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[We Are Not Foreigners]:
BRIDGING CULTURAL GAPS THROUGH MIDDLE EASTERN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN THE SECONDARY LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

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For Mom and Dad

Your struggles and triumphs alone in a strange new land

have always reminded me that anything is possible with faith and persistence.

This work would be nothing without you.

وأبي ليامي

وغربيبة جديدة أرض في وحدها والانصارات للفاحك
والبحث انREAالم مع مبلكن شيء لعل أن دائما ذكرني وقدم.
بدونك شيء أي عمل يتلون أن شأنه من هذا.

A küzdelmek és győzelmeit egyedül egy különös, új föld

Mindig eszembe, hogy bármihelyeles hittel és kitartással.

Ez a munka nem lenne más, nélküled.
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INTRODUCTION

We Are Not Foreigners

My senior thesis project has been looming over my head like an ominous raincloud since the first day of my freshman year of college. I always looked upon the upperclassmen with awe as they rattled off their thesis topics without breaking down in tears or having a full-blown panic attack, but, even more interestingly, with passion and excitement in their eyes. In my mind, I was going to have that “aha!” moment when everything would fall into place, and I’d know exactly what I was going to write and what my purpose for writing would be. However, that light bulb moment of clarity never came for me—instead, as I look back and think about this process, from brainstorming to editing final drafts of the following five chapters, I have come to realize that my eureka moment was not a moment, but rather the first 21 years of my life in their entirety.

I am blessed to have grown up in a very diverse home. Both of my parents are immigrants who came to America with nothing but the clothes on their backs and the change in their pockets. My dad escaped from Communist Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s, and my mom fled a brutal civil war in Lebanon in the 1980s. My childhood home was always buzzing with the smells of exotic spices and foods, TV channels featuring news and reality shows from Europe and Asia, quirky traditions like drying smoked sausages by hanging them from the rafters of our garage every winter, and
strange chatter in a multitude of languages shouted over the telephone (because, you know, you need to yell for people to hear you overseas, even on the phone). My father’s family is relatively small, and his only sister lives just a half hour away from us, so my connection to the Hungarian side of my family is not as strong as the one to my Lebanese family. My mother, the eldest daughter of 11, constantly told me stories of her beautiful home country; her mother and father, whom I finally met for the first time at seven years old; her siblings, three of whom were tragically lost during the war; her days picking cucumbers and watermelons on her father’s farm to take into the city; how she’d dropped out of school at 16 to find a job to support her large family that was incredibly poor. It all sounded like a dream to me.

I traveled to Lebanon with my parents for the first time in 2000, and while I remember that I had more fun than I’d ever had before, playing with my cousins from Australia and being spoiled by my uncles who didn’t have children of their own yet, I don’t have many specific memories of that trip. The first clear memory I have relating to my heritage is September 11, 2001, because that is the day that things changed for America and the Middle East forever.

From that moment on, I began to notice little moments of injustice around me. I knew that the actions of the people who terrorized our country that day were disgusting and cowardly, but it seemed absolutely ridiculous when people assumed that all Arabs were terrorists, too. Certainly, no one in my family had any intention of ever causing harm to another human being, especially to the country that my mom, dad, and I lived in. It didn’t make sense to me. When my aunt couldn’t get a visa to
come visit us for the holidays, or when my uncle was searched multiple times in the airport after his first visit to the United States, I knew something wasn’t right, but I couldn’t find the words to articulate what it was.

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Over spring break, I was out with friends watching a soccer game at a sports bar when two young men came over to our table and struck up a conversation. They were very friendly and chatty—we talked about where we were from, where we went to school, what we were studying—and then somehow the conversation shifted to our heritages. When I brought up my Lebanese ancestry, one of the boys joking began calling me “ISIS.” He said it with a teasing smile, and we all laughed, but as the conversation carried on I silently sat and mulled over what had just happened. This stranger that I had never met in my life thought it was appropriate to associate me with this militant Islamic group wreaking havoc in the Arab world solely because I am of Middle Eastern descent. This eerily echoed the detainment of Japanese-Americans during World War II since, of course, all Japanese people were enemies to the American public at that time. What’s more, we all laughed about his comment as if it were okay, which made me realize how much this attitude of misunderstanding and assumption is ingrained in our everyday lives. Imagine a man and woman who have just met and are amicably talking, when he suddenly tells her one of those favorite classic lines—“women belong in the kitchen” or “go make me a sandwich.” I find it hard to imagine that any self-respecting woman would sit idly by and laugh at this nasty comment that a stranger was making about her, and yet we all sat around and
accepted the fact that this man at the bar was making a rather offensive statement not just about me, but, more importantly, about an entire race of people. So when he called me “ISIS” again, I told him that his calling me that wasn’t okay. His response? “Chill out, ISIS, it’s just a joke. I’m teasing you.”

But I’m tired of “chilling out” and accepting these things as an inherent part of everyday life. I’m tired of seeing my family members get wary looks when they speak Arabic in public places. I’m tired of people warning me that I shouldn’t travel to my mother’s homeland because I could get killed or kidnapped. I’m tired of being stopped in airports for those wonderful and numerous “random” security scans because of the destination on my boarding pass. I am one small person, and I know that I cannot change the world over night, but this work that I have poured all my energy and heart into over the past year is my call to put an end to the prejudice and bigotry that Arab people are subjected to on a daily basis. At 21, I have found the words and means to articulate the things that I have watched my family undergo, whether consciously or unconsciously, for as long as I can remember.

My love of literature and sharing it with others has been a driving force in my life since I first learned to read. Because of this, I can see no better way to spread understanding about the Middle East and its people than through stories—stories about real people who have real problems in real places that aren’t so different from the things we experience in the West. The recognition that Arabs are not the “Other,” as Edward Said and other post-colonialists have termed them, but instead a large and important part of the “We” is the first step to bridging the gap between the East and
West. And, as a future secondary teacher, I cannot see a better place to start than with young, impressionable minds that will lay out the blueprints for tomorrow’s world.

In this study, I examine five pieces of young adult literature that are of or about the Middle East. Each work is of a different genre—fiction, nonfiction, poetry, short story collection, and graphic novel—in order to show the wide range of literature available, as well as the diversity of options for teaching each of these genres. The five chapters critically analyze each of the works, justifying the literary value and necessity of these pieces in the secondary language arts curriculum. In my analysis, I employ symbol analysis, Visual Thinking Strategies, psychological theory, and other lenses through which to examine the works, in addition to discussing teaching strategies for grades 7-12 English language arts educators to utilize. Finally, this work culminates with a series of appendices featuring ready-to-use lesson plans, project ideas, and models. These, in addition to the critical analysis of the aforementioned novels of study, round the project out by providing educators with direct gateways to bring literature of the Middle East into their classrooms.

They are not foreigners. We are not foreigners. We are, universally, the inhabitants of this great rock spiraling through the stars. As the famous Persian poet Rumi wrote in his poem “Your First Eyes,”

    The rose does not care
    if someone calls it a thorn, or a jasmine.

    Ordinary eyes categorize human beings.
    That one is a Zoroastrian. This one a Muslim.

    Walk instead with the other vision given you,
    your first eyes. Bow to the essence
in human being. Do not be content with judging people good and bad. Grow out of that. (174).
CHAPTER ONE

Shooting Kabul:
Looking at History through the Literary Lens

The morning of September 11, 2001 was a moment in history that completely altered the trajectory of American daily life in more ways than one. “This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace,” President George W. Bush said in his address to the nation that evening, “America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world” (Bush 2001). Lives of Americans everywhere dramatically morphed when the Twin Towers came down on that infamous morning, and people from all walks of life gained a renewed patriotism and pride in our great country. Yet for many Arab-Americans, this pride was quickly followed by feelings of intolerance and endangerment as word came out that the day’s horrific events were planned and executed by the terrorist group Al-Qaeda, led by Saudi Arabian extremist Osama bin Laden.

In the days following the attacks, among the many reports trying to analyze the events were accounts of Arab-Americans facing new sorts of prejudices simply because of the way they looked or the clothes they wore. NPR reported instances of
vandalism and harassment, documenting some Americans’ bigotry towards Arab and Muslim people; as one man from Portland, Oregon is quoted saying,

> Any Arabs that actually are American citizens, it would behoove them to turn themselves in to the FBI for full-scale interrogation so that we can find out where their national interests truly lie and who’s with us and who’s against us, and if they ain’t with us, then as far as I’m concerned, they need to be exterminated as brutally as they exterminated us. (Scott 2001)

Another unnamed woman left an obscenity-ridden message on a Virginia mosque’s answering machine wishing death upon all Muslims (Scott 2001). And yet another NPR segment reported that racial profiling of Arab people was being condoned by officials, one of whom stated that “[t]his kind of profiling is different” since the attacks because “zeroing in on Arabs and Muslims only makes sense” (Marshall 2001).

Today, nearly fourteen years later, the events of that infamous day still remain as vivid as ever in the minds of millions of Americans. For some, however, it is just a foggy memory based on word of mouth. Steven Lynn offers an explanation of the distant nature of that which has already occurred, stating that

> [t]he pastness of the past means, again, that it exists now only as an absence, an empty space that is written upon ultimately by language. The crucial insight here, let me emphasize, is that history’s content and meaning are open to interpretation. (142)

Today’s high school seniors were about four or five years old in 2001, and thus, their memories of 9/11 are an absence, heavily based on the things they were told about it as they grew up rather than their own memories of that day. Because of this, their understandings of 9/11 are wholly different than those of the previous generation because they could not directly experience it, but instead experienced it secondhand
through the memories of the adults in their lives and the media. Traces of prejudice against Arabs and Muslims have been a part of daily conversation for nearly a quarter of these students’ lives. Books like N. H. Senzai’s debut novel, *Shooting Kabul*, can offer a window, or a lens, of understanding for these students, giving them the opportunity to draw conclusions about the world around them on their own while also providing a work of literary value and entertainment for young readers.

Xenophobic experiences like those previously discussed are reflected in Senzai’s novel, published less than ten years after the terrorist attacks of September 2001. In the novel, we meet Fadi and his family, who have fled the Taliban regime and are now living in San Francisco in late 2001. As the family escapes from Afghanistan, Fadi’s youngest sister, six-year-old Mariam, is lost in the crowd, and the family has no choice but to leave the Middle East without her. Throughout the novel, Fadi struggles with guilt for the loss of his sister, doubt of his own honor, and prejudice from classmates who bully him for his background. Like many Arabs in post-9/11 America, Fadi struggles to find where he fits in a newly torn world.

*Shooting Kabul* not only helps to shed light on the issues of prejudice against Arabs in the United States, but it also offers sophisticated syntax, dialogue, setting, symbolism, and more within the novel, certainly making it an important piece of literature in any English-language arts classroom. One motif of particular interest in the novel is that of the camera. Fadi’s favorite pastime is photography—hence the title *Shooting Kabul*—and he is often looking through his camera lens, looking for a perfect shot to capture the world around him. Fadi uses this lens, this artificial view of
the world, to dull the pain he feels when he thinks of his family’s displacement and the loss of his sister. Moreover, Fadi reflects on his experiences in America, a land foreign to him, as if he is looking at his surroundings through a camera lens, a stationary and powerless observer trapped behind a transparent shield: “He felt as though he were hidden behind a camera lens, watching another world whirl past in shattered fragments” (Senzai 84). Lenses function as windows to view and capture the visual world, and as viewers stand behind the lens, they examine their surroundings from an objective standpoint. However, the person on the other side of the lens is simply an observer, and a powerless one at that. It is impossible to transcend the lens, so the image perceived is the only experience of the opposite side that the individual can have. What’s more, the image can be either enhanced or distorted by the lens, just as a camera can focus in on a scene and blur out surroundings.

In light of this, we as Western readers also sit behind a lens of sorts when we read and interpret Senzai’s novel. Like a lens, novels such as this one function as a window, a transparent barrier, through which we can view the lives and experiences of others, since this book may function as our only window into the life and experiences of a Middle Eastern family. Thus, just as a lens alters and obscures what we see, our perceptions are often times obscured by the artificially created notions, or “lenses,” we have fabricated through our secondary experiences with the Middle East, because, as Steven Lynn points out, “[i]t is in fact probably presumptuous for us to assume the accuracy of our own perspective on what is historically important, in literature or society” (139). Through the novel, Senzai seeks to provide us with yet another lens to
look through—one that zooms in on and enhances, rather than blurring, our understandings and perceptions of Afghani culture and the aftermath of September 11 in the minds and lives of Middle Easterners.

