

Connotation and Exile

TEACHER: All right, the verb we're going to work on today is, Sabrina?

STUDENT: Synthesis.

TEACHER: Synthesis or we're going to synthesize. Now, this shouldn't be a surprise. We know that we're wrapping up multiple texts, multiple pieces of fiction, over the course of the semester. And we're going to be connecting it to what? We're going to be connecting it to Edward Said's essay, right? The nonfiction piece.

So listen, let's look at the definition. Synthesis means combination of parts into a whole. OK? So today our goal is this, to think back on our pieces of fiction, think about paraphrase, understand Edward Said's point of view in his essay, and bring all of them together. That's our goal over the course of the period. We're going to take Edward Said's ideas and attempt to see those ideas at play within the literature we've studied.

Where we're going to start the period is where we started the period yesterday. We'll start with this image. We're going to start with the image that you guys had on the young Syrian boy in the refugee camp. Does everybody recall? OK. With your vocabulary words in front of you, can somebody go ahead and use some to review what we said yesterday about condition of this boy? The Syrian refugee camp. What is some words that you would use to characterize his situation?

STUDENT: Alienated.

TEACHER: Speak up a little bit.

STUDENT: Alienated.

TEACHER: Alienated, which means?

STUDENT: Alone.

TEACHER: Alone. What's another word that you might use?

STUDENT: Dislocated.

TEACHER: What does it mean?

STUDENT: It means that he's not with the rest of something. He's disconnected.

TEACHER: Disconnected, because he's no longer going in Syria, right?

STUDENT: Yeah.

TEACHER: He's in a camp. OK, good, dislocated. Away from home. Anything else?

STUDENT: Independent.

TEACHER: We talked about the idea of independent. Nicole, what did we say about the idea of independent?

STUDENT: That it has a positive connotation.

TEACHER: OK. Mikayla, knowing that Independence has a positive connotation, and we're to look at this image, you see a positive connotation on his situation within the refugee camp?

STUDENT: No.

TEACHER: What might be a better word to use to characterize the situation?

STUDENT: Individualism. But that also is kind of, like, positive.

TEACHER: It is kind of positive. Sabrina?

STUDENT: Estrangement.

TEACHER: Estrangement. Or maybe since, I think that is, you're saying because there's no one else around him? How about isolated?

STUDENT: Yeah.

TEACHER: Isolated, might that work?

STUDENT: Yeah.

TEACHER: OK. Any other words you would use? Go ahead.

STUDENT: Discontinuous.

TEACHER: Discontinuous. What does that mean?

STUDENT: Like, broken?

TEACHER: OK, broken. Yeah.

STUDENT: Rift?

TEACHER: Rift. How so? How does the word rift apply to this?

STUDENT: It's like an open, it's like cracked. He's like, I don't know, split from the society or something.

TEACHER: Split from society? Where do we see the potential rift? Where do we see the rift here? Mikayla.

STUDENT: Because he's walked away from, like, the tents in the refugee camp. So he's separated from them.

TEACHER: OK. Go ahead, Nicole.

STUDENT: And that can parallel, that he's separated from society, I guess. Because the way he's separated from what is his home right now, he separated that in the same way from society, or from what should be.

STUDENT: If you look in the background of the picture, it looks like there might be buildings or something back there, so maybe, like, all the long distance between the refugee camp and that.

TEACHER: So the distance between him and the horizon is the representation of the rift. OK, very good.

STUDENT: I was going to say, yes, and you know the city in the background, you can see that large sprawled land is representative of the rift between him and society.

TEACHER: Very good. All very thoughtful ideas. Now, what do you think about this image? If we were to put the two side by side, how is this image different? What are some vocabulary terms that you might use to characterize this image?

STUDENT: This one seems more like he is independent, because he seems more upbeat. Like the color in this one, considering the last one was black and white, the color shows more positive. And his clothes are clean and newer. And he's holding up the peace sign, so that connotes well being.

TEACHER: Well said.

