



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2013 Volume II: Interpreting Texts, Making Meaning: Starting Small

Interpreting the Literal for the Revelational

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A Story: Motive : Work :: Motif : Way, but "*there is fiction in the space between*" ¹

From the mouths of babes astonishing insights appear: "School is like a staircase; each new grade is one step higher!" Such a joyous moment of enlightenment is, in its humble way, an insight comparable to Poincaré's joyous insight into abstruse mathematical phenomena." ² Likewise, I hope, I set before you this track of thoughts, voiced by poets and authors, literary critics and cognitive scientists, family and friends, that explores theories of interpretation and cognitive science as well as life that exists in literature, while attempting to model how to make relevant what they reveal. It is hoped that in reading this curriculum you will find your own meaningful interpretations of life and literature, from the literal for the revelational. All aboard!!

The people that I am entrusted to teach English and Film Literature to, primarily high school sophomores and seniors, arrive with diverse but mostly limited reading, writing and interpretative skills, being either on the cusp of discovering their motivations to keep reading and experiencing personal revelations or accepting the lie that reading deeply is beyond them, thus begetting or continuing a premature and metaphysical moribund state. My motivation for negotiating this precarious turning point for these students is twofold: (1) to help propel those of the first disposition into the heavens while keeping their feet on the ground, with their senses primed and working; and (2) to assist those of the second disposition with dispelling the lie by finding its root and severing it in hopes that they will join the others and regain their identity.

In striving for this, I hold to the dictum "do no harm," though I know that even with all my best efforts, I have too often missed the mark—but I know too that young people are capable of deep understanding and forgiveness. In the words of my friend and colleague, Mr. B, I give my best in showing up for, working diligently with, and paying attention to those whom I face during the school day and beyond. ³ And yes, my goals are lofty, as I am a dreamer and 'speculative theorist,' but my work is grounded and effectual, though admittedly not as I hope it will become. I am only one of many villagers with thousands of other people's children whom we are expected to raise up through education. Still, we keep faith.

This curriculum unit comes out of years of seeking and striving to improve, with assistance from numerous people who have enabled a revelation in me that people and all forms of life matter, and not books or school

subjects (though they do matter in turn as means of transformation). Since I teach youth and want to see them become their mature selves, the texts included here are about them, though only abstractly. Our task is to discover the relevance of the texts to our selves and to each other and to our worlds through individual and collective interpretation(s), finding footing in the day-to-day.

Specifically, though, each text for this curriculum (though not the images) has a child or childlike protagonist, and all the works focus upon some aspect of understanding one's experiences or regaining identity. What follows is a list of works, though not comprehensive, which are held together by an *invisible* thread, and will be taught beginning with smaller texts up and through larger ones in a spiraling manner while always invoking memories of each:

- Images (posters and pictures from my classroom walls): *Photomosaic* of Grant Wood's *American Gothic*, Michael Schofield's *Midsummer's Search*, excerpt of Michelangelo's ceiling mural of the Sistine Chapel (man and God's fingers nearly touching), *xendless_xurbia*, a *Radiohead* poster, and an original photograph I will refer to as *Gray Matters*.
- Poems: *Unfolding Bud* by Naoshi Koriyama and *To Look at Any Thing* by John Moffitt and *Fifteen* by William Stafford, as well as other poems found in *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle... and other modern verse*.
- Short Stories and an Essay: *Grisha* by Anton Chekov, *No One's A Mystery* by Elizabeth Tallent and *Salvation* by Langston Hughes.
- Novels: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury and *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger.

If these works are familiar, then the *invisible* thread may be almost visible. At any rate, by the end of this essay I will have attempted to make it visible or, put another way, to make the *strange* familiar. I also interpreted in greater depth, further below, three other literary texts as they have revealed themselves, I believe, to be of the same spirit: a poem/song, *Strange Fruit* by Abel Meeropol, a short story, *The Flowers* by Alice Walker, and a book, *Secrets of the Cave*, by Anah Weathers (yes, a relation: my mother!). First, I provide necessary groundwork related to interpretation, revealing one more vital text, Dave Pelzer's *A Child Called "It"*. Then, I gradually stitch together concepts of analogy, metaphor and especially simile as a way, via a fourfold reading of texts in the spirit of both Dante's fourfold theory of allegory and *Pardes*, or Jewish exegesis, to *interpret the literal for the revelational*.⁴

A Beginning: Basics : Ground :: Garden : Body, or "...walls have eyes... like mine"⁵

"The science—or art—of interpretation is called 'hermeneutics,' ...which started centuries ago in scriptural interpretation and was only gradually applied to secular literature."⁶ It is also the effort to "distinguish further between meaning (what the text says) and significance (text to self, text to world)," and "in determining meaning," understanding "what counts as evidence." This understanding of interpretation is predicated on "what the educational literature calls analysis, synthesis, and evaluation," the "higher-order thinking" that supersedes "basic facts about the author and text, vocabulary and essential ideas." For this curriculum unit, though, and for students and teachers who seek to "address interpretive or 'higher order thinking' issues in texts," this is the starting point for practicing the art of interpretation.

The above explanation of understanding interpretation, derived from Paul Fry's introduction to his seminar *Interpreting Texts, Making Meaning: Starting Small*, is further clarified by him:

It's really only a question of remembering to read carefully, remembering that fictive elements, poetic elements—everything that contributes to the particular text you're reading—all serve to complicate basic ideas like plot, character, and theme. How does a plot work and function? How precisely can we describe character? Can the theme be explained in a programmatic statement, or is it more complicated than that (i.e., subject to irony, ambiguity, or qualification)? In poetry, what is the function of form (genre, meter, stanzaic structure, sound elements), and how does it contribute to the meaning?" ⁷

Also, he explains that the point of starting small is "to learn the art of interpretation and realize its possibilities through practice. In the course of expanding the possibilities of meaning, we'll have something to say about the varieties of evidence (known intentions, textual clues, historical and social context, the historical and social context that conditions one's own reading, etc.)." ⁸ Indeed, we did, and some to a degree is addressed below, but for the sake of brevity and clarity, here is Laurence Perrine's "criteria used for judging any interpretation of a poem," a re-assertion of "the accepted principal that for any given poem there are correct and incorrect readings":

(1) A correct interpretation, if the poem is a successful one, must be able to account satisfactorily for any detail of the poem. If it is contradicted by any detail it is wrong. Of several interpretations, the best is that which most fully explains the details of the poem without itself being contradicted by any detail. (2) If more than one interpretation satisfactorily accounts for all the details of the poem, the best is that which is most economical, i.e. which relies on the fewest assumptions not grounded in the poem itself. ⁹

Perrine further asserts that these two criteria "are not different from those we bring to the judgment of a new scientific hypothesis," which is encouraging to anyone who seeks to interpret both literature and life; and, he continues, revealing obvious parallels, "Of such we ask (1) that it satisfactorily accounts for as many as possible of the known facts without being contradicted by any fact, and (2) that it be the simplest or most economical of alternative ways of accounting for these facts." ¹⁰

This correlation of criteria between the arts and sciences and how best to apply interpretation, I believe, also validates each field of thought, as they are distinctly similar, allowing good readers and observant scientists to possibly be one and the same; and *that*, I further argue, is what good education does for a person who is inclined towards both. Consider, too, the parallels and further correlations to Mathematics expressed by Thomas Hill: "Mathematics and Poetry are... the utterance of the same power of imagination, only that in the one case it is addressed to the head, in the other, to the heart." ¹¹ And here is a similar parallel to our experiences, as expressed by Krista Waldron, a YNI Fellow who writes in her curriculum about cities inspired by Italo Calvino's novel, *Invisible Cities*:

It is the cumulative effect of all those ambient impressions that caused me to think about our rich and varied relationships with our cities.... Some of these cities are defined by their residents, some by what is there or not there. Others are identified by the perceptions of visitors or the imagination of Marco Polo. Nothing is clear or certain in the narrative except that cities are complex places, and that we have deep, emotional connections to them through experience, memories, symbols, and history. Our relationships with our cities define who we are by how they

capture our imagination and how they reflect what we love, hate and fear. ¹²

This is true with literature and all aspects of life with which we find ourselves engaged.

