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See and be seen: Young adult refugee literature in the high school curriculum

Patrice Splan

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See and be Seen: Young Adult Refugee Literature in the High School Curriculum

An Honors College Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

by Patrice Marie Splan

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Accepted by the faculty of the Departments of English and Secondary Education, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

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Abstract

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are more than 25 million refugees in the world today, over half of whom are under the age of 18. As these young people adapt to new schools and communities, it is essential that all students have opportunities to see themselves represented in literature and to develop understandings of the experiences of others. This project provides an analysis of young adult refugee literature with a unit plan for application of texts in a ninth-grade Virginia English classroom, stressing the importance of education as a tool for awareness, reflection, and empathy.

Preface

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Golding's *Lord of The Flies*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*: these are all important, significant texts, widely regarded as classics and necessities for high school English classrooms. They are books that many high school teachers in the United States assign to their students. They are books that most American high school students have read, looked up summaries of, or at least heard enough about to be familiar with the plot. They are, also, all books by white authors from America or the United Kingdom, written and published decades, if not centuries, before the 21st century. This does not mean the texts are without historical and social relevance and literary merit, but they are not the only texts that provide these things. Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* are all equally important, significant texts, though they are rarely included in curricula for high school students in the United States today. When I first started reading these texts at my university, I began to wonder: why am I just now learning about these authors, these texts, these experiences, these issues?

There is great need for diverse literature in primary and secondary education. While the books I read in middle and high school still have merit, they failed to communicate a range of experiences. Reading works by writers of diverse backgrounds, particularly ethnically diverse authors, opened my mind to histories and cultures I never knew existed. As I prepare to pursue a career as an English teacher at the secondary level, I am inspired by the multicultural texts I've read throughout college to bring new, enlightening perspectives into my classroom so that my students will not be as ignorant as I have been. This literature is not only important for engaging students who are unfamiliar with diverse narratives, but it is also a significant for the students who can relate to the texts (Landt 692-694).

Introduction

They only see us when we do something they don't want us to do, Mahmoud realized. The thought hit him like a lightning bolt. When they stayed where they were supposed to be—in the ruins of Aleppo or behind the fences of a refugee camp—people could forget about them. But when refugees did something they didn't want them to do—when they tried to cross the border into their country, or slept on the front stoops of their shops, or jumped in front of their cars, or prayed on the decks of their ferries—that's when people couldn't ignore them any longer. ~Alan Gratz, *Refugee*

Alan Gratz's 2017 novel, *Refugee*, combines the narratives of three adolescents: a boy in Nazi Germany, a girl in Castro's Cuba, and Mahmoud, mentioned in the quote, a boy escaping from conflict-torn Aleppo. All three of the protagonists are desperately fleeing violence and threats in their homelands that have forced them to cope with diverse obstacles and experiences as refugees. Mahmoud is frustrated by the ignorance of people around him who are only concerned about his presence when it is a direct inconvenience to their lives. The quote speaks to the need for increased awareness and understanding of the experiences of communities that are both similar to, and completely different from, one's own. Because Gratz's novel intertwines three separate stories, the characters evoke a universal human experience of journeying and migration. The novel makes it clear that any person, in any place, at any time, can become a refugee, and emphasizes the importance of finding ways to connect with and understand others' lives.

This project explores the use of young adult refugee literature in the high school classroom and provides a unit plan for application in a ninth-grade English curriculum. In discussing the literature, I use the concept of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors, which

has become increasingly common in curricula for English teachers in the United States. When discussing how to apply this concept in the classroom, I use Cindy O’Donnell-Allen’s theory of “tough talks, tough texts” to show how young adult refugee literature can be used, and its benefits for the high school English classroom.

Multicultural literature creates its own sliding glass doors through which readers can cross the threshold from their own position of comfort, stepping out into the life of a character in order to develop understandings of their perspectives (Thein and Sloan 313-314).

Sometimes, a text provides students with mirrors in which they see their own lives and experiences reflected; other times, texts give windows for students to look at different cultures through



(Bishop 1). The concept of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors has become increasingly important in classrooms in the United States. Included in *The Standards for the English Language Arts*, published by the National Council for Teacher Education and the International Reading Association in 1996 is the following: “Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world” (3). In an illustration by Grant Snider, whose comics and illustrations have been featured in a number of publications such as the *New York Times*, windows and mirrors are expanded beyond sliding glass doors, showing how the concept itself is rapidly developing, but it also emphasizes the multitudinous ways in which a student can interact with, understand, and

connect to a text. As stepping stones and springboards, books can serve as a foundation for students to expand their learning and understanding with. Books can provide comfort and protection for readers that relate to a text as an overcoat or warm blanket. The image of a book as a beacon to new readers is especially powerful because it shows how authors have the power to shape readers perspectives and exposure to different topics. Furthermore, any reader of the text who then shares it with another is also assisting with the spreading of that beacon. Snider's image reinforces the fact that texts can influence readers in countless ways, especially helping them understand themselves and the world in familiar or striking ways. It is now up to teachers to decide which texts to use and how to use them as windows, mirrors, and doors in their classrooms.

Diverse literature can serve numerous purposes, as suggested by Snider's image, and educators must help students learn more about themselves and the world using these texts. With the surge of refugees entering the United States due to the current global refugee crisis, more and more young adult refugee texts are being published each year that appeal to students and can be used in classrooms. Dr. Sang Hwang and Dr. Betty Coneway discuss this in their essay "Literature Focus Units as a Means of Exploring the Refugee Experience":

Changes in our nation's demographic are mirrored within classrooms across the country. With this increasing cultural diversity in American schools today, educators face the challenge of providing literacy-rich experiences that reflect various linguistic and cultural backgrounds . . . An effective way to address some of these challenges is through adopting a more generally inclusive approach. One such method is the use of multicultural literature to promote acceptance of differences and validate the unique qualities of all learners. (Hwang and Coneway 1-2)

In what follows, I offer a working definition of young adult literature, discuss the use of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors, and suggest ways to bring young adult refugee literature into a high school curriculum. The primary technique discussed for incorporating this literature into the classroom is the use of tough texts and tough talks to aid student learning and development (O'Donnell-Allen 6). Multicultural literature presents issues that can be both familiar and totally novel for different students so it is essential for teachers to facilitate tough talks that support student comprehension of these complex topics in a safe, constructive environment. In order to apply these texts to the classroom, use of Cindy O'Donnell-Allen's *Tough Talk, Tough Texts* to aid students learning and development will be examined. This is followed by a discussion of three specific texts and a unit plan for a ninth-grade English classroom.

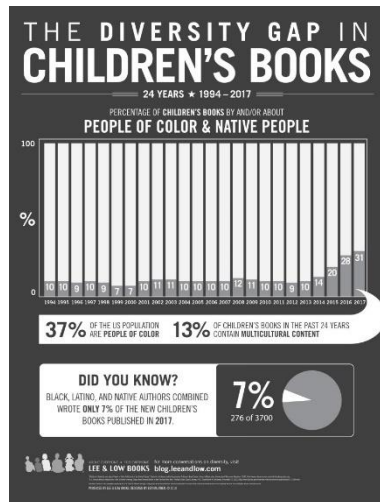
Defining Young Adult Literature

In his essay for Young Adult Library Services Association, Michael Cart explains why young adult literature is a difficult category to define:

The term 'young adult literature' is inherently amorphous, for its constituent terms 'young adult' and 'literature' are dynamic, changing as culture and society—which provide their context—change . . . Between 1990 and 2000 the number of persons between 12 and 19 soared to 32 million . . . The size of this population segment has also increased as the conventional definition of 'young adult' has expanded to include those as young as ten and, since the late 1990s, as old as twenty-five. (Cart)

Because the age group that qualifies as young adult has expanded to include an age range of 10-25, young adult texts must also work to appeal to these ages. As Angela Carstensen emphasizes in "YA Evolution" for the *School Library Journal*, "Books being published for the young adult

audience are largely read by students ranging in age from 12 to 15” but “by 10th grade, teens begin to mix YA literature with adult books.” Using a looser definition of young adult literature



allows for the incorporation of texts with more mature content and slightly older characters, fitting with the expanding interests of high school students as they progress. In addition to sharing a certain stage of life with protagonists, students seek out characters they feel represent their own books identities in different ways (Landt 694).

While it was difficult to find statistics focusing on young adult literature, information about the diversity gap for children’s literature is startling. In Lee & Low Books’ study which looked at the United States, only 13 percent of children’s books in the past 24 years contain multicultural content. Looking at the graphic, however, there is a slight increase in the number of people of color and native people visible from 2014 forward. The United States is expected become a majority “minority” country by 2043, meaning that the demand for multicultural literature, with characters and stories that represent more members of the population, is going to continue to increase (Vespa, Armstrong, Medina 7). If these trends exist across the young adult literature world, then the same demands can be expected. In order to increase exposure to recently published refugee texts for students, refugee narratives in young adult texts published after 2010 are the focus of this project. In any classroom, material should not be discussed or utilized in isolation; in fact, the young adult texts discussed in the following sections would pair well with magazine and newspaper articles. The texts themselves, however, have an undeniable impact on readers that asserts their full potential for classroom use. Because literature provides a way to look back and evaluate the past, as well as speculate on the future,

authors are able to create stories and lives with a depth and soul unique to that author and that narrative. When working with students, it is essential to provide texts that can educate and enlighten them beyond fact and instill empathy and understanding into each individual. A key way texts do this is by acting as windows, mirrors, and doors for students. When a text is acting as a mirror, young adult literature is especially useful in helping students reflect on their own lives as young adults. Refugee literature can also act as a window through which students can see the experiences of others and begin to develop empathy. In addition, the powerful narratives can act as doors that transport readers into a character's life. Teachers and students can investigate the literary devices that shape these reading experiences, and the texts discussed in this project show how verse, dialect, and theme can be used to create window, mirror, and door effects.

Using Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors

A Professor Emerita of education from Ohio State University, Rudine Sims Bishop has done research and written many works that explore the ways literature and readers can interact. In "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors," Bishop breaks down the concepts and their importance in literature. She explains:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created by the author. . . a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation.

(1)

Echoing these ideas, Emily Style's essay "Curriculum As Window and Mirror" expresses the need to incorporate texts that provide these routes of connection for students in classrooms.

According to Style, incorporating texts that accurately reflect "a multicultural world and the student herself or himself" allows for students to "acknowledge the varied experiences of reality which frame individual perspective" (Style 1). A lack of exposure to diverse narratives is "limiting and inaccurate," argues Style, since students "must live their lives in a global context, facing vast differences and awesome similarities" (Style 5).

Multicultural young adult literature has become a popular and powerful tool in the classroom because it encourages adolescents to reflect inwardly, while also considering the world outside of their comfort zones, both geographically and emotionally. From an educator's perspective, "Teachers who incorporate multicultural literature into their curriculum expose students to viewpoints and experiences that can broaden young adolescents' visions of self and the world" (Landt 690). These texts not only expose students to new perspectives, but they also give students a character with which they can identify. When students can see their own experiences and lives reflected in what they are reading, they become much more invested and engaged. The texts children and teenagers read can influence their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Culp 31). When creating a unit of study for students on any topic, it is necessary for educators to consider how a text relates to material and how students will react to the work (O'Donnell-Allen 14). Tough talks emerge because students have diverse backgrounds that allow them to see texts as windows, mirrors, and doors, and these students are all learning together in the same classroom. These students have intersectional identities that shape their response to the text. Intersectionality is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* as "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual

or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.” Topics broached in multicultural texts are very sensitive for students because they relate to the characters and experiences in different ways, based on the perspectives they have formed with their identities. It is all the more necessary to have the conversations, however, because students need to question the ways in which their stories are similar to and different from others’, and also validate the experiences that they share with characters, classmates, and other people in the world. These conversations, though difficult, allow not only for texts to be used to their full potential, but also for students to advance their skills and understandings for mature civil discourse which will translate across disciplines and experiences in their lifetimes.

In order to be effective in the classroom, these texts must pique interest and spark conversation so that students are engaged in examining and reflecting upon the mirrors and windows presented in the texts. Using small and large group discussion activities gives students a way to express their thoughts about the readings. Hearing how peers can or cannot relate to different aspects of a story leads students to realize there are more points of view beyond their own. These discussions may not always be comfortable; urging students to think about controversial or challenging topics, like the refugee crisis, and share these feelings with peers can be intimidating. Careful facilitation and mediation of the talks, paired with expectations for respectful participation and dialogue, can lead to productive, healthy conversations that open students’ minds. Classroom chats about difficult literature and topics also benefit students academically. Cindy O’Donnell-Allen writes about the significance of these discussions, emphasizing that “Forging empathetic connections with texts and peers undoubtedly provides social and emotional benefits for students, but recent work has suggested that these sophisticated moves also help them grow intellectually” because the empathy students develop is a key facet

of understanding (27). In her book, *Tough Talk, Tough Texts*, O'Donnell-Allen provides support and criteria for these conversations and the texts that can be used to inspire them.

