



# Neustadt Mini-Course *Ananda Devi*



Lesson Plans for grades 9-12 to study the work of Ananda Devi, the 2024 Neustadt International Prize for Literature winner

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## Ananda Devi: Biography

In October 2023, Ananda Devi was awarded the 2024 Neustadt International Prize for Literature and will be honored at the annual [Neustadt Lit Fest](#) in Norman, Oklahoma, October 21-23, 2024.

Born in the island nation of Mauritius, Ananda Devi is one of the most celebrated writers of the Francophone world. Her parents are of Telugu descent, connecting them to central India. Her career as a writer spans five decades, beginning with her first publication as a fifteen-year-old short story writer. Writing primarily in French, she has published multiple novels, short story collections, volumes of poetry, as well as autobiographical prose. She also holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. She is widely traveled and is known for her complex depictions of race, gender, and class.

Her novel *Eve Out of Her Ruins*, which served as the representative text for the Neustadt Prize competition, was first published in 2006 and translated into English in 2016 by Jeffrey Zuckerman. The novel was also adapted into *The Children of Troumaron*, a 2012 film by Harrikrisna Anenden, her husband and a noted Mauritian director.

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### Suggested works for students and teachers:

[“A Broken Mirror”](#)

[“Kari Disan”](#)

“Lakshmi’s Gift” (included)

“The Sad Ambassador” (included)

[“Poetics of Islands”](#)

Excerpts from the novel *Eve Out of Her Ruins* (included)

Other supporting resources listed in Appendix 1

“A Woman On a Roof” by Doris Lessing (linked)

## Assignment 1 (suitable for grades 9-12)

### Analyzing a Specific Theme

“What happens to a dream deferred?” Langston Hughes famously asks in his poem “Harlem” (1951). For some, that question resonates with their experience of trying to achieve their dreams and aspirations yet finding many obstacles—both internal and external—that keep them from doing so.

In many of her stories, Ananda Devi depicts what life is like for inhabitants of small island nations, like her home country of Mauritius, who must “defer” their dreams of a better life. She suggests that the natural beauty of these remote places often stands in contrast to the poor living conditions experienced by many residents. Because many lack the financial resources to leave the islands, these inhabitants of Mauritius and other islands face long odds; some even give up on their aspirations altogether.

In his foreword to *Eve Out of Her Ruins*, Nobel Prize winner J.M.G. Le Clezio notes that for some residents, “the island is their prison, the beautiful coastlines tug at their heart, even as they dream of escaping someday . . .” And in one particular Devi story, “The Orchid,” the narrator observes: “Perhaps because we were on the Mediterranean Sea, we looked ever outwards, towards the invisible coastline of the dream countries. We only had one thought: to go there and make our fortune.”

Because of these frustrating circumstances, Devi’s characters are often driven to the edge, desperately seeking answers to questions about their lives. From the list of Devi’s writings below, choose one such character who longs for something different and analyze how they manage their situation.

“A Broken Mirror”

“Kari Disan”

“Poetics of Islands”

Excerpts from the novel *Eve Out of Her Ruins*

Write an analytical essay (length and format determined by your teacher) in which you explore the character’s circumstances, identifying what it is that prevents them from achieving their goals and dreams. Be sure to include at least three supporting quotations from the text to support your argument.

## Assignment 2 (suitable for grades 10-12)

### A close reading of the short story "The Sad Ambassador"

One of Devi's most intriguing and complex pieces comes from a collection of short stories that was published as *Lambassadeur triste* in 2015. The following lesson is designed to help students carefully navigate their way through the text.

First, students should read the story ahead of class as a homework assignment, annotating the following key ideas: power, cultural conflicts, and what makes a meaningful life.

They should know before they start reading that the main character is a man from an unspecified Northern European country who is an ambassador to India.

Second, in class discussion the next day, the teacher can lead them through the story with the following guiding questions. Through the close analysis of this story, students can learn about narrative strategies and devices, including tone, irony, syntax, and the development of character.

1. How does Devi immediately establish the mental state of the ambassador? What makes him cry? What is he longing for and why? (paragraphs 1-4)
2. What is the effect of Devi's use of very short paragraphs? (e.g. 1, 4, 17, 22)
3. What does the ambassador seem to think of his assignment in India? What kinds of connotations are conjured by words and phrases such as "dust," "subtle poisoning," "sulfuric, diesel fumes" and "noxious air"? (5)
4. Next, we have a fleeting introduction to the ambassador's wife. How is she characterized? (6)
5. What does the fact that the ambassador has been at his post "for over ten years already" suggest about him? (7)
6. The next paragraph introduces what will prove to be an ambiguous first-person narrator. Students should be careful not to assume this person is Devi, but it could be, given her tendency towards autobiographical prose. Given the ambiguity, at the end of the story, it might be interesting to consider who this first-person narrator is or what their presence means for the story. In the meantime, students can also consider the way in which this narrator characterizes the festival that she and the ambassador are attending. Again, what specific word choices help guide our view of this setting? (8-10)

## Assignment 2 Cont.

7. The narrator wonders in paragraph 11 “what interest [a] Nordic country could have in sending an ambassador to India?” Although Devi does not specify which Nordic country, students could discuss answers to the question posed by the narrator. What is the narrator suggesting about European countries and their history of involvement with other countries outside of Europe, especially in her descriptions in paragraphs 11-14?
8. In paragraph 15, we get the first sense that the ambassador’s mental distress is also reflected in his physical self. To understand this, students should consider what cultural norms the ambassador is getting wrong and what impact it has on him. (15-18)
9. What is it that the ambassador must “swallow” (22) and why?
10. What important observations does the first-person narrator make about the ambassador in paragraph 28? What is the **tone** of this section?
11. Devi implies throughout the story that the ambassador’s work is mundane and meaningless.
  - a. Does the lengthy story-within-the-story about the couple arrested for drug possession (30-40) illustrate the meaninglessness of his work or not?
  - b. How does Devi use **irony** in this section?
  - c. What commentary is she making about people’s need for a “juicy” story?
  - d. Why do you think the ambassador rallies at this time – re-gaining weight and “barely control[ling] his emotions”?
12. The second story-within-the-story comprises most of the remaining length of “The Sad Ambassador.”
  - a. Again, how does Devi use **irony** in her description of the rich businessman? (41-43)
  - b. Why do the nomads flee from the scene once they realize the businessman has died? (43)
  - c. What does Devi suggest when she notes the ambassador’s “belly of satisfaction” (45)?
  - d. This second story-within-a-story is interrupted by the return of the first-person narrative. Why do you think Devi brings this narrator back into the story at this time? (47)
13. During a desperate few days in the desert, what does the ambassador come to realize? (53). Is this truly an **epiphany** or is it something else?
14. By the end of the story what do you think Devi is trying to say about the nature of power and the people involved in political affairs of the world?

