

12.4.2

Lesson 20

Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze pages 268-291 of *The Namesake* (from “Gogol wakes up late on a Sunday morning” to “For now, he starts to read”), in which Gogol learns of Moushumi’s affair, and Ashima hosts her last Christmas party before leaving for India. Students consider how Lahiri’s structural choices contribute to the aesthetic impact of the novel’s ending, and apply their analysis independently in a written response at the beginning of the lesson. This response informs students’ participation in a whole-class discussion that follows. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How do Lahiri’s structural choices in pages 268-291 contribute to the aesthetic impact of the novel’s ending?

For homework, students respond briefly in writing to the following question: Choose either Ashima or Gogol. To what extent does the novel’s ending provide this character closure? Also for homework, students review their notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes from *The Namesake* in preparation for the following lesson’s discussion about Gogol’s exploration of his identity throughout the novel.

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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)	
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 <i>on 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"> 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. 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. 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.

Assessment

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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.

- How do Lahiri’s structural choices in pages 268-291 contribute to the aesthetic impact of the novel’s ending?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Determine Lahiri’s structural choices in these excerpts (e.g., Lahiri repeats textual details like the setting of the train on which Gogol learns about Moushumi’s affair, which is the same train he takes home a year later when he emotionally accepts the divorce.).
- Analyze how these structural choices contribute to the aesthetic impact of the novel’s ending (e.g., Lahiri’s structural choice to repeat key textual details like the motif of the train contributes to the aesthetic impact of the novel’s ending by creating circular narration. When Gogol learns of Moushumi’s affair on the train, he feels “strangely calm” (p. 282). As he returns home for Christmas a year later on the same train, he admits to himself that “he can’t really blame [Moushumi] ... [t]hey had both sought comfort in each other” (p. 284) because of their shared heritage, not necessarily because they loved each other. Lahiri sets the collapse of Gogol’s marriage and his acceptance of it on the same train, which creates circular narration by linking the setting to Ashoke’s life-changing train crash. The circular narration Lahiri uses shows how Gogol moves toward resolution, “accept[ing], interpret[ing], and comprehend[ing]” (p. 287) his conflicted identity that began with his “father’s train wreck” (p. 286), which in turn, leads to the “accident of his being named Gogol” and all the other “events [that] have formed [him] (p. 287).).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- incontrovertibly (adv.) - done without being open to question or dispute
- malaise (n.) - a vague or unfocused feeling of mental uneasiness, lethargy, or discomfort
- subsequent (adj.) - occurring or coming later or after
- replicate (v.) - repeat or copy (something) exactly
- stamina (n.) - power to endure disease, fatigue, privation
- systematically (adv.) - done using a method
- demise (n.) - death
- solace (n.) - something that gives comfort

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

- None.

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

- sentimentality (n.) - the quality of being emotionally invested in an excessive way
- anticipation (n.) - a feeling of excitement about something that is going to happen
- perpetual (adj.) - continuing forever or for a very long time without stopping

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.11-12.5, SL.11-12.1.a, c, d • Text: <i>The Namesake</i> by Jhumpa Lahiri, pages 268-291 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Pre-Discussion Quick Write 4. Whole-Class Discussion 5. Quick Write 6. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 10% 3. 15% 4. 50% 5. 15% 6. 5%

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Materials

- Student copies of the 12.4 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.4.1 Lesson 3)
- 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	
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 the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.5. In this lesson, students consider how Lahiri's structural choices in pages 268-291 of *The Namesake* contribute to the aesthetic impact of the novel's ending. Students apply their analysis in an independently written response at the beginning of the lesson, which informs students' participation in a whole-class discussion that follows.

- Students look at the agenda.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider reminding students that *aesthetic* means “of or relating to the beautiful.”

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Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read and annotate pages 268-291 of *The Namesake*.) Instruct students to form pairs and share their annotations.

- Student annotations will vary.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 3: Pre-Discussion Quick Write

15%

Inform students that their analysis in this lesson begins with a Quick Write in response to the prompt below. Students then use their independently generated responses to inform the discussion that follows, and have the opportunity to review or expand their Quick Write responses after the discussion. Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

How do Lahiri's structural choices in pages 286-291 contribute to the aesthetic impact of the novel's ending?

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

Provide students with the definitions of *incontrovertibly*, *malaise*, *subsequent*, *replicate*, *stamina*, *systematically*, *demise*, and *solace*.

- 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 *incontrovertibly*, *malaise*, *subsequent*, *replicate*, *stamina*, *systematically*, *demise*, and *solace* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *sentimentality*, *anticipation*, and *perpetual*.
 - Students write the definitions of *sentimentality*, *anticipation*, and *perpetual* 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 are Lahiri's structural choices at the end of the novel beautiful?

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

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- Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.
- This initial Quick Write is intended to demonstrate students' first thoughts and observations in response to the prompt. Students have additional time to develop their analysis in this lesson, and return to this Quick Write after a whole-class discussion.