Identifying Tough Texts

Tough texts can be identified based on how they connect with the following topics: essential issues; cultural contexts; characters; choices, challenges, and resolutions; student appeal; and literary merit (O'Donnell-Allen 34-47). Essential issues must be significant and relevant to students (O'Donnell-Allen 34). They must also treat issues in complex ways that encourage discussion and contemplation. With cultural contexts, Style's and Bishop's concepts of windows and mirrors apply. Reading texts about diverse characters, written by diverse authors, allows students to develop a worldview from many different perspectives (O'Donnell-Allen 35-36). This reduces egocentrism and allows for the reduction of cultural barriers and stereotypes as students come to understand lives and experiences that vary greatly from their own (Landt 692-694). The character aspect of a tough text looks for a match between the characters students are reading about, and themselves. Ideally, protagonists are adolescents, but they must at least be someone students can connect with and care about. Characters in tough texts should be well-rounded, developed, and dynamic (O'Donnell-Allen 37). Static characters that adhere to stereotypes reveal far less to students than believable characters that experience growth over the course of the text. The choices, challenges, and resolutions in the text are the obstacles characters are facing, and students want to see characters dealing with the social, emotional, and moral choices and pressures that they are facing in their lives (O'Donnell-Allen 40). Furthermore, characters must deal with these challenges in meaningful, believable ways, so that they make sense to adolescent readers who may be experiencing similar situations. Lastly, literary merit is a necessity for any text used in the classroom. Looking at author's craft,

authenticity and complexity of style and structure, and taking into consideration external recognition such as awards, are all ways to gauge literary merit (O'Donnell-Allen 45-47).

Having Tough Talks

Along with the selection of young adult tough texts, teachers must be prepared to facilitate civil discourse, and help their students understand and talk about readings. O'Donnell-Allen defines tough talks as “the specialized communication students use to address the controversial topics that arise in tough texts, texts that raise difficult issues and treat them in complex ways” (O'Donnell-Allen 6). Through these talks, students are participating in meaningful conversations between authors and readers, readers with other readers, and readers with the world (O'Donnell-Allen 6). Tough talks have many benefits in the classroom because “students will write a great deal, critique literary quality, use technology, and compose sophisticated multimodal interpretations of texts, all the while engaging in civil discourse” (O'Donnell-Allen 23). Teachers prepare students for tough talks by scaffolding the texts with shorter readings, multimodal approaches, and factual sources. These resources provide context for the material students are learning about and prepares them for conversations about their texts. Prior to having a tough talk, O'Donnell-Allen recommends annotating the text, using quick writes, and having partner chats so that students can organize their thoughts and reflect on their readings before discussing (76). Working as a class to establish norms gives each student a sense of ownership in the standards, along with a responsibility for upholding and adhering to them (O'Donnell-Allen 88). These norms are crucial to having a respectful classroom environment for healthy debates and dialogues. Frequent formative assessments, student-teacher conferences, and class check-ins are required to ensure that students are comprehending material and staying up to date with readings, but more importantly, these methods give students opportunities to ask

questions and address any uneasiness they may feel from the complex situations and difficult experiences detailed in a tough text (O'Donnell-Allen 67-68).

During a tough talk, students are invited to share about things that struck them in their reading. O'Donnell-Allen recommends students use sticky notes to annotate their texts, and prior to having a tough talk, students can do quick writes to respond to and reflect on their notes (97).

O'Donnell-Allen provides a list of criteria for students to annotate for in their books:

“This part of the book made me. . .

THINK about something I hadn't thought about before

BLINK because I saw the world through the eyes of someone who is different from me

WONDER why an event happened or why a character felt a certain way

FEEL UNDERSTOOD because I could relate to a character or even

LAUGH because something was really funny

CRY because something was really sad

CONFUSED because I just didn't understand what or why or how something could happen the way it did in the book

NERVOUS because it challenged my way of thinking about something” (97)

These notes are the basis for discussion. The questions require students to look at how the text provided windows that they could look at others through, mirrors that they could reflect on their own lives in, or sliding glass doors they could pass through to gain empathy for the experiences of others, and how that shaped their reading or their worldview. The conversations are fueled by teacher's questions that encourage students to explore the complicated nature of tough texts:

What made you think, blink, wonder, feel understood, laugh, cry, feel confused, or feel nervous?

Why? What cause X to happen? How does society respond to X? How would you respond to X?

Can you think of instances of X in your life or in the lives of people you know? Do you agree with the way X was handled in the text? Why or why not?

Tough talks force students out of their comfort zones in a positive, constructive manner. O'Donnell-Allen is hopeful that English teachers can help students use literacy to promote civility and social justice through their work with tough texts on controversial issues. Students can learn to ask and contemplate challenging questions about our world (xiv). Furthermore, preparing for and participating in tough talks helps students “learn to listen and respond with empathy to one another . . . (and) implement strategies that will allow them to become more critical and strategic readers, writers, and thinkers both in and outside of (the) classroom” (O'Donnell-Allen xiv). Using tough texts and having tough talks show students how to be better citizens in their schools and communities, with techniques for understanding and communicating that are valuable across disciplines and situations.

Refugee Literature

For this project, I chose to focus specifically on refugee narratives because they give voice to the experiences of students that are in classrooms, schools, and communities that are not commonly represented in high school classrooms. This project will be using the United Nations definition of “refugee” as “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence . . . (and) has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.” According to the Pew Research center, the United States “has taken in 3 million of more than 4 million refugees resettled worldwide,” since the 1980s. Refugees are an integral part of schools, neighborhoods, and communities across the United States. In the last five years, however, the global refugee population has increased by 50

percent, but the United States has been decreasing refugee admissions (Pew Research Center).

Under President Donald Trump, refugee admission caps have reached their lowest point since the Refugee Act of 1980. From admitting almost 85,000 refugees in 2016, the United States set an admittance cap of 45,000 for 2018, but only resettled 22,491 refugees (Cepla). The admission cap for 2019 has been lowered even further, to 30,000, though that cap will likely not be met.

The drastic reduction in refugee resettlement efforts evidences a need for awareness and activism in the United States. The number of refugees in the world is continuing to rise, and these individuals and families need safe and welcoming communities. For the refugees that are already in American neighborhoods and schools, it is essential that they feel supported and not excluded, despite the changes being made to caps. In the classroom, students who are refugees deserve to be represented by the texts they read, and students who are unfamiliar with refugee experiences need opportunities to learn more about them. By integrating refugee texts into class, this project aims to open this topic through reading of the texts and through an understanding of background information. The refugee experience is not to be thought of in a vacuum; that is the point of using texts that have protagonists with very different situations and time periods. Any individual, anywhere, at any time, can become a refugee. Tying in newspaper articles, news clips, and government policy from different countries and different political stances is essential to understanding the complexity of the refugee crisis. While the world continues to become more diverse in myriad ways, the hope for a better future lies in finding what connects us. Using literature as a window into the lives and experiences of others, such as in the case of refugees, allows young people to develop empathy, appreciation, respect, and a compulsion to unite individuals, despite our differences, in order to benefit the whole (Landt 697, Style 5).

Text Use in the Classroom

An important aspect of including multicultural literature in the classroom is to provide material that students of all backgrounds can connect with. Having completed a teaching practicum placement in Harrisonburg, Virginia, this is the school system I am most familiar with working in, and thus is the model for this project. In Harrisonburg City Public Schools, about 35 percent of all students were English language learners as of September 2017 (Harrisonburg City Public Schools). There were more as many as 57 different languages represented, along with 53 countries represented. Specifically regarding refugees, the Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program has resettled more than 3,500 refugees in the Harrisonburg area since 1988 (Bearinger 2017). Because of these factors, Harrisonburg City public schools have diverse student populations in which refugees, as well as English language learners, are working with students who are native English speakers from the United States. All students should have an opportunity to relate to the texts they are examining in their classes. Style offers and explanation of the significance of using multicultural literature to bring the concept of windows and mirrors into curriculum:

. . .(curriculum should function as both windows and mirrors) in order to reflect and reveal most accurately both a multicultural world and the student herself or himself. If the student is understood as occupying a dwelling of self, education needs to enable the student to look through window frames in order to see the realities of others and into mirrors in order to see her/his own reality reflected. Knowledge of both types of framing is basic to a balanced education which is committed to affirming the essential dialectic between the self and the world. In other words, education engages us in ‘the great conversation’ between various frames of reference. (1)

Students from many different cultures and backgrounds, such as refugees, are already in Harrisonburg classrooms, so it is important to validate and explore the experiences and identities students are developing through diverse literature.

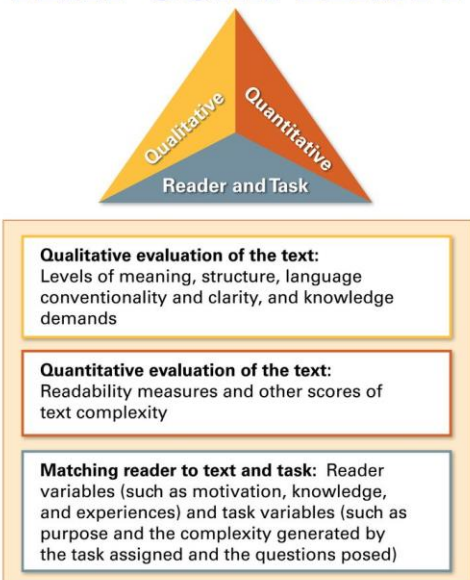
Multicultural literature can act as a learning tool for understanding literary concepts, content material, and cultural enrichment. Applications of these novels include exploration of literary devices, understanding themes and main ideas, working individually or collaboratively to present information on certain topics, and more. Newspaper articles, news clips, or other brief, factual reports are excellent for scaffolding the material presented in these novels to give students context. On their own, however, these mediums fail to convey meaning to students as deeply as personal, extended narrative can, emphasizing the importance of using varied types of refugee texts in the classroom. As noted by sociologist Milton Albrecht, “Literature is interpreted as reflecting norms and values, as revealing the ethos of culture, the processes of class struggle, and certain types of social ‘facts’” (425). In this way, texts can provide a more complex, reflective study of society and the world, and refugee literature is no exception.

Selection of Texts

Selecting texts that have a range of appeals for different readers, based on factors such as interest and reading skill level, is important for any classroom. Lexile levels can be used to determine the applicability of the texts in the classroom. Lexile levels are a tool used in schools to gauge a student’s reading level and to measure the difficulty of a text. A student’s lexile level is determined through standardized reading tests and inventories. The higher the lexile level, the higher the student’s reading level. Books are sorted into lexile levels based on their readability, and these lexile levels correlate with lexile levels for students. MetaMetrics is a popular resource for assessing the lexile level of a text. Regardless of lexile level, the texts must deal with mature

and complex themes. Tough talks and deeper understandings are not sacrificed for a higher or lower lexile, allowing the texts to be used in conjunction with one another for a cohesive unit and group discussions.

TEXT COMPLEXITY



From a practical standpoint, the readability of a text is important for students in any grade level. Texts need to be challenging enough that interest is maintained, but also clear enough in diction and style that students can understand what they are reading. Having comfort with the vocabulary and structure of a text allows students to dive deeper into the complexities of themes and underlying meanings within. Using school resources, such as online tools or reading

specialists, is key to identifying student comfort at different reading levels. Lexile estimates can also be taken into consideration for broad approximations of a text's pragmatism for students and classroom application. On page 408 of Glaus' article on text complexity and young adult literature, she explains the use of "The Triangle of Text Complexity" shown, along with state-mandated standards, to evaluate texts for use in the classroom. The "Triangle of Text Complexity" comes from Appendix A of the Common Core state standards for English language arts. All of the factors included in the triangle—qualitative evaluation of the text, quantitative evaluation of the text, and matching reader to text and task— must also be considered in tough text evaluations. The triangle provides a clean, concise visual aid for organizing the traits considered across texts. In order to fully and effectively apply the texts in a classroom, however,

the instructor must be adequately prepared to work with the topics presented and lead successful tough talks.

Discussion of Texts

Three texts were used for the unit plan that accompanies this project: *Never Fall Down* by Patricia McCormick (2012), *The Good Braider* by Terry Farish (2012), and *Refugee* by Alan Gratz (2017). These texts were selected based on criteria that qualifies them as a tough text, as outlined by O'Donnell-Allen and previously discussed. According to MetaMetrics, *Never Fall Down* by Patricia McCormick and *The Good Braider* by Terry Farish both have lexile levels around 710 and 630, respectively. *Refugee* by Alan Gratz has a lexile level at 800, which is higher than both *Never Fall Down* and *The Good Braider*, but still very feasible for a ninth-grade reader. All three texts were also published after 2010, highlighting the recent surge of powerful, young adult literature focused on depicting the refugee experience. The narratives occur in different eras and locations, and the texts contain different literary elements, such as symbolism, similes, free verse, and dialect, which appeal to a range of readers. In the classroom, texts need to be accessible and interesting for a range of students. The alternation of three different narratives across chapters and frequent use of cliff hangers make *Refugee* an engaging option for readers who struggle to maintain interest in a text. The concise prose and accompanying images in *The Good Braider* act as aids for less confident readers. The dialect and shorter sentences in *Never Fall Down* are more comfortable for students that may struggle with English themselves. Studying and discussing these different features of the texts can help students grapple with the complicated issues presented in the works and have tough talks that open their minds for new perspectives and considerations. In some ways, the texts provide students with windows for

seeing unfamiliar experiences, mirrors of lives that connect with their own, and perhaps even more avenues for accessing the narrative and relating to the protagonists.

