

The Father-Son Pair in World Literature: A Representation of the Relationship between the Individual and the State

Torrie K. Edwards

Content objectives

Introduction

The unit that I have created, “The Father-Son Pair in World Literature: A Representation of the Relationship between the Individual and the State,” is intended for a class of approximately thirty to forty students enrolled in English II. Though unlikely to happen, a smaller class size would also work with this unit; one would only need to be more diligent about inviting lively conversation in the seminar discussions. While in depth dialogue flourishes in small courses in college, I have found that larger classes in high school allow for greater conversation, as students are more likely to find someone with whom they can agree or find similarities in beliefs. High school students, in my experience, participate more frequently in whole group discussions when they are surrounded by more classmates, because they have more chances of having who they consider to be an ally in the room.

The school in which I plan to teach my unit is a large, suburban public high school of approximately two thousand students. The students are primarily white and come from middle class families. Many students’ beliefs and values reflect those of the community; they are relatively conservative and generally religious (of one Christian denomination or another). These values translate into their school behavior and the manner in which they participate in class. Discussions and interpretations of literature and society are indicative of the belief systems that are instilled at home. For example, students who come from stricter Christian families often struggle to understand or empathize with those who follow the polytheistic beliefs of traditional Ibo culture in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Regardless of faith, the students come to high school moderately well-prepared for the rigorous curriculum; the majority of those who are not ready for high school content are adequately prepared through ninth grade courses. When students reach me in tenth grade, they have, for the most part, been brought nearly to grade level.

My unit has been written for English II students. I have created this unit to be compatible with both honors students and standard level students. With honors students, the final argumentative writing assignment is expected to be greater in depth; furthermore, I will not check rough drafts. They may use peer editors to review their writing, but honors students should, at the end of a semester of English II, be able to create an argumentative essay without my assistance. The curriculum unit “The Father-

Son Pair in World Literature” will work for standard classes as well; the only change to the unit as presented in this document will be the submission of a rough draft of the final argumentative paper for basic feedback from me.

This unit will take approximately six days. I have included a detailed outline of the unit, including a timeline and lesson plans, in the Classroom activities section of this curriculum unit. In these six days, students will use knowledge from earlier discussions about the father-son relationship to draw connections between the pieces of literature and to larger sociopolitical concerns. I will allocate enough time, however, to extend the unit an additional two or three days, should the students need extra scaffolding, further discussion, or greater review.

Rationale

The reasoning behind creating this curriculum unit is two-fold. Teaching the ideas, elements, and skills that are a part of this material is beneficial to both the students and the teacher. One must first ask how this curriculum unit is helpful to the students. Why teach *this* material to *these* students?

Focusing on the Student

My first purpose in crafting this unit is to connect literature to other content areas that interest my students. As a teacher, I try to make English class enjoyable, or at least accessible, to students of various interests. By creating lessons and units that stretch across diverse subject areas, I can engage and interest the greatest number of students. For example, when we study grammar and language, I often use math or scientific vocabulary to connect the content to these other subjects. The historical documents we read appeal to students who like history and social studies. In the case of this unit, I structure my lessons to connect literature to social issues and politics, thus tapping into those students who enjoy civics and government.

Aside from creating this curriculum to appeal to students of varying interests, I wanted to construct a unit that would emphasize the intersection of literature and contemporary sociopolitical concerns. Students should understand that the literature we read in English class isn't simply read for aesthetic value or even thematic lessons, but also for socially relevant issues. With this unit, I hope to force students to recognize that no part of life exists in a vacuum. Every classroom in a school brings knowledge that is useful in other classes as well as in life. In the case of English class, literature is written in a historical context that has a residual impact on students' lives. On a larger scale, students live in political communities ranging from school, local, and state communities, to larger national and global communities. In this vein, students can recognize their own position in their schools as well as how they may function later in life within specific political parties. This unit, therefore, has been written to create greater awareness among students

as to how they figure into these political communities as individuals. Furthermore, this unit shows how these communities as a whole relate to one another; that is, how they have evolved, what events have encouraged any social or political change, how they are similar, and how they are different. Finally, understanding the nature of individuals in states and how individual states coexist with one another, students will be able to relate this knowledge back to the authors' societies and analyze the sociopolitical context of their respective pieces of writing.

I believe that students will be most successful in academics and career fields if they are able to tap into previously acquired knowledge that may or may not seem immediately relevant. In structuring and detailing my curriculum unit, I have aimed to include readings, create assignments, and encourage discussions that utilize these critical thinking skills that ask students to think across curricula. Interdisciplinary critical thinking most closely reflects what one must do in the real world; that is, determining what knowledge is applicable or relevant at what time. Once again, no subject, idea, or piece of information exists in isolation.

Similarly, complex and deep analysis of information is critical for success in a variety of academic fields and career choices. This unit reinforces this skill, as it connects four important, and very different, pieces of literature at a specific thematic level. Moreover, this unit is the culminating series of lessons before students become juniors and seniors; English III/IV and AP English courses require students to engage in thorough analysis of very difficult ideas and topics. With this unit, students will have a clearer transition to the expectations of eleventh and twelfth grade courses.

