THE GREAT BOOKS FOUNDATION
Discussion Guides for Teachers

The Great Books Foundation

Great Books Discussion Guides are now available for selected texts from Perfection Learning's outstanding Many Voices Literature series: American Short Stories, British Literature: Traditions and Change, and Reading the World: Contemporary Literature from Around the World. The guides, together with Great Books professional development, help teachers and students delve more deeply into these thought-provoking texts.
The Great Books Foundation

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Perfection Learning

Many Voices Literature

The Great Books Foundation

A nonprofit educational organization
About Perfection Learning

Founded by two educators, Perfection Learning is a family-owned company that has provided innovative, effective reading, literature, and language arts materials to K–12 classroom teachers for more than eighty-five years. Through the design of its literature programs and its partnership with the Great Books Foundation, the company offers two flagship literature programs, Many Voices and Literature & Thought, each of which focus using engaging, thought-provoking literature selections to teach middle and high school students to be critical readers and thinkers. Each anthology is structured to help students explore essential questions and develop the skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century.

About the Great Books Foundation

The Great Books Foundation is an independent, nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to empower readers of all ages to become more reflective and responsible thinkers. To accomplish this, the Foundation teaches the art of civil discourse through Shared Inquiry™ and publishes enduring works of literature across the disciplines.

The Great Books Foundation was established in 1947 to promote liberal education for the general public. In 1962, the Foundation extended its mission to children with the introduction of Junior Great Books®. Since its inception, the Foundation has helped thousands of people throughout the United States and in other countries begin their own discussion groups in schools, libraries, and community centers. Today, Foundation instructors conduct hundreds of professional learning courses for teachers and parents each year, and Great Books programs help more than one million students learn to read, discuss, and appreciate some of the world’s most enduring literature. Great Books programs combine classroom materials and the Shared Inquiry method of learning to provide the essential elements that students need to meet and surpass the goals of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.
**Introduction**

This booklet contains representative sample units of activities from the Great Books discussion guides for the Perfection Learning anthologies *American Short Stories*, *British Literature: Traditions and Change*, and *Reading the World: Contemporary Literature from Around the Globe*. Each discussion guide focuses on fifteen to twenty selections that the Great Books Foundation recommends for close reading and discussion using the Foundation’s Shared Inquiry™ method—a collaborative, inquiry-based approach to learning that complements the critical thinking encouraged in Perfection Learning’s *Many Voices Literature* series. Also included are the reproducible student handout pages that appear in each guide.

**FROM AMERICAN SHORT STORIES**

*SUCKER*  *short story*
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**FROM READING THE WORLD: CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE FROM AROUND THE GLOBE**

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**FROM BRITISH LITERATURE: TRADITIONS AND CHANGE**

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**What Is Shared Inquiry?**

Shared Inquiry™ is a method of learning in which the leader uses open-ended questioning to help participants reach their own conclusions about challenging literature. The leader guides the discussion by asking questions about specific ideas and problems of meaning in the text, but does not seek to impose his or her own interpretation on the group. Using Shared Inquiry, students develop the intellectual flexibility to analyze ideas and see a question from many angles. The focus on interpretation and discussion allows students at different reading levels to participate confidently and improve their critical thinking abilities.
The Benefits of Shared Inquiry

The Shared Inquiry approach develops students’ reading comprehension, critical thinking, and communication skills in the context of thinking about genuine problems of meaning raised by a rich work of literature. In Shared Inquiry discussion, students learn to cite evidence, respect divergent thinking, and develop well-reasoned interpretations of thought-provoking readings.

Shared Inquiry discussion:

• Helps students become more aware of their reactions as they read, develop a sensitivity to language, and value their own curiosity about a text

• Encourages students to present arguments clearly and persuasively, to offer reasons for their opinions and inferences, and to support their ideas with evidence from the text

• Gives students the confidence to shape and express their own opinions about what they read

• Helps students learn to weigh the merits of opposing arguments to modify their initial opinions

• Helps students analyze character motivation and development, as well as cause and effect

• Helps students analyze the author’s purpose, writing style, and meaning, as well as use of literary techniques

• Prepares students to write persuasively and support their interpretations with textual evidence

• Gives students practice in active listening and cooperative learning
By reading and discussing great works of the intellect and imagination, students lay the groundwork for a lifetime of independent and enthusiastic learning. Ultimately, Shared Inquiry forms the basis of a practical discipline focused on forming reasoned judgments, building common ground, and encouraging civil discourse.

**Great Books Professional Development**

To be an effective Shared Inquiry discussion leader, professional development from the Great Books Foundation is strongly recommended. The Great Books Foundation offers a range of professional development courses, including online options. In these courses, teachers learn how to frame questions that genuinely engage students, how to use follow-up questions to explore students’ ideas more thoughtfully, and how to involve students of all abilities in focused, lively discussions. Participants practice leading Shared Inquiry discussion and see experienced leaders model the range of interpretive activities introduced in these sample units. Instructors from the Foundation are also available for follow-up consultation days, which include on-site classroom demonstrations and coaching and can be customized for use with the Many Voices Literature anthologies. To learn more, visit www.greatbooks.org or call 800-222-5870.

