

Course Title:	American Identities Through Ethnic Literature
Grade Level(s):	12
Length of Course:	One semester or equivalent term
Credit:	5 units
Prerequisite:	Passing grade in English 11

**Course Overview:**

Through *American Identities through Ethnic Literature*, students will explore the connections between ethnic identity, literature, and culture in the United States. Rather than focus on one tradition, we will read works by writers from various ethnic backgrounds including African American, Asian American, Latinx, and other American immigrants. Before exploring the literature, we will learn about critical literary theories. These literary theories will provide a foundation for examining the texts. Course topics include the notion of an American identity and an ethnic identity, race and ideology, immigrant experiences, and cultural encounters with others. Students will create their own memoir pieces, write informal responses to literature, and draft, develop, and revise a formal literary analysis essay.

Schools Offering:	Del Valle High School Granada High School Livermore High School Vineyard High School
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**Meets University of California**

Entrance Requirements:	<i>Seeking 'b' approval</i>
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Board Approval:	<i>Pending Board Approval</i>
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**Course Materials:**

*The Poet X*  
Acevedo, Elizabeth  
ISBN: 978-0062662811

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*  
Angelou, Maya  
ISBN: 978-0345514400  
*Interpreter of Maladies*

Lahiri, Jhumpa  
ISBN-978-0395927205

*The Bluest Eye*  
Morrison, Toni  
ISBN: 978-0307278449

*Critical Encounters in High School English:  
Teaching Literary Theory To  
Adolescents (Language & Literacy) 3rd Edition.*  
Appleman, Deborah.  
ISBN: 978-0807756232

Gish Jen, *Who's Irish?*  
ISBN: 9780375705922

Supplemental Materials:

Anzaldua, Gloria. "La Prieta" or "Speaking in  
Tongues"

Baldwin, James. "My Dungeon Shook" or "Letter  
from a Region of My Mind"

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and The  
Racial Mountain". Essay. PoetryFoundation.org

Jen, Gish. "The White Umbrella," or "Birthmates"

Morrison, Toni. "Unspeakable Things Spoken: The  
Afro-American Presence in American Literature"  
excerpt

Packer, ZZ. "Brownies"

Tatum, Beverley Daniel. *Why Are All the Black  
Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Podcast

*Films:*

*The Namesake (2006)*

*The Grace Lee Project (2005)*

*Real Women Have Curves (2002)*

*Quinceanera (2006)*

*O (2001)*

*The Hate U Give (2018)*

## **COURSE CONTENT:**

### **Essential Questions**

- Is there a singular US American identity?
- How does race play a determinative role in culture?
- How can we connect to literature that conveys experiences similar to and different from our own?
- How do writers represent the United States? How do they represent their nations of origin or the traditions and history of their ancestors?
- How are writers of color affected by the racial prejudice of White people, and are they themselves also fearful or disdainful of racial “others”?
- How does gender intersect with race or ethnicity?
- What constructions of identity control or liberate writers? What models of selfhood do they embrace?
- If they are bi- or multilingual, how do the writers balance their languages, and what does it mean to make the choice to write in English?
- Are the texts themselves remarkable in genre, style, form, or language?
- How does history shape their contemporary lives and attitudes?

### **Unit 1: Foundations of Thought**

In this opening unit, students will be introduced to literary criticism, as well as the competing philosophies of the Harlem Renaissance regarding the relationship between race and art. Through this study, students will learn how to engage in close reading of challenging texts. Activities in this introductory unit include group discussions, journal responses, and a formal synthesis paper.

#### *Summary of Key Assignments and/or Activities*

Using 3-4 sources from this unit, students will compose a synthesis paper of 4-5 pages discussing how their selected texts negotiate at least one of the essential questions. Students will be expected to have a controlled thesis, apt and specific textual evidence, and control of the elements of effective composition. The final paper will include a works cited page and be formatted in accordance with MLA guidelines.

### **Unit 2: Black American Literature**

In this unit, students will deepen their understanding of the genre of autobiography and they will experience literature as a record of human experience through reading Maya Angelou’s novel *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*. This unit focuses on the theme of overcoming adversity found in the book and emphasizes ways that Maya Angelou uses language as a tool for resilience and transformation. Students will also gain a deeper sense of self through writing their own memoirs.

#### *Summary of Key Assignments and/or Activities*

As a part of their daily homework, students will produce dialectical journal entries where they identify quotes from each chapter that demonstrate either the theme of adversity or the theme of language. These journals will be a resource that they can draw on when writing the essay for this unit. Students also are encouraged to continue practicing the critical lens reading strategies they learned in the first unit.

