

Advanced Curriculum From Vanderbilt University's Programs for Talented Youth

I, Me, You, We

Individuality Versus Conformity

English Lessons for Gifted and Advanced Learners in Years 6–8

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Pre-test.....	14
Pre-test Rubric.....	16

AN EXAMINATION OF IDENTITY:

How Does Our Environment Shape Our Identity?

Lesson 1	"Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed"	19
	<i>by Ray Bradbury</i>	
Lesson 2	"All Summer in a Day"	31
	<i>by Ray Bradbury</i>	
Lesson 3	"Day and Night"	41
	<i>by M. C. Escher</i>	

AN EXAMINATION OF RISK: Against the Status Quo

Lesson 4	"Letter to DAR" and "My Day" Column.....	51
	<i>by Eleanor Roosevelt</i>	
Lesson 5	Picasso's Guitars and Plato's Theory of Forms.....	61
Lesson 6	"Much Madness is divinest Sense"	73
	<i>by Emily Dickinson</i>	

AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL CONFORMITY

Lesson 7	The Mayflower Compact.....	87
	<i>by William Bradford</i>	
Lesson 8	"Alone".....	99
	<i>by Maya Angelou</i>	
Lesson 9	"Harrison Bergeron".....	109
	<i>by Kurt Vonnegut</i>	

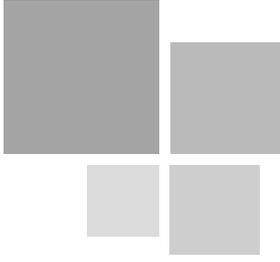
AN EXAMINATION OF NONCONFORMITY:

A Force of Social Change

Lesson 10	Excerpts From "Self-Reliance"	121
	<i>by Ralph Waldo Emerson</i>	
Lesson 11	Excerpts From "Civil Disobedience"	133
	<i>by Henry David Thoreau</i>	

Lesson 12 Final Reflection and Culminating Project	145
Post-test	150
Post-test Rubric	152
References	153
Appendix A: Instructions for Using the Models	155
Appendix B: Blank Models and Guides	181
Appendix C: Rubrics	193
About the Authors	197

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Introduction

I, Me, You, We: Individuality Versus Conformity is designed specifically with gifted and high-achieving secondary school learners in mind. These concept-based lessons are accelerated beyond typical year-level standards and include advanced models to help students analyse a variety of texts. Students explore essential questions such as: How does our environment shape our identity? What are the consequences of conforming to a group? When does social conformity go too far? This unit includes a major emphasis on rigorous evidence-based discourse through the study of common themes across rich, challenging non-fiction and fiction texts. Aligned to the Australian Curriculum, the unit guides students to examine the fine line between individuality and conformity through the related concepts of belongingness, community, civil disobedience, self-reliance and questioning the status quo by engaging in creative activities, Socratic seminars, literary analyses and debates. Lessons include close readings with text-dependent questions, choice-based differentiated products, rubrics, formative assessments and tasks that require students to analyse texts for rhetorical features, literary elements and themes through argument, explanatory and prose-constructed writing. The unit features short stories from Kurt Vonnegut and Ray Bradbury, poetry from Emily Dickinson and Maya Angelou, art by M. C. Escher and Pablo Picasso and primary source documents from Plato, Eleanor Roosevelt, William Bradford, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I, Me, You, We: Individuality Versus Conformity is one of four units designed specifically for gifted school students (Years 6–8) to support the acquisition of textual analysis skills including identifying the relationship between literary elements within a text, evaluating arguments, enhancing thinking and communication skills and connecting conceptual generalisations from cross-curricular themes through a variety of media including literary texts, art and primary source documents. The

Integrated Curriculum Model (ICM; VanTassel-Baska, 1986) is the conceptual framework used for the unit design. Components of the framework are embedded in each lesson: accelerated content, advanced literacy processes of the discipline (e.g. rhetorical analysis and literary analysis) and conceptual understandings. For example, the accelerated content includes English content descriptions, aligned to the Australian Curriculum. The content descriptions selected for each unit are above the year level(s) for which the unit was intended. Each unit also includes process skills and specific models to help students evaluate the development of effective arguments; analyse a variety of texts, art and primary sources; and connect literature to real-world applications (see Appendices A and B for more information on the models). The content of each lesson is connected by an overarching theme and key generalisations that span a variety of disciplines. These concepts vary by unit and include power, truth versus perception, individuality versus conformity and freedom. Table 1 shows how each unit in this series aligns with the ICM features. The ICM was selected based on its evidence-supported success in increasing gifted student achievement (see VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2008).

