



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Through Film and Literature, in Cultures around the World, Children Grow Up on Anxiety

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Rationale

Preparing my at-risk high school students to take the Language Arts component of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test is a daunting undertaking, requiring me to be creative and sometimes downright ingenious in coming up with lesson plans that appear to my students to have little or nothing to do with a test that many of them dread because of their limited skills. Many of the students in the second-chance program for at-risk high school students where I have taught for ten years have already, at least once, come up against the *timed* CAPT that is administered over a period of six days. They often do not finish the test because they run out of time or they grow discouraged and simply give up. Some, conditioned by failure, don't open the test booklets.

More and more, I have come to infuse my lessons with CAPT activities without identifying them, as such, to the students. At the same time, I have come to realize that many of my students' activities are, inadvertently, CAPT-like activities. It has become clearer and clearer to me that the skills required to get through and reach proficiency in the Language Arts CAPT are significant skills for our students, regardless of the test.

With this challenge in mind, my unit focuses on story-telling in films and literature with lessons based on skills that students need, not only in taking the Language Arts CAPT, but in any subject they might study in which they must: make observations and back them up with evidence, make connections to life, interpret meanings, make evaluations, and communicate their findings. . . skills they need regardless of the content.

Story telling thrives in all cultures of the world, making it an effective vehicle for students to explore various cultures at the same time that they are learning and sharpening language skills. As the world grows smaller through technology, students need exposure to multiple cultures and the values that make them up, many of which are universal and shared.

We naturally are separated from other cultures by geography, language, clothing, customs, traditions, religion, and politics to name only a few barriers that make *foreigners* seem distant and different. But the language of emotions that cuts across cultures is one that we all share and speak. In my unit, students will explore how stories *produce* , *use* or *play out* , and *resolve* the universally shared emotion of *anxiety* . Children can be seen in the throes of anxiety on the pathway to growing up in diverse cultures. We will see

anxiety registered in both film and literature coming from China, New Zealand, Australia, Iran, and in our own country. Students will be challenged to consider what is unique about anxiety-producing situations in each culture and yet how each situation is also universal. While the films I have chosen feature children and can be viewed by children, they were crafted for a wide audience of all ages.

It is my ambition that, although this unit features viewing films supplemented by reading literature, my students, with their new working knowledge of the principles of story-telling, will themselves become story-tellers, turning out their own stories based on the anxieties, real or fictional, that they experience in their own cultures, on their pathway to growing up. In addition to the Language Arts skills that students will hone, they also will explore the craft of narrative. . . how, in eighty-nine minutes on screen or eight or nine pages, the storyteller can compress time, vividly depict characters, and in the case of this unit, create compelling anxiety-producing conflicts that must be resolved in a few frames or pages.

The storyboard is one means of showing students how to grasp the changes in scenes, plots, and emotions across a movie-length story. I will introduce this device when analyzing world films and *then* suggest that students use it in setting up their own stories when they come to that activity.

The Essential Questions

The Language Arts CAPT typically consists of a story followed by questions to which the students are asked to respond. There is nothing unusual about these questions. Any teacher might ask similar questions to his or her students after reading a piece of literature or viewing a film. One of the questions simply asks students, "*What is your initial response to the story ?*"

Another question that might show up on the CAPT that I have asked my students for years is: *How does a character grow or change as the story unfolds?* A changing character is central to effective stories. Students can sharpen their skills to watch for these changes in a character's awareness of self and world-view. I have found it effective to ask students to make observations and support them with evidence from the text that shows the character: *at first , but then , and finally.*

In the CAPT, students are often asked to choose a passage or a quote and discuss its significance to the characters or plot. Since my unit deals with several films as well as literature, I plan to ask my students to *pick a scene in the film and explore how it is significant* to a character, to the plot, or to the lesson or theme; or if they have read a story, they will choose a passage or quote and do the same.

Students usually are asked to *connect* the CAPT story to their own personal experiences or to those of someone they know or know of. Students might connect the story with another story or with a movie they have seen. The better the reader or viewer gets at this skill, the more significant the story or film becomes to the reader or viewer, because the more the reader or viewer is able to link it to his or her world.

Finally, one of the most difficult questions that I ask my students to answer is whether they think the story is *good or effective* . It is always a challenge to get them past the automatic, "No, I didn't like it," or "Yes, I liked it." I explain that it is possible to find qualities that make a story effective even though any given reader may not like it. We spend considerable time grounding that abstract word "effective," with concrete questions such as: Is there a lesson in the story?; Are the characters struggling with a conflict?; Is the story believable?; Does

it have convincing details? I have found that the more terms students learn with which to critique a story or a film, the more open they are to it. "No, I don't like it." often means, "I have no way of responding to it because I don't know the mechanism, or the formula or structures for responding. I don't have the vocabulary."

I have chosen stories that *produce*, *use*, and *resolve* anxiety because I think these stories will elicit responses from the students. The CAPT-like questions will be driven by this universal human emotion as it plays itself out in the very specific lives of children in the process of growing up in diverse cultures around the world: the anxiety of an eight-year old Chinese girl sold, under the guise of a boy, by her impoverished parents, to an old puppet master who longs before he dies, to pass on his craft to a *male* child; the anxiety an Iranian boy suffers when he, inadvertently, loses his younger sister's only pair of shoes on the way home from the shoe repair shop, and their abortive attempt to *share* his large shoes to go to school, while he struggles to find a way to replace what his poor parents cannot afford to replace.

This unit will examine the mechanisms, formulas, structures, and vocabulary for responding to stories (both film and literature) that *produce*, *use*, and *resolve* anxiety in children growing up in diverse cultures around the world. Ultimately, as students are exposed to various formulas for storytelling, they will themselves become storytellers in a final project.