The rationale for writing this curriculum unit has two sides, the first of which is to benefit the students. This dual purpose is created to mirror the mutual relationship within the classroom. As there are two individuals in the classroom, both student and teacher, we must consider the benefit of this unit to the teacher. As students may improve critical writing and thinking skills, teachers have the opportunity for content area development and pedagogical growth.

Teacher Development and Growth

My culminating curriculum unit is designed to be adaptable for the individual class, the current political climate, and the subject area. For example, the four pieces of literature I use in this unit are by no means the only ones that focus on or include an important father-son dynamic. Teachers in other levels of English may easily switch out the pieces of fictions I have included for ones in their particular course. For example, English III teachers may choose to use the tense father-son relationships in Hemingway's fiction as representative of his disillusionment with American ideals. Additionally, this unit is readily expandable; a teacher may seamlessly incorporate other pieces of literature, supplemental readings or scholarships, and alter the final essay assignment. I could, for

example, add Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, as an additional piece of fiction to study. Students could also look at certain pieces of poetry, such as Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz." In an upper level English class, such as AP English, the instructor may incorporate more literary theory into his or her curriculum; this unit easily accepts further scholarship ranging from psychological studies to political discourse to literary analysis.

Although it is made for English II World Literature, the unit is adaptable to other subject areas and levels. The idea of a tumultuous father-son relationship being representative of tenuous loyalty between peoples and their governmental systems may be incorporated into a government class or a psychology class. For government classes, a teacher may choose to focus on how problems between the people and their government translate into their artistic expression, such as literature. This concentration would be especially interesting in a course that considered paternalistic societies, such as colonial America or India, as these cultures have historically experienced regular conflict between the people and the State. A teacher may also focus on paternalism at a more local level; he or she may present to students laws in our current American system of government, and initiate discussion about how the people's reaction to these laws. For psychology classes, the instructor could focus on the similarities between behavior within family units and within social structures, while using the relationships I have presented in literature as cross-curricular references. This instructor may present information on authority in families, power in friendships, and representation and authority in government. Psychology covers a great deal of ground, and therefore an instructor could also adapt this unit to one in which he or she discusses the role of fiction as avenues for social and political expression, outlets that are important for individuals' mental health and well-being.

The unit is also adaptable to the current political environment as well. By nature, our political climate and policies evolve, as do those around the world; therefore, it may be necessary to update the readings and discussion topics from time to time. One may argue that this is inconvenient, but I disagree. The adaptability of this unit encourages the teacher to improve upon his or teacher based on student feedback and self-reflection. More importantly, I feel that change and updating aspects of teaching prevent rote instruction, boredom, and teacher burnout.

My curriculum unit also benefits the teacher because it acts as a final assessment (that isn't just a traditional final examination) of student comprehension of and engagement with information, themes, and skills of English II. The unit provides teachers an accurate perspective of students' abilities to connect literature from various cultures on a thematic level. The unit also gives insight into students' abilities to access knowledge from other content areas; in other words, the teacher can assess student growth in the use of interdisciplinary critical thinking. Finally, the unit ends in a research-based argumentative essay. As persuasive essay writing is a skill that is must be mastered for academic and career success, this final assignment shows teachers their students' growth in this

important area. With this knowledge, teachers can both fairly evaluate what grade a student may deserve as well as consider how their instruction can be improved to maximize student growth.

Objectives

I have created my curriculum unit to help students improve three important practices: 1) their critical thinking skills; 2) oral and written communication skills; and 3) persuasive or argumentative writing skills. In order to successfully complete their CMS graduation projects, research projects that they begin in English III, students must demonstrate articulate speaking and writing based on logical and valid reasoning. This culminating unit of English II will capitalize off of the skills students have acquired and fine-tuned throughout the semester, as well as prepare them for the transition to upper-level English classes (English III, English IV, AP English) and the CMS graduation project.

Students are presented with a complex topic; I am asking them whether the father-son relationship in literature is reflective of the relationship between the individual and the state in the United States. In order to reach this final question, students must first connect all four major pieces of literature we have read throughout the semester. This act involves use of critical thinking skills; that is, considering similarities in plot, theme, and character development in four unique pieces of literature. The purpose of connecting the literature on a thematic level (e.g., the presence of a struggling father-son relationship, the agency of the individual in an overpowering state) is to show students that despite different times, cultures, and genres, there is fluidity in the work we study. We do not teach in a vacuum, and students must be able to find a common ground between distinct peoples. When students are able to see the similarities between experiences and desires of different groups, they will be able to relate personally to people and perspectives once deemed foreign and unrelatable to them.

“The Father-Son Pair in World Literature” also aims to help students connect fictional literature to non-fiction and informational text, two types of texts that are especially relevant to their academic and personal growth. Not only does this unit incorporate knowledge acquired in World History and Civics & Economics about different social structures and governmental forms, thus making it a cross-curricular unit, but it also forces students to apply this knowledge in a critical interpretation of informational text. Students will, for instance, read excerpts from Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* in order to understand the philosophical, economic, and moral reasons the American colonists desired to break from Britain. This analysis of non-fiction is then used for a deeper exploration of the fictional literature we have studied in English II. With regards to *Common Sense*, students will be able to apply their understanding of social progress, evolving political values, and economic freedom to the relationships in the pieces of literature we read in English II. The objective of this aspect of the unit is three-fold: first, students must recognize that literature has real-world applications and relevance; second,

students must be able to connect various academic disciplines to enhance the holistic experience of education; and finally, students must have the ability to integrate various forms of information to create a layered and complex analysis of an issue at hand. This unit serves to fulfill these three objectives.

