

## Words through the Eyes of the Space

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### INTRODUCTION

Literature is often not immediately accessible to my students. They seem to look at a book and see an ocean of words rather than a story. The pages have too many letters on them; the ideas come too slowly; the pictures do not form in their heads. As English teachers, we constantly search for ways to convince our students that reading is feasible, if not enjoyable. Forcing students to read, without showing them the pleasure involved, only accomplishes limited goals. This form of reading will increase vocabulary, will aid in test scores, and will generally help to clarify thoughts. What is equally, if not more, important than the benefits gained from forced reading is teaching students to become lifelong learners. Students who do not learn that reading is something they can choose to do because they *want* to will rarely continue actively teaching themselves. Cultivating a love of reading in all of my students is one of my primary aims in creating curricula.

Most of my students are not accustomed to reading, and truly do not know how to approach a story or book. They are literate in the sense that they know how to pronounce the word and often know its meaning, but they do not have the ability to read sentences and paragraphs and find meaning. However, when you instruct students to look at one specific aspect of what they are reading, they are usually more able to access information. Many teachers know this technique and use it, causing students to successfully understand text, but the redundancy of lessons from year to year can cause students to revolt further against reading. My goal in this curriculum unit is to find the point where teaching reading for pleasure and reading for understanding intersect.

I believe that reading pleasure is increased when the reading and focus relate to a person's life. All humans inhabit space. We each sleep somewhere. Most of us have houses or apartments that we can choose and arrange as we desire. Many of my students desire their own spaces, either because theirs is temporary or because they want to be adults. This unit will use space as the focal point for reading because all of my students are able to relate to space in some way.

Not only can all students relate to space, space has significance in much of literature. Authors do not choose where to house their characters with a blind eye. Some books use space to represent various emotions and ideas, while others use space to reflect the setting. Focusing on space will give my students the opportunity to relate to the readings and to have a lens with which they can see and understand different times and places.

Furthermore, when a book is read out of context, much understanding is lost. Without the knowledge of the context, the reader can react to hypothetical implications

that exist only because of the reader's impressions, biases, and current cultural context. Part of teaching literature is showing students how to shed their current cultural context and become immersed in another world. I tell my students that reading a book allows them to see the world through someone else's eyes. By experiencing this new vision, they are able to refine their own because they have increased their awareness of the way life is perceived. Architecture will provide the entry point into this new way of seeing life. This exploration should lead into a general understanding of the events, progressions, and way of life of the time we are studying.

I believe that using architecture as the focal point of the grading period will enable students to have a wider understanding of the literature that we read. Weaving an atypical theme throughout the grading period will allow my students to see connections and cause-and-effect relationships that they may not have discovered otherwise. Most importantly, the study of architecture within the sphere of literature will provide the cultural context that is so essential to comprehension, and provide it in a unique way that will eventually enable my students to describe a cultural context without a teacher simply handing them the context in a forty-minute lecture. This ability to discern the context of information will be invaluable to them in all of their academic pursuits.

## **UNIT BACKGROUND**

During this six-week unit, students will look at various types of literature with a focus on space. We will use excerpts from books, short stories, and a poem. Students will be responsible for writing about their space, completing small daily assignments, and working with a partner on a large project.

In order to use architecture as the entry to understanding the context of a piece of literature, I will begin the year with a mini-unit on architecture and how it can be indicative of culture. During this unit we will explore the meaning of culture, how it affects our perceptions, beliefs, and judgments, and the role it plays in both fiction and non-fiction. We will discuss how architecture can aid in understanding culture. We will venture on two field trips that should spark and maintain excitement for the unit.

After the background is set, I will begin the literary piece of the unit by discussing imagery of architecture and place. I will begin this by having my students look at a Frida Kahlo painting and write down all of the details that they find. They will then respond to the painting by writing down adjectives, and finally will spin these adjectives into a poem. This should show them that the visual observation alone is powerful enough to create passion. We will then turn to various short pieces, excerpts and poetry. During this time we will discuss the building of cities and the cultural implications of their development. We will then delve into the texts and search for the architectural and spatial references, looking for symbolism and attempting to distinguish reality from portrayal.