Excerpt from Geoffrey Canada's autobiographic *FistStickKnifeGun*

In thinking through an effective introduction to how storytellers produce, use, and resolve anxiety to dramatize the maturing process in children, I decided to begin with our own culture as a point of reference. Geoffrey Canada, who grew up in the South Bronx, describes in a section of his autobiography *FistStickKnifeGun* the anxiety he experienced when he came to realize at the age of five that in order to continue playing outside with the neighborhood boys he would have to fight another boy to establish himself in the pecking order. Until then, he had never dreamed of having to fight. Worse than this, the boy he would have to fight was his best friend and playmate. His other option was to stay inside with his mother and be considered a sissy. In a few pages, Canada conveys the shock of his realization and the internal struggle that ensues as he comes to terms with this unanticipated revelation. This excerpt from the autobiography gives me the opportunity to introduce several activities and skills that I will reinforce throughout the unit.

First, because the excerpt is only a few pages long, students can read it and *write an initial response* to it in one sitting. I often ask for volunteers to read a story aloud, and in preparation for this, we will determine whose voice is telling the story. In this case it is Canada himself in retrospect. To help students understand what it means to write a response, I will offer them a number of prompts and perhaps even model one on the overhead projector. Students might answer, "What are your thoughts and questions about the story, a character in the story, or a problem in the story? Prompts: This character makes me think of. . . ; This incident reminds me of . . . or made me wonder about . . . ; My first reaction (feeling or question) to the story is . . . because" I often model a skill I want my students to adopt, in order to "make learning visible."

In preparation for focusing on the presence of anxiety in the story, I will give my students a *graphic organizer* where they will write their observations *about the conflict* on the left side and on the right side they will copy sentences (with page numbers) in the story as evidence to back up their observations. Depending on the skill levels of my students, I may model this activity on the overhead projector, asking students for their

observations and then for evidence from the story. As students volunteer their observations about the conflict, it will become apparent that Canada has experienced fear, confusion, and loneliness. He is confronted by having to publicly fight a boy who has been his best friend and he feels confused and afraid. Students might speculate on whether there is a way out for him other than to fight. I will ask them whether they think he is experiencing anxiety in this conflict and just what anxiety is?

This excerpt also gives me the opportunity to ask students how the character of Geoffrey Canada changes in the story, making use of the terms: *at first* , *but then* , and *finally* . In studying Geoffrey in this way, we can also study the progression of his anxiety, speculating on *how old* he is before he learns that he has to fight and *how old* he is once he decides that he must do it, and does it. It is effective to use a *graphic organizer* for this *character study* , writing observations on the left side: *at first* , *but then* , and *finally* ; and on the right side across the page, copying sentences that prove the observations on the left. This way students learn how to record their observations and to record evidence to back them up. These organizers are often used again when students are learning how to write a five-paragraph essay about a character. They learn that they have done the preparatory work and do not have to go back and reread the story.

Following this discussion of character, students might brain storm about *the lesson of this story* . They could do this using the "*chalk talk*" activity. I hang a wide, long piece of white paper on the blackboard and each student gets a felt marker. No one talks and students volunteer to write with the marker what they think is the lesson of the story. They get extra credit for their entry. We then condense and combine ideas and come up with a manageable list that a student will copy and I will type up and make available the next day. They could then complete a graphic organizer on the lesson in the story, choosing the most significant ideas from the list the class came up with (left side), and finding sentences as evidence to back them up (right side).

Another question that is effective whether students are preparing for the CAPT or simply making connections to the story is, "*With which events or character do you most closely relate ?*" It is, after all, the connections that we make, both conscious and unconscious, that often allow us to *own* a story we have read or seen in a film. Students may personally connect to an event or character in a story or they may think of someone they know who has had a similar experience, or they may be able to connect an event or character in the story with a character or event in another story. As students read short stories and watch films, they will always revisit those they have already *studied* , making connections with them as well as with their own experience and those of people they know.

They will keep the story and subsequent papers in their two pocket folders for reference. This may sound simplistic, but because many of my students have very little structure in their lives, structure is very important in the classroom. If we manage to complete these activities: (initial response to the story, conflict (and the presence of anxiety), character change, lesson, and making personal connections to the story), they will have concrete models and a good foundation. In our next story, a film, I will introduce storyboards to deepen analytical skills. All of these activities ultimately will be significant when they begin to plan their own stories.

An Iranian boy's angst over losing his sister's only shoes in *Children of Heaven*

Because of its geographical and cultural remoteness to us and yet, at the same time, our political and military involvement in the region, the first film that I have chosen for my unit is from Iran. Most of my students do not know where to find Iran on a map of the world. As we locate countries in various parts of the world through our films and stories, students will name them and the countries around them and color them in on a blank 11" X 14" map of the world that they will keep in their two pocket folders.

Reminding the students that the story we read focused on Geoffrey Canada's childhood anxiety, I will tell them that we are going to the other side of the world where, while many things are different, the anxiety of a nine-year old boy is just as acute as that of Canada who, at five, is confronted with the horror of having to fight his best friend. The story we read had essentially one scene. The film is one and a half hours long and has many scenes. I will introduce the use of storyboards to emphasize sequence and to track Ali's anxiety that increases as the pleasures and innocence of childhood fade. Except for brief interludes of levity, the responsibility of growing up is piling itself upon Ali.

The movie can be divided into more than a dozen scenes; the first two scenes establish the root of Ali's anxiety and place it squarely on his young shoulders. Coming home from school, he picks up his sister's only pair of shoes at the repair shop, stops for fresh bread and potatoes as directed by his mother, who is nearly bed-ridden from a bad back, and while he is sorting potatoes at the market, we watch a bagman come by and, inadvertently, take the plastic bag with her shoes in it, along with the other bags that the proprietor has put out for him. Ali in his frenzy to find the shoes where he tucked them among the baskets of produce outside the market, accidentally dumps over several baskets of produce and is driven off by the proprietor. There are several clues in the first scenes that Ali's father is much too poor to simply buy Ali's little sister Zahra another pair of shoes. They haven't paid the rent in five months. The father is also strict and does not spare the rod, so Ali does not want him to find out that he has lost Zahra's shoes.