These interpretive correlations between various subjects of study, i.e. poetry, science, mathematics and environments, each in their separate pursuits of truth, only scratch the surface of the complex and interrelated experiences we have in being part of mere existence. What we learn in one field influences our potential understandings in others. It is also necessary to be aware of distinctions between them, however; but I can set that issue aside because I necessarily limit my focus to the practice and application of interpretation to literature as it reveals aspects about human life.

In different terms that stress the value of and reason for 'critical reading,' or interpretation, Reuben Arthur Brower, in his book *The Fields of Light, an Experiment in Critical Reading*, begins, in 'To the Reader,' with stark observations by Leo Stein and Le Corbusier, respectively: "Whatever one reads with close attention to the words and also to the things the words mean is the instrument of a liberal culture; whatever one reads otherwise, whether philosophy or history or poetry, is not"; and "In a complete and successful work there are hidden masses of implications, a veritable world which reveals itself to those whom it may concern, which means: to those who deserve it." ¹³

"Those who deserve it," I take to mean those who want it and honestly seek it, regardless of their flaws and failures or who they are. These statements, though, remind me of a truth in one of William Carlos Williams' poems, *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower*: "It is difficult / to get the news from poems / yet men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found there"; but what is "difficult" is worth it as it leads to liberation in the individuals who strive for it. ¹⁴ Brower concludes 'To the Reader' by reiterating and extending the arguments from the above statements: "Practice in defining the meanings of words in literature is an 'instrument of liberal culture' since it is practice in making discriminations. Practice in discovering the 'masses of implications' in a work of literary art is practice in finding relationships, in finding order in experience." ¹⁵

Interpreting life through texts is the essence of this curriculum unit. I hope it helps teachers and students like me improve our "making discriminations" and "finding relationships, in finding order in experience". No 'living' text, even if it is the text of a god, is ever more important than a living child, especially if children are God, or gods, incarnate; however, 'living' texts, those that *give* perpetually even to the greatest of 'critical readers' and interpreters who repeatedly seek their elusive depths, will always pale beside the living, breathing being that is a growing child. Literature remains an indispensable aid to this realization.

Let me provide what at first might seem like a non-sequitur but will actually, I believe, provide a practical starting point for interpretation and will directly be of use in discussing *A Child Called "It"*. Inspired by Yusef Komunyaaka's powerful poem, *Facing It*, by which I first began challenging my students to face their own *its*, a three-dimensional cardboard and masking-tape construction of that ubiquitous pronoun '*It*' hangs from the ceiling as the prompt of all class discussions. ¹⁶ '*It*' serves the reminder that for whatever we, the students and I, are discussing, there are infinite points of view and ways of perceiving *it*. '*It*' is also reminds us to consider yet-to-be-revealed possibilities when observing or associating or theorizing, especially if we want to become better readers, thinkers and writers.

Here is how I attempt to get my students to perceive '*It*'. During the first week of school, perhaps the first day, while standing under '*It*', I ask the students who happen to be in seats facing '*It*' from the front, "what is this?" The immediate and speculative responses are "It!" Then I turn to the other students who face the back of '*It*'

and ask what they see. Their responses sound more like questions, "tee?" or "ti?" in their uncertainty of how to pronounce 't'. My response then, while looking up at 't' from underneath, is "that's strange, *it* looks more like an '!' to me, or (turning to look another way) a lower case 'i', a symbol for a person! Why, if we are all looking at the same thing, do we not perceive 't' the same way?" Immediately, sparks fly (metaphorically, that is), and they get a concept of 't' as potentially more than they realized before.

This activity starts our collective effort to interpret texts and the world; and, the literal classroom with wall-to-wall posters and books (since there are no actual windows!) become our "dirty drawings" of the world outside our school.¹⁷ And now, from the process of crafting this curriculum, I have the idea to lower 't' over the course of time (invoking Emily Dickenson's line "It dropped so low in my regard") and eventually, though temporarily, removing 't' from the ceiling, second semester, to allow people to stand in *its* place and profess "I am NOT IT!" or, instead, "I AM..." as a beginning claim to their unique identity.¹⁸ Once they understand the dangers of reducing a child to an *it*, I will return 't' to the ceiling with *it* having its own purpose. More about 't' will be self-evident below where I discuss *A Child Called "It"*.

An English teacher's role, I believe, is to aid, carefully and without imposed will, each student in their personal discovery of literature, and *its* revelation(s) to them, individually and perhaps collectively, and in this I include the possibility and likelihood that each student shares the role as teacher. That is, each human potentially has insights into literature and life that others have not yet had but possibly will need.

The ubiquitous iceberg model for perception thus serves to supplant 't', here.¹⁹ Any text or product or character can be examined and understood in the same way a team of divers can observe an iceberg above the surface and in the depths. Good readers must learn to hold their breath and dive and resurface and do it again and again and again until they can sustain their dives into literary depths. At the surface, all divers share their discoveries and concerns, enjoying the fuller picture of the text(s) via their oral and written discussions, regardless whether they have yet reached the depths.

The 'reality' of (secondary) education for most students and teachers as I perceive it is disheartening: The ideal classroom is a myth for most schools, and thus the ideal ways to practice interpretation are immediately compromised. Teachers with classrooms of thirty plus students cannot ever meet the variant needs and demands (most often unspoken) of each student. The extreme rate of failure in American public schools is proof enough.²⁰ Still, the lofty goal of reaching each child and sharing with them the means to personal revelations through literature, sacred or profane, is essential, whether or not they graduate or seek 'higher' or further education.

