

# World Literature: Asia

In this twelve-week unit, students read and discuss ancient and modern Asian literature, especially from China, India, and Japan.

## OVERVIEW

By reading the diverse selections in this unit, students consider the role of ancient philosophies, universal themes, Western influence, and historical change in these works. In addition, students listen to recordings of some of the poems in the original language so that they may appreciate their sounds, structures, and rhythms.

*Note:* The tenth-grade World Literature Maps consist of four twelve-week units, each focusing on literature from a different part of the world. Select three out of the four units. As the middle unit will likely cross from one semester into another, it should be divided accordingly. Alternatively, teachers may choose to teach all four units by shortening each and selecting fewer works.

## FOCUS STANDARDS

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- **RL.9-10.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **RL.9-10.5:** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- **RI.9-10.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RI.9-10.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
- **W.9-10.7:** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- **W.9-10.10:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- **SL.9-10.1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- **L.9-10.2:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Common Core State Standards to be as a reference – [Word document](#) / [pdf document](#)

## SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES

- Explore ancient and modern works of literature from Asian countries, particularly China, India, and Japan.
- Consider how Asian literature both draws on and questions cultural traditions.
- Consider how certain Asian authors integrate Western literary influences into their cultural contexts.
- Compare two or more translations of a single poem.
- Write a close literary analysis of a work of poetry, fiction, or drama, considering language use and literary elements.
- Offer insightful inferences regarding the themes of the text.
- Create a clear, original, specific thesis statement.
- Organize concrete evidence and supporting textual details to support a thesis statement.

- Use precise language, avoiding casual language and clichés.
- Write appropriate transitions to organize paragraphs.
- Analyze how philosophy influences literature.
- Understand how literary devices convey theme.

## SUGGESTED WORKS

### LITERARY TEXTS

*Note:* Texts can be combined in a number of ways. Students, for example, can read excerpts from an ancient work; one novel; one play; several short stories; and a long poem or selection of poems. Or teachers might choose two novels or two plays instead of one novel and one play. Students should consult informational texts and secondary sources, online and in the library, for their essays.

#### Drama

##### *China*

- *Thunderstorm* (Cao Yu)

##### *India*

- *The Post Office* (Rabindranath Tagore) (EA)

#### Novels

##### *China*

- *Family* (Pa Jin)

##### *India*

- *In Custody* (Anita Desai)
- *Midnight's Children* (Salman Rushdie)
- *Nectar in a Sieve* (Kamala Markandaya)
- *The God of Small Things* (Arundhati Roy)

##### *Japan*

- *After Dark* (Haruki Murakami)
- *Norwegian Wood* (Haruki Murakami)
- *The Sound of Waves* (Yukio Mishima)

#### Poetry

##### *China*

- "A Song of Ch'ang-kan" (Li Bai\*) (E) (excerpts) (This author is referenced in Appendix B of the CCSS as Li Po, another transliteration of the author's name.)
- "On a Gate-tower at Yuzhou" (Chen Zi'ang) (excerpts)
- "Substance, Shadow, and Spirit" (T'ao Ch'ien) (excerpts)
- *The Jade Mountain: A Chinese Anthology, Being Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty 618-906* (Kiang Hang-Hu and Witter Bynner, trans.) (selections)

##### *India*

- "Song VII" (Rabindranath Tagore) (E)
- *The Golden Craft* (Rabindranath Tagore) (EA)

##### *Sanskrit*

- *The Ramayana* (attributed to the Hindu sage Valmiki)

#### Short Stories

##### *China*

- *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (Pu Songling, ed.)
- *Under The Red Flag* (Ha Jin) (selections)

##### *Japan*

- *Rashomon and Other Stories* (Ryunosuke Akutagawa)

## Vietnam

- *The General Retires and Other Stories* (Nguyen Huy Thiep)

### Autobiographies

- *Six Records of a Floating Life* (Shen Fu) (China)

### Nonfiction

- *Historical Dictionary of Modern Japanese Literature and Theater* (J. Scott Miller)
- “Li Bai, A Hero among Poets, in the Visual, Dramatic, and Literary Arts of China” (Kathlyn Maureen Liscomb)
- *The Analects* (Confucius) (selections)
- *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature* (Joshua Mostow, ed.)
- *The I Ching* (transmitted by Fei Zhi)
- *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Nicholas B. Dirks)
- *The Tao of Pooh and The Te of Piglet* (Benjamin Hoff) (selections)
- *The Tao Te Ching* (Lao Tzu) (selections)
- *Trading Places: The East India Company and Asia, 1600-1834* (Anthony Farrington)

