12.4.2 Lesson 9

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze pages 72-88 of The Namesake (from "Gogol's fourteenth birthday. Like most events in his life" to "has passed, suddenly cumbersome, irrelevant to their lives") in which the Gangulis celebrate Gogol's fourteenth birthday and spend eight months in Calcutta during Ashoke's sabbatical. Students explore the development of Gogol's relationships with his parents and sister. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: Analyze the relationship between Gogol and his parents in this excerpt.

For homework, students review pages 72-88 of The Namesake and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt: Analyze the relationship between Gogol and Sonia in this excerpt. Also for homework, students read pages 88-96 of The Namesake and annotate for the development of central ideas.





Standards

Assessed Standard(s)		
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).	
Addressed Standard(s)		
W. 11-12.9.a	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	
	a. Apply grades 11-12 Reading standards 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").	

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 relationship between Gogol and his parents in this excerpt.

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

• Analyze the relationship between Gogol and his parents (e.g., In this excerpt, Gogol begins to assert his independence from his parents. Ashoke "notices the Lennon obituary pinned to the bulletin board, and then a cassette of classical Indian music he'd bought for Gogol months ago ... still sealed in its wrapper" (pp. 77-78), and begins to understand that his son is growing up and seeking an identity independent from them. However, the Gangulis' eight-month stay in Calcutta temporarily forces Gogol into a different, less independent relationship with his parents because, unlike in America, Ashima and Ashoke are culturally at ease where Gogol is not. While Ashima "wanders freely" in Calcutta, Gogol "has no sense of direction" and must "surrender to confinement" (p. 83). Upon returning to America, Gogol feels above all "relief," "as if they've never been gone" (p. 87). Gogol's "relief" reflects his changing relationship with his parents and his desire for greater independence because back on Pemberton Road, Gogol finds himself "free" once more (p. 87).).

Vocabulary





Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- supercilious (adj.) contemptuous, arrogant, or disdainful
- obscure (adj.) not well-known; not known to most people; difficult to understand
- entity (n.) something that has a real existence; thing
- gravity (n.) dignity; solemnity or seriousness
- irrelevance (n.) the quality or state of being unimportant
- crestfallen (adj.) very sad and disappointed
- disconcerted (adj.) bewildered or confused, as by something unexpected

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

None.

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

- mutation (n.) change or alteration
- receded (v.) moved away gradually; became smaller or weaker
- itinerary (n.) the places one goes to or plans to go to on a journey
- rickshaw (n.) a small, light vehicle with two wheels that is pulled by one person on foot or on a bicycle and that is used in some Asian countries
- cumbersome (adj.) hard to handle or manage because of size or weight

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson	
Standards & Text:		
• Standards: RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.a		
• Text: The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri, pages 72-88		
Learning Sequence:		
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda	1. 5%	
2. Homework Accountability	2. 25%	
3. Reading and Discussion	3. 50%	
4. Quick Write	4. 15%	
5. Closing	5. 5%	

File: 12.4.2 Lesson 9 Date: 6/30/15 Classroom Use: Starting 9/2015

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Materials

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

Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence		
Symbo l	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.	
	Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.	
)	Indicates student action(s).	
•	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.	
(i)	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.	

Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.3. In this lesson, students explore the development of Gogol's relationship with his family on pages 72-88 of *The Namesake*. Students engage in evidence-based discussion and then complete a brief writing assignment to close the lesson.

Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

25%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the first part of the previous lesson's homework assignment (Review pages 48-71 of *The Namesake* and respond briefly in writing to the following question: How does Gogol's relationship with his pet name develop over the course of pages 48-61?) Instruct students to form pairs and share their responses.





