

Stage 4 Unit starter

A Single Stone - Novel

Rationale

This unit is based on the novel *A Single Stone* by Meg McKinlay. The novel is set in an imaginary world with the third person narration focalised through the young protagonist, Jena. The village's survival depends on her as the leader of the line and the six other girls who harvest the mountain each day. Jena begins to question and then challenges the beliefs ingrained in her since birth as she unravels the truth about their existence through a number of events. The story is powerfully written with evocative language, beautiful in its simplicity at times. The book provides many opportunities to discover and analyse the development of character, narrative and the ways connotation, imagery and symbol enhance the meaning of a novel.



Outcomes

EN4-1A, EN4-2A, EN4-3B, EN4-4B, EN4-5C, EN4-6C, EN4-7D, EN4-8D, EN4-9E

Concept/s

Character: Students understand that characters are constructs that function differently in different types of texts and media. They learn that these character constructs

- combine with constructs of events and settings to create narrative
- use resources such as description, dialogue, monologue
- may draw on such devices as stereotype and generic convention to reflect values.

Connotation, imagery and symbol: Students understand that imagery is aesthetically pleasing and persuasive. Students learn that

- words invite associations (connotations) in responders which bring related ideas and feelings to a text
- imagery and symbol communicate through associations which may be personal, social or cultural

Narrative: Students understand that narrative shapes and is shaped by one's view of the world. Students learn that

- their own experience and culture influence their responses to stories
- the conventions of narrative are combined to engage the responder emotionally and intellectually with events and characters depicted in the story and with ideas and values implied by the story
- conventions of narrative are adapted to different modes and media to achieve these effects
- close consideration and analysis of stories can bring to light subtleties in the text

Exemplar texts




- *A Single Stone* by Meg McKinlay, Walker Books, Australia, 2015



Focus questions for responding and composing

- What character constructs are used in novels and to what effect have they been employed in *A Single Stone*?
- How has the use of imagery affected our response to the characters, the world created and the novel as a whole?
- How have narrative conventions been used to engage us both intellectually and emotionally in the ideas and values of the novel?
- How do our own experiences and culture impact our response to the text?

Assessment

Students write the opening chapter of a novel based in an imaginary world, introducing characters through events, settings, dialogue and thoughts and using figurative language demonstrating their understanding of the content studied throughout the unit. **(Character, Narrative, Connotation, imagery and symbol)**

Processes		Lessons and evidence of learning
	<p>Understanding</p> <p>Students analyse texts and in their responding and composing explain information and ideas for particular audiences and purposes. They use their knowledge of texts to make generalisations about how texts work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the introduction and development of the character, Jena, in the opening chapter through her thoughts and actions. How have italics been used to differentiate her thoughts? Who else is introduced in the opening chapter? What words allude to the connections between the girls and foreshadow events to come? Students write a paragraph on each of the techniques used by the author to construct the characters. (Character, Narrative, Connotation, imagery and symbol) • Discuss with students the importance of vocabulary choices and the ways word associations build layers of meaning in texts. Explore the ways the author has introduced the words ‘harvest’ and ‘the line’ in the opening chapter. What do we associate with these words at the start of the novel? What do we associate with them by the end of the novel? What was the purpose and effect of the author using these simple expressions? Similarly look at the repetition of the lines ‘The rock has allowed it’/ ‘If the rock allows it’ throughout the novel and how the changing views on these simple statements and the associated meanings are linked to the views of Jena and our changing views of Berta from nurturer to manipulator. (Connotation, imagery and symbol, Character)
	<p>Engaging personally</p> <p>Students respond to and compose texts reflecting their widening world. They identify ways in which their own experiences, perspectives and contexts influence their responses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jena’s leadership skills are tested through the two incidents in Chapter 13 and 14; Kari getting stuck in the rock and Min’s fall. Investigate the ways the author evokes an emotional response from the reader and have students consider what they would have done in each of these circumstances. Debate the merits of Jena as a leader with the class then ask students to write a statement on their view citing evidence from the novel in support. (Character, Narrative) • Consider the title of the novel and the tagline, ‘A Single Stone’ ‘she only meant to move one’. What do students think these lines mean? What are they referring to? Think, Pair, Share and consider the different responses students have come up with. Which answers are based on a literal reading and which are figurative? Talk about why students have different readings of the title and whether they consider this a positive or negative in its construction? Ask students to write their own title and tagline using connotation, metaphor and/or symbolism. (Connotation, imagery and symbol)
	<p>Connecting</p> <p>Through responding and composing students make connections between information, ideas and texts. They compare texts to understand the effects of different choices of language, form, mode and medium for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm the roles and views of girls and women in the novel. What is life like for girls in the village? What do they represent? Look for evidence in the novel to support these views and create a list of the ways the author has built these ideas, such as through dialogue, thoughts, events such as the birthing and food allocation etc. Focus on the power of the vocabulary, and connotations of these passages as well as the sentence structure and techniques used such as repetition and italics. For example, ‘<i>Min</i>. The name came to Jena as if something had clicked into place inside her head. <i>A first daughter</i>, Mother Berta had said. A first daughter, but a sixth child. Jena winced, thinking of the hunger, the cold. The weight of a whole family on those fragile shoulders.’ P.22. Ask students to find links