These primary objectives for in-depth analysis of both fictional and non-fiction text are fulfilled through the connection of overarching themes in the literature to greater cultural and political concerns. In my unit, I want to focus students on the symbolic representation of the relationship between the individual and the state through a father-son dynamic. The fathers and sons in the literature we read struggle to remain connected; that is, the sons abandon fathers, betray fathers, or attempt to change fathers in order to fulfill their own desires or to achieve what they believe is necessary. The dynamic between these two family members in literature is often placed in societies in which younger generations fight what their parents had created or valued. For example, Nwoye dislikes and therefore leaves Okonkwo and traditional Ibo society for Christianity in *Things Fall Apart*. Similarly, Haemon refuses to respect or obey Creon's demands for Antigone, citing that he is an unfair ruler who will be met with aversion from his people. Brutus, considered by some historians to be the illegitimate son of Julius Caesar, is the final member of the Roman leaders to stab and slay the leader, for fear of tyrannical government. Finally, Elie Wiesel resents his father for inviting brutality from the Nazis and eventually allows him to die in the camp in order to save himself.

In each of these works of fiction, students can read disturbed father-son relationships as representative of a greater sociopolitical phenomena, one in which the individual displays personal agency by pushing back against undesirable states. This idea is especially relevant for high school students in our highly polarized and politically stagnant society. Students must be able to see that purportedly weaker or inferior individuals are able to resist unfair or unproductive societies. Through semester-long scaffolded instruction, my final unit requires students to make the connection between the fictional experiences of characters in literature as well as their own potential political agency in the United States. It is in the discussion of the United States and the possibility for individuals to show political agency that we will address the importance, power, and utility of American political parties. Aside from easing the transition from World Literature to American literature and U.S. History, this personal engagement with the literature will ensure greater reflection about important cross-cultural ideas as well as proficiency in critical thinking (metacognition).

Another objective of this unit is to assess students' absorption of skills addressed in every unit of my instruction, which are also stressed in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that will be fully installed in North Carolina in the next two years. Two important sub-standards within the English 9-10 CCSS are: 1) Coherent, cohesive, and persuasive writing; and 2) Articulate communication skills, with emphasis on speaking and analytical listening. My unit has been constructed to include rigorous lessons, organizers,

activities, and a final argumentative writing assignment that demand a demonstration of these aptitudes. I have created a varied unit plan in order to allow students of all academic preferences to succeed. Moreover, I have incorporated various content areas, including government, politics, psychology, and literature, to make the unit most appealing to a wide variety of students. The inclusive nature of this unit helps me, as the teacher, to promote these learning standards for *all* students.

Background information

Seminar

My seminar with the Charlotte Teachers Institute focused on the failures and futures of American political parties. Within the context of this seminar, I was able to consider the intersection of American politics and world literature. Although these two disciplines seem disparate, it is important to unite them, as tenth grade students in North Carolina study American government in Civics and Economics and World Literature. This seminar, therefore, provided me with the unique opportunity to learn more about the nuanced history and current purpose of the American party system, as well as to find ways to connect students' social studies knowledge and personal experience to my English class.

My seminar at Davidson College was also helpful because it gave me the chance to communicate with other educators about my curriculum unit topic. The feedback I have received over the weeks has been very helpful. For example, members of my seminar suggested I consider in Socratic Seminars and background information on American political parties how our families can influence our partisanship. This conversation will make the unit readily accessible and personal for students. My seminar leader also encouraged me to look at how American political parties act as a collective, rather than an individual; that is, how these parties need to feel a sense of shared oppression among a group of individual before having the power and impetus for action. This perspective may help in creating alternate analyses of pieces of literature. In my instruction, I emphasize the important of identifying and analyzing counter-arguments; this idea of collective versus individuality in the party system follows that vein of thinking in my teaching. Many of the readings we have completed, such as the de Tocqueville's and Washington's philosophies on American political parties, will be helpful for students when looking at what roles individuals and collectives play in certain systems. My seminar leader also suggested that I incorporate the fact that American political parties exist largely to dominate and exert power over one another. This power struggle can easily be related back to the conflicted relationships found in the literature of my class and the pieces' respective societies. Finally, the members of my seminar also suggested that I include background on the contexts of various governmental structures. Presenting students with information on why certain governments arise may give them a greater understanding of

how the individual functions within them, and how the literature written in these structures may reflect these ideologies.

