

## 12.4.2

## Lesson 21

## Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze their reading of the entirety of *The Namesake* by engaging in a fishbowl discussion about identity. Before engaging in discussion, students consider the discussion prompt individually, while reviewing their notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes in order to independently draft written responses. Students then engage in a fishbowl discussion about the text in response to the following prompt: How does Gogol explore his identity throughout *The Namesake*?

For homework, students write a text-based narrative writing piece in response to the following prompt: Choose a character from *The Namesake* and rewrite a key scene in the novel from his or her first-person perspective.

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## Standards

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Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.2	Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
SL.11-12.1.a, c, d	<p>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues</i>, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</li> <li>c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.</li> <li>d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.</li> </ul>
Addressed Standard(s)	

W.11-12.3. a-d	<p>Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.</li><li>b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.</li><li>c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).</li><li>d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.</li></ul>
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## Assessment

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**Assessment(s)**

Student learning is assessed via a whole-class discussion at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.

- How does Gogol explore his identity throughout *The Namesake*?
- Student learning will be assessed using the relevant portions of the 12.4 Speaking and Listening Rubric.

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze how Gogol explores his identity throughout the novel (e.g., Gogol explores his identity over the course of the novel through his names. As a child, Gogol goes against Bengali custom and maintains his pet name for public use because he is frightened of “be[ing] Nikhil, someone he doesn’t know” (p. 57). As an adolescent, Gogol feels embarrassed about his strange pet name and “he hates having to constantly explain” his name to people (p. 76), thus demonstrating his own discomfort with his identity. Gogol then legally changes his name to Nikhil, in an attempt to free himself from being “afflicted by the embarrassment of his name” (p. 100), because he no longer has to be Gogol to anyone other than his family. By the time Gogol is an adult and his marriage has ended, he understands that his name is part of the “string of accidents” (p. 286) that comprise his family history, and contribute to his identity, as he realizes it “had not been possible to reinvent himself fully” (p. 287). At the novel’s end, Gogol acknowledges his conflicted identity by reading his namesake, because “that randomness, that error” that is his name defines him and is “what prevailed, what endured, in the end” (p. 287).).

## Vocabulary

**Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)**

- None.\*

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

- None.\*

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

- None.\*

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\*Because this is not a close reading lesson, there is no specified vocabulary. However, in the process of returning to the text, students may uncover unfamiliar words. Teacher can guide students to make meaning of these words using the strategies outlined in L.11-12-4.a-d.

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards: RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3, SL.11-12.1.a, c, d, W.11-12.3.a-d</li> <li>Text: <i>The Namesake</i> by Jhumpa Lahiri</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning Sequence:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>2. Homework Accountability</li> <li>3. Pre-Discussion Text Review</li> <li>4. Fishbowl Discussion</li> <li>5. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 15%</li> <li>3. 20%</li> <li>4. 55%</li> <li>5. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Student copies of the 12.4 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.4.1 Lesson 3)
- Student copies of the 12.4 Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.4.1 Lesson 4)

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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.
	<b>Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</b>
	<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 the assessed standards for this lesson: RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3, and SL.11-12.1.a, c, d. In this lesson, students do not encounter any new text. Instead, students analyze *The Namesake* as a whole by engaging in a fishbowl discussion about how Gogol explores his identity throughout the novel.

- Students look at the agenda.

### Activity 2: Homework Accountability

15%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the first part of the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: Choose either Ashima or Gogol. To what extent does the novel's ending provide this character closure?)

- Student responses may include:
  - The ending of *The Namesake* provides closure for Ashima because she makes peace with the fact that her identity struggles remain unresolved. As she cleans her house in preparation to sell it so she can move to India, she realizes that even though she resisted America for so many years “[s]he will miss the country in which she had grown to know and love her husband” (p. 279). Ashima accepts that her American life, like the bathrobe her husband gave her, never quite fit, but it is “a comfort all the same” (p. 280). With her plan to live part of the year in India and

the other part in the American Northeast, Ashima embodies the “[t]rue ... meaning of her name” because “she will be without borders” (p. 276). The novel’s ending provides closure for her character because it ends with Ashima accepting that she belongs in neither India nor America.

