

# Redefining the *Bildungsroman*

9th Grade American Literature Course Outline by Isabel Forward

## Introduction

Upon researching best practices for students who are English Language Learners in the English Language Arts classroom, several aspects were consistently highlighted as effective consistent practices for reading, writing, speaking, and creating an effective and inclusive classroom culture. I then decided to design a course that focuses on clarity and purpose in all aspects of the classroom, consistency of practice, and transferrable skills and frameworks for future learning. If part of effective instruction of English Language Learners is the clear communication of expectations and purposeful choices, the outlining of methods that are backed by research in this content outline could serve as a tool for instructors or students.

Freire recognizes the place of the classroom as a “deeply civic and political project that provides the conditions for individual autonomy and takes liberation and the practice of freedom as a collective goal.” In this way, the course itself also functions as an act of resistance, as the coursework and discourse challenges a framework accepted as standard, acknowledges a diversity of unique barriers and privileges of growing into different identities, and narrative construction exercises that gives power to students to take agency as writers of their own identity.

The course outline has three specific focuses:

1

### CONTENT

This course finds resources that are multilingual and culturally inclusive, while also giving students new lenses through which to analyze texts and concepts that are a part of the dominant canon.

2

### PRACTICE

This course includes consistent writing and speaking practices to give students space to write with a variety of forms, purposes, messages. Classroom practices of oral and written expression provide a framework for future argument formation.

3

### ASSESSMENT

This course outlines the multiple ways in which students will be assessed and receive feedback on their work.

## COURSE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are the main components of a *bildungsroman*, or coming of age story?

What does it mean to grow up? What does it mean to grow up in contemporary American Society?

How does growing up differ for individuals on a spectrum of identities?

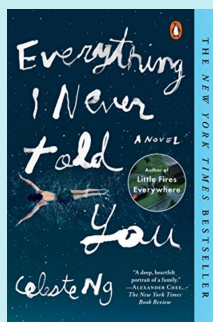
What has growing up looked like for you?

## Course Materials and Thematic Questions

### *Everything I Never Told You* by Celeste Ng

In what ways is identity defined by others?

In what ways is it self-defined?



### *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas

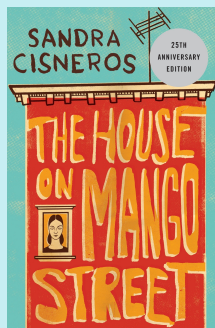


How is self-discovery complicated by multiple, and sometimes contradictory identities?

How does acknowledging intersectional identities provide a greater understanding of the self?

### *The House on Mango St.* by Sandra Cisneros

If the traditional *bildungsroman* promotes "radical individuality and upward mobility, how does one balance independence and participation in a cultural community?



### *The Danger of a Single Story* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

How is the traditional *bildungsroman* narrative prescriptive?



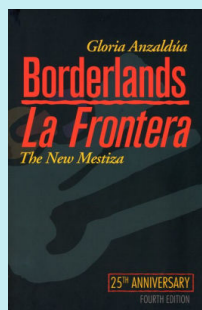
How can identities be restrictive?

How can they be empowering?

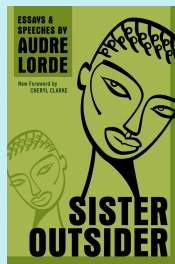
### *Borderlands/La Frontera* by Gloria Anzaldúa

What role does place play in identity?

What role does language play in identity?



### "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" by Audre Lorde



Is the *bildungsroman* a productive way to analyze texts, or should we find new, more inclusive lenses that deviate from the privileged norm?

Is the *bildungsroman* worth redefining?

AUDIOBOOKS, WHICH CAN BE USED IN CLASS DURING SSR, ARE ALSO AVAILABLE ON OVERDRIVE THROUGH THE LIBRARY.

# Writing Assessments

## Writing Instruction

Instructions for all writing assignments will include several components: the purpose, the message, the form, and the style. The **purpose** of the writing — to persuade, inform, excite, question — provides guidance for students in their composing process. The **message** of the writing largely depends on the students' individual argument, but can be guided in the prompt by a specific theme, type of analysis, or topic. The **form** of the writing guides students in the type of writing they will be producing. This could include a letter to the editor, a personal anecdote, an op-ed, a poem, or, in the case of teaching writing structures, an eight-point paragraph or five paragraph essay. Being conscious of the form of writing both provides clarity to students and encourages the instructor to diversify the types of writing students learn. The **style** of the writing could range from informal to formal, but could also include instruction surrounding the use of standardized English, a nonstandard variety, a regional dialect, or a different language. Instructors can communicate these varying expectations through a standard instructional template, as demonstrated below.

Prompt: After completing *The House on Mango St.*, write a personal letter to Sandra Cisneros expressing parts of the story you enjoyed and questions you have about the novel. Include at least two references to the text, focusing on the smooth integration of quotations.

Purpose	Form	Style
Persuade	<u>Letter</u>	<u>Standard English</u>
<u>Inform</u>		<u>Standard Spanish, if desired</u>
Excite		
<u>Question</u>		



*\*At the beginning of the year, instructors should explain what the numbers on the scale mean in the context of their classroom.*

## Types of Writing Assessments

Students engage in frequent writing practices to practice and improve writing with many different purposes, forms, styles, and formalities. However, the frequency of writing assignments does not eliminate the need for an individual purpose of each assignment — using specific writing instruction, students should have a clear idea of expectations and their focus of the assignment. If students need more time on their assignments, they have the opportunity to take them home to continue to work on them, or to work during time with the school's ELL or disability services programs, if applicable.