## Assignment 3 (suitable for grades 10-12)

### ***Analyzing Gender Roles in Three Stories***

In many of her stories, Devi depicts the **feelings of longing, resentment, and confinement** that women feel, especially if they are trapped in circumstances that are primarily beyond their control. In an interview with *World Literature Today*, Devi asserted that she tends to “write about women locked in traditions and conventions that stifle them.”

Three examples convey this dilemma for women in three different ways. First, in “Lakshmi’s Gift,” the main character, Shanti, hopes for a better life as she prepares for Diwali amidst the clamor of her five children. Second, in “Kari Disan,” the unnamed protagonist patiently plots a way out of her father’s clutches. Finally, using a comparative example from a different author, South African writer Doris Lessing, the situation in “[A Woman on a Roof](#),” shows how stereotypical attitudes towards women trap both men and women in a patriarchal system that benefits neither.

In a well-reasoned analytical essay (length to be determined by teacher), explain how each of these main characters responds to and struggles against her prescribed gender roles. What strategies do they use? Where do they seek inspiration and empowerment? What, ultimately, are Devi and Lessing saying about the restrictions and assumptions imposed on women in these three stories?

## Assignment 4 (suitable for grades 9-12)

### ***Writing a Personal Narrative about Place***

Most of Devi's writing features a strong sense of place; for many of her characters, geographical location determines their fate. Her home country of Mauritius is one of the island nations of the Indian Ocean, and its unique history figures prominently in her stories and in the minds of many of her characters.

For students, writing about an important place can help them better understand their own environment and their place within it. For this lesson, students will use objective, vivid descriptions, as well as their own subjective interpretation, to write an essay detailing how a place has helped define them in some way. The place does not have to be somewhere where the student feels a positive connection; it could be a place where they felt lost, confused, or disconnected.

An effective personal narrative should contain some or all of the following:

- A strong sense of the writer's "voice" – readers should feel the authenticity of the "I" in the piece
- A clear beginning, middle, and end; every personal narrative tells a story
- Lively, descriptive writing, often relying on sensory details to "show not tell"

Teachers may choose to incorporate certain technical requirements for the assignment as well. This would depend on which particular grammatical or technical skills they may wish to teach or emphasize. For example:

- Use of dialogue incorporating correct dialogue format
- No passive voice
- Consistent use of verb tense
- The incorporation of one simile or metaphor

There are numerous resources available to support students' reading and writing of effective personal narratives. The Appendix includes one that teachers may consider using.

For students, creating direct personal narratives to capture and describe their own lived experiences can be a powerful means of expressing themselves. One way to brainstorm ideas for their Place Essay is to borrow the [Narrative 4](#) structure, which encourages the power of storytelling and connection. (The Narrative 4 approach to storytelling centers on the process of the "story exchange," in which one person tells another person their individual story via direct communication. Later, in a group setting, each person tells the other person's story, hence the development of an empathetic dimension to story telling.)

Whatever the strategy for obtaining and sharing stories, we know that storytelling is central to all cultures and helps us to better understand ourselves, others, and the world in which we live.



### Student Model of a Place Essay

#### Bittersweet Farms

“Jump,” my brother calls as we leap from hay bale to hay bale. I proceed with a huge smile on my face.

As we walked through wheat fields, to hay fields, to pastures and beyond, it was always Carter leading the three of us brothers. We would leap and jog through a forest filled with thousands of pine trees like a pack of wolves, the sounds of our feet crunching the bark and leaves. The brave one, Charlie, with no fear, hopped the first bob wire fence and cut himself. We quickly gathered around him, helping him to seek comfort as the blood flowed from the wound. As memories arise from here, the story of Bittersweet Farms begins.

In 1997, Jim Beacher (my grandfather) decided to build a peculiar wooden cabin on a tiny piece of property in Sparta, North Carolina. The cabin consists of one room, with the view of one picture frame, and the space for one couch. Its rusted window frames and loud AC vents remind me of the days it was used in its prime. The farm was built by him and a team of a few other men that he had met years before in the same county. It took a collective ten years to build everything that still prospers on the farm today. It was his personal project for him to finish building a farm and enjoy it with his grandsons and two daughters. This piece of property later became a 1000-acre farm named “Bittersweet Farms” with tons of livestock and other memorable features. The same fields we played games on were stepping stones for my grandfather’s business revenue, the cows we chased around for hours were and still are beneficial features to the profit of this farm, the roads I learned to ride scooter on were essential when building the cow barn in 1999, and so on.

Each morning I would wake up to the sound of my grandfather’s 4-wheel gator casually strolling down the hill to our house, I heard the sound of the big 42-inch all season tires rolling on the loose gravel road. The sound would become stronger when his Gator appeared closer to the house. The parking break was pulled up and the keys were swiftly pulled out. He walked in with a smile and his defined dimples as big as the world shot up from his face.

“Who’s ready to work today?” he inquires.

We all shout out that we are ready.



## Assignment 4 Cont.

“Grandpa, what new chore are we going to do today?” Carter asks.

“Today we are picking up sticks and throwing rocks back into the river,” Grandpa says.

The continuing lessons our grandpa taught us about work are things that will be in my head till the day I die. The loud plops when each rock was thrown, the sound of each stick snapping to put it in the back of the four wheeler, the smell of the leather seats, and the voice of my grandfather telling us to “keep going” are the most important and memorable. The minutes felt like days when picking up rock after rock after rock. Each morning this repetitive action felt so embedded in my schedule I thought I could be a professional baseball player by the amount of rocks I threw. Eventually the job was over for the day and I felt like I had run a million miles. As soon as I got home, I dropped, and slept for 12 hours.

As one of three siblings, perspectives and engagement within the farm were completely different throughout the years. The motivator to work and enjoy it when we were younger was our grandpa telling us, “One day you will own this farm.” Carter, my oldest and most outgoing brother, was eager to work there every summer. Charlie and I didn’t understand the significance of this farm and didn’t understand it was the most developed and profitable piece of property in the county, and didn’t particularly have a drive to work the farm either when we were younger.

Growing up and learning countless lessons on this piece of property has taught me the significance of what a place can do for somebody. Now when I drive the tractor down to get hay for the cows, the smell of the pickling haw reminds me of how I’ve been running on these same hay bales every summer since 2008.