Research

Teaching strategies

Because of the demands for differentiation in our current educational climate, it is important for teachers to incorporate a number of teaching strategies. Students may be a number of types of learners, including visual learners, audio learners, or kinesthetic learners. I will utilize a variety of teaching strategies in order to reach a great amount of these varied learners. One aspect of classroom teaching that I find to engage students the most as well as give me a chance to assess comprehension is the student-led Socratic Seminar. Aside from allowing students to articulate their feelings and thoughts on a particular subject, the Socratic Seminar provides a greater opportunity for controlled interaction with peers. The Socratic Seminar ensures a safe environment for socialization, or the important “interactive process through which individuals learn the basic skills, values, beliefs, and behavior patterns of the society”¹. Because the subject matter at hand has the potential to be controversial (as political dialogue often can be), it is best that these issues are addressed in a monitored, respectful, and academic space. In this way, literature and its themes allow “students to experience a safe ‘practice run’ through the great issues confronting us”². Especially because students may be reflecting ideas that are not uniquely theirs, but rather, those of their parents or families, it is important to recognize Gallagher’s idea discussing literature provides this safe place for discussion about the truths of life and that including activities such as Socratic Seminars, which force students to connect literature to their own lives, “is essential”³. In the context of this safe place, students are given the opportunity to reflect on their own political socialization; that is, how they connect to others in a political community as teenagers now and as adults later. Finally, Gallagher reinforces the idea that regardless of possible difficulty in the classroom, such as ideological disagreement, collaboration such as the Socratic Seminar is necessary, as “the act of collaboration itself raises the reading comprehension of every student in our classes,” and “thus, it is important that we build in meaningful collaboration time for our students”⁴.

Another important teaching strategy that will be incorporated into my curriculum unit is the use of close readings with scaffolded discussion questions. Many students are coming into classrooms unprepared to analyze complex texts. Students are often aware of this deficit, and it is our jobs as teachers to fill in the gaps that may have been created in previous education. Educational researcher Kylene Beers conducted a number of studies that approached literacy deficits in her own classrooms and others across the United States. In these studies, the most successful students were able to achieve higher scores and demonstrate greater growth because of the “work the teacher was willing to do in providing the necessary scaffolds”⁵. My instruction will be greatly scaffolded, as I am

demanding students to engage in sophisticated critical thinking, and this is very difficult for many students, regardless of whether they are standard level students or honors level students. I hope to bring my students to this higher stage of thinking through incrementally more complex cognitive tasks. By providing students help with increasingly difficult content, I hope to capitalize off of psychologist Vygotsky's theory of the zones of development. This theory purports that every individual has an area of knowledge and action that he or she can complete without any type of assistance. Furthermore, the use of scaffolding in instruction allows "teachers to take students through zones of development...to a zone where instruction takes place and where real learning can occur—the zone of proximal development"⁶. My close reading and scaffolded discussion questions are specifically created to help students complete tasks that are difficult for them, and to make cross-curricular and cross-literary connections and progress to more advanced cognitive processes.

Metaphorical thinking, one of these complex critical thinking tasks I hope to enable my students to achieve, is the primary focus of my curriculum unit. Metaphors, or a direct comparison between unlike things used to clarify an idea or subject, are often a difficult concept to teach students. Although they are easy to recognize when specifically stated in a text (e.g., Okonkwo is called a flame in *Things Fall Apart*), when asked to identify less obvious metaphors, students struggle. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, traditional Ibo fables act as extended metaphors for the protagonist. One such fable, in which an aggressive Tortoise manipulates and demeans a set of birds only to find himself hurt and rejected, is an extended metaphor for what is happening concurrently to Okonkwo. Students who cannot make this connection miss out on both cultural details but also important character and thematic development. By structuring an entire unit around metaphorical thinking, in this case, how the father-son pair is a metaphor for society and its individuals, I hope to bring students to a greater level of critical analysis. Gallagher supports the heavy use of metaphor in English instruction, because frequent practice helps students "generate their own metaphorical connections to the text and to the world"⁷. With Gallagher's research in mind, my unit looks at the use of metaphor in literature as a way to help them understand how language may be used in both literature and real-world applications. Gallagher further elaborates that teaching students to think metaphorically

Sharpens their interpretive skills and helps them reach deeper understanding.

When we teach students to think in metaphorical terms, we are not only helping them to gain a better appreciation of a particular piece of literature; we are also providing them with cognitive underpinnings they can use to make sense of the world. Being able to interpret metaphors in a novel means that students will be able to interpret metaphors in a politician's speech, or in an advertisement, or in a new favorite song. In this way students are taught critical thinking skills that stay with them long after they have read the last book of the school year⁸.

Through a culminating unit on an overarching metaphor in world literature, I aim to bring students to a higher level of critical thinking that can be applied in later academic

ventures and in life. Metaphorical thinking and the use of analogies are ways to encourage students to connect learning to something they already understand, such as family dynamics and to “re-energize their thinking around a topic” like government and political agency⁹.

“The Father-Son Pair in World Literature” will incorporate small group work. I believe that students do well in small groups because every student is given the opportunity to take a leadership position and contribute to the work load. Although, as Gallagher articulates, “sometimes groups larger than three are necessary,” “when students are placed in groups of five or six, it is easier for individual members to hide”¹⁰. Small group work with cumulative organizers encourages all group members to think about and articulate thoughts about questions at hand, while requiring equal participation. Cumulative organizers, or those that connect each of the pieces of literature to one another and to the focus of the unit, are also critical aspects of my unit. I have included these cumulative organizers because they are an excellent way to categorize analysis and metaphors. The primary purpose of my unit is to increase students’ cognitive organizational development. According to Jean Piaget, individuals go through stages of development in which existing “schemes,” or ways of processing information, are reworked and retooled with the introduction of new knowledge or cognitive demands¹¹. When people are asked to process, incorporate, and apply more complex cognitive information, their brains are forced to create new, higher levels of organizational development. Metaphorical thinking is a complex demand; thus, the cumulative graphic organizers in this unit take students’ existing schemes and provide the necessary scaffolded steps for assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge.

