

《高级英语视听说（第三版）》

教师用书

第三版说明

《高级英语视听说》为专业英语课程教材，供高等院校英语专业高年级本科生使用；同时也为高等院校非英语专业高年级本科生使用。近些年，大学英语及专门用途英语教学改革成果显著，非英语专业学生的英语水平提高很大，有些甚至好于英语专业的学生。教师和学生都感到特别需要更高要求、更深程度内容的英语教材满足这部分学生的智力和情感需求。此外，本教材还可以供研究生英语课程使用，供有同等英语水平的自学者和工作者的使用。

本套教材于2008年荣获北京市精品教材奖。前两版目前已经重印十余次，受到教师和学生的广泛欢迎。

第三版教材撤去五部旧片，换上三部新片，其中两部电影，一部纪录片，以跟进时代。这三部新片分别是《城市化》、《降临》和《少年派的奇幻漂流》。这些片子已在北京外国语大学的课堂上使用过，深受学生们的喜爱。在单元安排上，编者根据学生的兴趣、影片的新旧和影片的难易重新做了调整。教师也可以按照自己的考虑、学生的水平重新安排一学期的课程顺序。

第三版教材建议每周学习一部片子，所用学时两小时。网络的发展以及各学校音视频的建设使学生随时可以看到新片，这样使一周完成学生课前的准备及课上的讨论成为了可能。

我们衷心希望第三版能够受到更多教师 and 学生的喜爱。在内容带给我们更多挑战的同时，也希望带给我们更多思考的快乐。

主编：王镇平

2022年5月

编写理念

21世纪是一个以经济全球化和信息化为显著特征的时代，我们的人才培养目标要适应这个时代，我们的教材则要适应这个新的培养目标。英语专业培养的人才应该是具有扎实的英语语言基础和广博的英语文化知识，并能在不同的工作和研究领域熟练运用英语的复合型人才，要兼具组织能力、实践能力和创新能力。这本教材就是在这样的需求中应运而生的。

根据2020年《普通高等学校本科外国语言文学类专业教学指南》（以下简称《指南》）的要求，21世纪外语专业教材与教学应具有以下几个特征：教材内容融合语言教学与知识教学；同时具有知识性、趣味性和思想教育意义；教材不仅仅着眼于传授知识，还有助于培养学生的跨文化能力、思辨能力和实践能力；教学内容有较强的实用性和针对性，合理使用现代教育技术，注重教学效果。

本教材的编写理念符合《指南》的要求，具有以下七大特征：

一、内容强调趣味性及思考性

近些年来，人们认识到兴趣是学习者内在动力的源泉。所以，我们在选择教材内容时，尽量贴近大学生的生活和思想层次，尽可能地满足大学生的智力发展和成长需求；能最大限度地做到这一点，就能最大限度地激发学生学习的积极性和主动性。语言学家布林（Michael P. Breen）和坎德林（Christopher N. Candlin）强调：教材应考虑学生的情感、态度和经历，适当的内容可激发学生的学习兴趣，最终促进第二语言的学习。我们选择的影片包括《黑天鹅》、《死亡诗社》、《帮助》、《朗读者》、《降临》、《闻香识女人》、《少年派的奇幻漂流》等，它们大都与时代同步，反映时代特征，与大学生的生活与思想贴近。还有根据名著改编的《肖申克的救赎》、《时时刻刻》、《飞越疯人院》等探索人生的电影，引人思考；纪录片《医疗内幕》、《城市化》和《中央公园》涉及医疗体制的弊病及改革、城市化进程，以及人与自然的关系，这些纪录片所涉及的问题也是人类目前正在面临的问题，对这些问题的思考和讨论有助于学生有针对性地汲取经验并产生责任感，同时对语言学习产生极大的热情。

二、选材强调知识性

当今的大学生不同以往，现代社会对他们的要求也比以往高得多，而且是多元的。只懂外语而缺乏对其他相关专业知识会使他们跟不上时代的步伐，相关专业知识的学习及融通成为急需。《指南》提到21世纪英语专业人才应具备宽广的知识面。这些知识指的是英语专业知识（即语言学、文学、文化、翻译、国别和区域）和相关专业知识（如外交、经济、法律等）。但目前，许多课程的教学内容中普遍缺少其他相关专业的知识。为了扩展学生的知识面，我们增添了纪录片。纪录片比电影知识性强，信息量大，涉及面广，学生可以在短时间内获得大量相关信息，学习相关知识。我们这里选择了三部纪录片，通过学习这些内容，学生可以了解城市建设与城市中人的关系、绿色环境、医疗体制等方面的知识及词汇。这在一定程度上弥补了

视听说课程相关专业知识的不足。

三、题材和体裁注重多元化

我们认为，不断变换题材是激发和保护学生兴趣的手段。我们选择的题材涉及范围广泛，包括家庭、教育、自由、种族、环境、未来与外星人、医疗体制、城市化、人生哲学等。我们的体裁也较多元化，除了电影这种艺术形式外，我们还选择了纪录片，其中有著名纪录片《医疗内幕》和《城市化》等。《医疗内幕》由美国著名导演迈克尔·摩尔（Michael Moore）执导，抨击了美国医疗体制的弊端并期冀改革。摩尔诙谐、犀利、大胆，因擅长以纪录片的形式揭露美国现行社会的尖锐问题而著名。从这部纪录片中，学生可以了解美国医疗体制的现状并反思中国医疗体制。《城市化》集中各方面的专家讨论城市发展与人之间的关系，城市如何为人设计，如何在道路交通、建筑规划中注入更多人文关怀。我国正处在迅速城市化进程中，影片的内容能够为我们提出新思考新思路，学生可以了解一些先进城市设计理念，体味城市设计中的人文关怀。不同的体裁提供给学生不同的艺术体验。

四、以学生为中心

现代语言教学的走向是以学生为中心，教师为主导，教师引导学生积极地、主动地、独立地去完成学习的全过程。教材应该具有启发性、引导性，而不是传统的知识存储场所。

认知理论认为，英语学习的过程是新旧语言知识不断结合的过程，也是语言能力从理论知识转化为自动应用的过程，而这种结合与转化必须通过学生的自身活动才能得以实现。以学生为中心符合语言学习的规律。因此，教师与学生的角色发生了很大的变化，教师由原来知识的输出者变成学生的引导者和协调者；学生由听讲者变成自觉的学习者和研究者。

以学生为中心是一种新的教学模式，而教材又必须体现教学思想和教学模式。首先，这种教学模式要体现在整套教材的内容选择和编排上。内容的选择和编排要顺应学习者的学习过程，即内容要由浅入深，由熟悉到不熟悉，而且又有内在的连贯性。其次，这种教学模式还要体现在教材每一单元课前、课堂和课下的语言活动设计中。课前学生是自觉的学习者。他们要按教学计划观看影片或纪录片，然后分小组活动，组内成员进行分工合作，按照每人分配的不同任务分别到图书馆或网上查找相关的资料。最后，小组成员再一起讨论。教师的任务则是给予引导，比如，如何观看影片，如何进行思考，如何提出问题，如何查询资料等。课上学生是主要的参与者，学生需要轮流对影片或纪录片某一方面进行评述。每一位学生评述之后，其他同学向这位评述者提出相关问题，评述者要为此做好充分准备。教师在课堂上是协调者，保证每一位学生都有讲话、运用语言的机会。课后，学生将口述评论写成文章，教师进行批改并提出建议。教师最后根据学生课前、课堂表现和文章的水平给予一个综合分数作为单元成绩。

正如《指南》中倡导的建立以学生为中心的教学关系，本教材着重引导学生进行自主学习、交互式学习和探究式学习，培养学生的思维 and 创新能力。

五、语言活动的设计具有启发性

英语专业教材不仅仅要着眼于传授知识，还要有助于培养学生的鉴赏能力、批判能力、思维能力和创新能力。因此，教材只提供语言事实是不够的，无法培养学生的思维和创新的能力。那么，语言活动的设计就十分关键。本教材设计的语言活动（课前、课堂和课后的练习）都试图培养学生的批判能力和思维能力。语言活动应该是一个过程，在这个过程中，学生既是导演又是演员，他们需要对该活动进行分析、设计、编排、组织，直到最后实施。这样一个过程可以激发学生的学习热情和主动精神，也可以开启他们的聪明智慧，培养他们的思考能力和创新能力。

六、注重培养学生的科研能力

《指南》指出课堂教学要注重培养学生的终身学习能力和科研能力，同时也明确要求现代英语教学应注重培养的信息技术应用能力，以适应新世纪的需求。要想真正成为独立的研究者，学生需要学习如何使用图书馆藏书及数据库，网络平台来获取信息。为培养学生独立研究的能力，视听说课程增添了科研内容，要求学生在观看影片或纪录片之后走进图书馆，访问网络平台，寻找自己所需的资料，为小组讨论和课堂演讲寻找依据。这种科研体验为学生将来的独立学习和独立工作打下了良好的基础，也为培养终身学习的能力奠定了基础。

七、创造实践机会，实现视、听、说三位一体

《指南》要求培养学生的实践能力，能运用所学的理论和技能解决实际问题。外语教学的目标就是将课堂中学到的语言技能运用到实践中。教材是为教学服务的，它是通向教学目标的桥梁。那么，教材就应该有实践的内容。实践内容不同于某一课后的语言活动，它是一个完整的、大型的项目，它需要学生走出校门，在社会实践中运用掌握的英语语言，运用专业主持人的采访技巧，就某一主题采访以英语为母语的外国人。在这样的实践活动中，检验自己的语言能力、知识面和采访能力，同时也锻炼自己的交际能力、组织能力和创新能力，实现语言训练的视、听、说三位一体。有位学生感慨地说：“这样的实践活动是我从未体验过的，我第一次将所学的知识运用到实践中，它不仅检验了我的语言水平，同时也培养了我的合作精神、组织能力和交往能力。”

主编：王镇平

2022年5月

使用说明

本书是《高级英语视听说（第三版）》的教师用书，为使用该教材的高校教师提供参考。我们希望教师用书带给您的是思路的开拓而不是思维的局限，因为您和您的学生在探讨问题的过程中必定会有更广泛、更深刻的理解。

教学目的及教学要求已经在学生用书中详细讲述，此处不再赘言。这里只对本书的内容作出说明。

本书的综合导视思考题答案是根据我们的理解得出的，您和学生的理解也许与本书答案不同，那是完全有可能的，对此不必有任何担心和顾虑，也不必强求一个答案。我们的重点本来就不在于选择了哪个答案，而在于启发学生的思想，开拓学生的思路，挖掘学生的思想深度。在研究性语言活动（Research Activities）部分也是如此。关于影片或问题的每一个方面，我们只提供了一部分内容而不是全部。每一个方面都有几个侧面，学生从哪个侧面展开都可以。鼓励学生讲述时注重一个侧面进行深入探讨和挖掘，不要全面讲述，全面讲述的结果是对每个问题的研究都只停留在表面，不能提高学生深入思考分析的能力。

测试是评价教学效果和学生表现的重要手段，下面我们将详细介绍本课程在北京外国语大学开课时采用的测试方法，供任课教师参考。

总评成绩分配比例：

为了不把期末考试作为衡量学生水平的唯一标准，我们将总评成绩分为70%（平时对电影、纪录片的分析和讨论）、10%（项目）和20%（期末考试）三部分。从比例上看，我们的重点放在平时成绩，这是为了让学生重视日常的学习和练习，淡化期末考试的分量，同时也避免出现某些学生因一次考试失误，而无法体现在整个学期中所付出的努力的情况。

考试内容及方法：

考试内容是针对一个纪录片的主题做演讲。教师先提供一些纪录片，学生从中选择自己感兴趣的节目来准备。纪录片的长短在20至40分钟左右，节目需要有一个可供讨论的主题。

考试要求学生根据节目的主题做一个三分钟左右的演讲。演讲的前半部分需要简单介绍节目的内容，检查学生的叙述能力；后半部分阐述对问题的看法，这部分是考查重点，检查学生分析问题的能力；演讲之后学生须准备回答教师提出的2到3个相关问题，这是为了检查学生即席阐述观点的能力和语言表达能力。

通常教师在考试前两周告诉学生可从中选择的纪录片范围以及考试要求，并把这些节目输入小型局域网，学生可以在开放时间内随时观看。我们建议准备10个左右的纪录片，要求每个学生挑选其中两个最感兴趣的节目进行准备。考试时只需要考核一个节目，考核哪一个由教师来决定。

我们衷心希望《高级英语视听说（第三版）》教师用书给您带来帮助。希望您在教授时感到得心应手。同时希望听到您和您的学生真诚的建议和意见。

主编：王镇平

2022年5月

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Unit 1 Black Swan (2010)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. **Who is Nina? What has Nina been dreaming about? What is it on Nina's back that attracts her mother's attention?**

Nina is a dedicated ballerina with a prestigious New York City ballet company. The night before the audition for *Swan Lake*, Nina has a dream in which Rothbart casts the spell and turns her, Princess Odette, into the White Swan. Later that morning, when she's standing in front of the mirror, her mother notices the "scratches" on Nina's back. Though Nina dismisses it as nothing but "rash", her mom looks worried because later as she says, she knows Nina has the habit of scratching herself when under pressure.

2. **Who is Thomas? Why does the ballet company want to start a new season of *Swan Lake*? What is the story of *Swan Lake*? What sort of a soloist dancer is Thomas looking for?**

Thomas is the company's art director of *Swan Lake*. Since the former soloist dancer of *Swan Lake* has been dancing for too long a time to keep the grip of the audience, the company plans to force her into retirement and present to the audience a new face to lead a new season of *Swan Lake*. In the story of *Swan Lake*, an innocent princess, Odette, is trapped by Rothbart into the shape of a White Swan, and only true love from the prince can break the spell and set her free. However, when the prince is about to declare his love for Odette, her lustful twin, the Black Swan Odile, tricks and seduces the prince, and Odette, the White Swan, in her desperation jumps off the cliff and in death finds her freedom. Thomas, the director, wants to find a new Swan Queen to play the dual roles of the White and the Black Swans.

3. **Who is Beth? What does Nina do after seeing Beth leaving her dressing room? Why does she do so?**

Beth is the former Swan Queen who is forced out of stage by the company. Nina admires Beth's role as Swan Queen so much that after seeing Beth leaving the dressing room, she steps in and takes Beth's lipstick. What she does is out of her strong desire to be a Swan Queen as perfect as Beth once was.

4. **What does the morning audition mean to Nina? How does she feel about the failure in her Odile's coda? How does Thomas comment on her dancing?**

Nina's dedication and perfect technique make her one of the best dancers in the company. For all the years, she's been driven by the dream to be a perfect ballet dancer, and the audition is a once-in-a-life-time chance to elevate her from an ordinary ballerina to a distinguished dancer. Nina's failure in the Odile's coda leaves her completely devastated. As Thomas later explains, Nina's perfect dancing technique and her fearful and fragile style make her an ideal choice for the White Swan; however, due to her obsession with perfection, her strong sense of discipline and self-control, there's no chance for her to portray the destructive and seductive Black Swan.

5. What does Nina see on her way home that disturbs her so much? What does it indicate?

After the audition, Nina is walking home, devastated. Then all of a sudden, she sees an attractive girl in black coming to her direction and when the girl slips by, Nina takes a glimpse and sees a face exactly like her own but with a strange wild smile, which gives her quite a start. What Nina imagines gives us a hint that the pressure has become so unbearable for Nina that her mind, while unable to seek a normal way out, starts to produce hallucinations.

6. How does Nina come to Thomas the next morning and ask for the part of Swan Queen? Why does Thomas force a kiss on Nina? How does Nina respond to it?

Loosing her hair down, wearing pretty white dress and thick lipstick, Nina comes to Thomas' office. Nina pleads for a chance to play the Swan Queen and assures Thomas that she can finish the coda, the hardest technical part for the Black Swan. Yet, Thomas emphasizes that Nina lacks the spirit of letting go for the role of Black Swan. Disappointed, Nina turns to the door. Right at that moment, Thomas forces a kiss on her. The director is making a last attempt to test her potential. Nina is shocked by the sudden attack and bites Thomas, who is equally shocked by such a strong instinct.

7. Why does Thomas choose Nina for the role of Swan Queen? How does Thomas view Nina's response to his kiss?

It is Nina's strong reaction to his forced kiss that changes the director's mind. Thomas sees in that bite a different Nina, wild, aggressive, and full of self-assurance, all of which are the demands of dancing the Black Swan.

8. How does Nina's mother celebrate her daughter's winning of the new role? How does her mother respond when Nina feels reluctant to eat the big piece of cake? Why does Nina change her mind and say that she loves the cake?

To celebrate her winning of the audition, Nina's mom prepares a cake of vanilla flavor with strawberry filling, which she claims to be Nina's favorite. However, Nina shows obvious reluctance to try the big piece of cake, and her mom feels annoyed by the daughter's ungratefulness. She claims coldly that she should throw the whole cake into garbage if Nina doesn't appreciate her way of celebration. Nina, for fear of making her mom unhappy, immediately puts on a smile and assures her mom that she loves the cake as she always does.

9. Who is Lily? How is she different from Nina in terms of her personality and appearance? What does Thomas say about her dancing?

Lily is a dancer from San Francisco who's recruited by the company to play a part in *Swan Lake*. Her sexy make-up, seductive tattoo, care-free style and vigorous personality present a sharp contrast to the fearful, fragile, self-controlled Nina who cautiously observes all the rules of perfection. Lily follows nothing but her own passion and desire. Therefore, as Thomas says, Lily may not be able to dance like Nina with perfect techniques, but her moves are effortless, impulsive, and therefore attractive.

10. What happens to Nina's nail while Thomas is announcing Nina as a new star to the guests of the company? What does Nina find when she is trying to clean the nail in the bathroom? Why?

When Nina is presented by Thomas to the company's distinguished guests as the

new Swan Queen, she sees her nail bleeding. Later she goes to the bathroom trying to clean it up and peel off the bleeding skin, but to her surprise, a second later she finds her finger in perfect condition. In fact, all the blood and the pain are out of her hallucination. As Nina is more strained by the role of Swan Queen, her hallucination is escalated to such a level that it starts to arouse her sense of physical pain. The bleeding may also indicate Nina's painful transformation from a disciplined and fragile self into a dark and destructive other self.

11. Why does Nina feel uneasy when meeting Lily? How does she feel when seeing Beth in the lobby?

With her own passion and desire being suppressed for too long a time, Nina only feels uneasy and cornered by the presence of the care-free Lily. Moreover, Thomas admires Lily's dancing and thus Nina takes Lily as her rival and feels more threatened by Lily. Nina shows sympathy to Beth when confronting her in the lobby. Beth viciously accuses her of seducing the director. Nina is embarrassed by the groundless accusation but she's not tough enough to defend herself.

12. What happens to Beth? What is Thomas' attitude toward her? How does the incident affect Nina?

Feeling abandoned, Beth walks to the street, gets hit by a car, and her legs are seriously injured. Thomas feels sure that Beth does it on purpose because she always acts out of a destructive impulse. Nina is quite shocked and feels guilty for taking the role from Beth. Though Thomas assures Nina that it has nothing to do with her and she should not get distracted by the tragic incident, the guilt of destroying Beth and the fear of being later destroyed by someone else still add up the pressure on Nina.

13. Nina has been feeling frustrated at not being able to perform well the Black Swan. What happens to Nina when she is taking a bath? What does Nina finally see in her mirror? Why is Nina being haunted by the dark figure of her other self?

Back at home, Nina is taking a bath and she starts to touch herself again, trying to follow the director's suggestion to let go of herself. When she immerses herself into the water and opens her eyes, she sees drops of blood dripping from above and suddenly, she sees her other self showing up right above her, giving a scary and evil grin at her. Jumping out of the water, Nina sees blood on two of her fingers. When getting out of the tub, Nina sees in the mirror the bleeding scratches on her back, and she starts to cut off her nails but only to see her vicious other self again in the mirror, staring at her with hatred.

14. Why is Nina's mom so concerned about Nina's career? How would you describe the relationship between the mom and the daughter?

Nina's mom is once a ballerina who also dreams to be a star dancer. But then she falls in love with her director, gives birth to her daughter, Nina, and that brings an end to her career. Nina's mom wants Nina to achieve what she fails to achieve at a young age. However, the mom's high expectations and possessive control lead to an unbridgeable distance between the two of them.

15. How does the evening at the night bar affect Nina? How does Nina feel about herself emotionally?

Nina resents her mom's control and to show protest, she accepts Lily's invitation to go out to the night bar for fun. The evening soon turns out to be a dramatic

adventure for Nina. Being pushed by Lily, she starts to flirt with guys and indulge herself with wild movements on the disco dance floor. While coming back home, Nina has a fantasy about seeing Lily's face suddenly turn into her other self. This sudden shift of her fantasy indicates how Lily is taken by Nina's sub-consciousness as someone resembling her suppressed other self. When whispering "sweet girl" into her face, her other self finally emerges to confront her and that seems to indicate a self-awakening moment when her sub-conscious other side of mind is fully aroused.

- 16. In the next morning's stage rehearsal, does Nina perform differently from previous days? How can you tell? Why does Nina throw away all her stuffed animals when getting home from the stage rehearsal?**

Nina's dancing in the next morning is no longer frigid and mechanical. For the first time, she smiles a hearty smile and for the first time, Thomas gives her an encouraging gesture, and later tells Nina her performance in that morning is a breakthrough. However, Nina is still deeply worried about the premiere. Lying in bed, she is at first lost in thought, then suddenly knocks the music box off the bedside table and finally jumps up and throws all her stuffed animals into the garbage. While doing so, Nina appears no longer as her mom's sweet little girl, but a grown-up adult with full power and strong determination to exert control of her own life.

- 17. Why does Nina feel so upset when knowing Lily is picked as her alternate? How does Thomas respond to Nina's plea of not picking Lily as her alternate? What is she actually scared of?**

Nina takes Lily as her rival who has plotted all the time to steal from her the role of Swan Queen, and even worse, she believes it is all personal and Lily is out there to destroy her. When she gets very upset and goes to persuade Thomas to change his mind, Thomas assures her that it's a common practice to have an alternate and she should be confident and focus on the performance instead of worrying too much. He also suggests she should take some rest that night. However, Nina stays late, dancing and practicing. Still, she's haunted by the idea of Lily stealing her role by winning Thomas' favor. What she actually fears is being replaced by Lily and thus loses her chance at the last minute to become a perfect dancer on stage.

- 18. Why does Nina visit Beth in the hospital again? What does Nina do with Beth's stuff? What does she seem to understand? What is it that makes them so much alike? What does Beth say about herself? Why does Nina have such hallucinations in hospital, and later at home?**

Feeling devastated by what she sees about Lily and Thomas, Nina believes Lily has already taken her position and suddenly she seems to understand how Beth must have felt while being replaced. She feels close to Beth due to the similar experience of betrayal and desperation. Nina dashes into the dressing room, picks up all the stuff of Beth and rushes to the hospital in wish to get Beth's forgiveness and asks for advice about what she should do now. However, Beth doesn't feel the same, saying she is not perfect and she is nothing (at all). What Beth says feeds Nina's despair and finally triggers a mental breakdown, which in turn brings about the most twisted part of Nina's hallucination. She sees Beth stabbing her own face violently, yelling "nothing", and the face all of a sudden turns into Nina's own face. Scared by what she sees in hospital, Nina runs all the way back home, only to be

confronted by a ghostly figure and later her mom's monstrous pictures all calling her "sweet girl". Nina is having such hallucination because deep in her heart, she is convinced that her sweet but weak personality as well as her self-denial obsession with perfection should be blamed for her being unable to keep the role of Swan Queen. However, the "let-it-go" journey of transforming herself into another self is too demanding and scary for Nina to bear. The hallucination reflects on the one hand her pain and fear, and on the other hand, her strong desire to liberate her other self.

- 19. Why are the Black Swan feathers bursting out of Nina's back? Why do both of her legs break? Is it a metamorphosis? If so, in what way? How would you regard this uncaged condition of Nina?**

Locking herself in the bedroom, Nina is frightened to feel the pain in her back and then she sees little black feathers growing out of her skin. When her mom is trying to come in and check on her, she breaks her mom's fingers while violently forcing her out of the door. Right after that, Nina sees her legs spontaneously snap in strange directions. Unable to stand steadily, Nina falls down and passes out. All the series of scary hallucination reveal the fact that Nina is losing control of her mind. And the imagined metamorphosis reflects a moment of mental transformation in which Nina's once suppressed other self eventually breaks out of her self-control and rises up to the dominant position in her mind.

- 20. Why does Nina's mom try to prevent her from going to the show? What does it mean when Nina says that the sweet girl is gone?**

Nina's mom finds Nina scratch herself all the night, so she prevents her from going to the show for fear that she's not well enough for the performance. Nina fights fiercely with her mom and finally breaks out of her grasp. When saying to her mom the sweet girl is gone, Nina means she's no longer the fragile and obedient little girl who has no strength to speak for herself. Instead, she's now fully grown into an independent self who's determined to get whatever she wants.

- 21. What does Thomas say to Nina in the dressing room right before the show? What happens when Nina is dancing the White Swan? Why does this occur?**

Thomas says to Nina that the only person standing in her way is herself and she should let it go and loose herself on stage. While dancing the White Swan, Nina is back to her usual fearful and unconfident self. She starts to have hallucination again and sees Lily wearing her costume and she herself showing up not as the Swan Queen but an ordinary ballerina in the corps. She gets so distracted by the horrible hallucination that she falls off on the floor while the dancer of the Prince is trying to hold her up.

- 22. Who is sitting in Nina's dressing room when Nina runs back into the room, devastated? Why do they start to fight? Who does Nina think that she is fighting with and who does she see lying dead on the floor? What does this dressing room scene reveal on Nina's psychological struggle and level of breakthrough?**

Running back into the dressing room with tears in eyes, Nina is surprised to see Lily sitting in her chair and humiliating her. Nina throws herself at Lily and the two start to fight on the floor with broken pieces of the mirror scattered around. During the fight, the face of Nina's opponent shifts into her other self and while her other self is strangling her, crying for a "turn" of domination, we can see the

strange physical changes on Nina. With extreme anger, Nina grabs a sharp piece of broken mirror and stabs her opponent with it, but then only to find Lily lying dead on the floor. This dressing room scene reveals to us the very point of a complete mental breakdown on the part of Nina, who by the time is totally possessed by her other self, body and mind.

- 23. What happens to Nina's arms while she gets back onto the stage? Does Nina dance well the part of the Black Swan? How does she make it? How does she look while getting off the stage and being hailed by all? Why does Nina kiss Thomas and in what way does she kiss him?**

While getting back onto the stage and dancing to the music as the Black Swan, Nina's arms start to grow black feathers and with Odile's coda coming to the climax, her arms grow into two big black wings. Her dance of the Black Swan is hailed by all as a great success and Nina looks enchanted and triumphant. Walking with her tiptoes as a ballerina does on stage, Nina moves toward Thomas and gives him a forceful kiss as a best salute that a ballet dancer can give to her inspiring director. The kiss is actually given by the passionate and aggressive Nina to the one who helps grant her ultimate freedom.

- 24. Who is knocking at the door when Nina is putting on her costume of the White Swan? Why is Nina so shocked at seeing her? What actually happens to Nina?**

When Nina changes into the White Swan costume, she starts to worry about the killing of Lily. Then someone is knocking at the door and she's extremely shocked to see it is Lily giving her congratulations. After Lily leaves, Nina checks around and suddenly sees the sharp piece of glass stabbed deep in her stomach. With tears rolling down, she finally comes to realize it is herself that she stabs with all her strength.

- 25. What does she realize about her struggle in the past few days?**

All her desperate struggle in the past few days starts to make sense to Nina whose mind for the time being comes back to its soberness. It's a struggle she carries against herself, a struggle between her obedient, self-controlled side of personality and the aggressive, passionate other.

- 26. How does Nina dance the White Swan again? What does Nina say in the end? How do you understand the satisfying smile on her face?**

Nina returns to the stage as the White Swan and dances with a tragic air just like the White Swan in the story. While lying on the stage, dying, Nina says with a smile to Thomas, "I felt it. It was perfect ... I was perfect." As Thomas once says, being perfect is not only about observing the discipline but also about losing control. At that moment, Nina feels the satisfaction of having both sides of her personality perfectly blending into one and thus enables her to give a perfect performance on stage and make her dream of being a perfect Swan Queen come true.

- 27. What kills Nina? What makes Nina so obsessed with the role of Swan Queen? What does this obsession bring to Nina, perfection or destruction?**

Nina kills herself during a mental breakdown. Being brought up as a sweet and obedient girl, Nina is obsessed with perfection and to make herself appear perfect, she adopts strong self-discipline and suppresses all her desire and passion, not knowing such a self-denial, once coming to an unbearable point, can only lead to self-destruction.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

When Darren Aronofsky was conceiving the film, he was inspired by Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's novel *The Double*, first published in 1846 as a novella *The Double: A Petersburg Poem*. It centers on a government clerk, Yakov Petrovich Golyadkin, who turns crazy with the idea that a colleague has usurped his identity. The novel delineates his internal psychological struggle when he keeps encountering someone who is his exact double in appearance but superior to him in every other aspect.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) was a Russian writer of novels, short stories and essays. Dostoyevsky explores human psychology in the troubled political, social and spiritual context of 19th-century Russian society. His literary works were influenced by realist and romanticist writers, most notably Dickens, Gogol and Balzac, and his best remembered work was *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoyevsky overall wrote 11 complete novels, 3 novellas, 17 short novels and 3 essays. He is often regarded as one of the greatest and most prominent psychologists in world literature.

Swan Lake was composed during 1875–1876 by Pyotr Tchaikovsky. Initially in four acts, it was based on Russian folk tales, telling the story of Odette, a princess who turned into a swan by an evil sorcerer's curse. The choreographer of the original production was Julius Reisinger. The ballet was premiered on March 4, 1877 in Moscow, with the name *The Lake of the Swans*.

The director also considered *Black Swan* a sequel to his 2008 film *The Wrestler*, which also reflects features of demanding art: An aging professional wrestler continues to participate in wrestling matches in order to resume his 1980s heyday performance regardless of his failing health.

Themes:

The film *Black Swan* addresses most of the significant issues confronting girls and women in the modern day world, of which the complex relationships Nina is involved in, especially the mother-daughter relationship, the pursuit of perfection and the virgin/whore dichotomy are the most worthy of being mentioned.

- a. **Complex Human Relationships:** For the complex human relationships, particularly the mother-daughter relationship, we see a mother who appears both supportive and destructive toward her daughter, who alternately cheers on her daughter yet also attempts to sabotage her; and who on the one hand lives vicariously through her daughter while resenting her achievements. And we cannot exaggerate the influence the mother (compounded with that of Thomas) on Nina's deterioration. These influences are so subtle and clueless that no one could blame the mother for what

was happening to Nina and her increasingly unhealthy behavior.