What I was truly looking for was how I could find my own comfort on the farm land that interested me. The answer to that was the bond with my grandfather. Throughout the years our connection heightened, which urged me to be a more of an adventurous person in the outdoors and taught me how to be myself. My grandfather had taught me the significance of a place and what you can do with it. Bittersweet Farms wasn’t only the stepping stones to our family’s beginnings, it was the memorable place that has taught me many life lessons.

# **"The Sad Ambassador" by Ananda Devi**

**Translated by Namrata Poddar**

He would cry at night, uncontrollably. Of course: he was sad.

He would cry during the day as well, secretly though, locked away in toilets, or when his employees snoozed over the slow afternoon hours. His tear glands had turned over productive, and at times, he would cry watching a television show where participants had forgotten to be human.

He would dream of fjords and frozen lava. Of an ash-colored sky whose light slit the clouds like a scalpel sometimes and blinded the eyes at daybreak. The atmosphere was so white that it broke your heart. Yet he welcomed each day with a certain joy, aware of everything priceless in that avaricious sun, in those days so short that they needed to be lived with a warrior's intensity. Each day, this way, was a gift and a struggle.

He would dream of the country he had left behind.

5-But what did he know of real struggles, him, the ambassador with eyes dazzled by the cold? What he saw in this other world was the dust on men, not men themselves. It was the color of the land, not a history the land told. A dust and a land that entered him through his nostrils and left him through his pores, working with each breath in, their subtle poisoning. He was convinced he would dissolve into the sulfuric, diesel fumes released by a noxious air into his pristine flesh.

Since the first day itself, he had cried. Every night, he would cry in the arms of his wife who was equally unsettled yet more pragmatic, consoling herself at the thought of having a staff to clean, cook, drive them around, even prune and maintain their lawn. She would whisper to him that being an ambassador at New Delhi was a phase in his career, a springboard toward New York, Berlin or London. Within two, or maximum three years, we'll be at The Metropolitan Opera watching Nibelung's Ring; we need to be patient, she would tell him. He promised he would be. After three months, it was she who packed her bags and left them for good, him and India.

Thus, for over ten years already, he had been crying and he had been dying, or vice versa. Each tear took away a few milliseconds of his life. At least he wouldn't be condemned to live forever on this land of the

wretched, he told himself. He saw himself forgotten by all, especially by his country of fjords and lava, his countrymen as beardless as the hairy ones here, his country where man reeked of neither sweat nor rancid oil, but flowered frost and ash.

This solitary man's proud yet distraught demeanor piqued my curiosity when I saw him at a literary festival in India. Maybe I recognized in him that vertiginous feeling of discord, like a relentless buzzing in my ear, that was consuming me since my arrival here. The excess and the lack. The supernatural and the evil. The generosity and the depravity. Wherever you looked, opposites clashed. No middle ground.

On the festival's first evening, the garden of an ancient palace now transformed into a luxury hotel was holding one of those extravagant parties Indians specialize in. Everything oozed money and power here; everything was overstated, overabundant, a flamboyant display where the writers seemed, let's face it, rather lackluster, threading their way through high Indian society's aggressive social butterflies. The lure of such abundance was short-lived, and the festival soon took a mildly unpleasant turn. On both sides of the walkway leading to the marquee, turbaned men stood stiff like British colonial army soldiers, holding heavy copper torches in their hands. "They'll stay like that all evening?" I asked. No one answered. I pulled my jacket closer toward me. This country gave me the jitters with its customs and aberrations.

The dinner matched the event. Behind the rows of tandoors, nomadic women with hazy eyes and scarred faces, reddened by the proximity to flames, labored. Their gnarled hands tackled simultaneously the coal and Indian bread as they sprinkled the latter with melted butter and flipped them over plates in a synchronized dance. The meals were served with the finest art; the guests' palates were pleased by exquisitely subtle dishes, especially desserts flavored with honey, saffron, and pistachio bits.

11-Toward the end of the meal, someone pointed out to me a lean and strangely elusive figure that was sliding once again toward the buffet while others had already finished eating. "He's the ambassador of —," the person said. "He comes to every meeting, every festival, and each meal." The man seemed both dignified and evasive to me. "Poor thing, I think he has nothing else to do," the person added. Indeed, I couldn't imagine what interest his Nordic country could have in sending an ambassador to India.

He wasn't a writer, nor did he have a role to play in these corridors of power that surrounded us. He was there, tall, white-haired, pale. Sad. Beyond measure.

He no longer knew who had thought his country's economic salvation was linked to commercial deals with the giants of the East. It would've made sense if his country had something to export, but its entire

economy was based on a highly abstruse banking system whose shock waves, over the last few years, were punctuated as in a tragic opera, by those of his country's volcanoes. He was sent here with much hoopla and election pledges toward an economic revival. Once here, though, he was up against a flat non-recognition masked by glib shows of friendship.

The clash between Indian bureaucracy's tardiness and his country's efficiency was inevitable. Verbose letters never truly responding to his proposals piled up in his office, acquiring mustiness and cobwebs with time. Increasingly coercive demands from his own ministry multiplied. Misunderstandings accrued, nipping projects in the bud. Despite his requests turning into pleas, they had refused to recall him or re-post him. This he knew to be the consequence of his failure.

15-No one seemed to notice the speed at which he was withering away. He had noticed it since his first week, though—a few grams lost already when he climbed on scale. He attributed this to travel stress, especially during his arrival when colleagues with imposing moustaches and ill-fitted suits had welcomed him while openly tongue-lashing their juniors. Courtesy incarnate, he had felt this humiliation of “inferiors” in his bones. As for inferiors, there were many in this country; everything here was a matter of hierarchy. One could take comfort in always having someone below oneself. Thus, every one of his considerate gestures towards them produced a palpable unease, winning him more enemies than friends due to the respect he extended to those who didn't see themselves as deserving of it.

He was shaken to the core. Every one of his beliefs had been challenged. Was he a man at all if he was self-effacing in front of a woman? In honoring a servant by shaking his hand, was he, in fact, hurting his pride? He had no clue.

So, he would cry.

Can you understand this kind of sadness? The kind that's ruthless because it's empty of all meaning, the kind that gnaws increasingly at the core of your being? I mean, you're an ambassador at one of the world's biggest countries. You're treated like a king. You no longer know what to do with your staff. You don't have to lift a finger for the smallest task. Yet.

To whom can you confess you're unhappy? To your wife, surely. But she gets it all too well and leaves before the place devours her raw, simply because she has the opportunity to do so.