Free resources, including downloadable materials, videos of classroom discussions, and research studies are available at www.greatbooks.org/resources. Anyone who has taken the core Great Books professional development courses can visit the Teacher Leaders Club at www.greatbooks.org/tlc for assessment tools, advice from Foundation instructors, and special offers on classroom materials.
How to Use the Great Books Discussion Guides

Each Great Books discussion guide includes general information about leading Shared Inquiry discussion and activities for fifteen to twenty selections from one Many Voices Literature anthology. Activities for each Great Books discussion unit consist of:

- **Prereading, first reading, and sharing questions:** setting a context for reading, reading the selection aloud if possible, and identifying questions worth exploring
- **Second reading:** rereading the selection, making notes using a specific prompt, and comparing those notes with other students
- **Shared Inquiry discussion:** the central Great Books activity, in which questions about the meaning of the text are explored in depth
- **Writing after discussion:** helping students consolidate or extend their ideas about a text and connect what they read to their own experiences and opinions

The guides include questions and prompts for each activity, while the sequence of activities—reading and asking questions, rereading and making notes, and exploring possible interpretations in discussion—mirrors the process that effective readers use with complex texts.

Following are two sample weekly schedules. Longer selections may require more in-class sessions, and some activities can be assigned as homework, depending on your students’ needs and the time available.
Option A: Three In-Class Sessions

Session 1
- Prereading activity (optional)
- First reading
- Sharing questions

Session 2
- Second reading
- Comparing and discussing notes

Session 3
- Shared Inquiry discussion

Homework: Writing after discussion

Option B: Two In-Class Sessions

Session 1
- First reading
- Sharing questions

Homework: Second reading

Session 2
- Comparing and discussing notes
- Shared Inquiry discussion

Homework: Writing after discussion
A rich and varied collection of classic and contemporary writing with a strong emphasis on understanding the written word and developing the craft of writing. This outstanding anthology for high school students contains canon pieces as well as the latest contemporary works by writers such as Homer, Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson, James Thurber, O. Henry, Sarah Ruhl, Alice Walker, Margaret Atwood, and Amiri Baraka.

The thematic organization focuses on issues important to students—growing up, family ties, nature, the world at large, crossing boundaries, and the past.

A special focus on writing helps students:
- understand how successful writers go about their work
- learn how to write in various modes to further their own understanding
- practice writing longer genre pieces in order to become accomplished in various writing styles.
It was always like I had a room to myself. Sucker slept in my bed with me but that didn’t interfere with anything. The room was mine and I used it as I wanted to. Once I remember sawing a trap door in the floor. Last year when I was a sophomore in high school I tacked on my wall some pictures of girls from magazines and one of them was just in her underwear. My mother never bothered me because she had the younger kids to look after. And Sucker thought anything I did was always swell.

Whenever I would bring any of my friends back to my room all I had to do was just glance once at Sucker and he would get up from whatever he was busy with and maybe half smile at me, and leave without saying a word. He never brought kids back there. He’s twelve, four years younger than I am, and he always knew without me even telling him that I didn’t want kids that age meddling with my things.

Half the time I used to forget that Sucker isn’t my brother. He’s my first cousin but practically ever since I remember he’s been in our family. You see his folks were killed in a wreck when he was a baby. To me and my kid sisters he was like our brother.

Sucker used to always remember and believe every word I said. That’s how he got his nick-name. Once a couple of years ago I told him that if he’d jump off our garage with an umbrella it would act as a parachute and he wouldn’t fall hard. He did it and busted his knee. That’s just one instance. And the funny thing was that no matter how many times he got fooled he would still believe me. Not that he was dumb in other ways—it was just the way he acted with me. He would look at everything I did and quietly take it in.
There is one thing I have learned, but it makes me feel guilty and is hard to figure out. If a person admires you a lot you despise him and don't care—and it is the person who doesn't notice you that you are apt to admire. This is not easy to realize. Maybelle Watts, this senior at school, acted like she was the Queen of Sheba and even humiliated me. Yet at this same time I would have done anything in the world to get her attentions. All I could think about day and night was Maybelle until I was nearly crazy. When Sucker was a little kid and on up until the time he was twelve I guess I treated him as bad as Maybelle did me.

Now that Sucker has changed so much it is a little hard to remember him as he used to be. I never imagined anything would suddenly happen that would make us both very different. I never knew that in order to get what has happened straight in my mind I would want to think back on him as he used to be and compare and try to get things settled. If I could have seen ahead maybe I would have acted different.

I never noticed him much or thought about him and when you consider how long we have had the same room together it is funny the few things I remember. He used to talk to himself a lot when he'd think he was alone—all about him fighting gangsters and being on ranches and that sort of kids' stuff. He'd get in the bathroom and stay as long as an hour and sometimes his voice would go up high and excited and you could hear him all over the house. Usually, though, he was very quiet. He didn't have many boys in the neighborhood to buddy with and his face had the look of a kid who is watching a game and waiting to be asked to play. He didn't mind wearing the sweaters and coats that I outgrew, even if the sleeves did flop down too big and make his wrists look as thin and white as a little girl's. That is how I remember him—getting a little bigger every year but still being the same. That was Sucker up until a few months ago when all this trouble began.