- b. Perfection Seeking:** The theme of perfection seeking is seen throughout the film in Nina, who struggles both physically and psychologically to get her artistic ideal. Nina longs for acceptance and being “chosen”. In order to be perfect, she experiences so much pressure from the environment that shapes one’s very identity. Apart from illustrating the intense pressure, external and internal, to be perfect, the film does drive home the reality that perfection is something that’s never actually attainable. Once you’ve achieved one kind of perfection—as Nina had as a “perfect” white swan—the game or the world always disappoints you by wanting more from you and extracting from you something you do not have. The symbolic ending of the film added a poignant statement on what it means to be an artist, visually portraying the physical manifestations of suffering one must endure through their bodies and minds in order to reach or approach artistic perfection.
- c. Virgin/Whore Dichotomy:** Meanwhile, the virgin/whore dichotomy is central to Nina’s story. She’s spent her whole life trying to be the pure, perfect ballet dancer, and has achieved that goal to some extent. Physical, emotional, and sexual purity can all be seen in her small, underdeveloped, and young body. But it’s when she tries to become the perfect seductive whore as demanded by the director that Nina is torn apart. She is asked to show not only technical perfection but sensuality and sexuality as well. She can’t handle the duality, the double identity: She can’t contain the perfect virgin and perfect whore at once.

Conflicts:

- a. Nina vs. Lily:** To get the role, Nina has to compete with Lily, a new dancer, who impresses the Thomas as well. Nina fits the White Swan perfectly with her inherent innocence and grace, but Lily is the personification of the Black Swan of guile and sensuality. As the two young dancers transform and escalate their rivalry into a twisted friendship, Nina begins to uncover her own dark side, an irrational passion that will lead to self-destruction.
- b. Nina vs. Thomas:** No one wants the role of the White Swan and the Black Swan more than Nina, who lives to dance and who wants to be exactly like Beth (the company’s former principle dancer) in every aspect. Nina is a technically proficient and hard-working dancer who can easily play the innocent White Swan, but Thomas, who cannot see she has the dark passion required to portray the Black Swan, becomes increasingly critical of her “frigid” dancing and advises her to stop being a mere innocent White Swan only and get herself into the passionate Black Swan.
- c. Nina vs. Her Mom:** The mother-daughter conflict is very obvious in the movie. The mother has been trying to mold Nina into what she herself has failed to be, yet her obsessive love and care are strangling Nina, who is no longer her mother’s baby girl, attempts to break out this confinement and to preserve her freedom and individuality.
- d. Nina vs. Herself:** Of all the thematic conflicts in the film *Black Swan*, conflicts of music and life, confusions of reality and dream, and all the other complicated conflicts, the most fundamental one involves the protagonist Nina who struggles within herself on matters of light and dark, good and evil. Her conflict is reflected in the form of the twin swan princesses, the innocent White Swan, and her seductive, aggressive twin

Black Swan. Nina has to understand and learn that the desired role is both a pure, naive white swan and a raw, visceral temptress and that true perfection is a mixture of order and chaos. In this sense she is her own worst enemy, and this conflict between the ideal and the reality is consuming Nina. The Black Swan metaphor of finding personal freedom is best seen in the inner conflict of the main character, an innocent dedicated girl, who then submits herself to a transformation which will reveal an adverse side of her. The tragedy of Nina, and of many young performers and athletes, is that perfection in one area of life has led to sacrifices in many of the others.

Performances:

According to *The Independent*, the film *Black Swan* was considered one of “the most highly anticipated” films of late 2010. The film was itself nominated for Best Picture within a total of 5 nominations including one for Darren Aronofsky for the Best Director.

Natalie Portman played a veteran ballerina in Darren Aronofsky’s 2010 film *Black Swan*, a role of which critic Kurt Loder wrote: “Portman gives one of her most compelling performances in this film, which is saying something.” To prepare for the role, she went through five to eight hours of dance training each day for six months and lost 20 pounds. In 2011, she won both the Golden Globe Award and the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role.

Darren Aronofsky was born February 12, 1969, in Brooklyn, New York. He was always artistic: He favored classic movies and, as a teenager, he even spent time doing graffiti art. Aronofsky got a reputation as a brash, intelligent filmmaker at the age of 29, with *Pi*, his 1998 feature directorial and screenwriting debut. In *Black Swan*, as in his other representative films, he uses a technique known as the hip-hop montage, which is a sequence of images or actions shown in fast-motion with accompanying sound effects, usually shown to simulate a certain action. Meanwhile, he employs sounds to objects that are not always seen on screen. And most characteristic of him and most obvious in the *Black Swan*, he portrays characters (like Nina and to some extent her mother) with strong obsessions that drive them toward self-destruction.

Unit 2 Kramer vs. Kramer (1979)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. Why does Joanna look so sad while she is kissing her son good night? What has she decided to do?

She has decided to leave home to start a life of her own. But it's really hard for her to leave her son for she loves the boy deeply.

2. Is Ted prepared for this? Why is he so insensitive?

Ted is totally unprepared for this. His job absorbs all his time and he seldom pays much attention to Joanna. He takes it for granted that as a woman, Joanna's position is at home and she should feel happy and satisfied with a husband supporting the family and with a lovely kid hanging around her. Though Joanna sometimes complains, he seldom listens to her and never takes her words seriously.

3. What does Margaret tell Ted about Joanna? Has Ted become aware of the problem? Why or why not?

She tells Ted that Joanna is very upset because Ted cares nothing but his job. Joanna once tells her that she feels sad because in the family she is the least noticed one and she cannot live a life of her own. Ted is surprised to learn that. However, he still believes Joanna is just angry and she'll come back to him soon.

4. How does Ted cook breakfast for Billy and himself for the first time? Why does Ted talk so much while cooking?

Ted wants to prove to himself that he can get along well without Joanna and he wants to show Billy that while mom is not at home, dad can take care of him as well. So he decides to cook some French toast for Billy and himself as breakfast. However, he hasn't cooked for a long time and he feels very nervous and unconfident. So he keeps talking cheerfully to show Billy and himself that he can manage it.

But soon, he finds himself have no idea of how to make French toast. He mixes the eggs, shells, milk, and bread and butter into the frying pan till the things smoke and when he goes to grab the handle, it's so hot that he throws it away and makes all the mess crash to the floor.

5. Who is Mr. O'Conner? What is his attitude when he hears about Ted's problem?

He is Ted's boss and friend. After knowing what has happened to Ted, he tries to be sympathetic. But he advises Ted to send Billy away to some relatives so that he can fully devote himself to his work.

6. When and how does Joanna explain her leaving to Billy?

After settling down, Joanna writes a letter to Billy to explain her leaving. She tells Billy that a mom can also leave home like a dad, and like anyone else, a mom also has to do something other than taking care of a family. She tells the boy that now she is just leaving to find some interesting things to do for herself. She emphasizes that she will always be his mom and she will always love him.

7. When Ted reads Joanna's letter to Billy, how does Ted feel and how does Billy understand it?

Ted feels upset for he finally realizes that Joanna will not come back home again. So does Billy. The boy feels abandoned by mom and he believes mom is leaving because he is not a good boy.

8. How is it for Ted to be a father and a mother at the same time? What does he do to make Billy happy?

There are plenty of things for Ted to learn. He has to learn to do housework, go shopping, and pick up Billy from school. It's quite hard and challenging for him and he almost has no time left for any social life. To make Billy happy, Ted starts going out with Billy, playing games with him and spending more time with him.

9. How does Ted explain to Billy one evening that Joanna's leaving is his fault, not Billy's?

He tells Billy in a very gentle and sincere way that Joanna leaves because he keeps trying to make her into a certain kind of person, to make her be the way he thinks a wife is supposed to be. However, Joanna just isn't like that. She tries hard to be like that but she just cannot do it. When she complains, he doesn't listen because he believes if he is happy, Joanna is happy, too. He tells Billy the reason why Joanna doesn't leave earlier is that she loves Billy too much, and she finally leaves because she can no longer stand him.

10. Does the family problem affect Ted's work in the company? How does Mr. O'Conner treat Ted at his difficult time?

Yes. Ted no longer has time to talk and drink with colleagues and he often comes late for meetings. Mr. O'Conner finds he cannot count on Ted one hundred percent and cannot have Ted work in the office till very late, so he decides to have someone else take the program away from Ted and kick Ted out of the team. Later, when their plan doesn't work, he fires Ted.

11. Why does Joanna come back to New York? Where has she been? What has she been doing?

She wants to take Billy back to her. She has been in California, working and enjoying her life.

12. How does Ted react when Joanna brings up the problem of the custody of Billy? Why does Ted disagree to give the custody to Joanna?

He feels very angry and firmly refuses her request because he believes Joanna has no right to take Billy away from him because it's she who leaves the boy in the first place, and he cannot afford to lose Billy for he loves the boy so much.

13. According to the family law attorney, what are the things that Ted should get prepared for if he decides to retain the custody? What kind of pros-and-cons list does Ted work out?

The attorney warns Ted that in the court they need to prove Joanna is an unfit mother, and both sides can get really tough. He also reminds him that he needs to pay five thousand dollars for it and if he loses he has to pay Joanna's court costs as well. Besides, he tells Ted that when such a young kid is involved, the court in most cases will side with the mother. So, he advises Ted to write down the pros and cons before he decides whether he'd like to retain the custody.

In the pros-and-cons list worked out by Ted, there is a long list of the drawbacks involved in keeping Billy: money, possibility of remarriage, sleep, emotional dependence, and on the “pro” side of the list, it is empty. But still, he decides to keep Ted with him because he loves his son.

14. How does Joanna explain to the court why she wants to leave her husband and son in the first place?

She explains that after the first couple of years, her marriage life becomes very difficult. She has always wanted a job but Ted never takes her point seriously for he doesn't think she can hold a well-paid job at all. So she becomes very unhappy and frustrated. When she turns to Ted for help, Ted takes it as personal attack and thus they become more and more separate. Ted's unwillingness to deal with her feelings makes Joanna feel she has almost no self-esteem. She leaves the son behind because at that time, she believes she has some problem within herself and the son should be better off without her.

15. In what way does Joanna believe that her experience in California helps to regain her self-esteem?

She works as a sportswear designer in California and gets a payment of 31,000 dollars a year. She works hard and feels like a whole human being. The job makes her feel that she has the ability to do wonderful things and she is not a terrible person at all. Now she understands she just needs to have some creative and emotional outlet other than her son, and that does not make her an unfit mother.

16. At the court, how does Ted argue for his right in his son's life?

Ted argues that a good parent should have the qualities of constancy, patience, understanding and love. He says these qualities are not only possessed by a woman, for a man can also be such a good parent. He admits that he is not a perfect parent, but he loves his son more than anything in this world.

17. Has Ted really changed as Margaret says?

Yes. Ted has fully realized that he has treated Joanna in an unfair way and it's in a way out of his fault that their marriage turns out to be a failure. After Joanna leaves, he starts to learn to be a good parent: getting to know details of Billy's life, playing with him, taking care of him everyday, and spending a lot of time staying together with him, reading stories for him, answering his questions and talking with him patiently. Ted has become a loving and responsible father.

18. In what way does the legal battle make things rather tough and bitter for both Joanna and Ted?

They are both cross-questioned by the attorney on the other side who will raise tough questions concerning personal life. The attorney on the other side is always trying to convince the court that they are irresponsible parents and they are losers both in life and career.

19. What is the final verdict? Why doesn't Ted appeal?

The court rules that Joanna be awarded custody of Billy, and Ted should pay for the maintenance and support of Billy, 400 dollars each month. It rules that Ted shall have the following rights of visitation: every other weekend, one night each week to be mutually agreed upon and one half of the child's vacation period.

On hearing the verdict, Ted wants to appeal no matter how much money it will cost. But when the attorney says this time he has to question Billy in the court, he

finds he has no choice but to give up the idea because he doesn't want to have his son get hurt in such a way.

20. How does Ted explain the court's decision to Billy? How does the boy take it?

He tries to explain the verdict in an easily comprehensible way, and he pretends to be very excited about the idea of Billy living with his mom. The boy cannot fully understand this. Obviously he feels happy and more at ease living with Ted, and doesn't want to move to a new place.

21. Why does Joanna change her idea of taking Billy away from Ted?

Joanna demands the custody of Billy because she loves him and she wants to take better care of him. But in the court, after hearing what Ted and Billy have gone through after she leaves, she realizes that it doesn't matter how much Ted and herself love Billy and the only important thing is what is best for the boy himself. She believes Ted has become a wonderful dad and it's best for Billy to stay with Ted.

22. What does the director intend to convey in the movie?

Answers to this question may vary.

V. Research Activities

Four Basic Aspects of the Movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

Kramer vs. Kramer is based on Avery Corman's 1977 novel. He has written novels, essays, reviews, light verse and articles, including pieces for the Arts and Leisure section of *The New York Times* on film and theater. His novels include *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Oh, God!*, *The Old Neighborhood*, *50* and *Prized Possessions*.

In the American society, divorce is more the norm than ever before. There are as many causes for divorce as there are people who divorce. Divorce itself is both a cause and an effect. There are many factors that contribute to divorce, such as awakening of feminism, gender role shifting, immaturity of one or both parties, the ease of getting a divorce, and various others. Divorce is also the effect of a marriage faced with difficulties that seem insurmountable, an inability to get along, one or both partner's growing apart, a culture that condones divorce, legal ease of getting a divorce, the inexpensiveness of getting a divorce and other factors. Divorce has become popular throughout the many years it has existed, and divorce rates keep increasing. There are many different factors that go into divorce, making it a tricky and time-consuming process, but divorce with those who have children is the most difficult. The process of divorce is complex and confusing.

There has been a dramatic shift in the dynamics of the roles of the members within the American family. Whereas the majority of American families still consist of the traditional make-up of a father, a mother and children, there are now an increasing amount of variations upon this theme which have become accepted as recognizable family units. Even in traditional families comprised of a father, a mother and siblings, the roles of these individuals have changed with the invention of new technologies and the emergence of new ideas about the female member in the family. With these new roles, the family unit has different relationships between their greater communities and political entities they are interdependent with. All of these changes have been well documented by the media in the form of art as well as academic writings. Television, music, magazines, novels and the Internet all record and promote this acceleration of change.

Themes:

a. Divorce: In the movie *Kramer vs. Kramer*, divorce plays an important role in the life of a child and his father. The film looks at a different aspect of divorce from what society normally would see by showing the father's point of view throughout the custody hearing. The film tells about a wife who leaves her unhappy marriage to fulfill her goal of making it on her own and having a career of her own. It is about the failure of marriage and the shift of parent roles. Self-involvement is just one of the film's underlying themes, along with the search for identity that prompts Joanna to leave Ted with their first-grade son, who now finds himself living with a workaholic parent he barely knows. We may well see how eager Joanna is searching for her own identity and how painful it is for her to leave her son. She feels that she needs to find herself and that Ted has just married the wrong person. Thus her divorce seems the only way out.

b. Shifting Gender Roles: Women are more determined in pursuing their own careers, just like Joanna Kramer from *Kramer vs. Kramer*. They are searching for their identity. Joanna feels trapped in her marriage and decides to divorce her husband Ted Kramer. After they are divorced, Ted begins to take care of his son Billy, playing the roles of both father and mother. At the same time, Joanna reevaluates her roles and comes to believe that as a woman she is socially and economically equal to men. Nowadays, women reject the idea that men and women each inhabit their own spheres, with the woman at home and the man in the outer world. Women's economic opportunities have improved, making divorce a realistic option for many more of them. They believe they are entitled to escape from dreary, loveless, or abusive marriages, and they are able to prove they could manage economically without male support.

Conflicts:

a. Suffocation vs. Preoccupation: Joanna feels suffocated in her marriage and in the household. Ted takes her for granted and is totally preoccupied with career advancement. He doesn't even know Billy's grade in school. Joanna had a job when they got married; she wants to return to the workplace, but Ted will not even discuss the idea. His refusal seems to be rooted in the conception that a woman's place is in the home and a man's place is in the world. Joanna's frustration finally boils over and she can think of only one way to save herself – a life apart from her family.

b. Work vs. Family: Ted was a workaholic enjoying his talents and ambition at work before Joanna left. Now he has to struggle hard to balance the demand from his work

and the needs of his son. Housework and taking care of the little boy are not easy at all: He burns the French toast, arrives late at Billy's birthday party and generally makes a mess of things. But through trial and error, patience and hard work, he learns how to understand and deal with Billy's needs and feelings. For the first time in his life he feels like a fulfilled parent. During this time, he gradually devotes more energy to his family than to his work, and finally loses the job because of his new priorities.

c. Paternal Custody vs. Maternal Custody: By the time Ted learns to take good care of Billy, Joanna returns and demands her child back. Ted's early neglect of the family costs him a wife, and this time he can't lose his son, so he tries all out to fight for the custody of Billy. His statement in court is touching: "Billy has a home with me. I've tried to make it the best I could. It's not perfect. I am not a perfect parent. Sometimes I don't have enough patience ... But more than anything in this world I love him. We built a life together and we love each other ... So Joanna, please don't destroy this." The court gives the custody to Joanna. However, later Joanna realizes that Billy has already had a home, a home that Ted has provided him. She decides that it is best for Billy to stay with his father.

Performances:

One of the central factors in the movie's fortunes is its timelessness. It addresses topics of concern to most people in society, reflects social change in a couple of very important ways. It deals with the changing role of women in society, women going into the work place, as well as the changing role of men at home, the different ways that men would interact with the family and participate in raising children. *Kramer vs. Kramer* is such a dominant film. The movie wins five Oscar Academy Awards including Best Picture, Best Director – Robert Benton, Best Actor – Dustin Hoffman, Best (Adapted) Screenplay – Robert Benton and Best Supporting Actress – Meryl Streep.

Kramer vs. Kramer was shot in 1979 when people paid special attention to the Women's Movement. In the movie, this social background is well reflected. Something special about the movie is that all the scenes in it are presented from the man's perspective. But actually it is a story that deals with a woman's problem. So there is more space left for the audience to think about the woman and her dilemma. In a word, this reflection of a current social problem contributes to the movie's great success.

The plot of the movie is also well designed. The director uses several sharp contrasts to show the development of the story while at the same time making the movie a whole. For example, at the very beginning, Ted is clumsy when he is making French toast for Billy. But in the end, on the very day Billy would be taken away by the mother, Ted once again makes the same French toast. But this time, he is extremely calm and skillful. Moreover, talkative as he is the last time, he is silent that day. The director tries to establish harmonious atmosphere there and then. And he succeeds. Besides, at the beginning of the movie, Joanna leaves crying in the elevator. In the last scene, she is also in the elevator. But this time, she removes her tears and smiles. It indicates a good ending as the problem has been solved.

Unit 3 Sicko (2007)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

- 1. Is there a nonprofit universal health care system in America? How do average American people get their medical expenses covered then? When was the system established and who are running the system? Please name several organizations that represent the major runners of the system.**

There's no government-sponsored, nonprofit universal health care system in America, so to cover their medical expenses, the Americans must get health insurance from private insurance companies. The system was established in 1971 under Nixon's presidency and has been reinforced several times by the federal government since then. As granted by the government, the system is mainly run by private health industry, mainly including the insurance companies, a few of which are now dominating the insurance markets, the hospitals and drug industry which also play an important role in facilitating the system. Organizations which represent the runners of the system include the Health Maintenance Organization, American Medical Association, and Health Insurance Association of America.

- 2. Is it easy for people to get insurance under the current system? Why or why not?**

According to the film, it can be very difficult for people to get insurance. First of all, those who do not have a good job or those who retire broke can hardly afford health insurance, let alone the unemployed ones. For those who do have the money to buy insurance, their application can be easily turned down because to lower the risk, each of the insurance companies will check the health conditions of the applicants and they all have a long list of preconditions which disqualify a large number of people for getting health insurance.

- 3. Does health insurance guarantee proper medical care for American people? Why or why not? What do American insurance companies do specifically to deny proper medical care for their policy holders?**

As indicated by the film, in America, health insurance can hardly guarantee proper medical care because to increase their profitability by avoiding the cost, the insurance companies in America will find all kinds of excuses to refuse to pay for the necessary medical treatment for their policy holders. They give their physicians bonus for claiming the necessary and proper medical treatment as unnecessary or improper. If there is no way to disapprove a medical treatment, they will have others investigate the policy holder's medical history and carefully examine the application forms they once submitted to seek any loopholes that can give the company an excuse to cancel the policy.

- 4. What will happen to those who cannot afford insurance or who find their insurance companies refuse to cover the medical expenses?**

Those who have no insurance or those who find their insurance claim rejected by their insurance company have no choice but to pay for the expenses by themselves. Since hospitals and drug industry put an unreasonably high charge on drugs and

medical treatments, those who are seriously ill can go bankrupt in paying high medical bills and those who cannot afford the medical treatment will be left to themselves. Therefore, though sometimes a threat of bringing the insurance company to court or revealing the case to media may occasionally force the insurance company to compromise, in most cases, people are simply left in a desperate and helpless situation.

5. Who are backing up the current health care system in America? Why do they prefer such a system?

Most American government officials, presidents and congress people in particular, keep a high profile in giving full support to the system. Behind the scenes, insurance business and the drug industry are spending a lot to promote the current health care system. Evidence revealed in the film indicates that despite their claim of serving the interest of the American people, the real motive behind their enthusiastic advocating and defending of the system is the great economic returns and financial benefits that they can harvest from the system.

6. As shown in the film, has anyone tried to promote a universal health care system in America? How is the effort brought to an end?

As shown in the film, Hillary Clinton, during her early years of being America's First Lady, once started a campaign to promote universal health care in America. However, her campaign encountered harsh criticism from many politicians in Washington who received large sum of money from the health industry and therefore would spare no energy in defending the current system. And later even Hillary herself was won over by the industry and thus brought to an end to the campaign. Since then, no attempt is made to call for a reform of the system.

7. In what way is the idea of universal health care demonized by American government and American mainstream media? What evidence is presented in the film to show that "socialized services" are not alien at all to America as claimed by some politicians?

American mainstream media keep promoting the myth that nonprofit universal health care provided in other countries is all seriously corrupted by bureaucracy and thus is found extremely unsatisfying by local people who desperately need medical care. Besides, universal health care system has long been criticized by American government as a product of socialist totalitarianism which helps bring out an overwhelmingly powerful and manipulative big government and thus presents immediate threat to people's freedom and democracy. However, as indicated by the film, socialized services are not at all new to America. Services involving firefighting, public education, postal service and public libraries are all very much socialized in the country.

8. Why does the filmmaker take us for a tour in Canada, Britain and France? How is he impressed by the health care systems there? What benefits do their health care systems bring to the needed, the practitioners, and the nation as a whole? What does the American system bring to its people instead?

The filmmaker starts a tour in Canada, Britain and France because he wants to see with his own eyes whether the nonprofit universal health care systems in the three countries are as terrible as believed by most Americans. During the tours, the filmmaker is amazed to see that people in the three countries all enjoy great

medical care, free of charge, and they all feel proud of such a practice. Under their systems, people who need medical care are all properly taken care of; practitioners are well-paid and at the same time can easily get a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction from their work; and the nation as a whole enjoy better health conditions and even longer life expectancy than the Americans. Comparatively, the American system takes advantage of the American people, constantly refusing to take care of the sick and leaving most of the others in worries for high medical bills and great burdens of working hard to meet their ends. The system also deprives the practitioners of the sense of pride and satisfaction in their work.

9. According to Tony Benn, former member of the British Parliament, which health care system is democratic and which one is a threat to the fundamental idea of democracy? Why?

As Tony Benn contends in the film, nonprofit universal health care is democratic in the way that it brings happiness to people's life, providing them with great care and giving them the opportunity to get recharged, feel fulfilled, develop the overall social well-being as well as a strong sense of social responsibility. As can be seen in France, only an educated, confident, and healthy public can readily become enthusiastic participants in democratic deliberations. He explains that it is the American health care system which presents a real threat to the fundamental idea of democracy because the system keeps people live under high burdens with low sense of self-esteem or social responsibility, and thus reduces them into enslaved labors who are too busy minding their own business to spare time and energy for democratic deliberations.

10. Why is the filmmaker heading for Guantanamo? Who are on board the boat with him? Do they get what they want in Guantanamo? Where do they finally end up instead?

The filmmaker decides to head for Guantanamo with a number of Americans who are desperately seeking for proper medical care, including several of those who once served the country as rescue workers at the time of 911 attack and thus were hailed by the country as national heroes. They learn from the news reports and public hearings that in the America-owned Guantanamo, the government provides excellent medical care for the imprisoned terrorists including those who are involved in the 911 attack. They claim that they want to go there to get the medical treatment they need. They are ignored and later warned by the Guantanamo guards and thus fail to get the medical care they want, but by doing so, they succeed in challenging the government for turning its back to its own national heroes while out of political interest, generously providing medical care for the criminals and for the country's enemies. Leaving Guantanamo, they end up in Cuba instead.

11. What is the myth most American people hold about Cuba? Do they finally get what they want in Cuba? What do they think of their experience in Cuba?

American government has taken Cuba as its enemy since the Cold War era, so due to the propaganda, Cuba has long been considered by most Americans as a very poor country where people's fundamental human rights are all deprived by their authoritarian government. However, in Cuba, they find that under a system of government-sponsored nonprofit universal health care, medical treatment is easily

accessible to all and to their surprise, the drugs which are highly expensive in America, are sold at cost in Cuba. Finally, all of them get the medical treatments they need in Cuba, free of charge, and the former rescue workers are treated as honored guests. The experience not only brings a deep sense of gratitude to the help they get in Cuba, but also evokes a deep disgust in the American health care system which makes high profits at the cost of people's interest as well as a strong sense of shame on their own government's indifference to people's well-being.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects

- a) The failing health care system in the U.S.;
- b) The free universal health care in the U.K.;
- c) The current situation of health care system in China;
- d) Your idea on a better health care system.

These four aspects are the selected four sides related to healthcare system. There are other aspects that students may research according to their own preferences. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

a. The failing health care system in the U.S.

The Health Care System in the U.S.

Kathy Gill

The nation's health care system was once again in the spotlight as part of President Obama's policy agenda; it was a priority issue during the 2008 campaign. Growing numbers of Americans were uninsured; costs kept rising at an annual growth rate of 6.7%; and the public was increasingly worried about the issue. The U.S. spends more money on health care than any other nation.

After much wrangling, Democrats eventually passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), known popularly as Obamacare, in 2010 with no Republican support.

Who Has Health Insurance in the U.S.?

Only about 6-in-10 of U.S. had employer-provided health care insurance, and almost 2-in-10 had no health insurance in 2006, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Children in poverty were more likely (19.3 percent in 2006) to be uninsured than all children (10.9 percent in 2005). The percentage of people covered by government health programs decreased to 27.0 percent in 2006 from 27.3 percent in 2005. About half were covered by Medicaid. One political question: how to provide affordable health care to Americans with no insurance?

In 2019, the number of people in America not covered by health insurance saw a decline for the first time in a decade after the implementation of the ACA. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the drop was attributed to a 0.7% decline in Medicaid participants. Those with private insurance held at the same level, while Medicare participation rose 0.4%.

How Much Does Health Care in the U.S. Cost?

Spending on health care in the United States grew 3.9% as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. That was a total of \$3.5 trillion, or \$10,739 per person.

What Is U.S. Public Opinion on Health Care?

Despite early worries about the ACA, once implemented, most Americans warmed up to most provisions of the law and did not want it repealed. Even though Republicans eventually took control of both houses of Congress and the presidency they failed to overturn the law as they had vowed—largely because it had become popular with much of the public.

Still, portions of the law, such as the individual mandate, which required all Americans to buy health insurance or pay a penalty were not popular. Though the mandate is still part of the law, Congress essentially nullified it by reducing the penalty to zero as part of the federal tax bill passed in 2017.

What Does Health Care Reform Mean?

The U.S. health care system is a complex mix of public and private programs. Most Americans who have health care insurance have an employer-sponsored plan. But the federal government insures the poor (Medicaid) and elderly (Medicare) as well as veterans and federal employees and Congressmen. State-run programs insure other public employees. Reform plans usually take one of three approaches: control/reduce costs but don't change the current structure; expand eligibility for Medicare and Medicaid; or scratch the system and start over. The latter is the most radical plan and is sometimes called "single pay" or "national health insurance" although the terms do not reflect a consensus.

The 2020 Democratic presidential campaign has brought health care reform back to the spotlight.

Why Is It So Hard to Reach Consensus on Health Care Reform?

Health care is big business. Politicians want to control costs but they cannot agree on how to stem the tide of outlays or the increased cost of insurance. Some want prices controls; others think that market competition will solve all problems.

The flip side of controlling cost is controlling demand. If Americans had more healthy lifestyles (exercise, diet), then costs would decline as health care demand declined. However, we don't yet legislate these types of behavior.

b. The free universal health care in the U.K.

National Health Service in the U.K.

Core principles

The NHS was born out of a long-held ideal that good healthcare should be available to all, regardless of wealth. At its launch by the then minister of health, Aneurin Bevan, on 5 July 1948, it had at its heart three core principles:

- That it should meet the needs of everyone
- That it should be free at the point of delivery
- That it should be based on clinical need, not ability to pay

These three principles have guided the development of the NHS over more than half a century and remain. However, in July 2000, a full-scale modernization program was launched and new principles added.

The main aims of the additional principles are that the NHS will:

- Provide a comprehensive range of services
- Shape its services around the needs and preferences of individual patients, their families and their carers
- Respond to the different needs of different populations
- Work continuously to improve the quality of services and to minimize errors
- Support and value its staff
- Use public funds for healthcare devoted solely to NHS patients
- Work with others to ensure a seamless service for patients
- Help to keep people healthy and work to reduce health inequalities
- Respect the confidentiality of individual patients and provide open access to information about services, treatment and performance

Structure

The English NHS is controlled by the U.K. government through the Department of Health (DH), which takes political responsibility for the service. Parliament has devolved management locally to ten Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), which oversee all NHS operations, particularly the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), in their areas. These are coterminous with the nine Government Office Regions for the most part, with the South East region split into South East Coast and South Central SHAs.

Nearly all hospital doctors and nurses in England are employed by the NHS and work in NHS-run hospitals, with teams of more junior hospital doctors (most of whom are in training) being led by consultants, each of whom is trained to provide expert advice and treatment within a specific specialty. But most General Practitioners (GPs), dentists, optometrists (opticians) and other providers of local health care are almost all self-employed, and contract their services back to the NHS. They may operate in partnership with other professionals, own and operate their own surgeries and clinics, and employ their own staff, including other doctors etc. However, the NHS does sometimes provide centrally employed health care professionals and facilities in areas where there is insufficient provision by self-employed professionals.