Now, consider Reuben Brower's point about one aspect of interpreting a poem: "The critic should start from what the writer says and what he means 'here' and 'here' and 'here' in the text. Then he may safely go on to make as large relationships as he wishes, providing he never goes contrary to these initial findings."²¹ To clarify, the critic is the 'critical reader' or interpreter who seeks to comprehend, in Brower's words, the "imaginative organization" which "implies a certain sort of response to words and certain ways of using them, single words frequently being used so as to have multiple significance."²² To elucidate, he addresses William Blake's lyric *The Sick Rose*: "as we read Blake's lyric from beginning to end, we experience the growing inter-relationship of designs, which builds up the total design of the poem. Our qualitative registering of this order is the total attitude, or evaluation, or sense of life, which the poem communicates."²³ As to whether or not one is successful in their interpretation of a poem, he adds a caveat:

The total attitude in this or any poem is not the cream of emotion skimmed from the describable

structure; and though it can be fully comprehended only at the end, it is not found waiting there like a pot of gold at the end of poetic rainbow, a beatific reward for good reading. The total attitude has been growing all along as a constant overtone to the musical progression of the work; or, if it has not, we are left with vacancy or fragmentary echoes... ²⁴

If there is to be a successful interpretation, then we are to realize that the "total attitude" Brower speaks of "is the complex feel of evolving, finally completed relationships and absolutely inseparable from our perception of them through the poet's language." ²⁵ But perceptions are infinitely varied even when the terms or words used to express an agreed upon interpretation are also agreed upon; and, as is separately understood, a paraphrase of a poem (or short story or novel) can never match the poem itself.

In explaining that "it's not just names, but words for many kinds of things, that are rigidly yoked to the world by acts of pointing, dubbing, and sticking rather than being stipulated in a definition," the cognitive scientist and linguist Steven Pinker inadvertently helps us relax and trust our interpretation of "total attitude" in a poem: "The tethering of words to reality helps allay the worry that language ensnares us in a self-contained web of symbols. In this worry, the meanings of words are ultimately circular, each defined in terms of the others." ²⁶ Interpretation must also be a "tethering" of poetry to individual and collective realities or else interpretation likewise becomes a "self-contained web."

With this new understanding, I turn, for the moment, away from interpreting literature to the issue of communicating effectively with youth, especially when I am attempting to impart vital information or ideas or, even more so, when a student is attempting to impart to me something vital to them, like suicide, to use an extreme but plausible circumstance, as expressed through Hamlet's famous phrase, "To be, or not to be". ²⁷

No child, I could profess, would ever really want "not to be," but to assert this flatly would be callous for the families who have lost a child to suicide. I do not want or like to read or infer from a face or body or text that something is wrong because it can be painful to one's spirit to behold, but everyone knows that when a sulking or yearning child, especially a teen, is asked "what's wrong," the most likely response is "nothing," which is not true since there can be nothing wrong if there is, actually, something wrong somewhere. So, the nothing is inevitably something. And yes, with children, and certainly with teenagers, their particular something might really be *nothing*, but who wants to be the one to misinterpret?

So, I am assuming a sort of worst-case scenario as a reason to learn how to interpret, and I include as equally relevant any deep pain and sorrow that people experience at some moment or another, usually for long stretches of time and experience, in their lives. With this in mind, I evoke the word 'loss' which is the first concept in the "story of the loss and regaining of identity... the framework of all literature," according to Northrop Frye, Canada's preeminent literary critic and theorist of the 20th century. He continues:

Inside it comes the story of the hero with a thousand faces, as [Joseph Campbell] calls him, whose adventures, death, disappearance, and marriage or resurrection are the focal points of what later become romance and tragedy and satire and comedy in fiction, and the emotional moods that take their place in such forms as the lyric, which normally doesn't tell a story." ²⁸

If loss really is that deep and widespread a concept or truth in literature, then it is imperative that stories about loss and the potential regaining of identity be taught to all children so that they begin to have that loss-and-recovery framework in their own minds, so as to be more readily capable of regaining their own identity after it is once lost, as no other person can regain it for them, though many can help.

Interpretation can help, too, for interpretation is the mind in conjunction with the spirit and body deciphering and discerning stories and reality in hopes of helping the self regain that identity. Here again I turn to Frye for an explanation about language and levels of language that we all apply as we think and talk and write:

We have three levels of the mind now, and a language for each of them, which in English-speaking societies means an English for each of them. There's the level of consciousness and awareness, where the most important thing is the difference between me and everything else. The English of this level is the English of ordinary conversation, which is mostly monologue, as you'll soon realize if you do a bit of eavesdropping, or listening to yourself. We can call it the language of self-expression. Then there's the level of social participation, the working or technological language of teachers and preachers and politicians and advertisers and lawyers and journalists and scientists. We've already called this the language of practical sense. Then there's the level of imagination, which produces the literary language of poems and plays and novels. They're not really different languages, of course, but three different reasons for using words. ²⁹

Language, it may seem, is self-referential, and it certainly can be, but it too regains its identity when it becomes one and the same with all its referents; and people, through language, begin to help one another when they truly are at each others' service. For example, the ideas within are a composite of myriad voices within voices within voices. The works I have read, and the people I have listened to and dialogued with, speak here, too. Paul Fry, my seminar leader, who writes back to me via email about an earlier draft, voices his vision of mine (which is, again, a composite of voices in his own mind): "literature matters only when it becomes continuous with, 'touches on,' life. If we read literature as though it were life, it becomes both an extension of our understanding of and relation to others and a means of establishing that saving understanding and relation." In this, our separate understandings have merged and become one identifiable vision in voice, regardless of who voiced them first.

For these reasons, we turn to poems, if not to poets, for truth since poems can reflect modern truths. Does a modern poet know less or only the same as an ancient poet? As Frye suggests, we would not turn for truth to a poet who is biased with all their limited perceptions, but are scientists exempt from this danger? I think not. Here is Pinker:

Many psychology experiments have shown that when people have a pet theory of how things work (such as that damp weather causes arthritis pain), they will swear that they can see those correlations in the world, even when the numbers show that the correlations don't exist and never did. ¹²² The habit of hallucinating causal powers and forcing experience to fit them has shaped human cultures from time immemorial, producing our species' vast compendium of voodoo, astrology, magic, prayer, idolatry, New Age nostrums, and other flimflam. Even respectable scientists don't stop at recording correlations but try to pry open nature's black boxes and identify the hidden powers at work. Sometimes the candidates don't pan out... but often they do, as with genes, atoms, and tectonic plates. ³⁰

I confess that I am building towards a pet theory—one that is vital to my curriculum, though, and to Education, I believe, especially in regards to children. Thus, more necessary groundwork follows. But first another word from Northrop Frye:

If you were developing an imagination in your new world that belonged to that world, you'd start off something like this: I feel separated and cut off from the world around me, but occasionally

I've felt that it was really a part of me, and I hope I'll have that feeling again, and that next time it won't go away. That's a dim, misty outline of the story that's told so often, of how man once lived in a Golden Age or a garden of Eden or the Hesperides, or a happy island kingdom in the Atlantic, how that world was lost, and how we some day may be able to get it back again. I said earlier that this is a feeling of lost identity, and that poetry, by using the language of identification, which is metaphor, tries to lead our imaginations back to it. Anyway, that's what a lot of poets say they're trying to do. ³¹

In associating Frye's theory of loss and regaining of identity and the levels of language, and also the voicing of visions and disagreements, I cannot think of a more exemplary story than Dave Pelzer's autobiographical "A Child Called 'It.'" *It* is "based on the child's life from ages 4 to 12" and shares the harrowing story of his abuse and the breakdown of their family. ³² But I will get straight to the point about *it*: the climax jabs its readers just as his mother "jabbed her finger at [his] face and hissed" (while tearing apart his teacher's letter of praise):

Get one thing straight, you little son of a bitch! There is nothing you can do to impress me! Do you understand me? You are *nobody*! An *It*! You are nonexistent! You are a bastard child! I hate you and I wish you were dead! *Dead!* Do you hear me? *Dead!* ³³

He did hear her, and he understood, standing "motionless, gazing at the letter which lay like snowflakes at [his] feet." ³⁴ She, however, had already turned away, back to her television show with her back to him, in a sense, if not quite literally. But he got it, having to hear what no child ever should. As he observes, "even though I had heard the same words over and over again, this time the word 'It' stunned me like never before. She had stripped me of my very existence." Where Dave had wanted "her recognition," right there he had to start regaining his identity. Now, recall '*It*' that hangs in my classroom and the idea that *it* be replaced by students speaking "I AM...."