In *Texts and Contexts*, author Steven Lynn examines a different kind of lens: critical literary theories. Chapter 6 of his study hones in on a series of theories that allow us as readers to better understand a literary work through careful study of the historical moment in which it occurs. Lynn reflects on the notion that history itself is a story to be interpreted and decoded by future generations, aligning fact and fiction as harmony rather than discord:

> Our tendency to separate history and literature—seeing one as fact, the other as fiction one as the background to the other—is collapsed by this insight [that history its itself a story]. So we cannot directly observe history, nor be scientific or objective about its facts or remains, because history must be interpreted; our reading of it is as subjective as our reading of any other texts. (Lynn 142)

In other words, it is through literature and fiction that we understand history, just as we understand history through literature (Lynn 143). One approach in this group of theories that is of particular interest in relation with *Shooting Kabul* is the cultural studies lens through which literature can be examined. This approach, according to Lynn, allows readers to recognize that our perceptions, or the lenses we look through as outsiders, are not always right, illuminating “where we are standing within our own culture as we look in on other cultures” (Lynn 149). Cultural studies theory in Senzai’s novel reveals the presence of the aforementioned lens as well as providing a new one to examine not only the novel, but also the events of 9/11.
Through the lens of this Afghan family seeking asylum in the U.S., we come to understand 9/11 in a new way, as Senzai’s novel and Fadi’s experience mirror the experiences of Americans of Middle Eastern descent across the nation. In a surface-level reading, it is easy to see how Senzai uses her novel as a means to bring about better understanding of Afghani culture and the religion of Islam. One strategy she employs to achieve this is consciously incorporating round characters that dispel misconceptions about Islam and life in Afghanistan. Through Fadi’s eyes, it is easy to see his father, Habib, as a role model and hero for his son. Thus, when Habib speaks about Islam, as readers, we too listen to and revere what he has to say:

Whenever someone is handed lots of power, they have a tendency to abuse it. The Taliban was a group of young religious students. When they first came to power, they brought peace and order to the country. But with time their strict interpretation of Islam began suppressing the people they’d helped free. (12)

In Habib’s interpretations of the Taliban’s actions and of how to properly practice Islam, Senzai reveals snippets of the Islamic dogma that are often misunderstood by Westerners. In these lines alone, any reader would be able to separate the Taliban rule from the Muslim people and recognize that just because Fadi and his family are of Afghani descent does not mean they support the actions of their government. In addition to Habib’s wise words, the dialogue Fadi engages in with his family also repels stereotypical perceptions of Islam: “The Taliban is oppressing everyone, with a version of Islam that they’ve cooked up. They’ve banned everything! Music, movies, books, photography, and kite flying. Show me where it says that in the Qur’an. Show me!” (12). The frustration expressed by Fadi’s older sister Noor in these lines clearly shows that the repressive practices of the Taliban are not characteristic of the Islamic
faith. Moreover, the fact that their version of the faith is “cooked up,” as Noor says, clearly states that the Taliban’s laws are their own creation and not those of the Islamic dogma. In addition to these statements regarding Islamic beliefs, other minor characters also reveal important Qu’ranic interpretations, such as in an imam’s reflection on the attacks: “…what the Qur’an is saying is that if we kill one human being, it is as if we have killed all of mankind, and if we save a human, it is as if we have saved all of mankind. That is the point we must understand. When you kill, you cease to be a true human” (157-58). In interweaving moments such as these with the action of the novel, Senzai subtly yet surely educates readers on what it means to be a Muslim.

Aside from this surface-level reading of the novel, Senzai also offers an opportunity for readers to dive deeper into the conflicts surrounding the effects of 9/11 on Arab-Americans. Fadi’s experience as an immigrant and new student in California is a lens into the lives of Arab-Americans post-9/11, and the triumphs and troubles he encounters are a mirror image of what so many in our country dealt with after the Twin Towers fell. Looking through the lens of Fadi’s point of view, we as readers can understand what it was like to be an Arab-American in the days, months, and years following the 9/11 attacks.

The novel begins with Fadi and his family in their home in Afghanistan, planning their escape from their dangerous homeland. Much of the book revolves around this escape and the loss of Fadi’s six-year-old sister, Mariam, for which he feels personally responsible. As the family continues on to the United States, hoping
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to have Mariam join them as soon as she is found, each of the family members struggle with the guilt of Mariam’s loss, although it is no one’s fault in actuality. Because Fadi is the main character, readers experience his guilt most clearly since it is the driving force behind all his behaviors and actions in the novel. He consistently questions his place in the family and feels that he has lost his honor, one of the principle virtues of Middle Eastern society. Jacob M. Fellure writes that in the Middle East, citizens “are most concerned with maintaining honor and avoiding shame” (270). Thus, because Fadi feels he is responsible for losing his sister, he also feels that he has lost his standing as a good citizen. Fellure continues, “In shame/honor-based societies, the entire group will feel the repercussions of one member’s offense” (272), which implies that Fadi also feels he has brought shame upon his family because of his actions. With this in mind, it is no surprise that he is so internally tormented throughout the novel. Similarly, just as the Afghani people we meet in Shooting Kabul are horrified at the actions of Osama bin Laden on 9/11 because he has brought shame upon the Middle Eastern people, many Arab-Americans also felt a collective shame for actions that were not their own. Fadi’s guilt and perceived loss of honor mirrors the feelings that many Arab-Americans experienced following the attacks, providing readers with a lens into the internal struggle the people of these so-called “shame/honor-based” cultures (Fellure 272).

Additionally, the bigotry Fadi faces after the attacks mirrors the racial slurs that many dealt with in the days and weeks following the attacks. Children at Fadi’s school call him and other Arabs names like “towel-headed” and “camel jockeys” (144,
145), harassing him both verbally and physically. Insults such as these certainly take a toll on Fadi as he works to find a way to travel back to Afghanistan to find Mariam. Among the most disturbing situations Fadi must deal with is the fact that some children in his class align him with the terrorists, suggesting that they are one and the same, as they rationalize their plans to assault Fadi, saying, “You asked for trouble when your terrorists attacked us” (145). It is these narrow-minded assumptions that all Arabs and Muslims are terrorists that caused problems for not only the characters in the book, but also for children of Middle Eastern descent across the country. The *Wall Street Journal* examined Arab-Americans’ reactions to the attacks and the new prejudices they faced, focusing in particularly on the experiences of Arab-American children who were now “running into problems,” as one student discussed how his classmates told him “you people are bombing us” and how he no longer felt comfortable speaking in Arabic or listening to Arabic music in public (Kaufman 2001). Indeed, it is foolish to assume that an entire ethnic group is responsible for the actions of a small group of individuals. Upon reading and perceiving Fadi’s experiences, one cannot help but see the blatant ignorance of the two boys bullying Fadi, which will undoubtedly translate into that same reader’s perceptions of Middle Easterners, detaching this ethnic identifier from the label of “terrorist.” Through heightened moments such as these, readers are able to draw connections between Fadi’s experiences and those of the Arab-American population, which can lead to a more wholesome understanding of this people.
Unlike the dozens of articles and video clips that cement 9/11, in history forever, *Shooting Kabul* offers a new point of view through which to examine the attacks. Where newspaper articles are static in their nature—unmoving and permanent, two-dimensional and detached—the novel is dynamic offering a vibrant portrait documenting not only the events of the day, but also the reactions of real-life, relatable individuals. 9/11 is no longer a black-and-white historical event in the history books; it is a colorful moment, and a real one at that, experienced by real people. When the monochromatic lens of television and newspaper lacks, the polychromatic lens that literature provides allows for a deeper immersion and thus understanding of one of the most monumental days in modern American history.
CHAPTER TWO

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and the Universal Human Experience

in *19 Varieties of Gazelle*

In the words of Aristotle, “Poetry […] is more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.” It is through poetry that we come to understand the human condition—its joy, its sorrow, its fury. No matter the language in which the medium is delivered, for centuries, human beings have come together through poetry and its spectacular power to transcend language and culture in capturing human experiences all people can relate to. It is through poetry that differences are relinquished and understanding is fostered. Therefore it is difficult to imagine coming to a greater understanding of diverse cultures—namely, recognizing the similarities shared amongst all cultures—without examining this art form.

When studying the shared human condition, one of the first theories that comes to mind is Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. In his initial study of human motivation, Maslow outlines the five basic categories of needs for self-fulfillment that are shared by all humans. These include physiological needs, like sustenance and shelter; safety needs, such as security of the self and possessions; love needs, which involve feeling accepted by family and peers; esteem needs, such as self-confidence and self-worth; and self-actualization needs, which means fulfillment of one’s goals
and desires (Simons, Irwin, and Drinnien 1-2). These needs, according to Maslow, must be met chronologically in order for the individual to develop properly. In other words, one cannot fulfill safety needs unless he or she has had all physiological needs taken care of. Thus, Maslow provides an explanation for why people who lack food and shelter are unable to attain self-actualization or fulfillment of their goals—until the most basic of needs are met, an individual is trapped at one of the lower levels of the hierarchy, holding him or her in a static limbo.

Janet A. Simons, Donald B. Irwin, and Beverly A. Drinnien break down Maslow’s ideas into more simplistic terms, stating that

This theory accurately describes many realities of personal experiences. Many people find they can understand what Maslow says. They can recognize some features of their experience or behavior which is true and identifiable but which they have never put into words. (1)

In this statement, we see the connection of Maslow’s theory to poetry in its ability to articulate the innermost thoughts and feelings of human beings, those that many others have not been able to articulate themselves. Therefore, Maslow’s hierarchy can be used as a gateway in discussions about universal developmental needs. Both the hierarchy and the poetic form of writing celebrate the universality of their essences; thus, poetry and Maslow’s theory can serve as a gateway into understanding one another and humanity as a whole.

Naomi Shihab Nye is acclaimed for her writing about her Middle Eastern roots and what it means to be an Arab-American. Her collection 19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East captures snippets of daily life in the Middle East, and while the collection of poems certainly emphasizes the glaring differences between life in
the Middle East and life in the West, it is through Maslow’s hierarchy that we can see
even more striking similarities between daily life in the East and West. In using this
lens to examine Nye’s poems, readers can see that no matter what part of the world we
live in, we are all the same at our core through our most basic needs. Each of the sixty
poems in the collection indirectly address some need of the hierarchy, whether it is
celebrating that one has been successfully met or lamenting the obstacles standing in
the way of meeting that goal. In this study, I will examine six poems that I have
selected to represent each of the levels of the hierarchy, probing into what Nye’s
words have to say about the implications of these basic, universal human needs and
desires.

Let us then begin with the first level of the hierarchy, which deals with the
most basic of human needs: food, shelter, and water. In the poem “Spark,” the speaker
observes two young gypsy girls passing through her village. She watches them
throughout the day and notes the differences between her and “them,” drawing a line
between her people and theirs. However, despite these differences—“their hillocks of
cheese / had been drying on a goat hide,” “their dark tents flapping,” and their
“[living] without roads” (4-5, 8, 12)—the speaker identifies with the gypsies and their
food, shelter, and lifestyles. Although they lead very different lives, she notes, “to live
without roads seemed one way / not to get lost” (12-13). In other words, just because
these gypsies do not have the same lifestyle as the one the speaker knows does not
mean that they are living incorrectly. Later, when she gives the two dancing girls
shoes from America and Greece, both of which are Western countries, she questions what they will do with them, since they traditionally do not wear shoes:

Maybe they would use them as vases, drawers. At least there were choices, not like a sword, which only did one thing, or a house, which sat and sat in the desert after the goats and music had blown away. (20-24)

As she reflects on how they might put these shoes to use, she decides that no matter what use they serve, it does not matter. Whereas we as Westerners wear the shoes on our feet, the gypsy girls using them in unique ways is in no way invalid. As Elizabeth Stork points out,

Generally speaking, in the last century, authors in several disciplines have explained our uniqueness and our differences on the one hand, and the chasms between individuals and groups caused by holding tight to what we know and expect of others on the other hand. Both thrusts add to the science of human behavior but distance us from an understanding about human nature in the main—what human beings desire and require. (1-2)

So long as the physiological needs of food, shelter, and clothing are met, the specifics do not matter; with their goat cheese and tents, the gypsies meet their needs in distinctive ways, which allows them to move towards self-fulfillment in their own means. Because these needs are met, the way they use the shoes is arbitrary at best. The differences in culture do not prevent them, like anyone of another culture, from reaching the highest level of Maslow’s hierarchy.

Just as “Spark” shows the different ways in which people have their needs met, Nye also demonstrates how people are unable to attain completion of many of the levels of the hierarchy due to the conditions under which they live. Simons, Irwin, and Drinnien state, “Maslow believes that the only reason that people would not move
well in the direction of self-actualization is because of hindrances placed in their way by society” (2). This phenomenon is seen frequently in war-torn societies, such as the one in the poem “Lunch in Nablus City Park.” The speaker of this poem eats her lunch in Nablus on a beautiful, calm day, despite the war that has just recently ravaged the area. Although life has gone on in the city of Nablus, the effects of war still hang heavy over the people living there, such as the old man who is “muttering / something about more to come” (7-8) or the old woman who “whispers / I don’t think we can take it anymore” (12-13). Even though life has gone back to seeming normalcy, the people of this town are held in a static state by the war that haunts them. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the young man who wanted to go to college in Texas: “He says the University of Texas seems remote to him / as Mars, and last month he stayed in his house / for 26 days. He will not leave, he refuses to leave” (21-23). Whereas he once dreamed of attending university in the United States, he is now unable to imagine a world without war and refuses, in fear, to leave his home, and thus he cannot attain self-fulfillment. The young unmarried woman also demonstrates the limbo Nablus is held at, as she refuses to get married until she falls in love (19-20). Her singlehood and suggested inability to find this true love she seeks proves that she, too, is stuck at the safety needs level of the hierarchy, and because of this, she cannot move to the next hierarchy level of love needs. The speaker, sitting in silence in a once-busy café, asks, “Where do the souls of hills hide / when there is shooting in the valleys?” which places emphasis on the “stuck” nature of the people living in Nablus (33-34). Despite the return to daily life, people are still caught in the aftereffects of the bombings and
the shootings, which holds them frozen in their place on the hierarchy as they seek safety and security. Without fulfillment of this level, the people cannot move forward, regardless of how much time passes, and it leaves the speaker (and reader) questioning whether or not true normalcy will ever return: “How can there be war / and the next day eating, a man stacking plates / on the curl of his arm, a table of people / toasting one another in languages of grace[?]” (36-39).