The NHS also plays a unique role in the training of new doctors in England, with approximately 8,000 places for student doctors each year, all of which are attached to an NHS University Hospital trust. After completing medical school, these new doctors must go on to complete a two-year foundation training program to become fully registered with the General Medical Council. Most go on to complete their foundation training years in an NHS hospital although some may opt for alternative employers such as the armed forces.

In July 2010, it was announced that the U.K. government planned to do a major decentralization of the English National Health Service. This plan entails shifting control of England's \$160 billion annual health budget from a centralized bureaucracy to doctors at the local level, as well as shrinking the bureaucratic apparatus.

Current reform proposals

The coalition government's white paper on health reform, published on 12 July

2010, sets out the most significant reorganization of the NHS in its history. The white paper, *Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS*, has implications for all health organizations in the NHS and very significant changes for PCTs and strategic health authorities. It aims to shift power from the centre to GPs and patients, moving somewhere between £60 to £80 billion into the hands of groups of GPs to commission services.

The money to pay for the NHS comes directly from taxation. The budget in September 2008 roughly equates to a contribution of £1,980 for every man, woman and child in the UK.

When the NHS was launched in 1948, it had a budget of £437 million (roughly £9 billion at today's value). In September 2008, it received over 10 times that amount (more than £100 billion).

(Another source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447686/>)

c. The current situation of the health care system in China

Healthcare reform in the People's Republic of China

The Chinese government still faces a mammoth task in trying to provide medical and welfare services adequate to meet the basic needs of the immense number of citizens spread over a vast area. Although China's overall affluence has grown dramatically since the mid-1980s—per capita income has increased many times over, and caloric intake has become comparable to that for Western Europe—a great many of its people live at socioeconomic levels far below the national average. The medical system, moreover, labors under the tension of whether to stress quality of care or to spread scarce medical resources as widely as possible. In addition, there has been repeated debate over the relative balance that should be struck between the use of Western and traditional Chinese medicine. While the Cultural Revolution pushed the balance toward widespread minimum care with great attention paid to traditional medicine, policy after the late 1970s moved in the other direction on both issues; by the late 1980s the proportion of doctors of Western medicine had exceeded those of traditional practices.

At the same time, the medical establishment also more or less has been affected by this major influence. Along with 1980s initial period people's commune disintegration, the original rural cooperatives medical service system rapidly disintegrates in the majority of areas. In the cities scope, the public health services system and the labor insurance medical service system also gradually decline in the varying degree. But the medical service relates to national economy and the people's livelihood and the social stability, and the related problems are extremely complex, the establishment of this new system is slower continuously, compared to other professions.

The health of the Chinese populace has improved considerably since 1949. Average life expectancy has increased by about three decades and now ranks nearly at the level of that in advanced industrial societies. Many communicable diseases, such as plague, smallpox, cholera, and typhus, have either been wiped out or brought under control. In addition, the incidences of malaria and schistosomiasis have declined dramatically since 1949.

As evaluated on a per capita basis, China's health facilities remain unevenly distributed. Medical and health personnel work in rural areas, where approximately one-half of the population resides, where access to higher tier care is limited. The

doctors of Western medicine, who constitute about one-fourth of the total medical personnel, are even more concentrated in urban areas. Similarly, about two-thirds of the country's hospital beds are located in the cities.

China has a health insurance system that provides virtually free coverage for people employed in urban state enterprises and relatively inexpensive coverage for their families. The situation for workers in the rural areas or in urban employment outside the state sector is far more varied. There are some cooperative health care programs, but their voluntary nature produced a decline in membership from the late 1970s.

The severest limitation on the availability of health services, however, appears to be an absolute lack of resources, rather than discrimination in access on the basis of the ability of individuals to pay. An extensive system of paramedical care has been fostered as the major medical resource available to most of the rural population, but the care has been of uneven quality. The paramedical system feeds patients into the more sophisticated commune-level and county-level hospitals when they are available.

New Rural Co-operative Medical Care System

The New Rural Co-operative Medical Care System (NRCMCS) is a new 2003 initiative to overhaul the healthcare system, particularly intended to make it more affordable for the rural poor. Nowadays the permanent urban population (except migrants) takes out medical insurance. Many in the rural areas may struggle to afford with the new burden of healthcare fees, a result of the collapse of the old state-funded health system which existed before China's program of economic reforms in the 1980s.

The annual cost of medical cover under the NRCMCS is 50 *yuan* per person. Of that, 20 *yuan* is paid in by the central government, 20 *yuan* by the provincial government and 10 *yuan* is paid by the patient. As of September 2007, around 80% of the whole rural population of China had signed up (about 685 million people). The system is tiered, depending on the location. If patients go to a small hospital or clinic in their local town, the scheme will cover from 70-80% of their bill. If they go to a county one, the percentage of the cost being covered falls to about 60%. And if they need specialist help in a large modern city hospital, they have to bear most of the cost themselves; the scheme would cover about 30% of the bill.

Primary care reform

Lu et al. reported in 2005 that China has no national primary care system, in particular general practice. The introduction of general practice in parts of urban China began in 1999. Lu et al. explain that "acceptance of general practice has been slow against the background of a strong urban tradition of hospitals as primary care providers, the widespread belief that specialists are more skilled than generalists even for minor complaints, and the perceived right of the individual to use the provider of their choice. But these attitudes are changing slowly. In several cities, notably in Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Guangdong provinces, GPs are acquiring a good local reputation and are attracting large numbers of patients."

Lu et al. responded to criticisms that general practice in China failed to perform a gate-keeping role, by stating that "such a role is virtually impossible to establish in the presence of a diversity of payment schemes including government insurance, employer-paid insurance, private insurance, community-based insurance (mostly with only part reimbursement), and out-of-pocket payment. Training and pay have not presented problems. The system of payment of GPs is similar to that of hospital practitioners—a basic salary supplemented by bonuses according to performance. In

popular hospitals and busy specialties, these bonuses may be up to ten times the basic salary, whereas some hospital doctors may receive only the basic salary. Likewise, GPs get a basic salary, which is topped up from patients' fees and prescriptions. Thus there are clear incentives to improve quality, hence attracting more patients and increasing income. The desire of newly-trained doctors to work in cities will ensure there will be an unlikely shortage of GPs for the foreseeable future.

There are several important problems facing health policy-makers. First, a system that keeps basic wages low, but allows doctors to make money from prescriptions and investigations, leads to perverse incentives and inefficiency at all levels. Second, as in many other countries, to develop systems of health insurance and community financing which will allow coverage for most people is a huge challenge when the population is aging and treatments are becoming more sophisticated and expensive. Several different models have been developed across the country to attempt to address the problems.

An example of a reform model based on an international partnership approach was the Basic Health Services Project. This was implemented between 1998 and 2007 by the Government of China in 97 poor rural counties in which 45 million people live. Its aim was to encourage local officials to test innovative strategies for strengthening their health service to improve access to competent care and reduce the impact of major illness. In particular it supported county executors to translate national health policy into strategies and actions meaningful at a local level.

d. Your idea on a better health care system

Answers to this question may vary.

Unit 4 Dead Poets Society (1989)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. Why do parents try to send their sons to the Welton Academy? What are the four pillars of the Academy?

The Welton Academy, with a history of 100 years, is regarded as the best preparatory school in the United States. A large percentage of its graduates can go to the Ivy League and such an accomplishment makes the parents believe that if their sons can study in this school, they will surely become successful men as others expect. The school authority believes that such a reputation is the result of its dedication to the four pillars of the school: "Tradition," which means love of school, country, and family; "Honor," which means dignity and the fulfillment of duty; "Discipline," which means respect for parents, teachers, headmaster; and "Excellence," which means the result of hard work, the key to all success, in school and everywhere.

2. Who is introduced at the school opening ceremony as a new teacher?

John Keating, a new English teacher, is introduced to the students. He was a star student at the Welton Academy, and before he comes to teach at Welton, he spends several years teaching at Chester School in London.

3. Why does Mr. Perry ask his son Neil Perry to drop some of the extracurricular activities? What tone does he use when talking to his son? Why?

Mr. Perry believes those extracurricular activities will divert his son's attention on study. He wants Neil to work hard and enter the medical school as he expects. He talks with Neil in a very authoritarian tone. He believes his son is still too young to know better and is in no position to make his own decision unless he fulfills the family's high expectations of him.

4. What advice do the other boys put forward then? How does Neil act on it?

The other boys encourage him to do what he likes doing and speak out his mind in front of his father. Neil does not take their advice seriously because he knows all the boys are just saying and none of them has the courage to say no to their fathers.

5. What is the general classroom teaching at Welton like? Are the students attracted and stimulated by their teachers? Why or why not?

Teachers at Welton all adopt a teacher-centered approach of teaching, strictly limited to the textbook. Students feel rather dull and weary because teachers will make no efforts to arouse their interest in the subjects, and what they care most is whether the students can remember what the textbooks say, follow their instructions and finish the huge workload assigned. Being force-fed, the students cannot achieve real understanding and deep appreciation of the essence of the subjects, and thus can hardly be attracted and stimulated.

6. In Mr. Keating's first class, what teaching approach does he apply? What message does he try to convey to the boys? How do the boys like it?

Different from the traditional way of teaching, Mr. Keating adopts a student-centered approach. He asks the students to stop following passively what the

textbooks and the teachers say, and start to explore their potential. He encourages the students to put the textbooks aside for a while, take the initiative to combine some themes explored by poetry with their life activities, think about the meaning of their existence, and thus get close to the essence of the subject. Then, he stimulates the students to think for themselves, make creative works of their own, and thus to follow the teachings of some famous poets to fully realize their potential. The message he is trying to convey to the boys is that to live a successful life, one must learn to be individualistic, self-reliant, creative, and sensitive to the beauty of life while at the same time trying to make their own contributions to such beauty. At first, the boys are not accustomed to such an approach, feeling strange and suspicious. But later, they start to enjoy every moment of his class, become enlightened and finally get the message he is trying to convey to them.

7. How would the boys address Mr. Keating if they are more daring? What is the sentiment of *Carpe Diem*?

The boys are encouraged to address him as “Oh Captain, My Captain,” which is taken from a poem written by Walt Whitman about Mr. Abraham Lincoln, a president fighting for freedom of all his people. “*Carpe Diem*” is the Latin term which means “seize the day,” a sentiment similar to “*Gather ye rosebuds while ye may*”—make wise use of your time while you’re young and do not wait till it’s too late for you to make an effort in living a life as you always dream of.

8. In his second class, which part of the literature textbook does Mr. Keating ask the boys to rip out? Why?

He asks the boys to rip out the preface of the book, “Understanding Poetry.” He doesn’t want his students to be limited by academic measuring of poetry. He hopes his students can think for themselves, learning to savor the words and ideas no matter what anybody tells them.

9. Why are the romanticism and poems worth learning? How does Mr. Keating explain to the boys?

Mr. Keating emphasizes that one reads poetry because he is a member of the human race and the human race is filled with passion. He says knowledge about medicine, law, banking is necessary to sustain life, but poetry, romance, love and beauty are what we stay alive for and what we should learn and make contribution to.

10. What is Dead Poets Society according to Mr. Keating?

According to Mr. Keating, Dead Poets Society was a secret organization of which Keating himself was a member when he studied at Welton. It was dedicated to “sucking the marrow out of life.” That phrase is by Thoreau and was invoked at every meeting. A small group of male and female students would meet at a cave and there they would take turns reading Shelley, Thoreau, Whitman, any other poets and their own verse, and they would follow the spirits of the poets and their works.

11. How is Neil Perry stimulated and what is he going to do?

Neil decides to start a Dead Poets Society of their own to follow the former members to appreciate the poets and get strength from them.

12. In Mr. Keating’s next class, what does he intend to convey to the boys by standing on his desk?

He does this to remind the boys that they must constantly force themselves to look at things differently. He asks them to stand on the desk in turns to feel how the

world may look different from different angles. He's telling the boy that how they should free themselves from the tradition, risk new grounds and find their own voice.

13. On another day, why does Mr. Keating ask his boys to read aloud a famous line of a poem before they kick the soccer ball on the field?

He wants them to learn the most important thing in all sports, that is, the way other human beings can push one to excel, encouraging one to be courageous enough to be an individual. And to be individual is exactly one of the important messages the poetry is intended to convey.

14. One day in a courtyard, why does Mr. Keating ask the boys to walk differently? What does he say to them about the importance of their own stride?

Through this practice, he wants to demonstrate "how difficult it is for any of us to listen to our own voice or maintain our own beliefs in the presence of others." He explains that all the boys finally walk in the same cadence and join clapping because "there is a great need in all of us to be accepted." He wants to stress that one should be strong and determined enough to "insist on the separate path" and do not be afraid of being different or contrary to others. He tries to tell the boys that one should trust what is unique about himself even if it's odd or unpopular. As he mentions, this idea is the one expressed by Mr. Robert Frost, who once said, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I ... I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

15. How does the school authority respond to Mr. Keating's way of teaching? What does the schoolmaster advise him to do? What is Mr. Keating's argument?

The school authority is rather uneasy about Keating's way of teaching because it thinks this kind of progressive teaching is beyond the boys' age and can be so misleading that the boys may feel encouraged to challenge the set rules of the school. The schoolmaster advises Keating to follow the set curriculum in the school because it's proven that the traditional way of teaching can help the boys enter good universities and make no trouble for the school. He emphasizes that boys at such an age cannot make their own judgments and thus must follow tradition and discipline. However, Mr. Keating believes that students should learn to think for themselves.

16. Todd is a quiet and shy boy. How does Mr. Keating stimulate him to contribute his own verse in the classroom?

First, Mr. Keating writes down a line from a poem written by Walt Whitman, "I sound my barbaric yawp over the rooftops of the world." Then he asks Todd to give the class a demonstration of a barbaric yawp. With his encouragement, Todd becomes less frightened and more relaxed about expressing himself in front of others. After showing Todd there is something barbaric inside himself, Keating asks Todd to describe his impression of the picture of Walt Whitman. He pushes the boy to speak out quickly and spontaneously. Meanwhile, he advises the boy to close his eyes and concentrate on nothing but his impression of the picture while giving him some encouragement and guidance at some critical moments. The boy is for the first time encouraged to face his intuition and speak out immediately what he has in his mind without being afraid of becoming others' laughing stock.

- 17. Why do Todd's parents send their son a study board as the birthday gift, the same birthday gift as last year? Why does he feel so depressed about it? What does he do with the study board at last? What does that indicate?**

The parents seem to use the gift to remind the boy that he should always try to study hard to improve himself and meet their expectations. They never know that Todd does not like the gift at all. This makes Todd very depressed because he feels his parents never care about his interests and feelings. The boy is terribly burdened by his parents' expectations, and thus becomes very unconfident and behaves even worse in class. Finally, with Neil's encouragement, Todd throws away the study board, which indicates that he will try to get rid of such a burden and be himself.

- 18. Why is Neil so excited about being able to play a role in the play? Does he worry about his father's certain objection?**

Neil takes it as a grand opportunity to have a good start in his pursuit of an acting career. The boy loves acting because this will allow him to express himself openly and experience different kinds of lives. He knows that his father will not allow him to take acting as a career, so he decides not to tell his father about it. He feels this is the first time for him to make his own decision.

- 19. Does Neil's father find out about his son's decision later? What does Neil's father force him to do?**

Yes. The father becomes furious at finding out about his son playing the role. He believes it is bad enough that the son has wasted his time with this acting thing, and it's even more unacceptable that his son deliberately deceives him. Though the play will be on show next day, he still forces his son to quit the play.

- 20. Why does Neil go to Mr. Keating's room the night before the play? What does Mr. Keating advise Neil to do? Does Neil act on the teacher's suggestion? Why or why not?**

Neil goes to Mr. Keating's room to ask for advice. Mr. Keating advises Neil to go to talk with his father, showing his father with his passion and commitment that acting is what he really wants to do. The teacher tells Neil that if that doesn't work, at least by the age of 18, which is two years later, he'll be able to do what he wants. However, Neil doesn't take Mr. Keating's advice because he has no courage and confidence to talk with his father, who always gives orders and never allows the son to talk with him as an equal. Neil feels sure that he cannot win his father's support, and he cannot wait for another two years to start a try on acting. Instead of facing the trouble, Neil chooses to bypass it. He knows his father will be out of town by the time, so he hopes that he can do the acting without being discovered by his father.

- 21. Is Neil's performance a success? How is he welcomed and appreciated by the peer performers and the audience? How does his father feel instead? What does he say to Neil?**

Neil's performance is a great success and he is hailed as a big star, and even a hero by his peers and the audience. However, his father remains untouched and insists his love for acting is ruining his life. So, Neil's father demands that he should drop the idea of acting business, leave Welton and go to another school where he can be more concentrated on his study and prepare for entering the medical school of Harvard, and only after college graduation, he can make his own decisions.

22. Why does Neil commit suicide? Who should be blamed, his father, Mr. Keating, the school, or Neil himself? Please comment on it.

Neil feels he has totally lost the control of his own life. He's forced to leave Welton and stay away from his beloved acting business, and concentrate on study for the medical school that he has no desire to enter.

Answers to the second question may vary.

23. What happens to Mr. Keating after the incident? Should the school authority put the blame on Mr. Keating? Why or why not?

The school holds Mr. Keating responsible for Neil's death and thus expels him.

Answers to the last two questions may vary.

24. How does Todd show his protest against Mr. Keating's dismissal? Do the other boys follow suit? What gives them the courage to do so?

In the English class given by the headmaster, Todd stands up to speak for Mr. Keating, who then comes to fetch his personal things. When Mr. Keating is leaving the classroom, Todd stands on the desk to show his understanding, support and appreciation of Keating's teaching and inspiration. Despite the headmaster's threats, more boys follow suit. Though Keating has finally been expelled, his teaching has already made a change in the boys' view of life, stirred both their hearts and minds, and thus given them the courage to do so.

25. What is the essence of Mr. Keating's teaching? Do the boys seize it?

Answers to these questions may vary.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

This movie is set during a period of romanticism in the first half of the 20th century. Romanticism was an artistic and intellectual movement that originated in the late 18th century and stressed strong emotion, imagination, freedom from classical correctness in art forms, and rebellion against social conventions. Romanticism emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental. It was marked by emphasis on originality and individuality, personal emotional expression, and freedom and experimentation of form. Still, in common usage, romanticism is often understood as a set of new cultural and aesthetic values. It might be taken to include the rise of

individuality; a new emphasis on common language and the depiction of apparently everyday experiences; and experimentation with new, non-conforming forms.

Elementary education in America used to be rigid and backward to some extent. America used to despise its teachers and, as a consequence, it has been granted the teachers it deserves. The quality prep education is noted for the excellence of its public schools and the teachers' dogged conscientiousness could not be found fault with. The principal had read all the right pedagogic books, and was ready to quote these in the footnotes to his circular exhortations to parents. The teachers worked rigidly from the approved rigidly programmed primers, ensuring that school textbook publication remains the big business. But there seems to be no spark, no daring, no madness, no readiness to engage in the individual child's mind with novel ideas. The fear of being a nonconformist is rooted in the American teacher's soul: He or she can be fired for treading the path of experimental enterprise.

The setting is Welton Academy, Vermont—the “best prep school in America.” Welton Academy is founded on tradition and excellence and is bent on providing strict structured lessons prescribed by the realist, anti-youth administration. With the dawning of each new semester, hundreds of parents abandon their sons, leaving them in the tried hands of Welton staff in hopes that they will raise doctors and lawyers. When a replacement English teacher arrives, who happens to be a Welton alumnus, he brings with him a passion for teaching romanticism, thus opening a never-before-seen world to his students.

Themes:

- a. **Individuality:** One major theme of this movie is individuality promoted and demonstrated by Keating. This is difficult to do, though, because society does not accept individuals like Keating. People have learned to conform to society. *Dead Poets Society* celebrates nonconformity and freethinking as an adventure worthy of emulation. When Keating asks the students to march differently, he opens the boys' eyes to their numb acceptance of conformity, and get them think about the endless possibilities in life.
- b. **Creative Teaching:** Keating's passion for poetry inspires some of his students to revive a secret club that he led when he was a student at the Academy. They gather in a cave to read poetry aloud and share their creative efforts. Among those who are most deeply influenced by Keating are Neil Perry as a boy who defies his father's orders and plays Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Todd Anderson as a reclusive lad who learns to stand up for what he believes in, and Knox Overstreet as a love-sick student who uses poetry to woo a seemingly unattainable girl away from her football star boyfriend. *Dead Poets Society* is regarded as one that glorifies teaching, presents a model of what all teachers should be, and dramatizes the imperative need for nonconformity. English teachers seem especially enthusiastic about the film. Thinking of innovative and creative methods for teaching students after all is challenging.

Conflicts:

- a. **Traditional Teaching vs. Nontraditional Teaching:** Welton Academy follows traditions and disciplines and concentrates on textbook teaching so as to send their students to colleges and universities. John Keating's unconventional teaching

approach is open, helping students learn for themselves and think for themselves, exploring one's talents and potentials.

- b. Individual Choice vs. Family's Expectations:** Neil Perry has a great passion for acting. He likes to do extracurricular activities of acting. But his father doesn't understand him and is strongly against it. The father thinks this is just a waste of time and he wants his son to go to the medical school in Harvard after high school graduation. The result of the conflict is Neil's death.
- c. Seize the Day vs. Bury It:** This is a whole choice of the way you're going to develop—to develop your own character, give full play to your talent or just bury them down and surrender to the traditions and social pressure.

Performances:

Director Peter Weir and screenwriter Tom Schulman do a marvelous job of describing the various characters so that we know each one. *Dead Poets Society* is ultimately moving and has an ending that will leave the audience thinking as it leaves the theater.

All the performances are excellent, particularly the complex shadings of Leonard (Neil Perry), but Williams (John Keating) is especially memorable. He is gentle, sincere, troubled and humorous. With each new venture, Williams shows he is a remarkable talent and, over these past years, he has found a surprising number of films that have worked for him.

Mention should also be made of John Seale's gorgeous cinematography and the nice, subtle score by Maurice Jarre.

Dead Poets Society was nominated for four Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Directing for Peter Weir, and Best Actor for Williams; it won one, for Tom Schulman's original screenplay.

Unit 5 The Help (2011)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. **Who is Aibileen Clark? What does she do for a living? Does she choose the job out of her own will?**

Aibileen Clark is a middle-aged black maid who works for white families in Jackson County, Mississippi. She was born in 1911 in a plantation. Since her grandma is a house slave and her mom a maid, she knows at an early age that she has no chance to pursue a career of her own choice and she is destined to become a black help serving white families.

2. **Which family is hiring Aibileen now and what is she supposed to do as their maid? How much does she earn? What is Aibileen particularly good at doing? How does she feel about taking care of white babies?**

Aibileen now works for the Leefolts from eight to four everyday, six days a week, earning 95 cents an hour which come to 182 dollars a month. As a maid, she does the cooking, washing, ironing, grocery shopping but mostly taking care of Elizabeth's baby girl, Mae Mobley. Aibileen is good at taking care of babies and she has altogether taken care of 17 white babies during her years of working as a help. Though she feels lost that she has to leave her own child at home, she's proud that she knows how to love and care for the babies and she feels sorry for the babies because they are constantly neglected by their own moms who are too busy presenting a good image in social life to take the responsibility of parenting.

3. **Who is Skeeter? In what way is she different from other white women in the county?**

Skeeter is the nickname of Eugenia Phelan, a 23-year-old white girl who grows up in Jackson County, gets double major in college and now returns to the county on graduation. Unlike other females in the county, Skeeter takes her college study seriously and she's highly motivated by her dream to become a journalist and a serious writer and thus has no intention to follow the tradition to get married young and live a life of a housewife. Most of all, she develops a deep concern about racial segregation and discrimination and she shows great compassion to the black helps in her county in particular.

4. **What job does Skeeter get after returning to Jackson County? How does she impress the editor-in-chief?**

Skeeter gets a job writing a domestic maintenance column named "Miss Myrna" for a popular local media *Jackson Journal*. The editor-in-chief is surprised to see that the young girl gets a double major and gains working experiences as an editor for three media. He's impressed when Skeeter shows him a letter written by Elaine Stein, a famous New York publisher in Harper and Row, who in the letter rejects Skeeter's earlier application for a job in her company, but suggests that if given time, the girl can become a good writer.

5. **Who is Minny Jackson and why does Aibileen feel lucky to have her as a friend? How does Aibileen describe Hilly Holbrook, Minny's employer?**

Minny is a black maid and a mom of three kids with a straightforward and outgoing nature. She seeks great pleasure and satisfaction in cooking and has a reputation for being an excellent cook in the town. Aibileen feels lucky to have Minny as her best friend because after the recent death of her only son, she has been living in deep sorrow and loneliness and Minny seems to be the only one who can keep accompany with her and bring laughs to her. Aibileen observes that Minny's employer Hilly is self-centered, mean and manipulative. She keeps a tight grip on her mom's life after the old lady gets sick, and she has a way to have the ladies in town take her as their queen bee.

6. How does Skeeter get to know Aibileen? What does she want Aibileen to help her with? Does she get Elizabeth's permission?

Skeeter is a close friend of both Hilly and Elizabeth. When she joins their bridge party, she explains to Elizabeth that she finds it hard to answer the readers' house-cleaning questions directed to the "Miss Myrna" column which she is working on, and since the maid of her own family Constantine quits the job, she wonders whether she can seek help from Elizabeth's maid, Aibileen. Elizabeth says yes reluctantly and keeps reminding Aibileen that the talk should not take too long so Aibileen can work on her daily routines as usual.

7. At the bridge party, why does Hilly refuse to use the bathroom at Elizabeth's house? What efforts does she take to promote her ideas? How is her suggestion taken at the moment by her friends Elizabeth and Skeeter?

Miss Hilly prefers not to use any of the bathrooms at Elizabeth's house because Elizabeth allows her black helps to use the guest bath, and Hilly's theory is that once the blacks are allowed to use the guest bath, they will venture to use any of the bathrooms in the house. She advocates that the blacks carry diseases dangerous to the whites, so their white employers should build separate bathrooms for black helps outside their house for the sake of the family health. She takes it so seriously that she proposes a bill of Home Help Sanitation Initiative which is endorsed by the White Citizen's Council. Feeling encouraged, Hilly starts to push those around her to take immediate actions, and ask Skeeter to have her initiative published in the newsletters. Elizabeth feels a bit embarrassed at first but she soon gets it over and starts to buy Hilly's ideas. Skeeter pretty abhors her friend's racist opinions and she feels quite uncomfortable when Hilly is talking aloud about her disgust of the black helps at the presence of Aibileen. To show her disapproval, she says sarcastically that Hilly should build herself a bathroom outside the house, and later she expresses her regret for what happens to Aibileen in private.

8. What does Skeeter's mom tell her about their maid, Constantine? Why is Skeeter skeptical? Why is she so upset to find out that Constantine is actually fired by her mom?

Skeeter is told by her mom after she returns from school that their old maid Constantine quits the job, and moves to Chicago with her own daughter. However, Skeeter gets suspicious because Constantine never writes to her and when she sees that Aibileen is holding something back on mentioning Constantine and her family looks rather uneasy while assuring her that Constantine simply moves on, she figures it out that the old maid is actually fired by her mom. Skeeter feels bitter and upset because Constantine has been working in her family for 29 years and while

her mom is busy with her own social life, it is Constantine who brings her up, keeps accompany with her and encourages her to become a woman with self-confidence and a free will.

- 9. Why does Skeeter call Elaine Stein, the well-known publisher in New York? Does Elaine Stein take Skeeter's concern for the social ills seriously? What is the publisher's major concern? Why does she agree to give Skeeter an opportunity to try out her idea then?**

Skeeter discusses with Miss Stein on the phone about her plan to write a book of interviews with black maids about what it is like for the black helps to live and work in Jackson, a county infamous for its racial segregation. Miss Stein is more interested in the potential popularity of such a book than in Skeeter's pursuit of having the true voice of black helps heard by the public. But she's concerned that Skeeter can never manage to find a black maid who will do such an interview. When Skeeter lies to Miss Stein, guaranteeing that she already has one black maid ready for the interview, Miss Stein agrees to give her idea a consideration.

- 10. Why does Skeeter pick Aibileen as her first interviewee? How does she persuade Aibileen to do the interview with her? Do things go smoothly as she expects? Why is it difficult for Skeeter to get the support from the black help?**

Aibileen becomes Skeeter's first choice because Skeeter thinks that she can use her need for Aibileen's help on her writings of "Miss Myrna" column as a cover-up for the book interviews. She assumes that so long as she keeps everyone involved anonymous, the black maids, one after another, will come to do the interviews with her because this gives them a golden opportunity to tell the public what is really like for a black maid working in a white family. However, things don't turn out as she expects. Though Skeeter knows it must be scary for Aibileen and the other black maids to do such an interview, she has no idea their life and freedom may be endangered, not only by the hostile white racists but also by Mississippi laws which claim any disturbance of racial segregation illegal and therefore can be subjected to severe punishment.

- 11. Why is Minny fired by Miss Hilly? What happens to Minny after that?**

One night, a tornado strikes Jackson County which later claims 18 lives. Despite the terrible storm outside, Hilly insists Minny can only use the outside bathroom for black helps. Later Hilly follows Minny, finds Minny locking herself in the inside bathroom and starts to question Minny angrily. Minny can no longer bear the insult so she deliberately flushes the toilet and is fired on spot by Hilly, who later tells people in town that Minny is a thief. Minny takes her revenge on Hilly but still the rumor makes it impossible for her to get employed by any white family in Jackson County. Not being able to bring home any money, Minny is abused by her husband and her young daughter is later forced by her husband to quit school and work as a maid to help pay the bills.

- 12. Why does Aibileen finally agree to tell Skeeter her stories? How does she prefer to do the interview and why? What does Skeeter do to reduce the risk and how does she make Aibileen feel at ease to share the stories with her?**

Aibileen feels sorry for what happens to her best friend, Minny, and hopes she can do something for her. Later at the church, the father's preach about courage and love enlightens her and helps her make up her mind to invite Skeeter to her place to do the interview. Instead of answering the questions prepared by Skeeter, Aibileen

prefers to write her own stories and read them to Skeeter. It turns out that Aibileen writes one to two hours every night about what she experiences as her way to memorize her son who once dreams to become a writer. Skeeter accepts Aibileen's suggestion because that's a much more natural way for the maid to tell her stories. To show her understanding of the situation, Skeeter reads the Mississippi laws of segregation, and then learns to take extra caution to come to Aibileen's place unnoticed and she shows a modest attitude, assuring Aibileen that she will not take it personal when the blacks make complains of the unfair treatments enforced on them by the white population.

