**Lesson 2**

**Title:** What’s in a Name?

**Duration:** 40 min.

**Grade level/subject:** Senior AP Literature & Composition

**Central Focus**: The central focus of this lesson is an extended discussion of symbolism and themes at this point in the novel, especially as they relate to Gogol’s name and his party. This reading and discussion will allow the students to bring their analysis to the story, as Gogol’s struggle with his name is perhaps the novel’s largest theme.

**Standard**: IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.11-12.R.L.3. Key Ideas and Details: 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).

**Objective**: After teacher modeling and small group discussion, students will be able to analyze how Lahiri’s structural choices concerning her depiction of Gogol’s young life contribute to the novel’s main themes with 80% accuracy.

**Assessment:** The assessment in this lesson will be informal. As the small groups discuss, I will move around the room to observe each in turn. This should give me the opportunity to hear what every student in the classroom has to say, especially since multiple questions are being asked, giving me time to interact with each group and ask questions directly if necessary. A further informal assessment takes place at the lesson’s end when the students are asked to summarize their discussions for the class, as I again have the ability to gauge student understanding and progress.

**Diversity of Learners:** There are 23 students in this AP Literature & Composition course. Of those students, the vast majority (19) are white. One student is a black male, and three students are Latinas. There are 12 female students and 11 male students, a nearly even gender split. The vast majority of students are from upper-class or upper-middle class homes, in line with the student body population. There is one struggling reader in this class, who is taking the AP course because it was the only English course available to them with their schedule. Another student had brain surgery to remove a tumor earlier in the school year; because of this, she has missed many school days, and is still only at half-attendance for most of the week. While there is no cognitive decline from the surgery, the sheer amount of missed time and outside stress means she merits special attention. Additionally, there is one boy in the classroom who likely has some form of Autism or Asperger’s but has never been formally tested or diagnosed. He is on the same intellectual level as the rest of the students in the class, but can struggle if directions are not concrete, and sometimes has difficulties with abstract concepts and ideas. As this is an AP classroom, the vast majority of students are talented intellectually; even so, there are one or two students who stand out as particularly gifted among this group.

**Personal/Cultural/Community Connections to Lesson:** The students all enjoy working together in small groups to create shared meaning and understanding, and this sense of fostered community is key to the task at hand. Additionally, a group of adolescents is likely to be sympathetic to Gogol’s struggles with his parents’ authority and disapproval in this chapter, as it bears relevance to their navigating authority and autonomy at home. Given the religious nature of the school, a fair amount of the students in the class have Biblically-based names, including names that might be considered odd or old-fashioned outside this religious context. It is therefore possibly that these students might relate to Gogol’s struggles with his birth name. The students can draw on this background to analyze and demonstrate understanding of Lahiri’s authorial choices.

**Adaptations:** The adaptations in this lesson are similar to the ones from the previous lesson. In creating the small groups, I will make sure to spread the students with adaptions among the groups so that any questions they might have can be answered by their peers. One thing I have noticed about each of these students, however, is that they can become silent during discussions if they feel that they do not know the information or cannot meaningfully contribute. It is imperative therefore that I give clear direction about what is expected from each student, and more importantly, that in observing the groups, I note whether these students are talking. If they are not, and there is concern whether they are understanding the analysis, I will use redirect questions along the lines of, “That’s interesting. Student A, what do you think about that?” in order to prompt a response. I also plan to ask each student as they enter the room for that day if they are confused about anything regarding the story and its analysis, which provides an opportunity for the students to share questions and concerns, something they are reliably good at when they are struggling.

**Prior Knowledge and Skills:** As mentioned in the previous lesson plan, the students are highly skilled and have significant practice at the main areas of this lesson: namely, textual analysis and small group discussion. They are highly experienced in reading, comprehending, and taking apart complex texts both through written and vocalized language. As a group they are highly familiar with each other, and are willing to have discussions with virtually anyone in the classroom.

**Pre-assessment:** The pre-assessment for this lesson comes from observation of the students when previously analyzing literature. From this observation, I believe the students are highly capable of analyzing and interpreting literature both individually and in groups. These observational pre-assessments indicate that the students are skilled at what is being asked of them in the learning task, and do not need scaffolding in how to perform, but only in content and the questions being asked to them.

**Academic Language:** The main task of this lesson is textual analysis, specifically how specific instances in the novel connect to larger, abstract themes that develop throughout the course of the book.