To whom else?

To the ten million that surround you? Pick one, randomly. They'll look at you, in your elegant suit, in your chauffeur-driven luxury car, in your house too big to be comfortable, and their gaze will tell you all: Only a rich [person] could have the [audacity] to mope over his solitude.

22-So, he swallows it all.

And he loses weight. The man with an imposing presence who had landed at New Delhi becomes thin and lanky over the course of months and years; his neck resembles that of a street chicken, his wrist turns too thin for his aging, patchy hands. The custom-made suits from Savile Row he had brought along (as there's a bit of a dandy in him) have gotten increasingly loose; one day, while getting ready in his huge dressing room, he's devastated to see his trousers slide down his hips, gather by his feet, expose the prominent pelvic bones and a skin recently turned flabby and gray thanks to its absence of color. There aren't enough holes in his belt anymore. Even his shoes have grown too big, which goes to show! Swallowing his shame, he goes to the best tailor he can find in the city to have new clothes made from head to toe. When he returns after a few months to order new suits, because he has lost weight again, the tailor notes his measurements with a tiny piece of pencil chewed away at its tip. He compares the dimensions with the previous ones noted in the same notebook, and pouts.

"Too, too thin," the tailor says. "You reducing too much. Are you sick?" He asks, eyebrows furrowed.

The ambassador shakes his head. He taps his belly with a small smile.

"I've trouble tolerating the food here," he says.

The tailor advises him to see an Ayurvedic doctor, reputed to work miracles. The ambassador listens with a distracted ear: he knows no medicine can cure sadness—not this sadness, at least, hard and cold like a tombstone.

28-On the festival's first day, I see him several times in the walkways, alone always, towering over the crowd, paler than the occasional pale people around, pale as the winter he carries in his wake with its mist of boredom. The public rushes from the conference to the round tables to the readings like a mob starved of words, helping writers recover from former literary events where empty chairs served as their audience. Here, there are thousands of them. Here, they rush, they cram, they stay standing or block chairs as if bent on passing their day and night, if need be, to not miss a single snippet from literary mouths. The ambassador stands at the edge of the crowd. He listens to a fragment of a reading or a debate. Occasionally,

he attempts a smile, but never when a writer cracks a joke. Maybe a sentence, a phrase, or a cadence secretly outlines a familiar image for him? Next, he goes to have lunch in the room reserved for writers, stands in a queue to get his badge scanned, checks out the various buffet options attentively as if the latter involved his day's most important decision. He eats alone. He looks at no one. He eats and drinks like a well-behaved child, the paper napkin on his knees. He sprinkles water on his hands because he has eaten the chapati with his fingers. My heart breaks just looking at him, at his deep blue eyes blurred by a void.

Since he was on duty, he had been officially solicited only twice—beyond the visa questions by tourists that his secretary handled through the embassy's website. (One day, a strange man visited the ambassador, looking for a job in his country. Convinced that the man would never be able to adapt to their climatic conditions, the ambassador steered him tactfully toward the American embassy, assuring him that he could find a job in Alaska. He never saw that man again.)

30-One noteworthy case he had to deal with involved a couple arrested with backpacks full of marijuana when they were returning from Kathmandu. In fact, they wouldn't have been exposed if someone hadn't stolen one of their backpacks as they were getting off a train at Delhi. They were intending to cross the border on foot. They had screamed and a cop had had the presence of mind to jump on the thief and knock him down. Other cops came running and beat the poor guy black and blue until the backpack burst open and the lining ejected transparent plastic packets, wrapped mysteriously. The cops collected the packets weighing several kilos, and discovered a particularly pure type of marijuana in them. The tourist couple tried to escape by abandoning the backpack, but the cops started chasing them, sniffing an underhand trick. The couple escaped a sound beating only due to their white skin.

Informed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the ambassador visited the couple in prison. Barely eighteen years old, they were already a wreck. Confined in their fetid, nauseating cell swarming with cockroaches, surrounded by inmates with looks transformed by the other end of hope and reason, the couple thought they'd rot over the years and die under the slow torture of abandonment. They got on their knees in a piss-puddle and implored him to repatriate them. "We're guilty," they said, "and we'll accept the penalty our country's law decides for us. But we beg you, let us serve the sentence in our own country!"

He surveyed their prison cell with disgust and felt no pity. They alone were to be blamed for voluntarily visiting this country and flouting its laws. A bit excited, however, by the idea of finally having a task to finish, he asked them to be patient and rushed slowly to settle the case.

As long as the case lasted, he woke up each morning with a certain joy. Finally, he had a goal. He had

gained importance. He shaved and combed his hair attentively, recuperating the gestures of a dandy tucked away at the bottom of his sadness; he gauged that he looked better than usual, his skin was less wan, gaining color, the blue of his eyes more alive. While dressing up, he was surprised to see that he had to tuck in his belly to tie the belt. A belly missing for a while now! He buttoned his shirt with difficulty. His jacket felt a little snug around the shoulders.

He spent the day calling his government officials, discussing with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, consulting the most eminent lawyers. As a climax, he had a surprise call from his country's Prime Minister! He stood straight and gave clear, well-composed answers. His listener congratulated him on his efficiency and assigned him the task of implementing whatever it would take to repatriate the couple with minimal media scandal. When the ambassador whispered that Indian authorities might balk at the idea of repatriation, given an absence of contract between the two countries, the Prime Minister stunned him by responding: "I trust you completely, buddy. If there's someone who can do this, it's you!"

He was so charmed that one of his shirt buttons snapped.

Indian authorities, in fact, did not show the slightest resistance to the idea of repatriation. They knew how much the media loved stories of drug dealers imprisoned in unbearable conditions. They wished to get rid of their inconvenient burden as soon as possible. Clearly, the dim-witted blondies wouldn't survive more than six months here. In all likelihood, they would be found hanged with their bed sheets or with their throats slit by their inmates. Local authorities would then get screwed for violating human rights. After all, India wasn't China. The world's biggest democracy had accountability to consider, even if it regretted dictatorial rule sometimes.

So the officers at the ministry of Foreign Affairs tried telling the ambassador that they were ready to negotiate his compatriots' repatriation. The ambassador was surprised, then happy, then a little annoyed that the case was settled so quickly. His recent look had convinced him that he should feel useful to survive. And what more useful than saving two youngsters from life imprisonment, or worse, a hanging? So he started following the rules of a tactful slowness he had learned from Indians themselves. He claimed letters to be lost, he avoided taking calls from the Indian ministry, he told his own government that the authorities here were slacking off. He released press statements, leading people to believe alternatively in the case's positive or negative outcome. Indian officers didn't get it: they thought they'd settled the case long ago.