13. Who is Celia Foote? Why does Aibileen recommend Minny to her?

Celia is a new-comer to Jackson County who marries Johnny Foote, Hilly's ex-boyfriend, and then lives in the Foote's plantation a bit far from the county center. Aibileen happens to know that Celia is in need of a black help and while working at Elizabeth's place, she gets to know that though Celia is very eager to make friends with the ladies, she is rejected by all because the jealous and contemptuous Hilly is manipulating everyone to keep her isolated and friendless. Therefore, Celia is the only one in Jackson County who will not mind hiring Minny.

14. Does Celia greet Minny in a way as most white hostesses would do? Why does she behave like that? Why does Minny feel uneasy to take the job?

Minny is quite amazed to be so warmly greeted by Celia who simply takes her as someone coming in time of need and who seems to have no idea that such a behavior is considered very improper in Jackson County. Grown up in a working-class family, Celia has no sense of white superiority and as a new-comer and an outsider, she's not fully conscious of the common practice of rigid racial segregation in Jackson County. Besides, she is very much frustrated at the moment because she can hardly cook well and she has no one to seek help in the neighborhood. That is why she feels so exhilarated and grateful when Minny accepts the job offer. However, Minny is a bit worried when Celia says she can work only during the working hours on the work days so that her husband Johnny will never find out about the help and thus will assume that Celia is an excellent housewife who can manage to do everything on her own. Celia obviously doesn't understand it can be dangerous for Minny if her husband happens to come back early and see a black woman in their house.

15. How does Minny react on seeing Skeeter in Aibileen's place, doing the interview? Why does she decide to join them a moment later? How devoted does she turn out to be in her first interview?

Minny is shocked to see Skeeter and Aibileen are actually doing the interview as Yule Mae once told her. She at first appears sarcastic and skeptical because she finds it hard to believe that a white girl can sincerely care about the black maids and take a humble position to respect whatever the blacks have to say. However, on a second thought, she decides to give it a try because she has so many stories to tell and she is somehow encouraged by the fact that her best friend Aibileen has been doing it for a while. Once she gets started, she keeps talking for a whole night, sharing stories with Skeeter and Aibileen about herself, the food she cooks and the white women she has worked for.

16. Is Skeeter's mom, Charlotte, proud of her daughter for getting herself a good education and a serious job to do? What does Charlotte care most about her

daughter? What does she do to show her cares and worries? Does Skeeter appreciate her efforts?

Skeeter remains a big headache for her mom Charlotte who desperately wants her daughter to get married before getting too old. Charlotte tries all means to transform Skeeter into an attractive lady with an elegant manner. The fact that Skeeter never dates any guy and shows no interest in finding herself a husband worries Charlotte so much that she once recommends some drugs to Skeeter which are claimed as a special treatment for those who develop a queer sexual orientation. When Skeeter is finally going out for an arranged date with Stuart, Charlotte excitedly helps Skeeter to get prepared. She orders expensive hair perm from New York, perms Skeeter's hair, dresses her up elegantly and keeps reminding her that she should put up a good image of herself. However, Skeeter finds her mom quite annoying because for Skeeter, a woman's success lies in her career not in the good image she puts up in front of others.

17. Does Skeeter's arranged date with Stuart go well? Why does Stuart come back to Skeeter a few weeks later? Does Skeeter accept his apology?

The date doesn't go well. Stuart deliberately makes fun of Skeeter's job as a writer for a cleaning column and he claims Skeeter is of no difference from the girls who throw themselves in the husband-hunting game right after college graduation. Skeeter feels insulted, says something harsh in return and rushes out angrily. Weeks later, Stuart shows up at Skeeter's door to apologize for the way he acts on their first date and confesses that he finds himself deeply impressed by Skeeter's straight-forwardness and her talent of writing. Skeeter is still angry with Stuart, but on seeing his sincerity, she accepts his apology, goes out with him for a second date and the two soon fall in love with each other.

18. What does Miss Steins say about the records of interviews that Skeeter sends to her? What does Skeeter have to do before she can have the book published? What does Minny suggest? Is her suggestion accepted by Skeeter? Why does Aibileen feel obliged to get the book published?

Miss Stein finds the stories outstandingly vivid and impressive, but she insists if Skeeter fails to interview a dozen more black helps and record their stories before the national concern of civil rights issues fades away, the interviews will never get published. Seeing no possibility to involve any more black maids at the moment, Minny suggests Skeeter should simply make up more names of the maids but Skeeter dismisses the idea for she wants to be professional and keep the book sincere and genuine. Aibileen tells Skeeter how she has to watch her son die right in front of her eyes and how the boy's life could have been saved, were it not for the negligence of the white foreman. By doing so, she is trying to make all the three of them see that they should never give up the hope for having the book published because that is the only way to make sure that their losses will not be of no values at all.

19. What does Hilly happen to see in Skeeter's purse? What does she demand from Skeeter? What does Skeeter do instead?

Hilly has long noticed that Skeeter is kind to the black helps in town and when she sees the book of Mississippi laws of racial segregation in Skeeter's purse, she confronts Skeeter, warns her of the danger she is inviting for herself, and demands that Skeeter should put her Sanitation Initiative in the newsletter immediately.

Disgusted by Hilly's arrogance and racist ideas, Skeeter decides to teach her a lesson, so she alters the original draft of the charity call in Hilly's Initiative, inviting people to drop off their "old commodes" instead of "old coats" to Hilly's yard. Hilly is on the edge of a breakdown on finding so many commodes be dropped off in her yard and she feels very much humiliated that she is made into a laughingstock for not only her neighbors but also some media reporters.

20. While the Civil Rights Movement in the country is confronted by violent hostility of the white racists, an incident in Jackson County draws national attention. What is it and how are Aibileen and Minny affected by it?

A black man is shot to death by someone from 3K Party right in front of his children when he gets off the bus at the black neighborhood in Jackson County. The whole nation, especially the civil rights promoters abhor the brutality of the murder. As Minny puts it, the tragic incident makes her feel like living in a hell and trapped. Considering the increasing hostility in Jackson County and throughout the nation in general, both Aibileen and Minny are fully aware of the danger to help Skeeter finish the book, but despite their fears and tears, they comfort each other and decide not to give it up because they are so eager to tell people the things that really happen to them.

21. Why is Yule Mae, Hilly's latest maid, arrested? Why does she steal the ring? Does Hilly feel sorry for what happens to Yule Mae?

Yule Mae goes to pawn one of Hilly's rings that she happens to find while doing the cleaning. The clerk gets suspicious and reports to the police who have Yule Mae brutally arrested at the bus stop. Yule Mae steals the ring to pay for the college tuition for her twin boys. As Yule Mae once proudly explains to Hilly that both of her sons graduate from high school on honor rolls, and the family have saved for years for the boys' education. However, they are still in short of 75 dollars for one of the tuition and thus faced with a difficult choice of which son should be sent to college. Yule Mae pleads with Hilly to give her a loan which she'd love to pay off by working for free, but Hilly responds arrogantly that even God will not give charity to those who are able, so they have to help themselves. It is out of desperation and love for her sons that Yule Mae decides to take the risk of stealing the ring, hoping to send both boys to college. Hilly shows no regret or sympathy on seeing Yule Mae get arrested and she claims to others that she knows Yule Mae is always a thief.

22. After Yule Mae's arrest, Skeeter is told by the black waiter to go to Aibileen's place immediately. What happens there? Why do the help change their minds and decide to help Skeeter get the book published? What feelings about the white people do the black help want to share with Skeeter in their stories?

Skeeter is surprised and almost brought to tears to see quite a number of black helps show up in Aibileen's house, ready to share their stories with her and help her get the book published. They change their minds because what happens to Yule Mae adds fuel to the flame they have long kept inside and they are finally made to see that only by making their voice heard by the public, they can possibly make a difference of life in Jackson County. The stories Skeeter learns from the black helps reveal their bitterness and resentment against the practice of racial discrimination which enslaves them, deprives them of their dignity and in some occasions puts their life in danger or even claims the life of their beloved ones.

However, this same group of black helps also share with her the deep affections they feel about the white babies they help bring up and their sincere gratitude to those liberal-minded white employers who sincerely support them or treat them as equals.

23. What does Minny tell Skeeter and Aibileen about her revenge on Hilly? Why does she urge Skeeter to include this story in the book?

Minny tells Skeeter and Aibileen that after Hilly fires her and spreads rumor about her being a thief, she decides to take revenge. She makes a chocolate pie and bakes her own feces into it, delivers the pie to Hilly and plans to leave after seeing her take a bite. But Hilly likes it so much that she soon finishes two slices and when Hilly's mom wants to try it too, Minny has no choice but to stop the old lady by telling the truth about the special ingredient of the pie. Minny doesn't feel proud of herself so she decides not to confess the story to anyone, but she now tells Aibileen and Skeeter because they are worried that with the situation around the nation getting more and more violent, terrible things may happen to them if someone figures out the book is actually about Jackson County. Minny suggests if they add this story into the book, Hilly will desperately try to convince everyone that the book is not about Jackson so that no one will know it is Hilly herself who is fooled to eat human feces.

24. What has Minny done to help Celia out of her troubles? Does Celia show the same concern to Minny?

Minny gives Celia great care and comfort when Celia has a third miscarriage and she suggests Celia should tell the truth to Johnny because a good husband has the duty to stand by her at such a moment. Later, when Celia feels hurt to find Hilly and the other ladies intentionally keep her as an outcast, Minny tells her it is not her fault because Hilly does all this out of jealousy. At the Benefit, Celia makes a last attempt to get socially accepted by those in town but only brings shame on herself. She gets so devastated and decides to leave Jackson County for good. On seeing her packing, Minny ventures to tell her about the revenge she takes on Hilly and confirms Celia that she is not the one to be blamed and she should not leave Jackson County as Hilly expects to see. Celia gradually takes Minny as her only friend in town and once when she sees the terrible cut on Minny's forehead, she helps Minny dress the wound and encourages her to say no to the abusive husband.

25. Who bids for Minny's chocolate pie for Hilly at the Benefit? Why does she do so?

It is Hilly's mom who intentionally bids Minny's chocolate pie for her. The old lady is unhappy with the way her daughter degrades the black helps because it is the black helps like Minny who take good care of her while her self-centered daughter gives no attention to her at all. That is why when she witnesses Minny's revenge on Hilly, she laughs aloud and asks Minny to run instead of showing sympathy to her own daughter. Then she is sent by Hilly to the nursing home as a punishment for her laughs on the scene, so in order to teach her daughter a lesson, she bids for the pie for Hilly to let her remember whatever she gives out to others may come back to herself.

26. What is the last story Skeeter needs to include into the book before it can be published? What has happened to Constantine? Does Charlotte feel sorry for it?

As required by Miss Stein, Skeeter needs to add into the book her own story of

being brought up by Constantine, the black help in her family. Being pushed by Skeeter, Charlotte finally reveals what really happens to Constantine. She explains that back on the day she fires Constantine, a ceremony party is held at their house to celebrate Charlotte's election of the state regent of the organization "Daughters of America", and the president of the organization comes all the way from Washington D.C. to congratulate her. But later at the banquet, Charlotte is very much embarrassed when the president feels annoyed by Constantine's "improper" service and then very much irritated by Constantine's daughter's unexpected visit and the black girl's persistence on walking into the house to greet her mom. Charlotte has no courage to offend her guests, so she gives in to the pressure of the circumstance, fires Constantine and forces the old maid and her daughter out of the house to save her own face. But the next day she regrets for what she has done and goes to pick up Constantine at her place but only to find the old maid already left for Chicago with her daughter. Later, out of guilt, Charlotte sends her son to look for Constantine in Chicago but is informed that the old maid passes away. Though Charlotte keeps lying to Skeeter and insists she has been left with no other choice at the moment, her tears and apologies show to us that she now knows what she has done is terribly wrong.

27. How successful is the book when it is put on market? What does Skeeter do with the royalties she receives from the publisher?

The book, named by Skeeter as *The Help*, is finally launched by Harper and Row and turns out to be a great success. It soon hits the stores of Jackson County and starts to get a large number of fans. To Minny and Aibileen's thrill, Skeeter shares the royalties with each of the black helps who help her write the book.

28. How does Hilly get to read the book and what is her immediate reaction on reading the part involving her? Does she try to convince others that the book is not about Jackson County? What does she get from Celia that makes her feel real cornered?

Hilly's mom is reading the book to the elderly in the nursing room and when she comes to the part about the "chocolate pie", she knows immediately the book is based on real happenings in Jackson County and she cannot wait recommending the book to Hilly. Hilly lets out a hysterical cry on seeing her most shameful secret uncovered by this book. However, as Minny predicts, she denies any suspect that the book is about Jackson County. Soon later, Hilly gets a mailed check of 200 dollars from Celia Foote, which has Hilly, the organizer of a charity fund for children in Africa, as the receiver, but when Hilly unfolds the check, she finds Celia has her name spelled as "Two Slice Hilly", obviously making fun of her dark secret. Hilly breaks down and tears the check into pieces.

29. What threat does Hilly bring to Skeeter? What warning does Skeeter give to her in return? Who comes to help Skeeter out and why does she do so?

Shaken with anger, Hilly drinks a lot and drives to Skeeter's home, threatening to take her revenge on Minny and bring Skeeter and Aibileen to court on the charge of libel against Elizabeth. Skeeter is not backing up this time. Instead, she reminds Hilly such a charge may finally give away her own disgusting secret. Hilly panics and threatens to bring it up to Skeeter's mom, Charlotte who comes out of the house right at the moment. To both Skeeter and Hilly's surprise, Charlotte defends her daughter with all her strengths, spares no mercy to Hilly and demands that Hilly

leaves her property immediately. Charlotte is on her daughter's side with no hesitation because after reading the book, she feels relieved that what she once fails to do is finally done by her daughter and she is proud that Skeeter brings honor to the family by showing courage to defend justice and equality.

30. What happens to Minny when she is seen by Celia's husband Johnny? What special gift do Celia and Johnny present to Minny? What does it mean to Minny?

Minny is scared when she comes across Johnny right in front of Johnny's house. But to her surprise, Johnny reveals to her that he has long known her presence in their family. To show gratitude to what Minny has done for her and for her family, Celia takes a whole night to prepare a splendid feast, especially for Minny. The couple treats Minny as a distinguished guest, and assures her that if she wants, she can stay with them for all her life. Minny has tears in eyes for she knows what she gets here is not just a job but respect and a life-long friendship.

31. What good and bad changes does the book bring to Skeeter's life? Why does she hesitate to leave Jackson County? Who helps her to make up her mind?

After the book is published, Skeeter's boyfriend Stuart breaks up with her, accusing her of upsetting the balance of life in Jackson County and her female friends in Junior Union all take her as their enemies. But were it not for the book, her mom would hardly understand her, let alone giving full support for her pursuit. Besides, the book brings her gratitude and respect from the black community. And due to the success of the book, she gets a job offer from Harper and Row in New York and thus gets a golden opportunity to fulfill her dream of becoming a journalist and a serious writer. However, she doesn't want to leave Aibileen and Minny alone in the mess she starts at the beginning. She makes up her mind to take the job offer only when the two black ladies assure her that they are willing to face the challenge and they sincerely wish she should have a promising new start in New York.

32. How is the book received by the black community in Jackson County? How do they express their support for and gratitude to Skeeter, Aibileen and Minny in particular?

The book brings excitement and confidence to the black readers and the whole community feels grateful to the author Skeeter and to the black maids who, despite all the hostility against the black population in Jackson County, take a courageous effort in making their voice heard. The black church launches a special meeting at which everyone in the church is hailing and applauding Aibileen to thank her in particular for taking the initiative to make the book possible. And to show support, the father gives Skeeter, Aibileen and Minny three copies of the book with the signatures of all the members of black churches in two counties.

33. What revenge does Hilly take on Aibileen? Does Hilly get the upper hand this time as she always does?

Hilly shows up at Elizabeth's house one morning, falsely accusing Aibileen of stealing three pieces of the silverware that she lends to Elizabeth. Once left alone with Aibileen, Hilly stops pretending and threatens that if she cannot send Aibileen to prison for helping write the book, she'd send her there as a thief. Aibileen bravely steps forward, looks Hilly right in her eyes and tells Hilly that if she finds

herself in prison on a false charge, she will take her time writing every ugly thing Hilly has done to others. While Hilly asks Elizabeth to call the police, Aibileen firmly denounces Hilly as a godless woman who keeps using fear and lies to get whatever she wants, and she questions Hilly about her conscience in an almost sympathetic and mournful way. Aibileen's eloquent retaliation strikes Hilly dumbfounded, who finds herself so much dwarfed by Aibileen's presence of character and moral integrity. Shaken by her anger, fear and shame, Hilly is completely defeated and rushes away to get her breath back.

- 34. Is it an easy decision for Elizabeth to fire Aibileen? Why or why not? Why is little Mae Mobley crying so hard on seeing Aibileen leave the house? What does Aibileen say to the little girl and what words does she have the girl repeat to herself? What does she say to Elizabeth before she leaves? What does Aibileen plan to do for her future?**

Elizabeth feels reluctant to fire Aibileen because deep in heart, she knows Aibileen is innocent and is of great help to her and to her family. However, she has no courage to stand by the black help and defend justice, so despite her reluctance, she fires Aibileen all the same. Little Mae Mobley is crying her heart out, pleading with Aibileen to stay with her because she takes Aibileen as her real mom who keeps accompany with her every day, gives great concern of her well-being and takes her as utter priority. Aibileen assures the small girl that she is not abandoning her for another kid for fear the girl may feel unwanted. And to keep arousing the self-esteem in the little girl, Aibileen tells Mae Mobley to remember what she has repeatedly asked her to repeat to herself, that is, "You is kind, You is smart, You is important". Before leaving the house, Aibileen asks Elizabeth to give the sweet baby girl a chance as a way to urge Elizabeth to take her responsibility as a mom. Once stepping outside the house, Aibileen's face is beaming with confidence and determination. As she walks further and further away from the house, she starts to consider carrying out her son's dream to become a writer and she moves on proudly as if she is walking out of an unhappy past and heading for a bright new start.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

The Help is a 2011 American film adaptation of the novel of the same name written by Kathryn Stockett in 2009. Kathryn Stockett was born in Jackson, Mississippi and graduated from the University of Alabama majoring in English and Creative Writing.

She later moved to New York City where she worked for about nine years in magazine publishing and marketing. She now lives in Atlanta with her family. *The Help* is her first novel. It took her five years to complete, and it had been rejected by 60 literary agents before agent Susan Ramer agreed to accept Stockett's endeavor. The novel has been published in over 42 languages. As of August 2012, over ten million copies were sold and remained more than 100 weeks on the *The New York Times* bestseller list, a few months after it was released. The novel was selected as the 2010 Indies Choice Book of the Year, the 2010 Southern Independent Booksellers Association's Book of the Year for Fiction, and featured on the *Today* show's "Ten Must-Read Books for Spring."

Set in the writer's native town Jackson, Mississippi, in the early 1960s, her debut novel adopts the racial theme of blacks and whites in the segregated South. About a century after the Emancipation Proclamation, black maids helped to take care of white children and manage white households, but they were paid poorly and treated unfairly (i.e. they often had to use separate toilets, and watched the children they cared for commit bigotry). In Stockett's story, Miss Skeeter wants to create a series of interviews with local black maids to explore the truth of their lives. As we know, even if the interviews are published anonymously, the risk is large; despite all this, Aibileen and Minny agree to be part of this grand project. Readers in Jackson and elsewhere in the world may question their own discrimination and intolerance in the past and present.

The New York Times detailed some of the controversy in the blogging world over the successful new book. *The Times* quoted blogger Melissa McCurdy who called the book "racist" on her blog, and who said, "I want to read the African-American version of *The Help*." When asked the reasons in writing this novel, Stockett said that she started writing it the day after Sept. 11 when she was living in New York City, where her family didn't have any phone service and didn't have any mail. So as a lot of writers did, she started to write in a voice that she missed. Then she started writing in the voice of Demetrie, the maid she had grown up with. She later became the character of Aibileen in *The Help*. She sent the story to her mother and she liked it. As she wrote, she found that Aibileen had some things to say that really weren't in her character. She was older, soft-spoken, and she started showing some attitude. That's how Minny came to be.

Themes:

- a. Moral Courage:** Aibileen Clark, a third generation black maid, manifested the most important theme in *The Help*: moral courage. She was the first black maid to spill out her heart-wrenching story to Skeeter, a conscientious young journalist who wanted changes to take place in her segregated hometown of Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s. Aibileen's moral courage was also seen in her unconditional kindness to the white children she took care of for the racist white families. Despite the horrible fact that Aibileen's own son lost his life because of racism, she still persevered as a woman with faith in human nature and the courage and the hope to heal the racially divided world. Aibileen also encouraged the neglected white children in her care to believe in themselves by having them repeat "You is kind, you is smart, you is important." If everyone had the kind of moral courage to do what is right that Aibileen had in the movie, our world would be a much better place in which to live.
- b. The Saving Grace of Humor:** Minny provides the perfect example of how humor

can help us through life's toughest times. Compared with the tension and seriousness of the other themes in the movie, the comedic relief Minny provides is appreciated. Though Minny experiences verbal and physical abuse from her husband, loses her job, and has multiple mouths to feed, she keeps her humor. Minny is a great cook and uses her baking ability to take revenge on her former boss, Hilly Holbrook. She makes a "chocolate pie" with an unusual and surprising ingredient to personally deliver to her and watch her take the first bite. Minny provides many other funny moments, but we admire her as a strong lady too. She is the second Negro maid to tell Skeeter what it's like being a black maid in a white world.

- c. **Sisterhood of Women:** Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter (the journalist) were the dominant three women in the movie. Skeeter initiated the idea that change was possible for the help in her hometown of Jackson, Mississippi and the world through the emerging effort of Martin Luther King. She was persistent in encouraging the black help to unify and tell their life story, in their perspective. She gained their trust by her sincere, yet strong personality. She also respected their privacy and promoted their safety by telling their stories using fictitious names in her book. Skeeter showed them she cared about their future.
- d. **Racism:** Racism unfortunately was the most serious and shameful theme in the movie. This movie brought tears as people reflected on what life was like for blacks in the early 1960s. Fortunately, there were a few representations of intelligent whites in the movie such as Skeeter, and Minny's new employers, who realized the laws dividing people by color were wrong, and they had the decency to treat Minny with respect instead of hatred. And one phrase summary of the central theme of the novel could be: racial injustice or racial intolerance.
- e. **Class and Gender:** Under class, the movie mentions how threadbare Elizabeth Leefolt's home and clothing were. Yet she still kept up appearances by having a maid. Also her husband, Raleigh was against getting a third bathroom because of the cost. Under gender, the example would be the time period, where women were supposed to be happy home makers. Skeeter wanted to be a writer. Yet when she got home from college, all her mother and her friends wanted to do was to push her into a relationship and marriage.

There's also a difference in the section of the city and lifestyle of the maids vs. their employers. Skeeter, Hilly, Celia and Elizabeth attend the Junior League Benefit, but their maids also work it. And Celia is considered to have married above her station, since she's from Sugar Ditch, a very poor section of Mississippi. Johnny Foote attended Ole Miss along with Hilly and Skeeter. And since he ran in the same social circle and Celia needs a maid to help with the cleaning of her mansion, it can be seen that Johnny has money, while the novel does not stress how he became well off.

Conflicts:

- a. **Racial Conflicts:** Racism in the 1960s was a huge decade and a war/battle between the white and colored people. The poison of racism remains an integral part of America. The black people, together with the other racial minorities, remain the most exploited section of society, mostly employed in the lowest-paid and menial jobs. Racism remains an everyday part of their desperate existence. Today, despite all the "reforms" of the last thirty-odd years, blacks continue to suffer from the state,

racist organizations and individuals, as well as being forced to live under conditions of mass poverty and oppression. Hilly represents an old world order of white supremacy destined to be destroyed. The Civil Rights Movement is sweeping through the South while Hilly desperately tries to maintain the social division between blacks and whites in Jackson. Her power is eventually diffused as the women she tries to control question whether she has their best intentions at heart or is simply grabbing at more power.

- b. Black Women's Love vs. Loveless Society:** The maids raised many of the white women, but the love they once felt for one another has been destroyed by dishonesty and cruelties of the society. The women are now having their own children, and they, too, have maids to do the messy chores of rearing them. Sometimes, the maids are the same ones who brought up the women, but now the women regard them not as family but as lowly-hired help. It's 1962, in Jackson, where the Civil Rights Movement is gaining strength. The women suppress their childhood memories, and the maids can't speak freely. They can't air their sufferings over their own children and men; they can't say much of anything if they want to stay employed. Aibileen works for Elizabeth Leefolt and adores toddler Mae Mobley Leefolt—even though she knows that the loving relationship could hurt them both.
- c. Skeeter in Conflict with the Society:** Skeeter's character represents conflicts throughout the movie. For example, she becomes in conflict with the community of southern women in which she was raised. She fails to meet her mother's expectations for what a proper woman should do and creates conflicts within her group of friends because she questions the way things are done. When Skeeter returns from university, she tries to re-enter her old life but finds that the life she left behind now looks different. All these eventually lead to her self-awareness of her role within the segregated society, which shocks her and motivates her writing project. The writing project also leads to a friendship with Aibileen that would never have been possible if Skeeter hadn't chosen to break from her own community. Eventually, she must choose between her past and her future.
- d. Minny against the Society:** Minny is an individual struggling against her society. Her inner nature is often at war against the world. As a black maid, she is expected to be submissive and quiet, but Minny is neither. She says what she feels, often speaking out against the injustice she experiences and witnesses. Her individualism leads to conflict with Hilly Holbrook, who has more power in the society, but it also leads to an uneasy friendship with Celia, her employer. She is highly regarded for her cooking skills, but her outspokenness often leads to getting fired.

Performances:

Filming started in July 2010 and extended through October. The town of Greenwood, Mississippi, was chosen to shoot 95 percent of the film there. Parts of the film were also shot in the real-life Jackson, as well as in nearby Clarksdale and Greenville. Other locations that can still be found in Jackson include the New Capitol Building and the Mayflower Cafe downtown. Scenes set at the *Jackson Journal* office were shot in Clarksdale at the building which formerly housed the *Clarksdale Press Register* for 40 years until April 2010. The film was released by Touchstone Home Entertainment on Blu-ray Disc, DVD, and digital download on December 6, 2011.

The Help wins Best Supporting Actress–Octavia Spencer, along with earning nominations for Best Picture, Best Actress– Viola Davis, and Best Supporting Actress– Jessica Chastain in 2012 Academy Awards. The other awards that the movie has won included: Best Supporting Actress–Octavia Spencer in 2012 British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA); Best Supporting Actress–Jessica Chastain in 2012 National Society of Film Critics Awards. And the notable nominations in 2012 BAFTA include: Best Picture; Best Adapted Screenplay–Tate Taylor; Best Actress–Viola Davis; Best Supporting Actress–Jessica Chastain, etc.

Unit 6 The Reader (2008)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. **When does Michael Berg first meet Hanna Schmitz? Who are they back at that time? What is special about Germany in the 1950s?**

Michael comes across Hanna in 1958. Back at the time, he is a 15-year-old high school student and Hanna is a tram conductor in her mid-30s. In the 1950s, Germany is on its way to an economic recovery. However, World War Two is still a fresh memory and the country is living in the shadow of the Nazi past.

2. **What happens to Michael on that day and how does Hanna help him out? Despite her kind offer of help, does she show up as a lady with feminine sweetness?**

Michael falls sick on street and he stumbles into a dark alley, vomiting and sobbing to himself when Hanna passes by. Hanna helps the poor boy clean up the mess, gives the sobbing boy a firm and assuring hug, and then escorts him home. She does all of this with impressive decisiveness and efficiency and she appears to be a strong and distant lady who behaves in a rather rigid way.

3. **When does Michael come back to see Hanna? What happens to him? How is he treated by Hanna? Why does Michael finally hurry away?**

Michael catches a scarlet fever and he is demanded by the doctor to be isolated and to stay in bed for three months. When he is almost recovered, he goes to see Hanna and brings her a bunch of flowers to say thanks for her help. Hanna is ironing her bra and she shows no courtesy to the boy but her interest in him is obviously aroused when the boy says he doesn't even bother to read while resting at home. While waiting for Hanna by the door, Michael peeps at Hanna's body and when Hanna suddenly turns to look back into his eyes, the boy feels so embarrassed and ashamed that he rushes out of the building.

4. **Why does Michael return to Hanna's place again? Is Hanna surprised to see the boy? Why or why not? What happens between them then?**

Michael has a crush on Hanna and knowing what brings the boy back, Hanna is not surprised to see the boy at her door. She first asks Michael to carry two buckets of coal from downstairs and then insists the boy should take a bath at her place. After the first moment of uneasiness, the boy soon responds enthusiastically and has his first sex with Hanna.

5. **Does Michael's family notice his excitement? Are they concerned? What can we infer about Michael's relationship with his family from their talking at the dinner table?**

Michael is so enchanted by Hanna that he keeps having flashbacks about her at the family dinner table. His obvious excitement is in sharp contrast to the serious and almost cold atmosphere of the family. His teenage sisters and brothers seem sour and aggressive. His dad, who appears to be a stiff and conservative man, hardly shows any emotions and keeps reminding the son of the discipline. Though

Michael's mom is trying to cheer up the family and show concern to the son, the warmth she brings to Michael can hardly be compared to the joy he gets from Hanna. Lack of communication creates an obvious distance between Michael and his family.

6. How does Hanna react when Michael asks for her name? What does she want to know about Michael? What does Michael study at school?

Michael finds himself in love with the lady so he feels it natural to learn who his love is. However, Hanna appears annoyed and suspicious to see the boy take their relationship so seriously and with reluctance, she tells the boy her first name only. Meanwhile, Hanna seems to be particularly curious about Michael's study at school and her face is beaming with excitement when Michael tells her that he studies Latin and reads western literature and German literature in particular.

7. Is Hanna happy to see Michael on her tram late in an evening? What does she say to Michael that brings tears to the boy's eyes? Why does Michael apologize?

Michael goes to see Hanna on her tram one late night when the tram is empty of passengers, thinking this will bring her a happy surprise. However, Hanna looks shocked for a second and then snaps the door closed between them and turns her back to him. Later at her place, Michael cries because Hanna is still bursting with anger and tells Michael coldly that he doesn't matter enough to upset her. Michael is heart-broken but he is so much in love with her that he apologizes and Hanna accepts his apology, coldly.

8. Throughout the time they spend together, Michael has read many books to Hanna. What books does he read to her and what themes are explored by those stories? What subtle changes does the reading bring to Hanna?

Michael for many times reads aloud Homer's *Odyssey* to Hanna and he also reads her books written by German writers Goethe, Schiller and Lessing as well as world-famous writers including Shakespeare, Dickens and Mark Twain. The books tell stories about life and death, love and hatred, joy and pain, compassion and cruelty, fear and comfort, excitement and beauty. Lying in Michael's arms, Hanna sheds tears, laughs, worries, and fears with the characters in the stories. During their reading safari, we can notice that the usual rigid, dreamy and anxious look in Hanna's face gives way to a lively, sensible and compassionate look.