The unit will culminate in a research project and presentation on architecture from a specific time period and an analysis of how an understanding of culture can be obtained by studying architecture. This project will provide my students with the opportunity to use library resources, and to experiment with multimedia such as PowerPoint, slides, overheads, and videos.

The skills taught and practiced in this unit will include identifying symbolism, understanding its use, making inferences and judgments based on the imagery in text, conducting research, and writing original pieces that contain architectural symbolism. My goal is to cause my students to be more sensitive to their surroundings and the various ways to describe them, and to understand that literature is not created in a vacuum, but is both reflective of culture and influential within culture.

### **MINI UNIT**

I plan on using overhead transparencies and LCD projections to bring the students pictures of houses, both inside and out, print and paint. This unit will last about a week. It will begin with a lecture on American architecture and how it has changed through the last 150 years. We will break into discussion groups and ask why those changes might have happened. I will present my students with a list of characteristics of space and have them deduce time periods and lives for the people who live in the space. Students will be asked to bring in a photograph of space that is important to them and describe how it reflects a certain culture.

This type of beginning is important because it provides a level field from which to progress. There is a common vocabulary needed to accurately discuss space, and it is important that the students be given this vocabulary at the beginning of the unit so that they do not feel frustrated by it during the unit. In addition to vocabulary, some students will have a limited range of experience with houses and their surroundings. Before it is possible to make judgments about how space reflects culture, the students need to have an understanding about what types of space exist.

While teaching students about architecture and space during this time, students also need to be taught how to question appropriately. The degree to which this teaching is necessary depends entirely on the composition of the class. A class that is accustomed to asking “why” and “how” will need only to practice, but some students will need to be directly taught that these questions are valuable and essential to studying culture and literature. Students should be questioning throughout this entire unit: questioning the authors’ diction and their own, questioning setting and characters’ relation to setting, questioning organization and description. In order for the students to do this with proficiency, they will need to be guided through questioning at the very beginning of the unit. Giving them time to speculate on the changes in architecture and the differences in architecture between cultures will provide them with the initial foundation they need to be successful in analyzing throughout this unit.

## **PAINTING PROJECT: AN INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING SPACE**

In order to begin teaching about space, students need to see things in a different way than they are accustomed. For example, looking at a house as a whole and seeing simply “house” will not produce the type of detail that provides important information. They need to look at the frame of the house, the roofline, the windows, the siding, the porches, and the foundation if they are going to learn about the time the house was built, and thereby, the culture in which the house was built. It is also important to know how many inhabitants the house had in order to tell how people lived together, how much space they required, and how that impacted them. Young adults often miss the details, looking only at the surface and at the whole. One method to break them of this habit is to take a whole, fragment it, and have students look at the pieces.

I am choosing to use Frida Kahlo for this project, mainly because another teacher at my school has been using her paintings for years and finds them to be very effective for this project. Kahlo paintings are often highly complex and lend themselves to being broken up and studied. Any painting with complex color or action (preferably both) will be equally suitable.

The idea is to take a picture and cut it up, giving each student, or group of students, one piece. An effective method of doing this is to put the various pieces on transparencies so that the entire class can see them during discussion. The students respond to their piece, writing about what is happening in the scene. They will then have to put the pieces together to tell a story, before looking at the intact painting. The idea is to force students to focus on the details by only giving them details. They can then start to see how these fit together into a whole. Training students to look at pieces of wholes to find detail will help them increase their descriptive ability in writing. This type of exercise is simple and enjoyable, and will therefore help spark their interest in class.

I will have my students look at their initial reactions to their piece of the painting and have them blend the adjectives they record together to form a poem about the piece. This poem will serve as the first piece with which to study diction. My students will look at synonyms for their adjectives, identify the connotations and edit accordingly.

## **LITERATURE**

The readings we look at will all be relatively short pieces. They each will serve two purposes. The first is showing students how space affects a reader. The second is to serve as a model for the students from which to create original writing. Students will study the piece, write an original piece modeling something from the story, and write an analysis of their work for each section of this unit.

