

NEUSTADT CURRICULUM PACKET

Lesson plans for grades 9-12
to study the work of Boubacar
Boris Diop, laureate of the
2022 Neustadt International
Prize for Literature



Sponsored by
World Literature Today
In partnership with
Colorado Academy



The Neustadt Prize is the first international literary award of its scope to originate in the United States and is one of the very few international prizes for which poets, novelists, and playwrights are equally eligible.

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THE PRIZE AT A GLANCE



DU & WLT

The prize is based at the University of Oklahoma and is managed by the university's international literary magazine, *World Literature Today*.

THE P

The prize consists of \$50,000, a replica of an eagle feather cast in silver and a certificate. A generous endowment from the Neustadt family ensures the award in perpetuity.

Journalists often refer to the prize as the "American Nobel."

THE NUMBERS

NEUSTADT/NOBEL PRIZE CONVERGENCES



In the prize's 45-year history, 30 of its laureates, jurors or finalists have gone on to win a Nobel Prize.

Neustadt Laureates	Neustadt Jurors	Neustadt Finalists
Gabriel García Márquez	Heinrich Böll	Elías Canetti
Cinzia Milosz	Joseph Brodsky	Günter Grass
Octavio Paz	J. M. Coetzee	Nadine Gordimer
Tomas Tranströmer	Odysseus Elytis	Sørensen Kierkegaard
	Merlo Vargas Llosa	Fyodor Leming
	Derek Walcott	Deris Leasing
	Elie Wiesel	Eugenio Montale
		Toni Morrison
		Alban Rønne
		V. S. Naipaul
		Public
		Kenneth
		Orhan Pamuk
		Harold P.
		John S.
		Clotilde S.
		Alexandra
		Selkirk
		Wole Soyinka
		Wu Y.

NEULSTADT LAUREATES SINCE 1970



■ Poets (57%) ■ Novelists (39%) ■ Playwrights (4%)

Since 1970, 57% of the Neustadt laureates have been poets, 39% have been novelists, and 4% have been playwrights.

GLOBAL COVERAGE



■ Europe (35%) ■ Latin America & Caribbean (28%)
■ Africa (13%) ■ Asia (13%) ■ Oceania (9%)
■ North America (4%)

*...There are very few literary prizes indeed which are international. Among these a place apart is occupied by the Neustadt Prize." – Octavio Paz

NEUSTADT PRIZE LAUREATES SINCE 1969



A FINAL DOSE OF INTERESTING FACTS

DIVERSITY FROM THE BEGINNING

By only the third awarding of the Neustadt Prize in 1974, the juries of the prize had already totaled 34 jurors from 25 different countries. Their nominees and finalists wrote in 13 different languages!

TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY

There's nothing veiled about the Neustadt Prize. The identities of both the jury and the finalists are made public before the announcement of the prize at the Neustadt Festival, which is traditionally held in September or October.



Many Neustadt-affiliated authors have gone on to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, but 1986 Neustadt jurist Elie Wiesel is the only one to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Author of nearly thirty books, his humanitarian goal was for the world to remember and learn from the Holocaust, of which he was a survivor.



To date, only four countries (Canada, Colombia, India, and Poland) have been represented by more than one Neustadt laureate.

About the Neustadt International Prize for Literature

The Neustadt International Prize for Literature is a biennial award sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and *World Literature Today*. The prize was established in 1969 as the Books Abroad International Prize for Literature, then renamed the Books Abroad/Neustadt Prize before assuming its present name in 1976, the Neustadt International Prize for Literature. It is the first international literary award of this scope to originate in the United States and is one of the very few international prizes for which poets, novelists, and playwrights are equally eligible. Biennially, an international jury of outstanding writers is selected and convened to decide the winners. The members of the jury are determined by the executive director of *World Literature Today* in consultation with the journal's editors and the president of the University of Oklahoma. Each juror nominates one author for the prize. The jurors convene at the University of Oklahoma for their deliberations.

The charter of the Neustadt Prize stipulates that the award be given in recognition of outstanding achievement in poetry, fiction, or drama and that it be conferred solely on the basis of literary merit. Any living author writing in any language is eligible, provided only that at least a representative portion of his or her work is available in English, the language used during the jury deliberations. The prize may serve to crown a lifetime's achievement or to direct attention to an important body of work that is still developing. (The prize is not open to application.)

The Neustadt Scholar Program at Colorado Academy

Colorado Academy (CA) hosts an annual writing competition for Upper School students, whereby winners are selected through a process of positive elimination, modeled after the Jury deliberation process for the Neustadt prizes. Members of the English and History Departments collaborate to select two to four CA Neustadt Scholars based on submissions modeled on and/or connected to the work of the Neustadt/NSK laureate for that year. The CA Neustadt Scholars attend the Neustadt/NSK Festival at the University of Oklahoma, their work is published in various journals by Colorado Academy and *World Literature Today*, and they participate in workshops with the winning authors and/or jurors.