9. When they are cycling in the countryside, we can hear Michael's voice reading some lines aloud. What is he reading about? What does he do during the trip to demonstrate his devotion to Hanna?

We can hear Michael's voice reading about how love can make a soul complete. During the trip, he shows Hanna the natural and peaceful beauty of the countryside, take her for lunch at an outdoor luncheon, and when they are mistaken by the waitress as mom and son, he kisses Hanna on spot, making a bold attempt to demonstrate his passionate love which goes beyond the gap of age.

10. Where do they stop for a break after lunch? What attracts Hanna's attention and how does she look like when Michael steps in to find her?

They later stop for a break outside a country church. Hanna is attracted into the church by the choir. Sitting on the bench, she is totally overwhelmed by the beauty of the chants which for a moment bring smiles and peace to her face, and for

another moment, bring tears in her eyes. When Michael comes in and catches sight of her, she looks like a lost lamb, consumed by the pent-up confusion, shame, fear, and misery.

- 11. What makes Michael so upset on the day of his birthday when he is with Hanna? Does Hanna apologize? What does she say about making an apology? What is Hanna bothered with? Does she tell it to Michael? What does she do instead?**

When Michael is reading Chekhov's story to Hanna, Hanna looks impatient and abruptly asks him to stop. Michael feels hurt and starts to complain how self-centered Hanna is, and that she shows no concern for him and never apologizes for her ill temper and rude manner, but his complaints are sourly dismissed by Hanna who insists "no one has to apologize". Hanna is actually disturbed by the fact that she gets promoted and has to leave Michael for her new job. However, Hanna doesn't want to tell Michael though it is about her decision to end their relationship. After having Michael read her *War and Peace*, she gives Michael a good bath like a mom will do to a small kid, and then simply asks him to return to his friends.

- 12. What does Michael do when he finds that Hanna leaves him?**

Michael returns to check on Hanna only to find that the apartment is now empty and Hanna is gone without leaving a word for him. Heart-broken, he cuddles on Hanna's bed for a moment, returns home defeated, and then goes back to the pond, takes off his clothes and immerses himself into the water as if that may help save him from being torn apart by the pain of being dumped by his love.

- 13. What has Michael become of in 1966? What brings him to that fateful trial? Why is he so shocked as one of the defendants introduces herself?**

Michael becomes a law school student in 1966 and he joins a special seminar organized by professor Rohl. They are taken by the professor to observe a trial of war crime which arouses public concern at the time. As the trial starts, Michael is shocked to see that one of the defendants is his mysterious lover, Hanna.

- 14. What does Michael learn about Hanna's identity at the court? What is the accusation and what is the key evidence for the charge?**

At the court, Michael learns that Hanna's full name is Hanna Schmitz and during WWII, she quit her job at Siemens and served as a guard first at Auschwitz, and later at a smaller concentration camp along with the other suspects. Hanna and the other defendants are accused of mass murder. According to the testimony of a Jewish mother and daughter who survived the "death march" and later published a memoir of it, Hanna and her co-workers at the time would select ten Jewish women to be gassed every month, and during the evacuation march, they locked 300 Jewish women in a country church which was bombed to flames, and thus burnt most of the women to death.

- 15. What does the Jewish girl say about Hanna that strikes Michael dumbfounded?**

To Michael's greatest shock, the Jewish girl says Hanna is different from the other guards because she would often select and take care of some young girls and have them read aloud to her before she dispatches them to be gassed.

- 16. How do the other defendants respond to the accusation? How does Hanna explain herself instead?**

The other defendants first deny their involvement in the "selection", and later claim

that they had no idea at the time about what would happen to the selected ones. When there is no way for them to deny what they did to the Jewish at the church, they insist that Hanna was in charge of the operation and they forge an official report with Hanna's signature on it. Hanna appears very confused at court, if not remorse. Unlike her former co-workers, she admits her involvement in the massacre readily and she believes she was simply doing her job. She explains that the monthly selection of ten for the death roll was the only way for them to make room for newly arrived Jewish that kept flooding in. And she insists she had no choice but to lock the Jewish women in the burning church because it was their duty to keep law and order and avoid any chaotic resistance of their prisoners.

17. What does she say to the judge when the latter abhors her admission of the murders? Why does she choose to admit it while the others all deny?

Hanna says to the judge "what would you have done" and also she questions whether the judge is suggesting that she should not take the job. This shows to us that Hanna simply believes there is no guilt in serving one's duty and she cannot see that she could have acted differently to uphold moral responsibility instead of following orders and disciplines blindly.

18. What do the professor and the students say about this case at the seminar? What does Michael think of the case?

They have divided opinions of the case. The professor argues that the defendants are not guilty if judged by the law in use at the time of their crime, but they would be considered guilty if judged by the law today. One student contends angrily that all those who failed to stand up against the holocaust bring shame to the nation and they should all kill themselves. However, Michael, out of his knowledge of Hanna as an ordinary woman but not a guard, suggests that perhaps the point of observing the case is to understand, though he himself looks puzzled and obviously finds it hard to understand such a past.

19. Why does Hanna refuse to comply with a demand for a sample of her handwriting, which can immediately reduce her punishment and influence the sentencing?

Hanna refuses to comply with the demand and admits the signature is hers. For Hanna, the most dreadful thing is not to face severe punishment for something she didn't do, but to disclose in public that she is illiterate, a secret she has kept for years.

20. How does Michael come to know Hanna's secret? What does his professor advise him to do? Why does he finally back off and decide not to help Hanna?

Michael comes to see that Hanna is illiterate when he remembers how she insists to have him read the books to her and how at the countryside luncheon, she says she'd order whatever he orders. Michael tells his professor that he has a piece of information in favor of Hanna and the professor suggests he should stand up for justice because that is what he must learn from the past. However, Michael decides to keep his hands off the case at the last moment. On the one hand, he feels that he should respect Hanna's dignity and not to disclose the secret she prefers to keep for her life. On the other hand, to reveal his knowledge of her illiteracy means that he has to disclose his love affair with her, a past he now feels too ashamed to face.

21. What is the verdict of the court? What happens to Michael during the years afterwards?

Hanna is sentenced to life imprisonment while the other defendants receive only several years of imprisonment. Michael feels devastated and haunted by love, guilt and shame he conceals deep at heart. Michael lives a lonely life afterwards because he finds it impossible to open up to anyone around him. Though he becomes a successful lawyer, gets married and has a daughter, he is soon divorced and remains distant from his parents as well as his own daughter. He has affairs with some women, but never falls in love again.

22. What does Michael decide to do while packing the books he used to read to Hanna?

When Michael takes his daughter to his mom, he goes to collect his high school stuff, including piles of books he once reads to Hanna. Almost unconsciously, Michael starts to read aloud as he used to do and he finds it a good way to vent his pent-up emotions. Suddenly an idea strikes him and he begins to record his reading of the books and send the tapes along with a recorder to Hanna.

23. What drives Hanna to learn to read and write? How does she manage to teach herself?

The tapes from Michael seem to recharge Hanna's flagging spirit, bring life back to her, and make her feel so much eager to tell Michael, the reader, her feelings about the stories and most of all, her feelings toward him. So one day she borrows the book, *The Lady with a Little Dog* from the prison library and teaches herself to read and write by matching Michael's pronunciations with the written words in the book.

24. What does Hanna write to Michael? Is it a pleasure for Michael to hear from her? Why or why not?

Once Hanna can write some simple words and sentences, she starts to write to Michael, telling him how she likes the story, how she may constantly think of him and how she hopes to get some reply from him. Though Michael keeps sending tapes of his recorded readings, he never replies or visits Hanna. Instead, he throws all her letters to an iron box as if he can lock away his shame, guilt and bitterness along with them.

25. How many years have passed by before Michael gets a phone call from the prison official? Why does the official call him? What does Michael do to help Hanna?

After over twenty years of imprisonment, Hanna is about to be released. Since Michael is Hanna's only contact, the official calls him to see whether he can do something to help Hanna adjust to the life outside prison. Michael rents a small but cozy apartment for Hanna which is near a public library and he finds her a job at his tailor's.

26. How does Hanna react on seeing Michael after so many years? What does she want from him?

Hanna is now a very old lady with white hair and wrinkled face. She no longer appears fierce and suspicious. Instead, she trembles with excitement and anxiety, stretching out her hand to Michael and checking on his life almost in a humble way. She doesn't show much excitement when Michael tells her about his arrangements for her future life, but she is very concerned whether he will keep reading to her

because if he says yes, that means he still wants to take her to his heart.

27. Does Michael feel happy to see Hanna again? What does he want from her? Does she give a satisfying answer to his question?

Being brought to the prison canteen, Michael looks stiff and distant on seeing Hanna in person. Though he takes Hanna's hand for a short moment, he quickly withdraws his hand. All he wants to know is whether Hanna takes her time in prison to reflect on the past and learn to show remorse and apologize for what she did at the country church. Hanna says what she thinks no longer matters but she does learn to read. Though the answer indicates that Hanna is now a reformed person, Michael obviously misses the message and takes Hanna's reply as totally irrelevant.

28. Does the short visit turn out as they expect?

The brief reunion turns out disappointing for both of them. Hanna comes to realize that Michael will not take her to his heart as he once did, and Michael gets upset for he believes Hanna has no willingness to free him from the bitterness and confusion of a shameful past that keeps haunting him for years.

29. Why does Hanna commit suicide? What does Michael bring to her the next day? What message does Hanna leave to Michael? Why does it bring Michael to tears?

Hanna is at a loss when she sees the formidable distance between Michael and her. She chooses death over a life with no love and hope. She steps on the books she borrows from the library and hangs herself. Michael brings Hanna a bunch of flowers as he did on his first visit to Hanna's place some thirty years ago but this time he is only received by the prison official who informs him of Hanna's suicide. Michael looks sad while reading Hanna's handwriting of *The Lady with a Little Dog* and he cannot help sobbing to himself when the official reads Hanna's note of will in which she asks him to bring a tea tin and the money in it along with 7,000 marks she saves in the bank to the daughter who survived the fire and she says hello to him. Michael sheds tears because what Hanna says in the note and what he sees in Hanna's cell all make it clear that Hanna teaches herself in prison to understand moral responsibility, see her guilt, and disclose her shame of the past. That note brings a closure to all his confusions and thus sets him free to move on.

30. Why does Michael take all the trouble to carry out Hanna's will? Does the Jewish girl accept Hanna's money? What does she keep instead?

Michael comes to visit the Jewish survivor in New York and he, for the first time, admits his relationship with Hanna. Carrying out Hanna's will to show remorse and make compensations is a way for Michael to accept his own past and open himself up to others. The Jewish girl doesn't accept the money because she believes she is in no position to accept such an apology. However, she suggests the money should go to the Jewish organization of fighting against illiteracy. She keeps the tea tin instead as a way to remember the loss of all the people living at the war era.

31. Why does Michael take his daughter to a country church? What surprise does he want to give to his daughter?

Michael takes his daughter to a country church because that is the place he buries Hanna. He is ready to be open to his own child, disclosing to her the true story of his past and the past of Hanna so that her daughter can stop running away from family, and stop blaming herself for feeling distant from the parent. He is setting

the daughter free from the guilt of not being able to understand a past she holds so dearly to her heart.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

The Reader, a 2008 romantic drama written by David Hare and directed by Stephen Daldry, is adapted from the 1995 German novel of *Der Vorleser* (the German term means someone who reads aloud to someone else) by Bernhard Schlink. This novel has been a huge international success, translated into some 39 languages, and topping *The New York Times* bestseller list. The reason for this Holocaust or rather, post-Holocaust novel's success is not hard to find: It lies in the acute, psychologically and emotionally convincing portrayal of a teenage boy's affair in the late 1950s with an older woman who turns out to have been a concentration camp guard. The year 1995 witnessed its proverbial overnight-acclaim, winning the WELT Prize for Literature, awarded by the prestigious German newspaper *Die Welt*, and several other international book awards.

Bernhard Schlink is a German jurist and writer, who became a judge at the Constitutional Court of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1988. He has been teaching as a professor of public law and the philosophy of law at Humboldt University, Berlin since January 2006. *Der Vorleser* had not been Schlink's first experiment into literature. His literary career started with detective novel series whose main character was always *selb*, the German word for "self." In 1995, he published *Der Vorleser*, a novel based partly on his own life experience.

The book was a bestseller both in Germany and the United States. Having been translated into various languages, the book aroused wide academic and popular acclaim, and has been included in the curricula of college courses in Holocaust literature, German language and German literature. It was sold two million copies in the U.S., 200,000 copies in the U.K., and 100,000 copies in France, and it was awarded the 1999 Boeke Prize in South Africa. The story is a parable, dealing with the difficulties post-war German generations have had comprehending the Holocaust and exploring how the post-war generations should approach the generation that took part in the atrocities. *The Reader* has many references to representations of the Holocaust.

Themes:

a. Philosophical Questions on Life: *The Reader* has been regarded as a post-

Holocaust work as it centers round the unanswerable philosophical questions of responsibility, law, justice and forgiveness, all the while considering education and literacy as crucial to those debates. It mixes the dark, menacing undertones of war with the innocent purity of first love. Morally complex and emotionally charged, the movie is on the one hand a film about the impact of German guilt on the generation born after the Holocaust, but on another level it's also a surprisingly warm love-story between the mid-aged woman and the teenage boy.

- b. Guilt, Evil and Forgiveness:** *The Reader* addresses a number of important issues about guilt, evil, responsibility and forgiveness. It explores the impact of the criminal/immoral actions on the perpetrators, their victims and on those people who are close to the perpetrators and the victims. To Hanna, being a tram conductor or burning people to death is one and the same: a job. If evil is the failure of empathy, in this sense, Hanna is evil. Michael is not evil to the same extent as Hanna: He is appalled by the Holocaust. But he fails to identify the extent of Hanna's guilt. Michael is apparently still in his attraction to Hanna, because he is blinded to all of the evil things going on.
- c. Nazism and Holocaust:** Since the film is about the plight shared by Nazi-holocaust guards who were charged for the crimes committed by their employers, the real tragic theme here, contrary to what the film tries very hard to make us believe, is not Hanna's illiteracy, but Nazism and Holocaust, with its accompanying horrors, exemplified in Hanna's participation in it: such as selecting the women who were going to the gas chambers "because there were too many prisoners," as she earnestly explains at trial, or the burning of 300 fellow human beings. Hanna's condition is more than a metaphor for the moral illiteracy of Nazism. The Holocaust is not denied, and is politely swept under the carpet.
- d. Victimization:** Among other things the movie deals with the issue of how a nation of normal people became a nation of murderers so easily. The most shocking and moving shot in the entire film is a close-up of "old" Hanna's deformed feet. Hanna's secret misery proves herself to be a sample of victimization that, if not exactly equivalent to that of her prisoners, is certainly something to be weighed and contemplated thoughtfully in the balance, and to see a guilt-free human vulnerability behind war crimes. The story apparently addresses the contemporary issue of accusing the Nazi guards for supervising the killings of hundreds of Jews; on the contrary, the truth is that they were only being dutiful and following orders of the Nazi regime.
- e. Memory:** The film begins with Michael Berg's recollections of his childhood and his special romantic relationship with Hanna. Years later, the adult Michael is haunted by dreams in which Hanna's apartment building appears again and again but in different surroundings, frequently with the windows so dusty that he cannot see inside. Michael's memory of returning after his illness to visit Hanna to thank her for her assistance contains similar images of her apartment cast as dark and somber. And Michael has been fundamentally changed by his memories of childhood experience. Thus, to a considerable degree, the film reflects the Freudian theme of dreams: When Hanna is in prison, and therefore less of a threat to Michael, he is given a chance to suppress the memory. The novel's narrator thus describes this interim period in Freudian terms.

Conflicts:

- a. **Conflict between Michael and Hanna:** The movie superficially is a failed love story between generations, but it actually delves into the moral difficulties which the post-Holocaust German generations have in comprehending the events, personal responsibility and guilt following the atrocities in the war. In the movie, there are a series of conflicts and the first is between Michael and Hanna. Michael is the middle-class burgher destined for college and a professional career, while Hanna is limited and held in the prison of her class and her illiteracy. The image of Hanna as a killer is in conflict with their first meeting when she aids the ill Michael and seemingly has other needs.
- b. **Internal Conflicts of Michael:** Beyond all else, this movie explores the internal conflicts of Michael. As a philosopher's son, he approaches his life and the guilt with a historian's/philosopher's air. He is introspective about how Hannah affects him and how the sins of the people during the Nazi regime affect their children. There are several complex issues about identity, morality, and love brought to bear in this novel. Michael, on the other hand, by choosing to be a lawyer is accepting himself as someone able to make his own moral decisions. Yet, he seems unable to make a choice, for he is either paralyzed to act to save Hanna or placed in the same situation as she was as he chooses to "enact" being both an observer of her fate and a reader.
- c. **Generational Conflict:** Besides, the movie has delved into the generational conflict between the young and the old following WWII. Namely, the children have ambivalent feelings toward their parents either for their involvement in the Nazi atrocities, or for not having done anything to prevent or mitigate the atrocities. This is a most important issue raised in the movies, more different than most other Holocaust literature.
- d. **Conflict of Conscience:** The film acquires its zenith of conscience conflict when the occasion comes of whether to testify for the innocence of Hanna at the court trial. While the Nazi defendants turn on one of their own, Michael has to wrestle deep inside with the fact that he has information that would partially exonerate Hanna. But if he presents it, he'll be a social outcast for having helped a Nazi. Essentially, he's in a dilemma of conscience and guilt, of love and personal fame. The final sequence, showing Michael attempting to connect with his adult daughter, makes the whole film Michael's personal journey to self-awareness and conscience probing.
- e. **Conflict of Innocence and Experience:** *The Reader* treats the Holocaust subject mainly, but presents itself basically as a love story and a tale of innocence versus experience; a love story that reveals the deepest part of human nature. The issues of innocence on the part of the boy's and the illiterate Hanna's love spread out through the lives of the two protagonists, who exemplify "normal" individuals, who grow from innocence to worldliness and sophistication. Both protagonists have made choices, which they are never very sure about, gradually shackling off the childlike purity and assuming adult features. This makes us aware of the shortcomings of being human; shortcomings for which we have no clear answers. The film examines this conflict successfully through the perspective of two ordinary German citizens who do represent every one of us.

Performances:

Ralph Fiennes and Kate Winslet star together with the young actor David Kross. A notable fact is that producers Anthony Minghella and Sydney Pollack both died before the film was released. Production began in Germany in September 2007, and the film opened in limited release on December 10, 2008. It was nominated for five Academy Awards including Best Picture, and Winslet won the Oscar for leading actress.

The actors' acting skills are what mesmerize the audience into this story. David Kross is amazing as the young Michael who could play from virginal innocent to wizened and bitter. It's the key role in the film, and he did play this role superbly. *The Reader* is the third film for German actor Kross and his first-ever role in English, a language he improved while making the movie. And Kate Winslet does something very different in the film, playing what amounts to a monster in human, and it may be her greatest accomplishment to date. As we know, from the start, novelist Schlink had imagined actress Kate Winslet for the pivotal role of Hanna Schmitz, saying that "Kate Winslet was always my first choice. She's a sensuous, earthy woman, exactly like Hanna."

In April 1998, Miramax Films acquired the rights to the novel *The Reader*, and Winslet was cast as Hanna. On December 10th, 2008, *The Reader* had a limited release at eight theaters; the film had its wide release on January 30, 2009; and its widest release was at 1,203 theaters on February 27, 2009. The film appeared on top ten lists of the best films of 2008, being named the 2nd best film of 2008. Yet most laudable is Winslet's work in the movie: She got the main prizes in the 2008/2009 award season, including the Golden Globe, the Critic's Choice Award, the Screen Actors Guild Awards, the BAFTA, and the Academy Award for Best Actress.

Unit 7 Urbanized (2011)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. How do you understand the magic of cities today?

Today's cities can be considered as a physical manifestation of giant economic, social and environmental forces which bring about opportunities as well as challenges and thus may enable unprecedented inventions or discoveries.

2. What is urban design? Who will be involved in such a designing effort?

Urban design is the language of cities which functions not only to shape the layout details but also to address to the forces of changes in urban life. Therefore, besides artists, it should also involve the perspective, agenda and role of multi-disciplinary talents who may work as public architect or city agents and developers.

3. How does today's urbanization differ from the historical stages of city growth?

Compared with the slow and gradual process of world urbanization, the pace of today's city growth is unprecedented. The number of new immigrants flooding into the cities is increasing dramatically each year and within 40 years, nearly three-fourths of world population will become city dwellers.

4. What strain does this city boom bring to today's urban systems? What role will urban design play in responding to such a challenge?

While urban systems can provide only limited resources of life and leave no space for such a dense population, one-third of the residents, despite their dream of coming to cities for good living conditions, will find themselves end up in slums. The informal settlement, if ignored by the city planners, will be haunted by severe health and hygiene problems and may turn into an inhumane and unlivable habitat which presents itself as a failure of human civilization. The urban designers must try innovative ways to plan the city differently.

5. Why is better location instead of better housing upheld as the priority of planning city habitats for the poor new city dwellers?

It is believed that if the settlements for new city dwellers and the poor families can be better located in a place with convenient public transportation, easy access to schools and more job opportunities, people can get a comparatively better chance to have their life on the right track. None of this can be provided by merely granting them better housing without caring for other resources people must possess in order to live a normal life in cities.

6. What is participatory urban design? What goal does it want to fulfill?

Instead of having the neighborhood and housing completely designed from a top-down approach, participatory urban design insists that the planners should have a free exchange with the residents about the planning and designing details so that the subsidy for land, infrastructure and houses should be granted to satisfy the most immediate demands of the families while space should be left for self-built by the families themselves in the future when they acquire the ability to make renovations. By doing so, it aims to facilitate the life of the subsidized families, by granting them a good start while leaving room for them to be self-reliant and motivated in pursuing a middle-class life in cities.

7. Three major stages of city planning have been witnessed during the process of industrialization. What are they and how are they labeled respectively?

The three stages of city planning may be represented by the city rebuilding in Paris, which aims to put an end to the un-livability of city; American's restoration of the civic pride in cities which aims to include new urban immigrants to enjoy city facilities; and the gardening movement which aims to rationally separate the city into different functional areas so as to restore the order of urban life.

8. What are the beauty and pain of the gardening movement?

The gardening movement enables architecture inventions which do not simply occupy the space with buildings but aims to surprise the city dwellers with artistic beauty. However, the rational division of city leaves the city areas too disconnected and the central areas deeply troubled by traffic jams.

9. What innovative ideas of city transportation are introduced then? What benefits do they bring to the cities?

In order to solve the problem of traffic jams and restore the self-esteem of city life, pedestrian walks, bicycle lanes and bus-based public transportation are given priority in city designing so as to develop a smart and healthy way of traveling for city dwellers. Such policies are believed to be able to upgrade city image and make urban life more efficient and economical. Besides, since this group of policies allocate more resources to guarantee average people's rights of traveling and thus depriving expensive private transportation of its privileges, it is also hailed by many administrators and residents as a symbol of modern democracy.

10. What other efforts are taken to make urban habitats more friendly to their dwellers?

In many cities, public open spaces are built with an appropriate size and moveable chairs would be provided to bring people comfort and freedom in organizing the physical space of their leisure activities.

11. What stress do post-industrial conditions bring to a city? How does the majority of city population react to it?

In post-industrial cities, high rises and housing blocs are replacing the old residential neighborhoods. Though the transformation provides rich social structures and commodity centers, the cities are finally becoming over-crowded and suffer the loss of the heart of the city as the civic center. As a result, many people choose to move from the center to the periphery, which gives rise to a wave of suburbanization.

12. What are the problems brought about by suburbanization?

Massive development of real estates in suburbs gives the countryside a same outlook and transforms the rich country life into an automobile-oriented life which may give rise to environmental crisis.

13. What are the two trends of today's city development? How can a city achieve prosperity?

Today we can see some cities booming while others shrinking, particularly the old mega-centers of industrial production like Detroit in America. While cities are competing for people and investment, only those which are livable, sustainable and economically promising can achieve prosperity.

14. What is self-organized urbanism? Please take Detroit as an example to illustrate it.

Self-organized urbanism encourages city dwellers to take initiative to build up or restore the vitality of their own community by committing to DIY activities. For

instance, in Detroit, some neighborhoods start their community garden on the abandoned land to produce vegetables for free exchanges or community trade in a hope that the community can be self-sustainable and gradually bring back the charm of the old neighborhood.

15. Are cities in developing countries like China and India faced with the same problems? Is it possible for them to copy the recipe of city planning in developed countries? Why?

Cities in developing countries are also haunted by problems of traffic jams, shrinking public space and increasing density of city populations. The only difference is that with the rapid economic growth and comparatively a more unprepared urban system challenged by the rush-in of a larger population, the mission of sustainable city planning in those countries can be even more formidable. However, to make the city convenient and conformable for people to live in, they cannot simply follow the western route of city planning, instead they need to be innovative enough to avoid the same mistakes and meet the special demands of their own people.

16. What creative measures are taken to respond to the energy crisis in developing countries?

In order to exercise energy consumption control and promote a change of people's behavior, a group of designers and planners launch an experimental project in a community where they install sensors in each household to record and publicly display the information of their use and waste of water and electricity. The project not only brings information and knowledge about energy consumption to the community but also encourages people to reflect on their own way of life and start to make a difference. It is believed to be a highly efficient way to trigger a bottom-up reform of community life which demonstrates a rather positive side of human nature.

17. What role may technology play in creative city designing? Please use Rio's project as an example to illustrate it.

Technology is believed to be a major force which may help city planners and designers not just prevent disasters but also better support the daily life of average city dwellers. In Rio, a city operator center is established and the smart technology there can enable various city departments to get connected and jointly take care of the urban systems and facilities, making efficient and well-calculated distribution of services and resources possible so as to guarantee a smooth and satisfying running of urban life.

18. How may community engagement help deal with the ills of city centers? Please use Cape Town's experiment to illustrate it.

Due to historical reasons, many urban communities may suffer problems of lack of resources or energy supply, devastated neighborhood, insufficient public services or high rate of crimes. The VPUU plan launched in Cape Town South Africa takes a bottom-up approach in engaging the community itself to construct necessary facilities, recruit public service staffs and gradually bring about change of the reality.

19. What is planning fatigue? What change may civic input bring to the outlook of New Orleans?

After being hit by the destructive Hurricane Katrina, a large group of people come with designers to passionately rebuild New Orleans and soon quite a number of houses and settlements are built with each demonstrating an individual taste and concern of designing, not giving a consideration of the overall aesthetic satisfaction

or the life convenience in community. As a result, people soon lose interest in the area, and many places are gradually abandoned and becoming devastated. After experiencing such a planning fatigue, local community designers start to launch an effort to involve local people in calling for a civic input in re-planning the devastated areas in community, hoping that local ideas may help make a blueprint of community planning more sustainable.

20. Why is the project of Stuttgart 21 so controversial? What does it tell us about city planning?

Project of Stuttgart 21 takes the ambition to technologically renovate the city systems and rebuild the railway tracks in the city so that the city can be upgraded to a level to meet future challenges, as well as grasping opportunities for further development. However, despite the fact that the project has been legally approved, a large number of the city population take various means to show their anger and objection. They are very much concerned that if the renovation project is implemented, landmark buildings and public parks will have to be destroyed. It is considered as a cost of their interest which is unacceptable and unbearable. This case shows that city planning of public spaces is by nature a struggle of different groups of people for power, position and influence in controlling and distributing the public resources and services in the city.

21. What is most crucial for today's planning of urbanized life?

Today's city planning involves various forces and it is by nature a matter of democratic movement which involves the interest of people from all walks of life in the city. Therefore, it should no longer be simply recognized as a job of artists or architects in designing the physical space. While public space has become the symbol of democratic struggle, it should bring in new ideas from talents of all circles. It is the new way of thinking generated by the real city lovers that may play a crucial role and such way of thinking should help connect the physical designing with the reorganization of city life so that the urban habitat may be transformed into a humane and democratic environment which can activate our imagination, and give us passion as well as a sense of meaning in life.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects

- a) Urbanization in developed countries;
- b) Urbanization in developing countries;
- c) The current situation of urbanization in China;
- d) Your ideas about urbanization.

These four aspects are the selected four sides related to urbanization. There are other aspects that students may research according to their own preferences. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

a. Urbanization in developed countries

Creating Walkable Cities: the Value of Transport Planning in London

Mailys Garden

For the first in our new series of short films we introduce the theme of walkability

in London. As increasing groups of citizens press for more sustainable forms of transport and the GLA through the London Plan is set to give increasing priority to pedestrians over cars, walking as a form of transport has gained prominence. Given the need for social distancing during the COVID-19 crisis in a city that has seen the highest age-standardised mortality than any other region in the U.K., walking will form an important part of any mobility strategy in the coming months. Responding to this new video, RUPS Alumni Mailys Garden (Principal Consultant at Momentum Transport Planning) revisits two projects in which walking was a particular feature.

Since becoming an urbanist (and probably before then too!), I've been interested in how we contribute to cities being at a human scale and the role that pedestrians play within them. I've been hugely influenced by Jan Gehl's work, and having started my career in pedestrian planning and modelling, I realized that the way to help with crowding, and to make cities more walkable, was to make more space for people.

There are, of course, many ways to do this (and they need to work together) but one way is to re-allocate space away from motorized traffic. Alongside a team of very talented people at Momentum Transport Consultancy, my current role is to devise access strategies that win that space back for pedestrians.

We've recently worked on two examples of this approach which illustrate the role a transport planning consultant can play in contributing to making London a walkable city: the first, a strategy at master-plan level and the second, a strategy at building level.

Example 1: Master-plan strategy—Olympia Exhibition Center (London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham)

Olympia, in West London, is undergoing massive regeneration. As part of the current operations, exhibitions and events tour nationwide and bring goods back to the estate to display—generating traffic, as well as large amounts of pedestrians for the most popular shows. The estate has developed over time, and traffic generated for the Exhibition Center is spread across different areas of the estate.

Challenges and opportunities

This created both challenges and opportunities for transport planning. One of the major issues we identified was traffic congestion—but one of the main opportunities was that we could increase public space.

In close collaboration with the design team, the proposal emerged to pedestrianize the main access road into the estate. Removing existing exhibition-related traffic from the adjacent highway network and providing 2.5 acres of public realm to serve the wider range of uses which will be introduced on site.

This meant re-thinking the access strategy for vehicles servicing the estate. Other opportunities were to add new, complementary land uses to the exhibition center, so as to strengthen its position as a national destination for the next 100 years and beyond. As a result the regeneration project also comprises a live music and performance venue, a theatre, hotels, office space and retail space. And this was unlocked by creating a unique logistics center with access to the different parts of the estate.