### *The Hiding Place*

Corrie Ten Boom's *The Hiding Place* is an autobiography that tells the story of a young girl growing up in Holland whose family hid Jewish people from the Nazis. In this story, space is less reflective of culture than in some of the other pieces, but space is nonetheless intensely important in the account. Here, the descriptions are not used to represent or tell a story as they might be in a fictional piece. Instead, space is important in this woman's life because of how it was used. Ten Boom's family used a secret room to house Jewish people. The book has an illustration of the floor plan of the house and a written description in the text of its layout. It shows how space was used in this house, as well as the cramped space given to those in hiding (Ten Boom, Introduction). Ten Boom's intention in including the floor plan was not to show the culture of the time, but rather the factual reality of how the people in her house lived.

We will discuss how the space that the author inhabits affects her life and understanding. The students will consider the author's treatment of her town as well as the house itself. They will look at the written description of the house and compare it to the floor plan. My students will then examine their own space and will write descriptions of their homes and depict how their surroundings have affected them. They will first create a floor plan of their home, and then they will create a written portrayal that reflects the floor plan. Finally, they will speculate about how living in their space has affected them and how they see and understand the world.

### *Good*

The book *Good* contains a short story called "Getting it Straight" by Gwendolyn Scott that describes space in Houston. This will be the first of the short pieces we look at. The narrator discusses her personal life in the context of coming to Houston and dealing with her surroundings. She carefully describes the buildings that she sees and how they affect her. She writes,

Finally (I guess I was nine or ten), my sisters and I went to visit Aunt Agnes on Altoona Street. I didn't want the place to be beautiful, grand. I didn't want to be impressed with Altoona Street, but I was disappointed when I wasn't. The house had two bedrooms, a living room, a tiny kitchen with a table too small for all of us to sit around at one time, a dining room with plastic still on the chair bottoms, and a back door with a screen that sagged in places. It was smaller than our house! The puny backyard was bordered on one side by the garage and on the other side by the neighbor's garage, so there was the feeling of being walled in. A clothesline stretched almost the whole way across; I felt as though I were in an outdoor closet. The house sat so close to the street that the front yard was all but nonexistent. A three-foot high wire fence separated the yard from the sidewalk. (41)

She interweaves these descriptions with discussions about her family and herself. The images of Houston are closely tied with her great dislike of the city. She describes her move away from the city, how she finds she appreciates Houston, and finally returns.

It surprised us how often we went back into Houston. Sometimes we came into the city just for dinner; the four restaurants in Lake Jackson at the time fried everything. The town also had no theatres nor museums, and high school football is not one of my passions. Finally—four years, three apartments and a house, and two babies later—we moved back, but we stuck to the suburbs this time: Missouri City. (44)

At the close of the story she discusses how she has come to terms with the look of Houston and is coming to terms with herself.

If the ultimate luxury is peace, then the next is choice, and Houston's proximity gives me that. Sometimes when I have the urge to be in the mix of things, I will go downtown, usually to shop for fabric. The little craftsy stores in Missouri City, with their wall-hanging straw hats and ceramic pigs, don't qualify as real stores. When I go downtown, I get an injection of the urgency and possibility of this world. The ebb and flow of the people at the lights and the unceasing stream of cars suggest a sense of purpose, a reason for the constant activity. Still, even though I need to remember that sometimes, I will always carry the never-healed wound of rejection from long ago. Maybe we all need to know that we are not invincible, but we don't have to forgive the messenger. (45)

After reading and discussing this story, my students will describe their own experiences of Houston, and comment on how the look of the city affects them. They will also compare the descriptions in this story to their own perceptions of Houston. Finally, they will look at why the author chose to describe her feelings toward the space in the city. They will examine how someone's inner emotions can be reflected in the way he/she sees his surroundings.

### ***Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening***

The first piece of writing my students will look at is "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost. This poem uses the tranquility of the woods to reflect the desires of the narrator. The description of the woods is a description of an inner peace and rest that the narrator craves, but knows he cannot have because as he says, "I have promises to keep/and miles to go before I sleep" (Frost 224).