The Good Braider by Terry Farish (2012)

Terry Farish uses free verse to chronicle the experiences of Viola in *The Good Braider* as she flees military violence in her hometown of Juba, Sudan, through Cairo, Egypt, eventually arriving in Portland, Maine, USA. Over the course of the novel, Viola deals with war, rape, death, physical and emotional journeys, high school, romance, and more, all while trying to find herself in an unfamiliar world. *The Good Braider* provides ample opportunities for tough talks, as well as exploration of literary tools such as symbolism.

For Viola, sexual assault catapults her from sister, daughter, and student, to refugee. The constant threat to Viola and her family's safety, particularly from the soldier who raped Viola, forces them to flee. This is portrayed in a powerful excerpt from the text:

The soldier looks at my brother.

When his eyes turn to me they speak clearly,

You know we take boys to be soldiers.

I don't hesitate again.

I follow the soldier.

In my mind, I hold the picture of my brother.

I need to walk back out and see my brother.

I will not die.

The soldier slams me into the dirt.

I will not die.

The sickening tobacco smell penetrates my nose,
my lungs, the skin between my legs.

‘If you cry out, I will kill you,’ he says.

I am crushed into the red earth and
do not know if this is alive or dead, this place
where there is only ripping pain.

I am sorry, Yumis.

Please...forgive me, my mother. (31-32)

This difficult scene gives readers significant insight into Viola’s character. She will do anything to protect her family, and her determination to survive is linked largely to them. After the assault occurs, Viola’s first thoughts are apologies to her mother, also known as “Yumis.” Instead of feeling pity for herself and her suffering, Viola instantly feels shame and guilt for having “lost her bride wealth” (Farish 34). Her mother goes on to criticize her for being “on the road at night” because “What kind of *girl* would be on the road at *night*?” (Farish 34). Although Viola was violently taken advantage of, society blames her for the actions of the soldier, though her motivations were only to protect her loved ones. This realization can be used to open up a tough talk on rape culture in societies around the world. Students can participate in free writes that ask questions such as, “Why does the society in Juba blame the victims of sexual assault, like Viola? In what ways does American society also blame the victim of sexual assault? Why do you think this is?” Following the free write, the teacher can facilitate a debriefing discussion for students to talk about their responses to the free write questions and their significance (O’Donnell-Allen 76). Students should be reminded of previously established classroom norms and expectations for

tough talks so that conversations can be productive and respectful. Debriefing discussions can occur in small groups or as a whole-class discussion. This activity allows students to explore the complexities of society in Juba while also examining how these complexities exist in American culture. In this way, students are accessing a window to peer into Viola's life and culture, but also interacting with a mirror that forces them to reevaluate their own. As the text continues, Viola's experiences allow for students to see how the intersectional cultures she belongs to impact her life.

In her essay on violence against women of color, Kimberlé Crenshaw highlights the connection between male violence against women in the forms of battery and rape, and the motivations of racism and sexism, though many other identities such as religion and sexuality can contribute to the abuse of women (Crenshaw 1244). Because Viola belongs to multiple identities that are systemically oppressed, she is frequently mistreated across continents. While living in Juba, Viola's age, socioeconomic status, and gender make her a target for violence from soldiers, as suggested by Crenshaw's essay, but this does not only occur in Juba. In the United States, Viola must add her status as a refugee and a minority to an already complex list of identities. When Viola befriends and starts spending time with a white, American boy in Maine, her mother burns Viola's hand over boiling water for "bring(ing) us shame!" (Farish 158). For the police in Maine, this clearly constitutes child abuse; for Viola's mother, however, it is only a means of punishing her daughter and preventing behavior that reduces her chance at a good future which can, in her mind, only be secured through marriage to man. By fraternizing with males outside of her culture, Viola is once again defying her cultural traditions. Viola's mother holds Viola to strict standards of male-female etiquette because it is the only system she knows. Asking students to explore traditions important to their own family, especially those that would

be unfamiliar or strange to an outsider, provides a foundation for a tough talk about cultural differences and the need for understandings. From reading the novel, it is clear that Viola's mother loves her very much, but the customs for raising a child in Juba are not the same as the customs in Portland. This leads into a tough talk for students to discuss ways they see cultural differences manifest in their communities. Students have access to a sliding glass door, as suggested by Bishop, through literature and discussion which allows them to step into other cultures and traditions for comparing, contrasting, and better understandings. While there are certain aspects of Viola's relationship with her mother that a student may relate to, there are also other features that complicate understandings and perspectives of familial relations. Along with family bonds, features such as elephants and braids are prominent in the novel, acting as symbols throughout *The Good Braider* that spark interest and emotion from readers.

A significant symbol throughout the text is elephants. *The Good Braider* is split into three parts: "Elephant Bone", "Elephant Footsteps", and "Elephant Songs." There are also poems throughout the parts that have references to elephants, such as "Elephant Bone" on page 23, "No Elephants here" on page 74, and "Elephant Trunk" on page 207. In some instances, the elephant connects to power and independence. It often evokes a sense of safety and comfort, as the familiarity of the strong mammal reminds Viola of her grandmother and of a home that is separate from the violence of Juba and foreignness of new communities. In other examples, however, the elephant is linked to traumatic experiences such as Viola's rape. These very different circumstances show how weakness and strength can be linked, especially in Viola's life. Students can monitor the appearance of the elephant within poems, poem titles, and section titles, and then reflect on the possible meanings of the elephant within the text. Also common throughout the text is the braid. Besides being the title of the whole work, braids are a major

feature in many poems. When Viola tells her mother about her rape, she is “braid(ing) the lines to the nape of her neck” (Farish 34). There is a poem titled “Why I Don’t Have Braids” on page 117, and another one titled “White Girl’s Braids” on 146. For Viola, braids can be a symbol of unity or division, depending on where and how they appear. Like elephants, braids feature prominently through *The Good Braider* and remind the reader of both Viola’s strength and her trials in Juba, Cairo, and Portland.

Never Fall Down by Patricia McCormick (2012)

Patricia McCormick’s *Never Fall Down* is told from the perspective of Arn Chorn-Pond, a man who was captured and forced to work under the Khmer Rouge’s extremist regime at 11 years old. Arn’s determination to survive, combined with his adaptability and ingenuity, allow him to form friendships in the bleakest situations and, eventually, escape the Khmer Rouge and flee to the United States. McCormick writes the real story of Arn Chorn-Pond’s experiences based on her interviews with him and many of the other characters from the story who were important figures in Arn’s life. *Never Fall Down* uses instances of bullying and Arn’s dialect to reinforce Arn’s innocence as an adolescent while also offering students more avenues for understanding the text.

After arriving in New Hampshire, Arn begins to attend an American school where his peers call him a “monkey”, though he does not know what the word means. When Arn does find out what monkey means, he immediately realizes the derogatory nature of the term as it has been used and is humiliated and angered by this bullying. Describing his feelings, Arn says, “Inside my heart, a bad feeling grow. Like tiger growling, like a big anger, like I have when I was soldier, and I think: if they don’t stop, I will hurt these American kid. I will show them what animal is” (McCormick 193). Using similes that compare his emotions to wild animals and his

anger as a soldier help Arn articulate what he is feeling in this deep, wounded rage. Connecting this incident with trauma from the past allows Arn to tell readers what he is experiencing by comparing it to the past. By drawing a parallel between a tiger's fury and the monkey name-calling, readers can expand the comparison to reveal that school can be its own jungle full of dangers and obstacles that can take a serious toll on an individual. Discussing this in a tough talk with students would allow them to relate to Arn's experiences and reevaluate the treatment of peers that they see in their school. Drawing from this scene in the text, teachers can pose a question to students about bullying that they have witnessed, like looking through a window, or participated in or been a victim of, like a mirror reflecting on their experiences. This can be the basis for a short, in-class writing assignment for students. Following this, a debriefing discussion should occur to speak about issues of bullying in the school and community, with or without volunteers sharing personal stories. By thinking about motivations of bullies in Arn's school, their actions, and their impact on Arn, the class can brainstorm possible steps that could be taken to help Arn and stop the bullies. These same ideas can they be thought of as they apply to students' current situations and classmates. Through this tough talk, students can examine and decide how to positively influence the social environment in their school.

Never Fall Down is told in written in a dialect of English that McCormick describes as an attempt to capture Arn's true voice and patterns of speaking. There are some missing verbs, mixed up conjugations, short or incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, and an overall slight shifting of the English language that gives a clear voice to the work. Describing a conversation with a soldier, Arn declares, "He says the soldiers in the jungle, they not real soldiers. Only peasant in black pajama. Not even with real boot. Sandal made from old tire. We gonna win, he says. We gonna squish them like cockroach" (McCormick 5). In this small section, the dialect is

clear and distinct. The short sentences are direct and matter-of-fact, while the syntax and grammar evidence a narrator that is young and not a native English speaker. Later in the book, when he hears a familiar song coming from a bus, Arn is overwhelmed:

And oh, so much hunger in me, a greedy, greedy hunger to be like these people, to sing the old song, the song I kill in my heart, my heart that now is ache, that now is so swole I think my body cannot hold it, my body that now is shaking so hard I think my bone will break, where now something inside me break open and I taste the salty tears on my lip and hear my voice, my own voice. Singing. (15)

Here, an entire paragraph is made up of only two sentences, one of which is five lines long, while the other is a single word. Still maintaining the dialect and speech patterns that readers are accustomed to reading as “Arn’s voice,” this section has specific sentence structures that emphasize Arn’s emotions and amplify what the words themselves are saying. The long sentence builds pace before revealing the power song has over Arn. Both of the passages are rich examples of the different ways Arn’s voice is used throughout the text to convey meaning to readers, but the dialect can also shape student reactions in different ways.

For a young reader, the language in *Never Fall Down* can be cumbersome because it is unusual, and thus can detract from the important themes of the text by depicting Arn as a non-native English speaker telling a story, instead of as an adolescent sharing his truth. There is a distance between the reader and the speaker through the language barrier and it can be challenging to read sentences that do not adhere to prescriptive grammar rules that many native English speakers were raised hearing and using. The language and the distance it creates give students a window through which they can view and reflect on Arn’s journey. Exploring how the dialect and structure shape the story, as within the above passages, helps readers see the impact

they have on the text. The dialectal speech pattern used gives a definitive voice to Arn. For any student in the classroom who is acquainted with the struggle of having to express oneself in a language that is not their native tongue, his narrative can have a comforting familiarity, acting as a mirror. Having a character whose language struggles resonate with one's own struggles shows how a story is still important and powerful, even if it is not in perfect English. Arn can be fully understood without much difficulty, so the dialect does not provide an unnecessary struggle to students who are also English language learners. In fact, they can work to recognize ways in which Arn's English contradicts grammar rules that they are learning and use this to strengthen their own understandings. His English is simply different from the typical dialect used in many English-language texts.

Refugee by Alan Gratz (2017)

Refugee by Alan Gratz intertwines three different narratives from three different eras and places to paint a picture of the refugee experience that transcends space and time. Josef is 12 years old when his family escapes Nazi Germany aboard the MS *St. Louis*; 11-year-old Isabel flees communist rule in Cuba on a small boat with family and friends; in modern day Aleppo, 12-year-old Mahmoud and his family are forced to leave Syria as violence intensifies and a bomb decimates their home. All three characters face a range of obstacles along their journeys, and though they each end differently, their stories all overlap by the end of the novel. Through consideration and discussion of three separate narratives and the theme of visibility, students have windows, mirrors, and doors into the amorphous complexity of refugee experiences.

Each chapter of *Refugee* alternates between Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud's stories. There is an omniscient narrator, but the protagonist of each chapter rotates as the narratives progress. Often, the endings of the chapters have major cliffhangers or foreshadow what is to come in the

text. Readers can sense the struggle and urgency of the situations that Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are in. On page 55, Mahmoud's father ends the chapter saying, "We should have gone long ago. Ready or not, if we want to live, we have to leave Syria" (Gratz 55). By the time the text follows up on Mahmoud's story, he and his family are "one day from home" and just outside of Aleppo. Every chapter also begins with a marker providing the number of days the character has been away from home, along with their approximate location which helps readers reorient themselves with the narrative. After Josef's family draws closer to Cuba, questions rise over whether or not they will be let into the country. The chapter ends asking, "If he and his family didn't make it to Cuba, if they weren't allowed in, where would they go?" (Gratz 80). As the MS *St. Louis* is not allowed to release passengers in Cuba, this chapter plants the seed for readers to begin to ponder the possibility of what eventually becomes reality for Josef over the course of the next few chapters. Finally, for Isabel, her grandfather, Lito, foreshadows their upcoming struggles remarking at the close of one chapter: "No. Red sky at morning, sailors take warning,' Lito said, looking up into the red-tinged clouds. 'A storm is coming.'" (Gratz 140). Their challenging trip to the United States requires Lito to sacrifice his own refuge, so this statement is especially impactful coming from him. The consistent movement through the chapters with lots of cliffhangers is useful for maintaining student interest, but on another level, it is also forcing readers to take on perspectives of multiple characters in very different situations. The exercise in perspective taking helps students realize both the universality and the complexity of refugee experiences. Through Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud, it is clear that refugees can come from any place at any time, but their lives and journeys contrast greatly before, during, and long after their arrival in a new location. Students can explore how Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud reflect one another like mirrors, and how they differ.