Then what?

Achieving these two objectives required us to undertake many rounds of complex data analytics in a number of areas including: numerous surveys and observations to

identify key pedestrian links; extensive traffic modelling; parking surveys; station modelling; and pedestrian comfort level assessments. Design iterations and operational models, case studies and benchmarks and vehicle movement analytics were completed to understand how to design and define the space requirements for the logistics center. We also needed to understand the predicted impact of the regeneration scheme in terms of deliveries and waste removal and to ensure the site is car free (with the exception of blue badge holders). We worked closely with Transport for London and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to understand the impacts of closing the main access road.

With our analytics completed, we turned our attention to designing the public spaces and landscaping, all whilst keeping in mind the concept of competing needs such as cycle parking, greenery and places to sit—using TfL’s Healthy Streets approach to help manage different requirements.

And finally, more testing and more pedestrian modelling to review different scenarios and understand the performance of the space, and strategies to improve future visitor access to the site both during and after construction.

Where we are now?

The proposals were approved by committee in January 2019 so now we need to build it! During this time, it’s essential that we continue to consider pedestrians going to and from the estate, as well as those using the footway network surrounding the site.

Example 2: Building strategy—One Leadenhall (City of London)

One Leadenhall is a 36-storey tower providing more than 500,000 sq ft of prime working environment in the heart of the financial centre of London and 50,000 square feet of shops and cafes on a podium in the first floor of the tower. With very significant levels of development in the immediate surroundings of the site, and being located adjacent to some of the busiest streets in London, construction logistics was a major challenge. But it also created a key opportunity for collaboration and to win back space to make the area more walkable.

Challenges and opportunities

One of the key challenges at the outset was another building, also under construction, which shared the same junction as One Leadenhall. The joint objective became to create a cohesive approach for pedestrians and cyclists, which would maintain consistent pedestrian access—as well as consistent traffic management—throughout the works and beyond.

Then what?

We developed the detailed design for a temporary highway scheme for the shared junction, and a suite of construction logistics plans to enable construction to proceed whilst minimizing the impacts on other users—in particular pedestrians.

It became apparent as we developed the construction logistics strategy that a physical change to the road junction and footpaths would significantly simplify the construction arrangements, whilst providing a more consistent and much improved environment for pedestrians that avoided the need for footpath closures. We undertook pedestrian studies to analyse the current and future pedestrian demand in the area to demonstrate the benefits of the scheme in line with both City of London and Transport for London requirements.

By making the junction smaller and maximizing the kerb space, all development

works could be carried out safely and efficiently, while still creating more space for pedestrians. By changing the junction, we were also able to remove a sub-standard alignment through the junction that created potential safety issues for cyclists.

Alongside the construction logistics work, a freight consolidation strategy proposed for One Leadenhall (once completed) will reduce vehicular impact and maximize public realm space for office users and city dwellers.

Where we are now?

Planning consent for One Leadenhall was approved in January 2017 and the junction changes were implemented last year in anticipation of the start of demolition and construction in 2020.

The additional space for pedestrians on the surrounding footpaths is immediately apparent when visiting the space. There is acknowledgement from TfL and CoL that the revised junction is beneficial not only to facilitate construction, but can also provide a long-term solution for the benefit of sustainable transport modes in the area. As such, the new junction is now also operating as a test case for a final scheme junction over the four-year construction period.

Undoubtedly, the dual benefit observed in achieving improvements to the construction logistics approach for two major schemes in the City through constructive and open collaboration between two developers, coupled with the opportunity to trial a new junction layout that will reallocate space away from motor vehicles and to pedestrians long after the construction works are completed, constitutes a real value added for the area.

In summary, both of these projects highlight that integrating all aspects of transport consultancy—analytics, engineering and transport planning—can play a huge role in making the city more walkable from both master-plan and building strategy level. And most importantly, they clearly demonstrate that reassessing existing conditions and reallocating space toward sustainable transport—to the huge benefit of the people using those spaces—are entirely possible.

Singapore's Success in Managing Congestion

An article by DAC (Danish Architecture Center & Cities) reminds us that Singapore was one of the first to bring in congestion charging way back in 1975. The original Area License System (ALS) charged drivers a flat fee for unlimited entries into Singapore's central area, with collection managed using manned toll booths. Immediately, there was a 45% reduction in the amount of traffic and 25% fewer accidents, while the average speeds increased from 11 mph to 21 mph (18k/hr to 34 k/hr).

In 1990, the chargeable area was extended to include the expressways leading into the city. With the objective of being able to manage road pricing even more precisely, Singapore has since replaced the ALS with a state of the art, digital Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) system. The ERP uses cash cards which are inserted into a car's On-Board Unit (OBU), permanently affixed to every vehicle on the road (excluding only Emergency vehicles). On passing through the ERP gantry, the cash balance left on the card is displayed for the driver. The system allows for "live" variable road pricing, based on time of day, location, vehicle type, and even on current traffic conditions.

The ERP system has been credited with further reducing congestion by another 15%, and the concurrent increase in public transport use from 45% to 65% of all

commuters. Meanwhile, the city boasts an impressive reduction in carbon emissions, while raising approximately \$50 million per year in revenue.

While the ERP system takes the lion's share of the credit for managing congestion, there are also other factors at play. The government has introduced a range of measures aimed squarely at reducing car ownership and usage. One of these is the Vehicle Quota System (VQS), which aims to contain the annual increase in vehicles on the road to 3%.

Under the VQS, one must enter a bid system to even get permission to own a car (the Certificate of Entitlement, COE), which will give you registration privileges for 10 years. If you are lucky enough to get a COE, then be prepared to pay an enormous tax for the privilege: Customs duty are 41% on the value of any imported vehicle, then it will cost \$1,000 to \$5000 to register the car (private vs. company), plus on first registration there will be an Additional Registration Fee (ARF) of 150% of the (inflated) market price of the car. Once you get the car on the road, there will be road taxes which vary with the age of your car.

As advised on the Expat Singapore website, new arrivals to the country will find owning a car in Singapore is very expensive, indeed, especially compared to U.S. prices! Some estimates of what one can expect (including annual registration fee, import duty, road tax, registration fee and number plates) are: Audi A41.8 \$182,000 (including COE), BMW 328 \$238,000 (including COE); Mercedes 200E \$201,902; Volvo 940 Turbo Estate 2.0 \$160,753.

Suffice to say, the calculations are quite complicated, with fees varying based on engine capacity, year of manufacture, fuel type, with rebates available for cars with lower emissions. Details can be found here on the Transport Authority website.

The government makes no apologies, and is up front about the purpose of the scheme:

“The VQS, together with ERP, is one of the key pillars in our traffic management strategies. With Singapore's limited land resources and increasing demands for vehicle ownership, we need to make sure that our vehicle growth rates do not spiral out of control and lead to gridlock on our roads.”

The key to the success of the program in reducing congestion is, of course, that Singapore has a public transport system that is up to the task. Revenue from the ERP system is allocated, among other things, to the construction and maintenance of the road network, as well as the public transportation system.

b. Urbanization in developing countries

Philippines' City of the Future: New Clark

Kieran Guilbert

He may never set foot in New Clark City, but taxi driver Edgard Labitag hopes the Philippines' first green, disaster-resilient, high-tech metropolis will ease the pressure on Manila—meaning fewer hours stuck in traffic and more time with his children.

At the wheel on a sweltering Sunday afternoon, the 42-year-old bemoaned another shift spent inching along the infamously congested streets of the capital city of 13 million people.

“Crowding, pollution and traffic—this is what people say about Manila,” he said, gesturing at the gridlock.

“But luckily the government has a plan ... and (President Rodrigo) Duterte is the right man to see it through.”

That plan is New Clark, a 9,450-hectare (23,350-acre) city that government officials say will be bigger than Manhattan by the time it is completed in 25 to 30 years, with an expected population of more than 1.2 million.

The aim is to build a city equipped to deal with climate shocks in one of the world's most cyclone-affected regions, and to promote healthy, eco-friendly and sustainable living by putting nature at the heart of development, urban experts say.

Reflecting a rising trend from Japan and India to the United States, New Clark seeks to challenge conventional urban planning by uniting government, developers, business and the public—and proving that green and resilient cities can be cost-effective.

“The objective is not simply to build a disaster-resilient city, but rather a successful, innovative and economically competitive city that is also disaster-resilient,” said Benjamin Preston, a researcher at RAND Corp., a global think tank.

New Clark is still in its infancy, but Duterte is fast-tracking the project as the Philippines, one of Asia's fastest-growing economies, seeks to boost spending on infrastructure to create jobs and attract more foreign firms.

Yet even as the government races to build New Clark and tackle Manila's booming population, density and congestion, it must plan the new city with care and avoid past mistakes, says the state-run Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA).

“We need to strike a balance between fast-paced development that maximizes value for the private sector, and protecting open spaces and making the city walkable, green and resilient,” said Vince Dizon, president of the BCDA, which oversees the project.

“Traditional development cannot overwhelm or overpower the area,” he said. “For New Clark City, here lies the challenge.”

Green agenda

Situated about 100 km north of Manila in Tarlac province near Clark International Airport, one of the country's busiest hubs, New Clark will be home to several government departments, an agro-industrial park and a huge sports complex.

Yet despite the range of planned infrastructure, only a third of the \$14 billion city's land will be developed, with two-thirds reserved for green spaces and agriculture, the government said.

Houston and nearby Singapore have provided inspiration on how to plan the city in an integrated manner where water management and green spaces are linked closely to all urban systems, according to the Dutch architect Matthijs Bouw.

By focusing on nature and allowing plenty of open space along rivers, for example, New Clark can benefit beyond protecting itself from floods, said Bouw, who has worked on the master plan for the city with the government.

“Putting green areas on the agenda not only helps with water storage and drainage, but creates community spaces and guides street design in a way that benefits pedestrians and bikes ... so social resilience also gets strengthened,” Bouw said.

Yet the rapid pace of development and large number of actors working on different structures and systems means some aspects could “fall through the cracks, resilience-wise,” he warned.

Making the case

Another challenge in designing and developing such a city is changing the mindsets of officials used to traditional planning approaches, who may be wary of going green, urban experts say.

“How do you do this in a regional context where there is massive and widespread

corruption, and where elected representatives change in the short term?” asked Harini Nagendra, an author and academic based in southern India.

The answer: convince politicians and bureaucrats that making a city stronger and safer against modern-day threats will not slow down development, and will save their governments money in the long run, said Oesha Thakoerdin of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which is backing the New Clark project.

Economists at RAND are seeking to demonstrate the social, environmental and economic gains from building resilience and are developing a business case to prove that green urban planning is not only an option for wealthy economies.

“Increasingly we are seeing middle-income countries realize that planning and investing in green areas in cities is critical for their development—and cost-competitive,” Thakoerdin said.

Infrastructure gap

Urban experts say New Clark City could not only set a shining example for Southeast Asia in terms of balancing rapid economic development with social and environmental policies, but may also mark a turning point closer to home.

“It has the potential to take pressure off Manila so that Manila can also invest in building a more resilient future,” said Lauren Sorkin, the Asia-Pacific director for 100 Resilient Cities (100RC), a network backed by The Rockefeller Foundation.

Manila is one of the world’s densest cities, with 14,500 people per square kilometer—almost triple London’s level—U.N. data show. Congestion could cost the capital \$155 million a day in lost productivity by 2030, a Japanese government study has found.

Cities across the Philippines generate more than 70 percent of gross domestic product, while the percentage of urban dwellers is set to rise by 2050 to 65 percent—representing 102 million people—up from 45 percent today, the World Bank says.

While New Clark has been hailed for its vision, experts warn that the push for resilience in Asia may be sacrificed in the rush to invest the \$1.7 trillion per year through 2030 the ADB estimates is required to keep up with the region’s infrastructure demand.

“We’re facing a huge infrastructure gap ... and a rapidly growing urban population,” Sorkin said.

“It’s going to be enormously difficult to make up deficits, and plan for and meet emerging needs at the same time.”

Urban Planning South Africa

—The Importance of Urban Planning and Transformation of South African Cities

Modern urban planning in South Africa is aimed at the development of sustainable living and working environments to address spatial imbalances. For instance, people live far from their workplaces, which adds to their living costs as their traveling expenses are high. With people having to commute over long distances to get to and from work, their time to relax, participate in recreational and sport activities, and spend time with their families is negatively affected. The issue also contributes to more traffic congestion, accidents, and pollution because of vehicle emissions.

To address factors such as the above and aspects such as inner city decay and class-distinct communities, it has become important to change urban planning practices in South Africa. The government has initiated a policy for the design and development of more productive and inclusive urban areas that are properly governed. Though some

changes have been made, progress in this regard is still limited. The South African urban landscapes are still very reflective of inequalities and though steps have been taken to improve the rate of transformation with public transport systems and housing projects, the government-funded housing projects also contribute further to the marginalization of the poorer communities. These projects are still located far from the places of work, educational facilities, and health centers.

Factors that still have negative effects on balanced urban and spatial development in South Africa include, but are not limited to:

- Improper alignment of planning with the overall vision of balanced and integrated city developments.
- Conflict in the local municipal plans and the vision and spatial development plans of the government.
- The spatial development frameworks are still geared toward the management of projects for land usage to support private sector agendas instead of proper coordination of investments and spatial planning and investment integration to support the vision for urban planning in South Africa.

Modern urban planning in South Africa must be a coordinated effort to address the changes in the cities. Urbanization has increased over the past twenty years, with cities such as Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Cape Town having experienced tremendous growth. The urbanization trend can also be related to more immigrants and more people from the rural areas flocking to the cities in search of work and better opportunities.

The rapid urbanization has led to more pressure on city resources and the cities have increased their spatial footprint. Urban sprawl is on the increase with continuing outward expansion. It is important to contain urban sprawl. With more and more shopping centers having to be built, which also require more parking spaces, a possible solution can be that of mixed-usage high-street development. Such an approach would make provision for diversification of the services and products that are on offer, while security risks associated with such environments can be addressed through advanced security surveillance.

Gated communities and security estates, though more prevalent in the affluent areas of the cities, are also often desired by the poorer communities. Such estates, however, tend to exclude rather than create inclusive urban areas. The government has driven a policy to meet the settlement needs of people in South Africa with plans such as the launching and integrating of human settlement projects with the aim of delivering a large number of residences. Mega urban projects are planned with close cooperation among the various divisions of the government.

New mega development projects and cities are in the pipeline as part of the Gauteng Department of Human Settlement's plan based on the view that cities can be developed, which would change how settlements take place, in order to address the problem of marginalized poorer communities, transportation to work, and access to essential services. An example of where investment in the economy has been redirected to promote a particular sector includes the UAE where the income from the oil industry has been used toward infrastructure development, promotion of the service sector, and promoting the growth of the tourism industry.

Transformation entails changing the urban landscape to address the imbalances discussed above. Unlike spatial restructuring focused on improving the urban landscape, transformation entails a complete change. Urban planning in South Africa must include the public and private sectors to bring about the necessary changes toward more

sustainable cities and land usage in future.

c. The current situation of urbanization in China

China's New Urbanization Plan: Obstacles and Environmental Impacts

Jack Maher and Xie Pengfei

Background

On March 16th, China's State Council released the "National New-type Urbanization Plan," a long-awaited top-down effort to utilize urbanization as an engine for economic growth in the near future. The plan details an ambitious series of goals the government seeks to accomplish by 2020. However, speeding up the urbanization process will have far-reaching environmental and social effects for China. The plan strategically focuses on the macro-level and aims to direct national-level policy. It is on the highest level of national plans much like the "Twelfth Five Year Plan." Therefore, it can be seen as a coordinated, top-level effort to increase the population of China's cities while addressing critical quality of life issues for urban residents.

Overall, the plan stresses "human-centered urbanization." Fundamentally, this concept involves increasing the urbanization rate from the current level of 53.7% to 60% by 2020. Under China's current internal household registration or hukou system, rural-urban migrants often lose out on social benefits once they leave their homes in the countryside. In order to assure better integration of new residents into urban life, the government has pledged to guarantee better access to schools and hospitals for 100 million migrants. In total, the plan calls for 45% of all the new urban residents who have moved into cities to receive urban hukou, a process that will place an immense strain on municipal resources. The question of integrating the remaining 55% of new residents with urban hukou remains an unresolved dilemma, as China cannot achieve full urbanization while the majority of the population moving into cities have no path toward receiving full social benefits.

Despite the urbanization plan's ambitious targets, there is no clear mention of how local governments can raise the funds to accommodate the necessary upgrades to the provision of social benefits such as healthcare and education. In addition, a wave of migration to cities will put an immense strain on urban transportation and waste management infrastructure. In order to reach these goals and avoid a rehash of the wasteful government spending on prestige projects during the post-recession stimulus, China will need to rethink changes to taxation, land use, and urban planning policy that will be integral to achieving financially and environmentally sustainable urbanization.

New development should meet the critical needs that urban migrants will have upon arrival to the city. While the narrative of an oversupply in China's housing market has gained traction in the Western media, much of the new construction consists of costly high-rises on the periphery of urban areas. Despite the construction boom, Chinese cities have a fundamental lack of affordable housing. In order to be fully integrated in the urban fabric, new residents must be able to afford to live within the city in mixed-income neighborhoods rather than being ostracized in remote bedroom communities. The development of underutilized urban land within the city itself needs to make space for affordable housing. The government has signaled that it will spend more than \$162 billion redeveloping urban "shantytowns", but there is no comprehensive plan in place to accommodate displaced residents badly in need of affordable housing. To help alleviate

the housing needs of residents, municipal governments should allocate underutilized industrial land suitable for habitation for affordable housing. They could also increase affordable housing supply by adopting an “inclusionary housing” program modeled after New York City. Inclusionary housing incentivizes developers to designate a portion of the property as affordable housing in return for bonuses such as increased floor area.

As key beneficiaries of municipal services, property owners should contribute to urban development by paying taxes. Therefore, local governments could benefit from increased land values, giving them direct incentives toward intensive-land use instead of wasteful, sprawling developments without residents. This would also resolve the cash flow problems of local governments so they would have more capital to invest in the urban infrastructure necessary to achieve the targeted urbanization rate.

Land use

Under the current land use system, all rural land belongs to collectives. Farmers, as prospective urban residents, have very little land rights and cannot decide whether to buy or sell land without government approval. Without the ability to leverage their land as a source of income, China’s rural population is at a critical disadvantage and will only fall behind urbanites if they choose to migrate to cities. In order for this level of urbanization to occur, land ownership rights for rural land need to be specified. Title registration needs to be improved upon and there must be a unified system of sales, contracts and procedures in order to define collective ownership and clarify ownership rights. This will protect citizen’s land from eminent domain seizures that develop rural land into private developments. Eminent domain needs to be restricted to land developed in the public interest, as opposed to merely enriching local government interests.

In the past few years, land requisition has been driven by administrative decisions as opposed to market demand. This has led to an urban growth pattern that is characterized by unnecessary sprawl. As a result, the average population density in Chinese cities has dropped by 25% in the last decade. Due to the funding gap between the central government and the localities, municipal governments have excessively relied upon land sales to provide services. By reclassifying rural land belonging to the collective as urban property, local officials are then able to cheaply convert this land and sell it at a higher price to property developers. This pattern of urban sprawl is completely out of sync with local market demand for new construction. About 90% of prior demand for urban construction was met through rural land expropriation. Meanwhile, the existing stock of urban construction land sits by vacant and unused. Construction needs to follow the demand for new housing stock, and new development should take place on property already designated as urban land so as not to create excess housing far removed from the actual city limits.

In comparison with other countries in Asia, China still uses a significant portion of its urban land for industrial purposes. Low-density industrial land is by no means the best use of scarce urban land resources, and it takes up critical space that could be utilized by the services sector. According to the World Bank’s comprehensive report on China’s urbanization plan released this March, if the current pattern of low-density sprawling growth continues, China will need an additional 34,000 km² of land to accommodate new urban growth in the next decade. This is a problematic trend that must be addressed in order to reverse sprawl and transition to more productive and less pollution-intensive uses of urban space.

Urban planning

Urban planning has the ability to strengthen innovation and governance in society. Due to the fact that the pattern of China's economic growth is changing, formerly manufacturing-based economic growth is transitioning to a mode of development which is more led by service and technology industry. In order to meet the growing needs of Chinese society, cities need to improve the function of public urban spaces.

The new urbanization plan also specifically mentions the need to strengthen the management and control of urban planning, accelerate the construction of green cities, and implement the air pollution control plans to improve air quality. We believe that rational urban planning can indeed play a role in improving urban air quality. Since the transportation sector contributes to air pollution in cities, reducing car-dependence in favor of walking and public transit can alleviate the problem. Rational urban planning can reduce emissions generated in urban areas. Key principles of sustainable urban planning include smaller city blocks, more road network density, mixed-land use, transit-oriented design, and reduced energy use. All of these factors have the potential to significantly impact urban sources of pollution.

These principles need to be put into action by city planners as soon as possible in order to stop the spread of air pollution in cities and counter the harmful effects it has on the health of residents. The physical layout of cities should also take into account how it contributes to the dispersion of air pollution: Industrial zones should be located downwind of the city center; the main highway networks in a city should also be favorably located with regards to the urban dispersion of vehicle emissions. Green belts should also be utilized to limit undue urban sprawl and provide relief from vehicle exhaust. In high density urban areas along with the city's main transport node, controlled ventilation systems have been proven to be effective in improving ambient air quality along those corridors.

Environmental impact

From an environmental perspective, the urbanization plan will result in a construction boom to build the approximate 30 million units of housing over the next seven years. The effort to reach the 60% urbanization rate target detailed in the plan will depend heavily on the construction industry. This will require an uptick in consumption of the three things China cannot afford to waste: water, energy, and land. Any new developments cannot proceed without exacting a significant toll on the environment as coal, cement, and steel manufacturing are all heavily polluting industries tightly linked to new construction. Further complicating the issue, some of these new development projects have received the designation of "eco-cities". Unfortunately, attaching the "green" label to new developments is more often than not a useful marketing scheme. Wide streets, inefficient use of building materials, and car-dependent design ensure that these developments are "eco" in name only. Additionally, the practice of using land grabs to finance municipal expenses has created a pattern of sprawl found throughout the Chinese urban landscape. Without tax reform or changes to rural resident's property rights, Chinese cities will grow in a low-density, car-dependent manner that will only put a greater strain on the nation's fragile environment. Furthermore, the government must adhere to strict international green building standards to ensure that all new construction meets benchmarks for sustainability. A large part of this process should involve retrofitting existing buildings to be more energy efficient. These retrofits are much more cost-effective and low-carbon when focused on existing developments near established urban cores.

Lastly, such top-down urbanization measures cannot proceed in a sustainable manner without a shift in consumption. The leadership sees urbanization as a way to maintain growth and counter an economic slowdown by boosting the number of consumers, as urban residents have been shown to purchase significantly more goods and services than their counterparts in the countryside. Despite the economic benefits, a rise in the urban consuming class could exacerbate China's environmental problems. According to a World Bank study, China's urban residents use three times as much energy as rural residents. An exponential increase in energy demand without a paradigm shift toward more sustainable consumption would only lead to more congestion, air pollution, and associated threats to public health. All of this would occur while a significant portion of the urban populace is effectively disqualified from receiving health benefits.

d. Your ideas about urbanization

Project Information Interview

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. What is the first step in the information interview process?

The first step in the information interview process is determining the purpose.

2. What is the second step in the information interview process?

It is researching the topic.

3. What four questions should the interviewer ask in selecting interviewees?

- 1) Does the person have the information I need?
- 2) Is the person available for an interview?
- 3) Will the person provide me with the information I need?
- 4) Can the person freely and accurately transmit the information to me?

4. What is a rapport in the information interview?

It is goodwill and trust between interviewer and interviewee, which can put each other at ease and encourage a receptiveness and a willingness to talk.

5. What question sequence should the interviewer use when the interviewee feels intimidated by a very specific question?

The interviewer should use the closed-to-open sequence, which is called “inverted funnel,” and move on to more open, general questions to relieve the interviewee.

6. What are the three basic ethical principles that should guide you in all stages of the interview?

- 1) The interviewer/researcher should not purposefully deceive interviewees.
- 2) The interviewer/researcher should not intentionally harm interviewees or the organizations or groups interviewees may represent.
- 3) The interviewer/researcher should treat all interviewees justly and equitably.

VI. Research Activities

Four basic aspects

- 1) How did you prepare for the interview?
- 2) What is your interview process?
- 3) What are the difficulties you have run into and how have you resolved the problems?
- 4) What have you learned from this project?

These four aspects are the selected four sides related to the interview. The information provided below serves as a sample answer only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects.

(The following is a report submitted by a group of students from Class One, Grade 2003, English Department of Beijing Foreign Studies University.)

1. How did you prepare for the interview?

Looking for the suitable interviewee

Our group gathered to discuss the project for the first time on Monday, November 29th. We decided to spend the following two days looking for the native speakers we could possibly contact.

I came up with the idea of asking one of my friends, Jingwen, Zhang for help. She works with CCTV-9, where there are a number of native speakers working in the newsroom. As far as I know, there are two options. One is a foreign expert Greg, whom my friend is kind of familiar with, and the other is a Chinese-American girl named Su Xiaowei, who is of our age and just returned to China two months ago.

I shared the information with my group members on Tuesday, and we decided that we were more interested in the Chinese-American girl and her special experience. After that, I called Zhang and asked her to connect us with Su. She agreed to help, but was not sure whether Su would agree.

During Wednesday and Thursday, we were waiting for the result from Zhang, and also gathered to decide on some backup choices in case we failed in our first choice. The backups included: our writing class teacher Brennan, and foreign students from the international department in our university.

Luckily, on Thursday evening, Zhang called to tell me that Su agreed to take the interview. That was good news for us. And we gathered again to discuss the detailed arrangements for the interview.

Detailed arrangements for the interview

But unfortunately, Zhang told us that Su had a very bad cold those days, suffering a lot from headache and fever and asked several days off from work. Besides, since I myself had never met Su before, we had to ask Zhang to accompany us during the interview. We needed to find a time when Su felt better, Zhang didn't have to work, and members in our group had no classes or other preoccupations. So it was still uncertain when we could actually carry out the interview. I kept contacting Zhang for the following days, and finally we set the date on Sunday, December 5th. We would meet at 2 o'clock in the afternoon in Cuiwei Plaza at Gongzhufen.

However, on Sunday morning, December 5th, Zhang called and told me that we had to change the time, for two of Su's friends would visit her on Sunday afternoon. And Su suggested 12 o'clock on Monday.

I informed my partners about this change. It turned out the new time was not convenient for us. For one thing, two of our members had a meeting at 12:40 that noon. For another, we had a class at 2 o'clock in the afternoon which we must attend. So, we had to adjust the time again. After further discussion with Zhang and Su, we finally settled at 10 o'clock.

Preparation for the actual interview

I asked Zhang for some basic information about Su. Su was brought to the U.S. at the age of eight, and spent more than ten years growing up there. She has just graduated from college, and returned China about two months ago, and is now working in the newsroom with CCTV-9. She could barely speak Chinese when she just returned, and still could not read Chinese now. Just like other Americans, she likes stuffs of Chinese ethnic groups very much.

Our group shared the basic knowledge with Su, and decided on our topic of this interview, which is the cultural difference she felt based on her own experience. We designed a series of questions and divided our responsibilities.

As we agreed, I should be responsible for the preparation part or our report and presentation, Jingle for the actual interview, Seven for the difficulties we encountered, and Angela for what we've learned through the project as well as the equipment and

present.

On Sunday evening, we had a final discussion and preparation for the next day.

Questions designed

- We know that you went to the U.S. at a very young age, lived there for more than ten years and then came back to China just a couple of months ago. These sound very special experiences. Would you like to tell us a little more about these experiences?
- So, when you migrated to the U.S., you were only a little girl. How did you feel then about this big event in your life? Were you excited, dreaming about the fantastic life you were about to have?
- But when you first arrived in the U.S., facing a different country, a different society, a different culture and people using a different language and living in a different way, did you experience a kind of cultural shock?
- If so, how did you get over it?
- What about the language? You probably couldn't speak English at eight. How did you deal with the problem of language?
- Is the way people get along with each other in the U.S. different from that in China?
- What is your opinion about the American society?
- Many people say that Chinese usually meet with some kind of discrimination when they first arrive in the U.S. Is this true?
- How did you feel about your Chinese origin in the U.S.? Did people always expect something typically Chinese from you?
- Is there any particular reason why you came back?
- Well, after so many years of American life, you have totally integrated into the American society. And now you have returned to China, did you experience another cultural shock? What are the differences you have noticed between the two countries?
- How do you feel about your life in these two countries? They may have given you very different feelings.
- And before you came back, have you pictured in your mind what China is like today?
- So, after coming back, you re-experienced China. Is the actual situation different from your mental picture? How do you feel about the Chinese society?
- Did you have any difficulty with the language? I mean, you probably can not remember Chinese very well, and maybe this will bring a little inconvenience to your life here.
- Besides the language, the way people think, work and get along with others is all different. Did you find it hard to deal with all these difficulties this time?
- We know that you have just graduated. How do you think are Chinese students different from American students?
- How are parenting and family lives in these two countries different?
- Now you are working with CCTV International, how do you like your work? And how is the working environment here different from that in the U.S.?
- How long will you stay this time? And what are your future plans?

(This part is written by Geng Fei.)

2. What is your interview process?

Sketch of the interviewee

Our interviewee, Su Xiaowei, has just come back from the United States. She was born in Tangu, went to the United States at the age of eight and spent 14 years there with her family. Now she is working in CCTV as an editor. Interestingly, she told us that she didn't have an English name. Even when she was living in the United States, she insisted on being called "Xiaowei" or "Weiwei." So throughout the interview, we addressed her the way she prefers.

Xiaowei is a helpful and lovely girl. She is very brilliant in conversation and uniquely insightful on many world issues. Later on, we learned that she majored in political science. Compared with most of her peers, Xiao wei is luckier for her rich life experience in China and the United States—two wonderful countries with distinctive cultures—although sometimes she is also troubled by a sense of failing to integrate into neither of them. However, she is very optimistic and just lets go of that feeling and continues her life. She likes changes very much, and hates to be tied down by anything. But she has something of a traditional Chinese girl in herself, who puts great emphasis on her family.

The interview at a glance

On the whole, the interview went on smoothly. Given Xiaowei's rich life experience, we had planned to focus the interview on some aspects of the American life and culture shocks she had had, if any. Most part of the interview was devoted to this topic. Since it was not a very formal interview, and all the participants were young people who are curious to know new things, we sometimes digressed from the topic and engaged ourselves in discussions. But that was handled within a permitted degree. The whole interview took about one hour and a half, during which we basically accomplished the task. In the end, we became friends.