To motivate students to pay attention to the cultural differences in these first two scenes in the film, I will tell them that for every five significant differences they can jot down, they will earn twenty-five extra credit points, up to 100 points or twenty significant differences, numbered in groups of five. They respond well to extra credit challenges. After we have watched these first two scenes, and they have had time to brainstorm the differences, we will do a "chalk talk" activity, or they will call out the differences and I will record them on a transparency on the overhead projector. If I use the overhead, I can copy the transparency for everyone.

After recording these differences, students will *write a response* to these first scenes, possibly predicting what will happen, responding to the differences between Ali's life and their own, or commenting on the setting and customs they saw. We will revisit the prompts students used when they wrote a response to the Canada story and I will add in a few more prompts for them to record. In fact, students will begin to make a list of prompts for responses to stories. They can keep this in their folders, and refer to it whenever they are asked to do this activity.

Now that students have observed differences in Ali's culture and daily life from their own and they have written a response to the first two scenes, I will show these two scenes again, asking students to focus on all the indications that Ali is experiencing anxiety. For example, when he comes out of the produce market and cannot find the bag with the shoes, he becomes frantic and digs around under the baskets of produce until he

has tipped them over and the proprietor comes tearing out and drives him away. We might set up a *web* or *spider graphic organizer* with "Ali loses the shoes" in the center and then, on tendrils or legs, record each indication of anxiety that we observe. There are plenty. These indications of his anxiety also establish conflict in the story. On the tendrils or legs students might indicate what kind of conflict Ali is experiencing in each incident. Modeling this, I will review various categories of conflict, e.g.: man vs. man, man vs. nature, man vs. society, man vs. himself.

Students could use this same *web/spider graphic organizer* at the end of the story as the types and levels of anxiety have multiplied for Ali. It turns out that he must try to win third place in a race where the third-place prize is a new pair of sneakers. And in his daily life he is confronted again and again with the impatient principal because he arrives late to school. Of course, we want him just to *tell* the principal that he and his little sister are sharing the same pair of shoes, but either because he is a child, or because of his culture, and/or because he is afraid of the principal and that his parents might find out, he just stands there being reprimanded and crying. Even when six-year old Zahra runs as fast as she can from school to the meeting spot with Ali, it is too late for him to run to school and be on time. And, the day one of his over-sized shoes drops off Zahra's foot into a gutter and starts rushing down a canal out of her reach, the viewer is already anticipating the outcome for Ali if he ever *gets* to school.

Using storyboards to contain or control the film

After seeing the film, students will draw and/or cut out of magazines we have in the room things that represent these two scenes and paste them onto the two pieces of white poster board. They can use colored pencils or felt-tip pens to finish these scenes and they can give captions to them that they think fit the scenes. It might be helpful if I model the first scene simply by drawing a pair of shoes and coloring them pink, which they are when we see them in the very first frame of the film, and perhaps, on the same board, I could draw oranges tumbling out of a basket that is tipping over or some representation of the produce falling helter-skelter in front of the produce store. By the time we have finished watching the film, they will have a piece of poster board for each significant scene with captions that they will then assemble into a visual representation of the whole story, . . . a vehicle for controlling the whole film. Ultimately, they will use this storyboard technique to help tell their own stories.

While the overriding dilemma in this poignant film is what to do about the lost shoes, the filmmaker offers moments of hope and illumination. Midway through the film, when the girls (there must be a couple of hundred) in Zahra's school are all lined up in the courtyard, Zahra spots her pink shoes on the feet of another girl several rows over from her. Once she learns where the girl lives, she and Ali, full of resolve, go to confront the girl, but, peaking from around the corner of a building, what they see dashes their hopes; the girl's father is blind and her family has even less than Ali's and Zahra's. Without even exchanging a word, they know, and the viewer knows, that the pink shoes are truly gone.

Ali holds out his last hope and experiences his ultimate anxiety in the school district race for which he struggles to qualify. Third prize is a new pair of sneakers and he promises Zahra that he will win them and trade them in on a new pair of shoes for her. In the confusion of the race, he accidentally wins, and instead of getting the new sneakers, he wins a huge trophy, and weeping, is hoisted onto the shoulders of his coach and the school principal. The media is there to record the event. Ali cannot even look at the camera. Whether

using a graphic organizer, or not, this produces a major opportunity to observe the *character change* in Ali: at first, but then, and finally. Ali is no longer the naïve little boy we saw in the first scene running a few errands for his mother on his way home from school. A child growing up on anxiety!

Although Ali tried everything humanly possible, he is not able to make up for Zahra the accidental loss of her shoes. But, one of the charms of the story is that just as the film ends, the viewer sees their dad, having earned a little bit of extra money, on his way home with new shoes for both Ali and Zahra.

It would be feasible to ask students to choose from among the dozen main scenes and write about how one of these is significant to the rest of the film.

A young Chinese girl confronts abandonment in a world that values only boys in *King of Masks*

This concerns an eight-year-old Chinese girl who carries the weight of the world. It takes place in the 1930's in a province of China where she is sold for ten dollars, on the black market, as a boy, to an old magician who is longing to pass his craft on to a male heir before he dies. When he discovers, after a several days, that this little boy, "Doggie," as he calls him, is a girl and that he has been duped, he throws her a small bag of coins on the landing and pushes off in his primitive junk, leaving her desperate on the shore. She implores him not to abandon her because she has been sold seven times previously. Ali in *Children of Heaven* bears the burden of losing his sister's shoes, and it feels to him like the weight of the world, but he, at least, has a family and a roof over his head. Doggie is fighting for her life in a patriarchal society that throws girls away.

King of Masks has about twenty-five scenes, so the *storyboard strategy* that I introduced to students for controlling the plot in *Children of Heaven* will be crucial. The first major scene is a celebration, replete with dragons and fireworks, so it should be easy and fun for students to capture this on a small square of poster board. It is at this celebration where we watch Wang, King of Masks, working his craft of instantaneously switching masks for an enchanted street audience. Students could once again jot down five significant differences they see and share them for extra credit, as they did with *Children of Heaven*.

