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Lesson Title: Our 9th Grade Quest, inspired by *The Conference of the Birds* as retold by Alexis York Lumbard

Brief description of the lesson:

After reading and exploring a childrens' book retelling of the Sufi text *The Conference of the Birds*, students will identify their own weaknesses and ways to move past them this year. We will end by creating an illustrated goal page for the first semester of 9th grade.

Brief description of lesson context:

The lesson will be one of the first we do at the beginning of ninth grade. The EQ for the unit asks students to consider what skills and habits of mind they'll need to be successful in 9th grade English and in other courses. The unit includes a student-created video explanation of a portion of the syllabus, a class ghazal, and a digital locker / writing piece. It leads into a unit on the essential question "how do social, historical, geographic, cultural, and religious contexts shape our identities?" Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* is the anchor text for this unit which culminates in an interview activity and personal reflection in comic form. The activity in this lesson plan serves as a bridge between the first EQ of the year and the second.

Essential question: *What do I need to know and be able to do to be successful in high school and beyond?*

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

Students will gain some knowledge of Sufi / Muslim art and culture as a prelude to more in-depth learning as we read *Persepolis*. They will also have a chance to set goals ("quests") for their first semester of high school, inspired by the lessons the birds learn in the text.

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

- *The Conference of the Birds* retold by Alexis York Lumbard, illustrated by Demi. (2012). ISBN: 978-1-937786-02-1.
- [Slides for the unit](#)
- Teacher created Quest page
- [Do Now Day 1 COB](#) (introduces the idea of quests / birds; back has information on COB)
- Readings on resilience / overcoming adversity for jigsaw activity (from Common Lit website: "Thai Cave Boys," "Yul Kwon," "Eleanor Roosevelt," "Going to school as a refugee") + notes page for journal
- Photocopied pages from the text
- Article: ["How Pursuing a Quest Can Bring Purpose to Your Life"](#)
- [Quest page directions & template](#)
- [Quest document for students](#)
- Art supplies (card stock, black fine tip pens, markers, colored pencils, paper, paint, etc.)

PRECEDING LESSONS: *What other activities / lessons were completed before this lesson?*

The unit includes a student-created video explanation of a portion of the syllabus, a class ghazal, and a digital locker / writing piece. We will have built some classroom community and established expectations, but this will be our first deeper dive into a text.

DAY 1: introduction & first read

- A. [Do Now](#): *quests, background on the text*
 - a. Do Now handed out as kids come into the room. Students work silent for 4 minutes after the bell rings. Cold call 2-3 kids for first 2 questions. Make list on board for quests and birds. Discuss as needed.

- b. Read the paragraph of background on COB as a class. Have kids complete Step 1, then share with group. Group choose best ten word summary; that person stands. Share out. (4 min)
- c. Students complete step 2 as a group. Person with the darkest shirt in the group shares. (4 min)
- B. *Overview for the week:* Tell students that COB is our grounding work for this week. We're going to work with the text and with the art in the text, then use that work to create our own Quest for the semester and present them in an artistic manner. By the end of class Friday: everyone will have a Quest page to be displayed in the room. (Share teacher Quest.)
- C. *First reading of the text:* Tell kids that we are going to read COB several times. As we read, they should jot down what they notice about the text in their Reader's Journals.
 - a. Remind kids to date & title the page in their Reader's Journal (RJ).
 - b. Read the book all the way through.
 - c. Have the kids freewrite for 2 minutes in their Reader's Journal, then underline a sentence or phrase that stands out to them in their writing. Have everyone stand and pass the mic share.
- D. *Second reading of the text:* Read again, but pause for questions & to build a timeline in their journal of what happens on the birds' quest.

Questions to consider as we read:

- a. On the opening page, what assumption do the birds make?
- b. Describe the hoopoe bird.
- c. What do you notice about the text? (hinting re: hoopoe speaking in verse)
- d. For each bird, what is holding them back from completing the quest successfully? What do they have to do to overcome this challenge? (build a chart on board and in their RJ)

Freewrite for 2 minutes: what's the lesson we should take away from the text? Discuss as a group and distill to 1 sentence- write on paper to be posted. Share.