Visibility plays a significant role for all three protagonists, whether they are wrestling with the power of being seen or invisible in various spaces, or hiding emotional and mental struggles to seem strong for their loved ones. After Josef's father desperately jumps overboard in Cuba to avoid being sent back to Germany, "Josef wished he was invisible," in order to avoid the attention and pity of other passengers (Gratz 197). Because his father is so traumatized from the horrors of the Nazis, Josef has to assume the father role, supporting his mother and caring for his sister. Even when he wants to disappear, he is bound to the ship and his duty to care for his family, especially because his father cannot. Mahmoud, in contrast, challenges the power of invisibility:

Mahmoud's first instinct was to disappear below decks. To be invisible. Being invisible in Syria had kept him alive. But now Mahmoud began to wonder if being invisible in Europe might be the death of him and his family. If no one saw them, no one could help them. And maybe the world needed to see what was really happening here. (Gratz 214)

By weighing the costs and benefits of visibility in different countries, Mahmoud leads readers to question how being, or not being, seen can impact an individual or an entire population. From Mahmoud's position, ignorance of the violence in Aleppo allows people in Europe to avoid concern, but this passage suggests that increased awareness could increase empathy and assistance to struggling populations. By making himself visible, especially to those who are unfamiliar with what it means to be a refugee, Mahmoud is creating a window. He spent many years aiming to be invisible as a means of protection, so allowing strangers to know his trials and tribulations makes Mahmoud feel vulnerable and exposed. This openness, however, provides a window of access and path for understanding between Mahmoud and the people around him who

have been unaware of the situation in Aleppo and all that his family has suffered and fought through.

In Isabel's experience, sight is manipulated by members of her group in order to secure freedom. As they approach the coast of Miami, a U.S. Coast Guard ship discovers their boat. In order to save the family and buy them time to swim to shore, Isabel's grandfather, Lito, jumps overboard:

“He jumped in to distract them!” Papi realized.

“They’ll come for us first!” Señor Castillo said.

“No, he’s in danger of drowning. They have to rescue him!” Amara cried. “This is our chance. Row -- row!” (277-278)

By making himself visible to the Coast Guard, Lito knows that he will be forced to return to Cuba, but this self-surrender buys his family and friends time to get to the shores of the United States and qualify for asylum. In this instance, being seen is a powerful tool that Lito uses to ensure the wellbeing of his loved ones. Lito's sacrifice opens a door for connections between characters and readers who share fierce loyalty to their loved ones. It also, however, shows the risks that come with windows, mirrors, and doors. Readers will often struggle with what they encounter on the other side. Empathizing with the pain Isabel feels as she loses her grandfather forever, along with the dedication Lito has to his family, puts readers on the other side of the door, helping to foster a connectedness between readers and characters.

Sight is a key factor in the concept of windows, mirrors, and doors because they all have to do with how readers see and perceive the lives of others. In the aforementioned scenes from *Refugee*, visibility and invisibility becomes tools or threats depending on the agency of the character in a specific setting. For Josef, being seen on the boat made him feel embarrassed

because he felt powerless to help his father and care for his family. Visibility equates to a mirror that Josef must look into and face the difficulty of his position, although he works tirelessly to remain optimistic. In Mahmoud's section, the pros and cons of being seen are considered in one passage: in the conflicts of Aleppo, being invisible allowed Mahmoud and his family to fly under the radar and survive as long as possible, until they could not do so anymore as their home was destroyed by bombings. In their new country of refuge, however, Mahmoud realizes that others must see him in order to understand him and the extreme obstacles his family, and many others, have faced. Mahmoud is acting as a window into the lives of refugees, allowing those who cannot relate to his experience to gain a better understanding of it. Lastly, in Isabel's case, she was able to see how her grandfather asserted his agency as a patriarchal figure to save those he cares about by making himself visible to the Coast Guard. Sharing in Lito's sacrifice creates a door for empathy and understanding.

For adolescent readers, the complicated relationships characters have with visibility spurs questions about how the text can challenge their positions as both readers and citizens in this complex world. Adolescence is a tumultuous time when students attempt to navigate new responsibilities and independence. According to Anne Reeves' book, *Adolescents Talk About Reading*, students with diverse interests share a common fascination with certain fundamental questions when they read, such as "How do I become the adult I want to be, living the life I want to live, in the face of the obstacles I see?" as well as questions about "relat(ing) to others" and "meet(ing) the demands of (their) culture. . .but also be(ing) true to (themselves)?" (Reeves 254) Josef, Mahmoud, and Isabel grapple with the same questions, and many more, allowing students to connect with them in many ways. Their experiences serve as foundations for tough talks about identities and compassion, as students look into mirrors, windows, and doors that let them

connect to characters and one another. This discourse leads students to think about the issues they are reading about outside of just the context of the novel, since students in the same classrooms will have different experience and perspectives on the material. Furthermore, tough talks not only help students grow academically, but they can also contribute to emotional and social growth (O'Donnell-Allen 24). By having tough talks about texts that relate to issues on both local and global scales, a text like *Refugee* prepares students to engage in civil discourse and understand their world.

Conclusion

Using *The Good Braider*, *Never Fall Down*, and *Refugee* in the classroom allows for students to interact with characters that mirror themselves and their lives, or gain awareness of another's perspective and give them a chance to step into someone else's shoes. Having tough talks about the material presented in the texts and asking students to draw from their own lives enriches their comprehension of the content because they are connecting to what they read.

O'Donnell-Allen sums up the significance of these readings and conversations:

“By reading tough texts, students learn to grapple personally with subjects, themes, and issues that figure large in characters' lives as well as our contemporary culture. By discussing tough texts, they also figure out how to engage in civil discourse—that is, to consider the perspectives of their peers in respectful, productive ways.” (26)

Through these processes, students are developing empathy and widening their understandings.

The Good Braider, *Never Fall Down*, and *Refugee* look in to the refugee experience from many angles and viewpoints, and the texts have an essential connection of providing windows, mirrors, and doors that students can access. By having tough talks, students can see how different individuals relate to the texts in different ways. What one student sees as a door, another may see

as mirror. Discussing why these variances exist and understanding one another's perspectives allows students to use tough talks, windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors to increase their awareness of the experiences of others in and outside of books. The tough talks they have about these texts in the classroom can shape students' perceptions of themselves, their communities, strangers, and many people throughout the world, like refugees.

Unit Plan for Application in a Ninth-Grade Virginia English Curriculum

The classroom the unit is designed for is a ninth-grade English classroom at Harrisonburg High School. The class is roughly 21-24 students. The book groups would consist of 6-8 students. The demographic makeup of the classroom is a mix of students from many different ethnic backgrounds, and there are several English language learners, as well as students with varying degrees of cognitive and/or behavioral difficulties. The school uses block scheduling, so this English class meets every other day for 90 minutes. This unit was planned so that "Lesson 1" would occur on a Tuesday, "Lesson 2" on a Thursday, and so on. "Lesson 7" would occur on a Thursday, giving students a weekend to finish their projects, and then begin presenting Monday and Wednesday of the following week. Friday could be used to start a new unit, or it could be kept as a buffer day in case more time is needed for the lessons.

Essential Questions and Know, Understand, Dos

Essential Questions:

1. What does "home" mean and why?
2. How do we define our identity?
3. In what ways am I responsible for the wellbeing of others?

The students will know:

1. Basic information about countries and conflicts in texts (including important names, dates, places, and events).
2. The Merriam-Webster definition of refugee as, "one that flees; especially a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution."

3. The U.S. legal definition of a refugee as “a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of a ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin.”
4. Several figures about the current refugee crisis from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (<https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>).
5. The definition of different literary devices. For the selected texts, the following terms and explanations are especially relevant:
 - Dialect: A dialect is the language used by the people of a specific area, class, district, or any other group of people. The term dialect involves the spelling, sounds, grammar and pronunciation used by a particular group of people and it distinguishes them from other people around them. (literarydevices.net)
 - First Person Perspective: First person perspective means writing from the perspective of the author or main character. The readers see everything through this person’s eyes. (literarydevices.net)
 - Free Verse: A free verse poem has no set meter; that is to say there is no rhyming scheme present, and the poem doesn’t follow a set pattern. (literarydevices.net)
 - Foreshadowing: Foreshadowing is a literary device in which a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story. Foreshadowing often appears at the beginning of a story, or a chapter, and helps the reader develop expectations about the coming events in a story. (literarydevices.net)
 - Motif: In a literary work, a motif can be seen as an image, sound, action, or other figure that has a symbolic significance, and contributes toward the development of a theme. Motif and theme are linked in a literary work, but there is a difference between them. In a literary piece, a motif is a recurrent image, idea, or symbol that develops or explains a theme, while a theme is a central idea or message. (literarydevices.net)
 - Omniscient Narrator: Omniscient is a literary technique of writing a narrative in third person, in which the narrator knows the feelings and thoughts of every character in the story. Through omniscient narrative, the author brings an entire world of his characters to life, and moves from character to character, allowing different voices to interpret the events, and maintaining omniscient form — that is keeping a distance. (literarydevices.net)
 - Protagonist: A protagonist is the central character or leading figure in poetry, narrative, novel or any other story. A protagonist is sometimes a “hero” to the audience or readers. (literarydevice.net)
 - Simile: A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. Unlike a metaphor, a simile draws resemblance with the help of the words “like” or “as.” Therefore, it is a direct comparison. (literarydevices.net)

- Symbolism: Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities, by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. (literarydevices.net)

The students will understand:

1. That there is no universal, specific refugee experience.
2. That the process of seeking refuge is complicated by many factors.
3. The difficulties of adjusting to life after resettlement.
4. The power and importance of a personal narrative.
5. How literary devices are used by the author to convey meaning.
6. That texts consist of more than just writing, and that different types of media such as song and images can also be analyzed.
7. How to evaluate online resources for gathering information.
8. The ways in which history and the world can impact refugees.

The students will be able to:

1. Analyze the importance of having a “home” (geographically or otherwise) in determining our sense of self.
2. Explain the reluctance many people have to leaving their homes.
3. Examine the role of different textual elements in conveying meaning.
4. Synthesize information from reliable sources.
5. Understand and evaluate the impact of experiences on one’s identity.

Virginia Standards of Learning

Communication

9.1: The student will make planned oral presentations independently and in small groups.

9.1b) Use relevant details to support main ideas.

9.1c) Illustrate main ideas through anecdotes and examples.

9.1d) Use grammatically correct language, including vocabulary appropriate to the topic, audience, and purpose.

9.1g) Credit information sources.

9.1h) Give impromptu responses to questions about presentation.

9.1i) Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work.

9.2: The student will produce, analyze, and evaluate auditory, visual, and written media messages.

9.2a) Analyze and interpret special effects used in media messages including television, film, and Internet.

Reading

9.4: The student will read, comprehend, and analyze a variety of literary texts including narrative, narrative nonfiction, poetry, and drama.

- 9.4a) Identify author's main idea and purpose.
- 9.4b) Summarize text relating supporting details.
- 9.4d) Use literary terms in describing and analyzing selections.
- 9.4g) Analyze the cultural or social function of a literary text.
- 9.4i) Explain the influence of historical context on the form, style, and point of view of a written work.
- 9.4m) Use reading strategies to monitor comprehension throughout the reading process.
- 9.5: The student will read and analyze a variety of nonfiction texts.
- 9.5a) Recognize and author's intended purpose for writing and identify the main idea.
- 9.5b) Summarize text relating supporting details.

Research

- 9.8: The student will use print, electronic databases, online resources, and other media to access information to create a research product.
- 9.8a) Use technology as a tool for research to organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
- 9.8c) Find, evaluate, and select appropriate sources to access information and answer questions.
- 9.8d) Verify the validity and accuracy of all information.
- 9.8f) Credit the sources of quoted, paraphrased, and summarize ideas.
- 9.8g) Cite sources of information using a standard method of documentation such as that of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA).

Outside Media

Several forms of media, or texts, outside of the books being read will be used to scaffold learning throughout this unit. These outside texts will be multi-modal and take the form of articles, poems, images, songs, and videos. Below is a list and brief description of each text. This media will be dispersed throughout the lesson plans that follow.

1. Hosseini, Khaled. *Sea Prayer*. Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., 2018.

Hosseini's *Sea Prayer* is a short story written in the form of a letter from a father to his son. In fewer than 50 pages, Hosseini expresses the father's fears about the upcoming journey to escape their home in Syria, which has descended into chaos and violence. *Sea Prayer* is bursting with powerful text and illustrations that make it appealing to readers of all ages.

2. Mulloy, Daniel, director. *Home*. United Nations Kosovo Team, 20 June 2016, homefilm.org.

Home is a short film directed by Daniel Mulloy that was released on June 20, 2016, for World Refugee Day. Focused on a mother, father, son, and daughter, *Home* follows the family as they pack their bags and head out on a trip that involves separation, assault, uncertainty, and increasing danger as the family heads into a war zone. Because home is often thought of as a safe, comfortable place, the film forces audiences to consider the desperation that refugees face when conflict or disasters drive them from a familiar space and plunge them into the terrifying unknown.

3. Chorn-Pond, Arn, and TEDx Talks. *Music Saved My Life*, TEDx, 21 May 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crv9Bre_T2g.