When the famous opera star that is also the female impersonator pleads with Wang not to die without an heir to his mask magic, he goes looking to buy a male child on the black market (not that uncommon in China in the '30's.) His ten dollar purchase gets him what he thinks is an eight year old boy, whom he calls Doggie, a term of endearment, and in the next two or three short scenes, they begin to bond. Things are looking up for both the old man who seems to have solved his problem and for the boy who now has a caring *grandpa*, until in a desperate public scene, Doggie is forced to confess, "I am a girl!" The old man is stunned. This occurs about thirty minutes into the film. Students will then *write a response*, referring back to the prompts from Canada's story and *Children of Heaven*, and speculating on what they think will happen. Students could write *another response* when they have finished watching the film and compare their overall response with the one they made after just six scenes when Doggie declares, "I'm a girl!" A few prompts that might be useful for them here are: Now I understand. . . ; At first I thought. . . , but now I think . . . ; This part is really saying. . .

They will then start their *storyboards*, including a caption that describes the essence of the first scenes, e.g. celebration, and King of Masks is seen performing by a famous female impersonator opera star; over tea and

Wang, King of Masks, laments to Liang the impersonator, that he has no heir; Wang buys a "boy" heir on the black market; they bond on Wang's little Chinese junk; Doggie becomes very ill and Wang spends lots of money for medicine; then, Doggie, asked to "piss on a cloth" as a remedy when Wang inadvertently is wounded on the ankle, must confess in public that she is a girl!!! Yikes!

It is also at this point in the story/film that students can begin to make *observations about the conflict* and write them down on a graphic organizer. They can brainstorm the scenes they have on their storyboard and/or we can view the first thirty minutes of the film again. We will revisit possible conflicts: man versus man, man versus himself, etc. Students may observe here that in some stories there seems to be more than one very significant conflict. At this point they need not choose; the graphic organizer will be an on-going work as the story unfolds.

The lives of these two unlikely mates, an old street performer with a unique craft and a young girl who has been sold as many times as the number of years she has lived, become inextricably and tenderly intertwined, but with life-threatening ramifications.

Students can practice the Language Arts CAPT of discussing how a scene or a quote is significant to the story, or to a character, or to the plot by using prompts for a scene they choose: (1) "What has the scene to do with the lesson in the story?" or (2) "How does the scene show a trait or traits of one of the characters?" or (3) "How does the scene serve as a hinge on which the story turns?" A good scene for this activity in *King of Masks* is the scene in which Wang has learned that Doggie is a girl and he throws her a bag of coins and pushes his junk off from the landing, but when she cries out to him and leaps into the water to swim to the junk, he jerks off his shirt and jumps in to save her. He has grown attached to this young caring child who calls him *grandpa* and who is filling a void in his life, even though she has turned out to be a girl. In another scene, Doggie from a rooftop, threatens the police captain, in public, that she will fall to her death if he does not give his word that he will release old Wang from execution for a crime he did not commit. She falls, and you must watch the movie to learn the outcome.

Students can repeat the graphic organizer exercise in which they answer the question, "*Does a character in the story change or grow in some way?*" There is no question that Wang, King of Masks, develops a whole new view of the value of girls, at least of *his* girl, from the view he had at the beginning of the film. They can also repeat the graphic organizer exercise answering the question, "*Is there a significant or important lesson or message in the story?*"

Tackling the CAPT question: "Does the story have effective qualities, making it a good story?"

This is as good a time as any to introduce the Language Arts CAPT question, "What qualities does the story have that make it effective literature?" This brings me back to my rationale for designing this unit; students do not have the vocabulary they need to answer such questions. Prompts for this question vary widely from very literal characteristics such as : *lots of details or lots of action* , to abstract characteristics such as: *an important lesson/message or a believable story*. As this unit progresses, students will develop a list of terms they can use to answer this CAPT question. Of course they already have started this list by making observations about the *conflict in a story* and backing it up with evidence (quotes or scenes); by making observations about whether a *character changes* in the course of a story; *at first, but then, and finally* and backing these up with evidence (quotes or scenes); and making observations about the *lesson in the story* and backing it up with evidence (quotes or scenes). These three characteristics alone make a good case for an effective or good story. And *King of Masks* has all three: conflict, character change, and lesson or message.

Students don't have to finish a story or film to revisit the question, "With which events or characters in the story do you or someone you know relate?" Since the unit focuses on the anxiety experienced by children on their way to growing up, students might consider how the anxiety of Canada, Ali, and Doggie interrelates. And as the future of three Aborigine girls in *Rabbit-Proof Fence* changes in a matter of minutes, students can assess their anxiety on their 1,200-mile trek *to growing up* .

Aborigine girls run away from racism and bigotry on a 1,200-mile trek in Rabbit-Proof Fence

Rabbit-Proof Fence is based on a true story about three girls abducted from their mother and grandmother and taken to an internment camp where they and other girls who were labeled *half-castes* (one parent was Aborigine and the other was Caucasian) were brought up to be domestics and were not allowed to marry Aborigine men. A special law known as the Aborigines Act identified the Chief Protector of Aborigines as the legal guardian of every Aborigine in Western Australia. He had the power to remove any *half-caste* , as they were called , child from its family and ship him or her off to an internment camp. This is a story of the sheer determination of three girls, two sisters and a cousin, who escape from the camp and literally walk 1,200 miles back to their home. . . pursued, all the while, by trackers and police.

Molly, the eldest sister who is fourteen at the time of the abduction, begins narrating the film in the language of her people when she is an old woman, and she conveys the history and events that lead to her abduction along with her sister Daisy and their cousin Gracie. Then we slip into the 1930's, which is when the incident occurred. In fact, from the moment the film begins, we hear Aboriginal women chanting. Students would have no trouble, by now, identifying five things in this culture that differ from their own and sharing them with the class for extra credit.