The third level of the hierarchy, as previously stated, is the level of love and belonging needs, which is addressed in the poem that inspires title of the anthology itself: “19 Varieties of Gazelle.” In the poem, the speaker reflects on her time in Bahrain observing gazelles at the wildlife sanctuary. “For years the Arab poets used ‘gazelle’ / to signify grace,” she writes before going on to say “[The gazelles] soared like history / above an empty page” (9-10, 15-16). The gazelle, the epitome of elegance, is a metaphor in this case for the human race, moving across the span of time and creating history. In Bahrain, the speaker is not only observing gazelles, but also the people of that country, one of the “varieties” of the human race. Yet despite the differences in the varieties of gazelle, and thus, human beings, Nye’s poem suggests that they are still all one and the same, which is a large part of the beauty of the natural world: “What else had we seen in our lives? / Nothing better than 19 varieties of gazelle / running free at the wildlife sanctuary…” (19-21). The gazelles, running free, do not seem to recognize the differences between them; rather, they coexist together. The speaker even outwardly—and rhetorically—questions whether or not the gazelles notice these differences and flock together because of them, which,
based on the rest of the poem, is not the case (13-14). As the speaker reflects, she differentiates between gazelles and human beings, breaking the metaphor to note how the gazelles’ peaceful nature is largely dependent on the fact that they do not differentiate between one another:

Human beings have voices—
what have they done for us?
There is no gazelle
in today’s headline. (36-39)

Unlike humans, who are incessantly dependent on identifiers—gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity—gazelles do not voice their apparent diversity and allow those distinctions to tear them apart, but instead coexist in peace at the sanctuary; they do not allow their differences to undermine what they communally are by nature. With this realization, the speaker asks, “Since when is a gazelle / wiser than people?” (41-42). Thus, the metaphor of the gazelle as a symbol of the human race takes on a new, parabolic role as it highlights the source of unrest in our world. It is this difference between our species that creates the dividing line between harmony and discord. These rifts in belonging and love of one another, as Nye proves in her poem, are where self-actualization fails.

As we move into the highest levels of the hierarchy, Nye provides both poems that celebrate achievement of these high levels as well as poems that explore why people in the societies she writes about are unable to reach these levels. One poem that mourns this short reach is “The Clean Rinse,” a poem in which the speaker describes a ritual of washing clothes. The speaker addresses the clothes she is washing, which symbolically represent people in times of struggle: “Each time you go through this /
you lose a little less color” (1-2). In comparing the audience to a colorful garment that
is slowly fading, the speaker suggests that through hardship—namely, war and strife—
without end or fulfillment can drain the individual of life and vigor. Logically, as an
individual tries and tries again at something, such as living in peace, but continually is
thwarted from that goal, levels of self-esteem, represented by the color in the garments,
will diminish. However, she writes, “this is what i [sic] try to say: / don’t let them
wring it out of you” (5-6) and encourages the audience to continue on in the face of
hardship and lack of personal esteem; even in the midst of an unmet basic need, the
speaker reassures the reader that his or her time will come when this need will, in a
sense, be fulfilled:

you are real, 100% cotton,
you can wrinkle, accept that as a gift
and accept these rinses
they are tedious
they will come
again and again
after awhile, you will have
nothing more they can take. (9-16)

However, the final lines of the poem imply that the garment is now colorless, as the
individual is now esteem-less. Although this seems like an encouraging statement, the
lack of color suggests a lack of self-worth and confidence, which keeps the individual
in a dull, nonmoving, and tired state, unable to progress. Eerily, the speaker
encourages the audience to accept things as they are and consider resilience and
eventual apathy a blessing. This poem emphasizes how a lack of fulfillment of levels
of the hierarchy, such as belonging needs, can lead to defeat.
On the other hand, Nye includes poems that celebrate completion of all the levels of the hierarchy, including the highest level of self-actualization needs. At this level, the individual feels complete and utterly fulfilled in all parts of life. The poem “Different Ways to Pray” showcases senses of fulfillment through spiritual means, embracing religion as a source of happiness. Just by the poem’s title, it is clear that Nye is using this poem to reveal the multitudes of ways one can worship and still feel contentment and fulfillment, despite religious differences. These spiritual actions help bring individuals closer to self-actualization because it brings them to the feelings of euphoria: “as if this shedding of syllables could / fuse them to the sky” (8-9). In reaching these heights of happiness, individuals are able to feel fully fulfilled and whole through their prayers. Although they still face hardships—“Hear us! We have pain on earth! / We have so much pain there is no place to store it!” (13-14)—the prayer, whether kneeling, murmuring, acting, or remaining silent, is a way to soothe the troubles of life, as people utilize prayer to ameliorate and heal themselves: “At night, the men ate heartily, flat bread and white cheese, / and were happy in spite of the pain, / because there was also happiness” (17-19). No matter the ways in which the individuals in this poem pray, they all experience happiness and satisfaction with life, suggesting that the means of achieving self-actualization is not set in stone but rather fluid, allowing people to summit Maslow’s pyramid in a multitude of ways. It is not the different methods that matter, but rather the same results that mean the most.

Through these and the other sixty poems in 19 Varieties of Gazelle, Nye proves that buried deep within the differences among cultures is the inherent sameness
all human beings share. Through showcasing Maslow’s needs and the things that prevent individuals from attaining them, she proves that we as human beings are united in striving for self-fulfillment, whatever paths we take to get there. Each piece in her collection directly calls upon readers “…to recognize their own realities as assumptions, no more truthful than anyone else’s, but deeply steeped in, and reinforced by, cultures trying to keep their members safe, just like their own” (Stork 5).
CHAPTER THREE

Painting the Unseen:

Visual Experiences of War in *Bye Bye Babylon*

Undoubtedly, one of the hottest topics in educational discourse today is the importance of teaching multiple literacies, or multiple forms of media. Although the medium of written text is still incredibly important, our ever-changing world calls for a new focus on other types of media, such as audial, tactile, and visual. As Dawnene D. Hassett and Melissa B. Shieble argue, “The social, cultural, and political environment shaped by globalization has seen an emergence of greater reliability on visual modes of communication” (62). The responsibility for teaching these newly important forms of literacy falls on teachers in primary through secondary schools, who are charged with the duty to prepare students to be well-rounded, knowledgeable global citizens. For the English language arts teacher, this duty is of particular importance, as the task of reading and making sense of texts, no matter how they are delivered, falls primarily within their curricula. In addition to utilizing Internet sources and tools to educate students on multiple literacies, books can also be utilized to help students become better acquainted with other texts beyond the traditional. This is where the genre of graphic literature can be a valuable tool in the classroom, serving to further both textual and visual literacies.
In graphic novels, the text is no more important than the images, and vice versa; both are equally essential in working together to communicate a particular message.

The artistic rendering of the story contributes to half the ability to comprehend it fully; therefore, the illustrations are equally as important as the text. The illustrations add the information and detail missing from the text. Although the clues may be evident or subtle, the illustrations enable the reader to make inferences and judgments separate from the reading and understanding of words. (Griffith 183)

In recent years, multiple authors have turned to this genre to help in communicating weighty messages to students, such as Art Spiegelman whose graphic novel *Maus* chronicles life during the Holocaust. Unlike the flat, detached, black-and-white nature of textbooks and the monochromatic images that fill their pages, graphic novels offer a living, breathing, vivid portrait of life in unfamiliar times and places. Thus, as Katherine T. Butcher and M. Lee Manning point out, “Because graphic novels appeal to young people, educators can use them to offer alternatives to traditional texts and mass media and to introduce young adults to literature that they might not otherwise encounter” (68). In selecting poignant graphic works, teachers can help provide a vibrant context in which students can place themselves when imagining setting. For example, most, if not all, American-born teens have not had the experience of growing up in a war-torn country. However, through graphic novels and graphic memoirs, teens can gain a better understanding of what life in these situations might be like through the images that depict war in a way that words alone cannot. This, without doubt, is a key feature of understanding teen life in the Middle East.
When teaching visual literacy, one strategy educators may employ, regardless of student age, is a technique called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). VTS is a term researched by Peter Yenawine, who explores the technique in depth in his 2013 book *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines*. This discipline-neutral technique allows teachers and students alike to immerse themselves within a particular historical moment through the medium of art. Yenawine states, “VTS uses art to teach visual literacy, thinking, and communication skills—listening and expressing oneself” (19). This technique can be used in nearly any content area and with all age groups, whether preschoolers or high schoolers, because anyone can look at a picture and explain what he or she interprets that image to be or say. It also invites students to access both the cognitive and affective in generating an answer, which leads to a more holistic approach to the study of images and literature. Certainly, it is easy to see how instruction of this sort can enrich any literary study in the secondary classroom.

Other important features of VTS that make it an ideal complement to standard curricula in addition to its aforementioned versatility are the neutral stance facilitators must take, a “gradual release of responsibility” to students (Pearson and Gallagher), and the active participation required of all students. The teacher’s responsibility as facilitator is not to lead the discussion but instead to oversee the students’ discussion; he or she is not a participant but a neutral observer, and the teacher must avoid injecting his or her own thoughts or opinions into the discussion. This, therefore, allows students to experience self-led discovery, making them the catalysts of their
own learning and understanding: “As facilitator, a VTS teacher helps students to: look carefully at works of art, talk about what they observe, back up their ideas with evidence, listen to and consider the views of others, [and] discuss and hold as possible a variety of interpretations” (Yenawine 15-16).

Second, the “gradual release of responsibility” is of particular importance, especially in the secondary classroom with adolescent students who are grappling with new responsibilities elsewhere in life. This technique, coined by P. David Pearson and Margaret C. Gallagher, invites teachers to move from taking the leading role in guiding the learning process to allowing the students to take the reins of their own processes. Unlike direct instruction models or teacher-led discussions, VTS allows students to take the front seat in the discussion, as there is no “right” or “wrong” answer, so long as the student has evidence to support his or her claims. In VTS, the teacher functions merely as a facilitator, restricted to a script of just three questions: “What’s going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?” (Yenawine 25). The teacher also paraphrases and repeats students’ responses back to them in order to help students make sense of those comments. This asset of VTS is particularly important in discussions of unfamiliar topics such as the Middle East; Yenawine states that “[b]y taking the time to listen and to reflect back what a student says, teachers build all students’ sense of being valued and capable” (28), which can help validate and encourage students to contribute to conversations on unfamiliar topics without fear of being “wrong.” Moreover, this gradual release allows teachers to help students develop their sense of self-efficacy and personal
responsibility because it says to students, “you don’t always need a teacher or an authority to help you figure things out” (Yenawine 30).

Here, I’d like to pause to make a disclaimer about the three-question script for teachers using VTS. It is easy to question this technique and its effectiveness—what if, for example, students do not arrive at the discoveries necessary to propel the discussion forward? In the case that it seems students will not come to these conclusions, I would argue that it is acceptable for teachers to probe students further through more questioning or hinting. Although this is not specifically outlined in Yenawine’s study, gentle probing—say, pointing out a particular area of the image—still, in my opinion, welcomes students to arrive at their own conclusions. It should not mean that teachers are explicitly telling the students what they need to know or notice about an image, but instead they may call students’ attention to something they might not have been aware of previously. Moreover, VTS does not always need to be used to arrive at a specific end result; instead, it could be used as a springboard for further exploration as a class, or as a warm-up before jumping into a lesson or unit. Probing in all cases should be, however, a last resort and a guide, not a crutch.

The next essential facet of VTS is the active participation aspect, which means that every student, from the boy in the front row who has all the answers to the shy girl in the back row who prefers to stay silent, is a fundamental element of discussion and discovery. In his survey of teachers utilizing VTS in their classrooms, Yenawine found that across the board, students were much more likely to contribute to discussion and engage in conversation with one another: “One quick and consistent
report from the teachers was that virtually all students participated in VTS image discussions; it seemed to engage those who normally held back or whose attention wandered, and to erase distinctions applied to students—gifted or challenged, for example” (16). Thus, this particular technique is wholly student centered. The focus on active participation makes this strategy one that does not allow students to take the backseat; instead, they are the driving force behind any discussion when VTS is utilized.

These three aspects of VTS instruction make it a perfect tool to utilize in the ELA classroom, particularly in tandem with works about unfamiliar people, places, and things. It can be used not only with external collections of photographs and artwork that come from the period in which a novel takes place, but also internal visuals that are a part of the work, such as in the case of graphic novels. A vigorous and in-depth study of the images that make up a graphic novel can allow for a richer, more meaningful reading, interpretation, and understanding of the work as a whole. Such is the case in Lamia Ziadé’s graphic memoir *Bye Bye Babylon: Beirut 1975-1979*, which chronicles four years of her childhood that also happen to be the first four years of the Lebanese Civil War. A complex war stemming from a complex web of social and political issues, VTS can be a necessary tool in helping students better understand the conflict itself as well as its implications on daily life in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Civil War, which began in April 1975 and drew to a close in early 1991, is a unique conflict whose origins may seem confusing and foreign to individuals from outside the region. Lebanon is home to one of the most religiously
diverse populations in the Middle East, with an estimated majority of the population (just over half) identifying with Islamic sects, like Shi’a, Sunni, or Druze, and the remaining population identifying as Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Catholic, or some other sect of Christianity ("Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)"). The Lebanese government is uniquely divided amongst these sects; just as each state’s number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives is determined by the population of that state, seats in the Lebanese Parliament are divided up between the two major sects (Christian and Muslim) based on population in the country. One of the sources of tension that sparked the Lebanese Civil War was the unequal divide in the government prior to 1975. Although it was well known that Muslims made up the majority of the population, Christians held the majority of the seats in the government, which, unsurprisingly, led to unrest. Other factors contributing to the rising tensions were the presence of outside forces manipulating the country as well as the growing number of Palestinian refugees displaced by the conflicts just south in Israel-Palestine ("Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)").