INTENDED YEAR LEVEL(S)

It is well known in gifted education that accelerated content is essential for increasing the academic achievement and social-emotional growth of gifted students (Assouline, Colangelo, VanTassel-Baska, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2015; Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004; Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011). This unit is intended for and has been piloted with gifted students in Years 6–8. The unit is aligned to Australian Curriculum content descriptions primarily focused on Years 9–10 with some lower year content descriptions included as needed. The accelerated content is necessary so that gifted students have the opportunity to gain new content knowledge at a pace and level that is appropriate for their learning needs. Gifted students' readiness and experience levels vary, as do their abilities. Because school contexts and content emphases are different, it is up to each teacher to determine which unit is best suited for their particular students and at which year levels. Some gifted students may find this unit engaging as a Year 6 student while others may need to wait until Year 7 or 8 to fully participate and understand the unit concepts. Teachers of Year 9 and 10 students may find that these units are on target for many of their general education students.

Materials

- Student copies of “Dark They Were and Golden Eyed” by Ray Bradbury, available at http://www.olgcnj.org/school/files/2010/10/E1006_dark_they_were_and_golden_eyed-4.pdf
- Butcher paper for groups of three to four and pens for each group
- Handout 1.1: Blank Literary Analysis Wheel
- Handout 1.2: Big Idea Reflection
- Handout 1.3: Concept Organiser
- Rubric 1: Product Rubric (Appendix C)

Introductory Activities

1. Distribute butcher paper to groups of three to four students and ask them to draw the concept of *conformity*. Leave the task open-ended. They can draw symbols but no words. Groups can share their drawings with the class, explaining any symbols.
2. Ask the class to come to an agreement on a definition for conformity. Ask:
 - What is conformity?
 - What other words are related to conformity (e.g. change, loss of identity, etc.)?
 - Is conformity always negative?
 - In what situations is it beneficial to conform?
 - What is the opposite of conformity? Is individuality really the opposite?
 - How are these two concepts related?
3. Explain that this unit is about the conflict between conformity and individuality. In some lessons, this is about a unique individual conforming to group expectations, while in other lessons it is about being alone versus being with community. Some lessons will explore the benefits of challenging the status quo, while others explore the benefits of being a part of a majority. Students will be examining various works of art, literature and non-fiction text to gain more insight into these concepts. Discuss or reflect in writing:
 - Why is conformity important to humans?
 - Why is it important to society?
 - When is it good? When is it bad?
4. Show several video clips from movies relating individuality versus conformity. Ask students to develop generalisations about individuality versus conformity after viewing the clips. Some suggestions include:
 - “Real You” from *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*, available at <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/cloudy-with-a-chance-of-meatballs/real-you>

- “A Little Different” from *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*, available at <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/cloudy-with-a-chance-of-meatballs/a-little-different>
- “Meeting the Giant” from *Big Fish*, available at <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/big-fish/meeting-the-giant>
- “Fearless Despereaux” from *The Tale of Despereaux*, available at <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/tale-of-despereaux/fearless-despereaux>

Examples of generalisations: *Individuality requires courage. Society's rules about conformity are designed to keep people safe.*

5. Briefly introduce the vocabulary words that students will encounter in this lesson. Students may develop a chart for these words (see Figure 1.1 for an example). You may wish to divide the words among students (giving them words they do not know) to look them up in the dictionary or an online source. Discuss meanings as they fill in the chart.
 - **Forlorn:** Lonely and miserable
 - **Recede:** To go back
 - **Villa:** A holiday house
 - **Convivial:** Pleasant, sociable
 - **Sapling:** A small tree
 - **Muse:** To gaze thoughtfully
 - **Bewildered:** Confused

Read Text

Distribute copies of “Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed”. Conduct a version of reader’s theatre. Students will read assigned parts of the story aloud. (*Note:* Although the story is not written as a play, it can still be read in parts if the students are savvy about following along and understand the dialogue.) Assign the following parts:

- Narrator
- Harry Bittering
- Cora Bittering
- Tim
- Laura
- Dan
- Sam
- Simpson
- Lieutenant
- Captain
- Others: The men, the people

Materials

- Pablo Picasso's *Still Life With Guitar, Variant State* (1913) to display, available at <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1101>
- Various works by Picasso (available online)
- Handout 1.3: Concept Organiser (continued from previous lessons)
- Handout 5.1: Blank Visual Analysis Wheel
- Handout 5.2: Excerpts From Plato and Picasso
- Rubric 1: Product Rubric (Appendix C)

Introductory Activity

Ask students to draw a guitar. Have students share their drawings. Ask: *How would we evaluate who has the best drawing? How would we evaluate the best piece of art? Does it have to accurately reflect a real guitar?*