In his talk, Arn Chorn-Pond, the main character of *Never Fall Down*, describes how his musical skill saved his life, but how music was also a tool manipulated by the Khmer Rouge to spread propaganda and control the population. Chorn-Pond recounts the horrors he experienced in a work camp as a child, his escape from Cambodia as a refugee, his struggles to adapt to life in the United States, and how music allowed him to connect with strangers, rebuild communities, and preserve Cambodian arts and culture through his organization Cambodian Living Arts.

4. Bergner, Joel. "The Syrian Refugee Art Initiative." *Joel Artista*, 14 Mar. 2018, joelartista.com/syrian-refugees-the-zaatari-project-jordan/.

Joel Bergner's art initiative works with refugee communities to facilitate the design and painting of murals. The vibrancy and vitality radiating from the murals contrasts starkly

with common stereotypes of refugees as sad or depressed. While refugees face extreme trials that many cannot begin to fathom, these artworks remind viewers of the power of the human spirit. This art helps shift students away from pity and sympathy, and more in the direction of empathy. Refugees are fellow humans with hopes, dreams, and potential for the future. Hearing their stories is a testament to what they have lost, but knowing their resilience and willpower inspires viewers to feel with them. Bergner provides an overview of the project, which takes place all over the world, and each picture is accompanied by a one-line description. Using words to share personal traumas and dreams can be very challenging; Bergner gives people another way to express themselves.

5. Baker, Aryn, et al. "Finding Home: A Year in the Life of Syrian Refugees." *Time*, 1 Dec. 2017, time.com/finding-home/.

This interactive article from *Time* magazine gives students a factual basis for understanding the refugee experience. The article is great for learners with different needs and literacy levels because it is light on text and has a huge mix of media ranging from video clips and images, to maps and pictures of text messages. This makes the article much less intimidating, and it is a more exciting way to read a news source. The article focuses on a baby named Heln, a Syrian refugee whose family is seeking asylum in Europe. Their article has a timeline format, so readers can follow along with the family's journey.

6. Morrone, Alessandro. *Melody's Story*. Refugee Council, 6 Nov. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xZGBYeudYA.

The United Kingdom Refugee Council has several animated videos that are narrated by refugees who talk about their journeys. The material is difficult, but it is important for students to hear, first-hand, about these experiences. *Melody's Story* is a short video, and because it is animated, it makes the tough content a bit less intimidating for students trying to understand the refugee experience. The other two videos on the same webpage can also be used by students interested in exploring more narratives.

7. Keys, Alicia. "Let Me In." *YouTube*, We Are Here Movement, 20 June 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-1hpZzJpmg&t=595s.

Alicia Keys' music video follows a family in California as they flee to Mexico as refugees. Incorporating music is a great way to appeal to student interests and provide more multimodal access to the stories being discussed. "Let Me In" directly responds to the world's refugee crisis. The video contains moving imagery, along with the obvious pairing of music and lyrics, all of which can be explored by students. In the video, the United States is depicted as the place of conflict that people are leaving, instead of as the place where many seek refuge. Often, the refugee experience is thought of as distant and inconceivable, but this video makes it feel incredibly close to home.

8. Bearinger, David. "Refuge in the Valley." *Virginia Humanities*, Church World Service, July 2017, www.virginiahumanities.org/2017/07/refuge-in-the-valley/.

This photo exhibit showcases the diverse cultures represented in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The goal of the exhibit is "to help all members of the community better understand the personal stories of new refugees—how and why they left their homes, the history that

sets these migration stories in context; the day-to-day challenges refugees face, and most of all, the talents, strengths, and traditions they bring with them into their new lives”.

There are portraits of individuals and families from seven countries: Congo, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Cuba, Pakistan, and the Central African Republic. The article and photos help make the material feel relevant and close to home, especially for students in Virginia who can see the growing importance of diverse narratives in their own communities.

9. Moncure, Arielle. “In Maine, Resettled Sudanese Refugee Gives Back to the Community That Gave Her Hope.” *UNHCR*, United Nations, 13 June 2017, www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2017/6/5953bd744/in-maine-resettled-sudanese-refugee-gives-back-to-the-community-that-gave.html.

This article talks about Ekhlas Ahmed’s experiences in Sudan and the United States.

Ahmed started high school learning the English alphabet, but now at age 25, is a graduate student working with Americorps as a teacher. Ahmed talks about the continued obstacles refugees face after being relocated, but also shares her motivations to give back to the community that helped her build a life in the United States. She emphasizes the importance of education and its role in her life, as well as how she uses it as a tool to help others.

10. Simon, Scott. “Sudanese Refugees Find New Home in Maine.” *NPR*, NPR, 29 Apr. 2006, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5370972.

Since *The Good Braider* was inspired by interviews with members of the Sudanese community in Portland, ME, it is important to provide a non-fiction reference for

students. The NPR interviews can be read and listened to, and contain several different perspectives from Sudanese-Americans on their lives in and outside of the United States.

11. Stone, Cynthia. "Watch the 1000-Year-Old Dance Tradition Nearly Killed by the Khmer Rouge." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 7 Apr. 2015, www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/watch-the-1000-year-old-dance-tradition-nearly-killed-by-the-khmer-rouge.

Like Arn Chorn-Pond, Charya Burt preserves Cambodian culture through music, using dance to do so. Burt talks about her experiences in Cambodia and the United States, but she also describes the power of Cambodian dance as a form of story-telling. This is an important art form for students to understand as another method of expression apart from written text, like film, playing instruments, or painting murals.

12. CNN Library. "Fidel Castro Fast Facts." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 3 May 2018, www.cnn.com/2012/12/04/world/americas/fidel-castro---fast-facts/index.html.

This handy fact sheet includes information about Fidel Castro's life, as well as a timeline of his rule in Cuba. For students trying to get context for Isabel's life in *Refugee*, this information paints a clear picture of life in Cuba.

13. Associated Press. "U.S. Resistance to Syrian Refugees Sparks Comparisons to WWII Jews' Plight." Edited by Newsela Staff, *War & Peace*, Newsela, 25 Nov. 2015, newsela.com/read/refugee-history/id/13183/.

This articles from Newsela relates current refugee debates to those from World War II. Considering how *Refugee* combines stories that deal directly with both of these events, the article is an excellent bridge between the material. There is background on conflicts in Syria, as well as the rise of Nazis in World War II Europe.

14. Buder, Emily, and Matthew K. Firpo. "The Harrowing Personal Stories of Syrian Refugees, in Their Own Words." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 3 Oct. 2017, www.theatlantic.com/video/index/541620/refuge-syrian-refugee-short-film-movie-matt-firpo/.

Containing affecting narratives from many different Syrian refugees, this short film was shot at refugee camps in Greece in 2016. Because it has imagery, audio, and good captions, this video appeals to a lot of different modes of information input for students. It will keep them engaged because it is brief and has good pacing. The video also has a short description that includes a link to external sources, giving students more points of reference for reputability.

Note for texts: All of the texts include sensitive information that will require appropriate emotional support for students. The teacher must be sure to provide necessary warnings for each source (i.e. trigger warnings for sexual assault, sensitive narratives) especially because there are features of each story that can resonate with different students in different ways. No one should feel like their experience is being exploited in any way by having these texts discussed in class. Having previously established expectations and norms for the whole class to facilitate respectful conversation will be essential, but also talking one-on-one with students as needed, and providing trigger warnings will help make sure each student is prepared for the tough texts and tough talks.

Summative Assessment

The summative assessment for this unit will be a choice of three projects. There will be one comprehensive rubric used to assess all three types of projects, with criteria specific to each

one outlined. Each project will have a separate assignment sheet that outlines its specific requirements. The first project option is a “Mask Project” in which a student may pick a character from their text and provide a visual representation with half of the character’s face based on physical descriptions in the text and their mental image, while the other half of the mask represents their identity and internal traits (O’Donnell-Allen 127). Students will also include an essay (two-page minimum, double spaced) explaining their decisions and inspiration for the project. The second option will be a “Map Project” which will require students to use images and words to describe not only the geographic points that are significant to their text, but also experiences or events that are major for their character and text. Again, this project will be a mix of visual media as well as text. The final option will be an identity poem and essay. For this project, students may to either write their own poem, or include a poem from a source that they think encapsulates the meaning of the term “identity”. They must include a two-page essay (minimum) which explains their choice of poem, or their decisions in writing it, as well as an exploration of their identity and the identity of one character from their text. Criteria will be clearly outlined in assignment sheets and rubrics. All students will be required to present their work to the class and respond to questions from classmates. They will also work with groups to generate questions for other classmates’ presentations.

Lesson 1

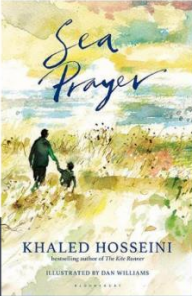
1. Lesson Preparation- Teacher will have provided short book talks to introduce the text choices. Students will have ranked their choices with 1-3, with 1 being their top choice text to read. Teacher will have looked at choices and assigned groups.
2. Topic- A lesson to prepare for texts and discussion, and to set norms and expectations.
3. Content Overview- Key concepts throughout this lesson will be reading and discussing a short story to ease into novels, and introducing the refugee crisis to students. We will also be setting expectations for respectful dialogue, both as a whole class and within small groups.
4. SOL's- 9th grade English class (refer to pages 2-4 for full substandard requirements)
 - 9.2a: Analyze and interpret special effects used in media messages including television, film, and Internet.
 - 9.4a: Identify author's main idea and purpose.
 - 9.4b: Summarize text relating supporting details.
 - 9.4d: Use literary terms in describing and analyzing selections.
 - 9.4g: Analyze the cultural or social function of a literary text.
 - 9.4i: Explain the influence of historical context on the form, style, and point of view of a written work.
 - 9.5a: Recognize and author's intended purpose for writing and identify the main idea.
 - 9.5b: Summarize text relating supporting details.
 - 9.8f: Credit the sources of quoted, paraphrased, and summarize ideas.
 - 9.8g: Cite sources of information using a standard method of documentation such as that of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA).
5. Instructional Objectives- (refer to pages 1-2 for full listing)
 - a. Understanding: 2, 4, 6
 - b. Know: 2, 3, 4, 5
6. Assessment Plan-
 - a. None.
7. Materials-
 - *Sea Prayer* by Khaled Hosseini
 - Document Viewer Camera
 - Projector
 - Writing instrument
 - Poster paper
8. Warm Up- Student book groups will be projected on front board. Students will be instructed to come in and sit with their groups at their designated tables.
9. Closure- Students will sign their "Group Norms and Expectations" and turn into the teacher.
10. Lesson Body and Sequence-

Time (90 min.)	Actions
5 min.	Community Chat is a time when the teacher asks a question or presents an idea to serve as either an introduction to the material for the lesson, or simply to check in with students. The first Community Chat question for this unit will be “Define ‘home’ in 5 words or less.” Students will be standing (as they are able) in a circle, and we will go around the class to respond.
20 min.	We will spend a large part of class working with Khaled Hosseini’s <i>Sea Prayer</i> . The first 20 or so minutes of class will be devoted to reading this text. Using a document camera would be a great way to project the words and images on the screen for all students to see with ease. Teacher reads the text aloud with appropriate volume and enthusiasm while students sit and listen.
15 min.	After finishing the reading, students will engage in a conversation with the teacher about the text. We will begin with factual questions which recap exactly what occurred in the text. These questions have definite correct answers: Who were the characters? Where are they? What happened? Next, we will move to inductive questions that force students to think about the meaning behind things occurring in the text. Students should reference the text to answer these questions: Why did the characters leave their homes? What are they seeking? What symbols did you see in the images? Finally, students will discuss

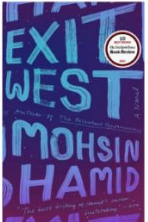
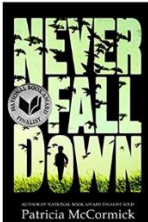
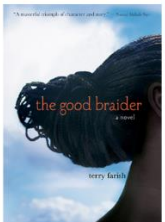

	<p>analytical questions that allow students to share their personal opinions as they relate to the questions and text: Would you leave if you were in this position? Why do you think the author chose a letter as the form for this text? How do the images they impact your understanding of the words?.</p>
25 min.	<p>Following this discussion, students will be instructed to follow along with a PowerPoint presentation to give background information on the refugee crisis. There will be questions incorporated into the presentation to engage students.</p>
15 min	<p>As a class, we will make a “Class Norms and Expectations” contract to guide our conversations throughout the unit. Students will sign the “Class Norms and Expectations” contract indicating their agreement to abide by the standards set, and it will be posted on a wall of the room for reference throughout the unit. Students will receive their book assignments and groups.</p>
10 min.	<p>As a class, we will explore the “Refuge in the Valley” article. This will put the unit into perspective as it is not a distant topic, but one that impacts the community directly. Because this means students in our classes may be refugees, it will be important for students to engage in conversations maturely and respectfully, which is why we will work as a class to establish norms and expectations for conversation throughout the unit.</p>

11. Differentiation- This lesson involves a mix of small group and large group activities to accommodate student comfort levels. Because students get to set their own norms and expectations, they can have influence on the standards, and all students will have a sense of ownership in the norms and expectation established.

