

10.2.2

Lesson 9

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze paragraphs 27–31 of “A Genetics of Justice” (from “Unfortunately for my mother, I grew up to be a writer” to “full-blown in a family moment, there it was”), in which Alvarez describes her choice to become a writer and the challenge she faces when she decides to publish a novel critical of the dictatorship. Students explore how portions of the text develop and refine Alvarez’s ideas and claims. Additionally, students analyze the powerful family moment and reflection Alvarez uses to conclude the essay.

This lesson assesses student learning through a Quick Write on the following prompt: How does Alvarez refine a central idea of the text in paragraphs 27–31? For homework, students reread the essay and organize their notes to prepare for the End-of-Unit Assessment. Students also reread and annotate the essay with a specific focus on of the idea of justice.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RI.9-10.2	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
RI.9-10.5	Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
Addressed Standard(s)	
L.9-10.5.a	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

Assessment

Assessment(s)
<p>Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does Alvarez refine a central idea of the text in paragraphs 27–31?
High Performance Response(s)
<p>A High Performance Response should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a central idea that Alvarez refines in paragraphs 27–31 (e.g., silence versus voice, trauma, or freedom). Explain how Alvarez refines the idea in paragraphs 27–31 (e.g., throughout the essay Alvarez’s family struggles to be free from the fear and influence of the dictatorship. In the final paragraphs Alvarez’s mother finally says, “I don’t care what happens to us.” This is the first time in the essay Alvarez’s mother seems to be free from her fear of the dictatorship).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contemporaries (n.) – people of the same age as each other cronies (n.) – close friends, companions embers (n.) – small live pieces of coal, wood, etc., as in a dying fire instilled (v.) – infused slowly or gradually into the mind or feelings
Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inscribed (v.) – addressed or dedicated (a book, photograph, etc.) informally to a person, especially by writing a brief personal note in or on it

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<p>Standards & Text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.5, L.9-10.5.a Text: “A Genetics of Justice” by Julia Alvarez paragraphs 27–31 	

Learning Sequence:	
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda	1. 5%
2. Homework Accountability	2. 10%
3. Masterful Reading	3. 10%
4. Reading and Discussion	4. 55%
5. Quick Write	5. 15%
6. Closing	6. 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the Central Ideas Tracking Tool (refer to 10.2.1 Lesson 5)—Students may need blank copies of the tool if they have run out of space on their original tool.
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer 10.2.1 Lesson 1)

Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
►	Indicates student action(s).
💬	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
❗	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and assessed standards for this lesson: RI.9-10.2 and RI.9-10.5. In this lesson, students read the conclusion of “A Genetics of Justice” and analyze how the final paragraphs of the essay develop and refine one of Alvarez’s central ideas.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they applied their chosen focus standard to their text. Lead a brief share out on the previous lesson's AIR homework assignment. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text.

- ▶ Students (or student pairs) discuss and share how they applied their chosen focus standard to their AIR text from the previous lesson's homework.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

10%

Have students listen to a Masterful Reading of paragraphs 27–31 from “A Genetics of Justice” (from “Unfortunately for my mother, I grew up to be a writer” to “full-blown in a family moment, there it was”). Instruct students to listen for ideas developed in these final paragraphs of the essay.

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently.

Activity 4: Reading and Discussion

55%

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss.

Instruct student groups to reread paragraph 27 (from “Unfortunately for my mother, I grew up to be a writer” to “she did not talk to me for months”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

In paragraph 27, What is Alvarez’s mother’s response to Alvarez’s poetry? What is her response to Alvarez’s first novel?

- 💬 At first, when Alvarez writes poetry, her mother “[flushes] with personal pride” but then she becomes angry and will “not talk to [Alvarez] for months.”

Explain the reason behind Alvarez’s mother’s response to Alvarez’s first novel.

- 💬 Alvarez’s mother’s feelings change because Alvarez writes a novel with a “strong autobiographical base” (par. 27).

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider asking them the following questions:

Which of her decisions does Alvarez claim is “unfortunate” for her mother?

- 💬 Alvarez says her decision to become “a writer publishing under [her] maiden name” was unfortunate for her mother.

Why do Alvarez's mother's friends believe that Alvarez's mother is a writer?

- Alvarez's mother's friends are confused because both Alvarez and her mother are named Julia Alvarez.

Based on Alvarez's mother's concerns from earlier in the essay, why would she object to a novel with a "strong autobiographical base"?

- Because she believes that "disrespect" is "anything short of worship" (par. 24), Alvarez's "just saying the truth" (par. 25) in her autobiographical novel would probably seem like disrespect to Alvarez's mother.

How do Alvarez's mother's responses to Alvarez's writing develop central ideas of the text?