STUDENT: Like the image itself is like potent. It's very potent because it's a strong image, demonstrating like his independence and individualism.

TEACHER: OK, some questions. Where do you see strength?

STUDENT: Well, I mean, the fact that he's behind, like, a barbed wire and he's holding a peace sign, it's kind of like you see strength in him.

TEACHER: OK. Can anyone [INAUDIBLE] strength?

STUDENT: I would build on hers by saying even though he might be in exile, he's like kind, it looks like some kind of prison, he still has strength. Like, to show when you're in exile, you can find the positives out of it.

TEACHER: OK, very good. Jake?

STUDENT: On the barbed wire in this image represents adversity and represents almost oppression. And this kid, reaching up high towards the top of the image, putting up a peace sign, represents him showing strength. You know, him working against the oppression being put on top of him.

TEACHER: Hey. If we were to put this in context here, who might this peace sign, who might be extending this peace sign to? The people in Syria who are still fighting. Very good.

Let's transition to what we talk, or what you guys worked on last night, and move into how the essay is actually structured. We're going to look over on this board today. The question that I want to start with is this one, how was the evidence organized within the text? How was the evidence organized?

What did you guys come up with? Remember now, the goal here is to take me back to the text as often as you can. Anne, how was it organized? You can just start with a general statement and then we'll move into specifics.

STUDENT: It's organized by the pros and cons of exile. Like, effects that exile can have on you. Like, the negatives that can happen because of exile. Or the positive things you take out of it.

TEACHER: All right. Is there anyone that would disagree with this? We essentially have two major arguments at play within the essay. One stressing the negative qualities of exile, one stressing the positive. Is that pretty much it? OK. Can you now take me into the evidence itself? Where does, can you summarize for me some of the very specific pieces of evidence he uses to illustrate the negative qualities? Is that clear, what I'm asking? Can you summarize for me the evidence he provides us with?

STUDENT: So, for example, with the Amy Foster story, he shows an example of someone in exile, or someone who's faced with the situation, and then he goes into showing how this is negative. So for, the Supreme disaster of loneliness and despair. And that's talking about after Amy leaves him. He so he gets himself out of exile, and then he finds someone, and then she leaves him again. Basically putting him back in exile. And that's showing the never ending cycle of it. So that portrays the negative effects.

TEACHER: Very good. Were you going to still work with Amy Foster?

STUDENT: No, I was going to say a positive effect.

TEACHER: OK, let's do this, and I will come to you first for the positive. Justin?

STUDENT: I have another evidence for the negative. It's from line 24 to 26. It says, "Exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical. It is produced by human beings for human beings and that, like death, but without death's ultimate mercy. It has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography."

TEACHER: OK. Can you summarize that? Can you paraphrase that? Put that into your own words.

STUDENT: I think his main thing with saying that is like, exiles is almost worse than death, because you feel so helpless but you don't, like, in death, it's tough but you eventually get to rest and the struggle is over. But in exile, you feel stuck between death and fighting for your life. So he's saying that exile is more of a struggle than even dying.

TEACHER: Good. Two examples. Can anyone build on Amy Foster? Anything else that you would say about Amy Foster in terms of how it illustrates a negative qualities of death? Lisa?

STUDENT: In line 63, it says that "a combination of crushing isolation and the world's indifference." So it like, shows the individual is like alone in the world, and can't relate to anyone else.

STUDENT: Adding on to that, in line 64, it says "Yanko's fate is described as the supreme disaster of loneliness and despair." So that kind of adds onto what his argument is on exile.

TEACHER: Very good. Anna, one more, and the we're going to transition.

STUDENT: Line 67, he says, "Yanko is dashing, light, and bright eyed, where Amy is heavy, dull, and bovine." I think he's trying to say that like, exile can happen to anyone, even if you're like a good person. Showing that he was bright eyed and he was a good person but exile still happened to him.

TEACHER: OK, very good. Vocabulary terms that we would use to illustrate the negative effects of exile, what are some of them? What are some of the vocabulary terms?

