

Flags of the Nations Literature Project

Subjects: English Language Arts

Suggested Grade Levels: 9–12

Time Frame: Variable

*Denise Junkerman,
Prep Charter High School*

Overview

With LOVE Park serving as its entrance, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway extends from City Hall to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Inspired by the Champs Elysees in Paris, the approximate mile-long boulevard is considered Philadelphia’s most monumental stretch of architecture, education, and art. In addition to museums, statues, fountains, and cathedrals, the Parkway is lined with flags of 109 countries from around the world. This international salute represents nations that have a significant population within the city. In recognition and celebration of these world cultures that create the heritage of Philadelphia, students will study and research literary genres set within a region of the world that is represented within the Parkway’s “Flags of the Nations.” Each student will read a major literary piece, maintain a reading log, and deliver an oral presentation.

Connection to Philadelphia World Heritage Tool Kit’s Goal

Through the oral portion of this assignment, students will be exposed to many areas of the world as well as the rich heritage of Philadelphia. As each flag represents a cultural community within the city, in recognizing, exploring, and connecting the national heritages represented by the flags on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway through literature, this assignment allows students to engage themselves as not only citizens of Philadelphia, but also as citizens of the world.

Core Curriculum Standards

In accordance with Pennsylvania Department of Education’s standard aligned system, the following Pennsylvania state standards apply:

- 1.1.12: Reading Independently
- 1.2.12: Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Text
- 1.3.12: Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature - Fiction and Non-Fiction
- 1.4.12: Types of Writing
- 1.5.12: Quality of Writing
- 1.6.12: Speaking and Listening
- 1.7.12: Characteristics and Functions of the English Language
- 1.8.12: Research
- 1.9.12: Information, Communication, and Technology Literacy

Objectives

Throughout this quarter project, students will demonstrate his/her ability to:

- Study literary work to impart knowledge of world authors, history, critical approaches, and ideological content
- Analyze the impact of societal and cultural influence
- Analyze the moral dilemmas in the works of literature as revealed by character motivation
- Identify literary theme reflective of historical significance, governing aspects, and ideologies associated with literary setting
- Consider varying themes related to the literature's discussion of social, cultural, and political thought
- Analyze a literary work incorporating the skills of reporting, interpreting, synthesizing, and evaluating.
- Express both intellectual and emotional response to the literature under consideration
- Compare and contrast cultures
- Compile relevant information and textual evidence in accordance with topic
- Document and present sources in accordance with MLA standards
- Prepare and deliver presentations with cohesiveness, clarity, and logic

Essential Question

Does where we are influence who we are, and how is community achieved on both a larger and smaller scale?

Materials Needed

- “My Mother, the Crazy African” by Chimamda Ngozi Adichie
- “The Nose” by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
- “It’ll be a banner day for Philly along the Parkway” by Queen Muse
http://articles.philly.com/2010-11-16/news/24952938_1_new-flags-flag-poles-cambodian-community
- Computer access for power point presentations -or- story board
- Internet access for research
- Free library card -or- personal or school library for book list
- Chart, Author list, and Reading Log Guide (see below in “additional resources”)

Procedure

Introduction: In an effort to permit students to discover their own definition of community, have students independently copy and complete the following sentence, then discuss the answers as a class:

“Community is _____.”

While discussing the variety of answers, help students realize the many layers of community, the multitude of aspects community is comprised of, and the importance of community on a personal level and in a broader sense.

Activities: Students will read and compare “My Mother, the Crazy African” by Chimamda Ngozi Adichie, and “The Nose” by Akutagawa Ryunosuke. Using a comparison chart, identify the following similarities and differences of each story: the setting (historical time period and geographical location), the characters, the conflict and the characters’ motivation behind behavior, the resolution.