### **Unit 3: Asian American Literature**

In this unit, students will read Jhumpa Lahiri's short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* and they will explore the experience of the children of immigrants who often feel like they're never completely accepted either in their adopted home country or their parents' country of origin. This unit asks students to consider the mixed feelings about identity, the difficulties of immigration, the struggles of tradition, and the significance of cultural heritage. Guiding questions for this unit include, 1) How do human beings either come to share or fail to develop intimacy with each other? and 2) What connections and misunderstandings emerge when humans from drastically different backgrounds encounter each other? Students will practice identifying and interpreting literary devices including dramatic, situational, and verbal irony, symbolism, tone, and motif.

#### *Summary of Key Assignments and/or Activities*

As they practiced in the previous unit, students will produce dialectical journal entries where they identify quotes from each story, this time focusing on one or two particular critical theories from the introductory unit. These journals will be a resource that they can draw on when writing their final essay. Students will write a 7-10-page essay analyzing the literary and stylistic elements *Interpreter of Maladies*, examining characterization, conflict, setting, and themes, as well as the author's use of stylistic devices such as diction, imagery, figurative language, and syntax to impart meaning. Student essays will be assessed via the department-created essay rubric, assessing students on their abilities to select apt and specific textual evidence, to generate subtle and nuanced inferences, to make connections to the major themes present in the work, and to communicate their ideas in a way that adheres to mechanics, usage, and grammatical conventions as well as the elements of effective composition.

### **Unit 4: Latina/x American Literature**

In this unit, students will read Elizabeth Acevedo's *The Poet X*. This modern narrative is structured as a collection of poems written from the perspective of a teenager. *The Poet X* features themes involving gender, religion, parent-child relationships, and identity. These themes make for engaging and relatable discussions. In this final unit, students will trace Xiomara's character development, analyze several of Xiomara's poems as standalone works, interpret key symbols in the text (such as apples, the baby bracelet, and Xiomara's burning journal), explain the effect the novel's structure has on the reader's empathy toward Xiomara, and consider Caridad and Twin as foils to Xiomara. Students will write their own free-verse poems and will engage an in-class open mic.

*Summary of Key Assignments and/or Activities*

Students will participate in fishbowl speaking and listening assignments over the course of the study of *The Poet X*, utilizing the critical theories as a lens through which to view and discuss the novel. By the end of the novel, with ample opportunities for practice, students will engage in a summative Socratic Seminar on the novel. They will produce responses to teacher-generated questions about the novel, utilizing apt and specific text evidence. While participating in the Socratic Seminar, students will engage in the practices of academic discourse and they will be evaluated on their abilities to do so via teacher-created scoring guide and peer review.

**California State Standards English Language for Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects  
Grades 11-12 Students**

***ELA/Literacy-Reading Standards Grades 11-12***

*Key Ideas and Details*

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining here the text leaves matters uncertain.
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.
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/archetypes are introduced and developed).

*Craft and Structure*

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
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.

*Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text.

*Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity*

10. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

***ELA/Literacy-Writing Standards Grades 11-12***

*Text Types and Purposes*

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
  - c. Use specific rhetorical devices to support assertions (e.g., appeal to logic through reasoning; appeal to emotion or ethical belief; relate a personal anecdote, case study, or analogy).
  - d. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
  - e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
    - a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
    - b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
    - c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
    - d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
    - e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
    - f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
  3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
    - d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

#### *Production and Distribution of Writing*

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

#### *Research to Build and Present Knowledge*

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.

8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation including footnotes and endnotes.

### ***ELA/Literacy-Speaking and Listening Standards Grades 11-12***

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - 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.
2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.
4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence (e.g., reflective, historical investigation, response to literature presentations), conveying a clear and distinct perspective and a logical argument, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks. Use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
  - a. Plan and deliver a reflective narrative that: explores the significance of a personal experience, event, or concern; uses sensory language to convey a vivid picture; includes appropriate narrative techniques (e.g., dialogue, pacing, description); and draws comparisons between the specific incident and broader themes.

### ***ELA/Literacy-Language Standards Grades 11-12***

#### ***Conventions of Standard English***

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  - a. Observe hyphenation conventions.
  - b. Spell correctly.

#### ***Knowledge of Language***

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

*Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on *grade 8 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
  - a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.
6. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

**Instructional Methods and/or Strategies**

This course utilizes a variety of instruction methods from teacher-centered to student-centered, with introductory presentations that are teacher-led as well as partner work and group work that is more student-centered. Students complete activities such as close reading of prose and poetry in partners and in small groups, Socratic seminar, Visual Thinking Strategies in small groups and whole-class discussion, essay writing workshopping, Jigsaw group work. Students will use technology for research and presenting findings.

**Assessment Methods and/or Tools**

To assess student learning, the teacher will use Socratic seminar and informal class discussions. The teacher will use regular reading quizzes to check for understanding on reading assignments. Literary analysis essays are assessed using the standardized English department rubric. Narrative writing, projects, and presentations are assessed on assignment-specific rubrics. Turnitin.com is used for all formal writing assignments to check for academic honesty.