LESSON PLAN

Grade: 11 Global Studies Humanities Course

Context:
After this two-week institute, I am in LOVE with the ghazal. The structure, rhythm, power and beauty are just so perfect -- and they'll bring so much both to my global studies classes and my new American Identities course.

This lesson is part of a larger unit on the ghazal to be taught in an 11th-grade humanities class known as Global Studies. That course uses forms of art to explore culture; we use In previous lessons students will have learned about the history of the ghazal and its place in literature (Lesson 1); explored translations of ghazals and practiced creating transliterations of popular ghazals (Lesson 2); studied well-known poets and ghazals as well as the "building blocks" -- the couplet structure, the repetition, and the common themes of love and of longing with mystical overtones (Lesson 3). Students will have, finally, used a writer's workshop methodology to create, share, and edit individual ghazals (Lesson 4).

This lesson will be the concluding lesson in the unit, focusing on poetry as performance and preparing students to give a public presentation of their ghazals in simulation of a community poetry event (like the *mushaira*). My school has a longstanding student-run "coffee house" tradition, and our teens are enthusiastic participants, both at the mic and in the audience. They're also naturally drawn to the common themes of the ghazal, to the balance, as Frances Pritchett describes it, between "the rakish celebration of wine, women, and song; and the elegiac lament over lost love. By the time the ghazal passed into Persian from the early eleventh century onward, this second theme had come to have mystical overtones: separation and suffering were at the heart of love, while the faithful, longing lover was even a kind of martyr" (Pritchett, An Overview of the Genre, accessed 7/22/2021). That's pretty much a teenager in a nutshell. Although they've had instruction in reading, analyzing, and writing poetry, they haven't been asked to learn the tools of spoken performance, to create poetry with an eye toward shaping the language on the page but also thinking about language for vocal expression. Pritchett (and others) have claimed that ghazals are among the genres that are overtly designed to be spoken, reflecting the long oral traditions of the cultures that shaped the form, and this, too, makes learning about spoken performance a useful lesson in our study.

We will have already discussed the language choices a poet makes to create sounds in poems, but as a refresher,

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OBJECTIVE: *What is the purpose of learning this? How does it connect to a Big Idea?*

One guiding theme of our study of world literature is the ways in which understanding the literature of any group of people can help us understand the cultures of the people who created it. I've never had students perform poetry in any real way, but as we've learned in this workshop, the communal, spoken nature of the ghazal and related forms of poetry carry powerful cultural meaning. Public performance of spoken art could prove a powerful way for students to develop nuance in their understandings of oral traditions. In keeping with this, rather than just asking students to recite, I want them to really prepare for a communal poetry performance in a simulation of how an actual poet-performer might, to give similar weight to the process of performing their poems (and to participating as audience members for their class community) as we do to the process of writing them. It is my hope that students will come away with an appreciation and understanding not only of the specifics of this lesson but also for the power of the interplay between oral traditions and living culture.

MATERIALS: *What materials/resources/tools/instruments are needed to teach this lesson?*

- a few hand mirrors; students can also use their phones as mirrors
- copies of ghazals in these sets. For the independent practice portion of this lesson, I would like to use ghazals that were created in English by Agha Shahid Ali. It's important to study this poetic form in translations of Urdu, Hindi, and Arabic, of course, but for this activity, ghazals created in English might be more immediately accessible to English speakers who are learning oral performance. (Plus -- I just love Ali's poetry!)
    - one for each student: a copy of four lines of Ghazal 4 by Hafiz, printed on white paper, double spaced, centered on the page so that there is a wide border for notes.

        Kindly tell the tender deer, O morning breeze
        I am wandering your desert and the wild countries.
        Long live the sugar merchant, but why
        Is he unkind to sweet lovers, the honey-bees?
        -- from Ghazal 4

    - one for each student: a set of three to five couplets from a ghazal by Agha Shahid Ali. Each student should have a unique set of lines. For a class of 20 students, Ali's ghazals "Of Light," "Even the Rain," and "Tonight," for example, would yield enough sets of three to five couplets so that each student has a distinctive set of lines with which to work.The poems can be printed and cut up so that each student gets a strip with tthe three to five couplets.

- videos of communal poetry performances; I've found several on Youtube of performances in India and Pakistan, and I recorded some small gatherings in Karachi (which I haven't gathered permissions for, so I would show them in a classroom setting only and not post or play them online). I'd also like students to watch excerpts of this video capturing NPR's final interview with Agha Shahid Ali, months before his death, to hear his own description of the ghazal, and a recitation and discussion of the ghazal "Tonight."

Post these questions at the front of the room on posterboard:

> Sonic Patterns:
> - What does your mouth do as you say each word?
> - When is it open? When is it closed?
> - When is the sound at the back of your mouth? When is it at the front of your mouth?
> - As you speak, when do you tend to speed up? To slow down? what about the rhythm of each line encourages you to speed up or slow down?
> - When do you work hardest as you form the words?
>   When do the words flow easily from one to the next?