Maybelle was somehow mixed up in what happened so I guess I ought to start with her. Until I knew her I hadn't given much time to girls. Last fall she sat next to me in General Science class and that was when I first began to notice her. Her hair is the brightest yellow I ever saw and occasionally she will wear it set into curls with some sort of gluey stuff. Her fingernails are pointed and manicured and painted a shiny red. All during class I used to watch Maybelle, nearly all the time except when I thought she was going to look my way or when the teacher called on me. I couldn't keep my eyes off her hands, for one
thing. They are very little and white except for that red stuff, and when she would turn the pages of her book she always licked her thumb and held out her little finger and turned very slowly. It is impossible to describe Maybelle. All the boys are crazy about her but she didn’t even notice me. For one thing she’s almost two years older than I am. Between periods I used to try and pass very close to her in the halls but she would hardly ever smile at me. All I could do was sit and look at her in class—and sometimes it was like the whole room could hear my heart beating and I wanted to holler or light out and run for Hell.

At night, in bed, I would imagine about Maybelle. Often this would keep me from sleeping until as late as one or two o’clock. Sometimes Sucker would wake up and ask me why I couldn’t get settled and I’d tell him to hush his mouth. I suppose I was mean to him lots of times. I guess I wanted to ignore somebody like Maybelle did me. You could always tell by Sucker’s face when his feelings were hurt. I don’t remember all the ugly remarks I must have made because even when I was saying them my mind was on Maybelle.

That went on for nearly three months and then somehow she began to change. In the halls she would speak to me and every morning she copied my homework. At lunch time once I danced with her in the gym. One afternoon I got up nerve and went around to her house with a carton of cigarettes. I knew she smoked in the girls’ basement and sometimes outside of school—and I didn’t want to take her candy because I think that’s been run into the ground. She was very nice and it seemed to me everything was going to change.

It was that night when this trouble really started. I had come into my room late and Sucker was already asleep. I felt too happy and keyed up to get in a comfortable position and I was awake thinking about Maybelle a long time. Then I dreamed about her and it seemed I kissed her. It was a surprise to wake up and see the dark. I lay still and a little while passed before I could come to and understand where I was. The house was quiet and it was a very dark night.

Sucker’s voice was a shock to me. “Pete? . . .”

I didn’t answer anything or even move.

“You do like me as much as if I was your own brother, don’t you, Pete?”

I couldn’t get over the surprise of everything and it was like this was the real dream instead of the other.

“You have liked me all the time like I was your own brother, haven’t you?”
“Sure,” I said.

Then I got up for a few minutes. It was cold and I was glad to come back to bed. Sucker hung on to my back. He felt little and warm and I could feel his warm breathing on my shoulder.

“No matter what you did I always knew you liked me.”

I was wide awake and my mind seemed mixed up in a strange way. There was this happiness about Maybelle and all that—but at the same time something about Sucker and his voice when he said these things made me take notice. Anyway I guess you understand people better when you are happy than when something is worrying you. It was like I had never really thought about Sucker until then. I felt I had always been mean to him. One night a few weeks before I had heard him crying in the dark. He said he had lost a boy's beebee gun and was scared to let anybody know. He wanted me to tell him what to do. I was sleepy and tried to make him hush and when he wouldn't I kicked at him. That was just one of the things I remembered. It seemed to me he had always been a lonesome kid. I felt bad.

There is something about a dark cold night that makes you feel close to someone you're sleeping with. When you talk together it is like you are the only people awake in the town.

“You're a swell kid, Sucker,” I said.

It seemed to me suddenly that I did like him more than anybody else I knew—more than any other boy, more than my sisters, more in a certain way even than Maybelle. I felt good all over and it was like when they play sad music in the movies. I wanted to show Sucker how much I really thought of him and make up for the way I had always treated him.

We talked for a good while that night. His voice was fast and it was like he had been saving up these things to tell me for a long time. He mentioned that he was going to try to build a canoe and that the kids down the block wouldn’t let him in on their football team and I don’t know what all. I talked some too and it was a good feeling to think of him taking in everything I said so seriously. I even spoke of Maybelle a little, only I made out like it was her who had been running after me all this time. He asked questions about high school and so forth. His voice was excited and he kept on talking fast like he could never get the words out in time. When I went to sleep he was still talking and I could still feel his breathing on my shoulder, warm and close.
During the next couple of weeks I saw a lot of Maybelle. She acted as though she really cared for me a little. Half the time I felt so good I hardly knew what to do with myself.

But I didn’t forget about Sucker. There were a lot of old things in my bureau drawer I’d been saving—boxing gloves and Tom Swift books and second rate fishing tackle. All this I turned over to him. We had some more talks together and it was really like I was knowing him for the first time. When there was a long cut on his cheek I knew he had been monkeying around with this new first razor set of mine, but I didn’t say anything. His face seemed different now. He used to look timid and sort of like he was afraid of a whack over the head. That expression was gone. His face, with those wide-open eyes and his ears sticking out and his mouth never quite shut, had the look of a person who is surprised and expecting something swell.