Finally, my unit incorporates argumentative writing with research support. With the institution of CCSS, North Carolina’s school districts are focusing much of their standards across curricula on persuasive writing skills. Being proficient in this area is especially important for success in the adult world, from college to business ventures; with this in mind, my curriculum unit requires a final essay that connects the father-son relationships in world literature to the relationship between the individual and the state in American society. This essay moves students beyond the first and second levels of the metaphor (what do the father-son relationships have in common across literature?; what do the father-son relationships symbolize in their respective communities?) to an even more complex area of analysis. Students must relate the metaphor back to their own lives; it must become relevant to them. Gallagher articulates this as a necessity of considering the “implications [of literature] to them as human beings who live in the world today”:

There is more to reading a book or short story than just recognizing the writer’s craft and enjoying the plot. We must get to what the story means to us *now*. Why, after all, should we read a story that takes place seventy years ago? Why do we devote valuable class time for this book? We must answer the questions “We read the book—so what?” We must ask students to reflect on their reading—to

consider the book in a contemporary context. What does this book say to us today?¹²

Students spend the entire semester in my class connecting pieces of world literature to their own lives. Why should this unit be different? In fact, it is especially important in this unit, as it has particular relevance in our increasingly politically polarized nation. It is also critical for students to show they can personally relate to the literature, history, and research with this specific performance task, as it provides grounds for a final assessment on their ability to use research to write persuasively about a cross-curricular and cross-literary topic.

Classroom activities

Day 1: The Individual and the State in the Literature

Day one will be an introduction to the curriculum unit. Students will start by identifying the main characters in the pieces of literature we have read. Using the “Individuals and Governments in World Literature” organizer, students will begin to consider the roles the protagonist individuals play in these works. This lesson will focus on the function of the main character as a rebellious figure, one who pushes boundaries in his or her personal relationships. After identifying the characteristics of the protagonists, students will identify what body serves as the state or the government in the novels and plays we read. They will then articulate what the role is of this governing body; that is, does it serve to promote individual wellness, or does it serve to control the people, or does it do something else?

Day 2: The Individual and the State in History: The Power of the Individual?

The second day of the curriculum unit will be a review of various governmental types (e.g., ancient democracy, communism, socialism, and imperialism/colonialism) studied in world history. Using a Power Point presentation, we will focus most heavily on the American system of government, which they study in Civics and Economics in tenth grade as well, with particular emphasis on representative democracy and true democracy. We will also consider the role of political parties, and whether they can act as a unique type of individual in the state, or whether they are collective bodies of diverse populations. Political parties are especially important in this discussion, not only because they are relevant to students’ lives, but also because they are a stepping stone between the actual individual and the actual government. Not only do parties provide linkage between the individual and a larger body, but they also create community between individuals. With this in mind, we will focus on how the individual and groups of individuals are conceived of in these systems; that is, what is the individual’s power for change in various states? To answer this question, students will read excerpts from Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* and the entirety of Jonathon Swift’s “A Modest Proposal.” Both of these political pamphlets were written by individuals who lived in somewhat oppressive

political systems, and both of these texts provided an impetus for change in their respective societies.

The second day of the curriculum unit will also stem from the introduction provided on the first day. After our more broad discussion about governmental systems and the individual within these states, we will return to the literature of English II. Students will first consider under which governmental systems each piece of writing operates. They will then consider what power for change the protagonist individual is given in the stories. These questions will be answered on the organizer from the previous day.

Although originally intended for only one day, the material for this part of the curriculum unit is extensive. This topic may be explored in two days rather than one, in order to provide ample opportunity for complex understanding and engagement.

Day 3: The Father-Son Relationship in the Literature

On the third day of the curriculum unit, students will start by looking at how the relationship between fathers and sons are integral parts of a child's (adolescent) development. They will read snippets of research from Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, and other psychological theorists to support this concept. To create a personal connection with this lesson, students will also engage in a short discussion in which they discuss their own experiences with fathers (taking into consideration ways in which those without present father figures may compensate for this lacking relationship).

We will then dive into the individual pieces of literature, using the "Fathers and Sons in World Literature" organizer to guide our discussion. Who are the sons? Who are the fathers? What is their relationship? Who has the power? How are these relationships resolved/concluded/ended? In this activity, I will guide students to see how these relationships figure into the various pieces of literature. For example, in *Night*, Elie Wiesel (son), has the power, while Shlomo Wiesel (father) dies after Elie ignores his calls for help. One may also consider the other numerous father-son pairs in the memoir in which sons abandon their fathers for their own self-preservation, as fathers begin to weigh them down or burden them in the Holocaust.

