



## ***The Trip to Bountiful***

### **Teacher Preview Workshop Lesson**

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**Grade Level: 8-10**

**Length: Four 55-minute classes**

#### **Introduction:**

In Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful* the characters are disconnected from each other's feelings. Despite each knowing what they want, their lack of empathy for each other is preventing them from being able to live in harmony and work together towards their goals.

This lesson centers on an exploration of the connections between self-reflection, perspective, and listening. Students begin with a self-reflective poetry writing activity. By learning to better understand and communicate who they are, students build a foundation for empathy. Next, through a series of activities students explore how perspective directly impacts how we respond to others, especially when they are different from us. Woven throughout the lessons is a protocol for actively listening and responding. Learning to actively listen and respond cultivates a mindset of curiosity, compassion, and support for those around us.

Educators may choose to teach one lesson as a stand-alone or to teach all four lessons sequentially.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Students will participate in self-reflection, and partner and group discussions to explore how they think, feel, and respond to others.
- Students will be able to use a variety of perspective-taking and close reading activities using visual art and text to build their empathy skills.
- Students will make connections between understanding, listening, and curiosity, and will be able to describe how these habits of mind foster empathy.

#### **Guiding Questions:**

- What habits of mind are useful for empathy?
- Where do we start to build these habits?
- How can visual art and text help us to explore and expand our understanding and feelings about others?

## **Standards:**

**Common Core English Language Arts. SL.9-10.1 and SL.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 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies. D2.Psy.2.9-12.** Investigate human behavior from biological, cognitive, behavioral, and sociocultural perspectives.

## **Classroom Activities:**

### **Lesson One: Self-Reflection**

Students will write an "I am..." poem and explore the importance of self-reflection. How does self-reflection connect to empathy?

### **Lesson Two: Empathizing with Difference**

Students will use two visual thinking strategy protocols developed by Harvard's Project Zero to consider a photo from the National Museum of Asian Art collection. How does deeply thinking about a photo help us learn to consider other perspectives? How does this build our capacity to empathize?

### **Lesson Three: Connecting with Text**

Students will use a close-reading approach to explore an excerpted scene from Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful*. They will take on the perspective of one character in the excerpt. They will use an active listening protocol to share the character's perspective with a classmate and examine the connection between perspective-taking, active listening, and empathy.

### **Lesson Four: Perspective-Taking Through Visual Art**

Students will use a close-looking strategy to analyze a work of visual art. Students will consider what they think is happening in the piece. Building on this thinking, students will imagine taking on the perspective of a figure in the artwork. How does this help us to connect to the painting? How does the practice of asking open-ended questions support our capacity to empathize?

## **Lesson One: Self-Reflection**

**Introduce** the concept of self-reflection. In their journals or on a piece of paper, ask the students to write down or draw in 30 seconds everything that comes to mind when they hear the words "self-reflection." After 30 seconds, invite students to share some of their responses.

Share with students or affirm their responses that self-reflection is a process of thinking about all the things that make us who we are, including where we are from, what we value, and the things to which we are emotionally connected. Self-reflection helps us develop the ability to clearly see who we are, whom we want to be, and what we want from life. But it's a skill that needs to be practiced and developed throughout our life.

### **I am...You see...**

Students will draw a big circle on a blank sheet of paper or in their journals. In the center of the circle, students should respond to the prompt, "I am..." they should write words or phrases that reflect:

- Things they love, like, or feel emotionally connected to
- Words to describe where they live (this can include sights, smells, and tastes)
- Words to describe their personality
- Words to describe their physical appearance (framed in positive language)
- Things they believe in
- Values they hold
- Emotions they feel or experience
- Hobbies or activities in which they participate

On the outside of the circle, they should write words or phrases that reflect how they believe others perceive them.

**Group discussion:** Remind students that anything they wrote inside or outside their circle does not need to be shared. Ask the students:

- Did they observe disharmony between what they wrote inside the circle and outside? What makes them say that?
- What was harder to write (inside or outside)? What makes them say that?
- What might cause disharmony or disconnect between what you think about yourself and how you think others perceive you?

### **I am... poem**

Students will write a poem that reflects who they are. Use the document attached to the lesson.

**Practicing Empathy:** Invite students to share their poems out loud if they are comfortable. Remind the class to be respectful, active listeners who uphold your shared classroom agreements and school norms. Students may respond to each other's poems with [warm feedback](#). Warm feedback sentence frames include:

- I liked it when you...
- Your line about...resonated with me...

- Thank you for sharing about...

As a group discussion, ask students the following questions. Write down responses on a flip chart, whiteboard, or Smart Board:

- How would they define empathy?
- What does empathy look like? What does it sound like? What does it feel like?
- Is it easy to be empathetic? When is it difficult?
- How does self-reflection connect to empathy?

### **Exit Ticket: Final Five**

Place five pieces of flip chart paper around the room. The flip chart headers should say:

- Something I knew about myself...
- Something I learned about myself today...
- Something I learned about another person today...
- Something I wonder about self-reflection...
- Something I wonder about empathy...

Students should write a response on each flip chart paper before exiting the room.