- Student responses may include:
 - As a child, Gogol remains attached to his pet name, and is so reluctant to change it that he "doesn't want to go to kindergarten" (p. 56) when he learns that he will have a different name there. Gogol responds fearfully to the idea of having a new name, with "tears springing to his eyes" (p. 57). The new name represents a new and unknown identity, and Gogol "is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. Who doesn't know him" (p. 57).
 - o Initially, at school, Gogol seems content with his pet name. As part of his early education, "he writes out his pet name again and again" (p. 60).
 - As Gogol grows up, his name "seems perfectly normal" to him (p. 66). Indeed, his
 parents encourage him to be proud of his name, telling him about the author Gogol
 and explaining that "the author's name, and therefore his, is known throughout
 the world and will live on forever" (p. 66). Gogol does not suffer teasing because
 of his unusual name; his teachers "know not to give it a second thought" (p. 67).
 - The visit to the graveyard when Gogol is eleven makes him aware of "the peculiarity of his name" (p. 68) for the first time. When the children make rubbings of the names on the gravestones, Gogol is unable, unlike the other children to "claim a grave" (p. 69) with his name on it. Instead, he identifies with names such as "Abijah," aware that he "has never met a person named Abijah, just as, he now realizes, he has never met another Gogol" (pp. 69-70). The visit to the graveyard marks the first time that Gogol is completely aware of his unique name: he finds himself drawn to the Puritan names in his rubbings, because he identifies with the "oddness" and "flamboyance" (p. 70) of these names, and feels that they "have spoken to him" (p. 71).

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 (Read pages 72-88 of *The Namesake* and annotate for character development.) Instruct student pairs to share their annotations.

- Student annotations may include:
 - "Lately [Gogol has] been lazy, addressing his parents in English though they
 continue to speak to him in Bengali" (p. 75) Gogol becomes less and less
 interested in maintaining his connection to his Bengali culture, even for his
 parent's sake.





- Gogol "hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian" (p. 76) Gogol has grown to dislike his name, because he feels that it does not represent him, leaving him without a clear identity. Gogol's resentment of the fact that his name is "both absurd and obscure" (p. 76) suggests that he is looking to fit in, and he feels that his name does not allow him to do so.
- Preparation for Gogol's large Bengali birthday party is "less stressful to [Ashima] than the task of feeding a handful of American children, half of whom always claim they are allergic to milk, all of whom refuse to eat the crusts of their bread" (p. 72) Ashima remains more comfortable with Bengali culture than with American culture.
- "For eight months [Ashima] does not set foot in a kitchen. She wanders freely around a city in which Gogol, in spite of his many visits, has no sense of direction" (p. 83) - Ashima has a different identity in Calcutta, where she moves more freely and feels more at home.
- Sonia addresses Gogol as "'Goggles,' the name she insists on calling him instead of Dada" (p. 74) - Sonia relies more on her American culture than on her Bengali heritage, preferring to give Gogol an English nickname rather than use the Bengali form of address.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

50%

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss (W.11-12.9.a).

• **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students throughout this lesson:

Explain Gogol's relationship with his parents in this excerpt.

Instruct student groups to refer to pages 72-78 (from "Gogol's fourteenth birthday. Like most events in his life" to "Not even the source of his namesake") and discuss the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of *supercilious*, *obscure*, *entity*, *gravity*, and *irrelevance*.





- 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 *supercilious*, *obscure*, *entity*, *gravity*, and *irrelevance* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *mutation* and *receded*.
 - Students write the definitions of *mutation* and *receded* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

What do the descriptions of Gogol's birthday parties suggest about the relationship between Gogol and his parents?

- Student responses may include:
 - The descriptions of Gogol's birthday parties suggest that Gogol identifies himself as American as well as Bengali, and that his tastes are more American than those of his parents. Gogol's birthday party with "[h]is own friends" features "pizzas that his father had picked up on his way home from work, a baseball game watched together on television, [and] some Ping-Pong in the den" (p. 72). For Gogol's parents, on the other hand, his birthday is "another excuse ... to throw a party for their Bengali friends" (p. 72). Although it is larger, the Bengali party is "less stressful" for Ashima than "the task of feeding a handful of American children" (p. 72).
 - For the first time, Gogol refuses a typical children's birthday party, with "the frosted cake, the box of harlequin ice cream, the hot dogs in buns" (p. 72). At his Bengali birthday party, Gogol finds himself "too old" to play with the other children present, but "not old enough" to join his parents and their friends (p. 73). In this way, the birthday parties highlight the fact that Gogol is no longer the young child that his parents knew, but at the same time, he is not ready to interact with them as an adult.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posing the following extension question to deepen students' understanding:

How does Lahiri develop a central idea through the character of Moushumi?