Fighting broke out in Beirut in April of 1975 when one group killed four members of a rival group during an assassination attempt on a political leader. The attacked group then bombèd a bus occupied primarily by Palestinians in order to avenge their loss. Thus, the beginnings of the Lebanese Civil War were underway, although most people did not expect these skirmishes to erupt into a full-fledged, country-wide war ("Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)").
Over the next months, sects splintered into multiple militant groups, each of which had different ideologies and beliefs, and the Lebanese government could not come to an agreement on how to control the fighting, as they too were divided in beliefs. GlobalSecurity.org argues that “at the bottom of the conflict was the issue of confessionalism out of balance—of a minority, specifically the Maronites, refusing to share power and economic opportunity with the Muslim majority” (“Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)”). The site goes on to point out how the conflict grew and pulled in the Lebanese citizens:

As various other groups took sides [in the conflict], the fighting spread to other areas of the country, forcing residents in towns with mixed sectarian populations to seek safety in regions where their sect was dominant. Even so, the militias became embroiled in a pattern of attack followed by retaliation, including acts against uninvolved civilians. (“Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)”) As more and more innocent people were affected by the war, outside powers got involved in the conflict, such as Syria in 1976 and Israel in 1982 (“Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)”). Although these outside forces worked to control the conflict and restore peace, they also made decisions geared towards furthering their own political, economic, and strategic interests, which in many cases dug Lebanon deeper into the brutal war.

By 1991, sixteen years after the initial battles began, internal and external leaders had finally reached a solution that seemed to be satisfactory enough to bring the war to an end. Parliament was reorganized to have a better representation of the population, with half of the seats open to Christians and the other half open to Muslims. Despite these seemingly suitable solutions, the country was in shambles and
the Lebanese people were exhausted and scarred. There were over 100,000 deaths, which composed nearly 7% of the entire Lebanese population; over 100,000 people were severely injured, and as many as 20,000 people whose whereabouts are still to this day unknown. Over the course of those sixteen years, 900,000 people left the country, which made up 20% of Lebanon’s population before the war; 250,000 of these people did not return to their homeland (“Lebanon (Civil War 1975-1991)”). It is because of the Civil War that more Lebanese people live outside the country than in it. Certainly, this event is still fresh and raw in the minds of the Lebanese people, with its repercussions still ravaging generations old and new. Unless one has grown up in this sort of environment, it is impossible to understand what a conflict of this nature can do to a people.

In her graphic memoir *Bye Bye Babylon: Beirut 1975-1979*, Lamia Ziadé complements written word with sketches and paintings of her childhood in Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War. Ziadé was only seven years old at the start of the war, and so most of her childhood and teenage years were spent amid the tensions and conflicts that tore apart the country until she was twenty-two years old (Ziadé 1, 282). Her memoir is written in the voice of a child, highlighting the innocence lost during the years of the war. As the reader progresses further into the work and thus into the events of the war, the childlike tone turns to one of biting sarcasm, which makes this loss even more apparent and poignant. Through Ziadé’s words and images, carefully interwoven together to create a vivid sense of war, she invites readers into a childhood of destruction, splintering people and factions, displacement, and a total upturning of
life as it was known. However, the words alone could not add this sort of depth to the piece; it is in the images and in an analysis of those pictures alongside text that brings readers to a better understanding of this crucial event in Lebanese history.

On a surface level study of the work, it is easy to see how essential Ziadé’s images are to the work. Of the novel’s 282 pages, over two-thirds of the pages are images alone, and the remaining third is made up primarily of pages containing both images and text with text-exclusive pages coming in closely behind (see Fig. 1). Without doubt, the novel cannot exist without these instrumental images, which is Ziadé’s primary medium in communicating her message. In a continuation of this surface level examination, readers (or viewers) may notice that Ziadé opts for an almost impressionistic style in her art, utilizing blurry, haphazard lines and just suggestive representations of the images she creates. This technique, which only gives the reader a shell or shadow of the actual image instead of a sharp depiction, suggests

![Concentration of Images versus Text in Bye Bye Babylon](image)

*Figure 1: Concentration of images versus text in *Bye Bye Babylon* out of 282 pages*
that all Ziadé can communicate is merely a taste of her experiences; no words nor pictures can truly portray what it is like to grow up in a warzone. This technique may also suggest that these moments of her life remain as indistinct snapshots in Ziadé’s memory; yet even in this case, the images vivid, despite their bluriness, on the page and thus Ziadé’s psyche.

In addition to the impressionistic nature of her paintings, Ziadé also draws from a large color palate, including bright warm hues like reds and oranges, muted cool hues like greens and blues, and bleak monochromatic tones like charcoals and blacks. Interestingly, these colors seem to follow a pattern, shifting from the vivid portrayals of Westernized Beiruti life as Ziadé remembers it in the beginning of the novel—the deep blue and fluorescent yellow of a can of Planters Cocktail peanuts, the rich red ketchup flowing from a bottle of Libby’s Ketchup (6, 8-9)—to the dark and dismal aftereffects of war in the novel’s later pages—a monochromatic landscape of Beirut, engulfed in black smoke and bombarded with streaking white bombs (184-85). Clearly, Ziadé employs color deliberately, using the brightness and eventual lack thereof to demonstrate the progression of war and its effects not only on Ziadé as our child protagonist, but also on the Lebanese people as a whole.

Despite the key features that the aforementioned reading can reveal to readers, a closer analysis through the strategies outlined in VTS can provide an even fuller reading to students and teachers alike. In teaching this novel in tandem with the VTS strategies outlined by Yenawine, teachers should carefully select a handful of images for students to study as they read the novel in its entirety. The timing of VTS
discussions can vary, from discussing selected pictures as an introduction to the work and its historical context to utilizing them as a means to investigate the text on the pages beside them. Whatever the case, teachers can depend on VTS’s three key questions—“What’s going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?” (Yenawine 25)—to create a welcoming classroom environment that invites rich discussion by students. The remainder of this chapter will examine a handful of image series and what these particular selections can contribute to discussion about the novel.

In introducing students to the work and preparing them to read and understand a complex war and its effects on daily life, there are multiple image series within the novel that can welcome discussion about topics that they know little to nothing about. These series can be used to inform students about the Lebanese Civil War, and war in general, through the visual rather than the verbal; unlike reading from a textbook which, as suggested by its name, is text-focused, students will be able to see images of war through the eyes of those who have lived in such conditions. This eliminates the dry, textbook-esque effect of introducing historical context to this and other novels, keeping students informed and engaged in a discovery-based discussion. Among the images of the war she experienced, Ziadé incorporates detailed sketches of political figures and war weapons and terminology, helping students understand the historical context of this novel in the midst of reading. For example, early in the novel,
Ziadé names and describes various weapons used during the war in tandem with text describing these weapons’ origins, who used them, and what they were capable of doing (see Fig. 2). Ziadé devotes these eight early pages to vividly describing and depicting 24 different kinds of guns and bombs, which makes way for much classroom discussion (Ziadé 10-17). Upon studying these images and asking the VTS key questions, students may notice that none of the weapons that are so instrumental in the Lebanese Civil War are Lebanese-made, but are of foreign origins, which may lead to a discussion about the idea that the war is largely influenced and manipulated by outside forces and not the Lebanese public. This discovery can be made through reading the small text blurbs beneath each image, and teachers can then incorporate the students’ finding into a lecture on the war. Additionally, students may also notice
that just pages earlier, Ziadé tells readers that she is seven years old at this point in the novel, and thus, they may question how a child so young is so familiar with these weapons and their capabilities. In turn, this may lead to discussions on developmental implications of war on children, which is certainly a theme of the memoir.

Similarly, Ziadé provides a character map of the major factions and players in the Civil War, providing readers an outline and understanding of the widespread splintering of groups and subsequent fighting (20-23). Beneath each of the fifteen depictions spanning these four pages, Ziadé provides descriptions of the factions, and while the information is still somewhat confusing, it underscores the complexity of the conflict. In a VTS examination of these images, students may find that despite the differing ideologies among the groups, in Ziadé’s eyes, they still bear many

Figure 3: *Bye Bye Babylon*, pages 20-21
similarities. When asked the question “Why?”, students may respond by pointing out the male face. What’s more, the individuals all look nearly identical—many of them wear dark glasses that obstruct their eyes, they are plainly clothed like everyday citizens, and their hair is dark and styled exactly the same. Their blurred features and identical appearances make them seem almost inhuman, which may spur interesting discussion on why Ziadé chooses to utilize this stylistic technique. Moreover, it can lead to a discussion of perceptions of the groups by the common folk of the country: what do these groups represent, how do we differentiate among them, and whose side is the right one to take? In addition to these pages, Ziadé weaves even more political portraiture into her work, depicting various internal and external political leaders who somehow influence the war. In this way, she uses the entire work to continue to provide a historical context in relation to Lebanese history as well as the history of the region and the global stage.

Another image series that will prompt meaningful discussion in the classroom juxtaposes Western culture and war, which can help students create a more vivid mental picture and understanding of war. Ziadé mingles images of familiar Western places and things, like Kellogg’s cereal and the Holiday Inn hotel chain, alongside devastating images of war, destruction, sadness, and death. In placing the familiar alongside the unfamiliar, Ziadé creates a fission between that which we know and that which we do not understand, pulling students abruptly from their comfort zones and into a world in which that zone is utterly upturned. These unsettling contrasts welcome discussion on life in other parts of the world, helping students empathize with children
and adolescents who are not as fortunate as they are. It also highlights the severity of
the war in Ziadé’s life, who too lived in a Westernized, happy life prior to the events
of April 1975. Ziadé writes, “To our delight, the supermarket shelves and our trolleys
overflow with the same wondrous items one can find in New York or London. At the
same time, the militias are stockpiling their arsenals with weapons and munitions of
all kinds, of all calibres, and from a variety of sources” (8). These words, in tandem
with the shift in imagery from the familiar to the unfamiliar, will help students better
relate to the author and her story, and it invites them to imagine what their lives might
be like if a war broke out in our country tomorrow. Early in the novel, we see the
image of Spinneys, Ziadé’s favorite grocery store where her mother purchases the
aforementioned imported products, engulfed in smoke and flames, proving that “[t]he
shiny Western varnish, which the Lebanese are so proud of, is finally cracking” (30).
While this portrays a direct connection between Lebanon and the West, it also
distances the novel’s setting from these familiar places and things because of the
crumbling Western shell. These images and the ones that follow welcome students to
discuss what they see and how it makes them feel, opening the door for deeper
conversation about the devastating effects of war on everyday life.

As previously mentioned, the transition from colorful and familiar images to
cold and unfamiliar imagery over the course of the novel is a mirror image of the
transformation of life pre-war and during it. Take, for instance, the pages that the
novel opens with: again, we see pictures of ketchup, bubble gum, marshmallows, and
an escalator leading to “Paradise” (1-8). These images elicit feelings of familiarity,
happiness, a carefree childhood and the flavors associated with it. Then comes the day that the war begins in April 1975, which Ziadé remembers as “a rebirth; there is the before and after of that Sunday lunch which separates two distinct lives” (30). After this moment, the imagery transforms into somber depictions of childhood alongside fire, smoke, and death, such as the image of traditional Lebanese sweets alongside a full-page fire and its smoky aftermath (58-59) (see Fig. 4, 5). These images directly portray the collapse of Westernized life, drawing the audience at which it was aimed into the nature of the conflict at hand.

The final image series in this examination directly touches upon literary technique, specifically character development, as delineated through images. The narrator and protagonist, Ziadé herself, makes a handful of cameos in the work, and the portrayals of herself at various points in the novel demonstrate the loss of innocence and character degeneration throughout the course of the war. The first images of Ziadé we receive are just over thirty pages into the novel; we see her, clad in a red checkered dress, playing around her older family members as they discuss the war (32-33) (see Fig. 6). She hides behind the speech bubble of her grandmother’s words, which are assumedly about the war, with a smile on her face; she plays outside on her swing set and reads a comic book. A VTS discussion will welcome students to analyze these features, which ideally will lead to the conclusion that initially, seven-year-old Ziadé is oblivious to the war and how it will change her life. As the war rages on and Ziadé gets older, her deterioration is shown in the ways in which she depicts herself.
Figure 4: *Bye Bye Babylon*, pages 2-3

Spitney's, an ultramodern supermarket, had opened in Beirut several years earlier. It is a monument to the best of what the Western world can offer with many items for Lebanon; trolleys, escalators (or maybe the first were in the *Byblos* department store, I'm not sure). It's a real paradise that is about to go up in smoke like everything else.

Figure 5: *Bye Bye Babylon*, pages 58-59
Figure 6: *Bye Bye Babylon*, pages 32-33

Figure 7: *Bye Bye Babylon*, pages 189, 191

For lots of people, counting the explosions, trying to locate where shells have landed, guessing their calibre and commenting on the evolution of the shelling and the logic behind it is a good way to overcome their fear and makes the interminable nights seem shorter. But for me, everything is frightening, including the rumbling of a storm, the metal blind being lowered, a door slamming.
When the severity of the war worsens, she hides in bomb shelters with her family, terrorized and unable to sleep (see Fig. 7). The images of Ziadé, crouching in fear alone and then in her mother’s arms, are nearly non-human. Her eyes are gray swirls; her hair unnaturally sticks straight up off her head; her face is drenched in tears and her mouth is frozen in an oval of terror (189, 191). These images of Ziadé contain no more than three colors—the first image on page 189 contains only two—which is a stark contrast from her bright red dress in the earlier images. An examination of these images would certainly elicit discussion on the developmental implications of the war on Ziadé, as she tells us that she is clearly unable to lead a normal life: “At eight I had entered a complex world filled with contradictions and nuances, Lebanon being one of the best examples on the planet of this” (168). Observations about these and other portrayals of our protagonist will welcome discussion on how traumatic situations and experiences can negatively impact children and thus a society as a whole.