This father-son relationship is not only present in *Night*; it is also an important factor in *Things Fall Apart*. Nwoye, Okonkwo's biological son, is seen as disappointing and feminine, whereas Ikemefuna, Okonkwo's adopted son, is masculine and ideal. Unlike *Night*, the placement of power is debatable, as Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna to uphold state social expectations and Nwoye abandons Okonkwo and warrior state for Christian state. In *Antigone*, Creon's son Haemon demonstrates strength by refusing to bend to Creon's will. Haemon also kills himself to prove to Creon that he (Creon) is weak and not worth obeying because he disobeys an even higher power, the Gods. In the discussion of *Antigone*, I will help students recognize that one may also consider how in the earlier two

dramas of the Oedipus cycle, Eteocles and Polyneices, Oedipus' sons and Antigone's brothers, do not value their father because of his crime and go as far as to attempt to use his death as a means to gain political power. Finally, this discussion of fathers and sons in world literature will end with the analysis of *Julius Caesar*. Brutus, who is sometimes considered the illegitimate son of Julius Caesar, has clear power over Caesar, as he lays the final blow in the assassination of the self-appointed dictator for life.

Day 4: The Father-Son Relationship as Representative of the Individual and State in Literature

The fourth day in the curriculum unit will consider the two common themes between all of the pieces of literature we have studied: the father-son relationship and the relationship between the individual and the state. Using the "Fathers and Sons: Symbolic of Something Else?" organizer, students will analyze the symbolic connection between the two themes. We will look at how these two relationships function together; how might the father-son relationships serve to symbolize or emphasize the role of the individual in the state? Students will consider the individuals' or sons' agency for creating change and the use of betrayal as a form of power in creating change.

Days 5 and 6: Argumentative Writing: Unit Essay Assignment

Days five and six introduce the culminating assessment of the Father-Son Relationship curriculum unit: an argumentative writing essay assignment. To prepare for the prompt, students will start the fifth day focusing on why this idea of fathers and sons, individuals and states, is relevant to them today. Students will engage in a Socratic seminar about how their individual society functions, and what their roles are in local, national, and global communities. They will also consider topics of familial betrayal, vocal political opposition, treason, and sedition as means to improve the state. Students will discuss what they believe to be the most important contribution individuals may make to the health and wealth of their states, and how that may differ between governmental systems.

The sixth day will connect days one through four with day five by asking students to answer the following question in an argumentative essay: How does the father-son relationship in the literature we have read represent the role of the individual and the state in the literature as well as modern American society? The student must use some of the research they have been given to support their arguments, as well as their own research to support their literature-based claims. As with any writing assignment about literature, they must directly reference the literature in the body of their essays and connect these works to the research evidence. Students will review what constitutes argumentative writing and look over the W.2 Rubric for Argumentative Writing. Students will be given a weekend, or four weekdays (depending on where in the week the unit falls), to complete this assignment.

Notes

¹ W. Laverne Thomas, *Sociology: The Study of Human Relationships* (Orlando: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich Publishers, 1990), 109.

² Kelly Gallagher, *Deeper Reading: Comprehending Challenging Texts, 4 – 12* (Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2004), 20.

³ Gallagher, *Deeper Reading*, 20.

⁴ Gallagher, *Deeper Reading*, 17.

⁵ Kylene Beers. *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do: A Guide for Teachers 6 – 12* (New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2003), 263.

⁶ Gallagher, *Deeper Reading*, 111.

⁷ Gallagher, *Deeper Reading*, 125.

⁸ Gallagher, *Deeper Reading*, 145.

⁹ Paula Rutherford, *Instruction for All Students* (Virginia: Just ASK Publications & Professional Development, 2008), 70.

¹⁰ Gallagher, *Deeper Reading*, 107.

¹¹ Robert E. Schell, *Developmental Psychology Today* (New York: CRM/Random House, Inc., 1975) 32 – 34.

¹² Gallagher, *Deeper Reading*, 20.

Name:

The Individuals and Governments in World Literature

Please fill in the following organizer based on the four major works we have studied this semester in English II.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Piece of literature: <i>Night</i> | Who is the individual in the story? The protagonist/antagonist?: | What is the role of the government in this story? |
| To be answered tomorrow→ | Do the individuals have power to create statewide change?: | What is the actual type of government of the state in the literature? |
| Piece of literature: <i>Things Fall Apart</i> | Who is the individual in the story? The protagonist/antagonist?: | What is the role of the government in this story? |
| To be answered tomorrow→ | Do the individuals have power to create statewide change?: | What is the actual type of government of the state in the literature? |
| Piece of literature: <i>Antigone</i> | Who is the individual in the story? The protagonist/antagonist?: | What is the role of the government in this story? |
| To be answered tomorrow→ | Do the individuals have power to create statewide change?: | What is the actual type of government of the state in the literature? |
| Piece of literature: <i>Julius Caesar</i> | Who is the individual in the story? The protagonist/antagonist?: | What is the role of the government in this story? |
| To be answered tomorrow→ | Do the individuals have power to create statewide change?: | What is the actual type of government of the state in the literature? |

Name:

Fathers and Sons in World Literature

Please fill in the following organizer based on the four major works we have studied this semester in English II.

| Piece of Literature | Who is the son? Who is the father? | Describe the relationship between father and son. | Who has the power in the relationship? | How is this relationship resolved, concluded, or ended? |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <i>Night</i> (Elie Wiesel) | | | | |
| <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (Chinua Achebe) | | | | |
| <i>Antigone</i> (Sophocles) | | | | |
| <i>Julius Caesar</i> (William Shakespeare) | | | | |

Name:

Fathers and Sons: Symbolic of Something Else?