My students will determine the setting of the poem and how it impacts the poem's meaning. They will examine why Frost uses snow for the weather and the woods for the place. The goal is for them to understand that the woods in which he stops are devoid of

the bustle of life. In one interpretation of this poem, Frost uses a natural setting because he wants peace in his life. Snow adds to this because it creates a quiet, uncomplicated scene.

After understanding that the setting of this poem is a mirror for the author's desires, the students will try to create a similar affect using totally different space. They will choose an emotion and create a space that mirrors the emotion. They will write a brief justification explaining why the space they have created reflects the emotion they have chosen. For example, a student who chooses sadness as his/her emotion might select a bare room with a person alone looking out at the rain and explain that sadness often feels like being isolated from others, and that the rain symbolizes tears or the grayness of mood. Another student might select chaos and choose a busy street, explaining that the different movements on the street are unrelated and cross, making each individual's path more complex than it would be if the person were alone. The student might add windy weather to the description, claiming that wind moves in different directions and disrupts the otherwise still environment.

Each student will then create his/her own original poem that uses this created space to aid the reader in understanding the meaning of the poem and the emotion of the main character in the poem. The purpose of this exercise is to show the students that meaning can be tied to space.

The next step will be for the each student to pick a new setting for his/her poem and re-write it such that nothing changes except for the setting. For example, the student writing about chaos might change the setting to an open field on a sunny day where no one is around her. The students will write a short piece explaining how the meaning of the poem changes or is lost as a result of this setting change. Students should understand at this point that setting can be critical in meaning, and as space changes, meaning also changes.

### ***House on Mango Street***

*House on Mango Street* is a collection of short stories that are very reflective of culture. The short story "House on Mango Street" has a very vivid description of a house.

It's small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is no front yard, only four little elms the city planted by the curb. Out back is a small garage for the car we don't own yet and a small yard that looks smaller between the two buildings on either side. There are stairs in our house, but they're ordinary hallway stairs, and the house has only one washroom. Everybody has to share a bedroom—Mama and Papa, Carlos and Kiki, me and Nenny (Cisneros 4).

I will ask my students to read this description and draw a picture of the house. The goal is for the students to understand the level of detail in the writing by drawing out each sentence. After they have completed their drawings, they will describe a building of their choice with the same level of detail.

They will then identify cultural characteristics based on the descriptions in the short story "House on Mango Street." I will place them in groups and ask them to first brainstorm what they believe are the cultural characteristics. They will then devise a method of researching the culture and determining what in the story is cultural. Finally, they will choose another story from the book and see how the culture depicted in the story might relate to the house.

### ***The Passion and Bleak House***

*The Passion*, by Jeannette Winterson, opens with a very detailed description of Venice. She describes how the city is alive and moves:

There is a city surrounded by water with watery alleys that do for streets and roads and silted up back ways that only the rats can cross. Miss your way, which is easy to do, and you may find yourself staring at a hundred eyes guarding a filthy palace of sacks and bones. Find your way, which is easy to do, and you may meet an old woman in a doorway. She will tell your fortune, depending on your face. This is the city of mazes. You may set off from the same place to the same place every day and never go by the same route. (49)

*Bleak House*, by Charles Dickens, begins with an equally rich description of London, in which the city is painted by following the fog:

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled amount the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs, fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and thoughts of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of the wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. (5)

Each of these descriptions continues and is just over a page long. We will look at the two works side by side and determine how description of space sets tone and mood. My



students will consider how characters are described as each author describes the setting. They will look at how using a vehicle like fog affects the reader's understanding of the city. They will also consider how the repetition in these pieces affects the reader. Finally, we will discuss why an author might want to begin a novel with this sort of description.

Students will then create their own introductions using these pieces as a template for their writing. They will select a city or town that they know well and some word or idea to repeat that represents the city in some way. After a rough draft is completed, they will edit their pieces for diction and precision. They will be asked to analyze the readers' potential reactions to the description.