Pelzer's books, the sequels being *The Lost Boy* and *A Man Named Dave*, are a testament to his heroism. *A Child Called "It"*, I hope, will be a clarion-call for students not to fear what may be real in the world and/or for them but, rather, to have courage knowing it is themselves who gradually establish their own identity as their lives unfold before them. Because of this, *A Child Called "It"* serves, in this curriculum, as an introduction to literature, especially that which focuses on children, from toddlers to adolescents. And since it is a book that sells itself, as so many students ask to read it, I will simply provide a means to do that, teaching primarily what I teach here.

Here is an older but similar and relevant story—the myth of Narcissus and Echo—that also illustrates loss and the levels of language: Narcissus sees his own reflection and becomes conscious only of his self, losing interest in other things, perceiving them as unimportant and falling more deeply 'in love' with his self to the point that he dies never to rise and regain his identity, as that self which is one with all things. Echo, at the other extreme, sees Narcissus and all other things and feels herself separated from him and them, his back always to her and their seemingly mocking sounds and silence repeating her pining for him, and for identity and her lost and disappearing self. They are, in essence, two halves of a whole self separated, one because he only loved himself and another because she only loved someone else. To me, any field of study or passion or motive, etc., risks this tragedy if it, or the one or ones behind it, fail to seek truth and identity mutually in collaboration with others and their *its*.

My call to my students, then, in regards to literature and interpretation and 'higher order' thinking, is for them to hear and understand another of Northrop Frye's claims: "literature itself uses language in a way which

associates our minds with it....There are two main kinds of association, analogy and identity, two things that are like each other and two things that are each other... One produces the figure of speech called the simile; the other produces the figure called metaphor." ³⁵ In keeping with my pet theory of interpretation, I argue that a good word for 'analogy,' above, is Frye's 'loss,' and that saying 'loss produces the analogy, in which I recognize that I am *like* this or that but separated,' is a good preliminary way to understand relationality as a dialectic. Metaphoric identity is then a recovery from loss, but only in the purest and truest forms of metaphor (those not generated by illogic or ill will or bad taste, etc.) What then of the simile? That, dear reader, brings me to my pet theory!

Yet more grounding is still necessary. Here are basic definitions of analogy and metaphor as they are generally accepted:

(1) Analogy, briefly defined here with only two meanings and whose etymology is Greek and suggests 'proportion,' "is a cognitive process of transferring information or meaning from a particular subject (the analogue or source) to another particular subject (the target), or a linguistic expression corresponding to such a process... [and] ...Phrases like *and so on*, *and the like*, *as if*, and the very word *like* also rely on an analogical understanding by the receiver of a message including them." ³⁶ (2) Metaphor is a literary device that states one thing *is* another *unlike* thing, as in James Geary's book's title *I is an Other* which is derived from Arthur Rimbaud's *Seer Letters* where it, the phrase, "is metaphor's defining maxim, its secret formula, and its principal equation. Metaphor systematically disorganizes the common sense of things—jumbling together the abstract with the concrete, the physical with the psychological, the like with the unlike—and reorganizes it into uncommon combinations." ³⁷

And here is the concluding argument of Steven Pinker in *The Stuff of Thought* that begins, for my purposes, to shed light on my theory, which I will soon explain:

People are not handcuffed to a single metaphor when thinking about something but can switch among them, sifting them for the best match between the relations among the concepts in the metaphor and the relations among things they are trying to understand. And this sifting can be driven by a core intuition. People sense that their words are *about* things in the world, and are not just definitions trapped in a self-referential circle of terms.... In a similar way, people can think of propositions as being *objectively* true or false, not just as things they *suppose* to be true or false.... The intuition that ideas can point to real things in the world or can miss them, and that beliefs about the world can be true or just believed, can drive people to test their analogies for fidelity to the causal structure of the world, and to prune away irrelevant features and zero in on the explanatory ones. ³⁸

Similarly to Frye's explanation of how literature "uses language in a way which associates our minds with it," cognitive science, as suggested in Pinker's argument above, establishes that our minds process our worlds through analogy and metaphor. Metaphor is understood as a kind of analogy and analogy is understood to develop earliest in children, as James Geary reports in his exposé on metaphor, *I is an Other*, research reveals that "our analogical abilities start early. To pinpoint the onset of analogical reasoning, researchers" found "that analogical reasoning takes hold in early adolescence, around the same time kids become able to understand more complex conceptual metaphors." ³⁹ In a previous chapter, *Metaphor and Children*, Geary also says:

though metaphor making starts early, metaphor comprehension develops in stages, beginning with basic physical comparisons before moving on to more conceptual and psychological domains. As children's knowledge of the world grows, so does their metaphorical range. The same is true for adults. Any metaphor is comprehensible only to the extent that the domains from which it is drawn are familiar. ⁴⁰

To further convey the importance of necessary development in children, and adults too, it is vital that we know that "Children have trouble understanding more sophisticated metaphors because they have not yet had the life experiences needed to acquire the relevant cache of associated commonplaces"! ⁴¹ What, though, are associated commonplaces (a term devised by the philosopher Max Black)? Again Geary, explaining that "Black provide[s] a metaphor for how associated commonplaces work":

Suppose I look at the night sky through a piece of heavily smoked glass on which certain lines have been left clear. Then I shall see only the stars that can be made to lie on the lines previously prepared upon the screen, and the stars I do see will be seen as organized by the screen's structure. We can think of a metaphor as such a screen and the system of 'associated commonplaces' of the focal word as the network of lines upon the screen." ⁴²

In a nutshell, then, associated commonplaces in metaphor are the aspects of one thing that apply to the aspects of another unlike thing. Or, the aspects of the *source* (a.k.a. vehicle or figure) of a metaphor that apply to the aspects of the *target* (a.k.a. tenor or ground) of the same metaphor. ⁴³ So, for example, where Shakespeare has Romeo metaphorically state "Juliet is the sun," the associated commonplaces are those where the aspects of the sun (source, vehicle or figure) apply to the aspects of Juliet (target, tenor or ground).