Days turned into weeks. The two youngsters were losing weight while the ambassador was gaining more.



In the morning, he would whistle with unprecedented joy while dressing up in clothes he had carried at his arrival here. Never before did their cut seem so sleek, the fall of that silk jacket more elegant. He would match his breast pocket handkerchief to his tie; in ruminating over different shades of color that complemented well the rest of his outfit, he could barely control his emotions.

One day, the young girl was found bathed in her own blood. She had cut her wrist with an iron nail wrenched from her bed frame. He was called urgently to the hospital. Watching her fragile in a bed with grayish, crumpled sheets, fluttering between life and death like a crushed butterfly, he figured he could no longer continue the masquerade. He released messages held so far in limbo. By the weekend, the accused youngsters were sent back to their country where the press awaited them with their insatiable hunger for the morbid, and where they considered their own TV and DVD-equipped tidy cell as a heavenly corner.

40-He returned home trying to retain the feeling of a task well done. He succeeded until the next evening. On the following day, he shrank again.

His second case involved a man struck by a heart attack while crossing the desert on camelback. He was a rich businessman seeking original experiences in the world's most inhospitable places. He had organized this trip carefully in the company of regional nomads, hyper-planning it with Excel spreadsheets and the latest communication gadgets. He had such confidence in himself and in his efficiency that it never occurred to him he could die during this trip. In his opinion, one could die only due to a lack of organization. He died, nonetheless.

The nomads accompanying him saw him fall off the camel as he was commanding them to move faster. They thought it was a rich man's joke, but when he refused to move, they panicked. As it is, they were a harassed tribe; due to their migratory lifestyle, their land had gradually shrunk to a token space, surrounded by the aggressive sedentariness of others. Their cattle was no longer as valuable, taken over by frozen products from New Zealand. Fake duplicates from China had displaced their handicraft industry. They were surviving thanks to the tourists fascinated by their exoticism, light eyes, skin worn out by wind and sun, and the hotels that called them to sing, dance, cook traditional meals, and exhibit themselves like circus bears. Their gaze held the horizon's hue as travel was inscribed in their genes.

When the tourist saw the Golden City of Jaisalmer emerge at a distance (he was mistaken as it was an illusion), he got excited, made explicit gestures ordering the nomads to rush, even participate in a camel race with him, turned red like a lobster thrown in boiling water, and fell off the beast. He had stopped breathing even before his flabby body could hit the ground. The nomads shook him, poured water in his

mouth and on his face, but eventually, they had to accept the fact that the tourist had died. They fled, aware that if they reported his death, the police would pester them endlessly. They told themselves that the sun, the sand, the wind, and the vultures would soon get rid of his cumbersome corpse while they would've long disappeared into nature.

The tourist's wife, worried about not getting any news of him and unable to reach him on his cell phone, contacted the embassy. The ambassador wrenched himself from the lethargy consuming him since the drug smugglers' departure, moved, exerted himself, and after some help from a detective, found the tourist.

45-He was offered a guide who knew the desert as well as the nomads. He had to pay the guide generously, but he had his government's permission. The missing man was important enough to spare no expenditure. The ambassador left for the desert in a ramshackle jeep, terrified at the thought of getting lost there and never returning. But when he was sitting in the jeep and tying his seatbelt, he noticed a little belly bulge out of his abdomen. It was the belly of satisfaction.

This second case took place just a few days before the festival where I met him. He'd grown thin and pale again. I noticed that he was helping himself to copious portions of food available to us, yet he seemed to be eating half-heartedly, without truly enjoying the taste.

On the festival's second-to-last day, I sat at his table for lunch. With an extreme politeness, he interrupted his meal and stood up to welcome me. I smiled at him as pleasantly as possible and introduced myself. He seemed distracted to me, and consumed by a secret angst. An awkward silence followed.

Then, maybe because he noticed a tacit empathy in my gaze, he gulped down a glass of the Indian wine served lavishly at our meals and continued the story I just told you. He stopped at the moment of his departure in the jeep.

"What happened next?" I asked him. "Were you able to find the body?"

He nodded.

"The desert heat was so unbearable that I thought I'd die. I couldn't stop drinking water, and soon after our departure, if you'll ignore this disgusting detail at lunch, a brutal diarrhea seized me. My guide had to stop every ten minutes so I could empty my intestines. I was writhing in pain. He wanted us to return but

I knew I had to finish this task. If I succeeded, I was convinced my government would recall me. If I failed, I'd die in the days to come. I was sure."

He was staring into space and the blue of his eyes gradually turned white, as if reflecting the void he couldn't stop observing. I noticed that his skin was sagging, a goatskin devoid of flesh.

53-"But after two days in that desert of staggering colors, where golden rocks fused into bleeding sands amid the brutal appearance and disappearance of howling winds, I understood a truth that had escaped me so far: this country couldn't stand me..., no, it loathed me, harbored an unflinching hatred toward me as if I were a virus it needed to get rid of."

After two days and two nights, they reached a crossroads, a meeting point for nomads. No one was around, but footprints of their passage had remained. What had remained in particular was a human carcass close by, once the sun, the wind, and the vultures had done their job: a cooked, ripped piece of meat, devoured by all that was ruthless in that place. And watching those inhumane fragments reduced to the nameless, the ambassador felt sure he was watching himself being offered to this country's gluttony and carnage.

Through an uncanny transfer, he told me, through one of those hallucinations that seize you when you're exposed headlong to the desert sun and are feverish, he felt increasingly convinced that he had found his own remains. He didn't tell this to his guide. But that blue shirt shredded by claws there, that perforated hat, that cross hanging by a rock, all equally vain traces of life, struggle and refusal, he was certain: it was him.

After the policemen and the medical examiner took away a sample of what was needed, reassembled the corpse, and packed the remains in airtight containers to be sent back to his country after the inquiry, the ambassador returned to his place. He sat on his terrace and continued drinking whiskey amid the cantankerous furor of sepulchral birds. He saw neither his maid who would gather his sweaty clothes to wash them, nor the servant who would fill up his crystal glass each time it got empty.

57-Ghostly and withered, he let the time of his undoing and inutility pass him by henceforth, checking his weight each night. He calculated that he had exactly two hundred and eleven days to live before disappearing and rejoining his remains, dissolved in the sand.

