



## Introduction

The seminar set out to track down the figure of the stranger, in various settings and various guises, in modern literature. We faced the question of how to teach authors like William Blake, William Faulkner, Amiri Baraka, Robert Heinlein, and Ntozake Shange in a single framework; and we faced the problem of how to introduce their works at the early levels, and sustain them at the later levels of secondary education.

At the outset our project seemed necessary, finite, and likely to be fun. Succeeding weeks were to confirm its importance and appeal, while at the same time revealing its tendency to radiate outward toward infinity; we actually added a text or two during our sessions. We concluded that the versatility of our theme was all to the good, since it gave both a definite focus for the group and also room for a great diversity of individual interests.

The participants in the seminar responded vigorously in such a context. Their units deal with the stranger from viewpoints as diverse as science fiction and the experience of young students as reflected in original poetry. They take up alienation as though it were “inalienable” and again incidental; and in yet a third instance explore the opposite of alienation, namely, utopia. They draw on modern philosophy and history, as well as popular songs. They center on one poet, or range among many writers and many genres. What they have in common is a blending of critical intensity and teacherly integrity and pride.

These units have been prepared as illustrations, not as blueprints, for particular teachers in particular situations. Some of the units may seem capable of adoption, direct and wholesale, as part of a course; some may ask to be treated as forecasts of a course that particular teachers could readily develop into their own material form. I can only say that all the units were produced as free documents for free consideration. I am pleased with their verve, and insight, and substance, and proud, on behalf of my fellow teachers, to think of their usefulness extending beyond a single classroom.

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