**Planning Resources:**

1. *The Namesake*
2. Whiteboard
3. Whiteboard markers
4. Google Classroom
5. Laptop
6. Pen/pencil and paper if students prefer

**Learning Theories:** This lesson is very much grounded in Vygotsky’s social constructivism, as the class is entirely discussion-based. Students are working together to come to shared conclusions and analysis, which they will reach by interacting with each other. In this activity students are part of a community of learners from start to finish, not merely providing feedback on one another’s ideas, but also actively shaping those ideas through the discussion back-and-forth. Although it is not present in this lesson, I believe this lesson shows the endpoint of Bruner’s scaffolding theory, as this ability to work independently on literary analysis is something that has been scaffolded and developed throughout the entire course with the goal of the students being relatively self-sufficient at this point in the year.

**Introduction:** Note that this class is two minutes shorter, as the school has religious services two days during the week, which results in slightly shorter class periods. Learning tasks and time management have been accordingly adjusted. Students will have read chapter 2 of *The Namesake* for homework the night before. As they enter the classroom I will greet them and arrange them in four tap-in circles throughout the room with 5-6 students in each group. I will review the concept of the tap-in circle, which we have done in the past (a small group sits at a table and discusses a question; those standing tap someone on the shoulder in order to switch places and join the discussion). I will explain to the students that we are doing tap-in circles today.

**Step-by-Step Instructional Delivery:**

1.Once the students are arranged in tap-in circles, I will ask them to summarize our reading and discussion from yesterday. What did we decide about how the Gangulis were outsiders in America? What about Ashoke, Ashima, and their relationship?

2. The students will answer and summarize, ensuring the class begins with reflective thought and a baseline understanding.

3. I will then begin asking a series of open-ended questions.

4. As the students discuss each question, I will move around the room, listening to the discussions and asking further questions if it appears one group is struggling or has easily mastered the material.

5. The first question is, “In what ways are the Gangulis behaving like native-born Americans? In what ways are they retaining their Indian heritage?”

6. I anticipate this discussion taking roughly 5-6 minutes.

7. The next question is, “What does ‘home’ mean to each of the Gangulis? What does it mean to Ashoke? What about Ashima?”

8. I anticipate this discussion taking 4-5 minutes.

9. “Let’s talk now about Gogol and the symbolic nature of his name. What’s so strange about it? Why do you think Lahiri would choose this name for him?”

10. I anticipate this discussion taking 6-8 minutes. There are several follow-ups I anticipate asking here once I feel the students have moved through the initial question. This includes the symbolic nature of Gogol’s true name being unable to arrive from India and the mix-up over names at his elementary school.

11. “There’s a moment in the chapter when Gogol is presented with several options as an infant that’s supposed to determine his path in life. He chooses none of them, but instead bursts into tears. What do you think the symbolic intent is here? How does it tie into the struggles with his name?”

12. I anticipate this discussion taking 3-5 minutes.

13. “What conflicts does Gogol face that his parents do not? Let’s build off yesterday: in what ways is he an outsider? How is that different from his parents?”

14. I anticipate this discussion taking 4-5 minutes.

15. We are likely at this point to have about 10-12 minutes remaining in the class period. I will now ask the groups to come up with a list of what they believe to be the most important symbols and themes present in the novel thus far. The groups will have five minutes to do so.

16. At the end of the five minutes, I will ask the groups to share what they have written with the goal of compiling a master list on the whiteboard. For each answer, I will ask students from a different group to build on it, either by adding to the answer or by using it as a jumping-off point for a different symbol or theme.

**Closing:** I will thank the students for a great discussion and give them time to copy down notes related to the day’s discussion.

**Gearing up and gearing down:** This class requires a fairly short time between questions, as they have a tendency to analyze it very well and then move on to discussing each other’s personal lives. I will need to strike a balance between moving between groups and asking higher-order questions to get the students to delve deeper and being aware of each group’s status to know when the next main question needs to be asked. Because I will be creating the groups, a conscious effort will be made to pair students of different ability levels, and I will be sure to question students across ability levels when I visit the groups. Additionally, I will tailor supplemental questions to the individuals in the groups to current comprehension; students who have easily mastered and answered the main question will be asked more specifics so that they think deeper about the questions. Students who seem to be struggling with the material will be asked more basic questions to help them explicate their thinking.