## **EXCURSIONS**

### **Sam Houston Park**

Students will take a field trip to Sam Houston Park, a small space with historic Houston homes. They will each choose a house and create a story that happens completely in and around the house. To begin this, students will write a list of words that describe the house. They will then create characters that might fit into the house. They will list details about these characters. They will then weave the characters and feeling of the house into a story. We will bring a digital camera for students to photograph their houses for use over the next few days. Students will edit their stories and bind them in a collection. Finally, students will write a reflection explaining how the look and feel of the house are related to their stories.

### **The Menil Collection**

Students will spend a day at the Menil Collection, which is a small museum filled with Surrealistic and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art. The students will pick three pieces to describe visually and emotionally. They will be required to write these descriptions in complete sentences. The purpose of this exercise is to increase the students' ability to use descriptive phrases. They will have a list of twenty adjectives that they can apply to the paintings. The students will then have to look at all of the pieces in the museum and write a one page paper explaining how one painting of their choice relates to something they have read.

## **THE PROJECT**

The unit will culminate in a project. The project is designed to allow students to exhibit their knowledge of the unit's material. Preferably, the only direct instruction during the project phase will be to show students what the end result should be like. Students should be left largely on their own and given wide range in how they attempt the project.

Before having students begin the project, they must be given the materials and background. First, the students will be shown a series of photographs of houses and will be asked to create cultures for the houses. I will select one picture to use in class as a model, and then students will be put into pairs and will select their own picture. They will be told the date and place of the picture. Next, they will go to the library and research the time period. It may be necessary to spend a day teaching research skills. Ideally, this part of the project will be done in association with their United States history class. The project could be timed so that the time period of the houses, or some of the houses, coincides with what they are studying in history. The history class could then explore the culture of the time period directly. Using the project for cross-curricular learning certainly enhances the process, but is not necessary.

Once the students have researched their house's time period, they will be given the following choices for projects:

1. Writing a fictional piece centered around the photograph;
2. Describing the time period of the photograph and how it is reflected in the architecture of the house;
3. Creating a PowerPoint presentation about the time period, its architecture, and how the architecture reflects the culture;
4. Creating a graphic organizer that explains the time period and how the photograph reflects it;
5. Finding a picture that the student believes accurately reflects one of the pieces we have read and writing an analysis explaining the relationship.

Students will be expected to both hand in their project and present it to the class. I permit students to work in pairs on this type of project; however, it is certainly not unreasonable to have students work alone on it. The presentations should be about 10 minutes in length. The purpose is to expose the class to a number of interpretations of cultures and the different ways the class represented them.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson 1**

#### ***Objective***

Students will read for detail and demonstrate understanding of detail.

#### ***Materials***

- *House on Mango Street*
- Blank Paper
- Colored Pencils

***Preparation***

Each student needs a copy of the story *House on Mango Street*, a piece of blank paper, a piece of lined paper, a pen, and a set of colored pencils.

***Time***

50 Minutes

***Opening***

The teacher will introduce details. The teacher should speak for a few minutes explaining that details in fiction breathe life into the literature. Literature is bland and dull when details are left out. Students should understand that details are used both for descriptive purposes and for bringing out theme and purpose.

***Introduction to New Material***

Students should brainstorm possible details on the board. The teacher is looking for adjectives relating to all of the senses.

The teacher will then write: “She went over there.” The teacher will then ask students to expand the sentence with the details on the board. The sentence will be modified to give it life and meaning.

Next, the teacher will write a descriptive sentence on the board, and have students identify the details. The teacher should underline these as the students point them out.

***Student Independent Practice***

The teacher should leave this on the board, and give students a copy of *House on Mango Street*. The teacher should provide students with a copy of printed directions that tell the student to read the story once and underline all details. When the student has finished, he or she should then re-read the story and draw the house EXACTLY as it is described.

When the students have finished their drawings, they should exchange papers with another student. The second student should look at the picture and identify anything that is missing. All missing elements should be listed on the back of the drawing.

The original student should then write a self-assessment paragraph explaining what details she included, which she omitted, and why she believes that certain details were missing. Students should include an explanation of what a detail is and how it can be identified.