Once I started to point him out to Maybelle and tell her he was my kid brother. It was an afternoon when a murder mystery was on at the movie. I had earned a dollar working for my Dad and I gave Sucker a quarter to go and get candy and so forth. With the rest I took Maybelle. We were sitting near the back and I saw Sucker come in. He began to stare at the screen the minute he stepped past the ticket man and he stumbled down the aisle without noticing where he was going. I started to punch Maybelle but couldn’t quite make up my mind. Sucker looked a little silly—walking like a drunk with his eyes glued to the movie. He was wiping his reading glasses on his shirt tail and his knickers flopped down. He went on until he got to the first few rows where the kids usually sit. I never did punch Maybelle. But I got to thinking it was good to have both of them at the movie with the money I earned.

I guess things went on like this for about a month or six weeks. I felt so good I couldn’t settle down to study or put my mind on anything. I wanted to be friendly with everybody. There were times when I just had to talk to some person. And usually that would be Sucker. He felt as good as I did. Once he said: “Pete, I am gladder that you are like my brother than anything else in the world.”

Then something happened between Maybelle and me. I never have figured out just what it was. Girls like her are hard to understand. She began to act different toward me. At first I wouldn’t let myself believe this and tried to think it was just my imagination. She didn’t act glad to see me anymore. Often she went out riding with this fellow on the football team who owns this yellow roadster. The car was the color of
her hair and after school she would ride off with him, laughing and
looking into his face. I couldn’t think of anything to do about it and she
was on my mind all day and night. When I did get a chance to go out
with her she was snippy and didn’t seem to notice me. This made me
feel like something was the matter—I would worry about my shoes
clopping too loud on the floor or the fly of my pants, or the bumps on
my chin. Sometimes when Maybelle was around, a devil would get into
me and I’d hold my face stiff and call grown men by their last names
without the Mister and say rough things. In the night I would wonder
what made me do all this until I was too tired for sleep.

At first I was so worried I just forgot about Sucker. Then later he
began to get on my nerves. He was always hanging around until I would
get back from high school, always looking like he had something to say
to me or wanted me to tell him. He made me a magazine rack in his
Manual Training class and one week he saved his lunch money and
bought me three packs of cigarettes. He couldn’t seem to take it in that
I had things on my mind and didn’t want to fool with him. Every
afternoon it would be the same—him in my room with this waiting
expression on his face. Then I wouldn’t say anything or I’d maybe
answer him rough-like and he would finally go on out.

I can’t divide that time up and say this happened one day and that
the next. For one thing I was so mixed up the weeks just slid along into
each other and I felt like Hell and didn’t care. Nothing definite was said
or done. Maybelle still rode around with this fellow in his yellow roadster
and sometimes she would smile at me and sometimes not. Every
afternoon I went from one place to another where I thought she would
be. Either she would act almost nice and I would begin thinking how
things would finally clear up and she would care for me—or else she’d
behave so that if she hadn’t been a girl I’d have wanted to grab her by
that white little neck and choke her. The more ashamed I felt for making
a fool of myself the more I ran after her.

Sucker kept getting on my nerves more and more. He would look at
me as though he sort of blamed me for something, but at the same time
knew that it wouldn’t last long. He was growing fast and for
some reason began to stutter when he talked. Sometimes he had
nightmares or would throw up his breakfast. Mom got him a bottle of
cod liver oil.

Then the finish came between Maybelle and me. I met her going to
the drug store and asked for a date. When she said no I remarked
something sarcastic. She told me she was sick and tired of my being around and that she had never cared a rap about me. She said all that. I just stood there and didn’t answer anything. I walked home very slowly.

For several afternoons I stayed in my room by myself. I didn’t want to go anywhere or talk to anyone. When Sucker would come in and look at me sort of funny I’d yell at him to get out. I didn’t want to think of Maybelle and I sat at my desk reading Popular Mechanics or whittling at a toothbrush rack I was making. It seemed to me I was putting that girl out of my mind pretty well.

But you can’t help what happens to you at night. That is what made things how they are now.

You see a few nights after Maybelle said those words to me I dreamed about her again. It was like that first time and I was squeezing Sucker’s arm so tight I woke him up. He reached for my hand.

“Pete, what’s the matter with you?”

All of a sudden I felt so mad my throat choked—at myself and the dream and Maybelle and Sucker and every single person I knew. I remembered all the times Maybelle had humiliated me and everything bad that had ever happened. It seemed to me for a second that nobody would ever like me but a sap like Sucker.

“Why is it we aren’t buddies like we were before? Why—?”

“Shut your damn trap!” I threw off the cover and got up and turned on the light. He sat in the middle of the bed, his eyes blinking and scared.

There was something in me and I couldn’t help myself. I don’t think anybody ever gets that mad but once. Words came without me knowing what they would be. It was only afterward that I could remember each thing I said and see it all in a clear way.

