Unit 16

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

American Prose Writers
1970–Present

Authors and Works

Featured in the Video:

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (novel)
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (novel), *Woman Hollering Creek* (short stories)
Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (novel)

Discussed in This Unit:

Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" (short story)
Thomas Pynchon, "Entropy" (short story)
Toni Cade Bambara, "Medley" (short story)
Maxine Hong Kingston, from *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (excerpt from novel)
Diane Glancy, "Jack Wilson or Wovoka and Christ My Lord," "Polar Breath" (short stories)
Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" (short story)
David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (play)
Judith Ortiz Cofer, "The Witch's Husband" (short story)
Sandra Cisneros, "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn," "Barbie-Q," "Mericans" (short stories)

Overview Questions

■ How do minority writers distinguish their communities' values from "mainstream" values?

■ What can writers' descriptions of physical spaces, including cities, workplaces, and houses, tell us about American life in the twentieth century?

■ How do Americans use public and private memorials, such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or the quilts in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use," to define themselves?

■ What literary strategies are commonly used in postmodern texts?

■ How are the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement, and the queer rights movement reflected in literature?

■ How has the American family changed with the advent of the women's liberation movement? How might authors both mourn the passing of traditional ways and celebrate new developments in society?

■ How do the writers in this unit use and/or adapt strategies or stylistic devices of various oral traditions, including the Native American and Mexican American oral storytelling traditions?

■ What does it mean to be a "radical" writer?

■ How do writers incorporate specific historical events, such as wars or scientific advances, into their texts?

■ How have authors used techniques of collage in their writings, and how do these techniques echo other artistic movements?

■ How do **postmodern narratives** adapt earlier literary forms? How and why do they borrow from or reject these earlier forms?

■ How do authors use "storytelling" to transmit ideas to their readers?

■ How have women writers revised the myth of the "self-made man"?

■ How do writers use characters' belongings, homes, and careers as symbols of both heritage and values?

■ How do writers educate readers about social injustice?

■ A bildungsroman tells the story of a character's journey, often from innocence to experience (or childhood to adulthood). How do the Unit 16 writers adapt the bildungsroman to express the experiences of minority groups within American society? Is it possible to discuss ethnic subgroups as "characters" who progress through stages of development? Why or why not? What might be the benefits and pitfalls of such an approach?

Learning Objectives

After students have viewed the video, read the headnotes and literary selections in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, and explored related archival materials on the *American Passages* Web site, they should be able to

1. identify and analyze postmodern elements in twentieth-century prose;
2. explain how minority writers (women, ethnic and racial minorities, and sexual minorities) have used postmodern narrative techniques to define their identities;
3. discuss the relationship between individual quests for identity and the related literature;
4. analyze the connections between postmodern literature and the feminist, civil rights, and gay rights movements;
5. analyze the connections between postmodern American literature and performance art, collage, memorials, the city within the city, and gay and lesbian identities.

Instructor Overview

Like the revolutionaries who hundreds of years earlier fought for the American colonies' freedom from English rule, the Unit 16 authors have challenged the status quo to demand recognition as independent subjects with unique identities. These authors continue the work started by earlier feminist writers, such as Margaret Fuller, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Kate Chopin, as well as by writers who celebrated self-determination, freedom, diversity, and democracy, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. Alongside the sweeping social revolutions of the 1970s, including the Black Power movement and the women's movement, Unit 16's authors highlight individuals' searches for identity—legal, social, cultural, sexual, and artistic. With often-innovative postmodern narrative styles, these writers have claimed places not only for themselves in the always-shifting canon of American literature, but also for the communities they represent in the popular imagination's conception of America.

In the 1970s through the early 1990s, women writers enjoyed historically unprecedented prominence, as government arts funding and publishing houses, many independent and run by women, recovered "lost" women authors from previous eras and gave opportunities to young women writers. "The Search for Identity: American Prose Writers, 1970–Present," the video for Unit 16, focuses on three women writers who use postmodern narrative styles to enlarge American society's definition of womanhood. In *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, Maxine Hong Kingston combines fiction and autobiography to articulate how a Chinese American adolescent negotiates her values: which of her parents' and which of the dominant culture's values will she adopt? As she grows from childhood to adulthood, she also experiences the double consciousness, to use W. E. B. Du Bois's term, of being both American and Chinese. Similarly, in *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros writes the story of Esperanza, a nascent Chicana feminist growing up in Chicago. Cisneros's novel—actually, a collection of short vignettes that cohere to tell the story—highlights the multilayered processes of identification necessary for many Americans. This idea of identity as a process is also at the center of Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*. Combining fiction and autobiography, Feinberg writes of Jess Goldberg, a transgendered individual attempting to deal with her own confusion in the face of mainstream society's often hostile reaction to her sexual variance.

By discussing these and the unit's other seven authors in the context of social changes and movements from the 1970s on, Unit 16 strives to teach students how to discuss identity as fluid and multivalent rather than static and unified. The Unit 16 archive and the curriculum materials extend the video's discussion of identity as a process, as they situate Kingston, Cisneros, and Feinberg in relation to other activist writers of their time, as well as to texts such as David Mamet's play *Glengarry Glen Ross*, whose characters tell the other side of the story—how some people in the mainstream can react to societal changes that they perceive as threatening to their ways of life.

This unit asks students to consider "identity" in racial, sexual, gendered, financial, and educational terms. It also invites students to analyze the literature in light of artistic movements (collage, performance art), cultural trends (memorials, the city within the city), and identity theory (gay and lesbian

identities). The core and extended contexts can help students to better appreciate the authors' social milieus: (1) the performance art context discusses how artists expanded the definition of "art" to raise awareness of social issues; (2) the memorials context describes some of the postmodern memorials, such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, that were built in the late twentieth century and remain powerful; (3) the collage context explores the work of Romare Bearden and other collage artists; (4) the gay and lesbian identities context explains how the gay rights movement is related to the ideas of Judith Butler and other theorists who pioneered new ways of thinking about identity; and (5) the city within the city context introduces the idea of economic imbalances in America's urban spaces. By giving students the opportunity to read literature by authors who have been involved in these artistic and political movements, Unit 16 asks students to examine their own relationships to society by considering the roles of heritage, community, opportunity, and identity.

Student Overview

Like the revolutionaries who hundreds of years earlier fought for the American colonies' freedom from English rule, the Unit 16 authors have challenged the status quo to demand legal and cultural recognition as independent subjects with unique identities. These authors continue the work started by earlier feminist writers, such as Margaret Fuller, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Kate Chopin, as well as by writers who celebrated self-determination, freedom, diversity, and democracy, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. Alongside the sweeping social revolutions of the 1970s, including the Black Power movement and the women's movement, Unit 16's authors highlight individuals' searches for **identity**—legal, social, cultural, sexual, and artistic—and for their **historical roots**. With often-innovative **postmodern** narrative styles, these writers have claimed places not only for themselves in the always-shifting canon of American literature, but also for the communities they represent in the popular imagination's conception of America.

In Unit 16's video, you will learn of the pioneering efforts of three women authors—Maxine Hong Kingston, Sandra Cisneros, and Leslie Feinberg—to revise and expand American society's definition of womanhood. By studying these and the unit's other seven authors in the context of social changes and movements from the 1970s on, you will be able to discuss identity as fluid and multivalent rather than static and unified. The Unit 16 archive and the curriculum materials extend the video's discussion of identity as a process, as they situate Kingston, Cisneros, and Feinberg in relation to other activist writers of their time, as well as to texts such as David Mamet's play *Glengarry Glen Ross*, whose characters tell the other side of the story—how some people in the mainstream can react to societal changes they perceive as threatening to their ways of life.

This unit asks you to consider "identity" in racial, sexual, gender, financial, and educational terms. It also invites you to analyze the literature in light of artistic movements (collage, performance art), cultural trends (memorials, the city within the city), and identity theory (gay and lesbian identities). The core and extended contexts can help you to better appreciate the authors' social milieus: (1) the performance art context discusses how artists expanded the definition of "art" to raise awareness of social issues; (2) the memorials context describes some of the postmodern memorials, such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, that were built in the mid-to-late twentieth century and remain powerful; (3) the collage context explores the work of Romare Bearden and other collage artists; (4) the gay and lesbian identities context explains how the gay rights movement is related to the ideas of Judith Butler and other theorists who pioneered new ways of thinking about identity; and (5) the city within the city context introduces the idea of economic imbalances in America's urban spaces. In this unit, then, you will have the opportunity to read literature by authors who have been involved in these artistic and political movements, and you will thereby be able to examine your own relationship to society by considering the roles of heritage, community, opportunity, and identity.

Video Overview

➢ **Authors covered:** Maxine Hong Kingston, Sandra Cisneros, Leslie Feinberg

➢ **Who's interviewed:** Mary Pat Brady, professor of English (Cornell University); Patricia Chu, associate professor of English (George Washington University); Sandra Cisneros, award-winning author and poet; Leslie Feinberg, transgender activist and award-winning author; Greg Sarris, professor of English (Loyola Marymount University)

➢ **Points covered:**

- Explains how women writers in the 1970s through the 1990s blurred genres (fiction and nonfiction, novels and short stories) to tell their stories.
- Connects feminist and identity movements in the 1970s and 1980s to parallel developments in literature, and explains that as women gained more political and social power, their writing also garnered more respect.
- Shows how these later writers recovered largely forgotten women writers from the past (e.g., Zora Neale Hurston) to establish a women's literary tradition.
- Addresses the challenges for ethnically diverse writers of describing their communities truthfully and questioning dominant beliefs while still identifying with these communities.
- Shows how these writers used their communities' storytelling techniques, primarily the oral tradition, in their own fiction.
- Analyzes how these writers tried to separate myths about womanhood from lived realities.
- Shows how Kingston, Cisneros, and Feinberg drew inspiration from their own lives to write fiction that would bring attention to the needs of their communities. Also expresses their desires to "give something back" to their communities, or to return one day to help those who could not leave.
- Defines postmodern narrative, transgendered identity, and feminism.

PREVIEW

- **Preview the video:** Inspired by the civil rights movement, the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s challenged established conceptions of what it meant to be American. Partly because such works as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* sold many more copies than publishers had anticipated, literary critics and readers began to take the work of women writers more seriously in the 1960s and 1970s. Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* inspired other women writers grappling with issues of feminine, American, and ethnic identity. Like Kingston, Sandra Cisneros and Leslie Feinberg portrayed in their works characters the reading public had never before encountered. These representations challenged mainstream society's definitions of women and of American identity. Like other "postmodern" writers of the period, Kingston, Cisneros, and Feinberg experimented with form and blurred genres. A mixture of fiction and autobiography characterizes their best-known works.
- **What to think about while watching:** What is identity? What does it mean to have a dynamic rather than a rigid identity? What does it mean to say that identity is a process? How might this idea conflict with preexisting ideas about identity? What is postmodern narrative? What writing styles did these authors use and why? What does it mean to "translate" one culture's stories into the language of another culture? How did female writers challenge the meaning of being American? What does it mean to be a woman in America? How can books help women readers to realize the options available to them? How did minority women writers complicate mainstream views of their communities while also questioning these communities' dominant beliefs? What risks did these writers take in telling their stories?
- **Tying the video to the unit content:** Unit 16 includes texts by Feinberg, Cisneros, Kingston, and five additional women writers (Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Diane Glancy, and Alice Walker) as well as Thomas Pynchon and David Mamet. It expands the video's emphasis on shifting identities to address how diverse people—men, women, Native Americans, African Americans, children, artists, and others—use postmodern techniques to express their reactions to a changing society and to contribute to its development. Many of the texts and the accompanying questions ask students to examine their own relationships to society by considering the roles of heritage, community, opportunity, and identity. The unit asks students to consider "identity" in racial, sexual, gendered, financial, and educational terms. It also invites students to analyze the literature in light of artistic movements (collage, performance art), cultural trends (memorials, the city within the city), and identity theory (queer politics).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE VIDEO

	What is an American? How does American literature create conceptions of the American experience and identity?	***How do place and time shape literature and our understanding of it?***	***How are American myths created, challenged, and reimagined through these works of literature?***
Comprehension Questions	What is integration? What is assimilation? How are they different?	How many American women had entered the workforce by the mid-1970s? Why did women's writing begin to be taken more seriously in the 1970s and 1980s? How did the women's rights and women's liberation movements affect women's literature?	How does Leslie Feinberg deflate the myth that there are only two genders?
Context Questions	Why is it so important for writers to be able to build on a literary tradition? For example, in the video, Sandra Cisneros says that when she was a young writer, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* "gave her permission" to write *The House on Mango Street*. What do you think she means by this? What do the two texts have in common?	How does region affect individuals' views of the country and their own identity?	How did Kingston, Cisneros, and Feinberg use experimental styles as well as autobiography to challenge mainstream society's definition of womanhood?
Exploration Questions	How, if at all, have these authors' personal stories changed your conception of what it means to be a woman in America?	Consider the mother's cautionary tales about female sexuality in Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. How do these writers use the stories of earlier generations in their own fiction? How do the stories change in the retelling?	These authors asked complicated, contradictory questions about themselves in order to discover their identities. What questions did they ask? What did they discover?

TIMELINE

	Texts	Contexts
1950s		National Guard called to enforce desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, public schools (1957) USSR launches *Sputnik*, first unmanned space craft (1957) NASA is founded; the United States enters "space race" with the Soviets (1958)
1960s	Thomas Pynchon, *Entropy* (1960), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) Faith Ringgold, "Civil Rights Triangle" (1963) Romare Bearden, "Three Folk Musicians" (1967)	John F. Kennedy elected president (1960) 18.6 percent of married women with children work outside the home (1960) FDA approves first birth control pill (1960) Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin is first man in space (1961) Alan B. Shepard Jr. is first American in space (1961) Project Apollo to put a man on the moon is launched (1961) John Glenn is first American astronaut to orbit the earth (1962) First telecommunications satellite launched into orbit (1962) Beatlemania begins (1963) Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. leads civil rights march on Washington, D.C.; over 250,000 people participate (1963) President Kennedy assassinated (1963) Digital Equipment Corporation introduces PDP-8, the first successful mini mainframe computer (1963) Civil Rights Act passed (1964) Vietnam "conflict" escalates (1965) Malcolm X assassinated (1965) Martin Luther King Jr. leads civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama (1965) Watts riots in Los Angeles (1965) Edward H. White Jr. is first American to conduct a space walk on the Gemini 4 mission (1965) Black nationalist organization the Black Panthers founded by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton (1966) National Organization for Women (NOW) founded (1966) First floppy disk developed by IBM (1967) Democratic National Convention in Chicago; nationally televised riots (1968) Riots in 125 cities around the world (1968) Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy assassinated (1968)

TIMELINE *(continued)*

	Texts	Contexts
		John Lennon and Yoko Ono hold "bed-in" to protest the Vietnam war (1969) Apollo 11 mission realizes President Kennedy's vision for the U.S. space program; astronauts Neil A. Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin land on moon and complete moonwalk (1969) Woodstock Festival held in New York state; 500,000 people attend (1969) Nixon initiates "Vietnamization" policy for the war (1969)
1970s	Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" (1973) Laurie Anderson, "Object, Objection, Objectivity" (1973) Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1976) Romare Bearden, "Family," "The Return of Ulysses" (1976) Toni Cade Bambara, "Medley" (1977)	Four student antiwar protesters killed by National Guard troops at Kent State University, Ohio, setting off protests at campuses around the United States (1970) American Indian Movement (AIM) founded (1970) Voting age lowered from 21 to 18 (1970) 30.3 percent of married women with children work outside the home (1970) Compact disc (CD) developed (1970) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created (1970) Disney World opens in Orlando, Florida (1971) Watergate scandal (1972) Equal Rights Amendment approved by Congress (1972) Military draft ends (1973) United States withdraws from Vietnam (1973) *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizes abortion (1973) President Nixon resigns in the wake of the Watergate scandal to avoid impeachment (1974) Sex Discrimination Act passed (1975) U.S. Bicentennial (1976) First Apple personal computer (1976)
1980s	David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1982) Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1982) Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" (1983), *Beloved* (1987) Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984) Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1989)	45.1 percent of married women with children work outside the home (1980) Former Beatle John Lennon murdered (1980) First space shuttle flight (1981) Sandra Day O'Connor becomes first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court (1981) AIDS officially recognized in the United States (1982) Equal Rights Amendment fails to be ratified as the 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1982)

TIMELINE *(continued)*

	Texts	Contexts
		Vietnam Veterans Memorial, designed by artist Maya Lin, dedicated in Washington, D.C. (1982) IBM personal computer marketed (1982) Sally Ride becomes first American woman astronaut in space (1986) U.S. Space Shuttle *Challenger* explodes (1986) Nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, USSR (1986) Berlin Wall falls; Soviet Union collapses; Cold War ends (1989) People's Republic Army massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tianamen Square, Beijing, China (1989)
1990s	Sandra Cisneros, *Woman Hollering Creek*, including "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn," "Barbie-Q," "Mericans" (1991) Diane Glancy, *Firesticks*, including "Jack Wilson or Wovoka and Christ My Lord" and "Polar Breath" (1993) Judith Ortiz Cofer, *The Latin Deli*, including "The Witch's Husband" (1993) Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (1994) Laurie Anderson, "Stories from the Nerve Bible" (1994)	East and West Germany reunified (1990) Nelson Mandela freed from prison after twenty-seven years in captivity (1990) Apartheid officially ends in South Africa (1991) Soviet Union dissolved (1992) Los Angeles riots following Rodney King beating verdict (1992) World Wide Web established (1992) Bill Clinton elected president (1992) Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Coco Fusco begin performing "Two Undiscovered Amerindians" (1992) Nelson Mandela elected president in South Africa's first multi-racial democratic election (1994) 61 percent of married women with children work outside the home (1994) In "Come With Me," Puff Daddy samples Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" (1998) Installation of Judith Baca's *La Memoria de Nuestra Tierra* in Denver International Airport (1999)

AUTHOR/TEXT REVIEW

[3042] Anonymous, *Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C. [A Young Woman at the March with a Banner]* (1963), courtesy of the Still Pictures Branch, National Archives and Records Administration.

MORRISON WEB ARCHIVE

[2254] Abbie Rowe, *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* (1963), courtesy of the National Park Service, Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many groups, including African Americans seeking greater equality and civil rights, used marches and nonviolent protests to make their voices heard. The sight of thousands of protesters marching in front of the White House was powerful and made causes like that of these marchers hard to ignore. This nonviolent approach contrasts with the radicalism of Black Arts movement writers and the Black Panthers.