- The ending of *The Namesake* provides closure for Gogol in a contradictory way because he learns to accept the conflicted nature of his identity. Instead of the novel ending with Gogol smoothly reconciling with his name, it ends with him accepting the struggle inherent in all that his name symbolizes and means. At Ashima’s Christmas party, Gogol realizes that his name, like the rest of his family history, is part of “a string of accidents” (p. 286). He realizes that though these events were “things for which it was impossible to prepare,” they inevitably “determined who he is” no matter how much he resisted (p. 287). Gogol recovers his identity “by chance” (p. 291) just before his identity as Gogol becomes “all but lost” (p. 290), which is similar to the way he rescued his father’s gift of Nikolai Gogol’s short stories from being discarded, and the way his father was saved from the train wreck that began the chaotic chain of events that molded Gogol’s identity. Gogol’s closure is that he can fully accept his fractured identity rather than try to “correct that randomness” (p. 287) before he loses a substantial part of who he is.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

- Students are held accountable for the discussion preparation work they generated for homework during Activity 3: Pre-Discussion Text Review and Activity 4: Fishbowl Discussion.

### Activity 3: Pre-Discussion Text Review

20%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the second part of the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Review your notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes from *The Namesake* in preparation for the next lesson’s discussion.)

- Students take out their notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes in preparation for the fishbowl discussion.

In this activity, students independently prepare for the following activity’s fishbowl discussion. Post or project the following discussion prompt:

**How does Gogol explore his identity throughout *The Namesake*?**

Instruct students to independently review the entirety of *The Namesake*, as well as their notes, annotations, and Quick Writes, in preparation for the discussion. Instruct students to



begin drafting preliminary written responses to the prompt in preparation for the following activity's discussion.

- Students independently review their texts, notes, annotations, and Quick Writes and draft preliminary written responses to the prompt in preparation for the following activity's discussion.

## Activity 4: Fishbowl Discussion

**55%**

Provide students with the discussion assessment prompt:

**How does Gogol explore his identity throughout *The Namesake*?**

Transition the class into two equal groups by forming two circles: one inner circle and one outer circle. Explain to students how the fishbowl discussion works: the inner circle is the discussion group, while the outer circle listens and takes notes on the inner group's discussion. Following the first round of discussion, the groups switch places, and the process repeats.

Inform students that this fishbowl discussion is the lesson assessment. Instruct students to use the relevant portions of the 12.4 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist to guide their discussion. Students will self-assess their participation after the fishbowl discussion.

- Students in the inner circle begin the discussion, posing questions, responses, and using evidence to support their answers. Students in the outer circle take notes to share in the second half of the discussion.

Instruct students in the outer circle to share at least one question or response to a question from a student in the inner circle, and share something new they learned as a result of the discussion. Ask students to note the strong points of the discussion and where the discussion could have been stronger.

- Students in the outer circle share one question or response as well as one idea they learned as a result of the discussion. Students in the inner circle listen.

Repeat this activity, moving students from the outer circle to the inner circle.

- Consider reminding students of their previous work with SL.11-12.1.a, as this discussion requires that students come to class having read the material and asks them to explicitly draw on evidence from the text to support their discussion.
- Consider reminding students of their previous work with SL.11-12.1.c, as this discussion requires that students pose and respond to questions, and qualify or justify their own points of agreement and disagreement with other students.

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- Consider reminding students of their previous work with SL.11-12.1.d, as this discussion requires that students seek to understand and respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives in order to deepen the investigation of their position and observations.
  - Student groups switch places and repeat the fishbowl discussion process.
  - Student responses may include:
    - Gogol explores his identity through his various names. As a child, he clings to his pet name because “[h]e is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn’t know. Who doesn’t know him” (p. 57). Once he becomes a teenager, Gogol feels ashamed of his pet name, so he changes his name to Nikhil in hopes of forging a new identity for himself. After changing his name, “[h]e wonders if this is how it feels ... for a prisoner to walk free” (p. 102), which implies Gogol finds his new identity as Nikhil liberating. Toward the end of the novel, when Gogol realizes he will lose his pet name because the “givers and keepers” of it continue to disperse, he comes to accept his name because the death of his pet name “provides no solace” (p. 289). He is “anxious ... to read the book he had once forsaken” (p. 290), the book written by his namesake. In accepting his name, Gogol accepts his conflicted identity, as evidenced by the fact that the novel closes when he “starts to read” (p. 291) the work of his namesake.
    - Gogol’s relationships with women before Moushumi illustrate Gogol’s exploration of his identity because all of the relationships involve women with different upbringings than him. In college, Gogol meets Ruth, his first love. Gogol realizes he cannot reconcile his relationship with Ruth with his Bengali identity because his parents “are not in the least bit proud or pleased” (p. 116) that he is dating her, an “American[]” (p. 117). The second relationship with Maxine is similar in that Gogol is “effortlessly incorporated into” her life (p. 136), while avoiding his own family and upbringing. While Gogol is on vacation with Maxine he realizes that “at Maxine’s side ... he is free” (p. 158). Just like Maxine’s summer home is in the “cloistered wilderness” (p. 158) and removed from the rest of the world, Maxine’s family’s lifestyle is completely removed from Gogol’s identity as the son of Bengali immigrants, because she is white and grew up in a large “Greek Revival” home in Manhattan (p. 130). In both of Gogol’s relationships before his marriage to Moushumi, his Bengali identity cannot be reconciled with the relationship, because he is either at odds with his parents’ expectations or disconnected from his family and heritage entirely.
    - Gogol’s relationship with Moushumi highlights the exploration of his identity because their relationship is largely based on their shared cultural identity. Moushumi and Gogol are attracted to each other in part because they “genuinely like[]” (p. 248) each other, but also because of their shared background. Moushumi concedes that part of why she married Gogol was the similarity of their shared