No one called him back to his country. He resumed his life, trying to fill it up with useless things like literary festivals that occupied his time, but engaged neither his soul nor his belly.

# LAKSHMI'S GIFT

ANANDA DEVI

*Translated by Dorothy S. Blair*

ON THE MORNING OF DIWALI, Shanti had woken with a prayer on her lips. Her mind was filled with thoughts of Lakshmi, and she got up, as she did every year on this day, with the certainty (produced by some quirk of her fertile imagination) that for once her prayers would be answered. That night she had dreamt that Lakshmi had appeared to her in a flash of dazzling light and, as the goddess had gazed at her long and searchingly, Shanti herself had been transformed into a bowl of light, her raised arms in flames, her long hair an immense network of stars which skimmed the confines of a sweet world, made manifest and vibrating with offerings and promises. When she awoke, her eyes bright in the early sunlight and shining with the memory of her dream, she knew the day would be propitious and that she would finally receive Lakshmi's gift after so many years of waiting patiently.

She tied her old cotton sari almost gaily, without inveighing against her fate. She was scarcely aware of her calloused hands, coarsened by work in the fields, nor the ache in her back every time she bent down. Nor did she pause to look in the tarnished mirror – to regret once more her lost beauty. On this morning, hope had washed away all dissatisfaction, smoothed away the many tribulations of her daily life. She set to work with unaccustomed vigour.

This morning, the scarlet and crimson blossom of the flamboyants and bougainvillaeas, the heavy mauve and white heads of the November-plants were as dazzling as the burning sun which beat down through the narrow window, set high in the east wall of the house. The sun was reflected in the copper and tin utensils crowding the shelves, and set up a merry play of lights and shadows. In the kitchen, flooded with steamy, murmuring heat, dozens of little cakes, white and pink, gold and brown, floated gaily in jars of syrup, while others still tossed in boiling oil over the stove and suddenly swelled up, as she deftly turned them with the big metal spoon, and they grew round and crusty, bringing a dreamy look into the eyes of the fascinated children. A heavy smell of sugar and cooking-oil filled the house, mingling with the heady aroma of crushed spices, bitter cardamom, sweet



cinnamon, bitter-sweet cloves, sharp mustard ... as Shanti set to work with her stone mortar.

The five children, with at most a year's difference in their ages, romped excitedly about the two rooms of the house. They ran and jumped and jostled each other, without bruising their muscular little bodies. Each face was one huge white-toothed grin, each voice a high-pitched trill. Sometimes they could be heard pushing one another, with the noise of furniture being overturned, the sound of broken glass, followed by an agonised silence. But that morning, Shanti, absorbed in her dreams, heard nothing, noticed nothing. The makeshift switch that she normally used so adroitly remained in a corner, forgotten. After a moment, the games were resumed more furiously than ever. And their innocent little voices pealed out like a ring of bells.

As Shanti went joyfully about her tasks, absorbed in the Diwali preparations, she was convinced that her fortunes were about to change for the better. With every year that had passed since her marriage, a vice of bitterness and humiliation had gradually tightened around her. The endless cycle of pregnancies, confinements and all the problems of motherhood, had worn her out. Then there was the added burden of work in the fields, making her coarse and aggressive, prematurely aged. And the house, with its bare, austere interior, on whose walls no shred of fantasy hung, no breath of folly, where no secret double life, no caprice, could hide; the house that had become a prison, cramping her personality, curbing her smallest desires. A relentless routine with no place for pleasure or rejoicing. A man at her side who was no companion, but a source of conflict and hostility. Trapped by his own masculinity, evenings spent at the bar would rouse him to violence, and this would inevitably be transformed into a fit of passion, combining noise and fury, blows and screams, insults and the motions of making love.

The days leading up to Diwali were the only time when life took on some greater measure of lightness and serenity; when hope sprang up once more in Shanti's breast, and gently cradled within her, refused to be quelled, washing silently over her surroundings. This was the time when Lakshmi was believed to enter every home. The bronze form of Lakshmi, goddess of light, but also goddess of wealth, whose blessing caused riches to fall like manna on her worshippers – or so they believed. And Shanti believed this as fervently and totally as her shattered illusions and spirits, dampened by her daily life, would allow. And that day she did everything in her power to be worthy of the goddess's blessing.

The fact that in spite of all her prayers her life had remained unchanged



up till now, did not alter her belief one jot. The fact that, as Diwali approached, she always found herself languishing in the same darkness which all the *diyas* lit throughout the house could not dispel, did not prevent hope springing up again in her breast the following year. This was her very own therapy; she recreated herself leaf by leaf, greening her bruised branches, freshly curling her faded petals. Once a year, she renewed herself and waited for Lakshmi's coming. If Lakshmi did not come, and the poverty remained the same with its days of scarcity and its terrible monotony, Shanti would still have obtained her elixir of strength for a whole year, at the end of which she would once more muster all the illusions of freedom around her and she would hope again.

After her dream of the previous night, she had all the more reason to allow herself to hope. A dream of Lakshmi didn't arrive out of the blue. It was *she* who chose to visit you as you slept, sometimes confirming by a smile, a word or an affectionate gesture, the glad tidings that her bounteous presence heralded. And every year Shanti who hoped for a lottery, or an opportune legacy from some deceased relative, began once more to plan a life of bourgeois comfort, fulfilling her dearest ambition. She thought electric cooker, she thought refrigerator, television, new saris and embroidered silks. She imagined her children in new clothes, weighed down under the burden of school books, pencils, satchels, all the equipment essential to make great men of them. She thought of a Diwali – the following year perhaps if her dreams came true – when the whole house would be illuminated, radiating light and gratitude. And as she reflected on all these comforts, she became more obsessed with the need for them, a need which was both an anticipated pleasure and an abstract fear of one more disappointment.

She felt herself ageing, too rapidly, too suddenly. Her long black pigtail was now shot through with a fine silver filigree and she could not face the inevitable arrival of old age, with its prospect of an existence as uniformly ugly, grey, colourless as a shroud of rain, without a single well of happiness from which to drink deeply a strong desire to live. Wherever she looked, wherever she turned, she saw the same lowering horizons, drained of colour, cloudy, heavy with certainties too long recognised, with a lucidity too bitter for rebellion or rejection of the inevitable ...

The day had been taken up with the usual activities: preparing vegetarian dishes, meticulous spring-cleaning, washing and dressing the children. Shanti herself washed her thick hair and perfumed it in the smoke of the incense which had been burning in the house since morning. She put on a clean sari and left the house carrying a big tray of *diyas* filled with oil and



wicks, ready to be lit. The children followed her, excited at the thought of the great moment drawing near, fluttering around her like so many plump little sparrows, brushing against her with their warm soft flesh.