***Close***

Students should be given a chance to share their work with the remainder of the class. They can present their pictures and point out their details. The teacher should use this time to discuss any differences in the drawings, anything that was missed by students,

and talk about the difference between misunderstanding details and creative interpretation.

### ***Assessment***

Teachers should collect the pictures to check for close detail reading. The teacher should also look at student comments to check for their visual understanding of details.

## **Lesson 2**

### ***Objectives***

- Students will read a poem and understand that setting affects meaning.
- Students will create their own poem that contains a setting that adds to meaning.
- Students will reflect on meaning and setting.

### ***Materials***

A copy of “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

### ***Preparation***

None

### ***Time***

100 Minutes

### ***Opening***

The teacher will explain the objectives for the class. Students will then think of movies in which the setting affected the characters. Students will write a brief paragraph about this and share with the class.

### ***Introduction to New Material***

The teacher will read the poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” twice. After the second reading, she will ask the students to respond to the poem, asking them how they react to it and what they think that it means. The teacher will allow students to interact and disagree about the meaning, guiding the discussion to ensure that each student explains why they interpret the poem in a certain way. The teacher’s goal is to guide the conversation to the point that students understand that it is possible that the man has a desire to rest and find peace, but cannot.

The teacher will then ask students about the setting of the poem. The students should describe the feelings associated with snowy evenings. The goal here is to collect a list of adjectives that are all peaceful and calm. The teacher will then ask how this relates to the man’s desires. Students should understand that the emotions the setting evokes are those that the man desires for himself.

### ***Student Independent Practice***

Students will now write their own poem with a setting reflected in the narrator's state of mind or desires. Students will choose an emotion for the narrator to have. They will then create a setting that reflects this emotion. Students should write a justification of why the setting reflects the emotion. The teacher should circle the room to ensure that the settings reflect the emotion. When they do not, the teacher should ask the student to close his eyes, picture the setting, and describe his feelings. The teacher should then ask if this is the emotion the narrator is supposed to have.

Once the students have an emotion and a setting, they should write a poem that reflects this emotion. Students may take the work home and finish it for the next day if they run out of time.

Next, the students will change the setting completely, but leave the rest of the poem the same. They will re-write the poem using this new setting. They will then write a reflective piece explaining how the setting change affects the meaning in their poem.

Finally, students should exchange poems and evaluate the two settings for a poem a fellow student has written, writing the same type of reflection.

### ***Close***

The teacher will ask students to share their findings, and lead a brief discussion about how setting affects meaning.

### ***Note on Further Use of the Assignment***

The teacher may choose to use this poem as a piece to edit for the portfolio as another lesson.

### ***Assessment***

The teacher should collect all poems and reflections, read the reflections, and evaluate whether the students understand how setting relates to meaning. The closing discussion will also serve as a brief informal assessment.

## **Lesson 3**

(This lesson should not be taught until students have a solid understanding of tone and mood.)

### ***Objectives***

- Students will examine the effect that an elaborate setting has on a reader.
- Students will be able to identify the tone and mood of a piece by looking at its setting.

### ***Materials***

- A copy of the first page of *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens for each student.

- A copy of the first page of *The Passion* by Jeanette Winterson for each student.

***Preparation***

None

***Time***

50 Minutes

***Opening***

The teacher will explain to students that today's lesson will be used as an introduction for the next week. The topic is tone and mood in setting. The teacher will tell the students that they will be examining two pieces of writing, looking at tone and mood and at setting in general as an introduction to a piece. The students need to be aware that they are looking at these as models, and that they will begin writing an introduction setting that must set mood and tone.

***Introduction to new Material***

Students will read both pieces to themselves. The instructor will choose two students who will each read aloud the pieces after the class has finished reading them silently. When the students have finished reading aloud, the teacher will ask for reactions. The board should be divided into two sections. The teacher begins the discussion by asking the students to give adjectives that apply to either the description or what it describes. The students will offer words and direct the teacher about where the word fits. The teacher will record all offered words.

***Student Independent Practice***

The teacher will ask the class to write a response to the pieces, taking into account the words on the board. The response should be short, no longer than a page, and address the student's reaction to the beginnings of the books, including what they believe the space looks like, whether they like the space, and if they would like to continue reading the story based on the beginning.