STUDENT: Dislocating.

TEACHER: Dislocating. Paige?

STUDENT: Alienation.

TEACHER: Alienating.

STUDENT: Estrangement.

TEACHER: Estrangement.

STUDENT: Ostracism.

STUDENT: Rift.

TEACHER: Where would rift go?

STUDENT: Home.

TEACHER: Who said that? How so?

STUDENT: Because regardless of whether you are impacted negatively or positively, there's still a rift between you and your home, or you and the place you came from. And so, I guess you could typically look at that with a negative connotation. But, regardless of whether it's negative or positive, it's there.

TEACHER: Does that make sense? Rift is, both of these conditions can tie to rift. OK, very good. Good use of the vocabulary terms. Do you want to take us to the positives?

STUDENT: Yeah. On line, I think it's 77, 78, it says, "James Joyce chose to be in exile to give force to his artistic vocation in an uncannily effective way." So it was effective. But, like, he still went through exile, but it had a positive effect on his art.

TEACHER: James Joyce's example of using exile to kind of fuel his art. Good. Other examples of the potential positives to come out of exile?

STUDENT: The Adorno, is that how you say it?

TEACHER: Yeah.

STUDENT: The whole idea of you have step outside of an alarm or the way of thinking that is you're stuck in your home. And that in order to step outside of that you have to get out of your home. So talked about the dogma and the orthodoxy. And he argues that to defy this you have to-

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TEACHER: OK, to defy dogma or orthodoxy, one has to leave their home. OK, very good. Yes?

STUDENT: Line 156 and 157, it says, "Seeing the entire world as a foreign land makes possible originality of vision." So it's showing that the different points of views-- that you can finally understand exile.

TEACHER: Who said that? Was that on lines 134 and 140? No, OK, so those are Said's words. OK that's where he's explaining his point of view. If we were to go ahead and give adjectives, or words to characterize the positives, what would they be? What are some possible positive effects? What's that?

STUDENT: Enriching.

TEACHER: Enriching. Other ideas?

STUDENT: Independent.

TEACHER: We need to take this, we need to take the essence of this and apply it to our pieces of literature. We need to synthesize. This is one of the components. Now if you were to create a graphic organizer, and we were to take into consideration everything that you said, all the ideas that you've just given me, how can we begin the process of developing a graphic organizer that will represent what he does here? Represents Julia's sentence. The fact that we had the negative and the positive.

STUDENT: You'd want to have two sides of it.

TEACHER: We'd want to have two sides. Good.

STUDENT: Kind of like a T-chart.

TEACHER: Like a T-chart, OK. So if we were to look at this and we were to go ahead and put negative on one side, and positive on one side, we would put our text up above, Asher Lev. And we would apply the ideas that you came up with, the vocabulary terms and you came up with, to the text.

So negative, you could use a very specific term. This becomes our argument. Just like it was Said's argument. Does that make sense to you? We can put "estrangement" here. Where inside of Asher Lev do we see estrangement? This becomes a body paragraph. You with me? You see how we're bringing the two together?

STUDENT: In our final essay, do you want it to be, like, picking a side? Or do you want us to show both sides?

TEACHER: We will probably be showing both sides, as Said does.

STUDENT: But doesn't he have an underlying argument that's more than just exile is two sides?

STUDENT: I think it was just both sides.

STUDENT: Do you think that he's saying, he's using the essay to show both sides, or he's using the essay to communicate something even more than that? Like, I feel he's trying to communicate more that exile is seen as negative, because people don't really understand it. Because people don't know how to associate the idea of exile because a lot of people only see--

STUDENT: There are positives and there are negatives, which makes it ambiguous. And because of that, people associate the idea of being ambiguous with a negative connotation. And that is why people see it as positive. I feel like there's more to it than just, there's positive and negative.

TEACHER: I think you're right. If we were to look at Julia's statement, what side of the statement, or what aspect of her statement, is the most arguable? Where does the argument lie?

STUDENT: A positive impact can impact because they finally see the true meaning of exile.