Once chart is complete, ask students what they have learned from both stories in an effort to establish the similar themes. Help students establish that whether a teenage Nigerian female in present day Philadelphia, or a Buddhist priest in 19th century Japan, the need for belonging and acceptance is important. Provide students with brief background of Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Flags of the Nations. As a class read Queen Muses’ article “It’ll be a banner day for Philly along the Parkway,” appearing on Philly.com on November 16, 2010, and discuss the efforts and the pride of Philadelphia communities that will have their nation’s flag added to the parkway. Connect the article with the short stories and help students establish the universal need pertaining to the importance of validation and the feeling of belonging.

Distribute the Author List and introduce the project to students: In recognition and celebration of world cultures that create the heritage of Philadelphia, students will study and research literary genres set within a region of the world that is represented within the Parkway’s Flags of the Nations. Each student will read a major literary piece, maintain a reading log, and deliver an oral presentation. Review and discuss project objectives and student directives. Review regions, authors, and books as a class (complete project below). For homework, students will independently research the list and make a top choice as well as a back-up selection. Have students make selections in an orderly manner that is best fitting of your student body and teaching style. Distribute and review reading log as well as establish due dates for each section. Remind students to continue to compile background information.

At a high school level: two weeks for each section is usually suffice; however, all aspects of the project can be tailored to needs of students and/or preference of teacher. This particular aspect of the project can be completely independent, or class time can be utilized for reading, researching, and completion of reading log.

Oral Presentations: Reiterate the oral presentation requirements after a few weeks. Presentations should be a five-to-six slide power-point that contains the following information: author background, historical aspects of geographical area and time period, synopsis of plot, personal opinion that includes what was learned and a recommendation of who should read the literary work (Remind students to provide an honest opinion with an explanation, and that a recommendation can be made even if one does not enjoy the literary work), works cited. Approximately three to four ninety-minute blocks will be required for a class of twenty-five students. Again, this aspect can be tailored to teacher preferences.

Closure Student evaluations of project will be conducted:

What did you learn about your own culture, other cultures, and Philadelphia?
What did you learn about the manner in which people are connected?
What did you learn about community?
From the list, what book are you interested in reading and why?

Outcome/Assessment

Comparison chart, reading log, presentation

For independent reading assignments as well as reading for pleasure, slide shows will be compiled within a binder and serve as a reference for peer book suggestions. Each year the teacher can slightly change the Author List until all 109 nations are represented within the Flags of the Nations literature reference book.

Additional assignment for upper grades: literary analysis essay.

Special Education and English Language Learners Accommodations

All aspects of the project can be tailored to needs of students. Project also allows for audio as well as visual aids and independent pacing. In addition to short stories being used instead of novels, extended time can be granted, audio books can be utilized, and one-on one tutoring with teacher scheduled.

Additional Resources

Web:

World Culture Encyclopedia: www.everyculture.com

MapZones: www.mapzones.com

Goodreads: www.goodreads.com

eNotes: www.enotes.com

Short Story Comparison

“My Mother, the Crazy African” and “The Nose”

Directions: Upon reading Adichie’s “My Mother, the Crazy African” and Ryunosuke’s “The Nose,” use the comparison chart below to identify the following similarities and differences of each story:

- The setting (historical time period and geographical location)
- The characters
- The conflict and the characters’ motivation behind behavior
- The resolution

“My Mother, the Crazy African”	Similarities	“The Nose”

Flags of the Nations Comparative Literature Project

Project Overview

In recognition and celebration of world cultures that create the heritage of Philadelphia, students will study and research literary genres set within a region of the world that is represented within the Parkway's "Flags of the Nations." As each flag represents a cultural community within the city, in recognizing, exploring, and connecting the national heritages represented by the flags on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway through literature, this assignment allows students to engage themselves as not only citizens of Philadelphia, but also as citizens of the world.

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- Analyze a literary work through the skills of reporting, interpreting, synthesizing, evaluating
- Express both intellectual and emotional response to the literature under consideration
- Compare and contrast cultures
- Compile relevant information and textual evidence in accordance with topic
- Document and present sources in accordance with MLA standards
- Prepare and deliver presentations with cohesiveness, clarity, and logic.