12. Homework- Read for 30 minutes.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Introduction to Refugee Literature</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Day 1</p> <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Slide 1</div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 20%;"> <p>Factual Questions...</p> <p>Who is the narrator? Where are they? What happened to them?</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p style="font-size: small;">KHALED HOSSEINI Illustrated by DAN WILLIAMS</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 20%;"> <p>Inductive Questions...</p> <p>Why did they leave their home? What are they seeking? What symbols did you see in the images?</p> </div> </div> <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Slide 2</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Analytical Questions...</p> <p>What would you do in this position? Why did the author choose to present this story in the form of a letter?</p> </div>
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<h2 style="text-align: center;">Who is a refugee?</h2> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>Merriam-Webster: one that flees; especially a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>United States Legal Definition: a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country because of a 'well-founded fear of persecution' due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>United Nations: someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. . . (and) has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.</p> </div> </div> <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Slide 3</div>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">UNHCR</h2> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: “ the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.”</p> <p>Figures at a glance → https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html</p> </div> <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Slide 4</div>
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<h2 style="text-align: center;">Book Groups:</h2> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; text-align: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">  <p>EXIT WEST MOHSIN HAMID</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">  <p>NEW FALL DOWN Patricia McCormick</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">  <p>the good braider wrey farris</p> </div> </div> <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Slide 5</div>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Class Norms and Expectations</h2> <p>How can we make our classroom a safe space for tough talks?</p> <p>What standards can we set for our conversations in order to keep every engaged, accountable, and respectful?</p> <div style="text-align: right;"> <p>TURN and TALK</p> <p>LOOK at your partner</p> <p>LISTEN to their words</p> <p>SPEAK so only your partner can hear</p> <p>TURN back to the front when done</p> <p>WAIT quietly</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Slide 6</div>
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Where are refugees?

Refuge in the Valley →
<https://www.virginiahumanities.org/events/refuge-in-the-valley/>

Slide 7

Lesson 2

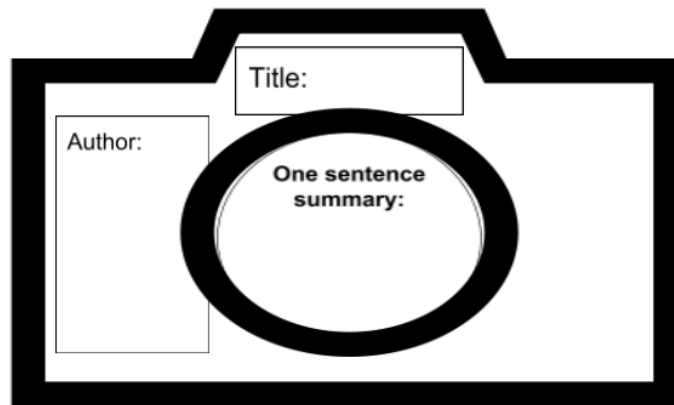
1. Lesson Preparation- Students must have done reading in order to participate in activities for the day. 15 minutes of reading time at the start of class will allow for the teacher to see student progress with texts.
2. Topic- A lesson to develop foundational knowledge for the conflicts and struggles presented in texts.
3. Content Overview- Key concepts throughout this lesson will be organizing information presented in reading so far, exploring personal narratives, and working with reputable sources to find factual information and cite using MLA format.
4. SOL's- 9th grade English class
 - 9.4a: Identify author's main idea and purpose.
 - 9.4b: Summarize text relating supporting details.
 - 9.4i: Explain the influence of historical context on the form, style, and point of view of a written work.
 - 9.4m: Use reading strategies to monitor comprehension throughout the reading process.
 - 9.5b: Summarize text relating supporting details.
 - 9.8a: Use technology as a tool for research to organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
 - 9.8c: Find, evaluate, and select appropriate sources to access information and answer questions.
 - 9.8d: Verify the validity and accuracy of all information.
 - 9.8g: Cite sources of information using a standard method of documentation such as that of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA).
5. Instructional Objectives-
 - a. Understanding: 7 and 8
 - b. Know: 1
 - c. Do: 4
6. Assessment Plan-
 - a. Formative: turn in conflict worksheet at the end of class so teacher can evaluate sources used, MLA citation, and understanding of conflict.
7. Materials-
 - Student texts
 - "Recap Snapshot" text worksheets
 - Screen and audio for video
 - Writing instrument
 - Chromebook
8. Warm Up- Students will read silently before Community Circle.
9. Closure- Share "Conflict Exploration" sheet with teacher online.
10. Lesson Body and Sequence-

Time (90 min.)	Actions
15 min.	Students will come in, sit with their book groups, and begin silent reading for 15 minutes.
10 min.	Community Circle: What is one memory you have of being 12 years old (roughly 7 th grade)? More time has been allotted for today, since the question requires a longer answer.
15 min.	Working with their groups, but on individual worksheets, students will begin working on their “Recap Snapshot” for their texts. This will help students keep track of and organize information they are getting in their reading. They can reference this sheet as they continue working with their texts.
20 min.	Melody’s Story: view video and discuss. Does anyone have any questions about what we just watched? Who was this video about? Can someone provide a 15-second-summary of what happened in the video? What did you think of the style of the video (animation, music, voiceover, etc.)? What kinds of colors and images were used? How did this impact your understanding of the video? Melody first left home at age 12. How are her experiences different from the ones we discussed during Community Circle? Thinking about what you’ve read so far, is Melody’s story similar to or different from what you’ve read? How so?
25 Min	Tough Talk: Students will meet with their book groups and for small group

	<p>tough talks. Building off of the discussion from Melody's video clip, students will work with their groups to discuss how Melody's story, and the texts they are reading, complicate the ideas of home and growing up that were discussed during the community chats. One student in the group will act as the scribe to write down three big ideas they discussed, two questions they had, and one conclusion from their discussion. Prompting questions will include: In what ways is Melody's story similar or different from the story in your group's text? Thinking about your own experiences growing up, how would those be different if you had to leave home? Or, how have they been different if you have left home? What do you think can make this experience easier or more difficult? Can you find a specific quote from your text in which characters relate to the struggle of leaving home?</p>
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11. Differentiation- Once again, there is a mix of small group and large group discussions, as well as elements of work that can be done as a team (tough talk) or individually (Recap Snapshot). The video about Melody will be played with captions to aid in understanding her words.
12. Homework- Read 30 minutes.

RECAP SNAPSHOT



Characters: Are there names of any characters? Descriptions of them?

Setting: Where is the story taking place? Are there multiple settings?

Literary Devices: Have you seen any examples of literary devices at work?

Predictions: What could happen next?

Questions: What is happening? Why is it happening?

Lesson 3

1. Lesson Preparation- Pictures should be printed and hung around the room prior to class time for gallery walk.
 2. Topic- A lesson to build on knowledge and skills.
 3. Content Overview- Key concepts throughout this lesson will be analyzing new media and examine literary devices at work in literature.
 4. SOL's- 9th grade English class
- 9.2a: Analyze and interpret special effects used in media messages including television, film, and Internet.
- 9.4d: Use literary terms in describing and analyzing selections.
5. Instructional Objectives-
 - a. Understanding: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6
 - b. Do: 1, 3
 6. Assessment Plan-
 - a. Formative: Check-in quiz to not only see if students are reading, but what they are retaining, and to gauge their comfort/discomfort.
 7. Materials-
 - Student texts
 - Printed photos
 - Writing instrument
 - Chromebooks
 - Check-In quizzes
 - Literary Device Assignment
 8. Warm Up- Students will take seats and complete a “Text Check-In”. They can have as much time as needed.
 9. Closure- None.
 10. Lesson Body and Sequence-

Time (90 min.)	Actions
20 min.	“Text Check-In” quizzes will be distributed. It should take students roughly 20 minutes. Students who finish early can read silently. Students who need extra time can either continue working at their seats or sit in the hallway to finish. They may join the gallery walk activity upon their return.

35 min.	Book groups will be split into two so that students have smaller groups to travel the room with. There will be 6 groups total, for the six stations of the gallery walk. One student in each group will need to bring their Chromebook around with the group. Each station will have a photo from Joel Bergner's Syrian art initiative with 3 accompanying questions. The questions will be found in a Google form for which the link will be posted at the station. As a group, students will respond to the questions for each question. They will have 5 minutes at each station.
10 min.	Teacher reads Bergen's "Transforming Lives Through Public Art" project description. Class debriefs images: What images stuck with you? Did anything surprise you about the images? Why or why not? What do you think about this project? Can art influence our world? Why or why not?
5 min.	Sheets are passed around to groups to introduce the mini-project which is an in-class group project. Working with their small groups from the gallery walk, students will pick one literary device to find evidence of in their work. Each group must have a different device, and devices will be given on a first-come, first-serve basis. Options for <i>The Good Braider</i> : first person perspective, symbolism Options for <i>Never Fall Down</i> : simile, dialect Options for <i>Refugee</i> : omniscient narrator, foreshadowing
20 min	Students will have the remaining class time to workshop an in-class project.

	They can look through their texts for evidence of a literary device that they would like to present on, raise their hands, and have the teacher come approve or deny their choice (based on if that device has been taken yet or not).
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11. Differentiation- Flexible time plan for the reading quiz. Small groups for gallery walk and literary device project. Project is done mostly in class (besides finding in-text examples at home), so no need for outside technology or coordination.
12. Homework- Locate examples of literary devices in text.

Text Check-In: You may use your text for this check-in.

1. What chapter have you read through?
2. Summarize what you have read so far in one paragraph (at least 4 sentences).
3. Based on what you have read so far, make one prediction for what will happen next in the story.
4. Give one example of a moment from the text that either surprised you, made you sad, or made you smile. Include a quote and a page number, and write at least one sentence about why you reacted in this way.
5. What is one question you have from your reading? (about the plot, characters, events, etc.)

⚡ Mini-Project: It's LIT(erary devices) ⚡

Working with your group from the gallery walk, you will complete the following mini-project in class:

1. Of the options below, select ONE literary device you would like to explore in your text and approve choice with teacher (first come, first serve).
2. Using your Chromebooks, create an online presentation (PowerPoint, Google slides, Prezi, etc.)
3. Work as a group to put the following into your presentation:
 - a. Define your literary device
 - b. Find at least 2 examples of the device in the text (include page numbers!) and 1 example of the device in another text (book, movie clip, song lyric, poem, etc.)
 - c. Explain how the device works in your examples (how does it change your text? What does it add to the meaning, or how does it change the meaning?)
4. Present your mini-project to the class in a five-minute presentation that includes all the above information. Not all members have to speak, but all must have a role (changing slides and coordinating technology, reading examples, speaking about slides).
5. Share presentation link with teacher.
6. Act as a respectful and engaged audience member for other groups.

The Good Braider:

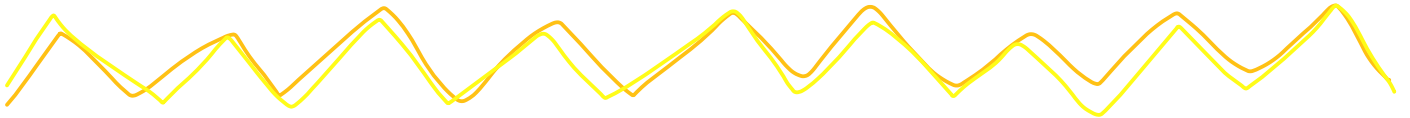
First Person Perspective
OR Symbolism

Never Fall Down:

Simile or Dialect

Refugee:

Omniscient Narrator OR
Foreshadowing



Lesson 4

1. Lesson Preparation- None.
2. Topic- A lesson to build on knowledge and skills.
3. Content Overview- Key concepts throughout this lesson will be increasing group work skills, increasing comfort and recognition of literary devices, and improving presentation and audience skills.
4. SOL's- 9th grade English class
 - 9.1c: Illustrate main ideas through anecdotes and examples.
 - 9.1d: Use grammatically correct language, including vocabulary appropriate to the topic, audience, and purpose.
 - 9.1g: Credit information sources.
 - 9.1i: Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work.
 - 9.4b: Summarize text relating supporting details.
 - 9.4d: Use literary terms in describing and analyzing selections.
 - 9.8f: Credit the sources of quoted, paraphrased, and summarized ideas.
 - 9.8g: Cite sources of information using a standard method of documentation such as that of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA).
5. Instructional Objectives-
 - a. Understanding: 5
 - b. Know: 6
 - c. Do: 3
6. Assessment Plan-
 - a. Formative: Teacher appraisal of presentation; student exit tickets from audience.
7. Materials-
 - Student texts
 - Chromebooks
 - Projector
 - Writing instrument
 - “Active Audience” worksheet/exit ticket
8. Warm Up- Students will go straight into workshop today instead of reading or doing Community Chat in order to have more time to work on their projects.
9. Closure- Finish filling out “Active Audience” sheet which must be turned in to exit the classroom.
10. Lesson Body and Sequence-

Time (90 min.)	Actions
50 min.	Workshop time: students put their information into a presentation of some sort (PowerPoint, Google slides, Prezi, etc.) and prepare for a 5-minute presentation.
40 min.	Student groups present. Each group has 5 minutes, and there are 6 groups. All audience members will be working on a worksheet (“Active Audience”) while groups present. Extra buffer time is included, but if groups go by more quickly, then the extra time at the end can be used for finishing up “Active Audience” sheets which must be given to the teacher as students exit the classroom. “Active Audience” goes into student grades for the project and presentation.

11. *Differentiation*- Students are NOT required to speak during presentation, but each group member must have a role (changing slides, speaking about the slides, pointing to examples in the text, etc.). “Active Audience” sheets will evidence attention and respect paid to peers during presentations.