## **Lesson Two: Empathizing with Difference**

**Introduce or refer to the previous lesson on** the topic of empathy. This lesson will connect empathy to the ability to understand difference. Ask the students, what are some ways that people are different?

Share with students that one difference may be people from other countries and cultures. Leaving a home country may be by choice but can also be by necessity or force. In these instances, immigrants may never return to their home country, despite a longing to do so. Today, students will be cultivating understanding.

Introduce the students to the **See, Think, Wonder** strategy. Share that students will be using this routine to slow thinking down. They will analyze a photo and reflect on the experiences of the people in the photo. We recommend using a photo from the [A Long Wait, From Border](#) series by artist Mitra Tabrizian in the National Museum of Asian Art collection.

In pairs or small groups, students have ten minutes to look at the photo. Students should respond to the following prompts, writing down their answers on a piece of paper or in a notebook.

- What do you see? What details stand out? Remind students to use objective language. These should be observations rather than interpretations.

- What do you think is going on in this photo? What do you see that makes you say that?
- If you could ask the person in the photo a question, what would you ask?

After ten minutes, pairs or small groups will share out their responses with the class. Capture responses on a piece of flip chart paper, whiteboard, or Smart Board.

Once all pairs/small groups have shared their responses, briefly share information about the photo, artist, and if available, the person in the photo.

**Step Inside:** Students will return to their pairs/small groups. Share they will now use the Step Inside thinking routine. In pairs, they have ten minutes to discuss and write down their responses to the following questions:

- What can the person see?
- What might this person know?
- What might the person care about?

After ten minutes, pairs/groups will share out. Capture responses on a piece of flip chart paper, whiteboard, or Smart Board. As a class, discuss the following questions:

- What responses surprised you or challenged your thinking?
- How did doing these thinking routines extend their understanding of difference?
- In what ways did the thinking routine affect that pace at which you thought about the photo?
- Do they feel any connections to the person in the photo?

**Wrap Up** – Students write a brief journal entry that answers the questions

1. What questions could you ask to check your assumptions about people who are different from you?
2. What are the benefits of empathy? Are there any drawbacks?

## Lesson Three: Connecting with Text

**Introduction:** Share with students that today they will explore empathy using text. They will use text to investigate character perspectives and examine emotional connections to a text. They will use a protocol for active listening and responding during partner work. They should think about the role of listening and responding in empathy. When we feel heard by others, how does that support empathy? When we actively listen to others, how does that support empathy?

Introduce the excerpted scene from Horton Foote’s *The Trip to Bountiful*. Share that the play centers on the Watts family in Houston, TX in 1953. Mrs. Carrie Watts is elderly and

lives with her son Ludie and his wife Jessie Mae. Mrs. Watts longs to return to her childhood home of Bountiful, TX. Ludie and Jessie Mae don't understand her longing, and actively prevent her from returning. One day, Mrs. Watts sneaks away and starts her trip to Bountiful on a bus. She meets a young woman, Thelma, at the bus station, and they take the bus together for part of Mrs. Watts's journey.

Share that the class is going to do a close-reading of an excerpt from Act One, Scene Four. Try to imagine what each character's perspective is.

**Round Robin Read Aloud:** Read the scene aloud, round-robin style. Students should mark up their text, circling unfamiliar words, and underlining lines that cause an emotional response. Star any lines they feel reveal character perspectives. They will return to their marked text later in the lesson.

After the reading is completed, discuss the following prompt as a class:

- What lines caused an emotional response in you? In what ways did the lines spark emotions?
- Were there any unfamiliar words? What do you think they mean? What does word choice tell us about a character and perspective?
- How would you describe the perspectives of Thelma and Mrs. Watts in this scene? What do they each want, think, or feel? What makes you say that?

**Drawing:** Students will count off by twos. Students assigned number one will focus on Mrs. Watts and students assigned number two will focus on Thelma. Individually, using their marked-up texts and responses from the class discussion, students will consider the perspectives of their assigned characters. They are going to create a drawing that represents the perspective—what the character thinks, feels, or wants. To get started, students will draw their responses to the following prompts:

- What color represents your character in this scene? Draw a figure that represents your character in this color.
- What symbols do you associate with the character in this scene? Share with students that a symbol is anything they feel represents an idea. It can be a shape, an emoji, a figure like a bird, etc. There is no right answer to this prompt. Draw this symbol anywhere on their page.
- What other images do you want to add to your drawing?

**Think/Pair/Share:** Turning to a partner, students share their drawings, practicing active listening and responding techniques. Students should pair up with someone who has a different character. Each person should share for two minutes. While their partner is sharing, the listener should take notes. After their partner has shared, the listener takes one minute to repeat back what they've heard, using the starting phrase, "What I heard you say is..."

After both partners have taken a turn as listener and responder, students should discuss the following prompts:

- What does each drawing help them to understand about their character's perspective or the other character's perspective?
- Are they empathetic to both characters?
- What impact did the listening and responding protocol have on them? In what ways did it support understanding another perspective?