“Why aren’t we buddies? Because you’re the dumbest slob I ever saw! Nobody cares anything about you! And just because I felt sorry for you sometimes and tried to act decent don’t think I give a damn about a dumb-bunny like you!”

If I’d talked loud or hit him it wouldn’t have been so bad. But my voice was slow and like I was very calm. Sucker’s mouth was part way open and he looked as though he’d knocked his funny bone. His face was white and sweat came out on his forehead. He wiped it away with the back of his hand and for a minute his arm stayed raised that way as though he was holding something away from him.
“Don’t you know a single thing? Haven’t you ever been around at all? Why don’t you get a girl friend instead of me? What kind of a sissy do you want to grow up to be anyway?”

I didn’t know what was coming next. I couldn’t help myself or think.

Sucker didn’t move. He had on one of my pajama jackets and his neck stuck out skinny and small. His hair was damp on his forehead.

“Why do you always hang around me? Don’t you know when you’re not wanted?”

Afterward I could remember the change in Sucker’s face. Slowly that blank look went away and the closed this mouth. His eyes got narrow and his fists shut. There had never been such a look on him before. It was like every second he was getting older. There was a hard look to his eyes you don’t see usually in a kid. A drop of sweat rolled down his chin and he didn’t notice. He just sat there with those eyes on me and he didn’t speak and his face was hard and didn’t move.

“No you don’t know when you’re not wanted. You’re too dumb. Just like your name—a dumb Sucker.”

It was like something had busted inside me. I turned off the light and sat down in the chair by the window. My legs were shaking and I was so tired I could have bawled. The room was cold and dark. I sat there for a long time and smoked a squashed cigarette I had saved. Outside the yard was black and quiet. After a while I heard Sucker lie down.

I wasn’t mad any more, only tired. It seemed awful to me that I had talked like that to a kid only twelve. I couldn’t take it all in. I told myself I would go over to him and try to make it up. But I just sat there in the cold until a long time had passed. I planned how I could straighten it out in the morning. Then, trying not to squeak the springs, I got back in bed.

Sucker was gone when I woke up the next day. And later when I wanted to apologize as I had planned he looked at me in this new hard way so that I couldn’t say a word.

All of that was two or three months ago. Since then Sucker has grown faster than any boy I ever saw. He’s almost as tall as I am and his bones have gotten heavier and bigger. He won’t wear any of my old clothes any more and has bought his first pair of long pants—with some leather suspenders to hold them up. Those are just the changes that are easy to see and put into words.
Our room isn’t mine at all any more. He’s gotten up this gang of kids and they have a club. When they aren’t digging trenches in some vacant lot and fighting they are always in my room. On the door there is some foolishness written in Mercurochrome¹ saying “Woe to the Outsider who Enters” and signed with crossed bones and their secret initials. They have rigged up a radio and every afternoon it blares out music. Once as I was coming in I heard a boy telling something in a loud voice about what he saw in the back of his big brother’s automobile. I could guess what I didn’t hear. That’s what her and my brother do. It’s the truth—parked in the car. For a minute Sucker looked surprised and his face was almost like it used to be. Then he got hard and tough again. “Sure, dumbbell. We know all that.” They didn’t notice me. Sucker began telling them how in two years he was planning to be a trapper in Alaska.

But most of the time Sucker stays by himself. It is worse when we are alone together in the room. He sprawls across the bed in those long corduroy pants with the suspenders and just stares at me with that hard, half-sneering look. I fiddle around my desk and can’t get settled because of those eyes of his. And the thing is I just have to study because I’ve gotten three bad cards this term already. If I flunk English I can’t graduate next year. I don’t want to be a bum and I just have to get my mind on it. I don’t care a flip for Maybelle or any particular girl any more and it’s only this thing between Sucker and me that is the trouble now. We never speak except when we have to before the family. I don’t even want to call him Sucker any more and unless I forget I call him by his real name, Richard. At night I can’t study with him in the room and I have to hang around the drug store, smoking and doing nothing, with the fellows who loaf there.

More than anything I want to be easy in my mind again. And I miss the way Sucker and I were for a while in a funny, sad way that before this I never would have believed. But everything is so different that there seems to be nothing I can do to get it right. I’ve sometimes thought if we could have it out in a big fight that would help. But I can’t fight him because he’s four years younger. And another thing—sometimes this look in his eyes makes me almost believe that if Sucker could he would kill me.

¹ Mercurochrome: trademark name for a red antiseptic that is meant to be brushed on skin
Prereading

Have you ever gotten so mad at someone that you said something you didn’t really mean? How did you feel after you calmed down? What did you do about the situation?

Second Reading

Mark with a P places where Pete is proud of his actions; mark with an R places where he regrets his actions.

Interpretive Questions for Discussion

Why does Pete want to make things right with Sucker?