⁴⁴

What needs be said of analogy? Here are Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander in their book, *Surfaces and Essences*, introducing the gist of their argument about it:

...we will show how the simplest and plainest of words and phrases that we come out with in conversations (or in writing) come from rapidly, unconsciously made analogies. This incessant mental sparking, lying somewhere below the conscious threshold, gives rise to our most basic, humdrum, low-level acts of categorization, whose purpose is to allow us to understand the situations that we encounter (or at least their most primordial elements), and to let us communicate with others about them. ⁴⁵

Categorization speaks to concepts, "for without concepts there can be no thought, and without analogies there can be no concepts." ⁴⁶

I fully agree with their assessment. I have witnessed this very act take place with hundreds of students over the years with their *nOATs*, a system I developed with my friend and colleague, Keith Burrows, where students notate their sensory *observations* which trigger their *associations* leading them to *theories* (or thoughts or teachings or theses, etc.) about either their observations or associations, or both, depending upon their perspective and focus, among other things. ⁴⁷ I let them know that "in words are seen the state of mind and character and disposition of the speaker," (or writer). ⁴⁸*nOATs* can work inductively from observations to theories or deductively from theories to observations and are designed to be fully open to the needs of the people who use them just as all thoughts are open to how people use them, for better or worse. They have been my *modus operandi* for interpretation, for better and worse at times, since I stumbled onto the concept

and shared the results with Keith, who helped me understand.

At this point, an important argument over how we think, whether primarily in analogy or conceptual metaphor, is necessary to briefly elucidate. George Lakoff, a linguist who specializes in metaphors, is an advocate of conceptual metaphors being the root of thinking, whereas Steven Pinker, and Hofstadter and Sanders, advocate for analogy. To set up my theory, I present some of their arguments because in them I perceive something elementary, and pertinent for thinking, to be missing.

In Pinker's *The Stuff of Thought*, while he debunks some of Lakoff's extreme points about what Pinker calls the (self-referential) metaphor-metaphor, he otherwise agrees, though with caveats, about the value of metaphor, and framing them:

Metaphors are generalizations: they subsume a particular instance in some overarching category. Different metaphors can frame the same situation for the same reason that different words can describe the same object, different grammars can generate the same corpus of sentences, and different scientific theories can account for the same set of data. Like other generalizations, metaphors can be tested on their predictions and scrutinized on their merits, including their fidelity to the structure of the world. ⁴⁹

To clarify Lakoff and Turner's teachings about conceptual metaphors (though without example), here is their explanation as quoted in Geary's book on metaphors:

Basic conceptual metaphors are part of the common conceptual apparatus shared by members of a culture... We usually understand them in terms of common experiences. They are largely unconscious, though attention may be drawn to them. Their operation in cognition is mostly automatic. And they are widely conventionalized in language, that is, there are a great number of words and idiomatic expressions in our language whose interpretations depend upon those conceptual metaphors. ⁵⁰

While this explains why groups of people share common concepts, Pinker makes clear that "metaphors are powerful to the extent that they are like analogies, which take advantage of the *relational* structure of a complex concept." ⁵¹ To understand what is meant by *concept*, look to Hofstadter and Sander who explicate simple and complex *zeugmas*, a kind of figure of speech that is "characterized by the fact that more than one meaning of a word is exploited in a sentence, although the word itself appears only once. For example: I'll meet you *in* five minutes and the garden." ⁵² Here, the word *in* refers to time *and* place. Hofstadter and Sander also explore verbs and other languages to show how one culture's language (English) may conceive of an idea like to play violin and contrast it with another's language (Mandarin) that has no concept of play (as with a violin) and, thus, no equivalent verb related to *playing* violin. Instead, their closest equivalent verb is conceptualized as *fussing around*, which is similar but not the same, especially when their choice verb for violin is conceptualized, roughly, as *to pull*.

Hofstadter and Sander explain further that concepts, through analogy, get categorized in infinite and shifting ways, as in an A is an A is an **A** is an A is an **Ä**, etc., for all conceivable concepts, keeping in mind that not a single human being conceives or categorizes in exactly the same. Here, they define "category" and "categorization":

a category is a mental structure that is created over time and that evolves, sometimes slowly and

sometimes quickly, and that contains information in an organized form, and gradated, gray-shaded linking of an entity or a situation to a prior category in one's mind.... A category pulls together many phenomena in a manner that benefits the creature in whose mind it resides. It allows invisible aspects of objects, actions, and situations to be "seen". Categorization gives one the feeling of understanding a situation one is in by providing a clear perspective on it, allowing hidden items and qualities to be detected..., future events to be anticipated... and the consequences of actions to be foreseen.... Categorization thus helps one to draw conclusions and to guess about how a situation is likely to evolve.⁵³

In short, we naturally know how to interpret! Hofstadter and Sander say we create more complex metaphors through inferences: "Inferences... are a crucial contribution to thought, and they come from categorization through analogy, for we rely ceaselessly on resemblances perceived between the present situation and ones we encountered earlier. If we did not do this at all times, we would be helpless." ⁵⁴ And Pinker, recall, says people can switch and sift through metaphors and that "sifting can be driven by a core *intuition*." Thus, inferences lead to intuition, and are basically the same, and both are the means to thinking and interpreting! But still, I believe, something is missing.

A Middle: Analogy : Simile :: Metaphor : Simile, or "a beautiful day of sunshine" ⁵⁵

So, what are inferences and what is intuition? Well, I have a theory, my pet theory, and I will give it a name, *the Similes*, and I will give it wings in hope that it successfully flies with Icarus's enthusiasm but more importantly with the late wisdom he gained while falling.

First a definition of the literary kind: Simile is "a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another *thing of a different kind*, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid (e.g., *as brave as a lion*, *crazy like a fox*)."⁵⁶ Let me clarify: Similes are structured like analogy in that they compare concepts, often in terms of "is like," but they are of the mind of metaphor in that they compare unlike things. They are both *is* and *like*, and although other words and phrases create literary similes, they all contain the essences of *is* and *like*, as with *crazy like a fox*, above, where '*is*' is implicit in the adjective *crazy* if not directly stated before. Here is further clarification of these three modes of thinking with sample sentences (all similarly structured for clarity):

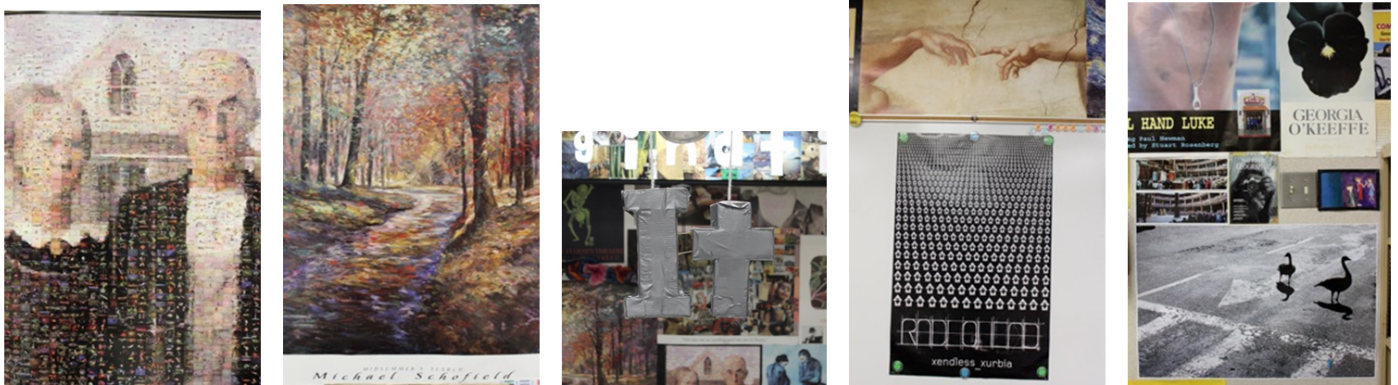
- Analogy (two concrete or abstract but *similar* things, which are then *likened* one to the other): (1) A book, *like* a short story, is worth reading. (2) Love and kindness alike are fueled by passion.
- Simile (one concrete or abstract thing, which is then *likened* to an *unlike* concrete or abstract thing): (1) The book *is like* an angel's dream. (2) The mind *is like* a brilliant illusion.
- Metaphor (one concrete or abstract thing identified as another *unlike* concrete or abstract thing): (1) The book is an angel's dream. (2) Truth is an elusive tiger.