Boubacar Boris Diop

Senegalese writer Boubacar Boris Diop (buh-bah-kar bor-ees gee-ohp) is the author of novels, essays, plays, and screenplays. He also ran an independent daily newspaper and continues to write for the foreign press. Early in his career, along with writing, he taught at a grammar school and actively spoke out against colonialism. In 1998, after publishing two award-winning books, Diop and eight other writers were invited to participate in the Duty of Memory Project. While staying in Kigali, Rwanda, the artists reflected on the 1994 genocide by meeting with survivors and learning of the horrors they lived through. His novel *Murambi: The Book of Bones* was published shortly after his stay in Kigali. Described as “a miracle” by Toni Morrison, *Murambi* was listed as one of the 100 best African books of the 20th century by the Zimbabwe International Book Fair.

Diop has won many prestigious awards including the Senegalese Republic Grand Prize, the Prix Tropiques for *Le Cavalier et son ombre*, and, most recently, the Neustadt International Prize for Literature. He has “established himself today as one of the most prominent contemporary Francophone writers.” His writings have been published in English, French, Wolof (a Sub-Saharan African language), and many other languages.

In addition to writing, Diop is passionate about language, especially the Wolof language. In March 2016 he helped create Céytu, a literary collection “that aims to publish literary masterpieces from all languages and all cultures into Wolof.” He also founded a publishing house that focuses on literary works written in Wolof.

A note for teachers about the lessons in this packet

In the following resource packet, there are two lessons that draw on or connect to the writing of Diop. Lesson One is accessible for grades 8-12, while Lesson Two is designed for upper-level English classes. From writing a personal narrative on a meaningful childhood place, to exploring one’s relationship with language, to looking at the immigration experience, these lessons allow students to explore themes in Diop’s works while connecting them to their own personal lives. Appendices A & B have the stories by Diop, and Appendices C-D are grading rubrics that might be helpful with assessment. Appendix E includes Common Core and Oklahoma state standards.

Works Cited

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Lesson 1: Writing a personal narrative based on “My Father’s Library”

OPTION A (FOR STUDENTS IN GRADE LEVELS 8-12)

In his short autobiographical piece entitled “My Father’s Library” (Appendix A), Diop describes one of the most important places of his childhood. Through specific detail and rich imagery, the library of his childhood emerges vividly. Although this is an autobiographical piece and therefore nonfiction, Diop relies on numerous literary techniques to make the prose come alive.

Students should first explore some of the strategies and writing techniques Diop employs. Consider the following sentences or passages:

1. “Why on earth had my father, a mere accountant in the colonial administration, put himself into such debt to acquire hundreds of volumes, which, in reality, I have never seen him read?” (paragraph 1). In this passage and in others throughout the essay, Diop relies on the rhetorical question, a device that allows him to pose a question to the reader (and to himself) for further consideration. How effective is this strategy for helping draw in the reader to the “mysteries” of his father’s library?
2. “. . . the room has been erected not to shelter any random kitchen or living room but to serve as a sanctuary, like a chest for its jewels, for the masterpieces of Molière, Ronsard, and company” (paragraph 1). Here Diop uses a simile, a comparison using the words “like” or “as,” to great effect. How does this comparison help him make his point about his father’s library?
3. Diop relies on alliteration in various places in his essay as well. Phrases such as “remote from reality” (paragraph 7); “our country at the crossroads” (second to last paragraph); and “sarcophagus of signs” (final paragraph) repeat the consonant sounds at the start of the words. Again, what effect does this have on the literary quality of the piece?
4. Posing questions within their essays is another strategy strong writers such as Diop frequently use. For example, in his first paragraph, he asks, “Who really, in the small town of Thiès in the 1950s, could boast of having dedicated a domestic altar to the Gods of French literature?” Later, when transitioning to a new paragraph on page 2, he wonders: “And Africa in all of this?” Sometimes, an author’s questioning may be rhetorical, in that they expect no answer or perhaps the answer is self-evident. Other times, an author may pose a question to be provocative and challenge the reader’s assumptions. As we consider Diop’s use of questions in “My Father’s Library,” what purposes do they serve for his overall literary goals in this piece?

After discussion, students will move on to writing their own personal narrative, centering their piece on an important place from their own childhood. When writing their own place essay, students should bring out concrete details as well as use more subjective interpretations to write an essay detailing how a place has helped define or alter them in some way. The place does not have to be somewhere where they feel a *positive* connection; it could be a place where they were lost, confused, or disconnected. Encourage students to show (not tell) how this place was/is particularly significant in the construction of who they are today.



BOUBACAR BORIS DIOP LESSON PLANS

As students explore their own backgrounds, potentially looking for connections to Diop, they should be reminded of the importance of storytelling as a means of expression. *Everyone's* story is valuable and should be heard. Here, a connection to the website and mission of Narrative 4 could be useful as a launching point for students as well: <https://narrative4.com/about>. The goal of this initiative is to “help students understand that their voices, stories, actions and lives matter, and that they have the power to change, rebuild and revolutionize systems.” Writing and sharing stories is a significant way to bridge cultural divides and build empathy.