1. Why isn’t Pete very nice to Sucker until after he starts seeing Maybelle?
2. If Pete doesn’t like the way Maybelle treats him, why does he treat Sucker the same way?
3. Why does Pete say that the “trouble really started” the night he says he likes Sucker and that Sucker’s a “swell kid”? Does Pete think it was a mistake to tell Sucker how he felt about him?
4. When Pete tells Sucker that he’s “too dumb” to know when he’s not wanted, why does Pete say, “It was like something busted inside me”?
5. Why does Pete feel that a big fight with Sucker might fix things between them?
6. Why can’t Pete make himself tell Sucker that he didn’t mean what he said? Why can’t he find a way to fix the situation with Sucker?
Why does Sucker begin to act “hard and tough” after Pete blows up at him?

1. Before the trouble between them, why does Sucker believe every word Pete says, “no matter how many times he got fooled”?

2. Are we meant to think that Sucker is certain, or hopeful, when he tells Pete, “No matter what you did I always knew you liked me”?

3. At the end of the story, why is the boys’ bedroom more Sucker’s than Pete’s?

4. Why does Sucker organize a “gang of kids” after the trouble between him and Pete?

5. Why doesn’t Pete want to call Sucker by his nickname at the end of the story?

Writing After Discussion

Have students write an essay, using evidence from the text, to support their answer to the focus question in discussion, or use one of the following:

1. Do you think it’s a good thing that Sucker becomes a tough kid?

2. Do you blame Sucker for turning against Pete so completely? Was Sucker asking too much of Pete?

3. If you were Pete, what would you do to make up with Sucker?

4. Write about a time when someone you know changed in an unexpected way. Why do you think the person changed?
Whenever my mother spoke of my father, she, in common with all the women in her town, simply used the personal pronoun in Arabic corresponding to “him.” Thus, every time she used a verb in the third person singular which didn’t have a noun subject, she was naturally referring to her husband. This form of speech was characteristic of every married woman, from fifteen to sixty, with the proviso that in later years, if the husband had undertaken the pilgrimage to Mecca,¹ he could be given the title of “Hajj.”

Everybody, children and adults, especially girls and women, since all important conversations took place among the womenfolk, learnt very quickly to adapt to this rule whereby a husband and wife must never be referred to by name.

After she had been married a few years, my mother gradually learnt a little French. She was able to exchange a few halting words with the wives of my father’s colleagues who had, for the most part, come from France and, like us, lived with their families in the little block of flats set aside for the village teachers.

¹ pilgrimage to Mecca: the visit made by Muslims to the birthplace of the prophet Muhammad at the Mecca in Saudi Arabia
I don’t know exactly when my mother began to say, “My husband has come, my husband has gone out . . . I’ll ask my husband,” etc. Although my mother did make rapid progress in the language, in spite of taking it up fairly late in life, I can still hear the evident awkwardness in her voice betrayed by her labored phraseology, her slow and deliberate enunciation at that time. Nevertheless, I can sense how much it cost her modesty to refer to my father directly in this way.

It was as if a floodgate had opened within her, perhaps in her relationship with her husband. Years later, during the summers we spent in her native town, when chatting in Arabic with her sisters or cousins, my mother would refer to him quite naturally by his first name, even with a touch of superiority. What a daring innovation! Yes, quite unhesitatingly—I was going to say, unequivocally—in any case, without any of the usual euphemisms and verbal circumlocutions. When her aunts and elderly female relations were present, she would once more use the traditional formalities, out of respect for them; such freedom of language would have appeared insolent and incongruous to the ears of the pious old ladies.

Years went by. As my mother’s ability to speak French improved, while I was still a child of no more than twelve, I came to realize an irrefutable fact: namely that, in the face of all these womenfolk, my parents formed a couple. One thing was an even greater source of pride in me: when my mother referred to any of the day-to-day incidents of our village life—which in our city relatives’ eyes was very backward—the tall figure of my father—my childhood hero—seemed to pop up in the midst of all these women engaged in idle chit-chat on the age-old patios to which they were confined.

My father, no one except my father; none of the other women ever saw fit to refer to their menfolk, their masters who spent the day outside the house and returned home in the evening, taciturn,
with eyes on the ground. The nameless uncles, cousins, relatives by marriage, were for us an unidentifiable collection of individuals to all of whom their spouses alluded impartially in the masculine gender.

With the exception of my father . . . My mother, with lowered eyes, would calmly pronounce his name “Tahar”—which, I learned very early, meant “The Pure”—and even when a suspicion of a smile flickered across the other women’s faces or they looked half ill at ease, half indulgent, I thought that a rare distinction lit up my mother’s face.

These harem conversations ran their imperceptible course: my ears only caught those phrases which singled my mother out above the rest. Because she always made a point of bringing my father’s name into these exchanges, he became for me still purer than his given name betokened.

One day something occurred which was a portent that their relationship would never be the same again—a commonplace enough event in any other society, but which was unusual to say the least with us: in the course of an exceptionally long journey away from home (to a neighboring province, I think), my father wrote to my mother—yes, to my mother!

He sent her a postcard, with a short greeting written diagonally across it in his large, legible handwriting, something like “Best wishes from this distant region” or possibly, “I am having a good journey and getting to know an unfamiliar region,” etc. and he signed it simply with his first name. I am sure that, at the time, he himself would not have dared add any more intimate formula above his signature, such as “I am thinking of you,” or even less, “Yours affectionately.” But, on the half of the card reserved for the address of the recipient, he had written “Madame” followed by his own surname, with the possible addition—but here I’m not sure—“and children,” that is to say we three, of whom I, then about ten years old, was the eldest . . .