- Student responses may include:
 - Alvarez's mother disapproves of Alvarez's writing or Alvarez's "voice," especially in novels "with a strong autobiographical base" (par. 27). Alvarez's mother's desire for "silence," especially about family "truths" further develops the ideas of silence versus voice (par. 26).
 - Alvarez's mother's desire for silence about Alvarez's writing shows that she is still living with the trauma of "living in the dictatorship" even though Trujillo is long dead (par. 18).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Distribute or instruct students to take out their Central Ideas Tracking Tools and record the development of central ideas in paragraph 27.

Provide students with the following definitions: *contemporaries* means "people of the same age as each other" and *cronies* means "close friends or companions."

- Students write the definitions of *contemporaries* and *cronies* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Instruct small groups to read paragraph 28 (from "Then I started to work on my second novel" to "an excuse to go after my family, after my father, after her") and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Which specific words in paragraph 28 recall ideas from earlier in the text?

- Student responses may include:
 - The phrase "three Mirabal sisters" and "confiscated *Time* magazine" recalls the "silence" Alvarez's parents demanded "about anything 'political'" (par. 18).

- The phrase “to go after my family, after my father, after her” recalls Alvarez’s mother’s traumatic fears that even after they move to New York her “own family . . . could suffer consequences” (par. 20).

What is the impact of recalling these ideas at the end of the essay?

- 💬 Recalling these ideas at the end of the essay reminds the readers of the issues still present in the Alvarez’s family life, especially those in the lives of Julia Alvarez and her mother: silence versus voice, trauma, and freedom.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with the previous two questions, ask the following questions:

What is the story of Alvarez’s second novel?

- 💬 Alvarez’s second novel is a “fictional retelling” of the story of three sisters living under the dictatorship.

What does Alvarez’s mother believe might happen if Alvarez publishes her second novel?

- 💬 Alvarez’s mother believes “cronies of the dictator” might go after her family because of the novel.

- ① Consider reminding students of their work with the Mirabal sisters in 10.2.2 Lesson 6 homework.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Instruct students to use their Central Ideas Tracking Tools to record the development of central ideas in paragraph 28.

Provide students with the following definition: *embers* means “small live pieces of coal, wood, etc., as in a dying fire.”

- ▶ Students write the definition of *embers* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Instruct small groups to read paragraph 29 (from “This was one of the hardest challenges” to “they said, shaking their heads”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

What “hardest challenge” does Alvarez introduce in paragraph 29? How does Alvarez use rhetoric to develop this “challenge”?

- 💬 Alvarez develops her challenge about whether or not she should publish her second novel. Alvarez uses two rhetorical questions to develop the challenge. First she asks, “Could I really put my work above the lives of human beings?” Next, she asks, “But, if I shut up, wouldn’t I still be fanning the embers of dictatorship?” (par. 29).

What does the word *embers* in the phrase “the embers of the dictatorship” suggest about the status of the dictatorship?

- ☞ The word *embers* describes what is left over when a fire is dying. This image suggests the dictatorship is not powerful like it used to be, but it is not totally gone and could still be dangerous.

① Consider drawing students’ attention to their application of standard L.9-10.5.a through the process of determining meaning of figurative language.

How does Alvarez’s “challenge” in paragraph 29 further develop one of the essay’s central ideas?

- ☞ Alvarez considers not publishing her second novel because she is afraid she would be “put[ting] [her] work above the lives of human beings” (par. 29). This develops the essay’s central idea of silence versus voice. This is another example of how the dictatorship used fear to silence people in the Dominican Republic and even after they left the country.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to understand Alvarez’s “challenge,” consider asking the following question:

What do Alvarez’s cousins in the Dominican Republic say about Alvarez’s mother’s “dire predictions”?

- ☞ Alvarez’s cousins say that her “mother’s dire predictions” have no “foundation.” This means that people will not be killed because of Alvarez’s writing.

What is the meaning of the cousins’ response that “old people still see a SIM agent under every bush”?

- ☞ The cousins say that “old people still see a SIM agent under every bush” to illustrate how older people in the Dominican Republic still live in fear of the dictatorship.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Instruct students to use their Central Ideas Tracking Tools to record the development of central ideas in paragraph 29.

Provide students with the following definition: *instilled* means “infused slowly or gradually into the mind or feelings.”

- ▶ Students write the definition of *instilled* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Instruct small groups to read paragraphs 30 and 31 (from “When the novel came out” to “in a family moment, there it was”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

What does Alvarez inscribe for her parents? How does this inscription refine an idea developed in Alvarez’s “challenge” about publishing the novel?