12. *Homework*- Read 30 minutes.

It's LIT(erary devices) Rubric	
1. Online Presentation	
a. Includes all criteria listed in directions	
b. Shows effort, organization, and creativity in design.	
c. Link is shared with teacher.	
	/4
2. Class Presentation	
a. All group members had a role in the presentation.	
b. Students were mature and rehearsed.	
	/4
3. Audience Behavior	
a. Acted as respectful audience member & turned in completed “Active Audience” sheet.	
	/2
Total:	/10

NAME:
~Active Audience~
<u>Group 1</u>
Device name & definition:
One example of the device:
<u>Group 2</u>
Device name & definition:
One example of the device:
<u>Group 3</u>
Device name & definition:
One example of the device:
<u>Group 4</u>
Device name & definition:
One example of the device:
<u>Group 5</u>
Device name & definition:
One example of the device:

Lesson 5

1. Lesson Preparation- Have links for articles written down on paper and given to groups in order to save class time of searching for articles.
2. Topic- A lesson to build on knowledge and skills.
3. Content Overview- Key concepts throughout this lesson will be working with non-fiction texts.
4. SOL's- 9th grade English class
 - 9.2a: Analyze and interpret special effects used in media messages including television, film, and Internet.
 - 9.4a: Identify author's main idea and purpose.
 - 9.4b: Summarize text relating supporting details.
 - 9.4g: Analyze the cultural or social function of a literary text.
 - 9.4i: Explain the influence of historical context on the form, style, and point of view of a written work.
 - 9.5a: Recognize and author's intended purpose for writing and identify the main idea.
 - 9.5b: Summarize text relating supporting details.
 - 9.8a: Use technology as a tool for research to organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
 - 9.8f: Credit the sources of quoted, paraphrased, and summarized ideas.
5. Instructional Objectives-
 - a. Understanding: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8
 - b. Do: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6. Assessment Plan-
 - a. Formative: Text check-in to see where students are with their books, and how they feel about them.
7. Materials-
 - Links to articles for each group
 - "Text Check-In" worksheets printed
 - "Article Exploration" Google documents
 - Earbuds/headphones
 - Writing instrument
 - Choice project assignment sheet
 - Choice project rubric
 - Sticky notes
8. Warm Up- Students will complete "Text Check-In" upon arrival.
9. Closure- Students will complete a "Stop Light Check" on their way out of the room.
10. Lesson Body and Sequence-

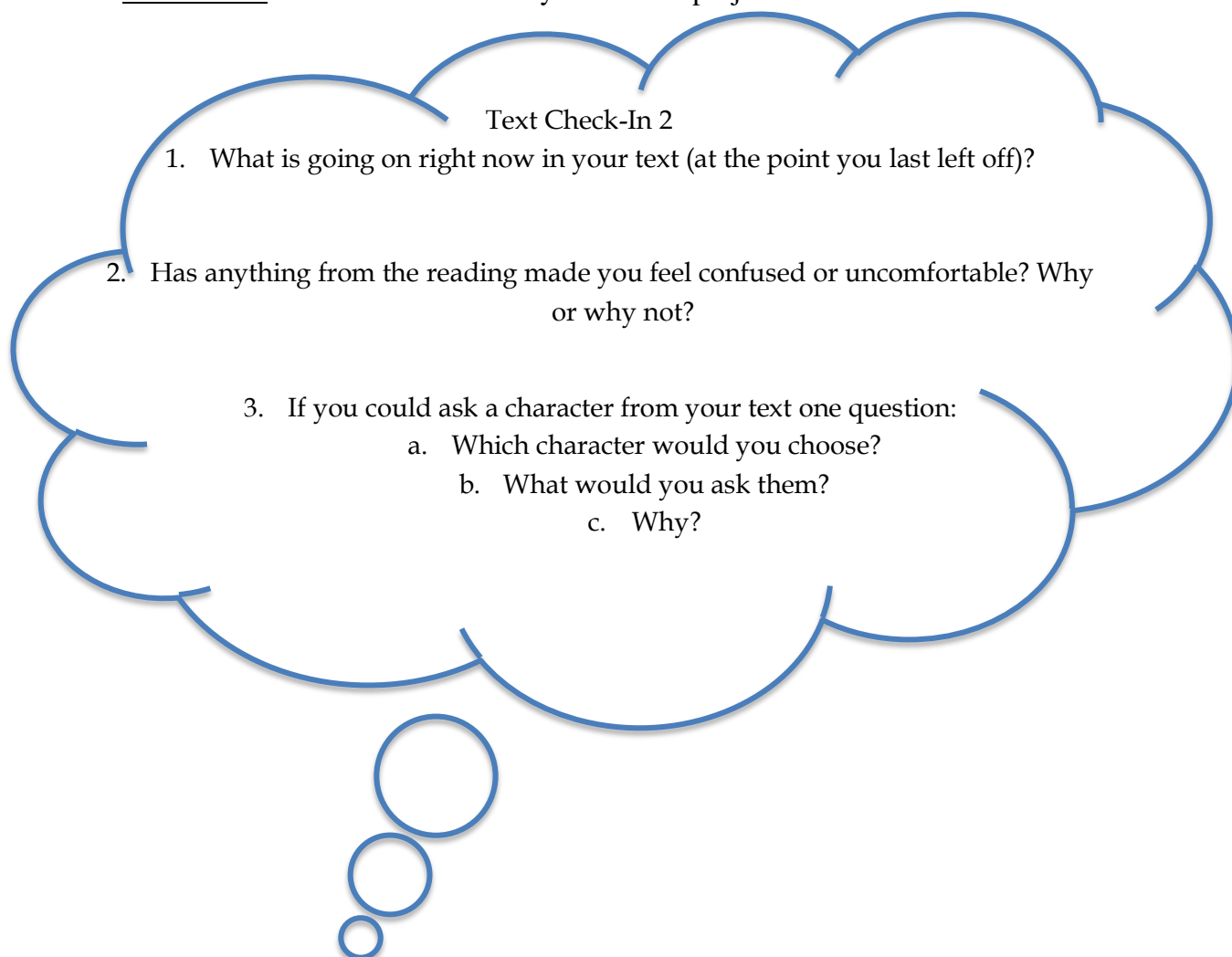
Time (90 min.)	Actions
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10 min.	<p>“Text Check-In” will be distributed. This check-in will only have 3 questions to track student progress and comfort with texts (not for answering questions on plot). It should take students 10 minutes or less, but students who need more time may continue working at their desks and join the class later, or work in the hallway and join the class later.</p>
10 min.	<p>We will not have had Community Chat for several classes, so it is important to have a brief community catch-up time. This question will just be a fun one to get everyone feeling comfortable and get some energy out before we begin working. Community Chat question: If you could eat one food, and only one food, every day of your life, what food would you pick and why?</p>
30 min.	<p>Each group will have a paper on their table that lists the links for different non-fiction texts/media. Using their Chromebooks, students will need to look up the links and respond to questions in the “Text Exploration” Google document. The document must have all group member names and all group members must contribute to the document, so every student should be on their Chromebook. The link to the group Google document must be shared with teacher by the end of work time. Groups may choose to break down into smaller groups to split up the texts.</p> <p>Groups and links: <i>Refugee:</i> 1. newsela.com/read/refugee-history/id/13183/. 2. www.theatlantic.com/video/index/54</p>

	<p>1620/refuge-syrian-refugee-short-film-movie-matt-firpo/.</p> <p><i>The Good Braider:</i></p> <p>1. www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2017/6/5953bd744/in-maine-resettled-sudanese-refugee-gives-back-to-the-community-that-gave.html.</p> <p>2. www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5370972.</p> <p><i>Never Fall Down:</i></p> <p>1. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crv9Bre_T2g</p> <p>2. www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/watch-the-1000-year-old-dance-tradition-nearly-killed-by-the-khmer-rouge</p>
20 min.	<p>Tough talk as a whole group: Can each group give a brief summary of their sources? How did the nonfiction texts add to your understanding of your text? Did these sources detract from your understanding in any way, or maybe just complicate it with more perspectives? Which texts do you prefer reading and why? What are the benefits and drawbacks of fiction and nonfiction sources? How did each source make you feel? In what ways is this similar to or different from your text?</p>
15 min.	<p>Teacher will introduce the summative project with an assignment sheet for the “Choice Project” listing the three options. Teacher will also present the rubric for the projects and distribute this to the class.</p>
5 Min	<p>Teacher will distribute sticky notes to students for a “Stop Light Check” exit activity. Students will need to have their name on the sticky note which they will stick on the board at either</p>

	<p>the red, yellow, or green part of a stop light image. The color indicates their comfort with the project. If a student is feeling yellow or red, they must include a point of confusion or question on their sticky note. Students will simply stick their sticky note on the board on their way out of the classroom.</p>
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11. *Differentiation*- “Text Check-In” work time is flexible based on student needs. The “Text Exploration” can be done with the whole book group, or in smaller subgroups. It also has multimodal elements for different groups. Students get a choice in their final projects, and the sticky note is a private way of addressing any concerns with the project that the teacher can address one-on-one. There will be a large amount of in-class work time for the projects which should alleviate some of the stress students feel about projects.
12. *Homework*- Finish text if not already done. Pick project.





TEXT EXPLORATION



<p>Title:</p> <p>Source:</p> <p>Summary:</p>	<p>Relation to book group text:</p>
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1 quote from book group text:
 1 quote from new text:
 Relationship between the quotes (How do they help us understand one another? What can they tell us about history and society? etc.):

<p>Title:</p> <p>Source:</p> <p>Summary:</p>	<p>Relation to book group text:</p>
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1 quote from book group text:
 1 quote from new text:
 Relationship between the quotes (How do they help us understand one another? What can they tell us about history and society? etc.):

Choice Project



Option 1: More than Meets the Eye

Mask & Essay

1. Select a character from your text. Using quotes from the text, along with your imagination, create one half of a mask that shows their PHYSICAL traits. For the other half of the mask, use quotes from the texts to inspire images that visually represent your selected character's IDENTITY and INTERNAL traits. Both sides of the mask must have color. It may be created by hand or online.
2. Write an essay (2 pages minimum, double spaced, TNR 12) in which you:
 - a. Provide the direct quotations that inspired your drawings on both sides of the mask.
 - b. Explain your inspiration for symbols and images that represent the character's identity/internal traits.
 - c. Discuss why you chose this character.



Option 2: Snapshot Map

Map & Essay

1. Create a "map" that takes viewers through points of the plot that are significant to your text. There must be a mix of geographic locations (in this location, x happened), as well as emotional or climatic locations (on page x, the characters were here and this happened). There must be at
 - a. An image or symbol that represents it.
 - b. A quote from the text that explains the location.
 - c. At least 150 words about why this location is important.
2. The map can be created online or on paper. It must include color. It does not need to take a formal "map" format; it may take the form of a slide (or other) presentation, as long as the locations are ordered somehow, organized, and explained. There must still be 5 locations, 150 words minimum per location, so at least 750 words total.



Option 3: Who? Me.

Poem & Essay

1. Either select OR write your own original poem that encapsulates the meaning of the term "identity". Think about the following when writing or selecting a poem: Who are you? Why? What influences and experiences have helped define your identity? How so? Is your identity fixed or is it fluid? Could it change in the future or is it a constant?
2. Write an essay (2 pages minimum, double spaced, TNR 12) in which you discuss:
 - a. Why you chose a certain poem OR why you wrote your own.
 - b. What identity means to you, with quotes from the poem that show how it supports your ideas.
 - c. How the poem's concept of identity could be applied to one character from your text.
3. Include an MLA citation for the selected poem, if it is not your own.

	4	3	2	1-0	Score
Project	Meets/exceeds project requirements. Extra effort evident in examples.	Meets project requirements. All pieces of project present.	Does not meet project requirements. One or two pieces of project missing or incomplete.	Does not meet project requirements. Many pieces of project missing or incomplete.	
Essay	Meets/exceeds essay expectations. Explanations are in-depth and well thought-out.	Meets essay expectations. Explanations are clear and make sense.	Meets essay expectations but may have one or two pieces of essay missing or incomplete.	Does not meet essay requirements. Many pieces of essay missing or incomplete.	
Organization	Project has clear organization, is easy to follow, & attractive.	Project is organized, can be followed with assistance, & attractive.	Project is not well organized and requires assistance to be followed.	Project is sloppy and does not make sense.	
Mechanics	Essay has clear organization and few mechanical errors.	Essay has clear organization, but several mechanical errors.	Essay is not well organized. Mechanical errors detract from understanding.	Essay is confusing and has too many mechanical errors to be fully understood.	
Presentation	Presentation is well-rehearsed, engages audience.	Presentation shows preparation, audience is engaged most of the time.	Presenter could use more preparation, struggles to hold audience attention.	Presenter is unprepared, little or no effort to engage audience.	
Creativity	Project and essay show great creativity and effort in design, presentation, and/or composition.	Project and essay show creativity and effort in design, presentation, and/or composition.	Project and essay show some creativity and effort in design, presentation, and/or composition.	Project and essay show a lack of creativity and effort in design, presentation, and/or composition.	