The radical change in customs was apparent for all to see: my
father had quite brazenly written his wife’s name, in his own handwriting, on a postcard which was going to travel from one town to another, which was going to be exposed to so many masculine eyes, including eventually our village postman—a Muslim postman to boot—and, what is more, he had dared to refer to her in the western manner as “Madame So-and-So. . . ,” whereas, no local man, poor or rich, ever referred to his wife and children in any other way than by the vague periphrasis: “the household.”

So, my father had “written” to my mother. When she visited her family she mentioned this postcard, in the simplest possible words and tone of voice, to be sure. She was about to describe her husband’s four or five days’ absence from the village, explaining the practical problems this had posed: my father having to order the provisions just before he left, so that the shopkeepers could deliver them every morning; she was going to explain how hard it was for a city woman to be isolated in a village with very young children and cut off in this way. But the other women had interrupted, exclaiming, in the face of this new reality, this almost incredible detail:

“He wrote to you, to you?”

“He wrote his wife’s name and the postman must have read it? Shame! . . . ”

“He could at least have addressed the card to his son, for the principle of the thing, even if his son is only seven or eight!”

My mother did not reply. She was probably pleased, flattered even, but she said nothing. Perhaps she was suddenly ill at ease, or blushing from embarrassment; yes, her husband had written to her, in person! . . . The eldest child, the only one who might have been able to read the card, was her daughter: so, daughter or wife, where was the difference as far as the addressee was concerned?

“I must remind you that I’ve learned to read French now!”

This postcard was, in fact, a most daring manifestation of affection. Her modesty suffered at that very moment that she spoke of it. Yet, it came second to her pride as a wife, which was secretly flattered.
The murmured exchanges of these segregated women struck a faint chord with me, as a little girl with observing eyes. And so, for the first time, I seem to have some intuition of the possible happiness, the mystery in the union of a man and a woman.

My father had dared “to write” to my mother. Both of them referred to each other by name, which was tantamount to declaring openly their love for each other, my father by writing to her, my mother by quoting my father henceforward without false shame in all her conversations.
MY FATHER WRITES TO MY MOTHER
ASSIA DJEBAR

Prereading
What are some gender-based customs that you are expected to live by? That is, what customs or rules are you expected to follow that someone of the opposite sex is not?

Second Reading
Mark with a C places where someone conforms to what is expected; mark with an N places where someone behaves in a nonconformist way.

Interpretive Questions for Discussion
Why is Djebar’s mother secretly flattered when she gets a postcard from her husband?

1. Why does referring to her husband directly open a “floodgate” for Djebar’s mother?
2. Years later, why does the mother refer to her husband by his first name naturally and “even with a touch of superiority”?
3. Why does a “rare distinction” light up the mother’s face when she says her husband’s name?
4. Why does Djebar say that “all important conversations took place among the womenfolk,” but then describe the women as “engaged in idle chit-chat”? Why are we told that the women talk “on the age-old patios to which they were all confined”? 
5. Why does the author call the conversation among the women a “harem conversation”?

6. How is the postcard “a most daring manifestation of affection”?

7. What does Djebar mean when she says she realized it as an “irrefutable fact” that her parents had “formed a couple”? Why is the author proud of this?

8. Why does the postcard incident give Djebar, a “little girl with observing eyes,” an “intuition of the possible happiness, the mystery in the union of a man and a woman”?

**Writing After Discussion**

Have students write an essay, using evidence from the text, to support their answer to the focus question in discussion, or use one of the following:

1. Use the Internet to research American, British, or Canadian writers who have used pen names. Write an essay using examples from your research to analyze why authors use pseudonyms.

2. Explain how Djebar’s mother’s modesty suffered when she spoke of her husband directly and when she received the postcard. Have you ever felt shame as a result of doing something that you thought was right?

3. How is the autobiographical form different from the poems and short stories you have been studying? Would this story have the same impact for you if it were fiction?
BRITISH LITERATURE:
Traditions and Change
A VALEDICTION:

Forbidding

Mourning

John Donne

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls, to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
The breath goes now, and some say, no:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love, so much refined,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Interassurèd of the mind,
Care less eyes, lips, and hands to miss.
Our two souls therefore, which are one,
    Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
    Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
    As stiff twin compasses are two,
Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show
    To move, but doth, if th’ other do.

And though it in the center sit,
    Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
    And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
    Like th’ other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
    And makes me end, where I begun.
A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning
John Donne

Prereading
Do you agree with the saying “Absence makes the heart grow fonder”?

Second Reading
Mark with an H places where the speaker is more concerned with his own peace of mind; mark with a B places where he is more concerned with his beloved’s peace of mind.

Interpretive Questions for Discussion
Why does the speaker forbid his beloved to mourn their separation?