Unlike Doggie in *King of Masks* , these three girls have a mother and a home to which they are determined to return, even though the law gives their *protector* and legal *guardian*, a Mr. A.O. Neville , the authority to relocate them in internment camps. Doggie, as you recall, has been sold eight times and has no one to call family. So a fair amount of growing up comes with the anxiety these children are experiencing.

Because this is the third film in the unit, it seems appropriate to tackle all five of the essential questions introduced in the second section of the unit. In the first fifteen minutes of the film, the problem and horrific conflict have been established. The girls have been wrenched from their mother's arms and hauled off to camp. The question that remains is, "How in the world will it be resolved?" This is a perfect moment for the students to *write an initial response* , using some of the prompts they have gathered. Certainly predicting the outcome seems appropriate. Perhaps thinking about the title and the fact that the fence runs right past the tiny settlement where the girls have lived with their mother and extended female family might pose some speculation.

Students could begin a *graphic organizer*, making observations on *the conflict* so far, and add to it once the girls escape from the internment camp and begin their 1,200-mile odyssey home. Except that this is based on a true story and in the end we meet two very old women, Molly and Daisy who actually walked the walk; it is almost unfathomable that children could have survived this ordeal.

There is certainly fodder for the question on whether a *character changes* : *at first, but then, and finally* .

There are about fifteen scenes for students to choose from to answer the question, " *How does this scene relate* to a character or to the elements of the story?" Prompts to fall back on here are: What does this scene show about a character? or how does this scene show an important part of the lesson? Students might look for the scenes that serve as the hinges upon which the plot turns.

By now students should be expecting the question, " *What is the lesson or message* of the story?" "What is it that the director wanted to express or *expose* ?" "How did he do it?" When we first meet Mr. A.O. Neville, the camera lens is looking up at him from his desk. Students might consider whether they liked him when they first saw him. No doubt, we will have discussed this in the opening scenes. The camera does a "take" on Mr. Neville at the internment camp when he calls Molly to come to him. As she walks towards him, Molly's eyes are the lenses, and we approach Mr. Neville through a narrow viewfinder. Again, students might think about how they liked him in that scene. This question of the lesson or message should generate discussion and can be laid out on a graphic organizer with their observations on the left and detailed incidents to support them on the right.

The two remaining questions are: "In what ways does the story, a character, or an event *relate to the students* or someone they know or a story they have read or a film they have seen. Even though this story takes place in Western Australia in the 1930's what might it have in common with how societies treat people today? Wasn't the strategy to cleanse Western Australia of the Aborigines, altogether? Isn't that the gist of Mr. A.O. Neville's slide show to the white women in Perth? Doesn't this sound familiar?

Finally, there is the question as to *whether the story is effective* . By now, students should have built up a list of prompts that they can visit to help them with this question. We might brainstorm all of the prompts that students have by now to help them make this determination. Students also will have the graphic organizers they have completed on this film, and their storyboards that I have not mentioned for this film, but that I highly recommend.

A young man wants justice when his friend robs him in *The Greedy Friend*

The storyboard for *A Greedy Friend* will be easy and brief, considering the whole story fits on an eight and a half by eleven-inch page. It is also a good transition from viewing films, to reading literature, to planning their own stories for the final project.

This story could be a self-assessment activity in which, once more students practice their Language Arts skills in response to *the essential questions*, and also demonstrate for themselves the skills they have learned: (a) an initial response following a reading; (b) how a character grows and/or changes; (c) how a passage or quote they choose is significant to the story; (d) how they connect to the story; (e) how a conflict can be experienced with levels of anxiety; (f) what the lesson or theme is; (g) whether and how it has the characteristics of an effective or good story; and finally (h) their storyboard with a representation of each scene with a caption. (For (b) how a character grows or changes in the story, see Lesson plan # 1.)

The Greedy Friend is a story set in a Muslim culture where the *cadi's* or judge's ruling is based on traditional Islamic religious law. According to the story, the punishment for a thief is to chop off his hands. That is the

punishment that Anpu wants the judge to render on his greedy *friend* Bata, who he thinks stole the gold coins that Anpu had buried in the back yard before he went on a journey to visit his sick father. Anpu becomes very frustrated when the judge inquires whether Anpu saw Bata take the gold coins.

Not only did Anpu not see Bata take the coins, although he is certain that he did, the *cadi* admits to Anpu that Bata bribed him to not listen to him when Anpu came accusing Bata of stealing. The plot thickens! First Anpu has the anxiety of what to do with his money while he is on his journey to keep it safe from his friend who has turned greedy; then he has the heightened anxiety of learning from the *cadi* that he does not plan to mete out the traditional punishment to Bata because, the *cadi* says he feels it is too harsh, and Anpu admits that he did not see Bata steal the coins. Anpu's anxiety level rises yet again when he learns that the *cadi* has taken a bribe in coins from Bata. While it is Bata who has taken Anpu's coins, the conflict in the story is between Anpu and the *cadi*.

The *cadi* shows Anpu how to bring Bata to justice that teaches him a hard lesson, and the *cadi* also teaches Anpu a profound lesson about punishment and justice. In the end, Anpu gets all of his gold coins back and Bata gets punished. In the end, the reader also learns a very significant lesson about justice.

Students might brainstorm evidence that this story takes place in a Muslim culture or, at the very least, that it takes place in a culture other than their own.

The names *cadi*, Anpu, and Bata are give-aways, as is the use of gold coins, and so is the traditional punishment for burglary.

This short, short story has all of the skills that the Language Arts CAPT measures, a. through h. Students who are able to demonstrate aptitude in these skills, have hard evidence that they have mastered them.

Final storytelling project

By now, students will have fair amount of experience identifying several principles of storytelling. This might be an opportunity to brainstorm the common elements of the stories they have read and watched in film: a changing character is central to an effective story; many of the stories have lots of details; we learn from whose perspective we are viewing the characters when we know whose voice is telling the story; an effective story has a conflict, a lesson or theme; the stories we have read and viewed all have focused on children or youth who grow up on varying degrees of anxiety that manifest the conflict in the story.