[3042] Anonymous, *Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C. [A Young Woman at the March with a Banner]* (1963), courtesy of the Still Pictures Branch, National Archives and Records Administration. The civil rights marches in Washington, D.C., and throughout the South during the late 1950s and 1960s made the cause of equality for African Americans visible to the nation. Beyond the right to vote and equal education, African Americans demanded access to good jobs, homes, and other basic opportunities and constitutional rights. "I have come to believe over and over again," poet Audre Lorde said, "that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared,

Toni Morrison (b. 1931)

Unlike many African American authors, Toni Morrison has set most of her fiction not in the rural South or the urban North but in Lorain, Ohio, where she was born as Chloe Anthony Wofford in 1931. She attended Howard and Cornell Universities before beginning careers in teaching and editing. While teaching, Morrison counted among her students civil rights activist Stokeley Carmichael and prominent literary and cultural critic Houston A. Baker Jr.; while editing for Random House, she worked with Muhammad Ali and Toni Cade Bambara. Her novels include *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby*, *Jazz*, and *Sula*. One of the most prominent African American woman authors in the nation's history, Morrison was the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize, which she did in 1993.

Morrison is best known as the author of the 1987 Pulitzer prize–winning novel *Beloved*, which tells the story of Sethe, an ex-slave haunted by memories and by the ghost of her daughter, Beloved, whom she killed as an infant because she did not want her to live as a slave. Morrison's portrayals of the brutality of the slave system recall the atrocities depicted in Harriet Jacobs's and Frederick Douglass's slave narratives. The novel sparked discussion about how the nation should attempt to heal from the wounds caused by slavery: was it best to literally live with the past, like Sethe, or to try to move into the future, like other characters in the novel?

In "Recitatif," too, Morrison explores the role of memory in shaping women's consciousness. Morrison tells the stories of two childhood friends, one white and one black, as they move into adulthood during the civil rights era. The twist is that she does not identify which woman belongs to which race. While some readers have felt that this "trick" is unnecessarily manipulative, by denying this information to the reader, Morrison highlights the human urge to categorize people. Without diminishing the very real consequences of racial difference, Morrison points out the absurdities of racial stereotyping by providing racial "markers" that serve to confuse rather than clarify her characters' races.

TEACHING TIPS

■ When you assign "Recitatif" to your class, provide background historical information about racial desegregation in schools (you can consult an online encyclopedia and/or see Unit 15) or ask students to briefly research the topic themselves. You might start by asking them to find out what "segregation" was. If your students are familiar with the topic before class discussion, you will be able to address the picketing scenes in a more sophisticated way. For example, you can ask your students to discuss the "sides" of the battle: Why did some people want desegregation? Why did some not want it?

■ Students will want to attempt to identify Twyla's and Roberta's races, so this is a good opportunity to discuss how and why people

stereotype each other as well as the pitfalls of doing so. You could start your discussion by assigning certain pages to groups of students and asking them to identify where Morrison uses phrases or ideas that could be considered "racial markers."

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What does "recitatif" mean? Why does Morrison use it for the title of her story?

Comprehension: Identify Roberta's and Twyla's races based on textual clues. How do you know? Are you *sure*? Why or why not? How does any uncertainty affect your reading of the story?

Comprehension: Why do Roberta and Twyla have to live in the orphanage as children? How are they different from the other children there?

Context: Why did some people oppose and some support racial desegregation in schools? What issues were involved?

Context: In the story, the town of Newburgh has changed dramatically because of an influx of IBM employees. For example, the Food Emporium stocks very different types of food for the new residents. Consider these changes in relation to "urban renewal" and "urban relocation."

Context: Think about this story while you analyze images of protesters in the archive. Interpret the language of picketing signs, as well as the picketers' facial expressions and body language. What are they "saying"?

Exploration: Why are Twyla's and Roberta's diverging memories of Maggie so important? Consider Maggie's race, her muteness, and her abuse by the schoolgirls. What does Morrison suggest about why people remember things in certain ways?

Exploration: Roberta and Twyla picket over the issue of racial desegregation in schools, each holding signs that are as much about their personal relationship as they are about the larger issues. In Twyla's words, "People changed signs from time to time, but Roberta never did and neither did I. Actually my sign didn't make sense without Roberta's." What do their signs mean and why do they make sense only together? Also, think about the prevalence of marches and protests at this time. Why did people march for rights? Was it effective?

Exploration: Newburgh has changed since its former sleepy days, but James's family has fond memories of an earlier time in the community, and Twyla "can see them all together on the Hudson in a raggedy skiff." Compare the "old" and "new" Newburgh to the "old" and "new" Hudson River Valley community in Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle." Consider the narrators' roles in shaping these histories.

even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood."

[3266] National Park Service, *John F. Kennedy's Address to the Nation on Civil Rights* (1963), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. On June 11, 1963, President Kennedy addressed the United States following the use of National Guard troops to enforce the ruling of a federal court allowing two African American students to attend the University of Alabama. "I hope that every American, regardless of where he lives, will stop and examine his conscience about this and other related incidents," Kennedy said. "This nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds. It was founded on the principle that all men are created equal, and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened."

[3603] Harriet Jacobs, Frontispiece from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (1861), courtesy of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* was the first female-authored slave narrative published in the United States. Focusing on the specific plight of enslaved African American women, Jacobs's autobiography uses the discourse of sentimentality to appeal to a white female readership. In the late twentieth century, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, in many ways influenced by slave narratives, describes the brutality of slavery and looks to ways the nation might attempt to heal from the wounds of its past.

[6187] Anonymous, *Congress to Unite Women, May 1, 2, 3, '70: Intermediate School, 333 W. 17 St., N.Y.C.* (1970), courtesy of the Library of Congress. From the same year that Toni Morrison and Alice Walker published their first novels, this poster calls women to one of the many conferences organized to formulate plans of action against oppression. In her article "Playing in the Dark," Morrison writes: "My work requires me to think about how free I can be as an African-American woman writer in my genderized, sexualized, and wholly radicalized world. [F]or me, imagining is not merely looking or looking at; nor is it taking oneself intact into the other. It is, for the purpose of the work, *becoming*."

[6241] Anonymous, *Anti-Communist Poster Showing Russian Soldier and Joseph Stalin Standing over Graves in Foreground; Cannons and People Marching to Siberia in Background* (1953), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-117876].

Thomas Pynchon (b. 1937)

Thomas Pynchon has become famous as the man who does not want to be famous. Little is known about this author's personal life: we know only that Pynchon was born in 1937 on Long Island, New York, and that he graduated from Cornell University in the 1950s, after which he served in the navy. Though he is notoriously reclusive, he reportedly lives somewhere in northern California. Devoted fans track Pynchon sightings much like the Elvis Presley fans who record rumored appearances by "the King." Unlike Elvis, though, Pynchon most certainly is still alive, and because of his insistence on remaining private, he has figured in debates about the importance of biographical information in literary analysis. For critics who believe that an author's life events is essential to understanding his/her writing, Pynchon's silence leaves a frustrating information gap. However, some are less bothered, including critics who believe that an author's biography is immaterial when compared to a text's "cultural" history—that is, the general history of politics, entertainment, social issues, cultural trends, and the like during the years of the text's composition.

Pynchon is known for writing densely detailed, nonlinear narratives that mirror the complexity of the postmodern condition. His plots are complicated, as are his themes, so his texts can be challenging for even the most careful readers. His works are also known for their humor; in Pynchon's short story "Entropy," soldiers crash Meatball's party to find communists but end up joining the fun. Pynchon's novel *The Crying of Lot 49* offers a good entrance into his longer fiction, because it combines a complex structure with an engaging wit as it explores the nature of being American: the heroine tries to determine a connection between a mysterious legacy left to her and a similarly mysterious, secret alternative to the U.S. postal service.

PYNCHON WEB ARCHIVE

[6240] Anonymous, *Look Behind the Mask! Communism Is Death* (n.d.), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-80757]. Propaganda poster depicting Stalin and a skull. Anti-communism in the United States peaked during the 1950s Red Scare. Many political, union, and popular culture figures were accused of being communist and subversive. Writers responded to the Red Scare in such works as Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. The remainder of this poster reads "From Lenin to Stalin . . . the word is one thing, the fact another." Cold War politics often made labor organizers unpopular, as depicted in Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*.

TEACHING TIPS

■ If you have students who are majoring in the sciences or interested in science fiction, try to get them involved in these discussions. These students rarely have the opportunity to discuss their areas of expertise in literature classes, and they can help their fellow students to better understand Pynchon's allusions. Also, you may have students who can provide updated information about the theories and scientists mentioned in the text.

■ Students who rely heavily on biographical information when they read and interpret literature may wish to know more about Pynchon before interpreting his writing. This would be a good time to briefly teach students about the New Critics' approach to reading literature, including their ideas about the intentional fallacy. You might emphasize the importance of close reading—students should learn how to think about and discuss not only the general ideas in a text but also its language. Choose a phrase or sentence, and ask them to discuss the connotations of each word. As for the intentional fallacy,

ensure that students do not assume that a text means a certain thing because that interpretation agrees with the author's biography: it is impossible to ever truly know the author's intention.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is "entropy"? Why is it an apt title for Pynchon's story?

Comprehension: What is a "lease-breaking" party? Why is this detail important? What does this days-long party tell us about Meatball Mulligan and his friends?

Comprehension: The perspective shifts frequently and abruptly between "upstairs" and "downstairs" scenes. Mark the locations of the shifts to determine why Pynchon intersplices the narratives in this way. How does this technique affect your understanding of both stories? What do upstairs and downstairs characters represent?

Context: Why do the soldiers say they're looking for communists? Consider this in relation to [6240] ("Look behind the mask! Communism is death" poster) and [6241] (anti-communist poster).

Context: The story takes place in February 1957, in Washington, D.C., a center for those involved in the civil rights movement as well as for intellectuals, the military, and protesters. Pynchon shows interactions among a wide variety of such characters, from freewheeling musicians to U.S. Navy enlisted personnel. Discuss the importance of Washington, D.C., and other urban areas as gathering places for people with disparate ideas.

Context: Saul talks about how "Miriam has been reading science fiction again. That and *Scientific American*. It seems she is, as we say, bugged at this idea of computers acting like people." Consider how twentieth-century technological innovations such as space travel have brought the stuff of science fiction to life. How do these innovations and ideas affect our notions of reality and the meaning of life? Consider the 1969 Apollo 11 moonlanding [6899] as an example of reality pushing the boundaries of the imagination.

Context: The musicians downstairs are described as wearing "horn rimmed sunglasses and rapt expressions." They "smoke funny-looking cigarettes which contained not, as you might expect, tobacco, but an adulterated form of *cannabis sativa*." What is *cannabis sativa*? Discuss how Pynchon uses this reference to the drug culture to characterize these men. Why do you think the narrator uses the Latin ("scientific") name? What does it say about his relationship to drug culture?

Exploration: Pynchon is famously secretive about his own life, so we have to analyze the story without any information about his biography or cultural or literary influences. Why do you think an author might wish to remain unknown? How does the lack of information about him affect your reading of the story?

Exploration: Pynchon's characters discuss scientists and scientific

[6241] Anonymous, *Anti-Communist Poster Showing Russian Soldier and Joseph Stalin Standing over Graves in Foreground; Cannons and People Marching to Siberia in Background* (1953), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-117876]. Thomas Pynchon's work is rife with references to contemporary and historical events, popular culture, and politics. "Entropy" opens with a description of a supposedly cosmopolitan and urbane group in Washington, D.C.—a passage that admits its own irony in what is perhaps a reference to the politics of the anti-communist McCarthy era.

[6899] Neil A. Armstrong, *Moon Landing, Apollo 11* (1969), courtesy of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Photograph of astronaut Edwin E. Aldrin Jr. and the Lunar Module (LM) taken by Neil A. Armstrong with a 70mm Hasselblad lunar surface camera. Writer Thomas Pynchon's works are full of scientific language and allusions and explore the shifting demarcations between science and science fiction.

[7105] *New York Times* Paris Bureau Collection, *London Has Its Biggest Raid of the War* (1941), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* has four main plots and many subplots. World War II London, however, is a prominent setting in this work. Pynchon's fascination with science and technology, as well as popular culture, animates this novel which includes an investigation into the V2 rocket program developed by Germany for bombing England during the war.

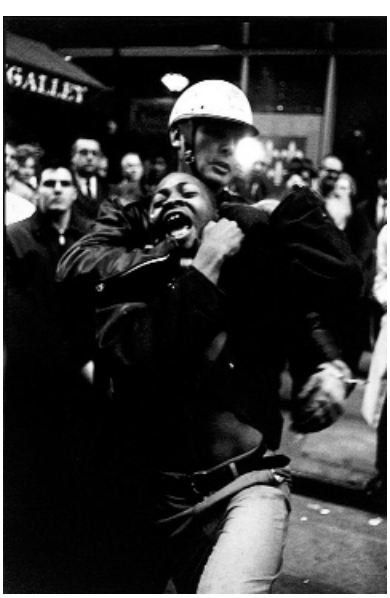
ideas to make sense of the world. Research one of these scientists or ideas (Gibbs, Boltzmann, entropy, thermodynamics, etc.) to better understand the story.

Exploration: Analyze the conversations that appear throughout the story in relation to Saul and Meatball's discussion of communication theory, including the ideas of "noise" and "leakage." When speaking to each other, how can people differentiate meaning from the surrounding noise and leakage?

Exploration: Aubade (her name means "a morning song") hears in the hothouse "a motif of sap-rising": "That music rose in a tangled tracery: arabesques of order competing fugally with the improvised discords of the party downstairs, which peaked sometimes in cusps and ogees of noise." What is a fugue? How does Pynchon use fugue-like structure in this story? Locate his "melodies" and "countermelodies" and compare them to those in a fugue by a musician such as Bach.

Toni Cade Bambara (1939–1995)

In addition to writing many stories and novels, Toni Cade Bambara was a civil rights activist, teacher, and editor. She lived in Harlem for the first ten years of her life, and her fiction reflects her intimate knowledge of city spaces. She also traveled extensively in adulthood, making trips to Cuba and Vietnam and a move to Atlanta. Bambara was committed to using her skills as a writer not only to entertain, but also to educate and contribute to social and political movements. When not writing, she was fervently devoted to activism in other forms. Early in her life she worked "in the trenches" to help minority city dwellers, and late in her life she made activist films, including a television documentary that spotlighted police brutality. In the 1970s and 1980s, she was also involved in the women's and black liberation movements, and before her death she encouraged many young southern writers to continue to use literature as a tool for social revolution.



[7154] Danny Lyon, *Atlanta, Georgia—High School Student Taylor Washington Is Arrested at Lebs Delicatessen—His Eighth Arrest* (1963), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-4843].

In her fiction, Bambara told stories about African Americans in the rural South and the urban North and of immigrants from the Caribbean. She depicted vibrant, though certainly not trouble-free, black communities whose residents were coming to terms with the changes in American society. In an 1982 taped interview with Kay Bonetti of the American Audio Prose Library, Bambara said, "When I look back at my work with any little distance the two characteristics that jump out at me is one, the tremendous capacity for laughter, but also a tremendous capacity for rage." Both are apparent in most of her works. In "Medley," for example, we see the laughter shared by women sipping drinks together as well as the frustrations felt by Sweet Pea, the main character, when the men around her act as if her opinion is meaningless. A young feminist who is dedicated to her dream of building a home for herself and her daughter, Sweet Pea, like many nascent feminists at the time, feels uncomfortable "neglecting" or leaving behind the man in her life. Bambara knew that in order to thrive—not just survive—women would need to learn how to adapt to society's

ever-changing rhythms without sacrificing their own identities in the process. In both her fiction and her personal life, Bambara refused to give up the fight, and she continued to work after a cancer diagnosis until her death. She was the epitome of the "liberated woman"—an educated, socially dedicated, creative individual who in every way used the personal to political effect. Bambara's works include the short story collections *Gorilla, My Love* (1972) and *The Birds Are Still Alive* (1977), as well as the novel *The Salt Eaters* (1978).

TEACHING TIPS

■ While some students are uncomfortable talking about sexual scenes and issues in class, it is important to address this story's "shower scenes." You may want to isolate one of these scenes and read through it with the class, focusing on how Bambara parallels the music that Sweet Pea and Larry create together with their physical intimacy. It may be useful to note that although Sweet Pea seems sexually satisfied, she nonetheless decides that she needs to leave her relationship.

■ Discuss Sweet Pea's decision to leave her relationship with regard to some of the feminist images provided in this unit and on the *American Passages* Web site. For example, you could analyze her statements about personal independence in light of the following images: [6182] (*Woman Power* poster); [6190] (*I Am a Woman Giving Birth to Myself*); and [6191] (*Women are Happening*). Ask your students to think about Sweet Pea's struggle for self-determination as part of a larger women's movement represented in the posters.

■ While the narrative only briefly mentions the Vietnam War, Sweet Pea's comment about getting "that bloodsucker off our backs" could open the door to a discussion about how and why she identifies with the conflict. Students may be familiar with Muhammad Ali's stand against the war, and you can use this knowledge as an entrée into a discussion about how and why disenfranchised people frequently sympathize with each other in opposing "the man." You may also refer interested students to Michael Bibby's *Hearts and Minds: Bodies, Poetry, and Resistance in the Vietnam Era*, in which he discusses identification between black nationalists and the Vietcong.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What does Sweet Pea do for a living? Why do the gamblers pay her so much for her service?

Comprehension: As Sweet Pea tells Pot Limit and Sylvia about her return to Larry's apartment, she admits that she "embroider[s] a little on the homecoming tale" to play to her audience. What does this comment indicate about her reliability as narrator?

Comprehension: How do we know when Sweet Pea is *remembering* as opposed to *storytelling*? What is the difference between the two and why is it important?

Context: Locate Sweet Pea's statements of self-empowerment and

BAMBARA WEB ARCHIVE

[6178] Melinda Beck, *Racism/Sexism* (1991), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-115151]. Image of a woman gazing into a mirror; her face is labeled with such words as "racism," "career," "equal pay," and "sexism." Writers like Toni Cade Bambara depict women who feel the pressure of society's conflicting expectations.

[6180] United Women's Contingent, *When Women Decide This War Should End, This War Will End: Join the United Women's Contingent on April 24* (1971), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-6882]. Protest poster against the Vietnam War. The antiwar, civil rights, women's rights, and gay liberation movements were connected politically and artistically. In 1961, writer and activist Grace Paley founded the Greenwich Village Peace Center, which was integral to draft resistance during the Vietnam War.