***Close***

The teacher will ask the students about their reactions. They should be permitted to either read or summarize what they have written. The discussion should address words and phrases and how they elicit mood and tone. The instructor should remind the students that they will be writing their own introduction tomorrow and should know what location they will choose for a setting.

***Assessment***

The teacher should use the class brainstorm of adjectives to gain a general idea about how the students are doing in general with looking at text and appropriately reacting to tone and mood. The reflections can be used to gauge how the students are doing individually.

### ***Additional Possibilities***

It may be helpful to have the students draw the images conjured by the descriptions in order for them to see the detail in the writing.

## **Lesson 4**

### ***Objective***

Students will be able to apply their knowledge of tone and mood by writing an original opening for a story.

### ***Materials***

- A copy of the first page of *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens for each student.
- A copy of the first page of *The Passion* by Jeanette Winterson for each student.
- A picture for each student to write about.

### ***Preparation***

The teacher needs to gather pictures for the students to write about. These can be photographs or paintings. The teacher needs to determine how he or she will distribute these pictures.

### ***Time***

50 Minutes

### ***Opening***

The students should be asked to comment on the image of Venice. What reaction do they have to Venice? The same question should be posed about London.

### ***Introduction to new Material***

The instructor should ask the students how the pieces differ from one another. If they are having trouble reflecting, the teacher may want to have the students read the two pieces again. The goal is to have the students comment that the Dickens piece tells about the city in general, including its inhabitants, by following the fog, whereas the Winterson piece tells of the specifics of the land of Venice, and weaves some of inhabitant life into this description without a vehicle (e.g. fog.) The teacher should have the students recall reasons for their reactions to the descriptions.

### ***Student Independent Practice***

The instructor will give the students the picture they are to use. They will write the mood and the tone that they believe the picture represents. They should list words, specifically adjectives, that come to mind when looking at the picture. They should then put those words into a one-page description of the picture.

### ***Close***

The students should write a reflection about their descriptions, explaining why they have chosen certain adjectives.

### ***Assessment***

The teacher should look at the reflections to gauge understanding of the material. The teacher should look at the descriptions to see how the students are applying their knowledge.

### ***Suggested Further Lessons/Assignments***

1. The teacher can have students edit these pieces for diction, looking at synonyms and connotation.
2. The teacher can have the students use these descriptions as a basis to write a short fictional piece that has specific tone and mood tied to the pictures.
3. The teacher can have students choose a tone and mood and create a description of some place that shows the chosen tone and mood.
4. Peer editing can be practiced on any of the above assignments.

## **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Teacher References**

Bartlett, Alice Hunt. *The anthology of cities*. Ann Arbor, MI: Gryphon Books, 1971.  
A collection of poems about cities.

Blanchard, Marc Eli. *In Search of the City*. Saratoga: Anma Libri, 1985.  
Discussion of people's places as the composition of the city, including pubs, dwellings, places of gathering. Specifically focuses on Engel, Baudelaire, Rimbaud. The book includes a general discussion on narrating a city.

Dunlap, George Arthur. *The city in the American novel, 1789-1900; a study of American novels portraying contemporary conditions in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965 [c1934].  
Background reading about city life in the northeast. Includes discussion on religion, disasters, social life, literary and artistic life, and political life.

Emmons, Frederick Earle, ed. *The Traveler's Book of Verse*. New York: H. Holt 1928.  
A collection of poems about places and buildings.

Fearnow, Mark. *The American Stage and the Great Depression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.  
Useful cultural discussion framed in literature. Nothing about architecture.



Fisher, Philip. *Hard facts: Setting and Form in the American novel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

A look at how the depiction of a city and the buildings therein reflect the author's views of the city and country. It looks at specific works and the subtle descriptions of settings, particularly character reactions to setting. The book focuses on the dark side of American history and discusses how life, including setting, is portrayed. There is a large focus on *Sister Carrie* in the city section. Killings of Indians and slavery are also major chapters.

Gelfant, Blanche H. *The American city novel*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1954.