- ① Consider providing students with the following definition: *inscribed* means “addressed or dedicated (a book, photograph, etc.) informally to a person, especially by writing a brief personal note in or on it.”
 - ▶ Students write the definition of *inscribed* on their copy of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- 💬 Alvarez inscribes the note, “Thank you for having instilled in me through your sufferings a desire for freedom and justice” inside her novel. This inscription refines the idea that Alvarez published the novel, even though she was afraid, because she wants freedom and justice.

How does the phone call between Alvarez and her mother develop the central ideas of trauma and freedom?

- 💬 Student responses may include:
 - The way Alvarez’s mother reacts to the novel develops the idea of trauma. After she reads the novel, Alvarez’s mother says, “You put me back in those days. It was like I was reliving it all” (par. 30).
 - Imagining her past experience through the novel allows Alvarez’s mother to be freed from the trauma of the dictatorship. She goes from being afraid that the novel will “directly” endanger her family’s lives to sobbing, “I don’t care what happens to us!” (par. 30).
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle to answer these questions, consider asking the following questions:

What is Alvarez’s mother’s reaction after reading the novel? What causes this reaction?

- 💬 Alvarez’s mother calls Alvarez to tell her that reading the novel was like being “back in those days” and “reliving it all” (par. 30). Then she begins “sobbing” (par. 30). Alvarez’s mother is grateful and “so proud of [Alvarez] for writing this book” (par. 30).

How does the phone call refine Alvarez’s ideas about her relationship with her mother?

- 💬 Throughout the essay, Alvarez develops the conflict in her “rocky” (par. 23) relationship with her mother. The phone call in paragraph 30 introduces a new element of the relationship by showing how Alvarez’s mother is proud of her for her courage in publishing the novel.

What is the meaning of “genetic justice” as Alvarez describes it? How is the event described in paragraph 31 an example of “genetic justice”?

- 💬 Student responses may include:

- Genetic justice is the value of justice being handed down from one generation to the next.
- Although Alvarez describes her parents as losing their “spark” of fighting for justice (par. 10), Alvarez credits her parents’ “sufferings” as giving her “a desire for freedom and justice” (par. 30). So they handed down a desire for justice to Alvarez.
- Alvarez herself gives justice back to her parents. Alvarez writes a novel that “put[s her mother] back in those days” of suffering under the dictatorship. By giving voice to her parents’ fears and suffering, she frees them from the hold the dictatorship had on them. Her mother finally experiences this freedom and justice, saying, “I don’t care what happens to us!” (par. 30).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Instruct students to use their Central Ideas Tracking Tools to record the development of central ideas in paragraphs 30 and 31.

Activity 5: Quick Write

15%

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

How does Alvarez refine a central idea of the text in paragraphs 27–31?

Instruct students to look at their annotations and tools to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses and to practice using specific language and domain-specific vocabulary. Remind students to use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

① Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

- ▶ Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.

🗨 See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

Activity 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread “A Genetics of Justice” and organize their notes and annotations in preparation for the End-of-Unit Assessment.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Also for homework, instruct students to reread the essay and annotate for the idea of “justice” and how Alvarez develops the idea throughout the essay.

Homework

Reread “A Genetics of Justice” and organize and expand your notes and annotations in preparation for the End-of-Unit Assessment. Also, reread the essay and annotate for the idea of justice and how Alvarez develops the idea throughout the essay.

Model Central Ideas Tracking Tool

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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Directions: Identify the central ideas that you encounter throughout the text. Trace the development of those ideas by noting how the author introduces, develops, or refines these ideas in the texts. Cite textual evidence to support your work.

Text:	"A Genetics of Justice"
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Paragraph #	Central Ideas	Notes and Connections
27	Trauma	<p>Alvarez publishes a novel "with a strong autobiographical base" in which she likely revealed details about her family's life, so her mother does "not talk to [her] for months" (par. 27).</p> <p>The fear surrounding Alvarez publishing her second novel refines the idea of trauma. Even though there is no real danger, "old people still see a SIM agent under every bush" (par. 29), so Alvarez's mother worries that the dictatorship will hurt people because of the novel. This fear shows some of the long-term effects of trauma.</p>
29–31	Silence versus voice	<p>Alvarez considers not publishing her second novel because she is afraid she would be "put[ting her] work above the lives of human beings," but she also doesn't want to "[fan] the embers of the dictatorship" (par. 29). This debate is a struggle between Alvarez being silenced by fear of the dictatorship and using her voice to tell a story based on truth.</p>
30	Freedom	<p>Alvarez thanks her parents for instilling in her "a desire for freedom and justice."</p> <p>Alvarez's mother has a breakthrough when she finally feels free from the fear and influence of the dictatorship. Speaking of the consequences that might come from the publishing of Alvarez's second novel, she says, "I don't care what happens to us" (par. 30).</p>