Outside, one shaft of late sun found its way into the tiny courtyard where begonias, shasta daisies and chysanthemums bloomed. Frangipani blossoms were opening their curled white petals in the setting sun and filling the air with their heady scent. Trees and foliage had all dissolved in the last glow of the sunset. The sky was shrouded in a faint trellis of clouds, mingling light and shadow, the lurid glow of the sun and the silvery gliding of the moon, the warmth of the dying day and the first cool of evening. A swarm of bengalis, perched on the branches of a huge banyan tree, suddenly set up a deafening chorus.

For a moment Shanti stood suspended between two actions, in the grip of the intense feelings that overwhelmed her. She felt she had never really looked at the things around her – as if she had been blind and her sight had just been restored at the very moment when the beauty of nature was at its most dazzling. Her head was a turmoil of ideas and thoughts. The vivid amber colour of the earth was now blended with an even more amazing blue. The air all around her was redolent with pungent aromas: the powerful green smell of mint, thyme and coriander plants, the intoxicating fragrance wafted from the gandia flower; all these treasures amassed as a result of the endless ferment deep in the bowels of the earth, which was transformed on the surface into growth and fruitfulness. With a strange detachment, almost as if under a spell, Shanti saw the disparate elements of her existence lock together to form an intricate chain. They wound around her, binding her to her obligations, and to all the allegiances that a woman forms about her in the course of her existence, while she gradually wears herself out – the better to fulfil them, the better to share the immense, inexhaustible wealth of love hidden in her innermost heart, on which she feeds endlessly.

She placed five *diyas* on the edge of a pool, in the middle of which the sacred *tuksi* plant grew, tall, broad-leaved. With silent, trembling concentration she struck a match and lit one wick. The tiny blue flame gradually flared up and shone on her first treasure: the delicate face of her eldest daughter, with huge lively eyes and an eager smile.

She lit the second lamp. Her second treasure appeared, just above the flame: her eldest son, the most loving and the best loved.

The third lamp dispelled the darkness around a cheeky, triangular, dimpled little face. Another lamp showed up a faint smile on the face of the fourth child: a delicate, sad little girl.



As she lit the last lamp, she knew she would see a thousand golden glints in the dark curls of an eighteen-month-old toddler who, for one brief moment, would look up at her with calm, trusting eyes, in which shone a fierce belief in the divine presence of his mother.

With the last lamp, Shanti herself became tall and resplendent, like the luminous creature of her dream, her hands filled with light. For the first time in her life, Lakshmi had accomplished her miracle. With her hands joined in the namaste position, as a sign of her last prayer of the day, Shanti accepted Lakshmi's gift and took it straight to her heart.

## Appendix 1

### Additional Resources

[Interview](#) with the author in *World Literature Today* (2013).

The group of authors/translators of which Ananda Devi is a member:

<https://www.lesfugitives.com/authors>

“European Writers on Borders and Identity,” an [EUNIC online event](#) with Ananda Devi in conversation with Leila Aboulela and Kapka Kassabova, The transcript of Devi’s answers to James Crawford’s questions is available here.

PEN article in which Ananda Devi writes on Mauritius and London, the purpose of fiction, and appearing to tread dark territories: [Who Gets to Write What?](#)

[Interview](#) with the author in *Electric Lit*.

[Video](#): In conversation with Prajwal Parajuly at the Jaipur Literature Festival.

[“The Sad Ambassador”](#)

## Appendix 2

### Connection to Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts

#### Lesson 1 (for grades 9-12):

Teachers should refer to Oklahoma State Standards for English Language Arts

9.2.R.1; 10.2.R.1; 11.2.R.1; 12.2.R.1:

Students will summarize the main ideas and paraphrase significant parts of increasingly complex texts.

9.2.R.2; 10.2.R.2; 11.2.R.2; 12.2.R.2:

Students will identify characteristics of genres and analyze how they enhance comprehension of fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction.

9.2.W.1; 10.2.W.1; 11.2.W.1; 12.2.W.1:

Students will routinely and recursively prewrite (e.g., develop and organize ideas).

9.2.W.2; 10.2.W.2; 11.2.W.2; 12.2.W.2:

Students will routinely and recursively develop drafts, applying organizational structure(s) (e.g., description, compare/contrast, sequential, problem/solution, cause/effect, etc.).

9.2.W.3; 10.2.W.3; 11.2.W.3; 12.2.W.3:

Students will routinely and recursively revise drafts for organization, transitions, sentence variety, and consistent tone and point of view in order to improve coherence and meaning.

9.2.W.4; 10.2.W.4; 11.2.W.4; 12.2.W.4:

Students will routinely and recursively use resources to edit for grammar, usage, mechanics, and format in order to finalize drafts for publication.

9.3.R.1; 10.3.R.1; 11.3.R.1; 12.3.R.1:

Students will analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts.

9.3.R.2; 10.3.R.2; 11.3.R.2; 12.3.R.2:

Students will evaluate authors' perspectives and explain how those perspectives contribute to the meanings of texts.

9.3.R.3; 10.3.R.3; 11.3.R.3; 12.3.R.3:

Students will evaluate how literary elements impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:

- setting
- plot structure (e.g., foreshadowing, flashback, in media res)

- conflict (i.e., internal, external)
- characters (e.g., protagonist, antagonist)
- characterization (i.e., direct, indirect)
- point of view (e.g., narrator reliability)
- archetypes

9.3.R.4; 10.3.R.4; 11.3.R.4; 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)

9.4.W.1; 10.4.W.1; 11.4.W.1; 12.4.W.1:

Students will use precise, grade-level vocabulary in writing to clearly communicate complex ideas.

9.4.W.2; 10.4.W.2; 11.4.W.2; 12.4.W.2:

Students will select language to create a specific effect in writing according to purpose and audience.

## **Lesson 2 (for grades 10-12):**

Teachers should refer to Oklahoma State Standards for English Language Arts

9.1.L.1; 10.1.L.1; 11.1.L.1; 12.1.L.1:

Students will actively listen using agreed-upon discussion rules with control of verbal and nonverbal cues.

9.1.L.2; 10.1.L.2; 11.1.L.2; 12.1.L.2:

Students will actively listen in order to analyze and evaluate speakers' verbal and nonverbal messages by asking questions to clarify purpose and perspective.