Students will feature children growing up on anxiety in their own stories, choosing from their own life experiences, their observations or fabrications. As they begin to brainstorm their own stories, they can refer to their lists of terms and prompts they have compiled as we have responded to the stories we have read and viewed. They can think about skills a. through h. in *The Greedy Friend* .

The first test of their stories, once they have written out a draft, will be to assess them as they did the other stories they read or viewed, completing a graphic organizer on character change and one on conflict generated by anxiety, and a graphic organizer identifying the lesson or theme in their story, etc. Once they have passed this test, they will lay them out on storyboards, including, along with a sketch, the narrative and dialogue that will appear on each page.

There are many ways to convert storyboards into little books, depending on resources, ambition, and time constraints. This decision I will leave to the teachers. However, in the bibliography I have recommended an excellent book for crafting storybooks. Students will share or present their storybooks to the rest of the class.

Lesson plan # 1 Charting the changes or growth in Anpu's character in The Greedy Friend

Objective: Using a landscape-format graphic organizer, students will practice making observations and finding evidence showing how a character changes or grows in understanding, in a story. Because the focus of this unit is how children *grow up* through the experience of anxiety, students will specifically home in on how the main character is experiencing this emotion.

Once we have read the story and discussed the students' written responses to it, including our theme of anxiety, on a graphic organizer that is divided into six parts (three on the left and three on the right) they will enter on the top, left side their observations about Anpu's anxiety beginning with the prompt "At first," and on the right side, they will *copy* sentences or passages from the story that support their observations. I always ask them to include the page number where they found the support. The left, middle section has the prompt, "And then," and they will make observations about how Anpu's level and focus of anxiety changes in the middle of the story, or changes from how he is "At first." They also will back up these observations with sentences or passages copied from the story. On the left side of the graphic organizer, at the bottom, they will write their observations about Anpu's level of anxiety at the end of the story, using the prompt, "But finally," and on the right side they will copy sentences or passages to back them up.

Ultimately, they will make a judgment, using their observations and evidence on the graphic organizer as to whether and how Anpu learned and grew in understanding about himself and the world as the result of the anxiety he experienced. This exercise could lead to observations on the lesson in the story that could be used to answer the *essential question* , "Is this an *effective* story?"

Lesson plan # 2 Ali, in Children of Heaven, experiences layers of anxiety simultaneously

Objective: Using what might be called a concentric, landscape-format graphic organizer, students will make observations as to the layers of anxiety that Ali is experiencing at the same time. In Lesson plan # 1, students documented how anxiety levels change; in this exercise, they will be asked to determine how a character may experience multiple anxieties simultaneously. The graphic organizer for this exercise might be a circle in the center with the words *Ali's Anxieties* ; then emanating from this circle are bigger circles, so that the layers of anxiety can be recorded. Ultimately this exercise can lead the students back to the *essential questions* : "In what ways do you connect with the character, and/or how does the character of Ali help make *Children of Heaven* an effective story?"

In the case of this lesson, students will be asked, as they view the film, to watch for incidents that result in

anxiety for Ali, such as, the very first scenes in which he misplaces Zahra's pink shoes at the produce shop, upsetting several baskets of fruit and vegetables searching for them, and being driven away, without the shoes, by the owner. These anxieties will also show up in the students' storyboards.

But, the layers that seem most obvious are the anxieties that Ali experiences in relation to the loss of the shoes and his worry over the reaction from his parents; his mother is ill and bed-ridden, and tries to work what little she can to earn a few extra coins; his father is very strict, and from the conversation between the children about what might happen to them as the result of his learning about the loss of the shoes, we learn that their father spansks or beats them as punishment for wrong-doing; the parents are very poor and Ali knows that they cannot simply replace the shoes he has lost by buying another pair. He carries all of this guilt and worry around with him.

Another layer of anxiety that Zahra does not let Ali forget, throughout the movie is, that *he* is responsible for losing her shoes and that somehow *he* has to provide shoes, or at the very least, something for her to wear on her feet so she can go to school. It is clear that going to school is highly valued, and simply staying home is not an option in their culture.

Ali experiences major anxiety at school because the arrangements he works out with Zahra to share his shoes is making him late to school every day. He is threatened with being expelled by the principal if he is late one more day, and the viewer and Ali both know that this is inevitable. This threat also, no doubt, plays into the anxiety he is having about being found out by his parents

Ali's solution to win a pair of sneakers in a race heightens and adds another layer to Ali's anxiety because first, having missed the tryouts, he has to insist that he be allowed to be in the race. This scene with the coach produces major anxiety for Ali who is not an aggressive person but he has to insist and persist in his determination to be in the race. Once he is in the race, he must come in third, not win, because the third-place reward is a pair of sneakers. Coming in first or second will be a disaster for him. There are dozens and dozens of boys running the long, winding race, and another boy trips Ali en route. He is all but done for, and he *is* done for, when, in the chaos of the finish, he wins the race and a huge trophy, instead of the sneakers. Students might debate what anxiety this failure will produce when he has to face Zahra.

Once students have interacted with this graphic organizer and completed it, they will be asked, either on their own, in pairs, or as a group, to make observations as to how they think Ali has grown up as the result of all of this anxiety he has experienced.

This could easily lead to a writing activity, bringing them back to the *essential questions*. Students might write about how they connect with Ali and his layers of anxieties, when in their own lives, they have experienced multiple anxieties simultaneously. They might consider whether the character of Ali qualifies *Children of Heaven* as an effective story; one of the qualities of an effective story is that it has a believable, convincing character that experiences growth and change in the course of the story.

Lesson plan # 3 Comparing anxiety experienced by the main characters in stories we have read and viewed and written, and how each, though different, was a growing experience.