The process of the interview

Under our major topic, aspects of the American life and culture shocks, the interview covers a wide range of sub-topics, which change successively in a natural way. I have divided the interview into 11 parts, and each of them features one sub-topic. When I have a review of the interview, I cross out irrelevant conversations and condense the sub-topics into series of Q&As, making it coherent and consistent. The process is as follows:

- The beginning of a new life

Q: We've heard that you have a very rich life experience, born in China, moved to the U.S., and then came back. As a start, we are curious to know your childhood life in the U.S. What's your first impression about that country?

A: Actually, I couldn't remember much of it. You know, I went there when I was eight, and at that time, I was not so well-informed, so I knew little about the U.S. before I went there. The only thing clear in my mind after the immigration is that everything was very nice. I moved to a wealthy neighborhood and everyone was friendly.

Q: How did you get along with others?

A: My parents hired a tutor for me, and found another girl as my interpreter, who has been my good friend since then. Anyway, kids don't have to talk a lot. We just played and ran around everyday. I think kids in the States are more willing to play in groups compared with Chinese kids, to some degree.

- Cultural difference: mixed stratum

Q: You just mentioned the difference between children's behavior in the two countries. That cultural difference is what we want to know. Your childhood memory may be vague, but I suppose you must have had quite a cultural shock when you came back to China again a couple of days ago.

A: Exactly. It's quite different from what I knew, and many things are difficult for me to understand. At first, I tried to analyze, but it was frustrating. So I told myself I was not going back ... just continue to live my life like anywhere else in the world. This made me feel better.

Q: What is so confusing?

A: For example, I find some people here are so fond of their pets. They treat them as family members. But meanwhile, they are living with homeless people and would not help them. In China, poverty and wealth are mixed together. But in the U.S., they are separated. So in a good neighborhood, you seldom see beggars who make you feel sad. But I know money can not solve every problem.

- Cultural difference: individuality

Q: You've just mentioned in the U.S., people don't care much about their appearance, so it is not easy to tell the rich from the poor in this regard. I am wondering if that has anything to do with individuality, the favored spirit in the U.S.

A: It is hard to say. In China, some people try to look wealthy and want to show off. But the thing is, in the U.S., the so-called individuality is not real. The government makes people feel free to choose, but their choices are very limited. So actually, people are under control without their awareness.

- U.S.'s mission

Q: There is a huge gap between the rich and the poor in the U.S. I often hear the American people say they have a mission to do this or that. How do you understand its position?

A: I agree with you that the U.S. is always in the position to help. I don't quite approve its sense of mission, though. Being so high makes you feel everything is right.

...

After an hour and a half, our interview drew to the end smoothly and successfully. We sent Xiaowei a Tibet bracelet as a gift and expressed our sincere thanks to her. We exchanged cell phone numbers and promised to keep in contact with each other.

(This part is written by Ma Jingjing.)

3. What are the difficulties you have run into and how have you resolved the problems?

During the whole process of the interview, we have come across some difficulties and problems. In every step, including the preparation part and the actual interview part, there was always something unexpected that had happened. But before taking action, we have also talked about the possible difficulties we would probably meet, so in

dealing with these difficulties, we did have some success. Now I'd like to summarize the problems and our solutions.

In the preparation part, the first thing we had to decide is whom we could interview. It did not take us long before we decided that the interviewee would be a girl who came to the U.S. at the age of eight and returned back to China about two months ago. She is named Su Xiaowei and is now working with CCTV International. The first problem we met was fixing the time. Our group members had classes in weekdays, so the weekend was the proper time for us. However, that weekend was not available for Su as she had caught a bad cold and needed a rest. Finally, we settled the time on December 5th. On that day, we had two classes in the morning, so we had to sacrifice these two classes in order to carry out this interview.

Next, we made great efforts to know something about Su's background. She was the colleague and friend of Geng Fei's sister, but as she was new in their workplace, from Geng's sister, we only got to know her name and the general experience. Then according to the limited information we had got, we listed a series of questions. Our focus was on the differences between Chinese culture and American culture as she herself had experienced the two. Then it was the preparation for the recording pen. We didn't meet any difficulties in this step.

And here came the actual interview. Most problems emerged during this process. Firstly, when we prepared for the questions, we designed questions about two cultural shocks—the one she had when she moved to the U.S. at eight and the one she met when she moves back. But it turned out that she was too young when she first went abroad to know what a cultural shock was. Also, we had imagined that before she migrated to the U.S., she might have pictured the coming life there. But actually, as a little child, all she knew was only to leave the old place and go to a new place. That was all. So of course, we could not get the expected answers and some other questions, such as how she had got over the cultural shock, could not be really asked either. So when preparing the questions, we should give more consideration to the reality.

Then we found that some of the questions we had designed were too general. For instance, how do you feel about your life in these two countries? We intended her to give a comparison to the two cultures, but this way of conducting the question was too general for her to find a proper point to start. If we could have divided this question into several aspects for her, maybe it would have been easier for her to answer the questions and those aspects may be able to recall some of her precious memories.

Another thing was that we didn't get enough background information of hers. During the conversation, we found that as for some questions on American policies and religion, she had given quite good answers. Later, we got to know that her major was political science. So if we could have known this beforehand, we could have found a more insightful topic.

But we did have some success. In the interview, we brought one recording pen and two MP3s, which functioned very well. So the good preparation made the interview smooth. Besides, as we arranged enough time—one and a half hours, we have asked most of the questions we prepared except those impractical ones I have mentioned above. Furthermore, during the interview, when the conversation had gone too far from the theme, we could successfully shift it back.

So from the interview, we have learned not only more knowledge, but also the way to arrange things and carry out an interview.

(This part is written by Li Jia.)

4. What have you learned from this project?

After reflecting on the whole process of this interview, we found it very educational and rewarding. I'll elaborate on what we've learned from this project from the following two aspects.

From the process of conducting the interview

The first and foremost thing of group work is good collaboration. We did fairly well in this regard. The four of us are all cooperative and agreeable, which is demonstrated in every step of the project. For example, we got started as soon as our teacher assigned us this project, each trying to find a desirable interviewee. Very quickly, Geng Fei suggested interviewing a Chinese-American girl working with CCTV-9. We agreed and made a clear division of work immediately, then flung ourselves into it. Though a division was made at the very beginning, we still helped each other on the share of work if necessary. For instance, with Geng Fei being responsible for the preparation, we discussed carefully on the questionnaire. Ma Jingjing was in charge of the actual interview but the rest of us also raised questions, making the atmosphere more active. Besides, our decision on what time to interview the person also shows a sense of collaboration. Geng Fei had contacted several times with the interviewee and made 12 o'clock, Monday our meeting time. But later Ma Jingjing and Jin Yuye were informed to attend a meeting at 12:40 pm the same day. It caused Geng Fei a little trouble. Yet she never complained and re-arranged the meeting time two hours earlier with the interviewee's agreement. What's more, the things which were not on the list of the division, such as buying a gift and sharing the cost, were settled very well. In short, we understand better from the project that a sense of collaboration is essential to group work.

Interpersonal skills are as important as collaboration. In fact, our successful collaboration is partly due to a good command of some interpersonal skills. This kind of skills is also necessary in the actual interview. For instance, we arrived at the appointed place earlier than the interviewee in order to show our respect. When Su Xiaowei arrived, we greeted and introduced each other, one of us offering to buy her a cup of coffee. A noticeable trait of the actual interview is that we are resourceful. We could make proper shifts on the questions according to Miss Su's response. For example, when a question was raised, if she frowned and hesitated to talk or said "I don't know," we could tactically shift to another question to avoid embarrassment. Or if we had talked much about serious topics such as politics and religion, we would suggest talking something light. Instead of letting the interviewee talk all alone, we aired our opinions on a few topics. This is necessary, because for one thing, she was eager to hear the opinions of her Chinese peers; for another, it's not considerate to keep the interviewee talking on and on for one and a half hour. At the end of the interview, we gave her a Tibetan bracelet as a gift and expressed our good wishes. On the whole, the interview was conducted in a friendly and easy atmosphere.

Of course, we also learned something from the weakness or lack of consideration on some matters. For instance, the chosen place McDonald's wasn't a good one for an interview. Fortunately, the meeting time wasn't their busy hour and the recording of this interview was very clear. Another unsatisfactory point is the design of questionnaire. We didn't get enough information of Miss Su such as what she studied in college and what were her interests. So the questions we put forward in preparation are rather general, like "What is your opinion about the American society?" It's fine that we

found interesting or meaningful topics later in the interview. But it's better to get more information of the interviewee and prepare more focused and informed questions so that we can dig deeper on some topics.

From the interviewee

We think that we've learned something more profound from what Miss Su said in the interview, including the differences between Americans and Chinese, and her outlook of life, etc.

We noticed that Su had a typical American personality. That's she is free to choose her own life style without being restrained by other people or factors. She didn't know what to do after the graduation and wanted to change, so she took a break and came to China to experience a completely different life. What impressed us most is what one professor said to her: "You don't have to do anything." Actually he was telling her that she should explore life on her own rather than being bound with unnecessary restrictions. She said to us: "I think life will be better if you don't make everything so carefully arranged ... For the future, I don't have a specific plan, but I do want to serve as a volunteer in some poor country."

Miss Su pointed out that the Chinese are reluctant to change, which is true to some degree. Being secure is one of Chinese traditional values and now it is still deeply rooted in people's mind. It coincides with conservatism.

Besides, Miss Su gave a clearer portrait of the Americans. For example, she asserted that democracy in the States is a false democracy by the American politician's standards. People actually don't enjoy much freedom especially after September 11 attack. In her opinion, the so-called "freedom" is like the government tells people that "you are free," but you only have a limited number of choices. Speaking of the mission which the Americans always keep in mind, Su thought it's an American mentality that the American people have the mission to help other people become "civilized." Indeed, the essence of this mentality is to explore and to expand. These analyses, along with other ones that are not mentioned in this article, help us know more about the Americans though the validity of some analyses remains to be proved.

In conclusion, this interview project is instructive, educational and rewarding. We hope to have more opportunities to do such projects.

(This part is written by Jin Yuye.)

Unit 8 The Shawshank Redemption (1994)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

- 1. Who is Andy? Why is he brought to the court? How does Andy defend for himself? How does the court rule his case?**

Andy is a vice president of a large bank, a successful banker. He is charged with murdering his wife, who is found shot dead in bed with her lover. Andy says the night when his wife and her lover were murdered, he did follow them to the man's house and sat outside in his car, drinking heavily, feeling very confused. At first, he felt he should go to scare them with his gun. But later he became sober and realized that she wasn't worth it, so he decided to give her a quick divorce as she demanded. Then, he came back to his car and drove home. On his way home, he threw the gun into the river. However, all the evidence is against Andy, so the court finally rules that Andy is guilty and he has to serve a life sentence in Shawshank State Prison.

- 2. Who is Red? How does he describe Andy at his first sight of him in Shawshank Prison? How does Andy impress Red later? How unusual is this new guy in Red's eyes?**

Red is a prisoner in Shawshank Prison. He is serving a life sentence and has now stayed there for 20 years. When he first lays eyes on Andy, he doesn't think much of the man, for he looks very weak and fragile. Red describes him as just a little turd in prison grays, and it looks like a stiff breeze could blow him over. However, soon later Red is impressed by Andy because the man adapts very fast and he is different from other inmates. He lives in the prison in a very calm and easy way and he does things with full determination.

- 3. After 20 years' service in prison, Red is brought to a parole hearing. What question is raised? How does he answer the question? Why is his application rejected?**

The question is "You feel you've been rehabilitated?" On hearing the question, Red answers "Yes, sir. Absolutely. I've learned my lesson. I can honestly say I'm a changed man. I'm no longer a danger to society. That's God's honest truth. No doubt about it." Though Red speaks in a very sincere and earnest way, the officers obviously do not believe his words and his application is rejected.

- 4. What hardships has Andy experienced during his first two years in Shawshank? Why does he remain silent to the unfair verdict by the government and the abuses by the inmates?**

Andy has to work hard in prison and he is frequently abused by some other inmates. Getting used to life in prison is extremely hard for a man like Andy, who once lived a very comfortable and successful life outside and who is actually innocent. However, Andy never complains to the authority, because he fully understands that no one will listen to him and his complaints may only make things worse. He can wait patiently for a best chance to take the revenge. Besides, he holds the thought that he cares too little about his wife and thus she starts seeking comfort from another man, so he believes he is in a way responsible for his wife's death.

- 5. Why does Andy walk to the chief prison guard giving him advice on the tax matter at the risk of his life? What does the beautiful smile on his face tell**

when he is watching his fellow inmates drinking the beer earned by him?

He knows this is an opportunity for him to make a change of his life in prison. Once he makes the guards know he can be useful to them, they may offer him some decent jobs in prison and thus he can win favor and live in a better situation. This time, he requires nothing in return but some beer for all the inmates working with him. He smiles when watching his men drinking beer because he can see it makes those men feel like free men, and watching them drink makes him feel like a normal man again.

6. Why does Warden Norton offer Andy a better job, working in the prison library?

He learns that Andy is very skillful at banking, so he wants to have Andy work for him. Having him work in the prison library can make it quite convenient for the wardens and later for himself to have Andy make some financial planning for them in private.

7. After 50 years in prison, Brooks is finally on parole. However, is he happy with the life outside? Why does he commit suicide at the halfway house?

He feels desperate on hearing that his parole comes through. He has lived in the prison for 50 years and he gets used to life in prison. In prison, he is important and he is needed by others, but out of prison, he finds the world has changed a lot and he is nothing but an old ex-con who has no use for others at all. Feeling sad, lonely and desperate, the old man kills himself.

8. What does Andy do to build up the library? Why is he so devoted to it?

First, he goes to Norton to ask for fund and later when Norton says he has no more fund for the library, he decides to write to the state senate to ask for fund directly from them. No one believes he can win the fund. And he never gets a reply for all his letters. However, Andy keeps writing a letter each week. Finally, the state senate allocates 200 dollars to him as fund for building up the library and they get some donation of old books to him as well. The only thing they ask for in return is to stop sending letters to them. But Andy determines to start sending two letters a week instead of one, which finally makes the senate approve of an annual fund of 500 dollars to his library.

9. Why does Andy venture into the guard office and broadcast Mozart all over the prison? How does the music affect the prisoners?

He wants to share what he believes inside with other inmates and give all the inmates in Shawshank a taste of music, which can bring them delight and dignity and can make them feel like free men. On hearing the music, all the inmates stand still. For a time, they all feel like a normal and free man. The music reminds them of the beauty of life and the power of freedom.

10. How is Andy punished for playing Mozart's music? What supports him during the punishment?

He is confined in a small room for two weeks as punishment. Later he tells others that the music in his head and heart can never be confiscated, and that gives him the strength to hold on easily in the hole-like place. Actually, that music in his heart gives him strong will, optimism and hope, a kind of spiritual power which can enable him to overcome any difficulties in life.

11. Why is Red rejected again at the parole hearing after 30 years' service? Why does Andy buy him a harmonica as a gift?

He is encountered with the same question and he gives the same answer in the same way. Still, they don't trust him. Andy gives Red a harmonica as a gift for his staying in prison for 30 years. Red once says he played the harmonica when he was young. But after years in prison, he has lost his taste for music and the taste of hope and desire for freedom. He starts to believe that hope is a dangerous thing that can drive a man in prison crazy. Andy gives him a harmonica for he wants to tell Red that one should never give up hope. However, Red has been totally frustrated and he does not play it that day.

12. What program does Norton put on this year to impress the public that he is a caring and democratic warden? What dirty deals does he make behind the scenes?

He institutes his famous "Inside-Out" program, which attracts great media attention. Norton declares the program is a genuine, progressive advance in corrections and rehabilitation. It allows the inmates, properly supervised, to be put to work outside the walls performing all manner of public service. However, behind the scene, it turns out to be a way for Norton to ask for bribes. Some businessmen who are driven out of business because of Norton's program will come to bribe him and offer him kickbacks for removing his program and leaving the business contracts to them.

13. How does Andy help Norton accumulate the filthy wealth without arousing any suspicion? Why does Andy do so?

Andy prepares all the bank deposits and launders the money for Norton. He invests the money in stocks, securities, tax-free municipals, and when the money comes back, it becomes clean. Besides, he opens the account with the name of Peter Stevens who has all the identity files but does not exist at all, so if someone is investigating the case, what he can get is nothing but such an imagined name. Andy does all this for winning Norton's favor and trust, so he can have the privilege to do things he loves to do in Shawshank. More importantly, he takes this as a part of his future escape plan.

14. What is the astonishing news that Tommy, the new comer, breaks to Andy? Is Norton willing to help Andy find out the real killer of his wife? Why or why not?

Tommy tells Andy that once he is in prison elsewhere, and a cell mate there tells him that he kills a man and his lover, but the court rules that the woman's husband, a banker, is guilty. Andy takes it as a great chance to demand for a re-investigation of his case, and thus a chance for him to get out of prison.

On hearing Tommy's story, Norton insists it's just a fantasy, so he will not help Andy report it. He is afraid of Andy telling someone outside about his money laundering, and he still needs Andy to launder the money for him.

15. Why does Andy continue to work for Norton after he is released from the solitary confinement?

He decides to carry out his escape plan to get himself out of the prison. In order not to arouse any suspicion, he continues to work obediently for Norton, pretending he has been totally beaten.

16. Where is Zihuatanejo? Why does Andy dream for the place? What does Red think of his idea of living in Zihuatanejo?

It's a small place in Mexico, right on the Pacific. Andy dreams for the place because the Mexicans say the Pacific has no memory. He wants to go to such a warm place with no memory to open a little hotel right on the beach, and take the guests out charter fishing. Red takes all this idea as daydream for he believes that Andy can never get out of the prison till he is too old to go anywhere. As for himself, he doesn't think he can survive outside the prison because he is institutionalized just like old Brooks.

17. What does Red promise Andy if someday he gets out of Shawshank?

Andy asks Red to do him a favor. He tells Red there's a hayfield up near Buxton, which has got a long rock wall with a big oak at the north end. He says it's the place where he asked his wife to marry him. He makes Red promise to go to the spot if he ever gets out, find a rock in the base of that wall and get something buried below. But he refuses to tell Red what he will find there.

18. Why do Red and some other inmates feel that Andy is a bit strange that day? Why does Red say that storming night is the longest night of his life?

Red is worried about Andy after he is told to go to find something in the hayfield. Besides, Heywood says Andy asks for a six-foot long rope from him. That makes the inmates suspect that Andy has come to a breaking point and he is planning for a suicide like old Brooks. Red is deeply worried about Andy for he firmly believes Andy is going to kill himself because of the way Andy looks at him before he is sent to his own cell. However, Red can do nothing to help his best friend during the night. That makes him very stressed and nervous.

19. What surprises Norton and the guards the next morning? What do they find in Andy's cell?

They do not see Andy come out of the cell as usual. When the guards rush in the cell, they find the cell empty and everything neat and tidy. Later when the angry Norton starts throwing Andy's rocks toward the picture on the wall, he accidentally discovers the tunnel that Andy has been digging for years with his rock hammer.

20. How does Andy escape that night? What is it that supports him to strive?

Andy spends 19 years digging a tunnel with his rock hammer. He does it during the nights and he uses the picture on the wall to cover it. That night, he takes away Norton's suit and shoes in a plastic bag and crawls into the tunnel with the help of his rope and hammer, approaching to the sewer pipe. Then he crawls in the pipe for 500 yards to outside. No one in the prison can make it except Andy because he has that distinguished will power and determination to take pressure and time to carry out such an escape plan. Besides, it is hope and love of freedom that support him during all the years.

21. How does Andy take revenge against Norton? What happens to Norton at last?

After getting out of the prison, he puts on Norton's dress and goes to several banks on that morning, declaring himself as Peter Stevens and closing all the accounts. In this way he takes away a large amount of money from Warden Norton. At the same time, he mails a report to the police about Norton's bribery behavior, and when the police are coming for Norton, the warden shoots himself dead.

22. Where is Andy heading for after he finishes his prison journey?

He crosses the American-Mexican border and is heading for the small place, Zihuatanejo on the Pacific.

23. At his third parole hearing after 40 years' service, Red's application is approved. Why?

Red says he feels regret every day, but it's not because he is rehabilitated. It's just because he can never go back to his youth, and he's already a man too old to care about future. He urges the board to finish the questioning and do whatever they want to do to save him the time. What he says makes the parole board fully believe that now he has a profound understanding of his mistakes made in youthful and rash times. And now he is already an old man who can never bring any threat to the society because he has absolutely lost the passion about going outside.

24. Why doesn't Red enjoy his life out of Shawshank? What is the one thing that stops him from committing suicide?

Red finds the world completely different from the world he used to know. He has difficulties in adapting to life outside and he is always in fear. He is on the breaking point and the only thing that stops him from committing suicide or breaking the parole law is his promise made to Andy.

25. What is written in the letter Andy leaves for Red in the secret hole in the hayfield? Why does Andy make such an arrangement?

In the letter, Andy writes that he is waiting for Red in Zihuatanejo and if Red has a chance to read the letter he should go to meet him in that place. He also tells Red that one should never lose his hope, for hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things. With the letter, he also leaves 1,000 dollars for Red as transportation fee. Andy makes such an arrangement because he knows for sure that once getting outside, Red will lose hope for life. What Red needs is encouragement and a chance to start a new life. Therefore, he asks Red to make such a promise and leaves him the letter and the money.

26. What does Andy mean by saying that "I guess it comes down to a simple choice, really. Get busy living or get busy dying"?

Answers to this question may vary.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

The Shawshank Redemption is based on a short novel by Stephen King. Stephen Edwin King, born Sep. 21st in 1947, is a productive American author best known for his horror novels. King's books have been extremely popular, and are among the top-selling books ever, fiction or non-fiction. In 1994, King won an O. Henry Award for his short story, "The Man in the Black Suit," and in 2003 King was honored with the

Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American Letters by the National Book Awards.

King's stories frequently involve an unremarkable hero—middle-class families, children, and often writers—being submerged into increasingly horrifying circumstances. He also produces more typical literary work, including the novellas *The Body* (later adapted for the movie *Stand by Me*) and *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*, as well as *The Green Mile*. King believes that good stories cannot be called consciously and should not be plotted out beforehand but are better served by focusing on a single “seed” of a story and letting the story build itself from there. King often begins a story with no idea how the story will end.

King in his works has expressed the fundamental concerns of his era, and used the horror genre as his own branch of artistic expression. King has underlined that even in the world of cynicism, despair, and cruelties, it remains possible for individuals to find love and discover unexpected resources in themselves. His characters often conquer their own problems and malevolent powers that would suppress or destroy them.

Themes:

- a. **Hope:** The dominating theme of the film, hope, is symbolized chiefly by the story of the film. It uses a somewhat implied motif where Andy Dufresne brings hope and salvation to the fallen world of Shawshank Prison and its convicted criminals—especially to Red. In fact, Red is headed down the same path as Brooks until Andy changes his course by bringing him hope. Andy saves Red from the sad end that Brooks met. In a discussion with Red, Andy links music and hope in a better life: “You need [music] so you don’t forget ... that there are places in the world that aren’t made out of stone. That ... there’s something inside that’s yours, which they can’t touch.” Hope embodies the liberating, redemptive power: “Fear can hold you prisoner. Hope can set you free.” Red initially resists Andy’s warnings and testimony in the power of hope, but by the end of the film he’s convinced. The last line has Red confessing, “I hope,” and the film shows that his hope is well-founded because he finally rejoins his “redeemer” in paradise.
- b. **Institutionalization:** Almost all of the convicts in Shawshank were on life sentences. They were kept in walls for decades. Some of them were adolescents when they committed serious crimes. When time went by, things beyond the walls had changed, were changing, and would definitely change. The knowledge of outside world escaped them. In their decades’ of imprisonment they began to cope with the life in walls, and some of them even got the best of themselves. Brooks, as an educated and respected librarian; Red, as a man who could get people stuff. They got used to the life in walls, and internalized the life pattern in them. All the prisoners were equal. Some of them made friends. On the one hand, they had a dire need for freedom; on the other, they were so institutionalized that they were afraid of leaving a familiar place and being thrust into an alien world in which they had no identity, no friends, and no love. When they were in the “free world” they were again thrown into invisible walls. Others regarded them as people with stained past, as cold-blood, incurable cons. Such indifference killed. A life with freedom but nothing else was miserable. As Red said, “These walls are funny. First you hate them. Then you get used to them. Enough time passes, it gets you so depend on them.”
- c. **Friendship:** People say that friendship is a ship that never sinks. Even in the hell like Shawshank, friendship exists. Andy and Red, despite of their different education

and ethnic backgrounds, become true friends. In the prison, Red helps Andy get stuff that he needed; Andy encourages Red to have hope and shares with Red his dream of going to the town of Zihuatanejo in Mexico, a place with “no memory” of the past. After Andy escapes from Shawshank, he leaves a letter under the oak tree hoping that Red can be inspired and follow him to the town, starting a free life. Their friendship, filled with mutual understanding and trust, warms the years they spend in the cold and desolate Shawshank Prison, and will continue to bloom in the sunny town of Zihuatanejo.

Conflicts:

a. Freedom vs. Repression: The movie’s primary conflict is between Andy and the Shawshank prison system. Andy Defresne is wrongly convicted of double murder of his wife and her lover. Unlike his fellow inmates, Andy endures the life in Shawshank calmly with a ray of hope; his unquenchable spirit finally leads him to the path of freedom. Secretly, behind the large pinned-up girl poster in his cell, Andy tunnels his way out over the course of two decades. It is as though he re-enters a woman (the pinned-up girl) to be born again. Freedom comes at a cost and he must go through a human waste sewage pipe. The warden of the Shawshank Prison, a modern-day Pharisee, represents the repressive and corrupt force. He even kills an inmate who may help prove Andy’s innocence, on the sole reason that Andy, if kept in prison forever, will make money for him with no one suspecting it.

b. Hope vs. Fear: With all of the aesthetic touches and attention to cinematic detail, the most beautiful part of the film lies within its thematic material, such as its focus on the human desires for the most abstract concepts, hope and freedom. An interesting conflict is between Andy and Red’s basic perceptions of life. “Fear can hold you prisoner. Hope can set you free.” Andy regards hope as the only means to set him free. He believes “hope can get you not forget there are places in the world that aren’t made out of stone.” “Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.” However, Red sees hope as a dangerous thing that can drive a man insane. Red’s stubborn rejection of hope reveals his inmost fear of his future and the world outside.

Performances:

The Shawshank Redemption was nominated for seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Actor (Morgan Freeman), Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Original Score, and Best Sound—but it failed to win a single Oscar.

Frank Darabont is well-known among his colleagues for his notable skills at writing and directing. *The Shawshank Redemption* is his directorial debut in feature film. Proving himself already a master of the craft, Darabont managed to create one of the most recognizable independent releases in the history of Hollywood. *The Shawshank Redemption* defines a genre, defies the odds, compels the emotions, and brings an era of artistically influential films back to Hollywood.

Darabont employs the cunning Thomas Newman, son of the legendary Hollywood composer, Alfred Newman. Darabont shows recognition for the film’s needs by employing Newman, who makes the gentle piano chords whisper softly to the viewer, as if a part of the scripted dialog. Newman lends himself to individualism and tends to drive more toward the unique in the realm of score composition. His effort in this

movie did not go unnoticed, as his score received an Oscar nomination in 1995.

The music *The Marriage of Figaro* (Italian title: *Le Nozze di Figaro*) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, is played in the film to inspire the human spirit. Andy broadcasts the Mozart opera on the loudspeakers throughout the entire prison. Everyone in Shawshank hears the music. The music melts the ever-solid ice mountain of numbness. Red expresses the feeling very well:

“I like to think they were singing about something so beautiful that can’t be expressed in words, and makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you, those voices soared, higher and farther than anybody in a gray place dares to dream. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made those walls dissolve away. And for the briefest of moments, every last man at Shawshank felt free.”

Unit 9 Arrival (2016)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. What moments of life are lingering in Dr. Louise Banks' mind and what message does she get out of them? What does she say about the later change of her perception?

Scattering moments that she spent with her daughter who had brought her all the happiness in life but finally died of a disease at a very young age are lingering in Louise's mind and she keeps seeing images of her girl as a cute new-born and later a lovely kid, an adolescent full of life and finally a cold body lying on the sickbed. She sees the exhilarating and heartbreaking images as illustrations of the beginning and ending of her most significant life story but as she mentions, some particular events finally arrive on the days when her story is re-defined beyond her life.

2. What does Louise teach in the university? One day, her class is abruptly interrupted. Why?

Louise is teaching Linguistics in the university and on that day, her class is abruptly brought to an end because the sudden mysterious arrival of 12 gigantic UFOs in locations across the globe including one in the United States has thrown the world into chaos. Most students run away from class on hearing the news and her university soon announces a campus evacuation.

3. How does the world make sense of the event? How do the general public and the countries across the world react to it?

Authorities across the world start to access the UFOs which are named in U.S. as "Shell" after their outlook. Since there is no sign of first contact from the aliens inside and no logical connections could be seen between their landing locations, they are perceived as unidentified objects whose purpose of arrival remains unknown and thus suspicious. The public get panicked. When no satisfying answers can be immediately supplied, many of them either resort to panic buying of life supplies or start to take the advantage of the chaotic situation. Governments across the world on the one hand announce a state of emergency, sending police and national guards to keep order; on the other hand, they mobilize the military, the intelligence and the talent supply to get together around the landing locations to collect information. Most importantly, they call for cooperation of all nations to handle this crisis.

4. Is Louise affected in a similar way? Why? Why does Colonel Weber pay a surprise visit to Louise at this point?

Louise seems to be stuck in visualizing the moments she spent with her daughter and the biggest event in the world is somehow reduced to a trivial matter compared with her personal puzzle and loss. But, she once assisted the American intelligence in one of their missions which owed its success to her expertise in translating a local dialog from a rarely used foreign language into useful information. Therefore, Colonel Weber, who is desperately in want of an expert of linguistics to help the intelligence accomplish the mission of assessing the intention of the aliens' sudden arrival on the earth, pays a visit to her, offering her an opportunity to communicate

with the aliens in the Shell and decipher any information that she could collect.

5. How does Louise respond to his offer and why? Why does Colonel finally come back to Louise?

Louise turns down the offer because the violence involved in the last operation is against her work ethics and thus quite upsets her. But driven by her professional interest in the challenge of communicating with aliens, before Colonel left for another linguist, she advises him to go to check with that person about the Sanskrit word of “war” and its original meaning in the local culture. While Louise interprets the Sanskrit’s word of “war” as a desire for more cows, the other expert that Colonel turns to simply explains it as an argument, which proves that he obviously could not compare with Louise in generating a thorough understanding of language as an expression of the life pattern and mindset of a civilization.