Activity 4: Whole-Class Discussion

50%

Facilitate a whole-class discussion of student responses and observations from their Quick Write responses. Encourage students to consider points of agreement or disagreement with other students and how the evidence and reasoning presented by other students can help qualify or justify the observations they generated independently.

Instruct students to use the relevant portions of the 12.4 Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist to guide their discussion.

- 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.
- 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.
 - Students share their observations and evidence generated during the Quick Write with the whole class.
 - Student responses may include:
 - Lahiri structures pages 268-273 by shifting the narrator's focus back to Gogol after the previous excerpt's focus on Moushumi. Gogol senses his marriage is in trouble but is hopeful he can salvage it because he decides "his Christmas gift to [Moushumi]" (p. 272) will be a trip to Italy, which, unlike Paris, is a place neither of them have been so they can be tourists together and on equal footing. The narrator's shifting perspective contributes to the aesthetic impact of the text's ending by creating the anticipation for and expectation of sadness, as the reader knows that Gogol's marriage to Moushumi is doomed even though Gogol is still hopeful, as his "heart leaps" (p. 273) when Moushumi returns from her trip.

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- Lahiri sets pages 274-291 at the Gangulis' house on Pemberton Road during Christmas, creating circular narration, as it mirrors the setting of the excerpt in which Ashoke Ganguli dies. The excerpt in which Ashoke dies begins with Ashima "addressing Christmas cards" (p. 159), and the final excerpt opens with Ashima preparing food for her Christmas Eve party. However, in the final excerpt of the novel, Ashima's Christmas Eve party is "the last party Ashima will host at Pemberton Road" and "[t]he first since her husband's funeral" (p. 275). Lahiri's use of setting to create circular narration in the final excerpt contributes to the aesthetic impact of the novel by creating a sense of closure, because Ashima's last Christmas Eve party references a time before the loss of her husband and marks her departure from the life she built with him.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider reminding students of the definition of *circular narration*: "a narrative that ends in the same place it began; a narrative that has certain plot points repeated." Students were introduced to *circular narration* 12.1.1 Lesson 17.
 - Lahiri structures pages 274-291 by shifting the narrator's focus back to Ashima and her thoughts. The narrator notes that Ashima will be "[t]rue to the meaning of her name, she will be without borders" by being a "resident everywhere and nowhere" (p. 276). Ashima also reflects that like the bathrobe her deceased husband gave her, her life and identity in America has never fit quite right, but "is a comfort all the same" (p. 280). The narrator's focus on Ashima contributes to the aesthetic impact of the novel's ending because it brings resolution to Ashima's struggles with identity through her acceptance of her namesake. Ashima finally accepts she has no single home or country, and her identity exists somewhere between her Bengali heritage and her life as an American, creating a sense of closure for her in the novel's ending.
 - Lahiri uses the structural choice of circular narration when Ashima readies herself to travel alone again "[f]or the first time since her flight to meet her husband in Cambridge, in the winter of 1967" (p. 276). Lahiri's use of circular narration in this excerpt contributes to the aesthetic beauty of the novel's ending by creating a sense of closure. Just like Ashima traveled alone to be with her husband and begin a new life with him in America, Ashima travels alone at the novel's end to leave behind the life she built in America with her now deceased husband.
 - In pages 274-291, Lahiri chooses to repeat the image of Gogol sleeping under a coat, which refers to Ashoke's death earlier in the novel and Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat." Earlier in the text, when Gogol's father Ashoke dies, Gogol flies out to clean his father's apartment and falls asleep on the couch "covered by his jacket" (p. 177). That Gogol sleeps under his "overcoat" (p. 280), not his "jacket" (p. 177), when he returns home in the last excerpt hints, through its reference to Nikolai Gogol's short story, that Gogol's identity is transforming again

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in this excerpt. Lahiri's choice to implicitly reference "The Overcoat" and the trip to Cleveland through the reference of Gogol sleeping under his "overcoat" in the final excerpt (p. 280), contributes to the novel's aesthetic beauty by creating circular narration. In tying the unconnected parts of the plot together in reference to Gogol's "namesake," the term that titles the novel, Lahiri creates the beauty of an aesthetic whole or circle.