Homework: Assigned reading on resilience / overcoming challenges on Common Lit. (See list in materials.)

DAY 2: Further exploration of COB and relationship to self / school. [Flex day- class is 80 minutes.]

- A. *Do Now: In journal.* Share within group. (Challenge by choice- kids can share a phrase from their writing or they can explain which bird they chose in more detail.)
- B. *Review of yesterday's class* (students can refer to notes).
 - a. Who were the various birds? (pass the mic)
 - b. What was the hoopoe bird's role?
 - c. Who is the Simorgh?
 - d. Have kids read the statements of theme from all classes (pass the mic)
 - e. Any lingering questions or thoughts?
- C. *Overview of today:* tell kids that we will be reviewing their reading from last night in jigsaw groups, then drawing some parallels to their own lives with the readings & COB. Then we'll take a brain break and follow that with a look at Islamic art from around the world.
- D. Jigsaw review of homework (see slide)
 - a. Create chart in notebook- model and review expectations.
 - b. Meet with expert groups to complete their section of the chart
 - c. Reconvene with table groups to share (may have to model what sharing looks like→ ie, not just copying the paper)
 - d. Whole class discussion
- E. *Connect to COB*
 - a. Students create chart in their journal.
 - b. Hand out copies of sections from book.
 - c. Partners fill in their assigned bird.
 - d. Share with whole class.
 - e. Add last 2 column headings on chart; partners fill these in.
 - f. Share with whole class.
- F. *Freewrite:* What's the message from these texts for us?
 - a. Every student share a word / phrase / sentence.
 - b. Reminder that we are going to use this idea of quest / overcoming obstacles to set personal goals for the year. Next activity today will lead into the visual aspect of that assignment.
- G. *Brain break!*
- H. *Islamic art*
 - a. Show the kids the 3 initial slides and teach the noticing protocol (what do you notice?).
 - b. After the first 3, make a class list of patterns the kids see in them.

- c. Have kids go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Islamic Art collection (link on Google classroom) and look at 3 pieces of their choice. They should write down the title of the piece and what they notice in their RJ.
- d. Share at their tables, then with the whole group.
- I. *Islamic art influence on COB*: Give each group a copy of the book and have them identify any places where they saw Islamic art influencing the illustrations.
 - a. Share with the class, 1-2 items from each group.
- J. *Closing*: Tell kids that tomorrow we will work on quest setting and planning their Quest Page.

Homework: Read the article "How pursuing a quest can bring purpose to your life." As you read, note the author's thesis (main argument) and the evidence he uses to support that thesis. Write these in your journal.

DAY 3: What's our quest? [50 minute class]

- A. *Do Now: reminder of quests & where we're headed (see slides)*
 - a. Share from each table group.
 - b. Whole class discussion / wrap up as needed.
- B. *Journaling*
 - a. Tell students that we'll be answering a series of questions in their journals. Just like freewrites, the idea is to keep writing without stopping.
 - b. See slides for questions.
 - c. After last slide, have students share their Quest with their table group. Table can offer feedback.
- C. *Introduce Quest Page assignment.*
- D. *Give work time. Use [playlist on Spotify](#).*
- E. *Closure*: Remind kids of deadlines: Monday for [written document](#) & Quest Page.

DAY 4: Workday [50 minute class]

- A. *Do Now: review the rubric.*
 - a. Have kids share answers at their tables, then discuss as a whole class.
- B. *Work time expectations*
 - a. Complete y chart in slides.
- C. *Work time*. Monitor - rotate to each table. Use playlist from yesterday.
- D. *Closure*: Have each student share what they've done so far with their Partner Bestie.

Homework: Finish Quest Page and written explanation. Due during next class period.

NEXT STEPS

- During the next class, students will share their Quest Page with the class (2 min / each) and then they'll be posted in the classroom.
- We'll start *Persepolis* the following week and will tie in *COB*, Islamic art, the idea of a quest, etc., with the graphic novel.