

12.4.2 Lesson 15

Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze pages 159-187 of *The Namesake* (from “Ashima sits at the kitchen table on Pemberton Road” to “a place where there was nowhere left to go”), in which the Gangulis deal with Ashoke’s death. Student analysis focuses on the structure of this excerpt and the aesthetic impact of specific structural choices such as flashbacks and shifts in the narrator’s perspective. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Analyze the aesthetic impact of one or more structural choices in this excerpt.

For homework, students read and annotate pages 188-201 of *The Namesake* and respond briefly in writing to several questions about the excerpt.

Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.11-12.9.a	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>a. Apply <i>grades 11-12 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics”).</p>

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Assessment

Assessment(s)

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.

- Analyze the aesthetic impact of one or more structural choices in this excerpt.

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify examples of structural choices in the excerpt (e.g., foreshadowing, shifts in narrator perspective, flashback, reflection, juxtaposition).
- Analyze the aesthetic impact of one or more structural choices in this excerpt (e.g., The structure of this excerpt contributes to a powerful sense of nostalgia and responsibility in the wake of a family member's death. The excerpt opens with foreshadowing: Ashima is alone "at the kitchen table" (p. 159), unaware that she is about to be thrust into a life of solitude, and she is contemplating how she "feels too old to learn such a skill" (p. 161). When Ashima learns of Ashoke's death, she informs Gogol, at which point the narration's perspective shifts to Gogol: "Gogol flies from LaGuardia to Cleveland alone" (p. 169). This abrupt shift highlights the handing over of responsibility, as well as the shock Gogol feels after his father's death. Throughout the excerpt, Gogol reflects on memories with his father, like "the many times he had driven with his family ... to the sea" (p. 185). These nostalgic reflections contrast the tense and conflict-ridden reflections of his parents he has in previous excerpts, which is beautiful because it signifies Gogol's insight into his own love for his father and acceptance of their "journey" (p. 187) together.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- vagabonds (n.) - people who wander from place to place without any settled home
- haughtiness (n.) - the insulting attitude of people who think that they are better, smarter, or more important than other people
- uniformity (n.) - overall sameness, homogeneity, or regularity
- façades (n.) - fronts of a building, especially imposing or decorative ones
- relentless (adj.) - continuing without becoming weaker, less severe, etc.
- deferring (v.) - putting off (action, consideration, etc.) to a future time
- forgoing (v.) - giving up the use or enjoyment of (something)
- abated (v.) - reduced in amount, degree, intensity, etc.; lessened; diminished
- intermittently (adv.) - in a way that is not constant or steady
- breakwater (n.) - a wall that is built out into the sea to protect a harbor or beach from the force of waves

Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)

- None.

Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)

- replica (n.) - an exact or very close copy of something
- abhorred (v.) - disliked (someone or something) very much
- peril (n.) - the possibility that you will be hurt or killed or that something unpleasant or bad will happen

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RL.11-12.5, W.11-12.9.a Text: <i>The Namesake</i> by Jhumpa Lahiri, pages 159-187 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Reading and Discussion 4. Quick Write 5. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 20% 3. 55% 4. 15% 5. 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.4.1 Lesson 1) (optional)

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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 standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.5. In this lesson, students analyze pages 159-187 of *The Namesake*, focusing on how one or more structural choices in this excerpt contribute to aesthetic impact.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

20%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the first part of the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read pages 159-187 of *The Namesake* and annotate for structural choices.) Instruct students to form pairs and share their annotations.

- Student annotations may include:
 - “Ashima sits at the kitchen table on Pemberton Road” (p. 159) - This evidence shows how the plot progresses in time and the narrator's perspective shifts to Ashima.
 - “Ashima feels too old to learn such a skill.” (p. 161) - This evidence foreshadows Ashima's inevitable solitude after Ashoke's death.

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- “Sonia flies back from San Francisco” (p. 169) - This evidence shows how the plot progresses in time and the narrator’s perspective shifts focus from Ashima to Sonia and Gogol.
- “He takes a cab from the airport” (p. 171) - This evidence shows how Lahiri moves the plot ahead in time and does not provide the details of Gogol’s phone call with Sonia.
- “The landscape jerks forward” (p. 184) - This evidence shows how Gogol’s experience on the train causes a flashback to memories of his father and his childhood.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct students to take out their responses to the second part of the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: How does Gogol’s career choice and his choice to move in with Maxine further develop a central idea in the text?)