1. Why does the speaker compare his separation from his beloved to the way virtuous men die?
2. How will telling “the laity” of their love with tears and tempests be a “profanation” of the lovers’ joy?
3. Why does the speaker compare the separation of the lovers to “trepidation of the spheres”?
4. Why are lovers who cannot bear to be apart called “sublunary”?
5. Why does the speaker say that their love is “so much refined, / That ourselves know not what it is”?
6. Why does the speaker think that when they are separated their souls will be “like gold to an airy thinness beat”?
7. Is the speaker convinced or only hopeful that their love will survive the separation?
Writing After Discussion

Have students write an essay, using evidence from the text, to support their answer to the focus question in discussion, or use one of the following:

1. If you had to be apart from someone you loved and you received a poem like this, would you be persuaded not to mourn the separation? How would you respond?
2. Must loving someone mean that you will suffer when that person is away?
3. Is Donne’s image of a compass—in the sense of a drawing instrument used to inscribe a circle—an appropriate description of separated lovers? Can you think of a better metaphor?
Shared Inquiry Discussion Guidelines

Come to the discussion with your book, a pen or pencil, a notebook, and an open mind. In Shared Inquiry discussion, everyone, including the leader, considers a question with more than one reasonable answer and weighs the evidence for different answers. The goal of the discussion is for each of you to develop an answer that satisfies you personally.

Following these guidelines will make for a better discussion:

★ Read the text twice before participating in the discussion. This ensures that everyone is prepared to talk about the ideas in the selection.

★ Discuss only the text that everyone has read. This keeps the discussion focused on understanding the selection.

★ Support your ideas with evidence from the text. This enables everyone to weigh textual support for different ideas and to choose intelligently among them.

★ Listen to other participants, respond to them directly, and ask them questions. Shared Inquiry is about the give-and-take of ideas, and speaking directly to other group members, not always to the leader, makes the discussion livelier and more authentic.

★ Expect the leader to only ask questions, rather than offer opinions or answers. The leader’s role is to listen and ask questions in order to help participants develop their own ideas, with everyone, including the leader, gaining a new understanding in the process.
+ Building Your Answer in Shared Inquiry Discussion 

Name: ____________________________________________________________________________________________

Selection: _______________________________________________________________________________________

Focus question: _____________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Your answer before discussion (include something from the text that supports your answer): ___________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________________
How did the discussion affect your answer? Did it change your mind or provide additional support for your answer? Did it make you aware of other issues?

Your answer after discussion:

What in the selection helped you decide on this answer?
## Critical Thinking Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Level</th>
<th>Idea: Generating an Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **7** Extends Interpretation | Extends ideas to interpret text as a whole  
  - Identifies themes, author’s perspective  
  - Goes beyond the question, widens the issues under discussion |
| **6** Builds Interpretation | Elaborates on own idea  
  - Defines terms, explores implications  
  - Resolves inconsistencies |
| **5** Explains Answer | Explains how an idea answers the question  
  - Relates actions, characters, statements to each other  
  - To clarify, spells out assumptions, relates them to the question |
| **4** Understands Issues | Fully understands the interpretive issue  
  - Infers motives and causes, addresses the question directly  
  - To clarify, tells more about the answer |
| **3** Recognizes Alternatives | Asserts a considered answer, aware of alternative ideas  
  - May hesitate between answers  
  - To clarify, paraphrases answer |
| **2** Offers Simple, Quick Answers | Gives a quick, simple answer to the question  
  - All-or-nothing, snap judgment  
  - To clarify, repeats answer |
<p>| <strong>1</strong> Begins to Answer | Talks about the text without addressing the question |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Evidence:</strong> Using Support from the Text</th>
<th><strong>Response:</strong> Listening and Responding to Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brings together evidence from whole text</td>
<td>Seeks out other students’ ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uses both major incidents and subtle details</td>
<td>• Asks questions to clarify other students’ ideas and suggests possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compares and weighs evidence</td>
<td>• Suggests support for others’ ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds case from several different passages</td>
<td>Incorporates other students’ ideas and evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Retraces process of thinking</td>
<td>• Agrees or disagrees with specific parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continues to add evidence during discussion</td>
<td>• Follows whole discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains how a passage supports an idea</td>
<td>Explains and gives reasons for agreement and disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explores meanings, connotations for relevant words, phrases</td>
<td>• Critiques or supports other students’ ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sees when evidence works against own idea</td>
<td>• Asks other students simple questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands the need for evidence</td>
<td>Understands and roughly summarizes other students’ ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spontaneously looks back into the text</td>
<td>• May be convinced by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focuses on relevant sentences</td>
<td>• Follows other students’ counterarguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports an answer against an alternative answer</td>
<td>Recognizes alternative answers and agrees or disagrees simply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Locates relevant major passages</td>
<td>Tends not to volunteer support; offers support only when asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reads or recounts whole passages</td>
<td>• Recalls major text facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tends not to volunteer support; offers support only when asked</td>
<td>• Considers answer self-evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May retell the story or give an opinion about something mentioned in the text</td>
<td>Reacts briefly or quickly to other students’ answers without talking about them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allows others to speak without interrupting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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