This image series, among countless others, in tandem with class discussion is a key feature of teaching this and any other graphic work. The nature of VTS discussion seems to be a natural relative of graphic literature, as it requires recognition of the priceless value of pictures in conjunction with the written word. Hassett and Shieble say it best, stating, “Graphic novels for adolescents also necessitate a reading of print and images to create meaning because much of the meaning is carried in the image itself. The print becomes a tool or a scaffold for making meaning of the image, versus the traditional notion of images illustrating print” (65). Indeed, this sort of text-to-image relationship is a surefire way to teach visual literacy alongside textual and
literary literacies as well. As English language arts educators, the responsibility to teach these literacies falls into our hands, and as teachers of literature, we must step forward to guide our students in utilizing literature in multiple media to advance their literary knowledge, and VTS is a foolproof method to meet these goals: “Independent thinking, collaboration, listening: these are things we can’t ‘teach’; they have to be learned by other means, and VTS has proved to be one of those” (Yenawine 34).
CHAPTER FOUR

Looking for Palestine, Looking for Myself:

The Marginalized Voices of First Generation Americans

When speaking of multiculturalism in the United States, two groups immediately jump to mind: Americans and immigrants. However, there is one other group that is important to discuss; it is a group caught in between being American and being a foreigner. This group is the first generation Americans, children of immigrants who are walking the line between being American and being whatever ethnicity their parents identify with—it leaves these individuals with the questions what am I and, more importantly, who am I? The identity confusion that this phenomenon creates leads directly into a depletion of self-efficacy, or confidence in oneself. Nancy L. Hadaway, Terrell A. Young, and Barbara A. Ward address these issues in their study “A Critical Analysis of Language Identity Issues in Young Adult Literature,” stating, “Adolescents may struggle with self-confidence versus self-doubt and become preoccupied by how they appear to others. For English learners, this struggle might lead to self-labeling of their ethnicity and language” (39). Moreover, Krystyna Nowak-Fabrykowski and Myroslav Sbkandij also affirm this state of limbo in their study on immigrant children, with findings that can apply to children of immigrants as well. The pair recognizes that the typical crises faced during development are revisited as children try to find the balance between their two worlds (28), and “[t]he
interdependence and the relations of the child’s two symbolic worlds are significant elements of his/her personal growth and functioning” (26).

In a classroom of developing adolescents, it is important to include literature that first generation students can relate to, as it is imperative to bring attention to this often-marginalized group. Sandra Hughes-Hassell calls this phenomena counter-storytelling, or “a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (212). As previously mentioned, multicultural literature should and must open the doors to unexplored worlds and states of being; it should help students better understand those different from them. In welcoming literature about first generation students, teachers can create an environment that is much more inclusive to these individuals and thus can foster growth in self-efficacy.

As the daughter of immigrants, I have personally experienced the balancing act of embracing multiple cultures at the same time, and I still to this day am working to reconcile these multiple ways that I identify myself. Each of my parents is from a different country, so I have the unique experience of juggling three different ethnicities—Lebanese, Hungarian, and American—and trying to find where I belong amongst them. It is a difficult challenge to overcome because even among the cultures of my parents, I still, to this day, feel like the outsider. In the Lebanese community, I feel like the “awkward white girl” who looks nothing like my Middle Eastern family and is too European to fit in seamlessly. The same goes for the Hungarian community, in which I see myself as the foreigner who knows next to nothing about European life, except for the delicious food and drink that my father’s family cooks. Even more
uncomfortable, however, is my experience with Americans. Although I was born in America and have lived here all my life, it is hard for me to consider myself a true American. Growing up surrounded by American peers and their families, I always felt like I was incredibly different from them. I wasn’t allowed to sleep over at my friends’ houses, unlike my friends; Santa Claus never visited my house because my parents thought it was a silly tradition; we went to church services performed in different languages, sometimes all within the same Mass; I packed Hungarian kolbász with crackers and pieces of Lebanese ba’lawa for lunch while my friends munched on bologna sandwiches and Oreo cookies. From the way I pronounced words to the phrases I used—“close the lights,” for example, instead of “turn off the lights,” was a favorite of my friends—I never felt like I was the same as my American peers, even though we were born and grew up in the same place. It is a difficult space to be in as a twenty-one-year-old woman still trying to figure out how to piece together the puzzle of my life and my ethnicity, and it often makes me feel alienated from even my parents and closest friends. It was not until I picked up Najla Said’s memoir, Looking for Palestine, that I felt, for the first time, like someone actually could understand what I have experienced. One segment from the novel that stood out to me was her description of herself, which was a moment I felt that Najla had taken all my thoughts and put them into words: “I don’t feel entirely American, never have, but it’s not because I don’t want to or because I don’t seem it—I do want to, I do seem it. I don’t feel entirely Arab though either, for the same reasons. But I also certainly don’t feel like any combination of the two” (N. Said 217). The sense of solidarity I felt with
Najla as she described this phenomenon was one of the first times I felt understood in my identity struggles. In fact, prior to reading Najla’s work, I hadn’t even realized that what I was experiencing was something that could be named or discussed.

*Looking for Palestine: Growing Up Confused in an Arab-American Family* is Najla’s memoir of her childhood and adolescence, and the tagline of the work is “Growing up confused in an Arab-American family.” As the daughter of prominent Palestinian-born Middle East scholar Edward Said and a Lebanese mother, Najla’s experiences are very similar to my own, and therefore they resonated with me long after I closed the book. The work is a chorus of Najla’s personal identity crisis that is still so deeply ingrained in her to this day; in the first half-page of the novel, readers are bombarded with dozens of identifiers and labels, such as what Najla now considers herself to be: “I am a Palestinian-Lebanese-American Christian woman, but I grew up as a Jew in New York City. I began my life, however, as a WASP” (1). She even outwardly recognizes this obsession to discover herself, saying “I needed to put [my family] in a box, so I could figure out who I was…” (21). Immediately, we are acquainted with Najla’s struggle with finding who she is and where she belongs.

Najla’s self-confusion that resonates throughout the memoir’s 258 pages mirrors the lack of self-efficacy and confidence outlined by Albert Bandura in his 1977 study of the topic.

As previously noted, self-efficacy means a sense of confidence in oneself. Bandura’s study focuses on how self-efficacy affects actions, beliefs, and outcomes of the individual, as he argues:
An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes. Outcome and efficacy expectations are differentiated, because individuals can believe that a particular course of action will produce certain outcomes, but if they entertain serious doubts about whether they can perform the necessary activities such information does not influence their behavior. (193)

More simply, he states that “[t]he strength of people’s convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations” (193). Therefore, in the case of Najla and other first generation children, the question of “who am I?” can cause the individual to doubt his or her ability to succeed, which will likely cause a sense of hopelessness or apathy. In his study, Bandura outlines four different sources for building self-efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Performance accomplishments are “based on personal mastery experiences,” meaning how many times an individual has successfully completed a task (195). Next is vicarious experience, which occurs when individuals watch others act and observe the results of those actions (197). Verbal persuasion, as he states, occurs when individuals “are led, through suggestion, into believing they can cope successfully with what has overwhelmed them in the past” (198). Finally, emotional arousal deals with the emotional responses that stem from the actions individuals perform (198). These four phenomena appear time and time again in Najla’s memoir, demonstrating the ways that her own self-efficacy and sense of self are sometimes deconstructed and other times built back up.

In the case of performance accomplishments, one of the most telling signs of Najla’s self-efficacy in this realm is her reaction to the ways in which she hides her culture. When Najla acts “American” enough, she is pleased that she blends in with
her peers; she is ecstatic when her actions elicit a response that says that her family is different from other Arabs, or that she is indeed an American. Moreover, she acts in ways that hide her ethnicity because this, to her, is the way to achieve a sense of self-efficacy: “And then I gradually came to learn what an Arab was and, consequently, spent a good portion of the rest of my childhood avoiding the fact that I might actually be one” (N. Said 52). She closes off from the rest of the world in an attempt to hide her Arab side: “From then on, I made a concentrated effort not to stand out at school…The fear of transgressing…drove my actions for the next thirty years…I could not risk drawing attention to myself in any way that was not positive, for fear that everyone would lean in closer and see my inner ugliness” (61). As Najla accepts unfamiliar food she does not want, keeps quiet, and does her best to be obedient, she is smothering her ethnicity, since she feels that this is the only way to validate her actions and decisions. In her search for self-efficacy, Najla feels this is “mastering” her goal of suppressing who she really is.

Najla’s senses of self doubt begin to form when she begins going to school and observing her peers, which exemplifies the phenomenon of vicarious experiences to formulate or diminish self-efficacy. It is because of these observations of her blonde-haired, blue-eyed classmates that she decides “It was at that point that I realized that something was seriously wrong—with me” (1). Her observations of what is considered beautiful in her world manifest in her self loathing and desire to change the way she looks, but try as she might, she cannot get past her own appearance. “But even the most elaborate uniform,” she says, “could not protect against my instant
awareness of my differences. I was a dark-haired rat in a sea of blond perfection” (2).

Certainly, referring to herself as a rat highlights her lack of confidence, and these shortcomings in her eyes drive many of her actions and the ways she pulls away from people to hide her “ugliness.”

Even more disturbing are the images of Arabs in the media that Najla sees, which is unlike anything she knows to be truly Arab. Following in the footsteps of her father and his work *Orientalism*, Najla questions the ways in which her people are portrayed, she notes that the representation of a part of who she is does not accurately mirror her or her family:

Despite the Arabic all around me, and the deep bond my parents had with their culture, I was never able to make the connection between the ‘fanatical Muslims’ on TV, the rich oil princes who showed up in movies, or the magic carpets and belly dancers in books and pictures and anyone I knew or had ever known in my life….My parents did not pretend not to be Arabs, they just weren’t at all like the ones I saw anywhere. There was absolutely no resemblance between the people I saw represented in the media and any single member of my extended family. (62-64)

However, these depictions, which she knows to be untrue, still influence her decisions and actions. For example, when classmates discuss with her about how vicious Arabic people are, all she can do is agree, because she feels that this is the response she must make to be accepted:

…so when my friends made passing comments about Beirut being the most awful, dangerous place on earth, when they asserted that the Lebanese were all violent, machine-gun-wielding lunatics (‘except for your family, Najla...’), and that Muslims were ‘weird angry’ people, I couldn’t really counter them with anything but a silent, sad nod. And was I really Arab? (52)

Without doubt, her observations of Arabs and Americans are a primary influence in the ways she chooses to behave and carry herself.
In lieu of these remarks, and despite what she knows to be true, Najla begins to believe the words of her peers, which counters Bandura’s phenomenon of verbal persuasion to build self-efficacy. Even though, as previously noted, she recognizes that portrayals of Arabs are not realistic or true, she starts to question her ability to draw these conclusions, since everyone else seems to believe otherwise: “I resigned myself to believing that everything people said about my culture was true, because it was exhausting and futile to try to convince anyone otherwise” (3). Because her attempts to build self-efficacy by analyzing Arab portrayal in the world seem to have failed in her eyes, she gives up and stops perpetuating her own ideas. However, Najla still questions if her feelings of worthlessness are valid; for example, when she is in an airport and is targeted for “random” security checks, she realizes that, for the first time, she is experiencing racism.

I felt as if the dirty, disgusting Arab me that I had buried so deep inside myself had been exposed for the third time in six weeks. My skin color, religion, and general appearance had helped to obscure my ‘true identity’ for so long, I was only now experiencing the punch-in-the-stomach feeling of racism. It is very difficult to explain to people who know you and see you as ‘white’ that you have been discriminated against because of your race. (152)

These Western attitudes towards the “other” continue to pervade daily life in America, leading in large part to the self-doubt that Najla internalizes throughout her life. The ways she is verbally affirmed or discouraged by others, without doubt, is another key factor in her degenerating self-efficacy.

Finally, Najla experiences negative emotional arousal that furthers her self-alienation. As she grows older and experiences more reactions to her culture, she begins to let negativity completely consume her, and her sense of self-hatred grows.
Each time that she is reminded of something of her ethnicities, she is disgusted and embarrassed: “But as I grew older and progressed into the first, second, and third grades, a sense of shame about my differences—my hairy arms, my weird name, my family’s missing presence on the Social Register—took over my thoughts. My grandmother’s once ‘fancy’ accent began to sound simply ‘foreign’” (57). The shame that she so often feels contributes to the learned loathing of her culture and herself. Moreover, Najla mirrors others’ emotional responses to her culture, taking it upon herself to apologize for who she is: “I could tell that many people were disgusted by what they thought about the people from [my mom’s] home country, and I felt ashamed…I would apologize for everything I did and said and try to keep quiet all the time. I was so very sorry. For what, I had no idea, but the feeling was real” (103). Detrimental emotions such as shame, guilt, and disgust directly contribute to the backwards progression of Najla’s development.

Yet among these backwards-moving moments in Najla’s life, there are also forward-moving ones in which her self-efficacy grows. During these moments, it is important to note that Najla is almost always completely immersed in one of the cultures that her parents identify with. For example, the moments that she and her family are in Lebanon or Palestine are the ones in which she feels most capable and most understood. In these settings only is she able to reconcile her selfhood. For instance, on her journey to Palestine with her family, which she classifies as awkward and uncomfortable, Najla experiences for the first time a sense of understanding by others. In reflecting upon the state of the country and the Israeli and Palestinian people
who live there, she realizes that they too do not feel a sense of belonging in their own home. She writes, “I turned my head to stare back at the saucer-eyed Palestinian children whose blank expressions mirrored my own. I began to photograph them obsessively, wherever we went. I had no other way of capturing what I felt inside” (168). All the children born after the Israeli invasion knew nothing more than a sense of confusion about where they truly belong, much like Najla’s own struggles with her identity. Moreover, her sense of community with these people grows as she explores their home, and she discovers an “intense need to feel the pain of these people” (174).