### Art

#### China

- Han Clothing (pre-seventeenth century)
- Ma Lin, wall scroll (1246)
- Moon-shaped flask with birds (1723-1725)

#### Japan

- Ando Hiroshige, One Hundred Views of Edo (1856)
- Arita, Porcelain plate with design of dragon (1690s-1730s)
- Kimono with carp, water lilies, and morning glories (1876)

#### South Asian and Himalayan

- Box with lid (Indian, late sixteenth century)
- Four Mandala Vajravali Thangka (Tibetan, ca. 1430)
- Scenes from the Life of Buddha (Pakistan or Afghanistan, ca. late second to early third century)

### Film

- Akira Kurosawa, dir., *Rashomon* (1950)
- Zhang Yimou, dir., *Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006)

### Media

- *Chinese Poems of the Tang and Sung Dynasties: Read by Lo Kung-Yuan in Northern Chinese, Peking Dialect* (Folkways Records, 1963)

## SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

*Note:* After reading and discussing a work or pairing of works as a class, students prepare for seminars and essays by reflecting individually, in pairs, and/or in small groups on a given question. In this way, students generate ideas. (Seminar and essay assignments include more than one question. Teachers may choose one or all of the questions to explore in the course of the seminar; students should choose one question for the essay.) Seminars should be held before students write essays so that they may explore their ideas thoroughly and refine their thinking before writing. Textual evidence should be used to support all arguments advanced in seminars and in all essays. Page and word counts for essays are not provided here, but teachers should consider the suggestions regarding the use of evidence, for example, to determine the likely length of good essays.

### [Scoring Rubric for Seminar](#)

## Reading Literature, Argument Writing

*Seminar:* Do the works you have read so far in this unit honor or rebel against cultural tradition? Write an argument that supports an original thesis statement, using at least three pieces of textual evidence to support your position. (The teacher may choose to focus on one or two texts.) Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (RL.9-10.6, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

### **Art, Speaking and Listening**

Examine a painting or object from each culture. What iconography do you see in each? Do you see cross-cultural connections in the artwork (i.e., which culture seems to have borrowed ideas from others)? How do you know? What imagery might you interpret as specific to one culture (e.g., designs, patterns, lines, or shapes)? Why does this imagery stand out to you? (SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.2)

### **Media, Reading Poetry, Multimedia Presentation**

Choose a recording of a poem from Chinese Poems of the Tang and Sung Dynasties, or find a different recording. Play the recording and explain the literary structure of the poem. Present two translations of the poem and compare the choices the translators have made. (This assignment is especially appropriate for bilingual students.) (RL.9-10.5)

### **Film, Reading Literature, Informative Writing**

*Seminar:* Analyze Akutagawa's story "In a Bamboo Grove" and Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*. How do the story and the film portray the characters' psychological states? (Note: Kurosawa's *Rashomon* based on Akutagawa's "In a Bamboo Grove," not on his "Rashomon," though a few details from the latter story appear in the film.) Write an informative/explanatory essay using at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis statement. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (RL.9-10.7, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2)

### **Reading Literature, Argument Writing**

*Seminar:* What does Amal teach the other characters in Rabindranath Tagore's *The Post Office*? Do these teachings reflect the values of Confucianism or Taoism? Write an argument using at least three pieces of textual evidence to support your position. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (RL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

### **Reading Poetry, Reading Informational Text, Argument Writing**

*Seminar:* Does the poem "Spirit, Substance, Shadow" connect to the teachings of Lao Tzu or Confucius? What does the poem reveal about these two philosophies? Write an argument using at least three pieces of textual evidence from multiple sources to support your position. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

### **Research, Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Informative Writing**

Choose one of the authors in the unit and write a well-researched informative/explanatory essay that discusses the ways in which the author's work reflects or questions one of his or her country's cultural traditions (e.g., arranged marriages or the caste system). Begin by defining a research question (and refining it as necessary as research is conducted). Determine and execute a strategy for locating primary and secondary sources that will enrich your understanding of the cultural tradition in question. The paper should include the following sections:

- Biographical information about the author
- The author's position and contribution in his/her country of origin
- Summary of the cultural tradition in question (i.e., origin, brief history, and significant details)
- Key ideas (including passages) from the author's work that support the thesis about reflecting or questioning the cultural tradition
- Reflective conclusion about the author and his/her contribution to twentieth-century literature

The essay should reflect a synthesis of sources consulted, a balance of paraphrasing and quoting from sources, and proper citation of sources. (W.9-10.1, W.9-10.7, W.9-10.8, W.9-10.9, W.9-10.10)