[6182] Ivy Bottin, *Woman Power* (1965), courtesy of the Library of Congress [POS 6-U.S., no. 548 (C size) <P&P>]. The women's movement sought to change the dominant perception that all women could be satisfied by homemaking. Many feminists argued that liberation must begin at home, where men should share domestic chores.

[6190] Marcia Salo, *I Am a Woman Giving Birth to Myself* (1973), courtesy of the Library of Congress [CN POS 6-U.S., no. 306 (C size) <P&P>] and the Times Change Press. For many in the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, there was an intense connection between the personal and the political. Central to these feminists was the fight to gain control over their bodies, as a woman's ability to control her reproductive fate was necessary for personal and political liberation. The feminists' resolve to increase education about female anatomy and reproductive health was, at the time, radical.

[6191] Women's Interart Center, *Women are Happening* (c. 1973), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Poster advertising a "Mixed Media Happening," to include workshops on poetry, dance therapy, silkscreen, and Plexiglas sculpture. Writer Toni Cade

Bambara was a social activist whose novel *The Salt Eaters* demonstrates the importance of storytelling in shaping healthy communities.

[6217] Cameron Lawrence, *It Is a Sin to Be Silent When It Is Your Duty to Protest* (1971), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Feminist and activist poet Adrienne Rich's work provokes readers to see the connections between the struggle for women's rights and other movements, including that against the war in Vietnam.

[7154] Danny Lyon, *Atlanta, Georgia—High School Student Taylor Washington Is Arrested at Lebs Delicatessen—His Eighth Arrest* (1963), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-4843]. Photograph of a police officer restraining a young protester. Many writers in the 1960s and 1970s were profoundly affected by the civil rights movement, including activist Toni Cade Bambara. Bambara's writing focuses on the need for societies to adapt without sacrificing their identities.

resistance to societal double standards for men and women, and consider these statements in relation to Marcia Salo Rizzi's 1973 poster *I Am a Woman Giving Birth to Myself* [6190]. Also consider Sweet Pea in relation to Melinda Beck's drawing, *Racism/Sexism* [6178]. Do you think that Sweet Pea is "a woman giving birth to herself"? What does this mean?

Context: Muhammad Ali famously refused to fight in the Vietnam War, saying, "Man, ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong." Research Ali's stance and its aftermath. Also, relate his position to Sweet Pea's comment that "my nephew'd been drafted and it all seems so wrong to me, our men over there in Nam fighting folks who fighting for the same things we are, to get that bloodsucker off our backs." Who or what is the bloodsucker, and who is the "our" to whom she refers? Consider Sweet Pea's opinions and relate them to [6180] (*When Women Decide This War Should End, This War Will End* poster) and [6217] (*It Is a Sin to Be Silent When It Is Your Duty to Protest* poster). Should Sweet Pea be more active in opposing the war, or does she have enough to worry about in her personal life?

Context: Compare Sweet Pea's self-empowerment in "Medley" to Dee/Wangero's self-empowerment in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." How are they the same? How different? How do you know?

Exploration: Compare Bambara's use of music, including jazz, in this story to Langston Hughes's (see Unit 10) and Amiri Baraka's (see Unit 15) use of jazz in their poetry.

Exploration: Why does Bambara include Larry and Hector's "best story" about Bam's funeral? Does it matter that Hector is "not what you'd call a good storyteller"? Consider Sweet Pea's comment, "There was something in that story about the civil rights workers wanting to make a case cause a white cop had cut Bam down. But looked like Hector didn't have a hold to that part of the story, so I just don't know." Why does Sweet Pea comment on what Hector *doesn't* say?

Exploration: Sweet Pea says that her friendships with Pot Limit and Sylvia help her recover from difficult days, but that she worries that no one will "intervene" for Larry in the same way. Consider the role of the African American community in this story. Use the text to identify the values of this community, including its strengths and limitations. You might also compare Bambara's depiction of community to Zora Neale Hurston's in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Maxine Hong Kingston (b. 1940)

Maxine Hong Kingston, née Maxine Ting Hong, was born in Stockton, California, to Chinese immigrant parents who left successful careers in China to raise their children in the United States. Her fiction thematically deals almost exclusively with her heritage as a Chinese American woman, including the struggles of trying to balance her parents' cultural values with American customs and expectations. It also more broadly addresses the challenge for all Americans of living in a

country in which so many different cultures coexist. Kingston combines fact and fiction in her writing, culling from her mother's stories about China while adding elements of history, legend, autobiography, and "outsider" observation.

While most famous for her first novel, the 1976 National Book Critics Circle award–winning *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, which addresses the complex issues facing Chinese American women, Kingston also wrote a companion novel, *China Men*, that does the same for Chinese American men. Kingston is adept at weaving China's **oral tradition** of storytelling into her fiction, but her fiction says as much about mainstream America as it does about Chinese Americans. She is also a keen observer of the ways people interact with and judge each other and, like Toni Morrison, provides provocative critiques of how people from all ethnic groups are guilty of stereotyping rather than sincerely trying to know each other.

In *Tripmaster Monkey*, Kingston returns to the locale of her college days, Berkeley, California, to tell the story of a struggling Chinese American playwright. We see in the sometimes-disagreeable character Wittman Ah Sing that Kingston is not afraid to tackle complicated issues that may cause some discomfort for readers both within and outside of Chinese American communities. Kingston's stories are not only for or about Chinese Americans: she strives to create literature that illuminates what it means to be an American, period, and as such resonates with readers from any ethnic group.

[7437] Eric Risberg, *Author Maxine Hong Kingston* (2001), courtesy of the Associated Press.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Many students seem to automatically sympathize with a story's protagonist. While Wittman Ah Sing is a sympathetic character in many ways, you may want to discuss his own areas of blindness or prejudice. Consider, especially, his discussion of "F.O.B." Chinese Americans and his reasons for contacting Nanci Lee. Ask your students to think about why Kingston chooses to depict Wittman as she does. Consider that Wittman has one perspective, but the narrative on the whole may have another. Use this story to teach students how to distinguish the main character's biases from the text's.

■ Ah Sing is a fifth-generation Chinese American man. Look at the early-twentieth-century photographs of San Francisco Chinatown in the archive; these could be very similar to the San Francisco homes and neighborhoods of Ah Sing's ancestors. Compare these images to Ah Sing's descriptions of San Francisco and Chinatown in the 1980s.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What does "F.O.B." mean? Who uses this term and why?

Comprehension: Of all the women that he knew at college, why does Ah Sing choose to call Nanci Lee?

Comprehension: Ah Sing and Nanci Lee discuss the problems they face in trying to become successful; for example, Nanci Lee, an

KINGSTON WEB ARCHIVE

[6166] Anonymous, *Police and Detectives Guarding Chinatown, July 6, 1909* (1909), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-69697]. Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) made efforts to combat stereotypes of Chinese immigrants as "heathen," "unclean," and "untrustworthy." She provided insight into the unique culture of America's Chinatowns.

[6170] Anonymous, *Chinese New Year* (1909), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-120168]. Chinese immigrants brought their traditions and customs to America, where they established strong communities to provide support in an unfamiliar world. Maxine Hong Kingston offers personal and deeply reflective portraits of how Chinese immigrants' experiences, from the mid-nineteenth century through the present, have affected their sense of American identity.

[6171] Arnold Genthe, *Children Were the Pride, Joy, Beauty, and Chief Delight of the Quarter, Chinatown, San Francisco* (c. 1896–1906), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-5265]. Four children in traditional Chinese clothing on a sidewalk in San Francisco's Chinatown. Writing about the time this photograph was taken, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) sought to make the lives of Chinese immigrants understandable to white audiences.

[6501] Marc Cohen, Cover: *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston (1989), courtesy of Vintage International. Maxine Hong Kingston published her first novel, *The Woman Warrior*, in 1976. Kingston was born in California to Chinese parents and grew up speaking Say Yup, a Cantonese dialect. Her prose is infused with Chinese rhythms and Chinese American speech.

[7437] Eric Risberg, *Author Maxine Hong Kingston* (2001), courtesy of the Associated Press. "We approach the truth with metaphors."—Kingston, from "An Imagined Life." Kingston draws much of the inspiration for her writing from the stories her mother told her as a child, which kept Chinese tradition alive for her.

[8183] Anonymous, *The Voyage, No. 8* (c. 1920), reprinted in *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*, courtesy of the University of Washington Press. "How has anyone to know that my dwelling place would be a prison?" asks this poem, one of many written on the walls of the Angel Island detention center by Chinese immigrants who were held there for extended periods by U.S. authorities. Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* focuses on the stories of early Chinese American immigrants.

actress, is frustrated by the roles that she receives. What is the problem? Why is she frustrated?

Comprehension: Ah Sing tells us his family history and, at the same time, allows us insight into white stereotypes about and expectations of Chinese Americans. Read the story closely to come up with a description of Chinese Americans as Ah Sing thinks whites see them. Consider phrasing such as "credits to our race."

Context: Compare Ah Sing's representation of the Chinatown community to Toni Cade Bambara's representation of an African American community in "Medley." What do they tell us about the significance of minorities living in a "city within a city"? Consider those who may be excluded from these communities (e.g., Nanci Lee) and why.

Context: Why do you think Kingston uses such detail about Nanci Lee and Ah Sing's conversation, as well as Ah Sing's thoughts during the conversation? Think about their conversation in light of the "communication theory" discussed by Saul and Meatball in Thomas Pynchon's "Entropy."

Context: Consider Ah Sing's reading on the bus as an example of performance art. What is he trying to accomplish by reading aloud? Why do you think he chooses this medium to communicate? Do you think this is a successful performance?

Exploration: In naming her main character Wittman Ah Sing, Kingston seems to invite us to identify him with the nineteenth-century American poet Walt Whitman, who is famous for celebrating America's democracy and diversity. In fact, as Wittman reads Rilke on the bus, his fellow passengers are described as "Walt Whitman's 'classless society' of 'everyone who could read or be read to.'" What does this mean? Read Whitman's "I Hear America Singing." What does it mean to "sing"? Write a poem or song that represents Wittman Ah Sing's "song" or your own.

Exploration: Ah Sing again recalls Walt Whitman (who included many long lists in his poems) when he lists the writers and texts that he would like to read on various trains that traverse the American West. What is the significance of this list? Read all or part of one of the texts that he lists and compare its representation of the American West or California to Kingston's in *Tripmaster Monkey*.

Exploration: In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois explains the difficulty of "double consciousness" for African Americans: "One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Can we adapt this idea to better understand Wittman Ah Sing as both an American and a Chinese American? You might also consider how Leslie Feinberg references Du Boisian double-consciousness to discuss both race and gender issues in *Stone Butch Blues*.

Diane Glancy (b. 1941)

Born in Kansas City, Diane Glancy is a poet, short story writer, playwright, and professor. She received her B.A. from the University of Missouri in 1964, her M.A. from Central State University in 1983, and an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa's Writer's Workshop in 1988. Currently, she teaches creative writing at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her father's Cherokee heritage is evident throughout her fiction; Glancy concentrates much of her writing on her dual identity as a mixed-heritage Native American. Her stories, including "Jack Wilson or Wovoka and Christ My Lord," address the difficulties of being "half" rather than "whole": half white, half Native American, her narrator defiantly wrestles with her position as both insider and outsider within her community.

Glancy's characters are honest—some readers have commented that they feel as if the characters are personal friends making confessions. For example, in "Jack Wilson or Wovoka and Christ My Lord," the narrator, using the informal (some say conversational) language that is typical of Glancy's characters, tells us, "I believe in being generous up to a point and then I think to say things like they are." Glancy often uses such colloquial language, sometimes with unusual punctuation, to tell stories about her identity, her family, and her spirituality. Her writing style often echoes the Native American oral tradition and, like oral storytelling, her fiction provides details that appeal to all five senses: she writes evocatively of the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings that her characters experience, thus drawing her audience more intimately into the work. Glancy's publications include *Trigger Dance* (1990) and *Firesticks* (1993), from which the stories in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* are taken.

[4203] Anonymous, *Protest Against the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)* (1970), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Students may have a difficult time understanding some of Glancy's writing because of its nontraditional punctuation. You may want to teach them to read the more confusing sentences as if they were poetry. Also, ask them to read sentences aloud so that they can more easily find the rhythm and, accordingly, the meaning in the prose.

■ Discuss the importance of oral tradition in Native American cultures. You could pair these stories with earlier Native American texts. You could also ask student volunteers to read aloud from the stories and, while doing so, to remember that they're not just reading aloud: they're *storytelling*. For more information about the Native American oral tradition, see Unit 1.

■ Students may more usefully discuss elements of oral storytelling and other Native American beliefs/traditions in Glancy's stories if they have some background first. Wovoka, also known as Jack Wilson (c. 1856–1932), was a Native American prophet, considered by some to be a messiah, of the Paiute tribe. After receiving a command from God during a fever- and delirium-induced vision, he taught his tribe members a "ghost dance" that was to help them live prosperously and peacefully, recover their lost lands, and regain contact with their

GLANCY WEB ARCHIVE

[4203] Anonymous, *Protest Against the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)* (1970), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. "To look upon that landscape [Rainy Mountain] in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion," writes N. Scott Momaday in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. "Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun." Along with the expansion and development of contemporary Native American writing in the late 1960s and 1970s, protest movements arose against the discrimination suffered by American Indians.
[4219] Western Photograph Company, *Gathering Up the Dead at the Battle Field of Wounded Knee, South Dakota* (1891), courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. U.S. soldiers, gathering bodies from the battlefield at Wounded Knee, standing in front of a wagon full

of dead Sioux. A blizzard delayed the burial of the dead. Eventually, the Sioux were buried in a mass grave, with little effort made to identify the bodies.
[5595] Gales and Seaton's Register, *Register of Debates, House of Representatives, 23rd Congress, 2nd Session, Pages 1007 through 1010, Cherokee Memorial* (1835), courtesy of the Library of Congress. This is a record of the reception of the Memorial of the Cherokee Council by Congress. Despite the eloquence of the petitions and their invocation of the republican ideals of natural rights and independence, the Cherokee people were brutally forced off their ancestral lands in 1838.
[8008] Greg Sarris, Interview: "Native Voices" (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Greg Sarris, author, professor of English, and Pomo Indian, discusses the trickster figure Coyote.
[8101] Blackfeet, Dress (c. 1890), courtesy of the Portland Art Museum, gift of Elizabeth Cole Butler. The Blackfeet of Montana are a Plains Indian confederacy of three politically independent tribes: the Peigan (Poor Robes), Bloods (Kainai or Many Chiefs), and North Blackfeet (Siksika or Blackfoot). Blackfoot author James Welch helped start the Native American Renaissance with works like *Winter in the Blood*, *Fools Crow*, and *Riding the Earthboy 40*. This woman's dress, made of leather, glass beads, and wool cloth, is similar to what women would have worn during the Ghost Dance movement of the 1890s.
[8688] Arch C. Gerlach, editor, *Map of Early Indian Tribes, Culture Areas, and Linguistic Stocks*, from *The National Atlas of the United States,* U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Geological Survey (1970), courtesy of the General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin. The Cherokee originally lived in the southeastern part of what is now the United States, but after the unsuccessful petitions of the Cherokee Memorials, they were removed to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). Contemporary writer Diane Glancy is of Cherokee descent; her 1996 novel, *Pushing the Bear*, is about the Trail of Tears, the Cherokees' long, forced march to Indian Territory, during which thousands died.

ancestors. You might start a discussion of Glancy by asking your students to read one or two of the Ghost Dance songs or a selection from Black Elk.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In "Jack Wilson or Wovoka and Christ My Lord," Glancy's punctuation is untraditional and her language is colloquial. How do these formal techniques influence your understanding of the stories?

Comprehension: Why do you think the narrator of "Jack Wilson" so frequently reminds us of her mixed-race heritage?

Comprehension: What happens to the old woman at the end of "Polar Breath"?

Context: The narrator of "Jack Wilson" tells about an Indian man who "can't fly really so heavy with his heritage." What does this mean? Compare this passage to Alice Walker's "Everyday Use," in which Dee/Wangero tells Maggie, "You just don't understand . . . your heritage." What is heritage and what does it mean to these characters? Is it a blessing or a burden?

Context: The female narrator of "Jack Wilson" states of her relationship with men: "if he's willing to stay you usually let him empty as the house is even with him in it." And consider that although the old woman in "Polar Breath" seems to enjoy her solitude, she eventually moves toward reunion with her late husband. Compare these descriptions to Bambara's description of Sweet Pea and Larry's relationship in "Medley." Why do the women seem to want to be alone, yet return to these men?

Context: Analyze [4203], in which Native American students protest the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1970 (the BIA is an often-criticized governmental agency charged with handling matters related to Native Americans). What do you make of the signs in this image, especially "Indians Are Red/B.I.A. What Are You" and "Stop Persecuting Indians"? Why might these people have been protesting?

Exploration: The narrator of "Jack Wilson" tells us that the "changing surviving ole Coyote finally teaches in the end that there's no ultimate reality no foundation and whatever he/she believes is true." What are the implications of a belief in shifting realities, or of an ideology characterized by relativism? What would it mean for there to be no "absolutes"?

Exploration: Compare Emily Dickinson's poetry with Glancy's prose, for example, when Glancy says, "Me and all the runny-nosed reservation children suffering alcoholism poverty want close-mindedness growing up to engender the same in their own." How do these authors' unique punctuation and word use either restrict or enlarge the possible meanings of their works? Why might they reject traditional punctuation and grammar?

Exploration: The mixed-race narrator of "Jack Wilson" says, "it was years before I started saying what I thought" and "I saw right away I was invisible to him." In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Ken

Kesey's narrator Chief Bromden is also half white and half Native American. Chief pretends to be deaf and mute, making him, in a sense, invisible. Read *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and compare Chief's experiences with those of Glancy's narrator. What does it mean to be "invisible"? Is silence an effective mode of resistance in an oppressive society? What does it mean when the bird in "Jack Wilson" says, "presence. Substance. Something visible"?

Exploration: The old woman in "Polar Breath" is described as "an exile in herself." What does this mean? How, if at all, is this possible? What is the significance of her dead husband and the spirits? Is she really alone?