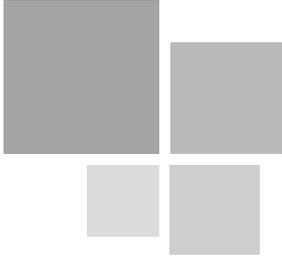
View Art

1. Show students the sculpture, *Still Life With Guitar, Variant State* (1913) (note that Picasso has several pieces of art featuring guitars, but this piece is a sculpture). Explain: *This piece is worth millions of dollars and the student sketches are not. Why?* At the end of the lesson, students should have a better understanding of why.
2. Ask: *What comes to mind when I ask you to envision a sculpture? What's different about this guitar sculpture?* Students may refer to classical sculptures; during this time most sculptures were of people or things in nature – never before had anyone made a sculpture of a guitar because people already made guitars. Why would anyone make a sculpture of something already made by humans? Making a man-made guitar that's not really a guitar was a revolutionary idea.
3. Show other pieces by Picasso. Ask students to give titles to the works as you share them. Ask: *Is this artwork good? Who determines whether a piece of artwork is good: the majority or the individual?* Suggested pieces:
 - *Three Musicians*, 1921
 - *Guernica*, 1937
 - *The Old Guitarist*, 1903
 - *Child With a Dove*, 1901
 - *Woman in Hat and Fur Collar*, 1937
 - *Self Portrait*, 1907
 - *Don Quixote*, 1955
 - *Ma Jolie (My Pretty Girl)*, 1912
 - *Le pigeon aux petit pois (The Pigeon With Green Peas)*, 1911
 - *The Picasso in Chicago* (Public sculpture)

4. After showing students several of Picasso's works, ask students to describe Picasso's style. Ask: *How do you think photography may have influenced abstract art?* (Photograph as a new technology depicts real reality, so artists have freedom to move away from depicting exact reality.)
5. Give some background about Picasso (or ask students to do some initial research): *Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) is a Spanish artist who lived much of his adult life in France. He has hundreds of paintings, drawing and sculptures. He is known for co-founding the Cubist movement in abstract art and collage making. In Cubism, Picasso would draw a picture, take apart an object's shape and rearrange the pieces in an abstract form. When one looks at this art, the subject can be seen from several perspectives. In developing collage, Picasso would use newspaper, wallpaper and other papers to produce a work of art. You will have an opportunity to look at samples and create your own collage later in the lesson.*

Visual Analysis

1. Tell students that they will be closely analysing the first piece: *Still Life With Guitar, Variant State* (1913). This is one guitar of a series of guitar art produced by Picasso. You may want to consult Khan Academy's video, "The Language of Representation: Pablo Picasso's Guitar, 1912–1914" to prepare to guide students through the visual analysis, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfy6IxsN_lg. Additional information can be found online at Artdaily: <http://artdaily.com/news/44861/Picasso--Guitars-1912-1914-Examines-a-Moment-of-Radical-Experimentation-in-20th-Century-Art#.Ukt16YZQGS0>.
2. Distribute Handout 5.1: Blank Visual Analysis Wheel and guide students in taking notes on the art form during class discussion. Sample questions and responses to lead analysis are provided. The suggested responses are derived from the aforementioned sources.
 - **Context/Purpose:**
 - *Provide context for students:* This art was produced in 1913 as a series of sculptures, 1912–1914.
 - *What do you think his purpose/motive is in creating this?* To question the essence of the depiction of reality and definition of art.
 - **Point of View/Assumptions:**
 - *What is his point of view towards representing reality? What are his assumptions?* He does not wish to depict a strict reality; yet he assumes that we all know it's a guitar from the features.



Appendix A

Instructions for Using the Models

LITERARY ANALYSIS WHEEL INSTRUCTIONS

The Literary Analysis Model is used to guide students through analysing how an author uses literary techniques to develop meaning within a work. The model allows students to see connections between multiple literary elements (e.g. setting impacts conflict, conflict reveals character motives and values, characterisation impacts theme, etc.).

Using the Literary Analysis Wheel

The Literary Analysis Wheel can be used to guide students through an analysis of a short story, poem or novel. First, guide students to identify elements of the wheel separately, then emphasise a deeper analysis by asking how elements relate to each other (e.g. point of view impacts theme, setting creates mood, etc.).

The Literary Analysis Wheel is meant to be interactive. The inner wheel conceptually spins so that its elements interact with each other and the outer wheel. Each element can relate to each other, regardless of its placement on the wheel.

The Literary Analysis Wheel Guide (Appendix B) shows specific prompts for each element of the wheel. The teacher may simply refer to the model during instruction or students may take notes on the Blank Literary Analysis Wheel using arrows to show how the various elements relate. It is suggested that students note the answers to the “simple” questions on the graphic organiser and then discuss interactions with other elements. Consider making a poster of the Literary Analysis Wheel Guide and posting it in your classroom for students to refer to throughout the unit.

Once students are accustomed to using the wheel, encourage students to develop their own questions about the relationship between elements.

Students can make their own interactive paper-plate model of the wheel. Two different coloured papers may be used for the inner and outer circles, secured with a brass paper fastener. Students may use the wheels as visuals in small groups.