**Wrap-Up Group Discussion:**

- Student pairs share from their partner discussion. What does this excerpted scene make you feel about each character?
- How did the listening and responding protocol help with understanding your partner's perspective as their assigned character?
- Extending/connection to self, think about your life. Do you share any connections with what the characters want, think, or feel?
- How does thinking about a character's perspective in a text help us to build our own empathy skills?

**Exit Ticket:**

On a sticky note, students write down a response to the prompts,

- When I feel heard, I am able to...
- By actively listening to others, we help our community to be...

They will add the sticky note to a piece of flip chart paper that is a class "Parking Lot." Students should write their names on their sticky notes. Remind students to be respectful in their responses. As students enter the class the next time, they can take a moment to read the sticky notes to learn the different perspectives on the impact of listening.

## **Lesson Four: Perspective Taking through Visual Art**

**Introduction:** Share with students that they will do an activity exploring perspective through the medium of painting in visual art.

To begin, ask the class to define curiosity. Write answers on a piece of flip chart paper, whiteboard, or Smart Board.

Share with students that today they will combine their curiosity with their communication skills and will practice asking open-ended questions to explore perspectives and develop understanding. Encourage them to consider how questions, curiosity, and understanding connect to our capacities for empathy.

Suggested artworks from the Smithsonian American Art Museum collection:

1. [Lois Mailou Jones, Les Clochards, Montmartre, Paris, 1947, casein on board, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Bequest of the artist, 2006.24.9](#)
2. [Walter Ufer, Callers, ca. 1926, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. R. Crosby Kemper, Jr., 1984.66](#)
3. [Ivan Albright, The Farmer's Kitchen, ca. 1934, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Transfer from the U.S. Department of Labor, 1964.1.74](#)

**Close-looking:** Students will look at a piece of artwork for ten seconds. They will write down a list of five things they can see. Then, they list five additional things. Ask volunteers to share what things they listed.

Next, have students write down how they think the figures in the scene feel. Ask volunteers to share responses. Ask the students who share, “What in the painting makes you say that?”

Ask students to write down three questions to better understand what’s happening in the scene; then write three more.

**Practicing Open-Ended Questions:** Share that close-ended questions can be answered with a yes or no. Open-ended questions encourage conversation and can help you find things in common, even when there are different points of view. Answers to these questions help you better understand another person’s perspective. Think about what it means to be curious and how questions help us to develop curiosity.

Ask students to circle their open-ended questions. These questions often begin with “how,” “what,” and “why.” Ask students to try to rewrite their close-ended questions as open-ended ones. Offer the example, “Do you like ice cream?” can become “What flavor of ice cream or what kind of treat do you like most? What is it about that flavor or treat that appeals to you?”

Next, have students rewrite any of their close-ended questions as open-ended ones.

**Perspective Practice:** students will imagine the perspective of a figure in the artwork. Going back to their open-ended questions, as the figure they should consider:

- Which question would be the easiest for you to answer? Put a star next to it.
- Which questions would be hardest? Draw a box around it.
  - How else might someone ask the hardest question? Write the rephrased question below it.
  - Why might you want it to be answered in this rephrased way?
- Which question would be scariest to answer? Draw a zig-zag line below it.
  - How else might someone ask the scariest question? Write the rephrased question below it.



- Why might you want it to be asked in this rephrased way?

With a partner, students should take two minutes to share their selected figure, their open-ended questions, and their responses as the selected figure. The listening student should practice active listening skills. When the sharer has finished, the listener should take one minute to repeat back what they heard, using the sentence starter, “What I heard you say was...” Each student should have a turn sharing and listening/responding.

### **Wrap Up:**

Each pair should share out some of their open-ended questions and responses as their selected figure. As a class, discuss:

- What was it like to take on the perspective of a figure in the painting?
- How do curiosity, perspective-taking, and listening connect to empathy?
- Why are these habits of mind important? How does empathy help us in life and help our communities?

### **Exit Ticket:**

On a 3/2/1 Exit Ticket, students write:

- 3 ways they can practice perspective taking
- 2 places where they can practice active listening and responding
- 1 reason empathy is important in life.

### **Assessment:**

- Engagement in class, small group, and partner discussions
- Completion of “I am..” poem
- Exit tickets: Final Five, Sticky Note/Parking Lot, 3/2/1
- Journal entry

## **Materials and Resources Needed For all Four Lessons**

- I Am... poem template
- Excerpt from Act One, Scene Four of *The Trip to Bountiful* by Horton Foote
- Flip Charts: for class discussions, “Parking Lot,” “Final Five” exit tickets
- Markers or Sharpies for flip chart activities and class discussions
- Sticky notes for “Parking Lot” exit ticket
- Blank paper or notebooks for journal entries and writing prompts
- Pencils or pens for writing prompts
- Speech excerpt from Horton Foote’s *The Trip to Bountiful* for Lesson Three
- Colored Pencils for Lesson Four
- Internet access to [Smithsonian American Art Museum](#) and [National Museum of Asian Art](#) collections

- [See, Think, Wonder Thinking Routine](#) from Harvard's Project Zero
- [Step Inside Thinking Routine](#) from Harvard's Project Zero