• Lahiri's description of Moushumi develops the central idea of identity by introducing a character who, like Gogol, struggles with multiple cultural influences. Moushumi's family has "recently moved to Massachusetts from England," and rather than affirming her Bengali heritage or trying to fit in with American culture, Moushumi prefers to emphasize her English roots, reading *Pride and Prejudice* while the other children





watch American television, which she declares "in her English accent" that she "'detest[s]'" (p. 73).

How do Gogol's thoughts about his father's gift of *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol* further develop his relationship with his name?

- Student responses may include:
 - Gogol's thoughts about his father's gift of *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol* show that he has come to resent his name, and in fact now "hates" it (p. 76). Above all, Gogol hates the fact that "his name is both awkward and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian" (p. 76). Gogol feels tormented and set apart by his name, which "manages ... to distress him physically" (p. 76) because it does not reflect any identity that Gogol recognizes. In fact, as Gogol realizes after Ashoke has left, his name is "a last name turned first name," so he shares it with "no one he knows in the world" (p. 78).
 - Gogol's thoughts about his father's gift demonstrate that Gogol remains unaware of the significance of the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol's impact on his father's life. Gogol has been "told only half the truth about Gogol: that his father is a fan" (p. 75). Without this understanding, Gogol's name sounds "ludicrous to his ears, lacking dignity or gravity" because he sees only what appears to be the "irrelevance" of his name (p. 76), without understanding the deeper significance it holds for his father.

How do the interactions between Ashoke and Gogol on pages 74-78 contribute to the development of their relationship?

- Student responses may include:
 - o The interactions between Gogol and Ashoke suggest that as Gogol has grown up, he has formed a cultural identity very different from his father's. Gogol speaks English to Ashoke, "though [his parents] continue to speak to him in Bengali" and behaves in ways that reflect his American upbringing, "wander[ing] through the house with his running sneakers on" and eating with a "fork" (p. 75). Similarly, Gogol rejects Ashoke's attempts to interest him in Russian literature, and "would have preferred *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*" (p. 75) to the collection of stories by his namesake.
 - In his interactions with Ashoke, Gogol begins to distance himself from his father. He is "eager to return to his [Beatles] lyrics" (p. 75) once Ashoke has presented him with his gift, responding "a bit impatiently" (p. 77) when Ashoke tries to explain to him why he feels such a connection with Gogol. After Ashoke leaves,





Gogol "gets up and shuts the door behind his father, who has the annoying habit of always leaving it partly open" (p. 78), placing a barrier between them.

- o In his interactions with Gogol, Ashoke tries to establish a connection with his son. Ashoke "takes the opportunity to sit beside" Gogol, and reflects on his physical development, wondering "how closely Gogol resembles himself at this age" (p. 77). His gift of *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol* represents an attempt to communicate with Gogol, and to explain his "special kinship" (p. 77) with his son's namesake. At the same time, Ashoke remains respectful of his son's attempts to form his own identity; when he notices "the Lennon obituary pinned to the bulletin board, and then a cassette of classical Indian music he'd bought for Gogol months ago ... still sealed in its wrapper" (pp. 77-78), Ashoke chooses to leave rather than to intrude further.
- The interactions between Ashoke and Gogol suggest the importance that Gogol has in his father's life, and the role that his birth played in helping Ashoke come to terms with the trauma of his accident. Ashoke begins to explain about the accident and his reasons for giving Gogol his name, but realizes that the accident has lost its importance, because "[e]ver since that day, the day he became a father, the memory of his accident has receded, diminishing over the years" (p. 78). As a result, Ashoke chooses not to explain why he chose Gogol's name, because to Ashoke, Gogol represents hope and new life beyond his accident, and so he decides that "[t]oday, his son's birthday, is a day to honor life, not brushes with death" (p. 78) and leaves the room.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding questions:

What does Ashoke explain about his "special kinship" (p. 77) with Nikolai Gogol in his conversation with his son?