Gelfant claims that the city in many novels is a character that interacts with people. This work will provide a literary analysis of the city as actor, and how the description forms the city. Specific authors and their works are discussed.

Hurm, Gerd. *Fragmented Urban Images: The American City in Modern Fiction from Stephen Crane to Thomas Pynchon*. Frankfurt am Main; New York: P. Lang, 1991.

Discussion of housing projects, social conditions, and gathering places in American fiction. There are many specific references to text, events, and setting.

Knapp, Bettina Liebowitz. *Archetype, Architecture, and the Writer*. Indiana University Press, 1986.

Discussion of architectural symbolism in specific works, including James, Kafka, Fuentes, Mishima. The contents will be useful in world literature classes. The book describes spatial relations, buildings, and surroundings, both metaphorically and literally.

Lehan, Richard Daniel. *The City in Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Lehan claims that literature and the city are inextricably tied. The city in literature is an imaginative reality reflecting what actually exists, and what exists directly effects the imagination. The imagined reflects perceptions; hence they are tied. This work examines the connections between the development of the city and changes in literature.

Olsen, Taimi Anne. *Transcending space: architectural places in works by Henry David Thoreau, E.E. Cummings, and John Barth*. Bucknell UP, 2000.

The focus of this work is on the descriptions of rooms and other architectural structures. It is looking at the relationships between literary space and physical space, physical space and cultural significance, and the relationship that literature and architecture have had throughout each other's development.

Ostwalt, Conrad Eugene. *After Eden: the Secularization of American Space in the Fiction of Willa Cather and Theodore Dreiser*. Bucknell UP; London: Associated University Presses, 1990.

Discussion of setting and social issues in various literatures, including the American dream.

Parker, Elinor Milnor. *Here and there; 100 poems about places*. New York: Crowell, 1967.

A collection of poems about places.

Pike, Burton. *The Image of the City in Modern Literature*. Princeton UP, 1981.

Specific to western culture (Europe), this book looks at various modes of a city: as image, as static, in flux, nowhere and utopia. It looks at the imagery of city and specific landmarks within cities.

Rotella, Carlo. *October Cities: The Redevelopment of Urban Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Discussion of the development of city over time and the literature produced at each time. Rotella claims that as a city changes, the depiction of the city in literature also changes. The change of the city can be viewed through the eye of literature.

Siegel, Adrienne. *The Image of the American City in Popular Literature, 1820-1870*. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1981.

The various classes of a city are discussed in this book. Care is given to describing building materials and structures. It also discusses how the city affected the literature. The focus is on the city rather than the city through literature. It is good background for city life and social conditions.

Spivey, Ted Ray. *Revival: Southern Writers in the Modern Mity*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1986.

This book examines various southern cities. It is more general than would be desired, but has a good chapter on Williams, including discussion on Streetcar. Spivey focuses more on the life of the city than the space, but he does contain some description of the settings of the works and how the themes are portrayed thereby.

Varey, Simon. *Space and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*. Cambridge UP, 1990.

While less useful for its specific content, the English novel, this book offers an analysis of space and politics. It looks at the underlying nuances of depiction of space. Good for general background reading.

Weimer, David R. *The City as Metaphor*. New York: Random House, 1966.

Weimer examines cities both imagined and depicted in various genres of literature and poetry. His focus is on the symbolic nature of the description and its social and political implications. Many authors are described.

Wirth-Nesher, Hana. *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge NY, 1996.

Discussion of cities by author and city grouped together. The book's focus is on the social aspects as seen through setting. Particularly of interest is the discussion of *Invisible Man* and its depiction of New York.

### **Student Resources**

Cisneros, Sandra. *House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. New York: Modern Library, 1977.

Frost, Robert. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." *The Poetry of Robert Frost*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1969: 224.

Scott, Gwendolyn. "Getting It Straight." *Good*. ed. Toni and Jeff Beauchamp. Houston: Toni Beauchamp, 2000.

Ten Boom, Corrie. *The Hiding Place*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1973.

Winterson, Jeanette. *The Passion*. New York: Grove Press, 1987.