Ultimately, in a 750-1000 word essay, students should strive for the following specific elements:

1. An opening image or scene that conveys action and draws the reader into the piece (see student model).
2. Five really interesting (image-conjuring) verbs. Remember that “interesting” doesn’t always mean polysyllabic. Good verbs simply *show* the action best. Be conscious of “to be” verbs and try to avoid their overuse.
3. At least three meaningful facts about the place.

STUDENT MODEL

Disney Magic in Wisconsin

1. All I wanted was to go to Disneyland. I spent my 6th grade school year listening to my peers discuss how “insane” the rides were, and their plans to visit over the summer with their families; I listened to their conversations longingly. I had never been to an amusement park other than Elitch’s, and I hadn’t returned in several years after witnessing someone get carried out on a stretcher after one of the rides. By comparison, Disneyland sounded absolutely magical. I ran the idea by my parents several times throughout the school year, preparing full presentations with a slideshow each time I discussed the trip with them; I thought if I planned the entire trip, they would be more inclined to say yes. Each time they responded, “We’ll see” with a slight chuckle.
2. The school year had ended, and my parents said they had “big news for summer” that they planned on telling me later that afternoon. The entire day I was ecstatic. There was no doubt in my mind that the “big news” involved a flight to California and Mickey Mouse. Much to my shock, however, the words “Door County” and “Wisconsin” blurted out of my father’s mouth. I was struck by a culmination of confusion and disappointment.
3. My dad’s side of the family had all contributed to renting a house in the small village of Egg Harbor in Door County, Wisconsin. It was a large house equipped with what seemed like a million bedrooms to accommodate my ridiculously massive family. My parents explained to me that the plan was to go out to Door County with my entire family- ALL SUMMER. This sounded like possibly the worst way imaginable to spend my time off. They attempted to sell me on all of the fun activities we would do and explained that this trip was a great opportunity to catch up with all of my cousins. To me, spending the summer on a lake in Wisconsin was no match for *Splash Mountain* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* in California. I was despondent.



4. When I arrived at Egg Harbor, it was even smaller than I imagined, and I felt even more dread for the summer ahead of me. There was a narrow street lined with colorful shops along either side. This “expanse” of shopping that stretched two or three blocks was Mainstreet. As we drove, I carefully examined each shop, hoping to find something exciting. Instead, all I found was “Fresh Fish!” written on practically every sign. I hated fish. We continued to drive, and on my right, I saw a large body of water: Lake Michigan. I had always loved the water, so seeing this massive lake gave me some comfort that there *would* be activities. Finally, we pulled into the driveway of the house, and I was shocked. The house looked absolutely beautiful. There was a large circular driveway completely filled with the cars of my relatives. The entire house was coated in light grey paneling, and all of the windows were lined with white trim. I could see that the house was right on the lake, and all my cousins were out back in the water. We parked and walked through the garage with our suitcases. The garage was filled with jet skis, water skis, and an enormous motorboat.
5. The bright orange jet ski caught my eye right away; I laid claim to it first thing the next morning when my cousins and I went out on the lake. Speeding and racing around the lake was more fun than I could have ever imagined. I threw caution to the wind, which turned out to be a disastrous mistake. While racing my cousin Jacob, we were approaching speeds of around 40 mph. With the wind pummeling my body, and my hair whipping my face, I felt like a racecar driver fighting to cross the finish line. As I accelerated my jet ski, longing to pass my cousin up ahead of me, a gust of wind hit me from the left, and my jet ski toppled over into the water. A wave of fear overcame me, as I frantically paddled to the surface. While I choked and gasped for air, I looked over to see my cousin laughing hysterically at me. Jacob laughed at me the whole way home, and I had to laugh too despite myself. “The jet ski incident,” as my family refers to it now, has become a popular story retold during family gatherings.
6. Despite my original disappointment, that summer in Wisconsin was full of nonstop activity. My cousins and I spent our days boating, swimming, and doing just about every water sport imaginable. I began to know the shop owners on Mainstreet by their first names, and by the end of the summer, I even grew to like fish. Though at the beginning I wanted nothing more than to be at Disneyland, I can say with confidence now that my summer in Egg Harbor was the best rollercoaster I could’ve asked for. It was constantly exciting, completely exhilarating, and a place I will never forget.
7. Visiting Egg Harbor has become a tradition in my family. Every summer, if possible, my family all meet up at the house and spend a few weeks together in Wisconsin. Egg Harbor has not only given me some of the most fun summers and best memories of my life, but it has also provided my family an outlet to spend time together. It is so much more magical than Disney.

OPTION B (FOR STUDENTS IN GRADE LEVELS 10-12)

The other important aspect of the essay “My Father’s Library” revolves around Diop’s relationship with language—not only the French that his father prefers and embraces but also his mother’s native tongue, Wolof.

Students should first explore the main ideas about language presented in Diop’s narrative. What do you think he means when he writes about “choosing between the mother’s stories and the father’s books”?



BOUBACAR BORIS DIOP LESSON PLANS

There are social and political implications of language as well, especially in the parts of Africa that were most impacted by colonialism. (Diop himself writes more about this topic in his essay “Write and . . . Keep Quiet” in his collection called *Africa: Beyond the Mirror*.)