Alice Walker (b. 1944)

Born in rural Eatonton, Georgia, but educated in the North, Alice Walker has been able to analyze the rural South, the focus of most of her writing, as both an insider and an outsider. In her works, which include novels, short stories, poetry collections, and essays, she has drawn inspiration from her own life experiences, including an abortion and a visit to Africa while she was attending Sarah Lawrence College. Walker also participated actively in the civil rights movement, during which she met civil rights lawyer Mel Leventhal. After she and Leventhal married, they fought discrimination against their interracial relationship. As a professor at Wellesley College, Walker taught one of the first women's studies courses in the nation, and she has been integral in bringing greater attention and appreciation to the work of early-twentieth-century anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston, who, like Walker, skillfully wove folk materials into her narratives.

Walker won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for her best-known novel, 1982's *The Color Purple*, which in 1985 was transformed into a successful movie starring Whoopi Goldberg and Oprah Winfrey. In *The Color Purple*, Celie, an African American woman, learns to assert her rights in relationship to her husband and comes to terms with her desire for another woman, Shug. While Walker has sought to describe black women's struggles to find agency and self-determination, she was criticized for too harshly portraying black men in the novel, a charge that shocked and dismayed her.

Walker's works include *In Love and Trouble* (1973), *Meridian* (1976), *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983), and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992).

[6187] Anonymous, *Congress to Unite Women, May 1, 2, 3, '70: Intermediate School, 333 W. 17 St., N.Y.C.* (1970), courtesy of the Library of Congress.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Start by asking your students what kinds of heirlooms their families have, if any, and why they're meaningful. Pay attention to their reasons: some students may provide sentimental reasons (like Maggie's), some may provide "cultural" reasons (like Dee/Wangero's), and some may provide financial reasons ("it may be worth something someday").

WALKER WEB ARCHIVE

[3090] Harriet Powers, *Pictorial Quilt* (c. 1895–98), courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Copyright 2002 MFA, Boston. Harriet Powers (American, 1837–1911). United States (Athens, Georgia), 1895–98, pieced, appliqued, and printed cotton embroidered with cotton and metallic yarns, 175 x 266.7 cm (68 7/8 x 105 in.), Museum of Fine Arts Boston, bequest of Maxim Karolik, 64.619. Many slave and freed women

used quilts to record their histories. Some quilts communicated messages: for example, quilts using the color black indicated a safe house on the Underground Railroad. Like slave narrative authors, African American quilters often used biblical themes and references in their work.

[4819] Alan Lomax, *Zora Neale Hurston, Rochelle French, and Gabriel Brown, Eatonville, Florida* (1935), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ61-1777 DLC]. Used with the permission of the Estate of Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston is pictured here interviewing residents of her hometown, the all-black community of Eatonville. While studying at Barnard, Hurston worked with renowned anthropologist Franz Boas and, in 1927, under Boas's direction, traveled to Louisiana and southern Florida to study and collect African American folktales. *The Eatonville Anthology*, an anthropologically based narrative, sketches vivid images of Hurston's hometown and reveals her skill as an anthropologist.

[6187] Anonymous, *Congress to Unite Women, May 1, 2, 3, '70: Intermediate School, 333 W. 17 St., N.Y.C.* (1970), courtesy of the Library of Congress. From the same year that Toni Morrison and Alice Walker published their first novels, this poster calls women to one of the many conferences organized to formulate plans of action against the web of racial, heterosexual, and patriarchal oppression. In her article "Playing in the Dark," Morrison writes: "My work requires me to think about how free I can be as an African-American woman writer in my genderized, sexualized, and wholly radicalized world. [F]or me, imagining is not merely looking or looking at; nor is it taking oneself intact into the other. It is, for the purpose of the work, *becoming*."

[6949] Harriet Powers, Bible Quilt (c. 1886), courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History. Harriet Powers, a black woman from Athens, Georgia, made quilts like this one before and after her emancipation. Her biblical scenes reflect how both slaves and freed people turned to Christianity to interpret their hard circumstances and find hope.

■ Students might be interested in thinking about the quilt as an heirloom in relation to the phenomenon of "antiquing." You could start this discussion by talking about the PBS television series *Antiques Roadshow*. On the show, people bring family heirlooms, relics from their attics, mysterious found objects, and the like to antique appraisers. Usually, an object's owners tell the story of how the object came into their possession, and then the appraisers explain the object's cultural history (as far as they can tell) and provide estimates of its financial worth. Each episode of the show thus demonstrates many different types of valuation: personal (family stories, family heirlooms, sentimental value), cultural (historical value, the antique's place in larger narratives about the country, wars, places, etc.), and financial. What makes some antiques more "valuable" than others? Whose definition of "value" is most important? And why are television viewers so interested in watching other peoples' junk be appraised?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: The story begins with a dedication that reads: "For Your Grandmamma." How does this dedication shape your understanding of the text? Who does the "your" refer to here: the reader? Someone in the story? And why "Grandmamma"? What is being suggested here?

Comprehension: Why does the story begin with such a detailed description of the yard?

Comprehension: Why have Dee and her boyfriend changed their names to "Wangero" and "Hakim-a-barber"? Why did Dee reject her birth name? What is the significance of the new names? Also, consider Dee/Wangero's new clothes.

Context: Closely read Walker's descriptions of the family's house and compare it to [7030], a photograph taken in 1958. These two houses were categorized as "good enough for Negro occupancy" (later, a housing project was built in their place). What does "good enough" mean? "Read" the photo, as well. What is behind the girl in the foreground? Note her clothes, her stance. Consider the condition of both the house and the yard.

Context: Consider the quilts as "collages" of the family's history. What different elements are brought together in the quilt? You might also consider how the quilts serve as memorials to earlier generations. Are the quilts more a memorial to a person, Grandma, as Maggie seems to believe, or a culture, as Dee/Wangero seems to believe?

Context: Dee/Wangero seems to feel contempt for her family because they have not, in her opinion, "progressed" into modernity. Compare her anxieties to those expressed in phrases about "F.O.B." Chinese Americans in Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey*. Discuss these characters' fears of seeming unassimilated, unsophisticated, and uncultured.

Exploration: Early in the story the narrator offers a frank description of herself as a "big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands."

She goes on to catalog her various features. Why does she do this? What is she trying to suggest and what does she ultimately accomplish by revealing these things about herself? Do you think that her self-description is meant to convince the reader that she is a certain type of person and, therefore, to be trusted? *Are* certain types of people inherently more trustworthy than others?

Exploration: When Dee/Wangero arrives at her mother's homestead, she begins collecting the things she wants to bring back with her. What do the things she wants tell us about her? What does she want to do with them, and why are her intentions here significant?

Exploration: How might we read the argument between Dee/Wangero and her mother over the quilts as a commentary on the function of art and/or heritage? What is each character suggesting about the meaning and purpose of the quilts? What does each believe they should be "used" for? Does the text encourage us to side with one or the other? If so, how does it manipulate our sympathies?

Exploration: Two characters in a story can be called "doubles" when they represent two perspectives about one issue. Some readers have suggested that Maggie and Dee/Wangero are doubles who embody different positions in mid- to late-twentieth-century debates about African American culture and progress. Consider Maggie's statement that "I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts" and Dee/Wangero's statement, "You just don't understand . . . your heritage. It's really a new day for us."

[7030] Anonymous, *These Two Houses Were Among the Structures in Washington, D.C. . . .* (1958), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-124134]. These two Washington, D.C., houses were classed as "good enough" for occupancy by African Americans until they were demolished so that a housing project could be built in their place. In the foreground a young girl stands near an old wooden well.

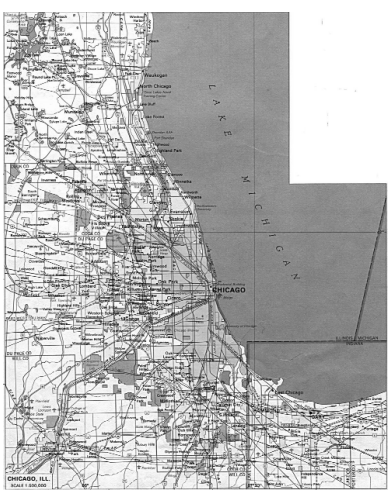
[8958] Alice Walker, Interview: "Rhythms in Poetry" (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg/CPB. Author Alice Walker discusses Langston Hughes's writing.

David Mamet (b. 1947)

David Mamet was born on the Jewish south side of Chicago. His plays have been performed throughout the country, in his hometown as well as in New York City, where Mamet studied the Stanislavsky method of acting. He has said that this method made him aware of how "the language we use, its rhythm, actually determines the way we behave, more than the other way around." It is important, then, for Mamet's audiences and readers to pay close attention to his use of language.

David Mamet's language in his plays and films is so distinctive that it is now known as "Mametspeak." His characters talk through, around, and over each other, sometimes clarifying and sometimes obliterating meaning, and his works have been described as perfect for "people who love words." In *Glengarry Glen Ross*, for which he received the 1984 Pulitzer Prize, Mamet tells the story of a desperate man attempting to keep his job in a profession that, for better or worse, has passed him by. The play uses the business of sales as a metaphor for the American condition, as characters jostle for position in an office where there are only so many "leads" to go around. For these men, who have been defined by their work, the end of a career could necessitate a new search for identity in a world that may seem as if it no longer has room for them.

In 1988's play *Speed the Plow*, in which Madonna was the original lead actress, Mamet used his experience as a screenwriter to stage a



[9072] U.S. Department of the Interior, *Map of Chicago, 1970*, from the *National Atlas of the United States of America*, U.S. Geological Survey (1970), courtesy of the General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin.

scathing critique of the truth behind Hollywood's glamorous façade. The film world has nonetheless treated him well. Since beginning his screenwriting career in 1981, Mamet has succeeded equally in films and in theater. Unlike many other writers who have attempted to "go Hollywood," Mamet has maintained his reputation as a legitimate writer. His film credits include *The Untouchables* (1987), *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1992), *The Edge* (1997), and *Wag the Dog* (1997). Mamet's plays include *The Duck Variations* (1972), *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* (1974), *American Buffalo* (1977), and *Oleanna* (1992).

TEACHING TIPS

■ One of the best ways to get your students interested in drama is to have them act out scenes for the class. You can choose the scenes or allow the students to pick their own. Remind them to pay close attention to both their vocal performances and their body language. To reinforce the play's themes, ask them to follow up their dramatic performances with analyses (including close readings) of the scenes that they acted out.

■ Mamet has written many screenplays and many of his plays have been made into films. Choose a scene or two from one of these plays, and ask your students to analyze the characters' language. You might ask them to come up with a list of characteristics of Mamet's work that they can compare to *Glengarry Glen Ross* after they read the play. Also, after the students read *Glengarry Glen Ross*, you could show a scene from the movie and ask them to compare the reading experience to the viewing experience. What does the film bring to or take from the play?

■ Many students have a hard time engaging with literature if they don't "like" any of the characters, and Mamet is famous for creating generally unsympathetic characters. Encourage students to find ideas in the text to which they can relate. Or, ask them if Mamet's representations seem "realistic." Do the students know people like this? Or, do the students know people who *talk* like this?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is Glengarry? What is Glen Ross? Why are they important in the play?

Comprehension: What do these characters do for a living? What is "the board"? What are "leads"?

Comprehension: How do the salesmen attempt to deal with James Lingk's desire to renege on his contract? Why does Roma become so angry with Williamson?

Context: Analyze the play's first words from Levene to Williamson (or choose another scene) in terms of Thomas Pynchon's ideas in "Entropy" about "noise" and "leakage." How much of Levene's speech is just noise and how much is communication? Is there a difference between the two? Does any language or utterance communicate something? If so, what?

Context: In stories by Maxine Hong Kingston, Sandra Cisneros, and other writers in this unit, characters are on the receiving end of ethnic and racial slurs. In this play, David Mamet's characters are often on the giving end—they actually make the derogatory comments. Why? What is Mamet suggesting about why people participate in and perpetuate stereotyping? For example, if we interpret Moss's comments about Indians in light of his job insecurity, are they more understandable and/or less offensive? Why or why not?

Context: When James Lingk attempts to cancel his deal, the salesmen are dismissive of his arguments, especially when he mentions his wife's role in the family's decision making. Consider their reactions in relation to Toni Cade Bambara's "Medley," in which Sweet Pea says that men ignore her while they "conduct business" in her presence. Consider Roma's comments to Lingk: "You have a life of your own. You have a contract with your wife. You have certain things you do jointly. . . . and there are *other* things. Those things are yours." What "things" does Roma suggest are Lingk's?

Exploration: Figuratively speaking, what does it mean to "get on the board"? Why is it so important to get and stay on the board, and how does Mamet suggest this be accomplished? What are "leads" and how can we get them? Is it possible for people without "leads" to succeed? What is he saying about American values and corporate, financial, and monetary systems? If "sales" are a metaphor for American capitalist society, what is Mamet suggesting about American values, opportunities, and achievements?

Exploration: When Levene crows about his sale to Bruce and Harriet Nyborg, he explains their agreement: "It was like they wilted all at once. . . . they both kind of *imperceptibly slumped*." Thus, his victory is their defeat. At what cost has Levene seized his own "opportunity"? Are the Nyborgs sympathetic characters? How, if at all, does your opinion of them change after you learn of their history with salespeople?

Exploration: In the nineteenth century, Henry David Thoreau wrote that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" because they spend too much time worrying about money, material goods, and worldly achievement. Here, David Mamet tells of twentieth-century desperate men who resort to desperate measures because they are part of the system of "corporate slavery." Why do you think achievement and financial success are so important to these characters? Also consider the ideas about manhood and masculinity that recur throughout the play, e.g., "It's not a world of men." What does it mean to be a man according to these characters and/or according to this text?

Exploration: Compare the salesmen in *Glengarry Glen Ross* to Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*. Consider how the salesmen in these plays are depicted as archetypal victims and, simultaneously, perpetrators of American capitalism and consumer culture.

MAMET WEB ARCHIVE

[3062] Carl Mydans, *House on Laconia Street in a Suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio* (1935), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-000658-D]. Suburban scene of houses, street, and sidewalk. This is an early example of the type of homogeneous suburban neighborhood that flourished immediately following World War II. The continuation of such development in the later twentieth century led to huge economic, social, and environmental problems resulting from uncontrolled "sprawl"—a term that captures the unreflective reproduction of language, people, and places. Sprawl has been criticized by David Mamet in his plays.

[8479] Anonymous, World War II Posters: *What School Teachers and Pupils Should Do During an Air Raid* (1942), courtesy of the World War II Poster Collection, Northwestern University Library. The standardization, homogenization, and regularization in everyday life that spread from the 1950s and 1960s through the present day—from responding to air raid drills, to pledging patriotic support to the government, to embracing the materialism of suburban life—all shape playwright David Mamet's engagement with American society through his characters' fierce, yet sometimes comical, use of language.

[9072] U.S. Department of the Interior, *Map of Chicago, 1970*, from the *National Atlas of the United States of America*, U.S. Geological Survey (1970), courtesy of the General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin. Playwright David Mamet experienced Chicago's postwar economic development, growing up on the Jewish south side of the city. Moving back to Chicago after college, Mamet worked at a real estate agency, an experience that provided the basis for *Glengarry Glen Ross*. His plays, capturing the potential violence of language and the travails of miscommunication, explore society's disregard for its most enduring inequities. "What I write about," says Mamet, "is what I think is missing from our society. And that's communication on a basic level."

[7947] Deirdre Griswold Strapp, *Leslie Feinberg Speaking at Madison Square Garden Theater as a Founder of Rainbow Flags for Mumia* (2000), courtesy of Deirdre Strapp.

Leslie Feinberg (b. 1949)

Like her character Jess Goldberg, Leslie Feinberg was born in Buffalo, New York, where she grew up before the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, which many observers consider the watershed moment in the twentieth-century movement to secure the rights of nonheterosexual people. Feinberg struggled to find her identity in a culture that seemingly had no place for her as a transgendered individual. Now, as a journalist and author as well as an activist for the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals, she has stated that her written work is often an attempt to answer her own questions about why some people feel that they need to punish those who are different.

Following in the tradition of writers like Toni Cade Bambara, Feinberg's novel *Stone Butch Blues* endorses the belief that writing can be revolutionary. Simply by sharing this story with others, Feinberg extends her activist reach by educating her readers. In *Stone Butch Blues*, she combines autobiography and fiction in a narrative structured as a letter to an ex-girlfriend. Her character Jess Goldberg struggles to come to terms with her identity and sexuality in a society that provides no models and no safe refuge for her. Thus, even as its startling depictions of brutality and cruelty may be uncomfortable for some readers, the novel answers a need in the queer community for testimonials that establish a common history and reveal stories that had for so long remained untold.

TEACHING TIPS

■ You will probably need to spend some time clarifying the terms "queer," "transgender," "transsexual," "gender variant," "butch/femme," and other phrases that students have questions about. For more information, see the "Gay and Lesbian Identities in Contemporary American Writing" extended context in this unit and consult an introduction to queer studies, such as Annamarie Jagose's *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York UP, 1997).

■ To exhibit the hatred toward gender-variant individuals that Feinberg describes, you could show an excerpt of the 1999 movie *Boys Don't Cry*, for which Hilary Swank won an Academy Award for Best Actress. You could ask the students to compare the rape scenes in the movie and in *Stone Butch Blues*. Or, students who may not be ready for such graphic descriptions could compare the scenes in which Swank's character cross-dresses to similar scenes in the novel.

■ Many students even at college age are uncomfortable talking about sexuality in general, so you may have to teach them how to do so usefully and constructively. Also, because of the persistence of homophobia, be prepared for the possibility that some students may make stereotypical and perhaps offensive comments. With this issue more than perhaps any other, it is important to remain sensitive to the probability that students are personally dealing with these matters, and some in the group are probably coming to terms with their own sexual identities and orientations.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What does it mean to be transgendered? What does it mean to be **gender variant**?

Comprehension: How does Jess realize that she is not like the other children?

Comprehension: What are butch and femme identities? What are **identity politics**?

Context: Relate Jess's difficulties dealing with the mainstream community to the difficulties experienced by Chinese Americans Nanci Lee and Wittman Ah Sing in Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey*. How are their experiences similar? What makes them different?

Context: Compare Feinberg's forthright, public image to Thomas Pynchon's near-invisibility. Feinberg seems to *need* to tell her own story as well as Jess's. Why might she consider her own story so important? You might want to think about your answer in relation to the statement, "The personal is political" (see Unit 15).

Exploration: Why do you think Jess Goldberg tells her story in letter form? Why is her audience, her former girlfriend, so important? How does this audience shape the content, tone, and style of the narrative? Do you think that the letter, or epistolary, form allows a narrator to relate details more intimately, or do you think that a specific audience (i.e., the recipient of the letter) can actually limit the narrator's revelations? If you have read *Portnoy's Complaint* by Philip Roth, you could compare Feinberg's narrative letter to Roth's narrator's address to his therapist.