Student Directives

Each student will read a major literary piece, maintain a reading log, and deliver a presentation.

1. Select a literary work from the list provided.

2. Divide the book into three sections.

Section I: pages 1 - ____ Section II: pages ____ - ____ Section III: pages ____ - ____

3. For each of the above sections, complete the Reading Log's required questions in accordance with the following dates:

Part I:

Part II:

Part III:

4. Continue to compile research for background information required for analysis as well as information required for presentation. Presentations should be a five-six slide power-point that contains the following information:

- Author background
- Historical aspects of geographical area and time period
- Synopsis of plot
- Personal opinion that includes what was learned and a recommendation of who should read the literary work
- Works cited

Flags of the Nations Literature

- (South Africa) Mark Mathabane: *Kaffir Boy*
- (Nigeria) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Half of a Yellow Sun* –or– *Purple Hibiscus*
- (Liberia) Leymah Gbowee: *Mighty Be Our Powers*
- (Ethiopia) Abraham Vershese: *Cutting for Sone*
- (Kenya and multiple areas) Uwem Akpan: *Say You're One of Them*
- (Cameroon) Nick Roddy: *A Woman of Africa*
- (Botswana) Alexander McCall Smith: *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency*
- (Chile) Isabel Allende: *The House of Spirits* –or– *Daughter of Fortune*
- (Argentina) Thomas Martinez: *The Tango Singer*
- (Mexico) Laura Esquivel: *Like Water for Chocolate*
- (Puerto Rico) Esmeralda Santiago: *When I was Puerto Rican*
- (Japanese- Canadian) Joy Kogawa: *Obasan*
- (Haiti) Edwidge Danticat: *Breath, Eyes, Memory*
- (Japan) Arthur Golden: *Memoirs of a Geisha*
- (China) Lisa See: *Peony in Love* –or– *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*
- (Cambodia) Vaddey Ratner: *In the Shadow of the Banyan*
- (India) Thirty Umrigar: *The Space Between Us*
- (Nepal) Patricia McCormick: *Sold*
- (Pakistan) Malala Yousafzai: *I am Malala*
- (Iraq) Deborah Ellis: *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees*
- (Israel-Palestine) Susan Abulhawa: *Morning in Jenin*
- (United Arab Emirates) Maha Gargash: *The Sand Fish: A Novel From Dubai*
- (Ireland) Frank McCourt: *Angela's Ashes*
- (Germany) Markus Zusak: *The Book Thief*
- (Italy) Umberto Eco: *The Name of the Rose*
- (Greece) Nikos Kazantzakis: *Zorba the Greek*
- (France and England) Charles Dickens: *A Tale of Two Cities*
- (United Kingdom) Ian McEwan: *Atonement*

Reading Log Questions

Directions: Within complete sentences, answer each of the following questions with explanation and support from the text. Please reflect the question and follow MLA format.

Section I: pages 1 - ____

1. What is the larger setting of the novel?
2. List and briefly describe the characters involved within the plot.
3. How is the story being reported (point of view)?
4. Briefly explain what has happened thus far, how the events occurred, and why.

Section II: pages ____ - ____

1. List and briefly describe any new characters that have been introduced into the plot.
2. How has the plot developed? In other words, what further events have occurred within the novel, how, and why (summarize)?

Section III: pages ____ - ____

1. Have any new characters been introduced into the plot?
2. What is the resolution of the plot? In other words, explain the final events of this novel (what happened, how it happened, and why)?
3. How does the setting contribute to this novel? Consider how the story would change if set in a different place and time period.
4. How does the point of view contribute to this novel? Consider how the story would change if told from a different point of view? Why do you believe the author chose this point of view?
5. What is/are the theme(s) of this novel?
6. What did the author reveal about the behavior of human beings?
7. What did the author reveal about the conduct of society?
8. What did you learn from reading this story?