ENGAGEMENT: *How will you initially engage students' attention?*

By the time they reach this lesson, students will be familiar with the structure, themes, and history of the ghazal. They will have completed a translation activity of ghazals, and the students would have worked through the process of composing their own ghazals.

To draw their focus to oral performance, I will invite one of our theatre teachers to engage us in warm-up activities common to dramatic performers, like the articulation and tongue-twister exercises described here and the "Pass the Word" exercise (where one word goes around the room with each speaker giving it a different sound indicating a different emotional emphasis or a different meaning) or "Random Sound Story," where small groups of kids tell stories using only sounds (that are not words).

For homework, I'll assign a few short videos for them to watch. We'll open class the next day with a reflection on and discussion of the videos.

MODEL/DEMONSTRATION: *What will you do? Model? Demo a process or technique? Think aloud? Look/listen/read an example of the art form you'll be teaching?*

Introduce the idea of "playable sounds" in words, using students' names as an entry point.

1. Ask each student to say his or her name out loud, slowly, paying attention to each separate sound of the word. (For example, in my name there are six distinct sounds: /k/ /e/ /n/ /d/ /r/ /ə/) Tell them to look at the "Sonic[1] Patterns" poster and consider the questions as they say each sound in their names.
2. Next explore the intentional or emotional beats you can put into the "playable" sounds of a word.[2] Have students work in small teams to explore saying each other's names with different emotional intonations. For example, in one group of three, two people first say the third's name like they're happy to see them, then like they're surprised to see them, like they're disappointed in them, like they want to convince them of something, like they're angry at them, etc. Go around the small group until each person's name has been centered in several different emotions. Then ask the groups to discuss these questions to discover the concept of "playable" sounds in a word:
   a. How did your partners change the sound of your name to create different emotions?
   b. What parts of your name were manipulated when your partners said your name in different ways?
   c. These are the "playable" parts of your name -- the sounds that you can manipulate to help convey different emotions or purposes. Talk with your group about the "playable" sounds in each of your names.

GUIDED PRACTICE: *How will students practice the new learning? How will they be guided?*

1. I'd open with a review of what we've learned so far about ghazals, emphasizing word choice. In working with students to analyze and write poetry, a discussion of a poet's word choice is paramount -- and part of this is talking about how a poet selects words not only for meaning but for sound. For example, one can say "get up and put on" or "rise and dress" -- why might a poet choose one of those phrases over another?

   Project this ghazal by Hafiz to the front of the room:

   I long to open up my heart
   For my heart do my part.
   My story was yesterday's news
   From rivals cannot keep apart.
   On this holy night stay with me
   Till the morning, do not depart.
   On a night so dark as this,
   My course, how can I chart?
   O breath of life, help me tonight
   That in the morn I make a start.
   In my love for you, I will
   My self and ego thwart.
   Like Hafiz, being love smart;
   I long to master that art.
              -- Ghazal 42, by Hafiz

   Lead a whole-class discussion reviewing the components of a ghazal demonstrated here (the couplets,

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[1] I'm indebted to NCTE's ReadWriteThink for their lesson "Speaking Poetry: Exploring Sonic Patterns Through Poetry," which introduced me to the ideas of sonic patterns and playable sounds as well as to several of the techniques I used here.
[2] "Playable" sounds can be described as the sounds one can manipulate to change the meaning or intent of a vocalization. For example, in "cat," a playable sound is "a" -- the vowel can be elongated, shortened, said forcefully or as a whine. The sound of "t" is also a playable sound -- it can be softened or hardened, for example.

the repetition of rhyming sounds, Hafiz' use of his own name in the final couplet, the theme of love and longing, etc.) Read the poem through a couple of times all together, emphasizing the sound of the language.

2. Project five words from Ghazal 4 by Hafiz: **breeze   bright   pride   snare   wonder**
   Have students write them down and underline the playable parts; discuss as a whole class, then have everyone practice saying each word and giving the playable sounds in them different intonations (say the word happily; say it furiously; say it sadly…)

3. Divide students into groups of two and tell the students that they will practice a short dialogue using only these five words. To create the dialogue, Partner A says the first word and Partner B repeats the word back to them, and so on through the five words. The theme of the dialogue should be communicated solely through sound and facial expression. They should do this twice, for Dialogue 1 and Dialogue 2.

Dialogue 1: I love you with all my heart!		Dialogue 2: You're late and I'm very angry!	
Partner A	Partner B	Partner A	Partner B
breeze	**breeze**	**breeze**	**breeze**
bright	**bright**	**bright**	**bright**
pride	**pride**	**pride**	**pride**
snare	**snare**	**snare**	**snare**
wonder	**wonder**	**wonder**	**wonder**

4. Give each student a "script": a copy of four lines of Ghazal 4 by Hafiz, printed on white paper, double spaced, with the four lines centered on the page so that there is a wide border for notes.