Exploration: The video for this unit expressed the idea that identity is not a stable, fixed thing but rather a process. What does this mean? Consider this idea in relation to Jess's story. What are the steps of her identity process? Has she resolved her identity at the novel's end? Is it ever possible to resolve identity or does the process continue until death?

Exploration: Cultural theorist Marjorie Garber explains that a "category crisis" occurs when the borders between things often positioned as binary opposites—such as black and white, old and young, new and used—are revealed to be permeable. In *Stone Butch Blues*, Feinberg shows that the line between man and woman can be (and is) crossed. What other categories are in crisis in Feinberg's novel? Consider gender, sexuality, race, education level, class, and any other category by which people are identified and/or judged.

FEINBERG WEB ARCHIVE

[7419] Anonymous, Cover: *The Liberty Press* (1996), courtesy of The Liberty Press. Cover of a 1996 issue of *The Liberty Press*, a gay/lesbian newspaper. Headline reads, "Leslie Feinberg tops the bill." Feinberg's novel *Stone Butch Blues* works from the premise that writing can be a tool for social change.

[7422] Anonymous, *Leslie Feinberg*, photo (n.d.), courtesy of The Liberty Press. The protagonist of Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* struggles to find her identity in a culture that does not seem to have a place for her as a transgendered individual.

[7766] Chris Hampton, Newspaper article: "Leslie Feinberg a Powerful Presence at Lesbigays OK Awareness Week." *The Liberty Press*, May 1996 issue [Vol. 2 No. 9] (1996), courtesy of The Liberty Press, Wichita, Kansas. Feature article from a 1996 issue of *The Liberty Press*, a gay/lesbian newspaper, which also includes "a full report on anti-gay marriage activity in our capital." Leslie Feinberg, a journalist and activist, has sought to understand why so many in the United States feel hatred for those who do not fit neatly into gender categories.

[7947] Deirdre Griswold Strapp, *Leslie Feinberg Speaking at Madison Square Garden Theater as a Founder of Rainbow Flags for Mumia* (2000), courtesy of Deirdre Strapp. Leslie Feinberg has gained recognition as a writer and activist. This is a photograph of her speaking at a rally for Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther and radio journalist convicted in the shooting death of a police officer and who is now on death row.

[8985] Leslie Feinberg, Interview: "Search for Identity" (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg/CPB. Author Leslie Feinberg discusses identity as a process.

Judith Ortiz Cofer (b. 1952)

Judith Ortiz Cofer was born in Hormingueros, Puerto Rico, and was educated in the United States, primarily New Jersey. Her fiction incorporates elements of memoir as well as of the oral storytelling tradition that she learned, and that comforted her, while she was growing up in Puerto Rican communities. As a writer of fiction, poetry, and essays, Cofer has merged her Latin and Anglo experiences to express the dual

[2184] Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *The Great He-Goat (Witches Sabbath)* (c. 1823), courtesy of the Museo Nacional de Prado, Madrid.

identity engendered by living in two cultural spheres. In her work, she adapts for new readers the Spanish and classical myths that provided the foundation for the stories she heard as a child. For example, in "The Witch's Husband," Cofer uses a double-narration technique that allows us to share the perspectives of both the storyteller Abuela and her granddaughter. Cofer is adept at crafting fiction that honors the traditions and stories of the older generations while remaining sensitive to the post–women's liberation views of the younger generation.

Cofer also builds bridges between generations as a professor of English and creative writing at the University of Georgia: she teaches students about the importance of their ancestors' stories even as she guides them in creating their own. In addition, she regularly gives lectures on biculturalism in America and on the importance of encouraging diverse voices to contribute to American literature. Cofer's works include *Terms of Survival* (1987), *Reaching for the Mainland* (1987), *The Line of the Sun* (1989), *Silent Dancing* (1990), *The Latin Deli: Prose and Poetry* (1993), and *Woman in Front of the Sun: On Becoming a Writer* (2000).

TEACHING TIPS

■ You may want to start a discussion of "The Witch's Husband" by relating it to the oral tradition of Cofer's culture. Discuss how Abuela's story may be even more effective if spoken, and encourage students to read passages aloud.

■ Students will be curious about what Abuela ("Grandmother") might have done during her year in New York. While you may effectively entertain a few suppositions, this would be a good place to emphasize Abuela's role not just as a character but also as a *storyteller*. She decides to leave out these details for a reason. Why? Are they not important to the story?

COFER WEB ARCHIVE

[2184] Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *The Great He-Goat (Witches Sabbath)* (c. 1823), courtesy of the Museo Nacional de Prado, Madrid. Goya left several of his paintings unnamed. This painting is known variously as *El Gran Cabrón* (The Chief He-Goat), *Witches Meeting* (Imbert), *Sabbath Scene* (Sánchez Cantón), and *Witches' Sabbath* (Viñaza). A group of initiates gathers for a ritual led by the black figure in the left foreground.

[2230] Jan van de Velde, *The Sorceress* [engraving] (1626), courtesy of The New York Public Library, Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why does the narrator's family think she will be able to talk "sense" into her grandmother?

Comprehension: Why did Abuela go to New York for a year and what did she do there?

Comprehension: Why do you think the story is called "The Witch's Husband" and not, for example, "The Witch"? Is the story more about Abuela or her husband? Or is it actually about the narrator? Also, what does it mean to be a "witch"?

Context: Think about how Cofer uses storytelling as a memorial to earlier generations, as a means of remembering and honoring ancestors. How does Abuela's ability to tell a good story, including her knowledge of her audience's values, affect her granddaughter's impressions of old age?

Context: Compare this narrator's appreciation of her grandmother's

"folk wisdom" to Dee/Wangero's simultaneous disdain and reverence for her mother's way of life in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." You might also think about the way the homes, and setting more generally, function in a story, particularly Cofer's use of the hammock, Walker's use of the butter churn, and both authors' use of yards.

Context: Compare Abuela to the "big-boned," down-home woman in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." They are both earthy, sensual women, but in very different ways. They each fulfill some traditional gender roles and expectations but break others, and they each (as far as we know) expand their opportunities relatively privately, e.g., by wearing masculine clothes, attending secret witches' meetings, or taking an extended break from the family. Consider their decisions to act privately in relation to archive item [6181] ("When women become massively political, the revolution will have moved to a new level" poster). Could these women do more "good" for the women's movement if they were more public about their **feminism**? Why or why not?

Exploration: Compare Abuela's storytelling approach of keeping memories to the more methodical approach—the "art of memory"—used by the father in Li-Young Lee's poems, especially "This Room and Everything in It."

Exploration: Abuela's story ends, "And in time, the husband either began forgetting that he had seen her turn into a witch or believed that he had just dreamed it." How does this ending affect the story's meaning? Is his forgetting positive or negative? If he no longer recognizes her "powers" as real, does this mean he has lost his hard-earned wisdom?

Exploration: The narrator tells us that in Puerto Rico, a "good woman" is willing to martyr herself to the interests and needs of those around her—and no woman has been better in this way than Abuela, whose "life has been entirely devoted to others." Do you agree that this kind of self-sacrifice makes a woman "good"? Think about this definition in relation to the following passage from British novelist and essayist Virginia Woolf, who wrote that when she began her career, she had difficulty because she was haunted by a phantom that she called "the Angel of the House." The angel whispered, "My dear, you are a young woman. . . . Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure." Is this good advice? Consider why this way of thinking could be difficult for both Woolf and Abuela, who seem very different.

Exploration: Consider "The Witch's Husband" in relation to other stories about witches in American society, including Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (about the Salem witch trials). Do you think that stories like "The Witch's Husband" allow us to interpret witchcraft and "possession" as a form of resistance for women? In what sorts of societies might such forms of resistance be necessary? You might consult I. M. Lewis's *Ecstatic Religion*, which discusses how witchcraft, shamanism, and possession can enable women to resist.

York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Van de Velde was a seventeenth-century Dutch artist. Beginning with the introduction of tobacco to Europe in the 1500s, smoke began to appear in artwork to allegorize the five senses, most often taste, as well as the notion of fleeting time. This etching shows a shift both in perceptions of tobacco and in representations of evil. The scene was intended to expose the darker and more unnatural side of tobacco by placing tobacco pipes in the hands of goblins and feminine minions of the devil.

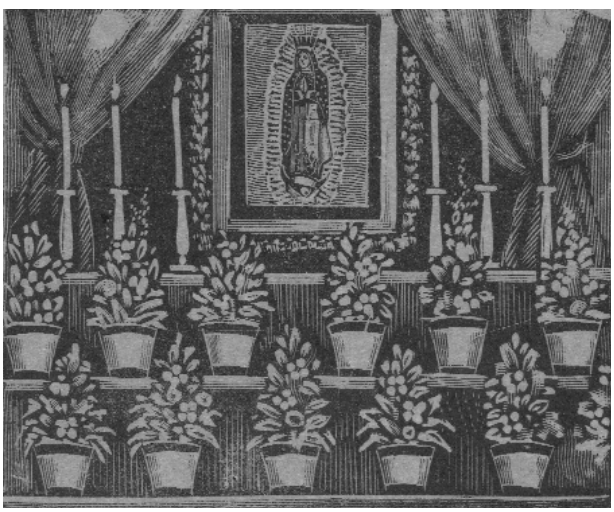
[2245] Alexandre-Marie Colin, *The Three Witches from Macbeth* (1827), courtesy of Sandor Korein. Shakespeare's influence on the popular American imagination has been profound. Paintings like this one resonate with the nineteenth-century interest in the occult and fear of what was seen by some as the supernatural power of women.

[6181] Peg Averill, *When Women Become Massively Political the Revolution Will Have Moved to a New Level . . .* (1976), courtesy of the Library of Congress [CN POS 6-U.S., no. 39 (C size) <P&P>]. Poster of a woman in whose flowing hair is pictured a setting sun and silhouettes of soldiers. The women's movement was closely allied to the peace movement. The National Organization for Women's 1966 statement of purpose began as follows: "We, men and women who hereby constitute ourselves as the National Organization for Women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders."

[8990] Greg Sarris, Interview: "Search for Identity" (2003), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg/CPB. Greg Sarris, author, professor, and Pomo Indian, discusses the task of integrating diverse cultures and viewpoints.

Sandra Cisneros (b. 1954)

Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago but spent most of her childhood and youth moving back and forth between Chicago and Mexico. By addressing themes of identity, poverty, and gender in lyrical and sensual language, she has become one of the nation's most well known and respected **Chicana** authors. Nonetheless, her vibrant style has not always been welcome, as she faced a battle with her San Antonio neighbors when she painted her historic King William District home purple. A *Houston Chronicle* article quoted the city commissioner as saying, "If you, because of your heritage, are allowed to paint your house purple, then we have no rules." Cisneros eventually agreed to paint her Victorian-era home in an approved, "authentic" color combination: pink with red trim.



[6394] José Guadalupe Posada, *Altar de la Virgen de Guadalupe* (1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [PGA-anegas, no. 127 (AA size)].

Like many of the writers in this unit, Cisneros uses fiction to point out how some Americans actively exclude or passively forget to include people unlike themselves when they define what it means to be American. Cisneros has stated that while she refuses to make concessions to Anglo readers, such as translating all Spanish language words in her texts into English, she nonetheless wants to open doors so that readers of any background can appreciate her stories and their implications for one's understanding of "Americanness."

By creating a voice and style uniquely her own, Cisneros tells stories that reflect her interests as well as those of her community. Cisneros's novel *The House on Mango Street* modifies stories that she heard throughout her life, especially those she witnessed firsthand while working as a counselor for inner-city high school children in Chicago. The novel's innovative style—it is a collection of short, poetically phrased vignettes—allows her to depict urban life in a unified way while representing the varied influences that shape the feminist consciousness of her main character, Esperanza.

Much of Cisneros's writing asks how women have been complicit in permitting the perpetuation of their own oppression. She writes frequently about sex and relationships between men and women, focusing on the dangers incumbent in many women's hyper-romanticized notions of sex, love, and marriage. If our girls play games in which they practice fighting over men, Cisneros seems to ask in "Barbie-Q," then why are we surprised when they grow up and make men the centers of their lives? It is impossible to separate the Chicana and feminist elements in Cisneros's work, and many readers believe that one of her greatest contributions has been to bring more attention to the needs of women of color, who have sometimes been overlooked by women's movements. Cisneros's works include two books of poetry, *My Wicked Wicked Ways* (1987) and *Loose Woman* (1994), and a collection of short stories, *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991).

TEACHING TIPS

■ Some students may have very fond memories of playing with Barbie dolls as children. This may make them both especially resistant and especially attracted to "Barbie-Q." Use your students' memories of childhood play to help steer conversation toward two ideas that Cisneros seems to be questioning: (1) Barbie dolls themselves as models for women, and (2) the sorts of modeling young children see that encourages them to play in certain ways, e.g., having their dolls fight over men.

■ Along the same lines, you might bring a Barbie doll to class (or ask students to bring one of their childhood Barbie dolls) to compare Barbie's physical dimensions with an actual woman's (some analysts have claimed that no real woman could exist with Barbie's dimensions). Also, you might note that in 1998, the Mattel toy company introduced new Barbie dolls, some of which had wider waists and hips, flatter chests, thinner lips, and flatter feet than the traditional Barbies. Why might the company have introduced these new dolls?

■ Ask your students why Cisneros might use stories about children to tackle very adult themes: same-sex desire, sexism, and racism. You might also want to discuss the challenges of writing from a child's perspective. Do your students think Cisneros does a good job of capturing children's "voices" through her child narrators? Why or why not?

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why does the narrator of "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn" want her skin to "get so dark it's blue where it bends like Lucy's"? Why does she like Lucy so much?

Comprehension: The narrator asks a series of questions in the final paragraph of "Barbie-Q." For whom does the narrator speak? Who is the audience of these questions? Is Cisneros directly challenging the reader?

Comprehension: In "Mericans," why does the narrator call her relative the "awful" grandmother?

Context: Compare the writing style and punctuation in "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn" to Diane Glancy's in "Jack Wilson." Why might these writers independently choose these similar styles? Or, why might they choose *not* to write with textbook grammar and punctuation?

Context: In "Barbie-Q," why do the children make their Barbies act in certain ways (e.g., fighting over a nonexistent man, the missing Ken doll) and wear certain clothes? If the girls are modeling behavior that they've witnessed, who are the models?

Context: In "Mericans," the grandmother and narrator visit a Catholic church, where the narrator describes icons that have survived attacks: "La Virgen de Guadalupe on the main altar because she's a big miracle, the crooked crucifix on a side altar because that's a little miracle." What does this statement mean? Compare these descriptions of the church and its altar (see archive item [6394]—"Altar de la Virgen de Guadalupe") to the picture. What are the most

CISNEROS WEB ARCHIVE

[6394] José Guadalupe Posada, *Altar de la Virgen de Guadalupe* (1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [PGA-anegas, no. 127 (AA size)]. This print, on fuschia ground-wood paper, shows an image of la Virgen de Guadalupe on an altar surrounded by potted plants and candles. In Sandra Cisneros's "Mericans," the narrator visits a Catholic church with her grandmother and describes the "big miracle" of La Virgen de Guadalupe.

[6502] Lorraine Louie, Cover: *The House on Mango Street* (1984), courtesy of Random House/Vintage Contemporaries Books. Sandra Cisneros spent her childhood moving with her parents and six brothers between Chicago and Mexico City. In her most widely read novel, *The House on Mango Street,* Cisneros draws on this background to explore the experience of growing up in Chicago's Mexican American community.

[6525] Wayne Alaniz Healy and David Rivas Botello, "La Familia" Mural (1977), courtesy of SPARC (Social and Public Art Resource Center). This mural shows a Chicano family standing in the center of a starburst, surrounded by images of life in Mexico and in the United States. Many Chicanos and Chicanas have struggled to understand their hybrid identity within the dominant white culture. Sandra Cisneros writes primarily about the experiences of Chicanas growing up in the United States.

[6528] Mario Torero, *We are NOT a minority!!* (1978), courtesy of SPARC (Social and Public Art Resource Center). Mural depicting a billboard. A young Chicano man points at the viewer in the typical "Uncle Sam" recruitment pose, with lettering that reads, "We are NOT a minority!!" Writers, including Gloria Anzaldúa and Sandra Cisneros, strive to give a voice to the Chicano/a experience.

[6638] Dana Tynan, *Sandra Cisneros After an Interview* (1991), courtesy of the Associated Press (AP), AP/Wide World Photos. Sandra Cisneros spent her childhood moving with her parents and six

brothers between Chicago and Mexico City. In her most widely read novel, *The House on Mango Street,* Cisneros draws on this background to explore the experience of growing up in Chicago's Mexican American community.

significant similarities and differences? Why have an altar in a home in addition to one in a church?

Exploration: In "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn," it seems like the narrator fantasizes about a woman-only utopia when she envies Lucy's all-girl family: "There ain't no boys here." What is appealing about Lucy's family community? Why does the narrator want to be one of the sisters? What does it mean to be sisters?

Exploration: "Barbie-Q" presents, in doll form, many different "types" of women by listing different Barbie dolls and outfits: "mean-eyed," "bubblehead," "Career Gal," "Sweet Dreams," "Bendable Legs." You can find other "types" by visiting the doll aisle in a toy store. Is Cisneros criticizing the makers of dolls such as Barbie or the culture that buys into these images of women? What is she saying about the importance of clothes in constructing identity?

Exploration: Are the girls in this story weak or crybabies? Do they go along with the boys' games so as not to be left out? Consider the comment, "I'd rather play flying feather dancers, but if I tell my brother this, he might not play with me at all." Why are the girls always the sidekicks in these games? Does Cisneros seem to blame the boys for imposing their games on the girls, or the girls for going along with the boys? Is she also critiquing gender conditioning in American society—are boys and girls "trained" to act a certain way?

Exploration: At the story's end, the children have become a spectacle—a tourist attraction for out-of-place visitors who want to take pictures as souvenirs. The tourist is surprised when she learns that the young Chicano children can speak English. Why does she think they are not Americans and cannot speak English? What is Cisneros saying about what it means to be an American? What does an American look like, sound like, *do*? Consider these questions in relation to archive items [6525] (*La Familia* mural) and [6528] (*We Are Not a Minority* mural).