In a **personal narrative**, write about your own relationship with language. For example, if you grew up in a bilingual household, what was the interaction between the two languages you learned? Do you face any similar dilemmas, feeling a tension between the two (or more) languages you learn and use?

If you grew up in a monolingual household, did you still feel that there were differences between the casual speech you used at home and the more formal language you encountered at school or in literature?

Another approach to this personal narrative might be to consider languages that used to exist and don’t anymore. How does language play a vital role in keeping a culture alive? Are there languages that are universal?

For this prompt, students should write 500-650 words using the first person. The same elements described above for Option 1 may be required in order to encourage the liveliest writing process.





Lesson 2: Understanding the African Immigrant/Refugee Experience

(FOR STUDENTS IN SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES GRADES 10 -12)

In Diop's short prose "black and blues" (Appendix B), he describes a small fishing village in northern Africa where much of the male population has gone to seek opportunity in Europe. Like many places all over the globe, northern Africa and the southernmost parts of Europe have seen an influx of immigrants and refugees, seeking better lives. As more people have become displaced due to war, famine, natural disasters, and economic hardship, the pressure on certain countries and their governments has increased. (An original dance film based on "black and blues" will premiere at the Neustadt Festival on October 26.)

In order to broaden their understanding of these issues, and to begin building empathy toward immigrants and displaced people around the world, students can read the following articles:

"At Least a Million Sub-Saharan Africans Moved to Europe Since 2010," Pew Research Center, 2018

"Understanding the Global Refugee Crisis," Facing History & Ourselves, n.d.

Students could also compare Diop's piece to an excerpt from Laila Lalami's book *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, which details the experiences of immigrants leaving Morocco to reach the southern tip of Spain.

They could also expand outward to other refugee crises around the world. The current war in Ukraine is just the latest example; teachers could choose from a range of global hot spots to emphasize the point.

For students to do: Taking action and responding locally to help offset global displacement is something that interests and inspires many young people. For this assignment, students can look into resources in their local community that support immigrants or refugees from countries that are facing a displacement crisis.

What nonprofit agencies exist in your community? (If students do not have time or ability to research widely, teachers might direct them to a national group such as Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services [LIRS.org], which has a presence in multiple states.)

What services do recent immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers need in order to maintain a level of dignity and security while they temporarily relocate?

Option A – Write a letter to a resource in your community sharing what you have found out through your research. How might your local community support asylum seekers or refugees?

Option B – Write a flash fiction piece or prose poem from the perspective of a migrant or refugee. Share this piece with your local community agencies as a way of showing empathy and compassion for refugees in your area.

Appendix A – Autobiographical Essay

“My Father’s Library”

by Boubacar Boris Diop | translated by Bojana Coulibaly

The most vivid memory of my childhood was a vast fair-walled room lined with books. It is the place of my original contact with the French language. Still more than half a century later, I haven’t unraveled all of its secrets. Why on earth had my father, a mere accountant in the colonial administration, put himself into such a debt to acquire hundreds of volumes, which in reality, I have never seen him read? It might have something to do with vanity. But for this native of Gorée, a proud Francophile like many intellectuals of his generation, it is most importantly an expression of his attachment to France which he truly considered as his Motherland. The only difference is that his confession of love, instead of being murmured, was cried out at the top of his lungs. Who really, in the small town of Thiès in the nineteen-fifties, could boast for having dedicated a domestic altar to the Gods of French literature? Indeed—and this is essential—the room has been erected not to shelter any random kitchen or living room, but to serve as a sanctuary, like a chest for its jewels, for the masterpieces of Molière, Ronsard and Co. The purpose of my father’s library was also naturally to give us—his children, and the kids in the neighborhood—the taste for books.

As far as I am aware, it only worked with me. I would stay locked all day inside the library, while my brothers and cousins would play soccer outside or chase sparrows with catapults. When I would sit at the table which separated the room in two, my short legs wouldn’t even reach the floor. And for some volumes that were placed very high on the shelves, it would require for me to ask help from an adult to have them at my disposal. I was too young to realize back then that the language of these books was self-sustaining, and that their content was nearly ornamental. This is probably why it didn’t matter to me that they all looked so similar—same dark brown color, same golden title, and an identical logo on all the book covers. I managed by chance to make good use of these books.

For some mysterious reason, the 19th century was massively represented in my father’s library. Very early, I had a thousand times under my eyes *Les contemplations*, *On ne badine pas avec l’amour* or *La légende des siècles*. It is difficult to imagine the imprint left in one’s mind at that age by the names of Vigny, Lamartine or Musset. Naturally, the romantic poetry, very popular among the indigenous educated elite at the time— “Ô temps! Suspends ton vol”, “Demain, dès l’aube, à l’heure où blanchit la campagne”, “Un seul être vous manque et...” — wasn’t lacking. With some distance, I can see now with a little bit of embarrassment, that all of this was of a vain emphasis, perhaps even simplistic (Gide saying ironically, “Hugo, hélas!”, when being asked to name the French greatest poets of all times.) But I cannot deny having tasted long ago those lyrical musings. In truth, when there was prose, it was *Les misérables*—a novel that made me cry even though I only understood a quarter of it—or *Paul et Virginie*, or even *Les rêveries d’un promeneur solitaire*. *Madame Bovary*? *Les fleurs du mal*? They were as absent from the shelves as the works of Zola and Jules Vallès. I doubt that my father had decided to hide them from us as a political choice or by malice. It could be that a publisher of luxurious books had simply shown him his catalogue.