- Lahiri's choice to implicitly connect the setting of the train in pages 274-291 back to Gogol's father's train accident earlier in the novel contributes to the aesthetic impact of the novel's ending by creating circular narration. Just like the traumatic event that forever changed his father's life occurred in a train, Gogol's marriage ends in a brief moment on a train when Moushumi accidentally mentions Dimitri. On the train when Gogol learns of Moushumi's affair, he feels "strangely calm" (p. 282), and once he returns home for Christmas a year later on the same train, he admits to himself that "he can't really blame [Moushumi] ... [t]hey had both sought comfort in each other" (p. 284) because of their shared heritage, not necessarily because they loved each other. Lahiri sets the collapse of Gogol's marriage and his acceptance of it on the same train, which creates circular narration by linking the setting to Ashoke's life-changing train wreck. The circular narration Lahiri uses shows how Gogol moves toward resolution, "accept[ing], interpret[ing], and comprehend[ing]" (p. 287) his conflicted identity that began with his "father's train wreck" (p. 286), which in turn, lead to the "accident of his being named Gogol" and all the other "events [that] have formed [him] (p. 287).).
- Lahiri structures the text with the motif of travel. Throughout the text, important moments in the characters' lives take place in transit, like the train ride "that had nearly taken [Ashoke's] life" (p. 123), Ashima's "flight to meet her husband in Cambridge, in the winter of 1967" (p. 276), and the train ride in which Gogol discovers Moushumi's affair with Dimitri. Lahiri's use of the repeating motif of travel contributes to the aesthetic beauty of the novel's ending because Ashima and Gogol are both in between destinations, physical and otherwise, when the novel ends. Lahiri's use of motif in the end creates the beauty of open-endedness, because the motif of travel shows how the characters and their identities are in transition.

Provide students with the definition of *motif*: "an image or concept that is repeated throughout a work of literature. Motifs may have symbolic meaning or contribute to the development of central ideas in a text."

- Lahiri's choice to set Gogol's rediscovery of Nikolai Gogol's collection of stories in his childhood room creates circular narration because it connects back to when his father gave him the gift. In the novel's conclusion, Gogol realizes that the book of short stories written by his namesake, Nikolai Gogol, "was destined to disappear

from his life altogether, but he has salvaged it by chance” (pp. 290-291) much like how his father was rescued after the train wreck. Before this discovery, Gogol realizes that because the “givers and keepers of [his] name” are now “far from him” (p. 289), his pet name will be “now all but lost” (p. 290) because there will be fewer people “to call him Gogol” (p. 289). The structural choice to have Gogol rediscover his father’s gift contributes to the aesthetic impact of the novel’s ending by creating a sense of irony and loss. Gogol only begins to accept his namesake once he realizes his identity as Gogol is about to “vanish from the lips of loved ones” (p. 289), which means Gogol only begins to accept his conflicted identity once he is about to lose the community who knows him as Gogol. Yet, his acceptance of his namesake provides him with “no solace” (p. 289).

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students the definition of *irony*: “the use of language to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning.”
 - Lahiri’s choice to end the novel with Gogol finally “read[ing]” (p. 291) Nikolai Gogol’s “The Overcoat” contributes to the aesthetic impact of the novel’s ending by connecting to the novel’s title, *The Namesake*. By ending the novel with Gogol reading “The Overcoat,” Lahiri evokes a feeling of acceptance and loss, because the narrative comes together in a single gesture that articulates Gogol’s acceptance of his conflicted identity right at the moment he is about to lose his pet name, as he realizes his name will “cease to exist” (p. 289). The aesthetic impact, or beauty, can be found in the emotional complexity of Gogol’s realization that he can only “try[] to accept, interpret, comprehend” (p. 287) his name, as it is part of the “string of accidents” (p. 286) that comprise his family history and “determine[] who he is” (p. 287).
- Consider putting students into small groups and having each group elect a spokesperson to share their observations, or asking students to volunteer to discuss the observations and evidence generated during their Quick Write.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students would benefit from a more structured analysis, consider providing the following scaffolding questions to support their reading and discussion:

What choices does Lahiri make with regard to where the final excerpt is set?

How do Ashima’s and Gogol’s reflections on their lives contribute to the meaning of the final excerpt?

How does the final excerpt’s structure impact the novel’s overall meaning?

Instruct students to form pairs and briefly discuss how their opinions were challenged or verified through discussion, or if they made new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented during the discussion.

- Student pairs discuss how their opinions were challenged or verified through discussion, and any new connections they made during the discussion.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student observations.

Activity 5: Quick Write

15%

Instruct students to return to their Pre-Discussion Quick Write. Instruct students to independently revise or expand their Quick Write response in light of the whole-class discussion, adding any new connections, and strengthening or revising any verified or challenged opinions.

How do Lahiri’s structural choices in pages 268-291 contribute to the aesthetic impact of the novel’s ending?

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 revise or expand their Pre-Discussion Quick Write responses.
- 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 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following question:

Choose either Ashima or Gogol. To what extent does the novel’s ending provide this character closure?

Additionally, instruct students to review their notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes from *The Namesake* in preparation for the next lesson’s discussion about the following prompt:

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How does Gogol explore his identity throughout the novel?

- Students follow along.

Homework

Respond briefly in writing to the following question:

Choose either Ashima or Gogol. To what extent does the novel's ending provide this character closure?

Also, review your notes, annotations, and previous Quick Writes from *The Namesake* in preparation for the next lesson's discussion about the following prompt:

How does Gogol explore his identity throughout the novel?

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