Using the information you wrote in the first two organizers of this unit as well as your knowledge of the four major works we have studied this semester in English II, please fill in the following organizer. I have included guiding questions to help you complete this work.

| Piece of Literature | How does the father-son relationship symbolize or explain the relationship between the individual and state? |
|--|---|
| <i>Night</i> (Elie Wiesel) | How does the father act toward the son?: Is the son loyal? Why or why not? How does the government treat its people? What power do the people have? Final conclusion: |
| <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (Chinua Achebe) | How does the father act toward the son?: Is the son loyal? Why or why not? How does the government treat its people? What power do the people have? Final conclusion: |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Antigone</i> (Sophocles)</p> | <p>How does the father act toward the son?:</p> <p>Is the son loyal? Why or why not?</p> <p>How does the government treat its people?</p> <p>What power do the people have?</p> <p>Final conclusion:</p> |
| <p><i>Julius Caesar</i> (William Shakespeare)</p> | <p>How does the father act toward the son?:</p> <p>Is the son loyal? Why or why not?</p> <p>How does the government treat its people?</p> <p>What power do the people have?</p> <p>Final conclusion:</p> |

Write a final statement that summarizes how these works of literature use the father-son relationship to symbolize or explain the relationship between the individual and the state.

Name:

Socratic Seminar: The Role of the Individual in Local, National, and Global Communities

Please answer **eight (8)** of the following questions in *3-5 complete sentences each*. Choose **an additional two (2) questions** on which you will act as an expert and answer them in *6-8 complete sentences each*. That means you are answering **TEN (10)** **QUESTIONS IN TOTAL!!!**

1. What is the role of a mother? A father? Which is more important? Why?
2. What responsibility does the government have to its people?
3. What do you think is the best type of government? Why?
4. What do you think is an individual's role in or responsibility to his/her family? Parents? Why?
5. What is betrayal? How might it hurt a family?
6. Is betrayal ever necessary or good? When and why or why not?
7. Under what types of circumstances would you betray a family member? A parent? Why?
8. What do you think is an individual's role in or responsibility to his/her local community? Why?
9. Under what types of circumstances would you betray your local community? Why?
10. What do you think is an individual's role in or responsibility to his/her national community? Why?
11. What is treason?
12. Is treason ever necessary or good? When and why or why not?
13. Under what types of circumstances would you betray your national community? When?
14. What is a global community?
15. What do you think is an individual's role in or responsibility to his/her global community?
16. Do people have the power to make positive changes in their local, national, or global communities? How? Why might somebody disagree with you?

Name:

Argumentative Writing Assignment

To conclude our final unit in English II, you will write an argumentative essay that answers the following question:

Does the father-son relationship characterize or symbolize the relationship between the individual and the state in the United States?

You must use the four major works we have studied (*Night*, *Things Fall Apart*, *Antigone*, *Julius Caesar*) and the research you have been given (you may find other sources as well) to support your claim. You must cite your sources and format your paper **according to MLA requirements**.

When constructing your thesis and the body paragraphs of your essay, you may want to refer back to the organizers we have filled out throughout this unit. To reiterate the main ideas of these lessons, consider the following questions. These are good questions with which you may brainstorm your essay.

- What is the relationship between the father and the son in the literature?
- Does the son remain loyal to his father? If not, why did he betray him?
- What role does the state/government play in the lives of the individual in the literature?
- How much agency, if any, does the individual have to effect change in his or her society in the literature?
- In the United States, what is the role of the state/government in the lives of its citizens?
- What role does the individual have in the United States? Does he/she have a responsibility to the state?
- What power does the individual have to effect change in the United States?

Due Date: _____

Resources

Bibliography for teachers

Beers, Kylene. *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do: A Guide for Teachers 6 – 12*. Edited by Lisa Ludeke. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2003.

When Kids Can't Read considers failing literacy standards in American education and how teachers may address reading ability, comprehension, processing, and analytical issues. The book not only provides statistics about literacy issues in the United States, but also gives teachers realistic and useful tools with which to overcome certain academic obstacles. Beers also explains some shortcomings of literacy teachers and commonly held misconceptions about students who struggle to read.

Gallagher, Kelly. *Deeper Reading: Comprehending Challenging Texts, 4 – 12*. Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2004.

Deeper Reading explains various rationales and teaching methods for literary analysis. Gallagher's book details reasons for teaching literature and writing, one of which is to increase critical thinking skills. *Deeper Reading* also delivers specific ways in which English and Language Arts teachers may teach skills such as analytical reading, annotation, critical thinking, and active engagement in academic material. To this end, the book includes various resources, such as organizers, activities, and teacher feedback.

Graff, Gerald, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russell Dorst. *"They Say/I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing: With Readings* (2nd edition). New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012.

"They Say/I Say" is a handbook that explains academic writing to students. Commonly used in colleges, this is a helpful resource to teachers in high school who have students write analytical or argumentative essays. The unit assessment is a persuasive research essay; therefore, this handbook will prove to be useful in helping students find their own voice, integrate research, and write strong arguments.

Havighurst, Robert J. and Daniel U. Levine. *Society and Education* (5th edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1979.