Najla also has similar experiences of self-efficacy as she matures and moves on to college. She writes, “Meanwhile, I started returning to Lebanon more often, and I began to reconnect with my culture and my place in it. As the country flourished and reemerged from the ashes of the fifteen-year civil war, I found myself flourishing too” (204). In the pages following these words, Najla launches into a beautifully poignant description of Lebanon, celebrating both its perfections and its flaws. This portion of the novel is perhaps the first time that Najla outwardly acknowledges her the beauty and quirkiness of half of her ethnicity and thus identity, and the poetic flow of the words spanning these pages signals a growing acceptance of the self.

Finally, Najla recollects her experience of September 11, 2001, when she is at the gym in New York and watches the Twin Towers burn on television with other gym-goers. In this unique moment, which she notes as “the moment [her] life changed forever” (214), Najla experiences a dual-belonging—both with her fellow Americans, as they share a sadness and anger at their country’s loss, as well as with her fellow
Arabs, who are now under scrutiny and blamed as a whole for the actions of a handful of people. When one of the trainers at the gym makes a comment that the Palestinians must be to blame, Najla snaps: “That was it for me; for the first time in my life, and with a heat that surprised me, I lunged into him” (215). Finally, Najla steps forward to defend her people and thus herself, bringing her dual identity full circle: as she mourns in the loss of her country, she also stands tall with her fellow Arabs, rejecting misplaced blame for their (and her) own sake. After this experience, she finally begins to identify herself as an Arab-American. The final thirty-or-so pages of the novel are, at last, a celebration of what it means to be a first-generation child reconciling a dual identity: “I had fallen in love with my family and everything they stood for, even as, for the first time, I was feeling hatred and racism directed at me from my fellow Americans” (228). This excerpt is the novel’s turning point—Najla acknowledges her ethnic roots and the fact that they are an inherent part of who she is, and she also identifies herself as an American, despite the surge of bigotry she is facing from her own people. Moments like these create a fire in Najla that help her attain epiphanies of who she is, making colossal realizations about her ethnic background, like “We are really not that different from the rest of the world—Arabs” (208).

As the memoir explores Najla’s struggles with self-efficacy as well as her rare triumphs with it, she invites readers to learn about her unique upbringing and relate to the problems that are common to a growing portion of the American population. Even in showing the many barriers she faced in developing a strong sense of self, she writes to help others in her shoes, like myself, overcome the same barriers to self-efficacy
attainment. As Sandra Hughes-Hassell notes, literature of this sort “can provide identity-affirming experiences, and it can help them understand the unique challenges they face. It can provide role models and support than may be missing in their schools, their homes, and their communities” (221). Despite her failures in figuring out who she is early in her life, Najla is successful in this sense.
CHAPTER FIVE
Universal Symbols in *Figs and Fate*

Being a teenager is not an easy task. The adolescent years are colored by raging hormones, frequent bouts of “no one understands me!”, shifting attitudes towards school and learning, battles with peer pressure and trying to fit in, and finding one’s place in the chaos that is our world. I would even venture to say that most Westerners would agree that adolescence is a confusing, difficult time that most people would not elect to return to. But, what is adolescence like in other parts of the world? Are the struggles associated with being a teenager universal, or is a construct of growing up in a Western society? In *Teen Life in the Middle East*, editor Ali Akbar Mahdi reflects on these very questions in his introduction to the collection of essays on what it means to grow up in the Arab world. Although the teenage years are not typically recognized as a developmental stage in Middle Eastern cultures, the experiences of young adults is, in many ways, similar to those in the West (Mahdi 2). He argues that the biggest difference “related to the safety and stability of the environment in which Middle Eastern teens grow is the political instability caused by government repression, war, or occupation,” phenomena most American teens have never experienced before (Mahdi 8). However, despite the differences in environment, the state of being a teen is much the same. In the introduction to *Figs and Fate: Stories about Growing Up in the Arab World Today*, Elsa Marston prompts her
teenage reader to look beyond these inherent differences to see the embedded similarities to which young readers can easily relate:

Never mind that [these young people] live so far away, in countries you may know little about. Many of the things that are important to them, that bring them happiness or arouse their resentment, will sound familiar to you. What they want is what young people everywhere want: a secure home, good friends, teachers who care about their students, and hope for a better future. (Marston 11)

Marston continues to draw on these similarities in the five short stories that follow, highlighting the very things that all teens, regardless of where they live, can easily identify with. One tool that she employs to accomplish this is the incorporation of familiar, universal symbols that carry meaning across cultures.

Even before the work begins, Marston establishes the importance of symbolism through the title of the collection, *Figs and Fate*. Figs have held significant importance in Middle Eastern culture for thousands of years. Fig trees, in ancient culture, have traditionally stood for knowledge and understanding: “Muslims considered the fig tree the most intelligent tree of all, and throughout the ancient world, people revered it as the Tree of Life and Knowledge” (Andrews 92). Beyond linking the fig with the origins of humanity told in the creation story of Genesis, figs also symbolized magic and luck: “People of many cultures considered fig trees wishing trees. The ancients used to pray under fig trees for protection against disease and for deliverance from evil, as well as for health, wealth, happiness, and fertility” (Andrews 93). Marston captures these symbolic representations alongside destiny and the notion of a predetermined path carved out for each individual, an idea that would be recognized by many Westerners. She thus links the symbolic representations of
knowledge, understanding, luck, and hope for a bright future to the human existence. Regardless of whether or not the Western reader recognizes the significance of figs—or is even able to recognize a fig in the grocery store—he or she will recognize the concept of fate as the course his or her life will take. This aligns Eastern symbolism and Western symbolism, setting the stories up as continuations of this congruence.

In addition to this overarching symbolic congruence that encompasses the work, Marston also utilizes universal questions as a framework in which to examine the symbols of each story. On the table of contents page, Marston provides the title of each piece, the country in which it takes place, and a universal question that is applicable to both the story and the life of any teen growing up. In this way she guides the symbol analysis of each story to function as a means for answering the universal question it addresses.

The first story in the collection is titled “In Line,” and it takes place in a small village in Egypt. In it, we meet Rania, a young girl who has just moved from the city to the country with her family. Marston frames this story with a universal question of belonging: “A city girl moves to a farming village…will she ever fit in?” (9). In the story, Rania, whose family is relatively wealthy, meets and befriends a village girl named Fayza, a friendship that her mother does not condone. Rania’s mother does not approve of the friendship because of the class differences between the two families: “If my mother had her way, I’d be friends with only girls from families like ours” (19). In the mean time, Fayza has her own struggles because of her social class, as she hopes to become a veterinarian but is held in place by her family’s status. Rania’s
mother sees this, in addition to the differing lifestyles of the girls’ family, as the factor that makes the girls’ friendship impossible; she is afraid that Fayza will hold her daughter back from a bright future. She struggles to convince her daughter of this, telling her “The future of a girl like Fayza—even though she might be very smart—is so limited. But you can prepare for anything you want, be a doctor or architect or university professor, anything” (29).

Rania grapples with finding her place in her new home and understanding right versus wrong, questioning who should be allowed to determine with whom she is friends. The story is framed by the symbol of roller skates, stretching from the title of the piece to the moment that Rania and her new friends test her new skates out in the empty government compound. But, the skates are symbolic of the girls’ ability to “skate” or glide past the lines drawn by society preventing them from their friendship and from their futures. In the carefree moment at the compound, when Rania, Fayza, and Fayza’s siblings learn how to use the brand new roller skates, the teens step “out of line” in order to learn, on their own, what is right and what is wrong. The skates allow them to move past the gridlock in which society holds them, giving them, for once, the freedom to decide. Although Rania’s mother eventually moves her daughter back to the city to put a stop to her friendship with Fayza and her budding romance with Fayza’s older brother, in an action of rebellion, Rania gives Fayza her skates, noting “it was a small price to pay, I felt, for my right to give my friend something nice...something that would help me be remembered” (36). In this way, Rania gives her friend the freedom to overcome the boundaries set by her socioeconomic status to
accomplish her dreams of becoming a veterinarian. What’s more, the action of giving the skates away also allows Rania to step out of her mother’s and society’s confines, experiencing the freedom she craves: “I was stepping out of line, a little. And I liked it” (36).

Marston’s second story in the collection also deals with the difficulties in becoming autonomous as a teen. The story, “Hand of Fatima,” takes place in Lebanon but follows the life of a young Syrian girl named Aneesi who works for a wealthy Lebanese family to make enough money for her own family to survive. Aneesi, who loves and respects her father, must decide between accepting her father’s wishes and accepting the arranged marriage he has organized for her, or following her dreams and attending school to make a better life for herself. Thus, the universal question this story asks is “A tough choice—loyalty to others, or faith in your dreams?” (9).

Aneesi’s father buys her a charm of the Hand of Fatima, the symbol that inspires the title of this story. This symbol, which may be unfamiliar to Western readers, is relatively comparable to a lucky rabbit’s foot or horseshoe—it is, more or less, a good luck trinket or protective charm. When Aneesi receives this gift in the midst of her internal struggle, she reminds herself what it stands for: “What did it mean, the Hand of Fatima? Luck…protection?...The Hand of Fatima also stood for strength, power” (57). Although it is a gift from her father in hopes of persuading her to return to Syria and marry the suitor he has chosen for her, the Hand ultimately serves as a call for Aneesi’s autonomy in deciding the trajectory of her life for herself, and the charm becomes for her “a reminder that her fate must rest in her own hands” (58).
The third story in the collection, “Faces,” takes place in Syria, and it raises the question “How can you make someone else happy when your own world is falling apart?” (9). In this story, we meet Suhayl, a young boy who lives with his mother after his parents have divorced. Suhayl’s mother, who must now work to be the sole breadwinner of the family, is tired and unhappy, and Suhayl takes it upon himself to bring happiness and life back into his home. The symbol that represents this story is that of a face or a mask, highlighting the underlying theme of appearances versus reality. Suhayl tries to figure out how to make those around him happy, even when they seem to be upset or disappointed with him; throughout the story, he struggles with feeling responsible for his parents’ divorce and his mother’s unhappiness. The symbol of the face first appears when Suhayl visits his friend Raeef’s house and observes the pictures of holy icons decorating the walls of his home. The pictures, to Suhayl, are intimidating: “Suhayl knew the saints were supposed to look very holy, but to him they just looked tired. Like his mother” (70). He reflects on how having such grave faces looking upon the family would affect their mood, although Raeef’s mom seems to be constantly smiling and happy. However, does a solemn exterior necessarily mean that the person is disappointed or unhappy? Suhayl thinks, “All those faces probably hide the truth, things they don’t want other people to know. I’ll bet every face does. Mine, too” (68).

Reflecting on appearances versus reality, Suhayl decides to cook dinner for his mother and himself to alleviate some of the workload and please her. Throughout the preparation and the dinner itself, it seems that everything is going wrong—the
chickpeas are too hard to mash, the spaghetti is overcooked, and the kitchen is left a mess. Suhayl’s mother seems to have little patience with his antics, and he consistently questions himself, asking “Did I fail again?” (75). At the end of the meal, his mother demands an explanation for the dinner and his strange attitude that evening. He tells her, “I did it so you could rest when you got home from work and be happy for a while” (76). At first, she does not respond, but finally, she thanks him: “I will always remember, Suhayl,’ she said, ‘how you made a wonderful dinner for me. And how happy I’ve been to have you all these years’” (77). Suhayl is shocked that his mother is happy to have him, even though she never appears to be so, and finally, she smiles. In this moment, Suhayl learns that external appearances do not always communicate what is going on inside, and he learns that happiness can be shown in a multitude of ways, not just one.

Next, Marston introduces the reader to Rami, a Palestinian boy growing up in a refugee camp in Lebanon, in the story “The Plan.” In this story, Marston raises the question of whether love can exist in unconventional places, asking, “Can the spring flowers bloom—and love blossom—in a refugee camp?” (9). The piece reflects on the difficulties of living in a temporary home, showing what exactly it is like to be an outsider in the confines of a place that it supposed to be home: “The word camp always struck Rami as weird because it was no camp at all—nothing like what he heard the scouts did sometimes, up in the mountains. Camp was just an ugly, makeshift, congested corner of the world for Palestinians to live in, because there was no other place for them” (82). However, the main character Rami does his best to
remain positive despite the circumstances, and with the help of his art teacher Miss Trabulsi, he learns how, through art, to look at negative situations in a positive light. Thus, the central symbol in this work is that of art and how it can be used to alter perceptions of reality.

As Rami tries to bring happiness into the life of his brother, Marwan, by setting him up with the art teacher, he learns that the lines between appearance and reality are not necessarily as define as he once thought they were. The turning point for Rami is when Miss Trabulsi brings bundles of sticks into class one day and asks the students to look at them in a new way before drawing them with charcoal. “That’s the way with everything…” she says. “There’s always more than one way to look at it” (98). That night at home, Rami tells his brother about the art project, and although Marwan is skeptical, he reiterates Miss Trabulsi’s words about looking at life in a different way. This notion, spurred by the symbol of art, helps Rami answer the universal question posed by his story: yes, love and happiness are possible anywhere, despite the circumstances, if one can take on a positive outlook on the situation. He reflects on the budding romance between his teacher and his brother and the prospect of a brighter future for himself and his family, thinking, “From any angle, it looked good to Rami” (101).

