories and make notes on what you liked/didn’t like in the margins. They will do the same for you. Make sure to include two to three compliments for every one criticism.

When you have updated your story based on student feedback, please turn it in to the teacher.

Analysis

In “Big Head,” the author writes “In the 19th century, Cesare Lombroso, an anthropologist from the Italian school of criminology, performed numerous autopsies on deceased criminals in an attempt to outline the fourteen physiognomic characteristics, which he believed to be common in all criminals, the foremost being a small head.” Patrick uses this fact as a way to joke about his head, but the history of criminology does have a serious past.

Please read the following passages from “Against the Rising Tide of Crime: Cesare Lombroso and Control of the ‘Dangerous Classes’ in Italy, 1861-1940” by Emilia Musumesci.

During his long career Lombroso attempted to identify, record and control the new, dangerous, disruptive criminals of an already precarious social and political order. He began “scientifically” to certify differences, not only among criminals and “normal” individuals,²² but also among different types of offenders,²³ in the belief that the physical reflects moral “monstrosity”.²⁴ Lombroso’s investigation, striving to discover what a great monstrum lurks behind the simple thief or brigand, should be considered in this context. In this sense Lombroso embarked on a frantic search over the bodies and faces of prisoners and lunatics, in order to find the stigmata of deviance, the unmistakable, irrefutable evidence that a criminal is predetermined to commit evil acts because he is biologically different from any other human being.

The most emblematic example of this attitude is provided by the famous and contested “discovery” attributed to Lombroso, that of the median occipital fossa in the skull of Giuseppe Vilella, a seventy year old brigand from Calabria who died in prison under suspicion of robbery. Thanks to this discovery, Lombroso theorized the differences between criminals and the so-called “normal” individuals, asserting that a criminal is, from birth, an “unhappy variety of human which is, in my opinion, more pathological than the lunatic”. According to Lombroso, this was the evidence that in criminals there are frequent monstrous regressions that correspond to characteristics observed in the skulls of the “lower level of the rodent or lemur, or the brain of a human fetus [sic] of three or four months”. Thus the theory of the “born criminal” was itself born.

- 1) Do you think the assumption of common physical traits in criminals could lead to unfair or prejudiced behaviors? Write a five-paragraph argumentative essay with a thesis statement and concluding statement, citing the article to do so and refuting any opposing arguments you may come up with.
 - a. Optional: If you like, use multimedia content (e.g., podcasts, audiobooks and/or images) to bolster your argument.
- 2) Later in the article, Musumesci states that in Fascist Italy, “the function of the biographical cards should be to support criminal justice, but above all to achieve a “general prophylaxis” and a “moral remediation” by extending the application of identification not only to criminals, but to anyone.”

How do you think Lombroso’s theories of criminology were used in Mussolini’s Italy to create a fascist state? Please find secondary sources to support your point and write a two-page argumentative essay about it.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

In “Big Head,” Patrick decries social networks, at the same time wishing there were ones for people with big heads.

Ten-Minute Free Write:

Do you use social media? If so, does it connect you to other people you might not find in your geographical location? Do you think it's beneficial or detrimental to you overall, and why?

If you don't use social media, please write about how the internet has impacted how people connect with each other and the social position of the "outsider," or anyone with differences from the average person in society.

Classroom Activity Two

Five-Minute Quick Write: Continue the story. Who do you think is on the other end of the phone? Do you think Patrick would bring up his big head or talk about something else? Can you see the story going another way entirely?

Follow-Up Activity: Discuss within small groups for five minutes, and then with the whole class.

Ten to Twenty-Minute Writing Exercise: Continue the story based on the most interesting premise you heard from the class. Is there a way you can thread the theme of being an outsider throughout the entire story?

Home Activity

Ask a friend or sibling if there's anything that has made them stand out or feel different, either as a child or now.

Take notes on your interview.

Bonus: In a ten-minute free-write, write down what surprised you, if anything, about your interviewee's response.

Guest Speaker

Option One: Invite the author, Patrick O'Neil, to speak to the class about his story and his experience as a former road manager for punk bands, a former drug addict, and a current writer and teacher. Ask him to lead a writing workshop.

Field Trip

Free Onsite Activity:

Visit the current exhibition of Henry Taylor: B Side at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Compare and contrast the subjects of his paintings. In what ways do they stick out? In what ways do they fit in? Which subjects seem self-conscious and which ones seem confident? Why do you think that is?

Follow-Up At-Home Writing Activity:

Who among your friends and family members do you admire? Why? How do they present themselves to others?

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

This story and its exercises are appropriate for 9th grade and above. 9th- and 10th-grade standards are cited.

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.C: Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

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.9-10.3.E: Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3: Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

Vocabulary Activity Options

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). (See grade 9–10 Language standards 4–6 for additional expectations.) CA.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.A: Analyze a. Apply grades 11–12 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.B: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and reasoning.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.A: Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize complex ideas, concepts, a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes)d include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics, multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.B: Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, oc(extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A: Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

Text-Dependent Question Options

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.C: Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas d and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.A: Analyze a. Apply grades 11–12 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.B: Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, oc(extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A: Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

Complementary Reading Text (Comparative Writing Exercise)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). (See grade 9–10 Language standards 4–6 for additional expectations.) CA.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.B: Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

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.L.9-10.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.