Processes		Lessons and evidence of learning
	various audiences and purposes.	<p>between this text and others depicting gender roles and stereotypes in society, such as <i>The Hunger Games</i>, <i>Paper Towns</i> or <i>Harry Potter</i>. What do these texts tell us about girls in today's society? What messages might these texts be attempting to deliver? (Character, Narrative, Connotation, imagery and symbol)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the <i>Acknowledgements</i>, page 272, where the author explains where her inspiration comes from and the texts she believes helped shape her as an author. She acknowledges that both Kafka and C.S. Lewis influenced her and that there are '...people and stories whose traces I haven't yet detected'. Can students identify any texts or authors they feel could have inspired this work? What connections support these views? (Narrative)
	<p>Engaging Critically</p> <p>Through responding and composing students explore the different ways texts can be interpreted. They identify ways in which composers position the audience to accept particular views and perspectives and make judgements about these.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse the representation of the world of the village and mountain created. Ask students to look specifically at the rules and beliefs the society is built upon, such as the food allocations, gender roles, the binding of the girls and the mantras about the mountain '<i>If the rock allows it</i>'. Do the students find it believable? Discuss the ways the ideas are presented to the reader through Jena's thoughts and growth and how we are positioned by her views. Can we see links between their society and our own? Does this help or hinder our acceptance of this imaginary world? Students analyse and write about a moment in the story where they felt a strong connection between the world of the village and our society. (Narrative) Assign groups of students different chapters of the book to explore the characterisation of the mountain. Focus on the events, descriptions, beliefs and the language used. Compile the students' findings and identify the techniques used. Students then write an essay on the characterisation of the mountain and how it represents the aesthetic qualities of the text along with supporting the narrative and its message. (Character, Narrative, Connotation, imagery and symbol)
	<p>Experimenting</p> <p>Students use, adapt or subvert particular textual conventions across modes and media to experiment with a range of meanings and textual concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The narrative uses flashbacks to Jena's childhood and a dual narrative to show Jena's and Lia's contrasting worlds. Explore the conventions used with these narrative devices, their purposes and effects. Have students write their own story employing one of these techniques. (Narrative, Character) Choose some key moments in the text for students to decide whether they feel sympathy, empathy or antipathy towards the different characters. Look at the techniques the author has used to position the reader and link the student's values and experiences to the events, too. Ask students to rewrite the passage to evoke a different response. (Narrative, Connotation, imagery and symbol) Assessment: Students write the opening chapter of a novel based in an imaginary world, introducing characters through events, settings, dialogue and thoughts and using figurative language demonstrating their understanding of the content studied throughout the unit. (Character, Narrative, Connotation, imagery and symbol)

Processes

Lessons and evidence of learning

Reflecting

Students begin to personalise their metacognitive processes, identifying their own pleasures and difficulties in responding, composing and learning. They are able to plan and monitor their work, articulate their own learning processes and begin to assess which learning processes may suit them and will suit particular tasks and why.

- Students complete a table explaining the connections between their chapter (assessment task) and their own experiences and explain the influence on their writing.

Element of chapter	Link to own experience	Influence on writing
1. Character Specifically		
2. Setting Specifically		
3. Technique used Specifically		
4. Conflict Specifically		
5. Writing style Specifically		

- Brainstorm with students strategies for improving the first draft of their chapter, such as, rereading, peer editing, using the marking criteria as a check, running a spell and grammar check, considering questions of purpose, audience and context, using a critical friend, surveying responses etc. Ask students to choose and conduct two of the strategies and write a statement explaining the changes they made based on these activities and how valuable they found the process.

The intention of this unit starter is to illustrate teaching and learning activities for each of the processes.

The processes may be taught in any order to cater for the needs of all learners and further differentiation can be included in your full version of the unit.