And, finally, here is my pet theory set in flight: similes are the interpreters between analogy and metaphor, the sparks between synapses, the space between the finger of Adam and the finger of God (Michelangelo), the flow between women (X:X, analogy) and men (X:Y, metaphor), between languages and cultures and peoples and people, between fire and water (Icarus) and hubris and despair (Narcissus/Echo), and between the infinite

imbalances that we all are mutually and continually shifting and turning and humming between in pursuit of balance. They are spirit that breathes, and though they might be invisible and gather like dark matter, they also radiate like pure light and pull like dark energy, and they *are like* the Sun as analogy equals Earth and metaphor is the Moon. In them, their beauty, "all is made whole... all is restored." ⁵⁷

Reality check: I was taking a liberty with the wings of my imagination and dreams, and thus admit my pet theory is extravagant (though I can see correlations everywhere); yet I stand by my insistence that simile is the go-between for analogy and metaphor, and emphatically believe that this framework is the key to meaningful interpretation and understanding of any text. In interpretation, similes help the mind build analogy towards metaphor but also reduce metaphor to basic analogy.

So, without further ado, except for a succinct introduction and description of fourfold reading, or *Pardes* as it was taught to me by a visitor to the seminar, it is time to make an invisible thread visible, one that weaves through literature and life, particularly the literature for this curriculum. ⁵⁸ I present it in the form of narrative, a sort of *riff*, that elucidates the ideas and concepts that string the invisible thread of the literature for this curriculum. I will also do so having interpreted them through fourfold reading. That means that I read literally first, metaphorically second, understanding that they are not what they are but something else, analogously third, asking how they apply to me personally (just as each person does the same, personally), and fourthly for the revelational, that is, seeking personal revelations:



The poster *Photomosaic* of Grant Wood's *American Gothic* is quite literally comprised of hundreds of tiny photographs of natural and man-made items that, taken as a composite image, evoke an image of the original painting. So, though the image is not actually there, we cannot help but see it. This is true with literature and life, too. Michael Schofield's *Midsummer Search* similarly 'reveals,' through composite colored paints and brushstrokes (via the poster medium of ink on paper), a dirt road within woods that bends to the left and into the future (notice the conceptual shift between direction and time). Metaphorically and conceptually, the picture represents infinite possibilities such as danger in the depths of the woods, light and understanding ahead, mystery in the bend of the road and in time, etc. Juxtaposing these images with Michelangelo's, we realize that spaces, or lacunas, allow infinite perceptions and ways of being, but especially, in context of this curriculum, the feeling of loss and the potential to regain identity.

The *Radiohead* poster confronts the indifference of sameness that systems and people put upon each other, and the image itself is akin to the iconic Malvina Reynolds song, *Little Boxes*, that are made of "ticky-tacky"—which are the very houses many of my students and their families reside in. ⁵⁹ The stark difference is that the poster is filled with hundreds of white houses with upside-down black houses (otherwise identical) within them. They are devoid of color, devoid of grayness. *Little Boxes*, though, confronts the same evil even

though the houses it condemns are multi-colored. It is the conformity and the willingness of people to conform that Reynolds indicts. My photograph of two geese, *Gray Matters*, speaks to, among other things, the choice of following others or finding one's own way (though not alone or to spite others).

Unfolding Bud is a beautiful and accessible poem about reading poems that models its message by means of its metaphor: a flower bud takes time and nourishment to open. And what one finds in them is no different from the miracle of seeing *American Gothic* or understanding the power of the space between fingertips reaching to regain identity to be one with God. *To Look at Anything* also models its message, too, which is about having patience and passion for discovering miracles and beauty. *Fifteen* captures that moment of realizing the infinite in the moment, especially as it speaks to a teenaged boy's discovery of the power of life. What he literally discovers is a motorcycle flipped over on the side of the road with the motor humming. Through his investigation of the scene (or it could be a poem) he discovers life, and friendship, and the power in being. It ends with him looking down the road of life, similar to the goose that appears to be seeing the open road (of course it's only personification – a kind of metaphor).

Grisha, an amazing short story about the most amazing day in the life of Grisha, a toddler who goes with his 'Nursie' to his first parade, reveals how children perceive the world (such as with object permanence⁶⁰) via associations through analogy and metaphor, but also misperceive, all while learning the illogical reasoning (to him) of adults as they punish him, time and again, despite his brand new experiences. The ending is most meaningful as it demonstrates how we at times misinterpret and assume, and ultimately force out meaningful experiences by 'medicating' children and, thus, metaphorically flush out all they have learned. Addressing the other spectrum in childhood, the transformation into adulthood and disillusion, *No One's A Mystery* magically reveals how teenagers have amazing intelligence, but unfortunately their narrow vision and focus on *ungolden* things keep them from seeing the bigger picture that healthy relationships afford. The narrator relates her experience with Jack, who for her eighteenth birthday gives her a "five-year diary with a latch and little key, light as a dime." What ensues is a debate on predictions of what she will write in her diary, but what the story makes evident is teenagers' romantic and idealistic hearts and minds that keep them from seeing the obvious. Fortunately for the narrator, when she brushes off the dust on her *derrière* she sees the dust in the shape of a butterfly, suggesting... well, just consider what butterflies emerge from. *Salvation* speaks to the pressure of conformity under religious expectations. It is rife with irony, and Hughes's voice is as authentic as its message is universal: What good is religion if it destroys faith? Or, put another way, what good is schooling if it destroys inquiry and passion?

Fahrenheit 451 is Plato's "The Allegory of the Den" manifested in characters who choose to seek life and light, or not, while struggling to adjust to seeing and perceiving or easing into blindness and death. In the process, mistakes are made and disasters unfold. The novel and the allegory both serve to remind us of our limited insights, foolish beliefs and misguided steps to action. As for the last, *The Catcher in the Rye*, it is an indictment of schools and people who claim to be there for kids but, in fact, fail to be, over and over and over. Is Holden Caulfield a whiner and complainer? You can decide for yourself, for no one truly is a mystery, but the point is not to indict him but to save him, and I prefer to save him. He is, after all, lost in that middle ground of teen-dom between adolescence and adulthood without a true friend. He asks in the form of a dismissive statement, while resting in a 'hospital' for the 'ill,' still hopeful though full of doubt, "if you really want to know about *it*...." Well, do you? He wants to know, as you, after all, are suffering there with him, in your own delusions, as his roommate!