Choice Project Rubric

Comments:

Lesson 6

1. Lesson Preparation- Read the sticky notes from the “Stop Light Check” and gauge student comfort with the assignment. Look for common concerns or questions that need to be addressed. Be prepared to meet with students one-on-one to go over their questions, concerns, and/or confusion.
 2. Topic- A lesson to build on skills and knowledge.
 3. Content Overview- Key concepts throughout this lesson will be connecting to seemingly distant narratives and exploring how texts shape our understandings of ourselves and the world.
 4. SOL's- 9th grade English class
- 9.2a: Analyze and interpret special effects used in media messages including television, film, and Internet.
- 9.4a: Identify author’s main idea and purpose.
- 9.4b: Summarize text relating supporting details.
5. Instructional Objectives-
 - a. Understanding: 1, 2, 6, 8
 - b. Do: 1, 2, 3, 5
 6. Assessment Plan-
 - a. None.
 7. Materials-
 - Projector
 - Discussion questions
 - Chromebooks
 8. Warm Up- Students will participate in Community Chat which will require them to know which project they will pursue.
 9. Closure- None.
 10. Lesson Body and Sequence-

Time (90 min.)	Actions
5 min.	Community Circle: Students will say their book and what project they have decided to do. Teacher records.
20 min.	As a class, we will view the short film, <i>Home</i> .
40 min.	Following the video viewing, students will move chairs to make a circle. The teacher will facilitate a Socratic-style

seminar. It will not require outside preparation or strict participation, rather it should flow as a natural conversation between students about the texts they read and the film we all viewed. Questions will be posed by the teacher and projected on the board, but the teacher may also ask follow-up questions not listed. There will be three themes for the questions: home, identity, and responsibility. Questions include:

The title of the short film is *Home*. We have talked about what home means to us, and how that can be different for different people. What is the importance of having a home? Why do you think this is the title of the film?

What do you think home means for a refugee? Thinking about your text, how is the story in the film similar to or different from your story? What does home mean in your book?

Describe yourself in three words.

What sorts of things make up your identity, or sense of who you are?

Think about a main character in your text. Can you describe them to the class using three words? How do you think they would describe themselves?

What identities do you think they see in themselves? What has shaped their identity and sense of self? How does the author give the reader ideas about the protagonists? Do they have a certain style of writing, certain literary tools they use, specific images or thoughts they provide? How does the author shape your understanding of the characters?

Without giving too many spoilers, tell us where your protagonist(s) end up. Explain a bit about how they get there (modes of transportation, time it takes,

	<p>etc.) Does anyone help them along their journey? In what ways? What would you do in their position? What would you do if you were in this text and met the protagonist(s)? Whose responsibility is it to help them? Why? What do you think the author of your text is saying about the refugee crisis? Do they think anything can be done about it? How so, or why not? What in the text makes you think this?</p>
25 min	Project workshop time.

11. Differentiation- The film will be shown with captions to aid in understanding. Students are not required to participate in the seminar/discussion, but they must exercise active listening techniques. Workshop time will give students time to get their projects going, and to get questions answered from teacher for any clarifications prior to/while beginning projects.
12. Homework- Work on project.

Lesson 7

1. Lesson Preparation- Print lyrics to Alicia Keys' "Hallelujah" to distribute.
 2. Topic- A lesson to build on skills and knowledge.
 3. Content Overview- Key concepts throughout this lesson will be continuing to explore different media forms as texts and continuing to work on projects.
 4. SOL's- 9th grade English class
- 9.1c: Illustrate main ideas through anecdotes and examples.
- 9.2a: Analyze and interpret special effects used in media messages including television, film, and Internet.
5. Instructional Objectives-
 - a. Understanding: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8
 - b. Do: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 6. Assessment Plan-
 - a. None.
 7. Materials-
 - Chromebooks
 - Paper
 - Coloring supplies (markers, colored pencils, crayons)
 - Projector
 8. Warm Up- None.
 9. Closure- Sign up for presentation slots.
 10. Lesson Body and Sequence-

Time (90 min.)	Actions
30 min.	In lieu of a warm-up or community chat, class will watch Alicia Keys' "Let Me In" video which features her song "Hallelujah." Following the video, we will have a whole class discussion using the following questions: Who did we see in this video? Describe the people. Where was the first family? Where was the second family? Did anyone pick up on what was said over the radio? What happened over the course of the video? Looking at the lyrics of the song (pulled up on screen), how do you

	<p>think this relates to the video? What is the video trying to say? How do you know? In what ways did this video appeal to our logos, pathos, or ethos? Did you see any literary devices at work? If so, point to moments in the video or lyrics. Do you think this video was effective? Why or why not?</p>
60 min.	<p>Project workshop (paper and coloring supplies available for students who need it, other students can use their Chromebooks).</p>

11. Differentiation- The music video will be played with captions, and the lyrics to the song will also be printed and handed out. Lots of workshop time, during which teacher circulates to aid students and answer questions. Supplies provided for students who choose to use them.
12. Homework- Work on project.

Lessons 8 and 9

The last two lessons in this unit are for the presentation of projects. During the previous lesson, students will have signed up for one presentation slot on either “Lesson 8” day or “Lesson 9” day. Each day will have between 10 and 12 slots depending on the size of the class. Presentations must be between 4 and 6 minutes and will be followed by a brief Q&A session. I am including buffer time for transfer between presentations. Because of the nature of these two days, one lesson plan is included below which suffices for both days.

1. Lesson Preparation- Students will have signed up for presentation slots. Desks should be arranged so that students can all face the same direction with little difficulty, but so that students are still seated with their book groups.
2. Topic- A lesson to apply knowledge and skills.
3. Content Overview- Key concepts throughout this lesson will be practicing presentation and audience skills.
4. SOL 's- 9th grade English class

9.1b: Use relevant details to support main ideas.

9.1c: Illustrate main ideas through anecdotes and examples.

9.1d: Use grammatically correct language, including vocabulary appropriate to the topic, audience, and purpose.

9.1g: Credit information sources.

9.1h: Give impromptu responses to questions about presentation.

9.8a: Use technology as a tool for research to organize, evaluate, and communicate information.

9.8c: Find, evaluate, and select appropriate sources to access information and answer questions.

9.8d: Verify the validity and accuracy of all information.

9.8f: Credit the sources of quoted, paraphrased, and summarize ideas.

9.8g: Cite sources of information using a standard method of documentation such as that of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA).

5. Instructional Objectives-

- a. Understanding: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8,
- b. Do: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

6. Assessment Plan-

- a. Formative: Teacher appraisal of group questions. Student exit tickets.
- b. Summative: Teacher appraisal of project and presentation.

7. Materials-

- Student texts
- Chromebooks
- Projector
- Writing instrument
- Sticky notes

8. Warm Up- None.

9. Closure- Sticky note exit tickets.

10. Lesson Body and Sequence-

Time (90 min.)	Actions
85 min.	<p>On the first day of presentations, the teacher will explain the process: students will give their presentation based on the outlined requirements in the initial assignment. Then, they will respond to one question from each of the student groups, including their own. Book groups in the audience will have 1 minute after the presentation to decide on a question. The questions may be factual, inductive, or analytical. An example of a factual question for the presentation would be “Can you please tell us what mode of transportation Isabel’s family used to leave Cuba?”; an example of an inductive question is “Why is Viola’s mother so angry that she is with Andrew?”; an example of an analytical question is “Why did you decide to map Arn Chorn-Pond’s journey the way that you did?” This means each presenter will answer 3 questions. PowerPoint slide from day 1 will be shown to remind students of factual, inductive, and analytical questions from <i>Sea Prayer</i>.</p>
5 min.	<p>At the end of class, students will be given a sticky note on which they will put their name, the name of a student whose project they really liked, and one reason they liked the project/presentation so much. They will give their sticky note to the teacher as they exit.</p>

11. Differentiation- All students must present, but it should be a comfortable environment for presenting which is a big reason why student evaluations of peer presentations are not being included.
12. Homework- None.

Additional Titles

In preparation for this project, I explored many different titles that fall under the category of “refugee literature”. Although they were not used in this project, they are still valuable resources for any classroom and can be considered as alternatives to use for a unit of refugee literature.

1. Abdelrazaq, Leila. *Baddawi*. Just World Books, 2015.

Abdelrazaq’s debut graphic novel follows her father’s journey as a Palestinian “baddawi”, or nomad, in the 1960’s and 70’s. After the establishment of Israel, Abdelrazaq’s father became a refugee and grew up in refugee camps. Trying to maintain some semblance of a “normal” life inside the camp brought many challenges which Abdelrazaq depicts in her black-and-white cartoon-like images throughout the novel.

2. Brown, Don. *The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018.

Brown documents the Syrian refugee crisis from 2011 forward in this book. *The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees* is a colorful, non-fiction graphic novel that depicts more than 6 years of struggles for Syrian refugees, along with the challenging, shifting public perceptions of those seeking refuge.

3. Diaz, Alexandra. *The Only Road*. Simon & Schuster, 2017.

When violence from a gang in his hometown hits close to home, Jaime is forced to flee Guatemala with his cousin Ángela. They make the treacherous journey to the United States to live with Jaime’s brother in New Mexico. *The Only Road* is inspired by true events.

4. Hamid, Mohsin. *Exit West*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2017.

Exit West by Mohsin Hamid blends the refugee experience with magical realism. Lovers Saeed and Nadia are forced to flee their unspecified home country, but their unconventional journey requires the use of enchanted doors that take them to Greece, England, and the United States. As two very different individuals trying to process and adapt to their new situations, Saeed and Nadia's love is tested as their senses of home, identity, and self are constantly threatened.

5. Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2013.

The Kite Runner follows the life of Amir who was born, and spent much of his youth, in Kabul, Afghanistan, before fleeing to the United States with his father during government changes in the 1980's. In order to clear his conscience of guilt that has been lurking since his childhood, Amir returns to Afghanistan in 2000, finding many things far different from when he left as he works to gain closure.

6. Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2013.

Lai's own experiences as a refugee fleeing Vietnam and ending up in Alabama are mirrored by the experiences of Hà, the 10-year-old protagonist of her story. Free verse is used to follow Hà's life with a child's perspective on the complex, challenging experiences faced by herself and her family both in Vietnam and in the United States.

7. Leatherdale, Mary Beth, and Eleanor Shakespeare. *Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees*. Annick Press, Limited, 2017.

Stormy Seas contains five true stories of individuals seeking refuge by boat or ship. Germany, Vietnam, Cuba, Afghanistan, and the Ivory Coast are all represented as the young people in very different times and circumstances flee their homelands in search of safety and a

future. The book combines fact boxes, timelines, and sidebars with text to provide extra resources and information to readers.

8. Lee, Sungju, and Susan McClelland. *Every Falling Star: The True Story of How I Survived and Escaped North Korea*. ABRAMS, 2017.

Sungju Lee's story starts with his family living a very comfortable life in Pyongyang, but quickly turns dark as they are exiled and he is abandoned, left to fend for himself. Lee comes to the harsh realization that the life he had known was a lie, and he turns to crime in order to survive. While Lee is able to endure in extremely challenging conditions and eventually escape, his experiences are a reminder of those who are left behind in similar situations.

9. Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *The Refugees*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2018.

The Refugees is a collection of short stories about people's experiences over twenty years, spanning the United States and Vietnam. There are eight stories included in the text. Each one is different, with focuses ranging from aging and time, to gender, relationships, cultural clashes, and more.

10. Park, Linda Sue. *A Long Walk to Water*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.

A Long Walk to Water alternates between the narratives of an 11-year-old girl named Nya living in Sudan and 2008, and an 11-year-old boy named Salva also from Sudan, but in 1985. Salva's section is based on Park's real interviews with Salva Dut who was a "lost boy" of Sudan and traveled across Africa by foot in search of refuge. Nya and Salva's lives are interconnected by the end of the novel, but both sections chronicle struggles and obstacles faced by two young people with inspiring dedication and optimism in difficult circumstances.

11. Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *The Red Pencil*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2015.

Free verse is accompanied by beautiful illustration in the margins of *The Red Pencil*. The plot follows Amira, whose village is attacked and destroyed, forcing her to flee on foot in search of safety. In a refugee camp, she struggles keep hope until she receives a red pencil which reminds her of the possibilities the future holds.

12. Rawlence, Ben. *City of Thorns: Nine Lives in the World's Largest Refugee Camp*.

Picador, 2017.

After working for the Human Rights Watch in Dadaab, the largest refugee camp in the world located at the border of Kenya and Somalia, Rawlence was inspired to share the diverse stories of some of the individuals trying to thrive in extremely limiting circumstances. His book focuses on nine people with very different stories and experiences, from their lives before Dadaab, how they got there, how their lives are in the camp, and the dreams they have of futures beyond Dadaab's walls and restraints.

13. Sepetys, Ruta. *Salt to the Sea*. Penguin Books, 2017.

Salt to the Sea follows the narratives of Alfred, Joana, Emilia, and Florian who are escaping Prussia at the end of World War II. They have diverse circumstances and perspectives, but they are all aboard the *Wilhelm Gustloff*. The ship is hit while carrying roughly 10,000 people, including refugees, and all the characters must fight for survival in the midst of this disaster.

14. Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*. Scholastic, 2007.

Tan's graphic novel contains no words, but still conveys an important story of an immigrant in a world that is similar to reality, though it differs in some ways. The man pictured in the story leaves home in search of a job to support his family and readers follow on his journey. Tan hopes the story will stir empathy in readers.

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