- Student responses may include:
 - Gogol’s choice to study at “the architecture program at Columbia” (p. 125) as opposed to MIT, “his father’s alma mater” (p. 126) highlights that he not only wishes to be separate from his family, but that he seeks to build a new home for himself. As an architect, Gogol wishes to “design[] and renovat[e] private residences” (p. 125), which suggests his desire to find a home. These desires arise from a yearning for a home he does not have, and so his career choice further develops the central idea of home.
 - Gogol’s decision to move in with Maxine suggests that he longs for home and longs for connection to a family. He is “effortlessly incorporated” (p. 136) into the Ratliffs’ life, and quickly becomes absorbed into their routines, which highlights his willingness to be taken in and taken care of by a family that is not his own. This willingness arises from a longing for a home where he feels comfortable in who he is.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

55%

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Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project the following questions for students to discuss. Instruct students to refer to pages 159-187 (from “Ashima sits at the kitchen table on Pemberton Road” to “a place where there was nowhere left to go”) and discuss the following questions in their groups before sharing out with the class. Instruct students to continue to annotate as they discuss (W.11-12.9.a).

Provide students with the definitions of *vagabonds*, *haughtiness*, *uniformity*, *façades*, *relentless*, *deferring*, *forgoing*, *abated*, *intermittently*, and *breakwater*.

- Students may be familiar with some of these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the group.
 - Students write the definitions of *vagabonds*, *haughtiness*, *uniformity*, *façades*, *relentless*, *deferring*, *forgoing*, *abated*, *intermittently*, and *breakwater* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *replica*, *abhorred*, and *peril*.
 - Students write the definitions of *replica*, *abhorred*, and *peril* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students throughout this lesson:

How does the structure of this excerpt contribute to the beauty of the text?

How does the beginning of this excerpt compare to the end of the previous excerpt: “in this cloistered wilderness, he is free” (p. 158)? What is the impact of this structural choice?

- Student responses may include:
 - The beginning of this excerpt shifts abruptly to Ashima’s perspective with no transition from the last excerpt, which focused entirely on Gogol’s perspective. Time has passed from summer to Christmas, as Ashima “address[es] Christmas cards” (p. 159). This excerpt begins, “Ashima sits at the kitchen table” (p. 159), just after Gogol imagines Ashima trying to call him in New Hampshire but realizing she cannot, which highlights their mutual isolation.
 - The fact that “Ashima sits at the kitchen table” alone (p. 159), when she is about to experience Ashoke’s death and therefore become much more alone, contrasts with the end of the last excerpt, in which Gogol is with Maxine.

How do Ashima's reflections about buying "the oldest [address] book" (p. 160) connect to events that occur later in the excerpt?

- Student responses may include:
 - As Ashima sits at the kitchen table addressing Christmas cards, she remembers that "[s]he bought the oldest book, soon after arriving in America, one of her first trips out of the apartment without Ashoke" (p. 160). Her reflections about "one of her first trips ... without Ashoke" connects to later events because Ashima will soon learn of his death, thus, she will soon be "without Ashoke" (p. 160) for the rest of her life.
 - These reflections transition Ashima into thinking about solitude, a skill "she feels too old to learn" (p. 161). Ashima "hates returning in the evenings to a dark, empty house" (p. 161), and she will have "to learn" (p. 161) how to do so after Ashoke's death, although she does not know this when she is addressing the cards.

What is the impact of Lahiri's choice to shift to Gogol's perspective after the break in the text on page 169?

- Student responses may include:
 - Prior to the break in the text, the narrator describes Ashima's experience, being alone and learning of Ashoke's death; after the break in the text, the narrator's focus shifts to Gogol flying "to Cleveland alone" (p. 169) to retrieve his father's body. The impact of Lahiri's sudden switch in perspective is beautiful, in part because it is jarring; the reader gains insight into both Ashima and Gogol, who are currently apart but will soon be reconnected in the midst of grief.
 - As Ashima calls "the number she has written down for Maxine" to tell Gogol, the reader is thrust into his world, in which he "flies from LaGuardia to Cleveland alone" (p. 169). The phone conversation between Ashima and Gogol is absent, implying that the importance is not how Gogol learns of Ashoke's death, but what Gogol's responsibilities are in the wake of the tragedy. Because Gogol takes care of the logistics in Cleveland, the switch in perspective mirrors the transition of responsibility from Ashima to Gogol.
- Remind students that *aesthetic* means "of or relating to the beautiful."
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

What does Gogol's visit to the hospital suggest about his state of mind in relation to Ashoke's death?