• Ashoke explains that he feels a "special kinship" with Gogol because "[Gogol] spent most of his adult life outside his homeland" (p. 77), just as Ashoke did.

What does Ashoke not explain about his "special kinship" (p. 77) with Nikolai Gogol in his conversation with his son, and why?

- Student responses may include:
 - Ashoke does not explain about "his accident" (p. 78) and the role that the author Gogol's story "The Overcoat" played in saving his life.
 - Ashoke does not explain his near-death experience because "[e]ver since that day, the day he became a father, the memory of his accident has receded, diminishing





over the years" (p. 78). By building a new life in America and becoming a father, Ashoke has come to terms with his past, so that the train crash "no longer looms over his life" (p. 78).

Ashoke does not tell Gogol about the train crash because, as he "notices the Lennon obituary pinned to the bulletin board" (pp. 77-78) alongside the unopened cassette, he realizes that Gogol is growing into an individual with his own identity, unaffected by the past. Ashoke decides that "[t]oday, his son's birthday, is a day to honor life, not brushes with death" (p. 78), thus, Gogol's future means more to him now than his own past.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student groups to refer to pages 79-88 (from "The following year, Ashoke is up for a sabbatical" to "suddenly cumbersome, irrelevant to their lives") and discuss the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of crestfallen and disconcerted.

- 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 *crestfallen* and *disconcerted* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *itinerary*, *rickshaw* and *cumbersome*.
 - Students write the definitions of *itinerary*, *rickshaw* and *cumbersome* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

How does the change in setting affect Ashoke and Ashima?

- Student responses may include:
 - Ashima and Ashoke's response to landing in Calcutta indicates their happiness at returning to a country that they still see as home. Ashima "weeps with relief" at being reunited with her family, while Ashoke "kisses his brothers on both cheeks, holds their heads in his hands" (p. 81).
 - The change in setting transforms both Ashoke and Ashima, suggesting a whole new side to their identities of which their children are unaware. Ashima begins her transformation on the plane as she "slips into the bathroom and changes" (p. 81).
 The change in their parents shocks Gogol and Sonia as "before their eyes, Ashima





and Ashoke slip into bolder, less complicated versions of themselves, their voices louder, their smiles wider, revealing a confidence Gogol and Sonia never see on Pemberton Road" (pp. 81-82). The pet names that the Gangulis' Indian families begin to use at the airport, "Monu" for Ashima and "Mithu" for Ashoke (p. 81) also reflect their new, more carefree identities.

How does Lahiri demonstrate Gogol and Sonia's relationship to their Bengali heritage during their trip to India?