The final story in the collection takes place in Iraq and is titled “Santa Claus in Baghdad.” This story’s universal question asks, “Does every gift have to mean that someone else loses?” (9). The main character, Amal, is a bright young girl who tries to make the best of her difficult situation. Her family is very poor, yet she and her
parents do their best to provide for her little brother Bilaal and keep him happy despite the trying times. The story follows Amal as she works to purchase a gift for her favorite teacher, who is leaving the school for a new job, and also take care of Bilaal, who is overjoyed at the thought of their uncle from America coming to visit. Bilaal thinks that this uncle, who will bring gifts from America, is Santa Claus, whom he has learned about in school, and all he wants is a shiny red car to play with. As Amal tries to find the perfect gift that she can contribute to despite her meager circumstances, she and her parents also try to comfort Bilaal when the American uncle does not bring him a toy as he expected. Ultimately, Amal decides to purchase her teacher a beautiful, expensive book of poetry, using the money her uncle gifted her to afford such a fine present. However, we soon find that the book she bought is the family heirloom her father sold to afford a toy truck for Bilaal: “The jewel of her grandfather’s library had gone to make Bilaal happy, to help a little boy believe that good things could sometimes happen…that Santa Claus would not completely forget the children of Baghdad” (135). Thus, the toy becomes the main symbol of the story, as it raises questions of how much a sacrifice costs and is worth. Even though the beloved book has been sold, the sacrifice is worth it for Bilaal’s sake in the eyes of Amal and her parents. The same goes for the book, as Amal’s teacher promises to cherish his new treasure and take care of it. Even though it seems that something has been lost, the tradeoff, in Amal’s eyes, is equal: “She was treasuring the images that lingered in her mind…the book resting in Mr. Kareem’s thing fingers, the red car firmly clutched in Bilaal’s little hand” (135).
Through these five stories, the universal questions aligned with them, and the five symbols that Marston focuses on in the collection, she sheds light on the notion that being a teenager is an experience colored with situations and questions that span culture and circumstance. Her collection, then, is effective in enforcing the final statement she presents in her introduction to the work: “Above all, young Arabs share with young Americans the universal challenge of growing up in a complicated, baffling world, meeting life with courage, determination, and not least of all, humor” (1).
CONCLUSION

In The Classroom and Beyond

In the world of education, analysis of content is useless without application, which is why this final piece of my project includes ready-to-use classroom activities relating to each of the preceding chapters. In the following appendices, teachers will find resources to utilize in their 7-12 language arts classrooms, ranging from project ideas and lesson plans to rubrics and models. All the materials are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and each appendix contains a list of standards that the activities within it meet. I have opted to include the aligned College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for each of the four main language arts strands rather than specific standards per grade level in order to demonstrate how the materials can be adapted for a wide range of grade levels. Teachers may assume that the CCSS for specific grade levels align with the Anchor Standards I have identified.

Whether or not you go on to use the materials I have included, which I invite you to do, I hope that this work and its culminating pieces have illuminated the relevance and importance of teaching the Middle East in our classrooms. In a world saturated with negative images and stereotypes about this region, it is a responsibility of teachers, as the people who mold young minds, to prepare our students to properly understand the international community in order to create a legion of conscientious humanitarian leaders who will go on to make the world a better place.
APPENDIX A

Middle Eastern Countries Multi-Genre Research Project

This project invites students to engage in an in-depth research study of a specific country of the Middle East and display their findings in a more creative medium than the traditional research paper model. The multi-genre research project, or MGRP, is a collection of creative works that are inspired by research on a particular topic. This can serve as a useful summative assessment of a unit to gauge student progress, or it can be used as a way to frontload and introduce a unit by making students responsible for generating their own background knowledge on a topic, as it is used in this case. Students will become “experts,” so to speak, on their assigned countries and will be responsible for sharing the information they have found with the rest of the class to make sure that all students have an understanding of the region they are about to study.

For this project, each student will research and write on a particular country in the Middle East. The teacher can determine whether he or she will assign countries to students, or whether student will be able to pick their own countries of study. Then, each student will find at least three outside sources to inform his or her writing about the assigned country. The project itself will contain at least five (teachers may increase or decrease this number as needed) pieces of original work to demonstrate an understanding of the country. Students may compose short stories, poems, drawings, cartoons, or any other creative medium to show their knowledge of the country and
what life there is like. Students will also be required to create an introduction to the country at the start of the work, presenting specified information like population, national language, and capital city. This information should be presented in some sort of creative medium; for example, creating a Facebook profile page for the country, or writing an acrostic poem that features the required information.

Finally, to connect the work to literature, students must also read a novel that takes place in their assigned countries. Teachers should provide a list of appropriate novels for students to choose from; however, students may also select their own novels and have them approved by the teacher. The list should include novels of varying difficulties, allowing students of diverse reading abilities to select novels they feel comfortable with. The final piece in the MGRP will be a summarization of the novel to demonstrate understanding and familiarity with the piece. Of course, students should also include a properly formatted works cited list and should utilize proper spelling and grammar conventions throughout the project.

Attached, you will find an assignment sheet and rubric for assessment.
Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards met:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCR Anchor Standards for Reading</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details, Standard 1.</strong> Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 7.</strong> Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 9.</strong> Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity, Standard 10.</strong> Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Types and Purposes, Standard 1.</strong> Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Types and Purposes, Standard 2.</strong> Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Types and Purposes, Standard 3.</strong> Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Production and Distribution of Writing, Standard 4.</strong> Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Standard 7.</strong> Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Standard 8.</strong> Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Standard 9.</strong> Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 4.</strong> Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
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<td><strong>Conventions of Standard English, Standard 1.</strong> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions of Standard English, Standard 2.</strong> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Middle East: A Multi-Genre Research Project

In preparation for a literary unit about the Middle East, you will create a multi-genre research project about a country of your choice. See the list of possible countries you may research below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Kuwait</th>
<th>Qatar</th>
<th>United Arab Emirates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Oman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your goal in this assignment is to help your audience better understand your assigned country. Below are the guidelines you must follow in accomplishing this task:

1. You must have a title and a cover page for your work, complete with a relevant image or illustration related to the country.

2. You must have an introduction to your country. This can be as straightforward as a fact sheet or as creative as an online profile. It should tell the official name of the country, the capital, style of government, population, official languages, official religions, and any other pertinent information about that nation. Also include a map of your country.

3. You must have at least five works of your own original writing. These works should show, not tell, information about the country you are researching. Be creative! You could write a poem, draw a cartoon, write a news article, etc.—anything that will help your audience understand what life in that country is like.

4. You must research your topic and create an annotated bibliography that includes at least three outside sources. Cite all sources in proper MLA format.

5. In addition to your research of the country, you will be required to read a novel that takes place in that country. I will provide a list of possible books to choose from; however, you are free to do some research and select your own book. If you pick your own book, you must approve it with me first. The sixth piece in your work should be a summarization of this book, whether through a book review, classic summary, character profile, or any other method to help us get a grasp of what the novel is about.

After you have turned in your project, we will spend two to three days in class to share work with one another. In addition to reading at least two of your written pieces, you are also responsible for giving an introduction to your country and answering any questions your peers or I will ask you about the country.
# Rubric for Multi-Genre Research Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Student has included an introduction to the country, including the information specified on the assignment sheet. Information is presented in a creative and engaging way. (10)</td>
<td>Student has included an introduction to the country, including the information specified on the assignment sheet. (7)</td>
<td>Student has included an introduction to the country, including some of the information specified on the assignment sheet. (4)</td>
<td>Student has included an introduction to the country, including just one or two pieces of information specified on the assignment sheet. (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Student has included 5 creative, thoughtful, original pieces. (10)</td>
<td>Student has included 5 creative, thoughtful, original pieces. (7)</td>
<td>Student has included 5 creative, thoughtful, original pieces. (4)</td>
<td>Student has included fewer than 5 pieces. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Novel</strong></td>
<td>Student has read an approved novel that takes place in the assigned country and included a concise yet complete summary of the work as the 6th piece. (10)</td>
<td>Student has read an approved novel that takes place in the assigned country and has included a brief summary of the work as the 6th piece. (8)</td>
<td>Student has read an approved novel that takes place in the assigned country but has not included a summary in the MGRP. (3)</td>
<td>Student has not read an approved novel. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Works Cited</strong></td>
<td>Student has also included a works cited list in proper MLA format. (5)</td>
<td>There are 1-2 errors in MLA formatting on the works cited list. (3)</td>
<td>There are more than 3 errors in MLA formatting on the works cited list. (2)</td>
<td>Student has not included a works cited list. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sources</strong></td>
<td>Student has used at least three outside sources. (10)</td>
<td>Student has used two outside sources. (7)</td>
<td>Student has used one outside source. (3)</td>
<td>Student does not use outside sources in the MGRP. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling &amp; Grammar</strong></td>
<td>There are 1 or no errors in spelling or grammar. (10)</td>
<td>There are 2-3 errors in spelling or grammar. (7)</td>
<td>There are 4 errors in spelling or grammar. (3)</td>
<td>There are 5 or more errors in spelling or grammar. (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional comments:**

**TOTAL: ____/55**
APPENDIX B
Islam WebQuest
(Aligned with *Shooting Kabul* by N. H. Senzai)

Many of the struggles Fadi faces in N. H. Senzai’s *Shooting Kabul* originate from his peers’ misunderstanding of the Islamic faith. In this activity, students delve deeper into the faith to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a Muslim. The attached worksheet can serve as a starting point for a unit on the novel, making sure all students have a solid background in Islamic faith and practice. It can also be used as a springboard into discussion on Islamophobia and Islam in the media, which raise issues throughout the novel, by pairing the WebQuest with a viewing of the film *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, a documentary on portrayals of the Muslim in Western media. This way, students will be able to see how factual representations of Islam are not always present in what we see on television, in films, and elsewhere.

An additional resource that can be paired with *Shooting Kabul* that I would like to highlight is the 9/11 Memorial website, which has dozens of lesson plans relating to the September 11 attacks. The site offers lessons and projects for all grade levels from kindergarten through twelfth grade, breaking each grade level into multiple subcategories such as “Historical Impact” and “The Mourning, Memorializing, and Meaning-Making of 9/11.” Moreover, each plan is Common Core aligned for easy
integration into any unit in language arts as well as other subject areas. This site is especially useful as time moves farther and farther from that infamous day, becoming a foggy piece of history in the minds of today’s youth.
Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards met:

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<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure, Standard 4.</strong> Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure, Standard 6.</strong> Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 9.</strong> Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</td>
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<td><strong>Conventions of Standard English, Standard 2.</strong> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Islam WebQuest: Understanding the Islamic Faith

Shooting Kabul by N. H. Senzai

Answer the following questions about Islam using the link provided.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/)

Background of Islam
1. What does the word “Islam” mean? ________________________________

2. Where and when did Islam begin? Who was its founder? Give a year, place, and name. ________________________________________________

3. What is the Quran? How was it written, and by whom? ________________________________

4. How does the history of Islam relate to Christianity and Judaism? ________________

5. Is the Quran meant to overwrite the Torah (Jewish holy book) or the Bible (Christian holy book)? Why or why not? ________________________________

Beliefs of Muslims
6. What are the six main beliefs of Islam? (not to be confused with the five Pillars)
   a. ________________________________
   b. ________________________________
   c. ________________________________
   d. ________________________________
   e. ________________________________
   f. ________________________________
7. Define each of the five Pillars of Islam.
   a. Shahadah: ________________________________________________________
   b. Salat: ____________________________________________________________
   c. Zakat: ____________________________________________________________
   d. Sawm: ____________________________________________________________
   e. Hajj: _____________________________________________________________

8. What is the difference between the Quran, Sunnah, and Hadith? __________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

9. Describe Islamic beliefs about polygamy. _________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

10. Does jihad, or “holy war,” always mean a physical war? If not, what else can it
     stand for? __________________________________________________________
     ____________________________________________________________________
     ____________________________________________________________________
     ____________________________________________________________________

11. Why do some Muslim women wear hair or body coverings? ________________
     ____________________________________________________________________
     ____________________________________________________________________
     ____________________________________________________________________
     ____________________________________________________________________

Islamic Celebrations
12. How many religious festivals do Muslims observe each year?______________
13. What does Eid al-Adha mean? __________________________________________
14. What does Eid al-Adha celebrate, and when and for how long does it take place?
    ________________________________________________________________
15. What celebratory traditions surround the festival of Eid al-Adha? 
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

16. What does Eid al-Fitr celebrate?
_________________________________________________________________

17. How long does Eid al-Fitr last, and when does it occur?
_________________________________________________________________

18. What celebratory traditions surround Eid al-Fitr?
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

19. When does Ramadan take place?
_________________________________________________________________

20. Why is Ramadan important to Muslims? Give three reasons.
   a. _______________________________________________________________
   b. _______________________________________________________________
   c. _______________________________________________________________

21. What do Muslims do during Ramadan?
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Sects of Islam
22. What are the two main sects of Islam?
_________________________________________________________________

23. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the two sects. Label each circle with the names of the sects and give at least 3 bullet points in each circle and in the overlapping portion of the diagram.
Your Response
24. Respond to your findings about Islam. What surprised you? What did you learn? Write at least one page documenting your response.
APPENDIX C

Analyzing Poetry through Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

(Aligned with 19 Varieties of Gazelle by Naomi Shihab Nye)

Students frequently struggle with reading between the lines of poetry. The form repels students because they often cannot find the tools necessary to unpack the short lines and embedded literary devices to find the author’s hidden intended meaning. Poetry is a puzzle, so teachers must provide students with a variety of lenses to look through in examining and piecing together this complex form. One such lens is that of psychological criticism, in which readers are called to discuss the poem in terms of psychological theories and phenomena to explain the human condition. The included chart requires students to analyze poetry through the lens of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, a topic that is frequently studied in basic psychology courses at the secondary and post-secondary level. In this case, it is used as a tool in exploring the poems in 19 Varieties of Gazelle by Naomi Shihab Nye, drawing attention to the similarities in needs across cultures and the consequences of not meeting those needs. The included chart can serve as a starting point for future activities, such as analysis essays or further interdisciplinary links between literature and the social sciences.