"The goal of education is to make up for the shortcomings in our instinctive ways of thinking about the physical and social world," says Steven Pinker in the closing chapter, "Escaping the Cave," of *The Stuff of*

Thought. "And education is likely to succeed not by trying to implant abstract statements in empty minds but by taking the mental modes that are our standard equipment, applying them to new subjects in selective analogies, and assembling them into new and more sophisticated combinations." ⁶¹ That, I say, is spoken in the voice of simile, and it makes me smile as a smile *is like* the sanctity of simile.

Now, if these theories are true, then we have to change, and I believe it is through *being like* similes that we will be able to see eye to eye, being flexible in translating abstractions to be the go-between and the breathing of spirit, person to person, animal to animal—and plant—elder to child and child to elder, as well in all other ways of being, regardless of, well, anything. I suggest a meaningful and healthy way for change is through literature that directs our perceptions towards inanimate *Its* and that speaks to deepest truths, whatever they may be, and so I offer three texts as a starting point. Even though they were written by three people who have never met, they are nevertheless of the same spirit and, therefore share an identity. Each one is also presented as a *riff*:

Abel Meeropol's elegiac masterpiece, *Strange Fruit*, is most familiarly voiced, perhaps, by Billie Holiday. ⁶² It metaphorically turns the tragedy and horror of lynching, through her mournful and haunting supplication and sorrow, into an indictment of it: "Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze / Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees / Pastoral scene of the gallant south... The scent of magnolia sweet and fresh... / ...fruit... / for the tree to drop / Here is a strange and bitter crop". ⁶³ These lyrics, selected from equally telling others, convey deep convictions in juxtaposed metaphors—*black bodies swinging* and *strange fruit hanging*—and imagery of ironic hypocrisy—*Pastoral scene of the gallant south*. How difficult it must be, then, to smell the sweet and fresh scent of magnolia and to see its fruit left to rot and drop as only part of an all too familiar and poisoned crop.

Alice Walker's short story, *The Flowers*, a one-page miracle of storytelling, speaks volumes about the irony intrinsic to this peculiarly American history. ⁶⁴ Myop, short for myopia and, read backwards, suggestive of her being a living poem, "skipped lightly from hen house to pigpen," evoking the cycle and rhythm of life, i.e., beginnings (eggs) and endings (smoke equaling spirit), and her working out "the beat of a song on the fence around the pigpen." Her state of mind, "the days had never been as beautiful as these," is predicated on "It seemed...." She is "ten, and nothing exist(s) for her but her song," except that in turning towards the spring, and adventure, she starts into new experience, beyond the sharecropper farm where she lives with her mother: "Today she made her own path, bouncing this way and that way, vaguely keeping an eye out for snakes. She found, in addition to various common but pretty ferns and leaves, an armful of strange blue flowers with velvety ridges and a sweet suds bush full of the brown, fragrant buds." She is growing, and circling the land, discovering. At noon, although having "been as far before, ...the strangeness of the land made it not as pleasant as her usual haunts... and began to circle back to the house, back to the peacefulness of the morning" when "...she stepped smack into his eyes. Her heel became lodged in the broken ridge between brow and nose, and she reached down quickly, unafraid, to free herself. It was only when she saw his naked grin that she gave a little yelp of surprise." Chilling because it is startling to realize she has stepped into the bridge of a skull, we watch her step back and assess the scene and see her seeing hints of the body, pushing leaves and layers of earth back to see what is to be revealed. Ultimately, she sees much more, but so do we within the hidden circles and truths within the story, her story:

Myop gazed around the spot with interest. Very near where she'd stepped into the head was a wild pink rose. As she picked it to add to her bundle she noticed a raised mound, a ring, around the rose's root. It was the rotted remains of a noose, a bit of shredding plowline, now blending benignly into the soil. Around an overhanging limb of a great spreading oak clung another piece.

Frayed, rotted, bleached, and frazzled—barely there—but spinning restlessly in the breeze. Myop laid down her flowers.

Although this body that she discovers had fallen from "a great spreading oak," it is merely one of too much 'strange fruit' that has bloodied American soil, and circling that tree and the man, sadly, in his last moments before his life was snapped, was a ring of hatred, of sneers and jeers and unfriendly faces, strange faces, unkind and unloving. This history recalibrates Myop's awareness, and for her, then, "the summer was over." For readers, though, the realities that Myop has stepped into are infinite and frightening, although she shows no fears. We are left to imagine. I suggest for a place to begin seeing: imagine the pattern the knot of a noose makes, and then pretend to be Myop reaching down to pick that wild, pink rose and, in the process, notice your fist that holds the bundle of picked flowers and see why she "laid down her flowers."

Treasures from the Past - Secrets of the Cave seeks in spirit, I believe, to teach healing by showing love in action and adventure and, in a way, to redress an aspect of that *bitter crop*. It is the story of William, a struggling reader and son of a white and poor, farming family, and Anna, the daughter of the only black family in the county who *is like* Myop in that she is unafraid to seek truth and to live in happiness despite hardship and hate. Their discoveries about each other, William cannot read well and Anna "can't go to Bon Aqua School because [her] skin isn't white," begets their friendship (as saintly similes) and adventures, where they soon discover secrets in a cave and, ultimately, experience great adventure in a hot-air balloon with their newly-formed friends and fellow adventurers.⁶⁵ How did William and Anna actually meet? When William, during recess from the one-roomed schoolhouse, slipped down to the creek in the woods and saw Anna "leaning against the big oak tree that grew in the middle of the forest" and "as he walked closer, he realized that she was reading a book."⁶⁶ Hmm.

On a side note, in *The Intentional Fallacy*, Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that "the design or intention or the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" and "critical inquiries are not settled by consulting the oracle."⁶⁷ I agree, but still I offer my mother's words of intent:

In 1998, Stafford A... encouraged me to write about my years growing up in the South. My thoughts drifted back to 1946, the year that our family moved from the city to a farm near Bon Aqua, Tennessee. It was a big change for me to live the life of a country girl; not only did I feed the chickens, milk the cow, and work in the garden, but I also attended classes in a one room schoolhouse during a time when segregation was being experienced throughout the South. Having lived through those times, I wanted to share about the hardships inflicted on some Americans as seen through the eyes of a child. While the persons and events in *Secrets of the Cave* are fictional, the problems brought about by segregation are real.⁶⁸

She was once a struggling reader, too, having suffered a childhood illness that set her back and triggered the onset of fears; yet, she overcame! In talks with her about this curriculum, she reminded me about the nursery rhyme *Mary Had a Little Lamb*: "it followed her to school one day / which was against the rule. // It made the children laugh and play, / to see a lamb at school."⁶⁹ In the mindset of William Blake as voiced by Frye: "The more a man puts all he has into everything he does the more alive he is."⁷⁰ Thus, allow children serious passion and play!