- Gogol's behavior in the hospital suggests that he has not yet fully grasped his father's death. Gogol first asks Mr. Davenport, "Are you—were you my father's doctor?" (p. 172), which suggests he has not yet fully comprehended the death. When Gogol sees his father's body, he notices that "[h]is glasses are missing" (p. 172) which suggests his desire to see his father the way he was.

What do Maxine and Gogol's conversations in this excerpt illustrate about each of them as individuals?

- Student responses may include:
 - Maxine's suggestion that Gogol "go to a hotel" suggests that she does not want to face death or hardship. Gogol's reaction to "hang[] up" while he is on hold with the hotel and his desire not to "leave his father's apartment empty" (p. 177) suggests both his desire to be with what is left of his father and his willingness to face death.
 - Maxine tries to convince Gogol "to go up to New Hampshire" for New Year's Eve, and suggests that he "get away from all this" (p. 182). Gogol responds by saying that he does not "want to get away" (p. 182), demonstrating that he takes comfort in his Bengali traditions and family in a way that Maxine does not understand because Gogol has never been connected to his family in this way before.

How does Ashoke's death impact Gogol's relationship to his home in Boston?

- Ashoke's death reconnects Gogol to his home and family in Boston. At first, Gogol is "terrified to see his mother" (p. 179) and dreads returning to Boston, but then they bond in grief. For ten days following Ashoke's death, Gogol and his family "eat a mourner's diet" (p. 180) and connect in their mutual grief. Gogol, Sonia, and Ashima are all bound by having to deal with "the calls, the flowers that are everything, the visitors" (p. 181). When Maxine visits, Gogol "doesn't care how the house ... might appear to her eyes" (p. 182), whereas before Ashoke's death, he did care.

How does Lahiri structure Gogol's memories of his father throughout this excerpt?

- The memories take place in the past tense: "At the end of the breakwater, there was a field of yellow reeds to the right" (p. 186). Gogol is reminded of his father throughout the excerpt in relation to small everyday occurrences, like when "[t]he train tilts to the left" and he is reminded "[o]f the disaster that has given him his name" (p. 185).

How do Gogol's final reflections of his father contribute to the power of this excerpt?

- At the end of this excerpt, Gogol nostalgically reflects on a moment with his father at Cape Cod, in which Ashoke says, "Remember that you and I made this journey" (p.

187), which suggests Gogol’s insight into the fact that his father’s journey resulted in Gogol’s own life. This memory and insight stands in contrast to Gogol’s previous reflections of memories with his parents, because prior to this, Gogol always remembers conflicts or his negative thoughts about his parents instead of warm, intimate moments like the journey to the “end of the breakwater” (p. 186).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 4: Quick Write

15%

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

Analyze the aesthetic impact of one or more structural choices in this excerpt.

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.
- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.
- Consider using the Short Response Rubric to assess students’ writing. Students may use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

Activity 5: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read and annotate pages 188-201 of *The Namesake* (from “A year has passed since his father’s death” to “sitting with her back to the room”) (W.11-12.9.a). Additionally, instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following questions about the excerpt:

How do the Gangulis’ various reactions to Ashoke’s death further refine one or more of the text’s central ideas?

What draws Gogol to Bridget? What does this relationship suggest about Gogol’s state of mind?

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- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider reminding students that they should annotate for character development, structural choices, and central ideas.
 - Students follow along.

Homework

Read and annotate pages 188-201 of *The Namesake* (from “A year has passed since his father’s death” to “sitting with her back to the room”). Additionally, respond briefly in writing to the following questions:

How do the Gangulis’ various reactions to Ashoke’s death further refine one or more of the text’s central ideas?

What draws Gogol to Bridget? What does this relationship suggest about Gogol’s state of mind?

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