Suggested Author Pairings

SANDRA CISNEROS AND TONI CADE BAMBARA

Ask students to compare the children's ideas about womanhood in Cisneros's short stories, especially "Barbie-Q," to Sweet Pea's adult perspective in Bambara's "Medley." While the stories do not have a one-to-one correspondence, they can help you shape a discussion about the development of two authors' feminist thinking in America. The children seem to believe that women are defined by their clothing and that any man—even a nonexistent "idea" of a man, like the absent Ken doll—are worth fighting over. But Sweet Pea resists such ideas and scoffs at the men who attempt to fight over her. Sweet Pea probably would not identify herself as a feminist, but her instinct is to take care of herself and her child before the man in her life (though you might want to discuss her lingering worries about Larry's ability to survive alone). These characters could help you define feminism for

many students who are still wary of the label "feminist." Ask students to identify and discuss Sweet Pea's statements of independence and self-determination.

THOMAS PYNCHON, MAXINE HONG KINGSTON, AND DAVID MAMET

While the texts by these writers are quite dissimilar in many ways, you could teach students how to make connections by focusing on the importance of conversation in each of them. Begin by reading Pynchon's "Entropy," and discuss Saul's ideas about "communication theory" (including "noise" and "leakage"). Then, ask your students to use Saul's theory to analyze the conversation between Nanci Lee and Wittman Ah Sing in *Tripmaster Monkey* and virtually any snatch of dialogue in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Your students may want to discuss why they agree or disagree with the theory. This would also be a good opportunity to address genre questions: they can compare how dialogue functions in prose as opposed to drama, and compare actual "snatches" of conversation from the texts. How do different characters speak? Are they recognizable by their speech patterns: the words they choose, the examples they use, the length of their sentences?

JUDITH ORTIZ COFER, DIANE GLANCY, AND ALICE WALKER

With "The Witch's Husband," "Polar Breath," and "Everyday Use," you can discuss how similar characters function in different texts. Ask your students to compare Cofer's Abuela, Glancy's old woman, and Walker's mother. How are they similar and different? You could discuss their feminist sensibilities, including their relative awareness, or lack thereof, about feminism. Ask the question: does a woman have to call herself a feminist to be one? What does it mean to be a feminist? These stories also offer a good opportunity to discuss how the characters address aging and marriage. Why do the older women seem more confident about themselves? Think about how Abuela and Walker's mother deal with their young female relatives. In addition, for genre discussions, it would be useful to address the importance of storytelling in each culture. How do these authors (particularly Cofer and Glancy) mimic the oral tradition in their written stories? How do their uses of oral tradition differ?

SANDRA CISNEROS AND MAXINE HONG KINGSTON

Use "Mericans" and *Tripmaster Monkey* to discuss how these texts addresses urban life for minorities. Compare Cisneros's and Kingston's depictions of whites as seen by the Chicano children and Wittman Ah Sing. What tensions are apparent within the "city within a city" in each text? You might discuss the child's rejection of the "awful grandmother" and Wittman's derogatory comments about "F.O.B." Chinese immigrants. Also, closely consider the authors' descriptions of physi-

cal places. Ask students if they can picture these communities based only on the writers' word-paintings. Ask students to use phrases from the texts to describe the smells, sights, sounds, tastes, and textures of these communities.

CORE CONTEXTS

Escaping Their Cages: Performance Artists in the Twentieth Century

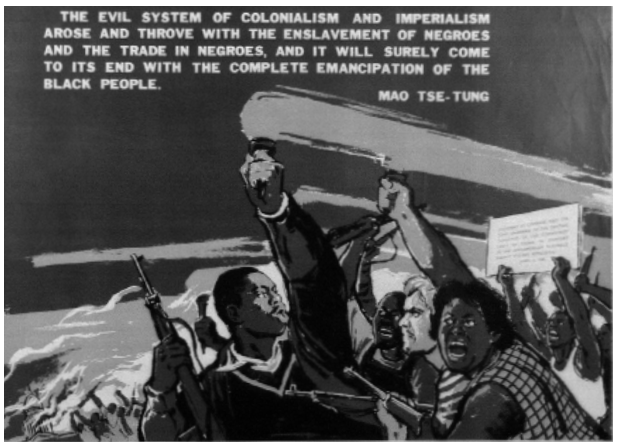
Imagine that you arrive for a concert, only to see all of the musicians do, well, nothing—no singing, no playing, no dancing. Would you feel you had been cheated out of a show, or would you feel invigorated by the concert's daring "newness"? Many performance artists would hope for the latter. Unrestricted by the bounds of traditional materials and freed from the need for museum space to display their work, performance artists often turn to their own bodies and environments to create art that many observers find both innovative and unsettling. In many cases, artists seek to discomfit viewers, forcing them to confront not only visual images but also ideas, ideologies, and people that might otherwise remain unacknowledged or, in a very real sense, invisible in the mainstream.

Beginning with the earliest performance artists, such as experimental musician John Cage (1912–1992), one of performance art's important goals has been to disrupt societal apathy by demanding audience participation in the performance. Cage used sounds made by machines, nature, people, found objects such as bottles, and virtually anything else he could locate, to produce experimental music that many listeners called "noise." He wanted his listeners to participate in the composition by finding the music within the noises. At times he went even further, once conducting a piece in which none of the members of his orchestra ever lifted their instruments—it was the audience's responsibility to fill in the silence with their own music. We can see the musicians in Thomas Pynchon's "Entropy" working out this theory for themselves. Duke, for instance, decides to write a song with "no piano, man. No guitar. Or accordion. . . . Nothing to listen to. . . ." Meatball, horrified, realizes that "the next logical step" is, in Duke's words, "to think everything." When Meatball protests, Duke replies that "there are a few bugs to work out," but that Meatball and, presumably, all other naysayers, will "catch on." Like Duke, performance artists are not, for the most part, unaware of potential resistance from their audiences but, like all revolutionaries, they hope that their new ideas eventually will prevail.

[6123] John Whitworth, *Protest for Legislature to Improve Conditions* (1969), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.

Alongside works that exist primarily to rattle the complacency of viewers, other performance art pieces exist independent of any audi-

ence at all or with ephemeral audiences who may not even realize that they have participated in or witnessed a performance. Wittman Ah Sing, in Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey*, reads aloud from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* on a public bus in San Francisco. Kingston's narrative provides the excerpts that Wittman reads aloud so that readers, too, can "witness" his performance. Wittman does not ask for applause or recognition: he complacently observes that "some of those present on the Muni were looking at [him], some had closed their eyes, some looked out the window, everyone perhaps listening." It is enough, then, that "none of the passengers was telling Wittman to cool it." He is pleased simply because they allowed him to continue reading. Sometimes, then, tolerance can be defined simply as allowing others to exist. Ah Sing's "performance" recalls real-life performances by other writers and poets, such as AIDS sufferer and activist Essex Hemphill in the poetry that he performs in Marlon Riggs's poignant and controversial film *Tongues Untied* (1989).



[7234] Anonymous, *The Evil System of Colonialism and Imperialism . . .* (c. 1970), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-995].

Some audience-free performance art, however, argues that such passive acceptance from the audience (i.e., society), while sometimes freeing, also can indicate blindness or apathy. In 1969, New York City performance artist Vito Acconci (b. 1940) enacted a "private" performance that consisted of his following random, unaware pedestrians through the streets of New York until they entered buildings, at which point he chose new "leaders" to follow. If no one knew about his journey, what could this performance possibly accomplish? Acconci saw himself as a "marginal presence . . . tying in to ongoing situations," and, as such, he demonstrated through his art that people and, by extension, society may be involved in revolutionary acts even without their own knowledge, much less their permission. While Acconci's performance itself was harmless, it also reminds us that people, preoccupied by the day-to-day comings and goings of life, could also be blithely complicit in allowing reprehensible acts or ideas to continue unabated.

Perhaps most significantly, then, performance art in the United States has been used by artists from disenfranchised or minority groups, including women, ethnic and racial minorities, and sexual minorities, to combat such apathy as well as prejudice and injustice. Frustrated by their absence or misrepresentation in American history textbooks and mainstream popular culture, these artists have created works to counter the history books and to make their presence and perspectives known. In a "living diorama" titled "Two Undiscovered Amerindians" (1992–94), which they performed during national celebrations of Columbus's arrival in the New World, Chicano performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña (b. 1955) and Cuban American performance artist Coco Fusco (b. 1960) dressed in grass skirts, painted their faces, wore tribal headdresses, and locked themselves inside a cage. They mocked the idea that the continent had not been

discovered until Columbus arrived, exposed the specific nineteenth-century practice of "caging" indigenous peoples for display, and protested "cages" such as discrimination and stereotypes that still exist. Karen Finley (b. 1956) and Laurie Anderson (b. 1947) also have provided commentaries on myriad social issues, and as two of the most influential feminist performance artists, they frequently offer scathing critiques of society's continued marginalization of women. Their different methods highlight the flexibility of performance art: it bends to fit the talents of its various performers. Finley has created installation pieces and delivered monologues about pornography, sexual excess, and sexual repression and deprivation. Anderson, on the other hand, has combined autobiography with architecture, photography, and music. Her "Object, Objection, Objectivity" (1973) collects her photographs of men who insulted her with unwanted sexual comments.

In addition to addressing societal inequalities, performance artists also confront specific issues and causes. Before becoming famous as Beatle John Lennon's wife, Yoko Ono (b. 1933) was already well known in performance art circles in the early 1960s for her feminist, avant-garde perspective and for the art shows that she held in her downtown New York City loft, starting in 1961. Her influence on Lennon increased the visibility of performance art in popular culture, as seen in his "Revolution 9" (from the Beatles' 1968 *White Album*), which was inspired by John Cage's music and composed entirely of preexisting sounds. Lennon's mainstream fame allowed their 1969 weeklong honeymoon bed-in for world peace to become one of the world's most widely seen performance art events. Over thirty years later, recordings of this anti–Vietnam War protest can be purchased on video, and Lennon's song "The Ballad of John and Yoko" (1969) immortalizes their position: "The news people said / 'Hey, what you doin' in bed?' / I said, 'We're only tryin' to get us some peace.'" By subverting the public's expectations and enduring widespread ridicule, Ono and Lennon successfully used performance art to bring visibility and support to a cause in which they believed.

Some observers argue that they and subsequent performance artists have been *too* successful and that American culture has changed so much that performance art has lost its shock value and "strangeness." But artists continue to perform, believing that because of its flexibility and fluidity, performance art by definition can never be irrelevant; it is, by its very nature, not only innovative but also politically, socially, and culturally revolutionary.

"ESCAPING THEIR CAGES" WEB ARCHIVE

[3043] John A. Gentry, LCpl, *Vietnam . . . Private First Class Joseph Big Medicine Jr., a Cheyenne Indian, Writes a Letter to His Family in the United States* (1969), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. Soldier from Company G, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, on a clear, search and destroy mission near An Hoa. U.S. military involvement in Vietnam encouraged antiwar protest and distrust of the government.

[6123] John Whitworth, *Protest for Legislature to Improve Conditions* (1969), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. Men and women, both Hispanic and white, set the stage for a protest with tents, furniture, and other household items near the Colorado Capitol Building in Denver. A placard reads, "Denver Witnesses for Human Dignity."

[6182] Ivy Bottin, *Woman Power* (1965), courtesy of the Library of Congress [POS 6-U.S., no. 548 (C size) <P&P>]. The women's movement sought to change the dominant perception that all women could be satisfied by homemaking. Many feminists argued that liberation must begin at home, where men should share domestic chores.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is performance art? Why does it continue to be appealing as an alternative to more traditional forms of art?

Comprehension: How have Karen Finley and Laurie Anderson used performance art to bring visibility to feminism? Relate their performances to the feminist posters [6182] (*Woman Power* poster) and [6183] (*Feminism Lives!* poster).

Context: Compare John Cage's theory of noise and music to the theory

of noise and communication set forth by Thomas Pynchon in "Entropy" (1960). How can we differentiate music, or meaning, from surrounding "noise" and "leakage"? Also consider Duke, Meatball, and Pac's conversation about "think[ing] everything."

Context: In Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* (1989), Wittman Ah Sing performs live readings of Rilke while riding public transportation. What do these readings accomplish? The audience is basically passive: does this indicate that they somehow accept the readings or just that they're apathetic? If the audience would react violently, would the performance be more successful or effective?

Exploration: Because so much of life is made up of various kinds of performance, how can we determine which performances are "art"? Does a categorization depend on the author's intention? The audience's reaction? Other factors?

Exploration: What do you think Vito Acconci was trying to accomplish with his virtually invisible performance? To find out, follow in his footsteps for an afternoon or even just ten minutes. What was your experience like? Did you perceive your environment and those around you differently?

Exploration: The growth of technology, including photo-imaging software, increasingly sophisticated recording equipment, and the Internet, has created new sites of experimentation for technologically savvy artists who "perform" by using computers to manipulate images, visual space, and text. Do you think performance art and computers are a good match? Why might a performance artist turn to the Internet, for example, to display his/her work? And is it really "performance" if it's on the computer?

Exploration: As performance art has become more accepted and seemingly a part of the mainstream, some might argue that it has concurrently become less shocking and, thus, less effective at delivering social messages. What happens when a fringe movement enters the mainstream? What do you think it loses and gains in the process?

Exploration: Performance art tends to stir up a lot of controversy, as its artists and subjects often push the limits of "acceptable" mainstream behavior. Specific works of performance art or exhibitions often are held up as ridiculous by people who want to discontinue government funding for the arts. Why do you think performance art may be controversial? Do you think that the government should limit its funding of artists to "traditional" art forms? If so, how would you define traditional? If not, why not? How should the government decide which artists it funds?

Memorials: The Art of Memory

Houses can be robbed, physical bodies assaulted, and rights taken away, but memory, we like to think, is inviolable. We are formed and defined by what and how we remember, and when our memories are called into question, so too are our identities as individuals. For exam-

[6183] Anonymous, *Feminism Lives!* (c. 1973), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Poster declaring "Feminism Lives!" in pink, above a black-and-white photograph of women fighting for suffrage. In the 1960s, a second wave of feminist activism washed over the United States, spearheaded by such figures as Betty Friedan, whose 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* created solidarity among the many women who were dissatisfied with the role society had mapped out for them.

[6525] Wayne Alaniz Healy and David Rivas Botello, "La Familia" Mural (1977), courtesy of SPARC (Social and Public Art Resource Center). This mural shows a Chicano family standing in the center of a starburst, surrounded by images of life in Mexico and in the United States. Many Chicanos and Chicanas have struggled to understand their hybrid identity within the dominant white culture. Sandra Cisneros writes primarily about the experiences of Chicanas growing up in the United States.

[7234] Anonymous, *The Evil System of Colonialism and Imperialism . . .* (c. 1970), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-995]. This poster shows the power of action and demonstration for dispossessed, marginalized, and persecuted peoples. Its quotation from Mao reads, "The evil system of colonialism and imperialism arose and throve with the enslavement of Negroes and the trade in Negroes, and it will surely come to its end with the complete emancipation of the Black people." Questions of action, audience, apathy, politics, and affect permeate performance art.

[8619] Various, *Don't Mourn, Organize: SDS Guide to Community Organizing* (1968), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries. Students for a Democratic Society's *Guide to Community Organizing*. Some of the articles in this guide address organization and resistance to the war beyond draft dodging, the original focus of SDS actions. One discusses responses of poor whites to black rebellion and violence during the ghetto uprisings in the summer of 1967.

[9161] Historic American Buildings Survey, *View of the Memorial from the Southwest End—Vietnam Veterans Memorial* ([1982] 1996), courtesy of the Library of Congress [HABS, DC, WASH, 643-10].

ple, consider how in Toni Morrison's "Recitatif," Twyla is never more distressed than when she realizes that for years she may have been misremembering important events in her life. To guard against such potentially disturbing lapses in memory, the speaker in Chinese American poet Li-Young Lee's "This Room and Everything in It" (1990) attempts to perfect his father's "art of memory." The speaker uses this method both to pay tribute to his father and to mentally file his memories so that he can prepare for "certain hard days ahead, / when I'll need what I know so clearly this moment." His very personal, emotionally invested process reflects how many people think memory works: it is individual and private, and it allows us to keep our senses of self intact even in difficult times.

But what about collective memory? Some American sites, such as Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home in Virginia, and Graceland, Elvis Presley's home in Tennessee, serve purposes that are as diverse as the people who visit them. As centers of learning, recreation, and nostalgia, these sites are more than just houses previously occupied by the famous: they are memorial grounds for national and cultural icons. When a nation or group of people formally recognizes an event, person, or idea, the memorialized subject—be it a person, a house, or a monument—becomes part of the nation's "official memory." America is crowded with these memorials, including the Lincoln Memorial, tombs of unknown soldiers, Mount Rushmore, John F. Kennedy's gravesite, and still-preserved Revolutionary War and Civil War battlegrounds. In general, these memorials were built not only to celebrate the dead but also to celebrate the supposedly righteous causes for which they died and to honor the nation.

But in more recent years, memorials have been built that honor the dead without necessarily honoring the cause of death. One of the most often-visited, haunting, and cherished national monuments is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Maya Lin, the architect and sculptor who designed the memorial, knew that she needed to recognize the deep mourning and unhealed wounds of surviving loved ones, Vietnam veterans, and a nation divided by an unpopular war. Unlike World War II memorials, for example, which celebrated America's victory and righteous involvement in the battle as well as its fallen soldiers, Lin had to honor the sacrifices of the dead without celebrating the war itself. Her design solved this dilemma by emphasizing the names of the more than 56,000 Americans who died during the war. Since its dedication in 1982, the memorial's somber black granite surface has been perpetually marked by splashes of color—the flowers, photographs, letters, and tokens left behind by the war's survivors, other veterans, loved ones of the dead, and tourists including schoolchildren, families, and international visitors. This monument serves as a public and private mourning wall, a site of convergence for the shared regret and deeply private grief of a nation and its citizens.

Sometimes, artists and communities create memorials as historical correctives, to celebrate, as mural artist Judith Baca put it in a *New York Times* interview, "people who were excluded from history." These memorials hope to remind the public that while the country has

moved toward greater diversity and equality for all of its people, there is still work to be done. To pay tribute to the efforts of Chicano rights activists César Chavez and Corky Gonzalez, Baca incorporated their images into "La Memoria de Nuestra Tierra," a mural located in Denver's International Airport [6710]. The nation has not officially memorialized Chavez and Gonzalez, who practiced civil disobedience to fight for Chicano and farmworker rights in the 1960s, but since its installation in 1999, Baca's painting has increased public awareness of the still-ongoing fight for Chicano rights in America.