An End: or Vision : Symbol :: Ethereal : Basics, or "to save our lives... envision" ⁷¹

I envision an organic classroom environment where individuals are 'born' into families (groups of three) and participate in communities (groups of eleven), one family member per large group, with the objective to create organizations (based on student passions and interests) that benefit them and their actual families and communities. Components of this vision are further explained in my curriculum, *Exchanging Letters - Changing Legacies*. ⁷² In honor of my father who writes a weekly page of encouragement to Christian Seniors and always attaches a column of humor in anecdotes and jokes (one of his passions), I will encourage my students to include with their academic daily-writings their own passions as they enhance all of our understandings via relevance to the texts and their lives and their worlds. The structure of weekly lessons and activities are predicated on the proverb, *it takes a village to raise a child*, where I am the villager on Mondays and the child on Fridays. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are transition days where I model for students, while meeting with each community or family group, how they are to be the villagers and to raise the literary children in the texts above as I embody them metaphorically. For practicing interpretation we will play the board game, *Wise and Otherwise*, discovering and interpreting proverbs from around the world! ⁷³ While doing this and practicing nOATs, we will also log analogies, similes and metaphors, and our theories about them, as we find them in literature, conversations and in shows such as *How the Universe Works, expanded edition (galaxies)*, which are rife with figurative expressions. Local artist, Beth Grossman, will lead and share her work *Table Talks* and a Bill of Rights for Seeds. ⁷⁴ And this spoken-word performance by Sulibreezy that speaks to children being human and more important than data will be our model for spoken-word exercises: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-eVF_G_p-Y Enjoy!

Thank you YNI, Fellows, family and Paul, all who shared wisdom, helping transform this curriculum and me! I wish I also had room for your teachings; however, I close with Alice Walker's sagacious words: "That is why when I look at you and I can say that I love you, it's impersonal and it's also an acknowledgement that love is basically what brought us here; and, if we can remember that, then we can take care of each others' treasures." ⁷⁵ In this wisdom may Educational revelations and revolutions carry on!

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Appendix

The following *Content Standards* from the State Board of Education ⁷⁶ will be applied for this curriculum: *Reading Standards for Literature 6-12: Grades 11-12*, 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. *Writing Standards 6-12: Grades 9-10*, 1. And, write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence: a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and

create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence; b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases; c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims; d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing; e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Endnotes

1. Traci Chapmen, *Telling Stories* from the recording *Telling Stories* (2000), track 1
2. Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander, *Surfaces and Essences*, 17
3. Keith Burrows, retired English teacher from Westmoor High School, Daly City, Ca.
4. See the Wikipedia.org site: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pardes_\(Jewish_exegesis\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pardes_(Jewish_exegesis))
5. Crowded House, *Silent House* from the recording *Time on Earth* (2007), track 9
6. Paul Fry, seminar description for *Interpreting Texts, Making Meaning: Starting Small*
7. Paul Fry, in a clarifying email on interpretation to YNI Fellows.
8. Paul Fry, from an email about the 'small' texts to be discussed: Robert Kraus's *Tony the Tow Truck*, and three lyrics: William Wordsworth's *A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal*, William Carlos Williams' *This is Just to Say*, and Ezra Pound's *In a Station at the Metro*
9. Laurence Perrine, *The Nature of Proof in the Interpretation of Poetry*; from *The English Journal*, September 1962, 393-98
10. Ibid
11. Jerry Farlow, *The Girl Who Ate Equations for Breakfast*, 124:
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/26895212/The-Girl-Who-Ate-Equations-for-Breakfast>
12. Krista Baxter Waldron, YNI 2013 Fellow in *Invisible Cities* seminar
13. Rueben Arthur Brower, *The Fields of Light, An Experiment in Critical Reading*, xi
14. William Carlos Williams, *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower and Other Love Poems*, 10
15. Rueben Arthur Brower, *The Fields of Light, An Experiment in Critical Reading*, xii
16. See the poets.org site: <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15830>
17. Günter Wilhelm Grass, from *In the Egg*; also, see (mis)interpretations run amok:
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/08/gunter-grass-barred-from-israel>

18. See: <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/it-dropped-so-low-in-my-regard-2/>
19. See the Bing.com site:
<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=iceberg+model+theory&qpv=iceberg+model+theory&FORM=IGRE>
20. See U.S. Department of Education site:
<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2013/01/high-school-graduation-rate-at-highest-level-in-three-decades/>
21. Rueben Arthur Brower, *The Fields of Light, An Experiment in Critical Reading*, 5
22. Ibid, 8
23. Ibid, 10
24. Ibid, 10
25. Ibid, 10
26. Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought Language as Window into Human Nature*, 11
27. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The Riverside Shakespeare, 1160 line 55
28. Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination and Other Writings on Critical Theory 1933-1963*, 455
29. Ibid, 441
30. Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought Language as Window into Human Nature*, 217
31. Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination and Other Writings on Critical Theory 1933-1963*, 454
32. Dave Pelzer, *A Child Called "It"*, xi
33. Ibid, 140
34. Ibid, 140
35. Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination and Other Writings on Critical Theory 1933-1963*, 445-6
36. See the Wikipedia.org site: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analogy>
37. James Geary, *I is an Other*, 1-2; Also, see the about.com site: <http://grammar.about.com/od/rhetoricstyle/a/13metaphors.htm>
38. Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought Language as Window into Human Nature*, 437
39. James Geary, *I is an Other*, 172-3
40. Ibid, 161-2
41. Ibid, 158
42. Ibid, 146-7

43. See the Wikipedia.org site: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphor>
44. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, The Riverside Shakespeare, 1068 line 3
45. Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander, *Surfaces and Essences*, 18
46. Ibid, 3
47. Jeffry K. Weathers and Keith Burrows, developed 2007-9 and first explained in previous curriculum:
http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative_10.02.10_u
48. See the site:
<http://www.dictionary-quotes.com/in-words-are-seen-the-state-of-mind-and-character-and-disposition-of-the-speaker-plutarch/>
49. Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought Language as Window into Human Nature*, 261
50. James Geary, *I is an Other*, 91
51. Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought Language as Window into Human Nature*, 267
52. Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander, *Surfaces and Essences*, 6
53. Ibid, 14
54. Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander, *Surfaces and Essences*, 20-1
55. See: http://tabs.ultimate-guitar.com/c/cecilio_and_kapono/here_with_you_crd.htm
56. New Oxford American Dictionary
57. Chester Nez with Judith Schiess Avila, *Code Talker*, 12
58. Ralf Thiede, Associate Professor of English, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
59. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malvina_Reynolds about Malvina Reynolds and
http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative_11.04.11_u for more curriculum
60. I knew the phenomenon but learned the term via a stranger on a train, Marcie Mauro.
61. Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought Language as Window into Human Nature*, 439
62. See Billie Holiday's performance: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4ZyuULy9zs>
63. See the bluesforpeace.com site: <http://www.bluesforpeace.com/lyrics/strange-fruit.htm>
64. Alice Walker, *Sudden Fiction (Continued)*, 35
65. Anah Weathers, *Treasures from the Past Secrets of the Cave*, 15
66. Ibid, 12

67. W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley, from *The Intentional Fallacy*, 2 and 17
68. Anah Weathers, *Treasures from the Past Secrets of the Cave*, 103
69. See the wikipedia.org site: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Had_a_Little_Lamb
70. Northrup Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 21
71. Andrew Bird, *Fiery Crash* from the recording [ARMCHAIR APOCRYPHA] (2007), track 1
72. See the YNI site: http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative_12.04.02_u
73. See the site: <http://www.thehouseofcards.com/games/wise-otherwise.html>
74. See her website: <http://bethgrossman.com/>
75. See video for Alice Walker Archive: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDFiK7i6-FA>
76. See the cde.ca.gov site: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>

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