All the books being written in French, he couldn’t have hated neither one of them. He must have chosen the ones he liked the most or the ones that were chic to own. That would explain some inconsistencies, so to speak, because *Les caves du Vatican* was there, and I don’t know how many times I’ve heard myself whisper, for no reason, the melodious and enigmatic name—Lafcadio Wluiki. Kipling was also there. I’ve reread the story of the wolf-child Mowgli so many times that Bagheera and Baloo ended up becoming as familiar to me as my neighborhood friends. I later offered the two volumes of *Livre de la jungle* to my son Moustapha who was eight years old, a huge literature admirer. It seems that the tricks of the Monkey People, the Bandar-Log, haven’t captivated his imagination as much as his father back then. Lastly, there were two volumes of tales and legends set in India, and another one in Ancient Greece.



All of this confirms that the monotony of the display was only apparent. Each book represented its own unique world. All one was expected to do was to decipher each world so as to be transported out of the self by the power of signs.

And Africa in all of this? The only trace of it that I found was in a novel by Jules Verne, *L'étonnante aventure de la mission Barsac*. In one of the illustrations, Barsac, the colonial explorer quite typically represented—all dressed in khaki, from the boots to the helmet to the sjambok—was being carried by some Black Africans even more caricatured. I don't remember the story, but it is very easy to imagine the clichés and nonsense that could comprise such a book. What could be more normal? My father's library was in perfect resonance with an educational system more focused on formatting than on training. As a child, I wasn't allowed to speak Wolof during recess, and our geography lessons made me meander through the smallest streams of France and Navarre.

Certainly, the reading of Césaire, Birago Diop and Mongo Beti, among others, quickly came to correct such serious anomalies. But I probably would never have discovered those African authors without the stories told by my mother, Faat Ndiaye. It was her fantastic narratives that made me a novelist. Strangely, the more they seemed in line with my daily life, the more they appeared remote from reality. Whereas the texts in the library would promptly trigger the same long reverie, her fables on the other hand, would accelerate my heartbeat. Without being fully aware, my fate was being decided in this rivalry between words coming from elsewhere, and the fire of words burning so close to me. I realize better today how unequal the contest was. The great nineteenth-century works weren't taking me anywhere, because after I've taken great delight in them, I heard no one around me—not even my father—speaking French. The stories were told to us only at night, that is to say, at the same time as when my diurnal companions, Voltaire and Co., had delved into a deep slumber. Little by little, the nightly tales had deprived these texts of their power to charm.

Thanks to this personal experience, I know better why French is not doing well in Senegal today. My friends outside of the country get always surprised when they hear us switch from Wolof to French. They would get mad saying: "What language do you even speak in this damn country?" Whoever can answer this question is exceptionally clever. This is like asking, "What happened to the tail of Mbott-the-frog", as we would say it here! According to certain experts, my compatriots have become "semi-lingual".

Mamadou Cissé at the Cheikh Anta Diop University has judiciously observed that between Wolof and French, there is a superimposition rather than a fusion. This logic of separation has encouraged what another linguist Pierre Dumont, calls "the Senegalese elites' tendency to hypercorrection." Is Senghor to blame? He is being criticized by some for having paradoxically "destroyed" French by wanting to preserve its purity. According to many witnesses, the civil servants most in danger in Senghor's time were radio and *Le Soleil* newspaper directors. They were persistently reminded, with an angry and irritated tone, the deviations—not political but grammatical ones—of such and such unknown journalist. I also remember that when the Six-Day War started, the radio announced an important message by the president Senghor to the nation. Everyone was expecting a statement on this serious conflict between Israel and the Arab countries. Well, that evening, he lectured us on our habit ("neither Senegalese, nor French") for placing the family names before the first names. He also warned us that he will not allow anyone to continue using apostrophes on the last names such as Ndiaye, Ngom, Mbaye, etc.

It is therefore easily understandable why there is almost no epigone of Kourouma in Senegal! In my opinion, the image of our country at the crossroads is summed up in this dilemma—choosing between the mother's stories and the father's books. The choice is not easy to be made, but it is certainly not ambiguous.

My father is born the same year as Senghor. From their generation to mine, the impact of the French language has never been denied. French has however been reserved for a minority, and we realize today that such a hugely elitist scenario was hardly viable. What has remained of my father's books? All of them have been swept away by the wind long before his death. They have never really been part of the family heritage, and for that reason, my father's library was essentially a sarcophagus of signs. I know that I am indebted to them for having, as a child, vibrated to the rhythm of a thousand imaginaries. But in the end, they are no match for the tales of a mother storyteller.