The AIDS quilt, first unveiled in 1987, is another memorial that educates while it recalls the past. The quilt is, in many ways, the quintessential postmodern memorial: its location is not fixed, its content and dimensions are constantly shifting, and its myriad panels break down stereotypes about AIDS by displaying its victims—through photographs, letters, and personal items—as individuals with families, dreams, and distinct identities. The AIDS quilt is also inherently democratic; it is continually added to and changed "by the people" when each victim's loved ones contribute their 12-foot-square panels, many of which use collage techniques to tell stories about the victims' lives. Though the quilt has a permanent home in Atlanta, Georgia, sections of panels can be displayed simultaneously at different locations throughout the country. In fact, at nearly 50 square miles and 50 tons, it is the world's largest work of community folk art, and it would be nearly impossible for any one venue to display the entire piece. Its form, then, serves its function: like AIDS itself, the quilt is almost too large to fathom, and it grows along with the number of people lost to the disease. As a highly personal, portable, and emotionally affective memorial, the quilt is, in its founder Cleve Jones's words, "a silent, stunning display that helps heal, educate, and inspire."

It is important to remember that memorials need not be monuments or tangible objects: literature, music, and dance, for instance, can also be used to memorialize cultural stories, traditions, and values. In *Woman Hollering Creek* and "Mericans," Sandra Cisneros memorializes the Chicano practice of praying to the Virgin of Guadalupe for healing. Alice Walker memorializes the traditional African American rural home in "Everyday Use" by carefully describing its features: the yard, the butter churn, and the quilts. In a sense, every reader of the story "visits" this memorial. In the absence of official memorials, writers such as Cisneros and Walker, along with lobbyists, activists, and other citizens, remind us daily of past heroes and horrors and call our attention to important social issues. People who wear red ribbons for AIDS victims or pink ribbons for breast cancer victims; Chicano families that build altars to Catholic saints in their homes; bereaved survivors who preserve rooms as shrines to lost loved ones: these people all practice memorializing in their everyday lives.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why did Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial have to be different from memorials to previous wars?

[7974] Janjapp Dekker, *Sandra Cisneros with Virgen de Guadalupe Boots* (n.d.), courtesy of *El Andar Magazine*.

"MEMORIALS" WEB ARCHIVE

[2161] Eero Saarinen, *Saarinen's Conceptual Drawing of the Gateway Arch* (1948), courtesy of the National Park Service, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. The Gateway Arch was built to commemorate the westward expansion of the United States and to inspire like-minded ambition. Just below the arch sits the courthouse where the Dredd Scott decision declared that slaves were not human, a stark reminder of the costs of America's growth.
[6710] Judith F. Baca, *La Memoria de Nuestra Tierra* (2000), courtesy of the Social and Public Art Resource Center, © Judith F. Baca, La Memoria de Nuestra Tierra: Colorado, 2000. Judith Baca is an acclaimed muralist who believes that art can be a forum for social dialogue, as well as a tool for social change. In this sense, she shares much with Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Helena Maria Viramontes and builds on the work of Mexican muralist Diego Rivera.
[7163] Esther Bubley, *Inside the Lincoln Memorial* (1943), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs

Division [LC-USW3-040346-D]. After Lincoln's assassination, his image became iconic in the North and among African Americans, appearing in ceremonies; popular songs and prints; statuary, including his templelike memorial; and poetry such as Whitman's "Oh Captain! My Captain!" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

[7974] Janjapp Dekker, *Sandra Cisneros with Virgen de Guadalupe Boots* (n.d.), courtesy of *El Andar* magazine. Sandra Cisneros spent her childhood moving with her parents and six brothers between Chicago and Mexico City. Here we see her wearing boots bearing images of La Virgen de Guadalupe, a vision of the Virgin Mary that appeared to an Indian convert in the sixteenth century. Cisneros writes about La Virgen in "Guadalupe the Sex Goddess" and "Little Miracles, Kept Promises." Cisneros currently resides in San Antonio, Texas.

[9161] Historic American Buildings Survey, *View of the Memorial from the Southwest End—Vietnam Veterans Memorial* ([1982] 1996), courtesy of the Library of Congress [HABS, DC,WASH,643-10]. The design specifications for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial said that the work must "make no political statement regarding the war and its conduct" and that it must include the name of each of the 57,661 Americans who died in the conflict. Maya Lin's winning design was controversial, but the then-twenty-one-year-old Yale architectural student persevered in seeing it through to completion. Viewed within the tradition of land art, the memorial makes a sharp cut into the sloping land, with a gravestone-like surface of polished granite that literally reflects viewers back into the open wound through which they walk.

[9164] Historic American Buildings Survey, *Panels 37E and 38E—Vietnam Veterans Memorial* ([1982] 1996), courtesy of the Library of Congress [HABS, DC,WASH,643-70]. Thousands of veterans, the families and friends of those who died in the Vietnam War, and visitors to Washington, D.C., come to the memorial each year to pay tribute. Over 56,000 Americans died in the war, and they are all named on the panels of the monument.

Comprehension: How is the AIDS quilt a postmodern memorial?

Comprehension: How can memorials be both public and private?

Context: Read the "Collage" context in this unit and analyze the AIDS quilt as a collaborative collage. Consider its form as well as its function. Relate the quilt's message to the messages of Romare Bearden's collages and to urban graffiti collages.

Context: Some writers compose elegies, or mournful poems, to remember the dead. The stories themselves, as well as their subjects, can also be "memorials" to previous generations. Analyze the writing styles and themes in Judith Ortiz Cofer's "The Witch's Husband," Diane Glancy's "Jack Wilson" and "Polar Breath," and Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." How do the writers' styles serve as memorials to the traditions of the authors' cultures (including oral tradition)?

Context: Consider the quilts in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" as memorials to the family's ancestors. Do you think it is more appropriate to pay tribute to the grandmother's way of life by using the quilt, as Maggie would do, or by preserving and displaying it, as Dee/Wangero would do? Consider Dee/Wangero's comments about heritage.

Exploration: The AIDS quilt is a testimony to both the personal diversity of individual victims, as well as to the unfathomable reach and effect of the virus on modern humanity. The quilt is often displayed in parts at different locations around the world. The AIDS Memorial Quilt organization, which manages these appearances, has also made a vast Web site (www.aidsquilt.org) that includes a database of the individual panels. How is this site a part of the memorial? What are some of the positive and negative features of the site? How does the Internet affect the way we think about the possibilities of time and space as it relates to memory, testimony, and memorial?

Exploration: Research another national memorial, such as John F. Kennedy's gravesite, the National Holocaust Museum, the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, or the St. Louis Arch. What does the memorial encourage us to remember? What is its most important message? Also consider researching the debates about constructing a memorial to the African Americans who were legally enslaved for decades in the United States. What political issues are at stake? What would such a memorial signify? Could the absence of such a memorial demonstrate a lack of national healing—could this void itself be an abstract memorial to the struggles perpetuated by the legacy of slavery?

Exploration: In Toni Morrison's Nobel and Pulitzer Prize–winning novel *Beloved* (1987), the character Sethe imagines that some places and events are so powerful that they never really go away. She says, "Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. . . . If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my memory, but out there, in the world. . . . If you go there—you who never was there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you."

What do you think Sethe means? Do you agree that some events "memorialize" themselves by lingering in the air, like smoke after a fire? Have you ever experienced anything like what Sethe is describing here?

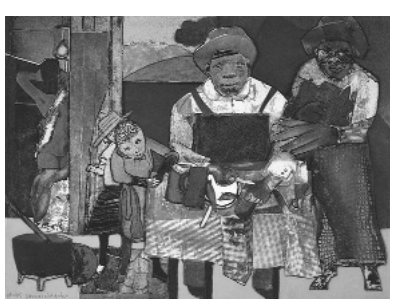
Exploration: Some cultural scholars have argued that memorials serve to replace the dead with an object and thereby help the living move past their melancholia. Do you think memorials are more "about" remembering the dead or comforting the living? If they are about the living, do you think that memorials do, indeed, help us to "move past" melancholia, or do they simply prolong it by providing concrete (sometimes *literally* concrete) reminders?

Exploration: While more memorials are built across the nation every year, some people believe that Americans have a tendency to overmemorialize. For example, it took a surprising amount of effort to build a World War II memorial on the Washington Mall in Washington, D.C., and late-night comedians regularly joke about the proliferation of commemorative "days." Do you think that Americans tend to memorialize too much, too soon? If so, why? What sort of response (if any) would you find more appropriate, and why?

Collage: Putting the Pieces Together

When young children cut pictures out of magazines and glue them haphazardly to poster board, they probably do not realize that their projects grow out of an artistic movement invested in an aesthetic of social change. Like performance art, assembly and collage have allowed artists to explore the ways in which individuals and communities negotiate radical societal changes. To create assembly pieces, which are usually three-dimensional, artists combine preexisting elements (e.g., furniture, garbage, food) to form new pieces. In the final "assemblies," the individual elements are usually recognizable, yet have been recontextualized to communicate new meaning. Collage uses similar techniques but in two dimensions. The artist's primary role is to "see" differently: he or she must recognize how unexpected combinations might work to reveal new perspectives on important issues. Collage, then, is a distinctly postmodern art form in that it allows its artists to transcend conventions and represent reality as shifting rather than stable.

One collage master, African American artist Romare Bearden (1914–1988), was a cubist early in his career but had no formal artistic training. He brilliantly nuanced the collage form to represent the lives of African Americans in the twentieth century, confronting stereotypes during the civil rights movement by representing the complexities of the African American experience. While referencing the works of artists such as Picasso, he mixed genres (primarily painting and photography) and staked out a completely new African American artistic tradition by combining the imagery of two traditional African American imaginary homes: the rural South and the urban North (partic-



[6714] Romare Bearden, *The Family* (1976), courtesy of the Romare Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

ularly Harlem). His works profoundly affected their viewers, many of whom found that his collages represented African American life even more accurately than representational photographs.

In the years Bearden was painting, depictions of African Americans in the mainstream media frequently focused on the hardships of their daily lives, including poor education, violence at home and on the streets, and meager living conditions. Even those with the best intentions often saw African Americans as lacking basic necessities and skills. While Bearden did not ignore such difficulties in his art, he often chose to celebrate the unique, vibrant contributions of African Americans to broader currents of U.S. culture and society. His technique perhaps can best be understood in relation to another image of African American life in the mid-twentieth century. The photograph "Two Negro Houses" (1958) [7030] shows two Washington, D.C., houses in which African American families lived during the 1950s. The houses look old, broken down, and even premodern (the girl stands in front of an old-fashioned water well), emphasizing what these families lacked: proper housing, water, sanitation, and modern amenities. Bearden's paintings, however, consist of multiple overlapping images and focus on what black Americans *had*. For example, in "The Family" (1976) [6714] and "Playtime—Inner City" (1976) [6717], Bearden uses vibrant colors, and his images evoke the joys of music, family attachments, and play within African American communities. Significantly, his characters confront the viewer by staring directly out from the canvas: these are faces that show pride and vitality, not hopelessness.

Like Bearden, writers use collage techniques to enhance readers' perceptions of American life. In "Recitatif," Toni Morrison's narration jumps back and forth in time as her main characters' lives intersect over many years. Just as Bearden leaves it to the viewer to decipher many details in his crowded paintings, Morrison never identifies the races of her main characters except to clarify that one is white and one is black. This information gap forces readers into the uncomfortable position of confronting their own stereotypes as they attempt to determine the race of each character. By overlapping different characters' versions of shared history, Morrison shows what can happen when two people's diverging memories of the same event bump up against each other. When Roberta and Twyla discover that they have startlingly different memories of an important event in their childhood, Twyla asks, "I wouldn't forget a thing like that. Would I?" Her uncertainty points to the story's theme—the insecurity and instability of memory—that is also conveyed formally via narrative collage.

Similarly, Thomas Pynchon's style in "Entropy" also may cause discomfort for some readers, as the author zigzags between two narratives that occur simultaneously in the upstairs and downstairs apartments of the same house. It may seem that he has randomly cut and pasted two stories together, but close reading reveals that his placement of the textual elements is just as deliberate as Bearden's placement of images in his works. The effect is the same in literature as in visual art: the audience is forced to consider two seemingly unrelated

images simultaneously. Thus, comments made by downstairs characters can help the reader to better understand upstairs characters, and vice versa.

Mainstream culture also offers numerous examples of collage in action. One of the most familiar forms of pop-culture collage is usually illegal: for years, urban graffiti artists have used spray paint to decorate buildings, benches, buses and trains, and other public areas. Often, artists paint new images adjacent to or even on top of previous images, sometimes obliterating previous pictures, thus creating "collaborative" collages that change as the communities change. Sometimes called "train-bombing" by its New York City subway practitioners, this art form allows artists, working quickly to avoid detection by authorities, to use relatively inexpensive materials on the seemingly limitless canvas of urban objects.

While graffiti artists have been active for decades, in recent years perhaps the most visible—or, rather, audible—form of popular collage has been the "sampling" practiced by hip-hop musicians. By inserting samples, or short "quotes," from other musicians' songs into their own compositions, musicians pay tribute to earlier musical styles while updating them for a new generation of listeners. Sampling produces effects in music similar to those of collage in visual art and literature: it unites ostensibly different (both racially and sonically) musical forms. For example, Puff Daddy (now P. Diddy) fused 1990s rap with 1970s hard rock when he sampled Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" in his 1998 song "Come With Me," which he performed on TV's *Saturday Night Live* with Zeppelin's Jimmy Page on guitar. Like artists such as Romare Bearden and writers who use collage-type layering in their narratives, hip-hop artists use "collage" in their music to build bridges between themselves and past masters, to show off their skills, and to express the diversity and energy of their communities.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is collage? How is this art form different from assembly?

Comprehension: What does it mean to discuss reality as "shifting" rather than "stable"?

Comprehension: How have authors adapted collage techniques to their literature?

Context: In his paintings, Romaré Bearden attempted to portray African American communities from the "inside." Compare his representations to those in Toni Cade Bambara's "Medley," in which she also provides an insider's view of a predominantly black community. Consider her descriptions of her home, the nightclub, and the gambler's home.

Context: In Diane Glancy's "Polar Breath," the old woman's death scene could be read as a collage: she sees "her husband in his icehouse fishing in winter" while "inside her head, birds flew from the wall" and "up the road, the church steeple hung like a telephone

"COLLAGE" WEB ARCHIVE

[6513] Pablo Picasso, *A 1912 List, Written by Pablo Picasso, of European Artists to be Included in the Armory Show of 1913* (1912), courtesy of Walt Kuhn Family Papers and Armory Show Records 1882–1966, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Handwritten list of artists to be included in the Armory Show. Modernist writers and visual artists, including Dos Passos, Picasso, and Braque, used combinations of disparate pieces to create a whole image and message.

[6714] Romare Bearden, *The Family* (1976), courtesy of the Romare Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Romare Bearden gained international recognition for the powerful visual metaphors and probing analysis of African American heritage in his many collages, photomontages, watercolors, and prints. He was a member of the Harlem Artists Guild and had his first solo exhibition in 1940 at the age of twenty-nine. He had many equally distinguished friends, such as James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Albert Murray.

[6715] Romare Bearden, *The Return of Ulysses* (1976), courtesy of the Romare Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Romare Bearden's painting and collages distinguished him within the twentieth-century African American aesthetic tradition. Derek Walcott's poem *Omeros* is a Caribbean retelling of the Odysseus (Ulysses) myth. Bearden often drew on his past in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, for his powerful images.

[7030] Anonymous, *These Two Houses Were Among the Structures in Washington, D.C. . . .* (1958), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-124134]. These two Washington, D.C., houses were classed as "good enough" for occupancy by African Americans until they were demolished so that a housing project could be built in their place. In the foreground a young girl stands near an old wooden well.

pole pulled crooked by its wires after an ice storm." How does collage help Glancy to portray her character's death? Do you think the technique is effective?

Exploration: Some critics claim that musicians who use sampling are actually plagiarizing other artists' work. How do we distinguish between artistic sampling and criminal plagiarizing? Is a work of art that incorporates sampling any less original than works of art that draw their inspiration from less obvious sources?

Exploration: Why do you think graffiti is more appealing to some urban artists than other art forms, such as traditional painting or sculpture?

Exploration: Many Americans frequently use collage techniques, from schoolchildren completing class art projects to adults creating scrapbooks that contain collages of photographs, letters, souvenirs, and other personally meaningful items. Scrapbooking in particular has become a national phenomenon of sorts, with entire companies and stores devoted to providing tips and selling materials. Why do you think people have so readily adopted collage techniques to memorialize their personal histories? Are collages such as family scrapbooks "art"?

EXTENDED CONTEXTS

Gay and Lesbian Identities in Contemporary American Writing

[8171] Anonymous, *Gays Kissing* (n.d.), courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

In the cultures of the West, the literary arts have been energized by a gay presence for as long as there have been arts at all. Over the course of American cultural history, however, that presence, and its importance, have not always been recognized and understood. In the American Renaissance, Walt Whitman stands out as a powerful representative of a gay identity and poetic voice, but in the reconstruction of American literary history he is presented, for most of his long career, as an isolated figure, working courageously and almost alone. From the earlier years of the twentieth century, Willa Cather is remembered in much the same way—as an artist whose life and work were complicated and intensified by a condition of isolation, an imperative to keep her own sexuality in the background of her art and her public life. Before the end of the 1960s, in Britain and America, there were brief periods in which gay and lesbian literary communities found or created a context in which to express themselves together and in the open, and to affirm every dimension of who they were as Americans and artists. London in the early 1890s was such a place; the "Bohemian" neighborhoods of lower Manhattan before World War I were another. More often than not, however, a gay or lesbian author who wanted to be "out" as an individual and an artist had to seek safety away from the public gaze, away from local police and repressive laws. Many of the expatriate artists of the 1920s and after (including

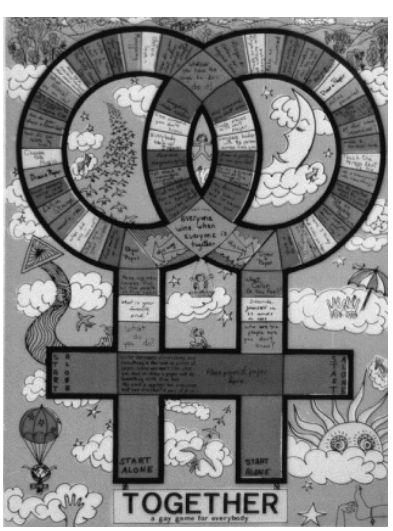
Gertrude Stein, James Baldwin, and Elizabeth Bishop) spent much of their time in Paris, in South America, and in other far-off places where they could live and work with a measure of freedom unavailable in much of the United States, where old Puritan values hung on strongly.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the so-called "Stonewall Riots" of July 1969, a confrontation with the New York City police in and around a gay bar in Greenwich Village, have been remembered by some social historians as "the Boston Tea Party of the gay and lesbian rights movement." What they came to signify was the full arrival of civil-rights militancy for gay communities in major American cities. The "sexual revolution" of the later 1960s had been strongly heterosexual; now it took on a new cast, especially in cities where the arts flourished—San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, and New York. In these and other venues, there was a renaissance of literary life in which gay and lesbian sexuality and identity were foregrounded. In poetry, in drama, in film, and in dance, there was unprecedented experimentation with these new possibilities and values in mind.