9.1.S.2; 10.1.S.2; 11.1.S.2; 12.1.S.2:

Students will follow agreed-upon rules as they engage in collaborative discussions about what they are reading and writing, expressing their own ideas clearly, building on the ideas of others, and respectfully disagreeing when necessary in pairs, diverse groups, and whole-class settings.

9.2.R.1; 10.2.R.1; 11.2.R.1; 12.2.R.1:

Students will summarize the main ideas and paraphrase significant parts of increasingly complex texts.

9.2.R.2; 10.2.R.2; 11.2.R.2; 12.2.R.2:

Students will identify characteristics of genres and analyze how they enhance comprehension of

fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction.

9.3.R.1; 10.3.R.1; 11.3.R.1; 12.3.R.1:

Students will analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts.

9.3.R.2; 10.3.R.2; 11.3.R.2; 12.3.R.2:

Students will evaluate authors' perspectives and explain how those perspectives contribute to the meanings of texts.

9.3.R.3; 10.3.R.3; 11.3.R.3; 12.3.R.3:

- Students will evaluate how literary elements impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:
- setting
- plot structure (e.g., foreshadowing, flashback, in media res)
- conflict (i.e., internal, external)
- characters (e.g., protagonist, antagonist)
- characterization (i.e., direct, indirect)
- point of view (e.g., narrator reliability)
- archetypes

9.3.R.4; 10.3.R.4; 11.3.R.4; 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)

### **Lesson 3 (for grades 10-12):**

Teachers should refer to Oklahoma State Standards for English Language Arts

10.2.R.1; 11.2.R1; 12.2.R.1:

Students will summarize the main ideas and paraphrase significant parts of increasingly complex texts.

10.2.R.2; 11.2.R.2; 12.2.R.2:

Students will identify characteristics of genres and analyze how they enhance comprehension of fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction.

10.2.W.1; 11.2.W1; 12.2.W.1:

Students will routinely and recursively prewrite (e.g., develop and organize ideas).

10.2.W.2; 11.2.W.2; 12.2.W.2:

Students will routinely and recursively develop drafts, applying organizational structure(s) (e.g., description, compare/contrast, sequential, problem/solution, cause/effect, etc.).

10.2.W.3; 11.2.W.3; 12.2.W.3:

Students will routinely and recursively revise drafts for organization, transitions, sentence variety, and consistent tone and point of view in order to improve coherence and meaning.

10.2.W.4; 11.2.W.4; 12.2.W.4:

Students will routinely and recursively use resources to edit for grammar, usage, mechanics, and format in order to finalize drafts for publication.

10.3.R.1; 11.3.R.1; 12.3.R.1:

Students will analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts.

10.3.R.2; 11.3.R.2; 12.3.R.2:

Students will evaluate authors' perspectives and explain how those perspectives contribute to the meanings of texts.

10.3.R.3; 11.3.R.3; 12.3.R.3:

Students will evaluate how literary elements impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence: setting

- plot structure (e.g., foreshadowing, flashback, in media res)
- conflict (i.e., internal, external)
- characters (e.g., protagonist, antagonist)
- characterization (i.e., direct, indirect)
- point of view (e.g., narrator reliability)
- archetypes

10.3.R.4; 11.3.R.4; 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)

10.7.R; 11.7.R; 12.7.R:

Students will analyze and evaluate the techniques used in a variety of multimodal content and how they contribute to meaning.

#### **Lesson 4 (for grades 9-12)**

Teachers should refer to Oklahoma State Standards for English Language Arts

9.1.L.1; 10.1.L.1; 11.1.L.1; 12.1.L.1:

Students will actively listen using agreed-upon discussion rules with control of verbal and nonverbal cues.

9.1.L.2; 10.1.L.2; 11.1.L.2; 12.1.L.2:

Students will actively listen in order to analyze and evaluate speakers' verbal and nonverbal messages by asking questions to clarify purpose and perspective.

9.1.S.1; 10.1.S.1; 11.1.S.1; 12.1.S.1:

Students will work effectively and respectfully in diverse groups by showing willingness to make necessary compromises to accomplish a goal, sharing responsibility for collaborative work, and recognizing individual contributions

9.1.S.2; 10.1.S.2; 11.1.S.2; 12.1.S.2:

Students will follow agreed-upon rules as they engage in collaborative discussions about what they are reading and writing, expressing their own ideas clearly, building on the ideas of others, and respectfully disagreeing when necessary in pairs, diverse groups, and whole-class settings.

9.2.W.1; 10.2.W.1; 11.2.W.1; 12.2.W.1:

Students will routinely and recursively prewrite (e.g., develop and organize ideas).

9.2.W.2; 10.2.W.2; 11.2.W.2; 12.2.W.2:

Students will routinely and recursively develop drafts, applying organizational structure(s) (e.g., description, compare/contrast, sequential, problem/solution, cause/effect, etc.).

9.2.W.3; 10.2.W.3; 11.2.W.3; 12.2.W.3:

Students will routinely and recursively revise drafts for organization, transitions, sentence variety, and consistent tone and point of view in order to improve coherence and meaning.

9.2.W.4; 10.2.W.4; 11.2.W.4; 12.2.W.4:

Students will routinely and recursively use resources to edit for grammar, usage, mechanics, and format in order to finalize drafts for publication.

9.2.W.5; 10.2.W.5; 11.2.W.5; 12.2.W.5:

Students will routinely and recursively publish final drafts for an authentic audience (e.g., publishing digitally, community and professional audiences, newspapers and magazines, entering contests).

9.3.W.1; 10.3.W.1; 11.3.W.1; 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

9.3.W.4; 10.3.W.4; 11.3.W.4; 12.3.W.4:

Students will blend narrative, informative, and argumentative writing to suit their audience and purpose.

9.4.W.1; 10.4.W.1; 11.4.W.1; 12.4.W.1:

Students will use precise, grade-level vocabulary in writing to clearly communicate complex ideas.

9.4.W.2; 10.4.W.2; 11.4.W.2; 12.4.W.2:

Students will select language to create a specific effect in writing according to purpose and audience.

9.5.W.1; 10.5.W.1; 11.5.W.1; 12.5.W.1:

Students will use or revise for active/passive voice and parallel structure in words and phrases for effect.

9.5.W.2 ; 10.5.W.2; 11.5.W.2; 12.5.W.2:

Students will add clarity, variety, and/or style to their writing and presentations with parts of speech and various types of phrases and clauses.

9.7.W; 10.7.W; 11.7.W; 12.7.W:

Students will create engaging multimodal content that intentionally addresses an audience and accomplishes a purpose.