- Student responses may include:
 - As Ashoke checks the family in at the airport, he produces "two U.S. passports and two Indian ones" and asks for "'[t]wo Hindu meals'" (p. 80). The differences between Gogol and Sonia's passports and their eating habits and those of their parents suggest that they do not identify with India in the way that Ashima and Ashoke do.
 - On the plane, Gogol "savors each mouthful" of his omelet, "aware that for the next eight months nothing will taste quite the same" (p. 81). For Gogol, the meal represents a last taste of home, suggesting that while India is home for his parents, the same is not true for Gogol.
 - The contrast between Gogol and Sonia's feelings on arrival in Calcutta and those of their parents suggests that unlike Ashima and Ashoke, they do not feel comfortable in India. When Ashima and Ashoke greet their Bengali family, Gogol and Sonia, although they know their relatives, "do not feel close to them as their parents do" (p. 81).
 - Gogol is unable to go running in Calcutta because he, "in spite of his many visits, has no sense of direction" (p. 83) and Uma Maima has to send a servant after him to prevent him from getting lost. Gogol's lack of direction and sense of "confinement" suggest his discomfort in India, in contrast to Ashima, who "wanders freely" (p. 83).
 - The list of different titles for Gogol and Sonia's various aunts and uncles, "mashi and pishi, mama and maima, kaku and jethu" (p. 81) represents the complexity of life in India for Gogol and Sonia. While they are confident and comfortable in American society, they must use a "far more specific" vocabulary (p. 81) in Calcutta.
 - Gogol and his sister grow closer in Calcutta as Sonia represents Gogol's "only ally, the only person to speak and sit and see as he does" (p. 84). The two of them share "excruciating cravings" for American food, which they can only admit





- "privately" (p. 84) to one another. The siblings share a yearning for Boston, and feel out of place in Calcutta.
- The sickness suffered by Gogol and Sonia in Calcutta, as they both "get terribly ill" (p. 86) highlights their discomfort. The attitude of their Bengali relatives, who remark that Sonia and Gogol "were not made to survive in a poor country" (p. 86) highlights the sense that Sonia and Gogol do not belong in India, that they are foreigners in Calcutta, unlike their parents.

In what ways do the visit to Calcutta and the return to Pemberton Road impact the relationships in the Ganguli family?

- Student responses may include:
 - O During the visit to Calcutta, the relationship between Ashima and Ashoke and their children changes. Ashima and Ashoke are less comfortable than their children in American culture: preparing for Gogol's parties, Ashima finds cooking for the larger Bengali party "less stressful to her than the task of feeding a handful of American children" (p. 72). In Calcutta, the reverse is true: Ashima, who is rarely seen out of the kitchen in America, "does not set foot in the kitchen. She wanders freely around a city in which Gogol, in spite of his many visits, has no sense of direction" (p. 83). In India, Ashoke and Ashima enjoy greater comfort and freedom than Sonia, who is "'scared'" (p. 82) or Gogol, who, unable even to go running, must "surrender to confinement" (p. 83).
 - o In Calcutta, the Gangulis are part of a larger family, rather than four individuals. They do not rent their own apartment, but rather "spend eight months with their various relatives, shuttling from home to home" (p. 83). For Gogol, the eight months in Calcutta represents "eight months without a room of his own, without his records and his stereo" (p. 79) in which he must live without privacy. With their return to Pemberton Road, the Gangulis are once more four individuals rather than part of a larger family unit, and they "retreat to their three rooms, to their three separate beds" (p. 87).
 - When the Gangulis return to Pemberton Road, they slip easily back into their previous relationships "as if they've never been gone" (p. 87). Family members resume the lives they led before the trip to Calcutta and soon there is no sign that life was ever any different as the eight months in India "are put behind them, quickly shed, quickly forgotten" (p. 88).

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 relationship between Gogol and his parents 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 review pages 72-88 of *The Namesake* (from "Gogol's fourteenth birthday. Like most events in his life" to "suddenly cumbersome, irrelevant to their lives") and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

Analyze the relationship between Gogol and Sonia in this excerpt.

Also for homework, instruct students to read pages 88-96 of *The Namesake* (from "In September, Gogol returns to high school" to "That Gogol had had nothing to do with it") and annotate for the development of central ideas (W.11-12.9.a).

Students follow along.

Homework

Review pages 72-88 of *The Namesake* (from "Gogol's fourteenth birthday. Like most events in his life" to "suddenly cumbersome, irrelevant to their lives") and respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:





Analyze the relationship between Gogol and Sonia in this excerpt.

Also, read pages 88-96 of *The Namesake* (from "In September, Gogol returns to high school" to "That Gogol had had nothing to do with it") and annotate for the development of central ideas.