Appendix B – Prose Poem

“black and blues”

by Boubacar Boris Diop | *translated by Bhakti Shringarpure*

An expanse of blue. Flickering through black and white images. A black hole of memory. Fragile and visible only because of its absence. It might be a village but it's set deep in the heart of the city. Almost a *trompe-l'œil*. The sea, with its cruel double standards, devours the bodies as much as it nurtures them.

Césaire would have said: houses *eerily stranded* on the beach. A tire wedged between the pebbles and the algae. Fragments of a broken bottle scattered around a sandy mound, a beach cluttered with all sorts of detritus. One must tread carefully on the beach, to avoid cuts from the shards or stains from the excrement. The ocean, though close by, is inaccessible, relentlessly taking back what it gives mankind. It is hard to imagine what type of life would be possible in such a place.

Here, all social activities revolve around fishing. In swift, skillful moves that hark back to the dawn of time, young men wind their ropes in preparation for the imminent journey. Women lean over stalls dotted with stray heaps of sea bass. They're not just sorting out the day's catch, picking out some to be dried under the sun and others to be salted: they are also counting these little treasures from the sea. Without these life would be worse.

These men of the sea know it instinctively: fishing nets draw worlds closer to each other weaving a link between here and faraway. If only because of this ability to connect everything, one feels inclined to compare them to the boats you see, or rather imagine, are everywhere. Perhaps that was the case before. *Before*: what exactly does this word mean? It was such a long time ago, in a previous life. Today, it's hard to think there was a time when boats weren't possessed by the sea, a time when they symbolized life, not death.

If only you dare to open your eyes. The village has been depleted of its menfolk. How strange it is to stand on the seashore facing the foaming, surging waves, and yet be able to only think of the desert. Children are squeezed in a boat and some are surprised to find themselves wondering whether they are learning how to fish or learning to map the route to the Balearic Islands or Lampedusa at the risk of death. They don't know themselves but on their haggard faces you can clearly see that it has been a long time since their body and spirit were a single entity.

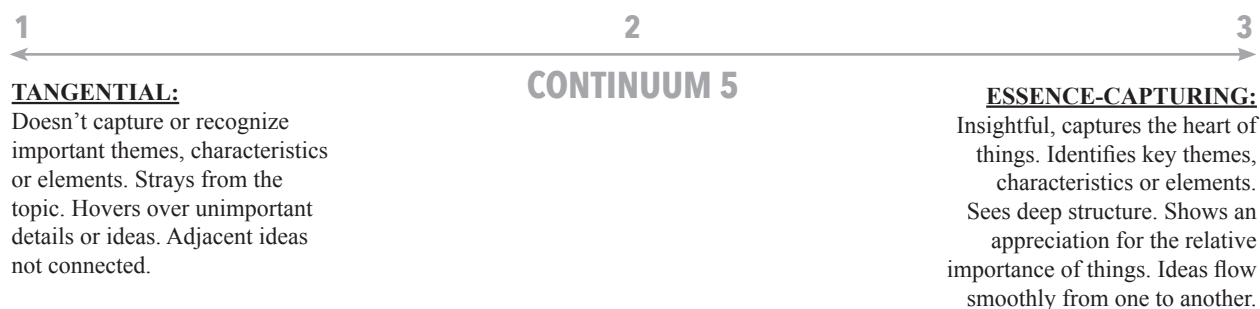
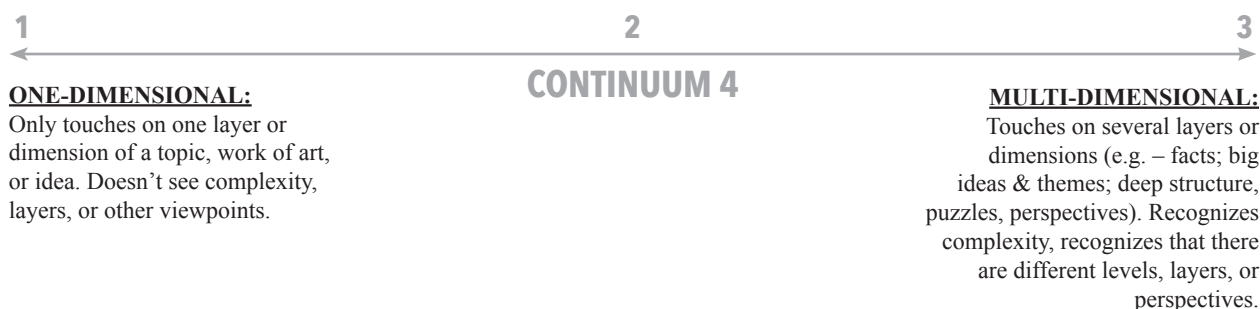
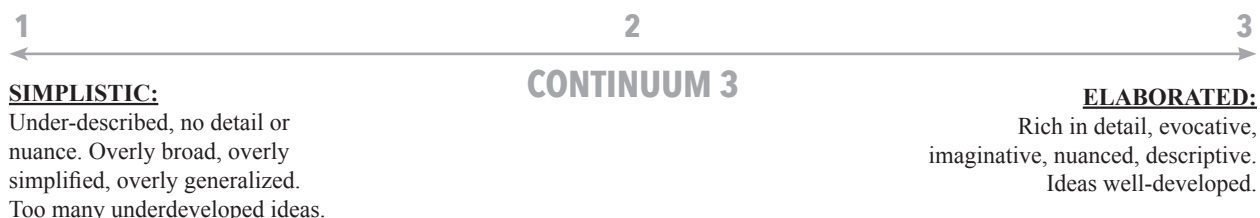
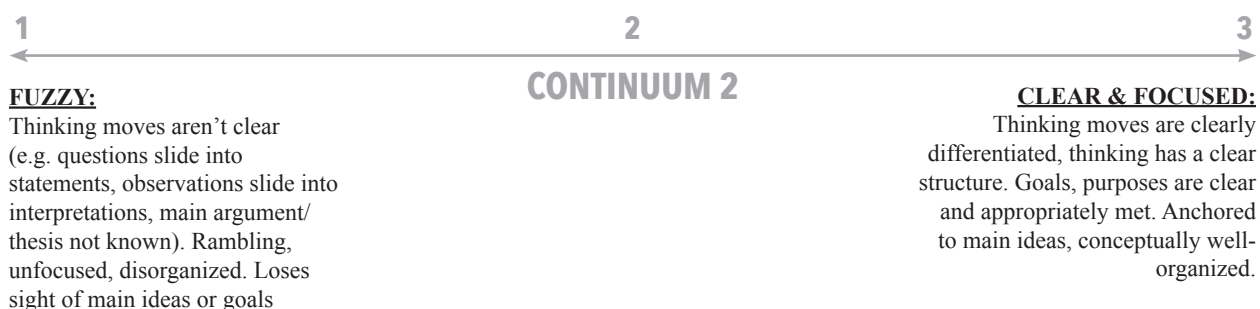
In the pictures, only the women's eyes don't have a faraway look. The women stare down at the ground to hide their distress. They can't picture themselves living anywhere but in these tiny, humble dwellings wedged between car repair shops and food stalls. They did nothing to hold onto their sons, for they are men and—as the saying goes—it's unbecoming for a man worthy of his name to resign himself to destitution and mediocrity. Like their fathers, they have done well to leave even though at the end of the day this running away, ever further away from themselves, hasn't been good for anyone. Surely one can't expect the matriarch to resign herself to such a separation with a light heart. You can easily read on their beautiful ebony faces how much *they too* suffer from the fact that so many places, real or barely conceivable, are engaged in a dark battle for precedence over their minds. Even as they look into the lens-graciously but without really being present—they are serious and impenetrable but most of all, alone.