By the early 1980s, however, the celebratory mood had shifted towards the tragic. Slowly, awareness spread that the HIV virus was a lethal danger, and that AIDS was already a death sentence to thousands of gay Americans. There were no effective treatments for HIV exposure and infection for the first decade of the epidemic, and as the disease devastated gay populations that had flourished so recently before, mainstream America began to recognize the price that was being paid not only in human lives, but also in its collective imaginative and cultural life.

At the same time, along with social and legislative activism, changes have begun and continue with regard to the reading and criticism of literature by gay and lesbian authors and about gay experience. This new field of study is often referred to as "Queer Theory." One primary objective is to find a language appropriate to discussing this art, as well as to locate aesthetic values and assumptions which are not unduly inflected by centuries of cultural habit, a long tradition of commentary which either ignored the importance of sexual preference in artistic expression, or which repressed that importance. For instance, Hollywood studios and independent filmmakers have participated in the national dialogue about gay identity with varying levels of intensity, sometimes as adversaries, sometimes not. The 1980s and 1990s brought a return of the transvestite as a subject in such mainstream films as *The Crying Game* (1992), as well as in popular films from much smaller production companies, including *Paris Is Burning* (1990), *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), and *Boys Don't Cry* (1999). Marjorie Garber describes this popularity as signaling a "category crisis" not only with respect to sexual identity, but also elsewhere in society: in her view, transvestites represent a permeable border between the male and the female and the possibility that other binary oppositions—upper and lower classes, black and white races, Jews and Christians, masters and slaves, gays and straights—may also be much less sure than we have been led to believe.

Also writing about transvestite and contemporary gay life, Judith



[6229] Anonymous, *Together: A Gay Game for Everybody* (1973), courtesy of the Library of Congress.

"GAY AND LESBIAN IDENTITIES" WEB ARCHIVE

[6229] Anonymous, *Together: A Gay Game for Everybody* (1973), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Poster depicting two interlocking "woman" symbols, which form a board game. Beginning in the 1960s, a number of "homophile" organizations began to form, inspired by militant black civil rights groups. Such activists as Franklinn Kameny and Barbara Gittings protested discriminatory employment practices, and by 1970 several thousand people had joined the more than fifty homophile organizations that had been established.

[8171] Anonymous, *Gays Kissing* (n.d.), courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. A gay couple kisses in the background of this photograph; in the foreground are two lesbian women. In the second half of the twentieth century, homosexuals began to demand equal protection under U.S. law.

[8172] Anonymous, *Gay Parade* (n.d.), courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. The gay rights movement really came to life when, in 1969, New York City police raided a gay bar in Greenwich Village called the Stonewall Inn. The patrons of the Stonewall fought back, and three nights of rioting ensued, bringing unprecedented support for the homosexual liberation movement. By 1973 there were more than 800 homosexual groups in the United States; today there are more than 5,000 organizations fighting for gay rights.

[8179] Anonymous, *Lesbians Kissing* (n.d.), courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. Photograph of a lesbian couple kissing. Although progress has been made in securing rights for homosexuals, a reactionary movement has consistently tried to slow that progress down. For example, in 1977 a gay rights ordinance was repealed in Florida due to the efforts of singer Anita Bryant. Political and religious figures including Jesse Helms and Jerry Falwell have fought to revoke rights for homosexuals and prevent them from securing protection under the law.

Butler has described gender, in contemporary culture, as a role that is performed rather than a transcendent identity. In her view, gender is or has become such a performance, such that people can choose to cause "gender trouble" by dressing, acting, and behaving in ways that resist traditional expectations—for example, by "voguing." If sexuality is not who we *are* but what we *do*, and if sexual activities or desires do not equal sexual identities, there is no need for rigid categories such as "heterosexual" or "homosexual."

Filmmaker Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied* (1989) reveals another snapshot of the diversity of gay life in America, and the special predicament of gay African Americans. The film features the work of poet Essex Hemphill and confronts the challenges of interracial love, self-hatred, and persecution within African American social contexts. With the popularity of TV shows such as *Will and Grace* and *Queer as Folk*, which both focus primarily on gay characters, and *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* and *Felicity*, which both include gay characters among their ensemble casts, gay culture has found entrance into the mainstream.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What happened at the Stonewall Inn in 1969?

Comprehension: Describe the various meanings and contexts in which the word "queer" can be used. How is its current meaning different from "gay" or "lesbian"?

Context: Consider the relationship between the young narrator and Lucy in Sandra Cisneros's story "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn." What is the nature of their relationship?

Context: In *Stone Butch Blues*, Leslie Feinberg's character Jess writes about her perspective on Stonewall, 1970s activism, and the difficulties experienced by transgendered people within the gay rights movement. In what ways do you see her "performing" gender? At what point do you think she is most "true" to herself? Is it possible to identify a specific point or do you think this exercise goes against the very idea of identity as a process?

Context: Another Unit 16 core context, "Memorials," describes the AIDS quilt. How do you think that the AIDS quilt may contribute to struggles for gay and lesbian rights? You might also consider AIDS elegies, or poetic memorials to the dead, such as those by Mark Doty.

Exploration: Explore the gay rights posters and other images in the archive. What do the images tell you about the struggles of the gay and lesbian movement? Choose one or two posters and analyze their text and imagery to identify their messages. Whom do the posters target?

Exploration: Using online resources, compare the organization, style, and intention of gay arts communities over a longer historical period: London in the 1890s, New York's "Bohemian Period" (c.1900–17), Bloomsbury in the 1920s and 1930s, San Francisco in the 1980s and after. What similarities and differences do you observe? What could latter-day communities learn from their historical forebears?

Locking the Gates: The City within the City

The "city within the city" has long been understood to mean urban enclaves with names like Little Italy, Chinatown, the Barrio, or Boystown. The literature included in this unit contains richly descriptive accounts of such communities, including Maxine Hong Kingston's Chinatown, Sandra Cisneros's Chicano neighborhoods, and Leslie Feinberg's queer district. These authors' characters, like their real-life counterparts, have found acceptance, cultural touchstones, and inspiration in these communities.

In recent years, however, while many of these ethnic, racial, or identity-based communities have continued to thrive, another definition of the "city within the city" has begun to take hold, inspired by another striking urban division: the economic imbalance between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Disparities in income have delineated new cities within the city with boundaries defined not by identity markers so much as by widely varying living conditions and opportunities. Like Disney World, a self-enclosed, sanitized, comfortable space that provides everything its visitors need—food, shelter, entertainment, and, perhaps most importantly, security—new urban designs promoted by the wealthy and sometimes billed as "urban renewal" seemingly offer many benefits: meeting places, museums, restaurants, arts, and diversions. But these ostensible improvements mask the growing economic disparity between the rich and the poor and often physically displace the poor from their homes.

In many cities, including Los Angeles and New York, physical barriers literally separate the classes, creating fortresses that insulate the "safe" areas from "dangerous" ones. As urban theorist Mike Davis sees it, the "pleasure domes" of new malls, apartment complexes, office buildings, and art centers depend upon the "social imprisonment of the third-world service [workers] who live in increasingly repressive ghettoes and barrios." While ambition and creativity are still evident in these economically depressed neighborhoods, as seen in the more than 3000 murals (primarily painted by Hispanic Americans) that decorate Los Angeles's walls, these previously vibrant urban communities have been devastated by widespread drug use, crime, and poverty. In 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois predicted that "the problem of the Twentieth Century [would be] the problem of the color line." Now, at the beginning of a new millennium, urban theorists warn that the problem of the twenty-first century will be the problem of these abject cities within the city.

[6164] Arnold Genthe, *Street of the Gamblers (by day)* (1898), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-3890].

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What are some potential negative effects of creating urban "pleasure domes"?

"LOCKING THE GATES" WEB ARCHIVE

[6164] Arnold Genthe, *Street of the Gamblers (by day)* (1898), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-3890]. Photograph of pedestrians in San Francisco's Chinatown. Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) tried to combat stereotypes of Chinese immigrants as "heathen," "unclean," and "untrustworthy." She provided insight into the unique culture of America's Chinatowns.

[6166] Anonymous, *Police and Detectives Guarding Chinatown, July 6, 1909* (1909), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-69697]. Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) made efforts to combat stereotypes of Chinese immigrants as "heathen," "unclean," and "untrustworthy." She provided insight into the unique culture of America's Chinatowns.

[6171] Arnold Genthe, *Children Were the Pride, Joy, Beauty, and Chief Delight of the Quarter, Chinatown, San Francisco* (c. 1896–1906), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-5265]. Four children in traditional Chinese clothing on a sidewalk in San Francisco's Chinatown. Writing about the time this photograph was taken, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) sought to make the lives of Chinese immigrants understandable to white audiences.

[6527] Judith F. Baca, *Pickers from Guadalupe Mural* (1990), courtesy of SPARC (Social and Public Art Resource Center). © Judith F. Baca, Farmworkers of Guadalupe, 1989. Since 1976, muralist Judith Baca has worked as the founder and artistic director of the Social and Public Art Resource Center in Los Angeles. She has headed a number of large-scale projects dealing with interracial relations, such as the construction of *The Great Wall*, of which this image is a part.

[7746] Danny Lyon, *Young Men of the Second Ward, El Paso's Classic Barrio Near the Mexican Border* (1972), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. This photograph was taken by Danny Lyon for the Environmental Protection Agency's *Documerica* project. Lyon, hailed as one of the most creative documentary photographers of the late twentieth century, photographed the Rio Grande Valley and the Chicano barrio of South El Paso, Texas. Tejanos, or Chicanos from Tejas (Texas), have developed a rich tradition of arts and literature that develops out of their lives in this border again.

Context: Explore the photos of early-twentieth-century Chinatown [6164, 6166, 6167]. Compare the clothing worn by people pictured in these images to Wittman Ah Sing's descriptions of Chinese Americans in Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey*: "Immigrants. Fresh Off the Boats out in public. Didn't know how to walk together. . . . So uncool. You wouldn't mislike them on sight if their pants weren't so highwater, gym socks white and noticeable. F.O.B. fashions—highwaters or puddlecuffs. Can't get it right. Uncool. Uncool." Why is fashion so important to Wittman? What did the traditional Chinese clothes worn at the turn of the twentieth century signify, and what does Wittman think the "F.O.B." clothes say about their wearers?

Exploration: Compare Wittman Ah Sing's descriptions of "F.O.B." Chinese Americans to Anzia Yezierska and Abraham Cahan's discussions of clothing and "greenhorns" in Unit 9.

Exploration: Research the construction, condemnation, and reconstruction of Chicago's Cabrini Green housing project. What does this project's history tell us about changes in theories of urban planning and development? Why do you think the architectural style of Cabrini Green and similar housing developments has fallen out of favor with city planners and residents? Use online resources including <www.voicesofcabrini.com> as well as sites created by former and current residents.

ASSIGNMENTS

Personal and Creative Responses

1. *Journal:* In Toni Cade Bambara's "Medley," when Sweet Pea criticizes Hector's storytelling, she also provides her criteria for effective storytelling, including the need for names and details. What elements do you think are necessary for a good story? Create a definition or list; then use it to analyze any story that is meaningful to you (a family story, movie, novel, etc.). Does the story meet all your criteria? If not, how does the discrepancy affect your definition?
2. *Journal:* In David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Roma asks a series of questions in Act 1, Scene 3, including "what is our life?" and "what is it that we're afraid of?" Consider his statement, "All it is is THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO YOU." In your journal, answer his questions and offer an interpretation and opinion of his statement.
3. *Journal:* Do you think Abuela, "the witch" of "The Witch's Husband" by Judith Ortiz Cofer, spent long enough in New York (one year)? What do you think she did there? Was this enough of a taste of freedom to allow her to remain happy in Puerto Rico? Do you think it would just whet her appetite for even more freedom? How feminist is she, if at all, according to your own definition of feminism?

4. *Creative Writing:* In "Polar Breath," Diane Glancy depicts the old woman's death using images of birds, the icehouse, frigid water, and spirits. Do these images seem appropriate for the old woman? Choose a person or character from another story in this unit, and write a story or create a visual representation of his/her death using character-appropriate imagery.
5. *Creative Writing:* Write a new version of Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" from Dee/Wangero's point of view. What was it like to grow up in the house and see it burned? Why did you change your name and clothes? Describe your visit home. Why are the quilts so important to you? Why are you so frustrated with your family?
6. *Acting and Performance:* As a young actor, David Mamet was influenced by the Stanislavsky method of acting, also called "method acting," with which actors attempt to make their work as *real* as possible. Research the Stanislavsky method further. With a group of students, choose a scene from *Glengarry Glen Ross* and use method acting to rehearse and perform it for the class.
7. *Acting and Performance:* Alone or with a small group of students, produce performance art of any kind to relay a message to your class. Before you begin, answer the following questions: What message are you trying to convey? Why? How can you best communicate your ideas? How can performance art afford you a new perspective or suggest new ways of thinking to your audience?
8. *Multimedia:* Imagine that you are part of a performance art group that needs new members. To convince talented artists to use performance art methods, create a presentation that reports on the activities of one performance artist mentioned in this unit. Using the *American Passages* multimedia resources, Internet research, and your knowledge of performance artists, create a slide show of the artist's work, a video capturing audience reactions, and/or print materials to explain the artist's themes, ideas, and methods. Explain why performance art is the most successful means of reaching some audiences.
9. *Modified "Show and Tell":* Think about the importance of the quilts in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use." Choose an object that is personally meaningful to you, and prepare a multimedia presentation explaining its significance. Is the object functional? Is it "worth more" than the dollars you could get if you sold it? Design visuals and a narrative that speak to the object's aesthetic, sentimental, cultural, and financial value.

Problem-Based Learning Assignments

1. It is 1975 and you belong to a local feminist group that has convinced many women to join your cause and actively promote women's rights. However, you have had less success recruiting men. Your job is to design a public relations campaign directed at young men. You need to convince them that feminism is not just a

women's issue. Design a campaign—including a slogan, logo, pamphlet, and posters—that persuades young men to join their mothers, sisters, girlfriends, and friends in fighting for women's equality.

2. You are a member of your school's drama club, and you want to produce David Mamet's play *Glengarry Glen Ross*. However, some members of the campus community (including parents and wealthy alumni, among them the drama club's most consistent financial contributor) oppose the play because it contains strong language and offensive slurs. Create a skit aimed at these opponents, explaining why you think the play is appropriate and asking for their support. To be persuasive, you may need to analyze Mamet's language and content for your audience.
3. You are an artist who wants to paint a mural representing your neighborhood on the side of a local building. The building's owner has approved your plan and your design, except that she does not like your idea to incorporate existing graffiti into the mural. She thinks that the graffiti is vandalism and that it should be covered. Write a letter in which you convince her that the graffiti is actually art and that it is essential to your design.
4. Imagine that you are a prominent urban planner and designer. Your city has decided to erect a memorial to the victims of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks, and you have been hired to determine where to place the memorial and what it should look like, including its form, size, and any text that might be included. Prepare a report of your findings that you can present at the next city meeting. Include visual representations of your ideas to support your report.

GLOSSARY

Chicano/a A once derogatory term that has been reclaimed by Mexican Americans. Implies a more radical definition of Mexican Americans' subjectivity than the term "Hispanic."

feminism Feminism is an extremely broad and diverse term that focuses on the examination of sex and gender. It captures an expansive history of, and debate about, personal identity, political action, philosophical inquiry, and literature and literary studies. Feminism itself can be characterized as a movement, a mindset, or a way of being; feminists have examined topics ranging from the unequal treatment of women in almost every aspect of daily life, to the restrictions of patriarchal culture and its oppression of women, to the intersecting forces of race, gender, sex, and class as they impact the possibilities of knowledge, representation, lived experience, cultural and historical interpretation, and the constitution of reality itself. Contemporary feminism can be traced through an extended history of women's activism, particularly the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s. Critics have assailed what they argue is a single-minded, righteous, or anti-male intention within feminism, as the movement itself continues to expand and develop with both clarity and contradiction.

gender variant An individual who does not fit into the categories "male" or "female." The person's genital sexuality may not match his/her gender identity. Can include transsexual and transgendered individuals.

historical roots The values, myths, and culture that often form the foundation of an individual's identity.

identity An individual's consciousness of his/her own being. Can include personality traits as well as an allegiance to social categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion.

identity politics Movements that focus on securing rights for people from various identity groups, such as women, ethnic and racial minorities, and sexual minorities.

oral tradition Passing cultural wisdom and values from one person or one generation to another through oral storytelling. Unlike written communication, the oral tradition necessarily involves person-to-person contact and is thus by definition community based and performative. The oral tradition was an early stage in virtually every language system and is still prominent in Native American and Chicano cultures, among others.

postmodernism A philosophical and socio-historical movement that challenges the progress-oriented master narrative of Enlightenment and positivist traditions. At the beginning of the twentieth century, linguists and philosophers questioned the possibility that language can truly reflect reality, or that there can be any essential, categorical, or transcendental truth claims made about the world. From the unspeakable violence of the Holocaust, to the assertion of gender and other personal traits as being malleable and socially constructed, postmodernism has sought to explain the many uncertainties, ironies, contradictions, and multiple points of view that animate the world. Postmodern art and literature is often self-consciously reflexive, questioning the nature of the text and the authority and existence of the author; it uses techniques like pastiche, metanarrative, nonlinear constructions, absurdity, and irony. Postmodernism is at once a literary style, a critical and theoretical movement, and a description of the socio-cultural world of globalized consumer capitalism.

postmodern narrative A story that may not have a linear structure and that incorporates postmodern ideas about form and reality.

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