Objective: Because my students have a difficult time with the skill of making connections, this third lesson is an opportunity to practice this by revisiting the main character in each of the stories students have read, viewed and written for their final project, and comparing and contrasting the anxieties and resulting growth that these characters have experienced.

This lesson might well lend itself to a landscape-format graphic organizer with three columns, divided horizontally into as many stories as students have read, plus the one they have written. This would include at least these six: Geoffrey Canada, Ali, the three girls in *Rabbit-proof Fence*, Doggie, Anpu, and the main character in their own story. The graphic organizer will, no doubt, be two pages.

In column one, on the left side, students will identify the main anxiety experienced by the character, labeling the story and naming the character; in column two, in the middle, they will explain how the main character handled this anxiety; and in column three, students will conclude how this was a growing experience as the result of columns one and two.

I will model filling in the columns for the first character, Geoffrey Canada, in his selection from his autobiography, *FistStickKnifeGun*. Students can help me with this as I write it on a transparency and project it onto the screen. Students can use the graphic organizers and notes in their folders, and their storyboards to complete the rest of the chart.

Once they have completed this, they will be able to draw some conclusions as to similarities among the anxieties that the characters experienced and make connections. This could become a writing exercise answering the *essential question*, "What connections can you make among the characters and their anxieties?" They may include themselves and other stories if they wish.

It is my hope that this lesson will reinforce that this unit is based on a common theme, unifying everything we have read, viewed, and written. Students can use this lesson as a self-evaluation of their own understanding of what they have learned. The degree to which they are able to complete this graphic organizer should be one indication for them of their understanding of the content of the unit and their ability to organize what they have learned.

Students who have completed all assignments and would like to earn extra credit, may rent the film *Finding Forrester* or *Always Outnumbered* and complete: a character change chart, a lesson chart, and the three column chart described in Lesson plan # 3.

Appendix A: prompts suggested for this unit

For an initial response to a story, students might begin with:

At first I thought. . . but now I think. . .

This reminds me of . . .

This character makes me think of . . .

This story is similar to . . .

What I want to know is. . .

When students pick out what they think is an important quote or passage or a scene in a film to write about, they might think about:

This quote, passage, or scene. . . shows . . .about the character. . .;

This quote, passage, or scene. . . identifies the conflict. . . in the story;

This quote, passage, or scene. . . expresses the lesson. . . in the story;

This quote, passage, or scene. . . is the turning point in the story because. . .

When students are making observations about how characters change and grow they might use the three prompts:

At first. . . . (This prompt establishes how the character is before the change)

But then. . .

And finally . . .

When students are trying to make connections to the story, they might consider:

This character makes me think of. . .

This story is similar to. . .

The decision made by in the story reminds me of when I . . .

This setting reminds me of. . .

When students are practicing the skill of evaluating whether the story is good or effective, these prompts might be useful:

This story has lots of details;

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The characters are believable because. . .

The story relates to me because. . .

The story has a surprise ending;

The story has an important lesson;

The character(s) in the story learned or grew in understanding as the result of. . .

Appendix B: Language Arts Standards in this unit

Because my unit includes film as well as literature, the references to *texts* in the Standards often apply to film as well as literature. My unit focuses on the following Standards:

Content Standard 1: Reading and Responding

1.3 reflect on the text to make judgments about its meaning and quality

Students will answer what I call the *essential questions* in *text* and *film rendering* and, ultimately, make judgments as to whether the texts and films are effective stories.

1.11 make inferences about ideas implicit in narrative texts.

Students will infer from the stories in the texts and films to what extent the main characters are growing from anxiety they are experiencing. As part of this activity, they will respond to prompts throughout the unit.

Content Standard 2: Producing Texts

2.4 engage in the process of generating ideas, drafting, revising, editing and publishing or presenting.

Following a process that includes storyboards, students will produce their own stories about children growing up or maturing as the result of experiencing anxiety. These stories may be about themselves or fictional, but they will have many models to use as the result of the stories they have read and viewed in the unit.

Content Standard 3: Applying English Language Conventions

3.3 use variations of language appropriate to purpose, audience and task.

Students will become skilled at using a variety of prompts to answer essential questions that are spelled out in the second section of the unit.

Content Standard 4: Exploring and Responding to Texts

4.6 demonstrate an understanding that literature represents, recreates, shapes and explores human experience through language and imagination.

The nucleus of this unit is about human experience and how young people grow up as the result of experiencing anxiety. Students will hone the skill of observing these anxieties as they are experienced by characters in the stories; connecting these experiences to their own lives and the lives of people they know; and finally writing a story about their own human experience or that of a fictional character.

Working bibliography

Berriault, Gina. *Women in Their Beds*. Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 1996.

Contains Berriault's story *Stone Boy*.

A young boy goes with his brother to hunt rabbits and to pick peas on their farm. As they are climbing through a fence, his gun accidentally fires, killing his brother. The young boy is so stunned he appears not to react or have any emotions, and everyone including his parents and neighbors think he is a callous, uncaring boy, while what is really going on is profound turmoil and terrible anxiety inside his head and heart. He definitely grows up as the result of this incident.

Canada, Geoffrey. *FistSticksKnifeGun*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Geoffrey Canada tells the harrowing story of his life, growing up in the South Bronx. In particular, the vignette I used from this autobiography deals with when he was five years old and he learned that he had to fight his very best friend or be called a sissy and spend his days inside with his mother.

Corrigan, Timothy and Patricia White. *The Film Experience, an Introduction*. Boston:

Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

This book gives teachers many practical tools that they and their students can use in viewing films critically. This book lays out a way

for students to view, talk about, and write about films they view.

Faulkner, William. *Collected Stories by William Faulkner* . New York: Vintage, 1995. Contains Faulkner's short story *Barn Burning*.

A boy must make a profoundly life-altering decision whether to turn in his father for lighting a barn full of horses on fire. It is about where one's loyalty and sense of morality lie, and it is fraught with anxiety that challenges the boy to grow up.

author unknown, *The Greedy Friend* , *The Hartford Courant*, several years ago.