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heritage and upbringing, but that eventually “the familiarity that had once drawn her to him” (p. 250) starts to drive her away from him. Later, Gogol also admits that he and Moushumi “had both acted on the same impulse, that was their mistake” (p. 284). Moushumi and Gogol’s attraction to each other shows that the marriage was born out of a failed attempt for both characters to reclaim their cultural identities.

- Gogol explores his identity through college; moving out of his parents’ home gives him the freedom to change this identity. When Gogol attends Yale, he rushes all over campus filling out forms to change his name from Gogol to Nikhil so that “[b]y the time upperclassmen arrive and classes begin, he’s paved the way for a whole university to call him Nikhil” (p. 104). In erasing his pet name from the college record, Gogol frees himself to try and fully become Nikhil. Yale’s architecture also helps Gogol explore his identity, because it “roots [Gogol] to his environs in a way he had never felt growing up on Pemberton Road” (p. 108). Gogol further explores his identity through his college classes. Instead of taking classes to prepare him to be “if not an engineer, then a doctor, a lawyer, an economist” (p. 105) as his parents expect, Gogol decides to become an architect because “now that he’s Nikhil it’s easier to ignore his parents” (p. 105). College allows Gogol to try to fully explore his new identity as Nikhil, even if “he doesn’t feel like Nikhil” sometimes (p. 105).
- Gogol explores his identity through his family and upbringing. As he grows up, Gogol resists his family’s attempts to define him. As a child, he resists taking on his good name as “[h]e is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn’t know” (p. 57), but then as a teenager he feels “afflicted by the embarrassment of his name” (p. 100), and so he changes it when he becomes an adult. Similarly, when his father gives Gogol a copy of “The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol” (p. 74) because of the author is his namesake, Gogol does not read it until he is in his thirties, and he understands the identity his parents tried to provide for him. Gogol realizes at the novel’s end that it was “for him, for Sonia, that his parents had gone to the trouble” (p. 286) of learning American customs and hosting the annual Christmas parties with other Bengalis in order to provide him with a context in which he could create an identity. Once Gogol gains a deeper understanding of his upbringing, he recognizes he no longer needs to explore different identities, but “accept, interpret, comprehend” (p. 287) the identity he already has.

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Instruct students to use the 12.4 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist to self-assess their own application of SL.11-12.a, c, d in their fishbowl discussion. Also, instruct students to provide a 1-2 sentence explanation of the self-assessment.

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- Students self-assess their speaking and listening skills for SL.11-12.1.a, c, d.

## Activity 5: Closing

**5%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to write a text-based narrative writing piece in response to the following prompt:

**Choose a character from *The Namesake* and rewrite a key scene in the novel from his or her first-person perspective.**

Instruct students to use the skills outlined in W.11-12.3.a-d when writing their scenes.

- Remind students of their work with W.11-12.3.a-d in Module 12.1 when writing personal narratives for the Common Application prompts.
- Remind students to use the 12.4 Narrative Writing Rubric and Checklist to guide their writing.
- This homework assignment prepares students for the 12.4 Performance Assessment by providing students an opportunity to practice the narrative writing skills they learned in Module 12.1.
- Students follow along.

## Homework

Write a text-based narrative writing piece in response to the following prompt:

**Choose a character from *The Namesake* and rewrite a key scene in the novel from his or her first-person perspective.**

Use the skills outlined in W.11-12.3.a-d when writing your scene.