### **Reading Literature, Informative Writing**

*Seminar:* Compare and contrast *Midnight's Children* and *Nectar in a Sieve*. How do they differ in meaning? How are they similar in meaning? Write an informative/explanatory essay using at least two pieces of textual evidence from each text to support an original thesis statement. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (RL.9-10.6, RL.9-10.9, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

### **Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Informative Writing**

*Seminar:* How does fiction writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa or playwright Tsao Yu integrate Western literary influences into his work? Use textual evidence from the literary and informational texts to support an original thesis. Write an informative/explanatory essay using at least three pieces of textual evidence to support your thesis statement. Your teacher

may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (RL.9-10.6, RL.9-10.9, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

### **Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Informative Writing**

*Seminar:* How do Benjamin Hoff's allegories reveal Asian teachings? Do the allegories accurately illustrate these teachings? Write an informative/explanatory essay that uses textual evidence to support an original thesis statement. Use evidence from more than one text. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (RL.9-10.6, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

### **Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Informative Writing**

*Seminar:* How is the novel *Midnight's Children* or *Nectar in a Sieve* an allegorical text? What does the allegory reveal about the author's point of view? Use evidence from reference texts *Trading Places: The East India Company and Asia, 1600–1834* and *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* to enhance your argument. Write an informative/explanatory essay using at least three pieces of evidence from the novels and the reference texts to support an original thesis statement. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

### **Reading Literature, Informative Writing**

This writing assignment follows the study of several Asian authors. Included is a recommended selection, but teachers may choose to alter the list. Suggested Texts: *Midnight's Children*, by Salman Rushdie (India); *Rashomon and Other Stories*, by Ryunosuke Akutagawa (Japan); "A Song of Ch'ang-Ka", by Li Po (China); and *The General Retires and Other Stories* by Nguyen Huy Thiep (Vietnam). Write an informative/explanatory essay in which you compare the works of two of these authors. Follow these steps as you prepare to write the essay:

- Identify a theme that you wish to examine.
- Select two authors or poets whose works explore this theme.
- Write an introductory paragraph that introduces the authors or poets, names the specific texts that will be discussed, identifies the common theme, and provides a clear thesis.

You may choose to post your paragraph on the classroom blog and discuss it with your classmates prior to writing. Then, following discussions about and revisions to your opening paragraph, compose your essay, citing at least three pieces of evidence from the text to support your thesis. (RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.9, W.9-10.2)

### **Reading Poetry, Language Usage, Informative Writing**

Write a close literary analysis of one of the poems in the unit, with attention to its form, figurative language, symbolism, and meaning. Be sure to include any historical context necessary. Use at least three pieces of textual evidence to support your analysis in an informative/explanatory essay. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your first draft on a shared online document and receive feedback from classmates before publication. (SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

### **Language Usage**

Read another student's essay from an assignment in this unit (when in draft form). Highlight instances of parallel structure and places where parallel structure could strengthen the quality of the writing. Discuss with your partner how and why parallel structure can enhance your writing. (L.9-10.1a)

### **Speaking and Listening**

Reflect on seminar questions, take notes on your responses, and note the page numbers of the textual evidence you will refer to in your seminar and/or essay answers. Share your notes with a partner for feedback and guidance. Have you interpreted the text correctly? Is your evidence convincing? This collaboration can be done in a journal or on a shared spreadsheet. (RL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.1)

### **Reading Poetry, Argument Writing**

*Seminar:* Read James Merrill's poem "Lost in Translation" and discuss it in the context of (one of) the works of Asian literature that you have read in this unit. What skills does a good translator need? In translation, is meaning lost irrevocably to the reader? Write an essay that uses at least three pieces of textual evidence to support your position. Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your initial thoughts on the classroom blog in order to get feedback from your classmates. (This assignment is especially appropriate for bilingual students.) (RL.9-10.6, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- *Poems by Li Bai (Li Po)* (PoemHunter.com)
- *Being in the Noh: An Introduction to Two Japanese Noh Plays* (National Endowment for the Humanities) (RL.9-10.6)

- *Lessons of the Indian Epics: The Ramayana* (National Endowment for the Humanities) (RL.9-10.3)

## TERMINOLOGY

1. Absurd
2. Allegory
3. Confucianism
4. Figurative language
5. Filial piety
6. First-person perspective
7. Foreshadowing
8. Internal monologue
9. Irony
10. Metaphor
11. Paradox
12. Perfect rhyme
13. Perspective
14. Poetic translation
15. Simile
16. Stream of consciousness
17. Symbol
18. Taoism
19. Theme
20. Third-person omniscience
21. Tone (chinese)