(contact me and I will email you this story.)

A story about two Islamic boys who have been friends, who move to the city to try to make a living. But one, Bata, steals the other's, Anpu's, money and Anpu wants revenge. It is the story of Anpu suffering anxiety and the loss of his money when the cad, the judge, will not simply render the prescribed punishment in Islamic religious law for stealing, which is to chop off Bata's hands. In the end, Anpu gets his money back and learns an important lesson, and Bata learns a lesson and keeps his hands.

Gutherie, Donna, Nancy Bentley, Kathy Keck Arnsteen. *The Young Author's Do-It-Yourself Book*. Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, 1994.

This marvelous book takes students step -by-step through the process of assembling a storybook.

Marshall, James Vance. *Walkabout* . Littleton, MA: Sundance Publishing, 1959.

An urbane girl and her brother, thirteen and eight respectively, from South Carolina in the 1950's are the only survivors of a plane crash in the Australian Outback. Their survival depends on a chance encounter with a thirteen year-old Aborigine on his walkabout. The southern thirteen year-old girl struggles with the prejudice she has learned back in South Carolina, trying to decide whether to be rescued from certain death by this very dark-skinned, largely naked boy, or whether, terrified that he might rape her, to run for her life.

Tough, Paul. "The Harlem Project." *The New York Times Magazine* , June 20, 2004.

A compelling article about Geoffrey Canada's program to radically change the lives of inner-city kids in Harlem, changing their school experience, their families, and their neighborhoods. . .all at once. Interesting background on Geoffrey Canada.

Films:

Always Outnumbered, Dir. Michael Apted, Palomar Pictures, 1998. (104 min. VHS / DVD)

Adapted from a book by the same name by Walter Mosley, the movie is about the relationship between Socrates Fortlow, stunningly played by Lawrence Fishburne, an ex-convict who served 27 years for a double murder, and a twelve year-old boy, Darryl, whose life is taking some dead end turns, where they both live in the Compton section of Los Angeles. Darryl has some very serious issues, with which he must deal, having been present when a bully in his gang killed another boy. Socrates mentors Darryl who has tremendous anxiety and guilt about this and about how to deal with the gang.

Children of Heaven , Dir. Majid Majidi, Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, 1997. (88 min. VHS / DVD)

A young Iranian boy, Ali, inadvertently loses his younger sister's only pair of shoes on his way home from the shoe repair shop. This

is a charming story of his struggle to find a way to replace the shoes that disappeared under his care. His parents have little on which to subsist therefore purchasing another pair of shoes is out of the question, and because his father is very strict, even telling him will result in a beating for both Ali and his sister. The two are quite inventive in the way that they try to resolve the dilemma.

Finding Forrester, Dir. Gus Van Sant, Columbia Pictures, 2000. (133 min. VHS / DVD)

The movie is based on the unlikely relationship between a hip, urban, African American teen-age boy with a penchant for basketball and writing, and a reclusive, sixties-something Euro-American, Pulitzer Prize winning writer who becomes the former's mentor, but not without tremendous tension, mistrust, and several layers of anxiety on both sides. Although one is a teen-age boy and one is a sixty-something year-old man, they both grow from their relationship.

Into the West, Dir. Mike Newell, Miramax Films, 1992. (97 min. VHS / DVD)

Accused of a crime of stealing a horse that actually adopted them, two young brothers with their roots in the country, ride on their "magical white horse," out of Dublin, Ireland, across the country and into the West, in an all-out effort to save their horse from being claimed and taken by a wealthy, sinister, Irish business man who wants it for its amazing jumping skills. The pursuit is hot, the boys' father (Gabriel Byrne) and members of a gypsy group that the father, boys and their deceased mother were part members of, help search for the illusive boys and horse. The boys suffer through tremendous anxiety worrying whether they will be caught and lose their beloved white horse.

King of Masks, Dir. Tian-Ming Wu, Shaw Brothers, 1996. (101 minutes VHS / DVD)

Wang, an aging street performer skilled at switching masks instantaneously, wants to pass his craft on to a male heir before he dies, but unfortunately he has no children. On the black market, he buys an eight year-old boy (apparently a practice in the China of 1930's) and in a short time they bond and Wang treats him like a son. All is well until Wang discovers to his horror that his boy is actually a *girl*, and he abandons her. This is the tender, suspenseful story of "Doggie," the name he has given the "boy," confronting the anxiety of abandonment by the old man, when she has been bought and sold on the black market, already, as many times as she is old.

Rabbit-proof Fence, Dir. Phillip Noyce, Australian Film Commission, 2002. (94 min. VHS / DVD)

In 1931, three interracial Aborigine girls escape from an internment camp where they had been taken against their will to be taught how to be domestics. The movie is the story of their sheer determination in the face of horrific obstacles to walk 1,200 miles back home, following a fence that goes right through the tiny village where they live with their mother and grandmother

Walkabout, Dir. Nicolas Roeg, 20th Century Fox, 1971. (100 min. VHS / DVD)

Based on a novella by James Vance Marshall, two urban Australian children, abandoned in the Australian Outback, meet up with an Aborigine on his walkabout, his rite of passage. While the survival of the two children depend upon the Aborigine, the 13 year-old girl is terrified of the 14 year-old Aborigine boy and her anxiety causes her to nearly abandon him several times, which would mean death for her and her brother. The Aborigine boy has his own anxieties about the fear that he senses in Mary, and in the end, while he is able to aim them towards a way out, he dies. Because he hangs himself in a tree, I do not recommend this for any student younger than ninth grade.

Whale Rider, Dir. Niki Caro, New Zealand Film Commission, 2002. (94 min. VHS / DVD)

A young Maori girl, Paikea, struggles to fulfill her destiny to become the chief of her Maori tribe in New Zealand, against the wishes of her grandfather and against a long tradition of male chieftains. Her anxiety levels rise as one obstacle after another is thrown in her way, but with the heart and resolve of a chief, she overcomes them one by one.

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