### LOWER STAKES ASSESSMENTS

Low stakes assessments entail that students' work will be evaluated as a part of their participation grade, but not graded themselves. In this course, low-stakes assessments will take form in journal entries. The entries take different forms for different purposes — a personal reflection a greater understanding of the students' background, an introductory paragraph to a paper to practice form, or a fictionalized diary entry of a character to practice narrative construction. Aside from evaluation, the low stakes assessments differ from the higher stakes assessments in their timing. Lower stakes assessments are always “do now” writing assignments, giving students informal but daily opportunities to engage in a writing practice.

### HIGHER STAKES ASSESSMENTS

Higher stakes assessments entail that a student will be evaluated and graded on their writing. Students will have opportunities in class to work on the construction and revision of the assignments, and instructor will provide opportunities for students to check for the components of their essay in class. The following provides an example of an essay criteria checklist, as adapted from Linda Christensen's *Teaching for Joy and Justice*:

Prompt: Write an essay that clearly states your opinion on the novel you read. Support your opinion using evidence from the novel. In this essay, also focus on tightening your sentences and using active verbs. Attach this sheet to your essay and highlight the following elements	
<b>Thesis Statement</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	What kind of introduction did you use? Anecdote, Quote, Question, Bold Statement
<b>Book Title</b>	Underlined or italicized
<b>Transitions</b>	Refer back to your thesis.
<b>Evidence</b>	Prove your point with specific examples from the novel.
<b>Conclusion</b>	What kind of conclusion did you use? Summary, Circle back to the beginning, possible solution, restate and emphasize thesis, further questions to think about
<b>Tight Writing</b>	Active verbs, lean language, metaphorical language, sentence variety

Prompt: Write an essay that clearly states your opinion on the novel you read. Support your opinion using evidence from the novel. In this essay, also focus on tightening your sentences and using active verbs. Attach this sheet to your essay and highlight the following elements

**Grammar, Punctuation,  
Spelling Checked and  
Corrected**

**Revisions**

On the back of this page, describe what you need to do to revise this essay.

## Instructor Feedback

While the course does not contain rubrics, each assignment returns with an evaluation of two components: **what worked well and why**, and **what could be improved and why**. What worked well and what could be improved may be informed by the specific outlined essay goals, but the evaluation leaves room for flexibility.

Students will also have the opportunity to conference with the instructor twice during the semester, for a midterm evaluation and for a conference regarding the end of the course. Conferencing provides the opportunity for students to individually speak about their progress and to establish learning goals. Students can sign up for conferencing during advising or tutoring periods (if available) or for smaller increments of time during class while other students are engaged in essay workshopping or SSR.

*Informed by “Success with ELLs: We are All Writers! Building Second Language Skills in the ELA Classroom” by Margo Dellicarpini*

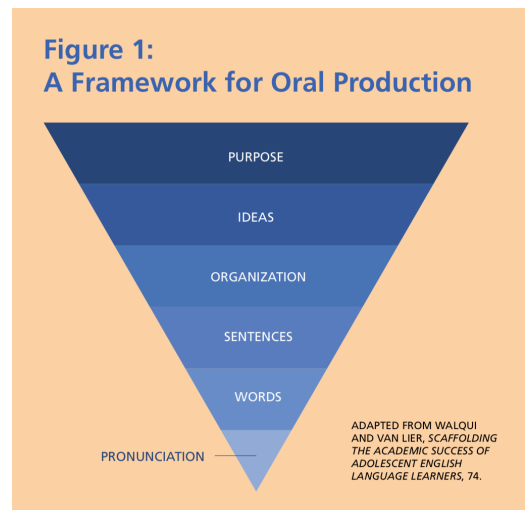
## Class Practices

Class participation plays an integral role in student learning and development. Students engage with one another through work in small groups and in whole class discussion and sharing, with the goal that students should be speaking in some way during every class period. However, class participation is most clearly undercut by the need for a trusting and safe classroom culture where students know that their contributions will be valued. This can occur through the provision of a space for students to get to know one another through community-building exercises and the instructor’s ability to meaningfully pose open-ended questions.

## Speaking Frameworks

Part of constructive discussion is the provision of frameworks that lead to more analytic and constructive discussion. Productive student talk has depth, is sustained, and is student controlled.

Walqui and Heritage provide a framework for student interactions in “Meaningful Classroom Talk: Supporting English Language Learners Development:” giving students transferrable tools to participate in class by outlining the purpose of their contributions, the ideas they present, the organization of their sharing, their sentence structure, word choice, and pronunciation. Instructor can provide formulaic expressions that inform student participation, such as “I notice that...” followed by “this makes me think...” The provision of meaningful frameworks can also strengthen students’ skills in argument construction for their writing.



## Sustained Silent Reading

Students will have the opportunity to engage in Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) in order to focus on vocabulary acquisition, writing development, and reading practice. Students will have the opportunity to present books they read independently twice during the semester with **book talks**, or informal presentations of a summary of a book, the relation of a concept we’ve learned in class, and their review. Book talks promote a students independent reading practice, oral presentation skills, and their own choice in the literature they read.

## RESOURCES

- DelliCarpini, M. (n.d.). Success with ELLs: We Are All Writers! Building Second Language Writing Skills in the ELA Classroom on JSTOR. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from [https://www-jstor-org.ezp1.villanova.edu/stable/23269537?pq-origsite=summon&seq=3#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www-jstor-org.ezp1.villanova.edu/stable/23269537?pq-origsite=summon&seq=3#metadata_info_tab_contents)
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- Giroux, H. A. (2010). Paulo Freire and the Crisis of the Political. *Power and Education*, 2(3), 335–340. <https://doi.org/10.2304/power.2010.2.3.335>
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- Walqui, A., & Heritage, M. (2018). Meaningful Classroom Talk: Supporting English Learners’ Oral Language Development. *American Educator*, 42(3), 18.