TEACHER: Or life, or something along those lines. A truer perspective on life. If we were to go ahead and look at those refugee images again, most people would argue that exile is a terrible thing as he does in most of his essay. So I think the strongest, the most controversial part of his argument is the second half. If we were to consider this, what we're going to do is we're going to take the text that we're studying, here in about a minute, and we're going to look for evidence and explanation of how we see these vocabulary terms, these terms, in the text. Potency, independence, and so forth. Strength, estrangement, isolation, and so forth.

STUDENT: Sacrifices. Like when he had to burn down his own home, and then he saw Mildred running away. Like he lost alone in the woods.

TEACHER: Very good. What about positives?

STUDENT: I was thinking like, when he was in the river. Like, he started to have new perspective on life and understand that.

TEACHER: Very good. So what else is happening in the river? New perspectives on life. He's got the leisure.

STUDENT: The other teachers-- No, the other people he finds

TEACHER: The runaways.

STUDENT: Yeah, the runaways. They help him reach self actualization, right? Like, find what he's worth.

TEACHER: Where do we see evidence of that? Can you summarize for me what happens? Where do we see?

STUDENT: 107.

STUDENT: They tell him that he's a part of their society, I guess. Their own society, because he's read that book and now he's part of it.

TEACHER: You remember this, Che?

STUDENT: Yes.

TEACHER: Do you remember, what position does he take within that group that Cassie's talking about?

STUDENT: He takes over the position, he remembers, it's either the Holy Bible or it's--

TEACHER: Ecclesiastes.

STUDENT: Yeah.

TEACHER: But I guess my question is this, what role does he take within that group?

STUDENT: Like, he fits in. Because in society, he didn't fit in, but now since he's in this group of men, like to understand him, he finally fits in.

TEACHER: I agree with exactly what you're saying. If we were to look for a specific piece of evidence, what does he do at the end of the novel in relationship to the group?

STUDENT: He leads the group.

TEACHER: Yes, very good. He leads the group. OK, and that may tie in to a piece of evidence for self actualization. He becomes a leader of sorts. Good, nice job.

STUDENT: So, on positive, reached self-actualisation. And we got a quote for that. Under it, put a bullet point or dash that says leads the group.

STUDENT: Lenny has no morals, that's kind of a negative.

STUDENT: They just kind of wandered from ranch to ranch.

STUDENT: Nothing's rooting them, so they can choose where they root down.

TEACHER: This is a positive? What do you think?

STUDENT: To all places.

TEACHER: I don't know, this is the hardest part, right? Where do you think there's positive within "Of Mice and Men"? Migrant workers, estranged from home. Not having a home, having to bounce from place to place. I mean, what would be the one positive quality that comes out of it?

STUDENT: Dreaming?

TEACHER: The dream, OK. What do other migrants say to George and Lenny?

STUDENT: That they're rare.

TEACHER: They're rare, they're strange, right?

STUDENT: They have understanding.

TEACHER: They don't understand. The library, who has understanding? Who understands one another?

STUDENT: Lenny and George. They have a relationship that they can validate each other's existence because they understand each other.

TEACHER: Well said. That's what I would be looking for. That would strengthen your evidence. Them Did you hear what he said? They validate each other's existence. That's good. Now where are you going to find support for that?

STUDENT: Where they say that they have each other.

TEACHER: Very good, where is that at?

STUDENT: It's whenever he talks about the dream house.

TEACHER: We just essentially engaged in the thought process necessary to find success on the final. We have one more novel to read, "The Lord of the Flies", so as we read "Lord of the Flies", we want to be aware of where we're headed. We don't have a lot of time before the final exam, so as we move into the text, we have an idea of bringing texts together. We want to synthesize, right? We want to find those common threads that bring texts together. So what I'd like you to do on this note card is just, having gone through the experience, I want you to explain how you will synthesize Said's essay with the literature we have studied. What thought process do you have to continue to go through? What activities do you have to do in order to find success and bring all the literature together?