Society and Education is a college textbook written to provide an overview of how social structure, family life, friendship, and socialization are deeply connected to education. It explains a number of ideas about how education plays a critical role in socialization and the ability to function as an adult in society. For example, how students are treated by

authority figures in school as well as by their equals, their peers, factors into how productive they are as adults.

Rutherford, Paula. *Instruction for All Students* (2nd edition). Virginia: Just ASK Publications & Professional Development, 2008.

Instruction for All Students is an introduction to teaching students of all levels for beginning teachers. The manual provides classroom activities and lessons, such as organizers and vocabulary development, but also skills teachers must focus on in twenty-first century education. These skills cover a great range, from text analysis to articulate written communication in any subject. The unifying thread within this text is that it is written to give young or new teachers a starting point in curriculum and pedagogical development.

---. *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?: Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century* (2nd edition). Virginia: Just ASK Publications & Professional Development, 2009.

Why Didn't I Learn This in College? introduces classroom management to beginning teachers. This text provides strategies and tips for managing a classroom. It also explains certain pedagogical ideas, such as scaffolding, community-building, and skill-based learning, as central pieces of classroom management.

Schell, Robert E. *Developmental Psychology Today* (2nd edition). New York: CRM/Random House, Inc., 1975.

Developmental Psychology Today maps the various psychological theories that are important to educators. Schell includes the major players in cognitive developmental theory, such as Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky. As each of these men have had strong impacts on pedagogical development in the last fifty to one hundred years, reading their ideas is very important for understanding classroom management, teaching content, and skill-based learning. For example, understanding Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development allows teachers to assign appropriate work that challenges students, while remaining relevant to their lives, and that is not so challenging that it becomes frustrating and encourages students to misbehave or lash out at others in school.

Thomas, W. Laverne. *Sociology: The Study of Human Relationships* (4th edition). Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1990.

Sociology discusses the various relationships people have throughout their lifetimes, from parent-baby to mutual adult friendships to geriatric dependence on the youth. By creating a timeline of human family, friend, and romantic relationships, Thomas provides his reader with an elaborate understanding of how people develop and exist within certain phases of their lives. This knowledge is helpful for teachers in dealing with teenage

students, but also helpful in analyzing literary characters and their relationships with others.

Reading list for students

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*.

Things Fall Apart follows the life of a traditional Ibo man named Okonkwo, who lives in a fictional village before and during European colonization of Africa. Okonkwo is strong, stubborn, violent, and arrogant. He overcomes hardship at a young age, which has determined much of his identity. Okonkwo is set in his ways, which creates conflict in his family life and friendships, as well as with white missionaries who arrive in Umuofia to convert the clansmen and women to Christianity.

Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense*.

Common Sense is a political pamphlet written in the time leading up to the American Revolution. Thomas Paine analyzes the origins and functions of the government and how the individual is supposed to function within the state. This literature was written in response to the dynamic between the British and the American colonists, which was largely determined by unfair taxes and non-existent political representation for the colonists.

Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is the fictionalized story of the eponymous historical figure. The play maps the rise of Caesar's power to that of a tyrant, and his eventual betrayal and murder by his governmental peers and friends. The play also considers the emotional turmoil Brutus, Caesar's closest friend (and sometimes called Caesar's illegitimate son), undergoes in helping to plot the murder of Caesar.

Sophocles. *Antigone*.

Antigone is the third installment of the Ancient Greek trilogy, *The Oedipus Cycle*. This play centers upon a young woman who tries to bury one of her dead brothers after he is killed in a battle against his brother (who had usurped his rightful throne). Antigone desires to provide a proper burial for her brother, according to the laws of the gods, but her uncle, who is now king, refuses to allow this to happen.

Swift, Jonathon. "A Modest Proposal."

"A Modest Proposal" is a satirical and ironic political pamphlet written by Jonathon Swift in response to the brutal and unfair treatment of the Irish at the hands of the British

in the early nineteenth century. The essay proposes that, in order to alleviate the Irish from their poverty and to contribute to the betterment of society, lower classes of Irish Catholics sell their babies who are under one year old to be eaten. It is a clear mockery of the English, who consider the Irish to be of little value, and who seem to believe that they contribute little if anything to society.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*.

Night is a memoir written by a Holocaust survivor. Elie Wiesel is taken to Auschwitz and other concentration camps throughout the Holocaust, and *Night* details the horrific torture he endured. The memoir focuses on his struggle to maintain any faith in humanity, God, and himself. The memoir also considers the survival or death family relationships, with particular emphasis on fathers and sons, under hardship and severe duress.

Materials for classroom use

Reading material

The fiction and non-fiction texts are of critical important to my curriculum unit. They are the focal point of the class discussion of the father-son relationship in literature as well as how the father-son relationship acts as a metaphor for the connection between the individual and the state.

Formal Outline Guide Template and Key

This handout is a blank guide for essay writing. It is written in Roman numeral format, providing space for main sentences, examples, and transitions. The formal outline template has been a successful tool for students when writing five-paragraph essays; it can be used for the argumentative essay at the end of my curriculum unit to help students focus their ideas and organize their thoughts.

Peer-editing guide (which they can use to guide their own self-assessment and revisions)

The peer-editing guide lists questions that help students proofread and revise their own writing. It asks students to look at grammar, writing style, mechanics, content, and flow of ideas. This tool will be used in revising the argumentative essay that ends the unit.