   Kindly tell the tender deer, O morning breeze
   I am wandering your desert and the wild countries.
   Long live the sugar merchant, but why
   Is he unkind to sweet lovers, the honey-bees?
            -- from Ghazal 4

   Make sure that each student also has a small hand mirror (or can use their phones as mirrors).

5. Read the lines out loud, while students listen. Then the students will read the lines out loud together with me. I'll prompt students to watch their faces in their mirrors/phones as we read the lines together one more time. Finally, I will give them these instructions:
   a. Consider the questions on the Sonic Patterns poster as we read, and mark your poem in response to the questions using your own symbol system. (ii.e., write "open" in areas where you notice that your mouth is open; write "flow" when the words flow together easily, etc.)
   b. As we read the lines out loud again -- *this* time mark your emotional responses throughout the poem: what feelings do you have as you read through the lines? Mark where each different emotional "beat" occurs, making sure to indicate the emotion you feel at each beat.

6. To conclude, allow students to share their work with each other to compare their markings. Finish up with a discussion of what this exercise reveals about analyzing language through the perspective of preparing a vocal performance. Students might mention what their faces looked like as they read the lines, or how their voices went up and down -- reinforce that the markings on their poems should reflect all of this; these will be their scripts as they prepare for a performance.

INDEPENDENT EXPLORATION: *How will students explore the new learning on their own? As individuals, in pairs, in small groups?*

1. Give each student a copy of three to five couplets of a ghazal by Ali (as described above in the materials section). Each student should also still have a small hand mirror/phone to use as a mirror.

2. I'll then give them these instructions:
   a. Find a quiet space to work on your own. Read your poem out loud, slowly, watching your face in your mirror as you do. Consider the questions on the Sonic Patterns poster as you read, and mark your poem in response to the questions using your own symbol system. (ii.e., write "open" in areas where you notice that your mouth is open; write "flow" when the words flow together easily, etc.)
   b. Read out loud to yourself again, and *this* time mark your emotional responses throughout the poem: what feelings do you have as you read through the lines? Mark where each different emotional "beat" occurs.
   c. Practice reading your lines out loud, following the directions you marked on your poem. Edit your marks as needed, and practice a few more times. This is your script with your notes!

SHARE/CLOSURE:
How will students share out to demonstrate their understanding of the teaching point? Will they reflect or review? Ask questions? Is there an assignment to complete before next class?

For closure for this lesson, I'll group the students together who have lines from the same poem and ask them to practice their scripts together. Then, each group of students will perform for the rest of the class, presenting the couplets as ordered in the original poetry, so that each group performs one entire poem for the audience.

As we prepare to take the ghazals to the coffee-house audience, I would also ask students various models of spoken-word performances of ghazals. For example, I love [Frances Pritchett's description of a classical 18th-century mushairah](#): "The traditional venue for oral performance was the [mushairah](#), which consisted of a smallish group of (male) patrons, connoisseurs, master-poets ('Ustads'), and pupils… the first line of a verse was generally followed by a pause full of obligatory praise and exclamatory comment from the audience, after which the poet repeated the first line and only then followed it with the second line. Mushairahs were thus lively and participatory; this modern example ([Ghalib Academy, Delhi, 2013](#)) shows how they sometimes still are. This style of oral presentation created an interval of time when the audience had access to the first line but not the second-- with possibilities for generating suspense, misdirection, anticipation, etc., that became major factors (along with complex wordplay and semantic multivalence) in the development of the ghazal's poetics."

Finally, we'll bring our poetry to a *Mushaira* coffee house! I'll have my students watch videos of similar events, and ask them to come to the whole school coffee house prepared to lead the audience in participating. I always have a few students for whom performing before strangers is just too uncomfortable, and I think that's okay: they can spread out in the audience and model how to participate and interact with each poet.

Also!
So many nuggets that I plan to develop and work with:
1) I teach a contemporary American Identities course that is literature-based, and includes August Wilson. Wilson drew heavily on the Blues for his Pittsburgh cycle of plays, both thematically and structurally. I knew that he also experimented with Islam and wrote about the peace and freedom he derived from reading the Qu'ran. I'll already use the Blues as an entry point for his work, but now I have much more to say about that!
2) In Global Studies, we look at the complicated cultural positioning of the USSR; in important ways, it privileged culture far more than the Western world has done. I can draw so much from Dr. Levin's discussion to add to my coverage of that topic.
3) Recitation! The power of oral storytelling is washing over me -- and something I have to use with students.
4) I am 100% going to have my students play Bait Bazi
5) So much more, that I haven't even thought of yet.