This appendix contains a chart worksheet with an example to go along with Nye’s book of poems as well as a list of CCSS Anchor Standards met by this project.
Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards met:

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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details, Standard 3.</strong> Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure, Standard 4.</strong> Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure, Standard 6.</strong> Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions of Standard English, Standard 2.</strong> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of Language, Standard 3.</strong> Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, Standard 5.</strong> Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in meanings.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and 19 Varieties of Gazelle

Fill in the grid below as you read 19 Varieties of Gazelle, paying careful attention to how the subjects of the poem fit in to the hierarchy of needs outlined by Abraham Maslow. Then, decide what conclusions you can draw about the subject and his/her situation based on whether or not that need is being met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Poem Title</th>
<th>Need Met or Unmet?</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Actualization Needs</td>
<td>“The Clean Rinse”</td>
<td>Unmet</td>
<td>“after awhile, you will have / nothing more they can take” (15-16)</td>
<td>after continuously going through trials of “washing,” you lose self-worth and confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem Needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love/Belonging Needs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety Needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Physiological Needs</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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APPENDIX D

Using Visual Thinking Strategies to Understand Stereotypes

(Aligned with *Bye Bye Babylon: Beirut 1975-1979* by Lamia Ziadé)

This lesson plan utilizes Yenawine’s exploration into Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to encourage students to critically analyze images of the Middle East prior to studying the region. In this activity, teachers take on a facilitator role, stepping back and allowing students to take control of the conversations about the selected images. Teachers will divide students into small groups who will then rotate to five different stations around the room, discussing the texts at each station and recording their responses as a group. The three VTS questions (“What’s going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?” (Yenawine 25)) serve as the guide for each of the stations. Moreover, when used with older students, this lesson is a great time to introduce Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism, which can enhance any discussion on the Middle East and how it is represented in the Western world. In the case of the Common Core State Standards with which this lesson is aligned, the texts mentioned in the standards are the images that students are examining at each station; thus, teachers are able to incorporate multiple literacies into one class period when teaching a lesson like this one.
Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards met:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCR Anchor Standards for Reading</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details, Standard 1. Read</strong> closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details, Standard 2.</strong> Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure, Standard 6.</strong> Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 7.</strong> Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 8.</strong> Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 9.</strong> Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity, Standard 10.</strong> Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCR Anchor Standards for Writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Types and Purposes, Standard 1.</strong> Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Standard 9.</strong> Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension and Collaboration, Standard 1.</strong> Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension and Collaboration, Standard 2.</strong> Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension and Collaboration, Standard 3.</strong> Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 4.</strong> Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions of Standard English, Standard 1.</strong> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions of Standard English, Standard 2.</strong> Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to Understand Stereotypes
Lesson Plan for Grade 7-12 Language Arts

CCSS:
See previous page.

Objectives:
• Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the effects of stereotyping by utilizing VTS to analyze a variety of images, filling out a worksheet packet after engaging with discussion with classmates.
• Students will be able to delineate the arguments presented in Orientalist theory by summarizing and explicating portions of Edward Said’s work and recognizing its existence in various images from history as well as today’s media and pop culture.

Prior Learning:
This lesson is meant to serve as an introduction to a unit on Middle Eastern literature. Students will have differing levels of background knowledge on the region, so this lesson is meant to level the playing field and put all students on the same page prior to delving into the literature.

Future Learning:
Students will utilize the findings from the stations activities to inform their future study of the Middle East in the upcoming literary unit.

Materials:
• Copies of excerpt from Orientalism
• Printed out images from Bye Bye Babylon
• Printed out images of famous artwork that displays Orientalist views
• Printed out images of Middle Eastern stereotypes
• Printed out images of American stereotypes
• Five worksheet packets, one for each group

Texts:
• Orientalism, by Edward Said
• Bye Bye Babylon: Beirut 1975-1979, by Lamia Ziadé

Procedures:
1. Introduction:
Divide students into groups of five by counting off. Assign each group to a station set up at a different part of the room. Each group will receive a worksheet packet to complete (one per group). The groups will be given ten minutes per station before rotating clockwise to the next station. At each station, students will decide who the recorder filling in the worksheet packet
will be, and each student should record at one station. The order in which the stations are completed is not important. (5 minutes)

2. Station One—Excerpt from *Orientalism*:
At this station, students will read a selected portion of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. The section will explain what Orientalism is and how it is seen in portrayals of the Middle East as well as our perceptions of the region. Students will read the excerpt together and then discuss the questions listed on the worksheet, with the one student recording the answers on the corresponding page in the worksheet packet. (10 minutes)

3. Station Two—Images of famous artwork:
Students will examine three famous paintings that portray the Middle East in Orientalist ways. Students will utilize the questions outlined in VTS (What do you see? What makes you say that? What more can you find?) in order to examine the images initially, and then they will look at the paintings through the lens of Orientalism to discuss the nuances in each piece. One student will record the group’s findings on the worksheet packet. (10 minutes)

4. Station Three—Images from *Bye Bye Babylon*:
Students will look at a series of images taken from the graphic novel *Bye Bye Babylon: Beirut 1975-1979*, which will ideally be the novel of study for this unit (or, at the very least, one of the novels of study). Students will respond to the three VTS questions mentioned in the description of Station Two in order to examine the images and draw conclusions about the visual representations Lamia Ziadé provides. One student should record the group’s discussion on the worksheet packet. (10 minutes)

5. Station Four—Images of Middle Eastern stereotypes:
At this station, students will examine images that represent popular stereotypes about the Middle East, such as ads in magazines and political cartoons. Students will discuss the implications of these stereotypes by talking about the discussion questions provided on the corresponding page of the worksheet packet while one student records the discussion. (10 minutes)

6. Station Five—Images of Americans stereotypes:
Similar to Station Four, students will discuss stereotypical portrayals of Americans and Western culture in the media and pop culture. The questions for this station, which will be listed on the corresponding page in the worksheet packet, will be the same as the ones for Station Four. (10 minutes)

7. Wrap-Up:
Before students hand in their worksheet packets, they will be given the opportunity to share their findings and engage in a discussion about their new understanding of stereotypes as they are perpetuated in our culture. This discussion should take up the remainder of class and could potentially flow over into the subsequent class period. (5+ minutes)
Adaptations:
- Teachers may pre-assign groups rather than counting students off in order to make sure that each team has a range of ability levels, encouraging struggling students and excelling students to work together in discussion and analysis.
- Teachers may also do away with the written component, having students simply talk through the discussion points. In this case, teachers should set aside more time for the discussion component as a whole class after the stations activities.
- Teachers may eliminate the stations and utilize the activities for each station in a whole-class setting to better monitor and guide the discussion.

Assessments:
- Formative: The worksheet packets will serve as the informal assessment for this lesson. The teacher can look over the students’ findings to monitor and check for understanding. The teacher should also walk around throughout the activity, engaging groups in further discussion and discovery and continuously monitoring learning.
- Summative: The teacher may elect to have students summarize their findings in a short essay; however, summative assessment for the unit that this lesson introduces may come later after students have read the novel(s) of study. This would invite students to utilize their preliminary findings to inform a deeper analysis of the literature.
Understanding Stereotypes

STATION ONE—Orientalism
Read the passage provided as a group, and then discuss the following questions. One student should record your group’s responses.

1. What is Orientalism?

2. How does Orientalism have a negative effect on Middle Eastern people?

3. How does Orientalism have a negative effect on Westerners?

STATION TWO—Famous Artwork
The pictures at this station are famous paintings and pieces of art that depict the Arab World. Look at them with your group, using the VTS strategies to discuss the images. Select one image to focus on when answering the following questions. Have a different student record your group’s responses.

4. What is going on the picture you selected?

5. What do you see that makes you say that? Use specific evidence from the images to support your responses to question 4.

6. What conclusions can you draw from your observations?
STATION THREE—Images from *Bye Bye Babylon*

*At this station, you will be looking at images from the graphic novel we are about to study, Bye Bye Babylon. Use VTS strategies to discuss the images and respond to the following questions. One student should record the group’s responses.*

7. What is going on in these images?

8. What do you see that makes you say that? Use specific evidence from the images to back up your responses to question 7.

9. What conclusions can you draw about the images based on your observations?

STATION FOUR—Stereotypes of the Middle East

*The images at this station depict common stereotypes of the Middle East. Discuss the pictures and stereotypes with your group and respond to the following questions. Have a different student record your group’s answers.*

10. What are the stereotypes portrayed in these images?

11. Do you think these stereotypes hold any truth? Why or why not?

12. Can you think of any other ways these stereotypes perpetuated are in society, other than through the images you are looking at?
STATION FIVE—Stereotypes of Americans
The images at this station depict common stereotypes about Americans. Look at the images and discuss them with your group before having the recorder write down your group’s responses to the following questions.

13. List the stereotypes that these images portray.

14. Do these stereotypes hold any universal truth? Why or why not?

15. As an American, how do these stereotypes make you feel?
APPENDIX E

“Who People Think I Am/Who I Really Am” Meme Project

(Aligned with Looking For Palestine: Growing Up Confused in an Arab-American Family, by Najla Said)

The idea for this project came from a presentation I attended at the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (OCTELA) annual spring conference in February in Columbus, Ohio. The session, entitled “Resources To Connect English to Global and Cultural Issues,” was presented by Sydney Hartzell and Kristin Williams from Wright State University; it focused on making students critically aware of social issues in the world today. One suggested project was to create a “What People Think I Do/What I Really Do” meme, a popular meme template that has been circulating on the Internet for the past few years. Using this meme in class would require students to critically examine the ways they (or others) are perceived by those around them versus how they perceive themselves. Initially, I struggled with coming up with a lesson to align to Najla Said’s Looking For Palestine, since the majority of students will not be first generation students or caught in between multiple cultures like Najla is in the novel. However, this meme project seemed like a perfect way to reach a wider audience by asking students how they too are caught in multiple existences through the ways they are perceived by society, their friends, their families, their teachers, and themselves. The sample featured in this appendix, called “Who People Think I Am/Who I Really Am,” utilizes the template mentioned above and
examines the character of Najla in the novel. Teachers and students are welcome to edit the categories listed on the sample in order to make them more applicable to the content or the students' lives, and the project could be used to study characters in a text or the students themselves. Students can use a basic image search to find images for their memes—the images I have selected for the sample project are free stock photos from Pixabay, for example—but students are also free to draw or create their own visual representations for each of the categories. Students should use the name of the represented individual as the title of their memes. Teachers can pair this project with a written component to have students rationalize their choices for each visual representation, or teachers might require an oral presentation of the memes with a verbal explanation of the project.
Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards met:

<table>
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<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details, Standard 1.</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details, Standard 3.</strong></td>
<td>Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure, Standard 4.</strong></td>
<td>Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure, Standard 5.</strong></td>
<td>Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure, Standard 6.</strong></td>
<td>Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</td>
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<td><strong>Text Types and Purposes, Standard 2.</strong></td>
<td>Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Types and Purposes, Standard 3.</strong></td>
<td>Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Standard 9.</strong></td>
<td>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 4.</strong></td>
<td>Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 5.</strong></td>
<td>Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 6.</strong></td>
<td>Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</td>
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<td><strong>Conventions of Standard English, Standard 2.</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NAJLA SAID

WHO MY PARENTS THINK I AM

WHO MY TEACHERS THINK I AM

WHO I THINK I AM

WHO SOCIETY THINKS I AM

WHO MY FRIENDS THINK I AM

WHO I REALLY AM
APPENDIX F

Symbolic Story Representations

(Aligned with Figs and Fate: Stories of Growing Up in the Arab World Today by Elsa Marston)

The symbolic story representation (SSR) is an idea adapted by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm to utilize the visual aspects of a text to create a representation of a character, a symbol, a scene, etc., to showcase how they interact with the text. Students are not restricted to 2D paper collages for these projects, but can involve as much creativity as possible to expand the project into something more. Once the SSRs are complete, students will present and discuss how their representations depict their interpretations of the text. The attached sample, based on the short-story collection Figs and Fate: Stories of Growing Up in the Arab World Today by Elsa Marston, presents the five major symbols in the collection alongside the universal question aligned with each story. As previously stated, students would be expected to present their SSRs to the class and describe how the representations they have created offer a better understanding of the text and what it represents symbolically or metaphorically.
Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards met:

**CCR Anchor Standards for Reading**

**Key Ideas and Details, Standard 1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**Key Ideas and Details, Standard 2.** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

**Key Ideas and Details, Standard 3.** Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

**CCR Anchor Standards for Writing**

**Text Types and Purposes, Standard 1.** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

**Production and Distribution of Writing, Standard 4.** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Standard 9.** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**CCR Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening**

**Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 4.** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 5.** Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

**Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Standards 6.** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

**CCR Anchor Standards for Language**

**Conventions of Standard English, Standard 1.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

**Conventions of Standard English, Standard 2.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

**Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, Standard 5.** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in meanings.
Figs and Fate

Stories about growing up in the Arab world today

By Elsa Marston

Hand of Fatima

A tough choice—loyalty to others, or faith in your dreams?

The Plan

Can the spring flowers bloom—like love blossoms—in a refugee camp?

FACES

How can you make someone else's world your own?

Santa Claus in Baghdad

Does every girl have to go through what she does?

In Line

A city girl moves to a village. Will she fit in?
REFERENCES


Kaufmann, Jonathan. “Aftermath of Terror: Some Arab-Americans Doubly


Nowak-Fabrykowski, Krystyna and Myroslav Sbkandij. “Between Languages and Cultures: The Triad of Symbols in the World of an Immigrant Child.”