As the setting sun is reflected onto the surface of the water, the closing lines of those delirious nocturnal stories of old come to mind: “And here I let the tale vanish into the sea, and the first to smell its fragrance will go to Paradise!” And yet in this topsy-turvy world, it is only at such a parting moment that the tale truly unfolds in its full splendor. Under the gaze of a little black and yellow creature—a tiny speck on the vast, blue expanse of the Atlantic—stands a house in ruins, its heart gnawed by sea-salt, neighing and galloping into the night. The ocean becomes a lake, and the lake a mirror, reflecting the returning shadows of those who left. Neither men nor women, they are timeless beings: dark lines hovering over the sea.

Do they dream of setting out on a journey home?



Appendix C – Evaluation Rubric, Assessing Thinking: THE FIVE CONTINUA (HARVARD PROJECT ZERO)





Appendix D – Assessment tools: 6-Traits Memory Essay Rubric: Writing to Record a Memory

1. IDEA DEVELOPMENT (20)

- the essay is daring and clearly shows that the memory described has helped to define the writer
- the essay selectively and purposefully uses quality detail, sensory imagery, and explanation to make the essay compelling to read
- thoughts are clearly expressed and directly relevant to a well-defined thesis
- the essay shows a depth of thought that engages the reader; the writer has taken creative risks to reveal something thoughtful and wonderful about him/herself

2. ORGANIZATION (15)

- the order, presentation, or internal structure of the essay is compelling and moves the reader purposefully through the text
- stanzas show cohesion, and details fit logically and effectively where they are placed
- ideas are linked together naturally through effective use of transitions
- a strong lead captures the reader's interest
- a satisfying conclusion derives clearly and logically from the detail and description, ending reflectively

3. WORD CHOICE (20)

- language is precise, vivid, and natural—not trite or overblown
- the writer's message is remarkably clear and easy to interpret
- phrasing is original and memorable, and verbs are strong and effective

4. SENTENCE FLUENCY (15)

- lines and phrases have a flow, cadence, and clarity, which make the essay sound natural and fluid when read aloud
- lines and phrases vary in both structure and length, making them fluid and avoiding chopiness and monotony, unless intentional
- phrasing is clear and concise
- verb tense is consistent throughout

5. VOICE (20)

- the writer's energy and sincerity for the subject drive the essay, making it compelling and engaging
- the language is natural and down-to-earth and sounds like the writer would speak: the reader can actually hear the author's voice when reading his or her essay

6. CONVENTIONS (10)

- the writer shows excellent control over a wide range of standard writing conventions and uses them with accuracy and style to enhance meaning
- the essay appears clean, edited, and polished
- errors are nonexistent or so few that they do not distract or confuse the reader
- 2 points off per spelling error; 1 point off for each major grammatical/punctuation error

TOTAL (100)



Appendix E – Alignment with Common Core and Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts and Social Studies

All lessons are aligned to meet the following Common Core Standards, grades 9-12

Anchor Standards for Reading (RL.9-10, RL.11-12)

- Key Ideas and Details: 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. 2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. 3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- Craft and Structure: 4. 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. 5. 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. 6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. 8. 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. 9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Anchor Standards for Language (L.9-10, L.11-12)

- Knowledge of Language: 3. 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.
- Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: 4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate. 5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Lesson 1 is aligned to meet the following Oklahoma Standards for English Language Arts, grades 9-12:

8.3.R.4 Students will analyze literary devices to support interpretations of a text:

- figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism, idiom)
- sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia, alliteration)
- verbal and situational irony



9-12.3.R.4 Students will evaluate how literary devices impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:

- figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism)
- sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance)
- irony (i.e., verbal, situational, dramatic)

8.3.W.1 Students will compose narratives reflecting real or imagined experiences that:

- include plots involving complex characters resolving conflicts
- unfold in chronological or surprising sequence (e.g., flashback and foreshadowing)
- include a narrator, precise language, sensory details, and dialogue to enhance the narrative
- use sentence variety to create clarity
- emulate literary elements and/or literary devices from mentor texts

9-12.3.W.1 Students will compose narratives reflecting real or imagined experiences that:

- include engaging plots involving well-developed, complex characters resolving conflicts
- establish narrator(s) that enhance(s) the narrative
- are intentionally sequenced in a way to achieve a specific effect (e.g., create suspense, establish mood, reflect theme)
- provide clear descriptions, using precise language, sensory details, and dialogue
- include varied syntax to enhance readability
- emulate literary elements and/or literary devices from mentor texts

Lesson 2 is aligned to meet the following Oklahoma Standards for Social Studies, grades 10-12:

World Geography


WG.2 The student will analyze how human population is organized geographically in order to understand the cultural, political, and economic systems of the world.

- WG.2.2 Describe and summarize the push and pull theory of migration and its impact on human capital and demographic transitions including the research of major voluntary and involuntary migrations.
- WG.2.3 Compare and contrast the impact of population policies on the patterns of fertility, mortality, and health.

WG.3 The student will analyze the components and regional variations of cultural patterns and processes.

- WG.3.1 Assess the spatial dimensions of culture as defined by language, religion, ethnicity, and gender.
- WG.3.3 Explain the processes of cultural diffusion, acculturation, assimilation, and globalization regarding their impact on defining a region.
- WG.3.5 Explain how cultural characteristics, such as language, ethnicity, and religion impact different regions.

WG.4.2 Analyze the concept of territoriality, the nature and meaning of boundaries, and their influence on identity, interaction, and exchange.



WG.7.2 Analyze contemporary patterns of rural migration on urban development including the concept of suburbanization, edge cities, megacities, and global cities.

World History

WH.6 The student will evaluate contemporary global issues and challenges.

- WH.6.2 Examine contemporary issues that impact the new global era such as the A. changing patterns of population B. cycle of disease and poverty C. status of women D. environmental issues.
- WH.6.3 Describe the impact of trade and interdependence on cultural diffusion.

Appendix A: Social Studies Practices Vertical Progression

2.A.9-12.1 Develop, investigate and evaluate plausible answers to essential questions that reflect enduring understandings across time and all disciplines.

2.B.9-12.1 Use interdisciplinary lenses to gather and evaluate information regarding complex local, regional, and global problems; assess individual and collective actions taken to address such problems.

3.A.9-12.1 Gather, organize, and analyze various kinds of primary and secondary source evidence on related topics, evaluating the credibility of sources.

3.A.9-12.2 Evaluate the usefulness of primary and secondary sources for specific inquiry, based on the author, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose

3.A.9-12.3 Develop questions about multiple historical and/or contemporary sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

3.A.9-12.5 Evaluate how multiple, complex events are shaped by unique circumstances of time and place, as well as broader historical contexts.

3.A.9-12.5 Evaluate how multiple, complex events are shaped by unique circumstances of time and place, as well as broader historical contexts.

3.B.9-12.1 Actively engage in asking and answering geographic questions by acquiring, organizing, and analyzing multiple sources of data and information about the world's past and its present conditions.

3.B.9-12.6 Evaluate how globalization and the expanding use of scarce resources contribute to conflict and cooperation.

4.B.9-12.1 Evaluate the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect an author's stated or implied purpose.

4.B.9-12.3 Actively listen, evaluate, and analyze a speaker's message, asking questions while engaged in collaborative discussions and debates about social studies topics and texts.

5.A.9-12.1 Compose narrative writing, when appropriate to a given purpose or task, citing evidence from informational texts.