6. What do we learn about Louise’s general perception of language from the conversation she holds with Ian Donnelly, her team partner, in their first meeting in the helicopter? Does Ian agree with her?

From the lines that Ian Donnelly quotes from Louise’s book, we can learn that she considers language as a foundation of civilization, the glue that holds people together as well as the first weapon which might be drawn in a conflict. But Ian Donnelly, a theoretical physicist, insists that the cornerstone of human civilization should not be language but science.

7. What major parties are involved in this particular mission at the base? As core members of the mission, do you think Colonel Weber, Louise Banks and Ian Donnelly share the same priority? Please explain.

At the base which is set up close to the landing spot of the Shell, Louise and her partner Ian are briefly greeted by the parties involved in the mission, including the military, the intelligence, the government officials as well as scientists and experts specialized in diverse fields. Though they are working as one team, each seems to have their own agenda. For Colonel Weber and the institution he works for, the top priority is to figure out where the aliens come from and why they come to the earth. For Ian, the purpose of his mission is to collect scientific data and seek for answers to scientific puzzles and mysteries. For Louise, however, her participation is out of a professional curiosity in stretching the possibility of language communication with aliens.

8. How do they prepare and proceed with the assessment of the Shell? And how do they make contact with the aliens?

Operations at the base are proceeding hectically under stress and anxiety because every 18 hours the Shell, which is floating not very high above the land surface, would open its door to allow the team members in. Though Ian suggests the long interval might be designed on the purpose of creating a living environment fit for human visitors in the Shell, the base still takes precautionary measures, giving the members immunization and medical checks, having them put on HAZMAT suits and carry a bird in cage, in order to protect them from any radiation or poisonous elements that might exist in the Shell. To communicate with the aliens, the team would be lifted up into the Shell and proceed toward a glass wall behind which two aliens would show up. While the two sides are making contact, their equipment would take records of all the information and transmit it back to the base where a large group of soldiers, officers and assistants would watch every move of them, quickly process the information, consult superior departments or talents reserved

and provide information to the outside world. Meanwhile, an unprecedented international sharing of information is also ensured by online connection.

9. What has the base already learned about the aliens? What happens in the team's first contact with the aliens? Is it a complete failure?

Several attempts have been made to talk with the aliens, who do make some sounds in return, but no useful information has ever been produced and thus Louise and Ian are recruited for another try. While coming close and finally entering into the Shell for the first time, both Ian and Louise are held in awe by the Shell's overwhelming outlook as well as the unbelievable set of the physical rules they witness inside it. Once the aliens show up behind the glass wall and produce some strange sound, Louise is so startled that she is caught completely wordless and Ian couldn't help throwing up after coming back to the base. However, Colonel Weber still holds confidence in them because despite everything, they behave much better than their precedents.

10. Why does Louise decide to change their strategy? What is the new plan for their second visit to the Shell?

All the attempts of speaking to the aliens fail and the Australian team's effort in playing the record of the alien's sound back to them is only greeted by the aliens playing audio record of randomly man-made sounds in return. Therefore, Louise decides to try visual communication instead. In the second visit, she brings a board with the written word of "human" on it and to everyone's excitement, the aliens produce some visual signs in response, which although remaining unidentifiable at the moment, marks a big step forward.

11. Does Colonel Weber support Louise's change of the plan? Why? How does Louise talk him into her idea?

Fear for a deadly alien attack on human race as well as concern about the public's violent reactions and hysterical demand for immediate military action catches the colonel in deep anxiety and he is reluctant to allow Louise's experiment on visual communication because teaching the aliens to write would be too time-consuming. Louise makes up a funny story of the white people's mis-interpretation of the aboriginal word "kangaroo" to explain how hasty moves in language communication may lead to irreversible misunderstanding.

12. Why is Colonel Weber unsatisfied with Louise's choice of the vocabulary that is to be shown to the aliens? How does Louise explain such a procedure in language teaching and acquiring?

Colonel Weber criticizes Louise's choice of the vocabulary as grade-school words which lack complexity and have nothing to do with the inquiry on their purpose of arrival. Louise explains that only by starting with the basics, it would be possible for her to communicate with the aliens about the idea of questioning, clarifying, showing intention and making responses in a language understandable for humans.

13. What breakthrough does Louise make in their third visit to the aliens? Why does she take such a risk?

While Louise presents her name board in an attempt to make a self-introduction, the aliens seem to be confused, unable to tell the difference between the word "human" and the word "Louise". Then Louise decides to take off her protective suits, steps forward and puts her palms onto the glass wall, repeatedly pointing at the written word "Louise" on the board while introducing herself aloud, and Ian soon follows

her in this bold move. Louise takes the risk for she has confidence in the aliens' friendliness and she believes that only by introducing themselves properly could it build up a real sense of contact. Her adventurous attempt is enthusiastically responded by the aliens who give out the visual signs which obviously signify their names. This successful talk-turn is considered by Louise as a significant progress because it sets off a positive way of communication.

14. During the month, Louise and Ian pay more visits to the Shell and manage to expand the vocabulary to be acquired by both sides. Meanwhile, what does Louise learn about the aliens' language and their way of thinking?

Louise spends hours and days measuring and decoding the visual signs produced by the aliens whom she named as "heptapod", and she is amazed to discover that there is no correlation between what the heptapods say and what they write. More astonishingly, she notices that the heptapods could write a sentence from both sides at once in a highly efficient and effortless way and she suspects such non-linear orthography of the language might indicate a unique way of thinking.

15. What does Louise keep visualizing while having herself immersed in the aliens' language?

While getting totally immersed in the heptapods' visual language, Louise starts to see visuals of more moments she spent with her daughter which are unfolding like a prophecy being fulfilled by what she is dealing with at the base.

16. What is unusual compared with Louise's memory of the girl before?

The flashing moments give her a clue about her marriage with Ian, the birth of their daughter, their divorce and the girl's dying of an incurable disease, all of which would be a part of her future. The astonishing discovery makes Louise believe that the aliens' arrival has some mysterious connection with her life.

17. Does Ian notice her confusion? What do they discuss about the impact of language acquisition?

Ian invites Louise for a quiet talk just between the two of them for he notices the anxiety and confusion Louise is suffering at the moment. He quotes the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to remind Louise that if one immerses herself in a foreign language for too long, it would rewire her brain because the language one speaks can determine the way that one thinks.

18. While Louise finally raises the question to the heptapods about their purpose of arrival, what answer does she get?

The heptapods give Louise a brief answer to her inquiry about their purpose of arrival, which could be translated into "offer weapon" in human language.

19. How does the American authority interpret the answer? What about other countries?

The American authority gets immediately alerted by the word "weapon" based on which they speculate that the aliens come to launch a deadly attack on humanity. Other countries make a similar interpretation and out of the instinct for self-defense, they soon cut off the connection and withdraw from the international session of cooperation, each keeping the self-collected information to itself for fear that sharing information may deprive them of the chance for immediate self-defense.

20. How does Louise react to the situation? Does she get enough attention from others?

Louise tries all means to persuade the authorities to give her more time to clarify the

meaning of “weapon” for she believes the word may be defined as something other than destructive objects to attack and kill. But no one would listen to her.

21. What happens when Louise and Ian go to the Shell to clarify the message? What do the aliens show to them at the last moment?

To clarify the meaning of “weapon,” Louise and Ian pay another visit to the Shell all by themselves, not being aware of the fact that some soldiers have loaded bombs up there in advance which would soon devastate the place. The aliens, once sensing the incoming danger, take the last moment before the bombing to send out the information which is encoded in a large number of their visual signs.

22. What message do Louise and Ian manage to decipher from the signs?

Louise and Ian take hours to decode the signs and finally Louise gets the message from visualizing a conversation with her future daughter at the same time when Ian, after hours of scientific measuring and calculating, manages to complete the analysis. Both reach to the conclusion that the intact information the aliens arrive to send to humans is divided into 12 pieces and sent to 12 different locations. To get the full information, the human world has to cooperate and see the mission not as a competition but a non-zero-sum game.

23. What do the aliens reveal to Louise about their mission and her role in helping accomplish the mission?

While everyone turns a deaf ear to her suggestion and gets busy with a military mobilization, Louise ventures to return to the Shell with the help of the survived alien who then reveals to her that they arrive to help humans so that the humans would help them in return 3000 years later. It tells Louise that she is the special one who possesses the “weapon” which can be used to help humans.

24. What is the astonishing discovery of her own life that has gradually dawned on Louise after her final exchange of words with the heptapods?

After hearing what the alien says to her, Louise starts to make sense of the flashing moments that keep haunting her. The girl in the visualized moments is actually her future daughter to whom she would give birth after getting married to Ian. And after years of a happy marriage, they finally get a divorce because Ian wouldn’t accept the truth when she confesses to him that she has a special ability to see the future and she decides to marry him and give birth to the child although she knows from the very beginning that their daughter would die at a young age of a rare disease. The name that she would give to her daughter, “Hannah”, which reads the same forward and backward, gives her a clue about her special ability to see the future and thus sees how the puzzles today can be resolved in the future.

25. How does Louise figure out the meaning of the “weapon”? What is the purpose of the aliens’ arrival?

Now that Louise knows she could seek answers to questions she is facing at the moment from her visions of future, she makes an attempt to open the book she writes in the future on “the Universal Language”, where she comes to see the “weapon” that aliens arrive to offer is actually a “gift”, which may enable humans to develop a non-linear perception of time.

26. How does Louise finally prevent the worldwide military attacks from being launched at the Shell and thus save the humans from misreading the intention of the heptapods’ arrival?

She visualizes her greeting with the Chinese General Shang at a grand party held 18

months after the crisis to celebrate the cooperation across nations in successfully receiving and deciphering the “gift” offered by the aliens. During the visualized moments, she is surprised to learn it is she herself who stops the crisis at hand by making a daring satellite phone call to General Shang. And she talks him out of the idea of resorting to violence by repeating the words Shang’s dying wife once spoke to him, urging him to always gather his courage to protect world peace. Louise takes down the words that General Shang repeats to her at the party and then she comes back to the present, rushes to make the phone call and speaks out the words aloud. On hearing the words, General Shang takes the lead in stopping the military mobilization and shares the information they get from the aliens with the other nations, and thus the international cooperation is restored.

27. What message does Louise help the aliens to communicate to the human world? And what choice did she make to face her own life?

The aliens finally leave after the human world successfully received the gift that they arrived to offer. The gift is a way of thinking which at the core, celebrates proper communication and cooperation going beyond language limitations and encourages a non-linear perception of human experiences as indispensably correlated. The aliens’ arrival also brings a new vision to Louise in perceiving her own life. Despite knowing her life journey and where it leads up to, she still decides to embrace it and welcome every moment of it because she now understands every moment, no matter exhilarating or heartbreaking, has its own worth and meaning.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie:

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is based, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

a. The Author of the Novel: The film had its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival on September 1st, 2016, and was released in the United States and Canada on November 11th, 2016. The film was adapted from a novel by Ted Chiang, who plotted *Arrival* back in 2002 as a first-person short story called “Story of Your Life.” Ted Chiang, born in 1967, is an American science fiction writer. His Chinese name is Chiang Feng-nan (姜峯楠). He graduated from Brown University with a computer science degree and graduated from the Clarion Writers Workshop in 1989. He currently works as a technical writer in the software industry and resides in Bellevue, Washington, near Seattle. His work has won four Nebula Awards, four Hugo Awards, the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, and six Locus Awards.

b. The Novel: “Story of Your Life” is a science fiction novella, first published in *Starlight*

2 in 1998, and in 2002 in Chiang's collection of short stories, *Stories of Your Life and Others*. Chiang wrote that inspiration for "Story of Your Life" came from his fascination in the variational principle in physics. When he saw American actor Paul Linke's performance in his play "Time Flies When You're Alive" about his wife's struggle with breast cancer, Chiang realized he could use this principle to show how someone deals with the inevitable. The screenplay by Eric Heisserer was based on "Story of Your Life." Chiang's work cleverly uses different tenses, mixing future, past, and present to weave the complex non-linear knot of Louise's life in a way reminiscent of Billy Pilgrim from Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Chiang's hidden meanings, and the things that inevitably get lost in translating his words to the big screen, are pivotal to help viewers understand what *Arrival* is saying.

- c. **Linguistic Relativity:** In *Arrival*, a hypothesis about language called linguistic relativity, also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, plays a key role in understanding the movie. It is a theory developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, which states that the structure of a language determines or greatly influences the modes of thought and behavior characteristic of the culture in which it is spoken. This theory hypothesizes that the structure of a language determines the way that a user of that language views reality. According to the theory, human languages determine the structure of the real world as perceived by human beings, rather than vice versa, and this structure is different and incommensurable from one language to another. Obviously, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is conceived with regards to the impacts that distinct human languages might have on their speakers. But here, the power of the science fiction genre is fully realized: In *Arrival*, viewers explore a truly alien language that is different from all human language in a way that fundamentally alters the way the heptapods view reality.

Themes:

Arrival is a versatile science fiction film that communicates on many levels. It's about language and communication, about people transcending barriers and immersing themselves in a new culture to understand a foreign race.

- a. **Language, Meaning and Communication:** *Arrival* is first of all a film about language and meaning. Language is a human system of communication that uses arbitrary signals, such as voice sounds, gestures, and/or written symbols. In modern philosophy, the dismissal of metaphysics is replaced with linguistic philosophy, where endless questions and disputes about how words can "mean," why words are socially constructed symbols, and how language becomes a loop of circular contradictions, much like the alien language in the film. In *Arrival*, mankind is on the brink of destruction due to the divisions caused by language—and by extension, race, gender, nation and culture. Linguist Louise Banks (Amy Adams) is a strong, independent young lady who, having done translations for military intelligence, is recruited to decipher the sound and speech of an alien race that has "arrived." Therefore, the movie shifts its focus from an alien encounter to what the purpose of language is—a means of understanding the seemingly unknowable. The movie's lesson is that cross-cultural communication with openness, empathy and humility can lead to mutual understanding, which has profound and positive effects on the world. Being able to not only translate a language, but also understand how a culture influences that language is vital to the human world.

b. Free Will and Personal Responsibility: Meanwhile, the film is more concerned with a deeper, grander theme about free will and personal responsibility. “Story of Your Life” spotlights those ideas more than any others. The theme rests on a line Louise utters in one of *Arrival*’s closing scenes. “If you could see your whole life laid out in front of you, would you change things?” She asks her future husband Ian Donnelly. Put another way, would you rob someone of their existence, and yourself of the time shared with them on earth, if you knew they would one day feel pain, and you would feel their loss? The question is vital to the narrative because Louise is harboring a terrible secret. She knows Hannah will die young. She knows this before she even decides to conceive a baby with Ian, a theoretical physicist who, years earlier, helped Louise crack the alien language. When Louise tells Ian their daughter will die, he’s naturally upset. He assumes Louise could have warned him, or refused to have a child—changed the future. But Louise made the choice, even knowing the eventual outcome.

Underneath the technical complexity of the explanation is a profound truth Chiang is communicating—and one *Arrival* similarly hammers home. “What if the experience of knowing the future changed a person?” Louise ponders. “What if it evoked a sense of urgency, a sense of obligation to act precisely as she knew she would?” And it is precisely because Louise understands what it will be like to lose her daughter that she chooses to bring her into the world nonetheless. The film suggests that knowing what will happen in the future doesn’t diminish the meaning behind a choice you’ll make today. Rather, it says every choice you do make can be made knowing it will actively shape what’s to come. As Emerson once wrote, “life’s a journey, not a destination.” In the circular, non-linear minds of *Arrival*’s aliens and Louise Banks, the destination doesn’t even exist. If we could see our lives laid out before us, would we change anything? “Story of Your Life”—and by extension, *Arrival*—is telling people to live as if the answer is, and always will be, a resolute “no.”

c. Time: Time is one of the most constant things in people’s lives, and yet *Arrival* demonstrates a reality in which time is relative. It’s statistically shown that language can change the human’s thinking patterns, but this movie postulates that language can actually teach man how to experience time in a non-linear fashion. This isn’t time travel, it’s *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. Adams’ character, Dr. Louise Banks, exists both inside and outside of time, seeing what has been and what will be almost simultaneously.

How are the heptapods so easily able to understand the human language? When Louise spells out “human” and points to herself, Abbott and Costello are immediately able to recognize what that means and replicate it in their own language. Since they experience a non-linear version of time, they likely already understand how humans speak and spell, because they’ve already lived through it. It’s similar to how Louise is able to transfer a message from her future self into her past. If that’s the case, the aliens are simply going through the motions until the dumb human beings get on the same page.

Conflicts:

a. Lost in Translation: *Arrival* offers a poignant message about finding interconnection in a world divided by oceans, languages and opposite political atmospheres. The movie builds the conflict and tension through communication, debates, and arguments surrounding the meaning of heptapods’ writings. The conflict is based on “lost in

translation.” The tension is mounting when major world powers are handling the presence of the heptapods in different ways. After the heptapods send a message to “offer weapon,” many nations, including unhappy protesters in the U.S., want to turn to lethal force. The fate of the entire world depends on the deciphering of a single word. Did the aliens arrive on earth with a weapon or did they bring earthlings some sort of tool? Dr. Banks believes it is a tool, but she needs to prove it before a war breaks out. This goes to show that in translation, every single word counts. As is evidenced in history, the consequences of getting a single word wrong can be severe.

- b. Human vs. Alien Languages:** As explained in the movie, language isn’t simply a vehicle for conveying thoughts. Rather, human language actively shapes the ways in which they process and frame the world. The movie’s drama is fueled by the question of how Dr. Banks and those around her, both near and far, interpret the aliens’ speech. As Dr. Banks explains, “language is the first weapon drawn in a conflict.” Humans’ everyday language frames the world as one of incessant competition and conflict. Whether on a sports field, a classroom, a business meeting, or a political platform, the dominant human language turns every space into an arena of us versus them, of winners and losers. The human language frames the aliens, called heptapods, as a threat. However, in contrast to this linguistic framing, the heptapods arrive on earth to provide humanity with the ultimate gift: a new language rooted not in conflict and combat, but in collaboration and community. For the aliens, written language consists of squirting a vapory substance into the air that resembles a circle, a form that symbolizes the heptapod’s ability to think multiple space-time simultaneously. The human linguistic structure is a linear grammar that flows in one temporal direction from the settled past to the nebulous future. In contrast, the heptapod’s language sees and thinks with the future in sight. It’s a language that does not see others as competitors, but as partners, and it remains open to a wider sense of community.

Performances:

Arrival is the latest in a long line of “first contact” sci-fi stories, and yet regardless of its familiar premise, its achievements are unique. *The Hollywood Reporter* was pleased with how thoughtful *Arrival* was, saying it was a refreshing change of pace from how destructive these types of movies usually are. Considered one of the best films of 2016, *Arrival* appeared on numerous critics’ best films lists, and was selected by the American Film Institute as one of ten Movies of the Year. It received eight nominations at the 89th Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay, ultimately winning one award for Best Sound Editing. It also received Golden Globe nominations for Best Actress and Best Original Score for Jóhann Jóhannsson, and was awarded the Ray Bradbury Nebula Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation and the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation in 2017.

Critics widely praised Adams’ performance, Villeneuve’s direction and the film’s exploration of communicating with extraterrestrial intelligence. Led by Amy Adams in a performance that, like the material itself, is perched on the precipice between despair and ecstasy, *Arrival* is a thrilling work of science fiction, one that conflates individual and universal concerns via a methodical examination of mankind’s response to the arrival of interstellar beings. According to *Time*, Adams gives a nicely polished, muted performance: She keeps the story grounded when the ideas Villeneuve is striving for threaten to get too lofty, and the picture is intelligently and effectively crafted, one of those enterprises where the cinematography, sound design and score, as well as the

special effects, melt into a seamless, organic whole. Amy Adams is a miracle worker of an actress—she makes us believe in whoever and whatever she’s playing.

Unit 10 Scent of a Woman (1992)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

- 1. Who is Charlie Simms? Which school does he attend and what family is he from?**

He's a brilliant, hard-working and excellent student in Baird School, coming from a poor family in Oregon. His father left the family when he was a kid, and now his mother and stepfather are running a convenient store. He has won the Yong American Merit Scholarship and he is on student aid. However, to support his life and study in Baird, he still has to do some part-time jobs both on campus and off campus.

- 2. What is Charlie going to do during this Thanksgiving weekend? Why?**

He's going to do a house-sitting job, helping Mrs. Rossi take care of her housebound uncle. Mrs. Rossi plans to go with the family to Albany, but her uncle is blind, and thus cannot go with her, so she needs someone to stay with him during the Thanksgiving weekend. Charlie is interested in the job, because he can earn 300 dollars to pay for his flight ticket back home on the coming Christmas.

- 3. What are his rich schoolmates George, Harry and Larry going to do during the holiday?**

They'll go to Vermont for skiing, an expensive trip covered by their fathers.

- 4. How does the interview go at Mrs. Rossi's house? Why doesn't Charlie have an easy feeling while the job is so easy?**

Mrs. Rossi's blind uncle seems very hard to please. He talks dirty, gets angry easily, and what Charlie says or does can hardly make him satisfied. This makes Charlie feel it must be a very difficult job to do.

- 5. What do Charlie and George witness one night when they come out of the library?**

They see Harry and his buddies put a ladder against the lamp post, and climb up the ladder hanging something on the lamp post.

- 6. What happens to Headmaster Trask and his new Jaguar the next morning?**

The next morning, when Headmaster Trask pulls his car under the lamp post, Harry and his buddies start making a speech ridiculing him through the loudspeaker. Then, a balloon tied on the lamp post shows up, hanging right above Trask and his car. On it is a cartoon with Trask licking the board committee member's ass. When the angry Trask jumps and hits the balloon, it explodes, dumping a load of white paint right on Trask and his new car.

- 7. Why are George and Charlie asked by the headmaster to go to his office?**

A staff member of the school can prove that they all bear witness to the planning of this mischief. Thus the headmaster decides to have them stand out and tell him who the suspects are so that he can punish the boys and save his face.

- 8. Why does Mr. Trask ask George to leave first and keep Charlie for a private talk? In what tone and what way does Mr. Trask talk to Charlie? What dilemma does Charlie seem to face?**

He knows George is hard to push, and he believes Charlie, a good student, can be easily maneuvered. So he decides to talk with Charlie in private, offering a direct recommendation to Harvard University as a bribe to push Charlie to give out the three boys' names. He speaks in a sincere, but cold and serious way. Charlie is faced with a dilemma and he has to choose between Harvard, which means a promising future, and betrayal of his fellow students, which means selling his integrity.

9. Who is Lieutenant Colonel Frank Slade? Why does he want to go to New York during the Thanksgiving holiday?

He is a retired army officer who once served 26 years in army. He has won many honors as a war hero, but he hardly gets any promotion because his straightforwardness makes him lose the superior's favor. During all his life, he keeps taking adventure, showing contempt to social norms and rules and keeps failing the family's expectations of him. Finally, he gets his eyes hurt in an accident and he becomes blind, confined to his own room in his niece's house, feeling lost and lonely. Therefore, he decides to go to New York to make a last attempt to enjoy his life and then if he still seeks no strength, he will commit suicide.

10. On the airplane, how does Charlie get to know that the Colonel loves women?

Though the Colonel is blind, he can smell out the scent of a woman and figures out how she looks like. All he talks about is how he loves women. He says to Charlie he loves women above all things.

11. Why is this trip to New York the start of Charlie's education according to the Colonel?

This is the first time for Charlie to take an adventure in life, and thus to learn the real excitement about life.

12. How does the Colonel notice that Charlie is deeply troubled? How does he help Charlie analyze the situation?

Charlie insists he has to go back to school immediately for he has some important stuff to do. The boy looks troubled, and he seldom speaks up, sighing frequently. After learning Charlie's story, the Colonel takes it as a to-tell-or-not-to-tell issue. He tells Charlie that they are all rich kids, while he is a poor kid who wants to become rich. He believes the rich kids will have their fathers come to protect them, so he sees no need for Charlie to cover them, or he will have no future, and end up in poverty just like his parents.

13. In the restaurant, what plan does the Colonel mention he has made in New York and what does he intend to do after that?

He tells Charlie that he plans to take a tour of pleasure. Live in the first-class hotel, have a first-rate meal, see his brother in New York, and have a date with a terrific woman. After that, he will lie down in his bed and blow his brains out.

14. How is the relationship between Colonel Slade and his big brother's family? What does the family reunion turn into? How does the bitter feeling affect Colonel Slade?

Though the Colonel is excited about his sudden visit to his brother's family, the brother and all the other family members seem very reluctant to have him in the family gathering. Obviously, he has always been a nuisance in the family. When

the Colonel starts to talk dirty jokes and speak straightforwardly about the family members' problems, the nephew fires back and the Colonel soon bursts out. Finally, the family reunion turns into a bitter fighting. The Colonel is frustrated, and he leaves as a very lonely man.

15. What does the Colonel advise Charlie to do to solve the school problem? What does he say about the two kinds of people in this world?

The Colonel advises Charlie to do the deal, tell Trask what he wants to know and take the free ride to Harvard. He tells Charlie there are two kinds of people in the world. In the face of a dilemma, one kind will stand up to face the music while the other kind will seek cover. He says cover is better because it means less suffering.

16. On the next morning, what does the Colonel do in his room that scares Charlie? What struggle is he going through?

The Colonel is assembling a gun which makes Charlie very uneasy. When he decides to call his niece, the Colonel grabs the paper and swallows it down. Charlie is scared and he demands the Colonel give him all his bullets. The Colonel is at the crossroad of his life, where he has the passion to live, but he feels disabled by his blindness and his failure to maintain a warm relationship with others. He is faced with a dilemma of life and death.

17. Why is the Colonel so depressed on Sunday, the last day of the tour? What idea does Charlie accidentally suggest that excites him and cheers him up? Why?

He has enjoyed his tour of pleasure as he plans, and he finds no reason and courage to face life in the future. He feels like an exhausted loser, disabled and lonely. To cheer him up, Charlie suggests they go out to drive around the city. The Colonel feels excited about the idea because he feels that is a way for him to take control of something.

18. What kind of driver is the Colonel and what does he feel while driving the red Ferrari on the street?

The Colonel drives the car to its extremes. He enjoys every moment of driving, feeling once again in control and capable of making life exciting.

19. How does the sad fact that he is not going to drive affect him? Is the Colonel determined to die? Why or why not?

He feels like an absolute loser who has lost his last battlefield. He concludes that he has lost control of everything and he is a man of no use. He decides to carry out his plan of suicide because he would rather die than being deprived of the ability to appreciate the beauty and excitement of life, and being left alone with no meaningful relationship and no attraction to any one. However, deep in his heart, his love for life has never ceased because he has many dreams left unfulfilled.

20. In the struggle of getting the gun from the Colonel, what reasons does Charlie give to him not to die? What other compliments does Charlie pay to the Colonel about his unique personal attractions?

Charlie reminds the Colonel that once dancing with the girl, the Colonel says that if one gets tangled up in life, one should just tango on, which means one should never give up, but remain courageous enough to face life as it is and keep moving on one's way to seek happiness. Besides, Charlie tells the Colonel how he admires his courage, his sense of humor and his dance. He also tells him how attractive he is in women's eyes.

21. What fate is waiting for Charlie at the meeting of Student-Faculty Discipline Committee on that Monday morning?

He will be placed on stage, facing Headmaster Trask's questioning in front of the whole student body. If he refuses to tell out the three boys' names, he will be faced with severe punishment of being expelled. If he can break his promise and tell their names to the public, he can get the school's direct recommendation to Harvard.

22. How does the headmaster react to the Colonel's appearing at the meeting? How does the Colonel introduce himself?

Trask is annoyed at the Colonel's appearance for his arrival disturbs his speech and the Colonel shows no respect to him as an absolute authority in the school. The Colonel introduces himself as the friend of Charlie's parents who is entrusted to come to stand for Charlie's interest.

23. How is Charlie facing the fire and what is the personal quality of Charlie that supports him to face the fire? How is George hiding in his big daddy's pocket?

Charlie keeps to his own integrity. Though he is deeply pressured, he believes it's not right to betray his integrity. However, George keeps finding excuses to avoid answering Trask's question directly. Later, under the pressure, he gives out the three boys' names and advises Trask to go to ask Charlie.

24. How does the Colonel defend Charlie? How does the audience react to the Colonel's brilliant speech? How does the Colonel's speech save Charlie from punishment?

The Colonel declares Charlie is a model for all people in front of a dilemma. Because instead of running for hide, which is the easiest choice for most men including himself, Charlie chooses to face the fire and keep to his integrity. He further argues that what Charlie does represents the real spirit the school declares to uphold, so if the school decides to expel Charlie because he refuses to sell his soul for a bright future, then the school is killing the spirit it claims to instill. Finally, the Colonel urges the school, which declares itself as the cradle of leadership, should protect the boy and embrace his spirit instead of destroying him, for the boy's integrity and courage represent qualities of real leadership. He promises that some day, the boy will make the school proud of him.

The audience are totally overwhelmed by his speech and all the boys stand up, applauding and hailing for such a wonderful speech. The committee is also convinced that Charlie is the only one in the incidence who should be excused.

25. What do women mean to the Colonel?

To him, women mean love for life and they are the source of vitality and warmth in life. He is always sensitive to them as he is always sensitive to the beauty of life.

26. What does the title of the movie *Scent of a Woman* imply?

Answers to this question may vary.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background (Private Education in the United States):

Private education in the United States consists of programs of instruction that are created, controlled, operated, and principally financed by private individuals and groups rather than by governments. About 11 percent of American elementary and secondary school (high school) students attend private schools, and 24 percent of all elementary and secondary schools in the United States are private. Private education is also offered at many American preschools as well as at many colleges, universities, and technical institutes.

Unlike public elementary and secondary schools, which are free, nearly all private schools charge some form of tuition. The amount of private school tuition varies widely according to the type of school and the level of education offered. Although the cost of private education is beyond the reach of many American families, most private schools offer some form of financial aid to low-income applicants. In addition to revenue generated by tuition payments, private schools are supported mainly by funds from other private sources, such as religious organizations, endowments, grants, and charitable donations.

Private schools in the United States may be broadly classified as either religious or non-sectarian (non-religious) institutions. The most common types of religious schools in the United States are supported by various branches of the Catholic Church. Some private schools are known as boarding schools because they offer lodging to students in addition to academic instruction. Private schools that do not offer lodging are often called day schools. Private schools that focus on academic preparation for college are sometimes called preparatory schools or prep schools. Both religious and non-sectarian private schools may feature other distinguishing characteristics, such as single-sex enrollment or residential facilities.

Unlike public schools—which are controlled by state and local governments—private schools in the United States are relatively free from governmental regulation. Consequently, private schools vary considerably in their philosophy, mission, and educational method. Nevertheless, private schools typically share certain characteristics that distinguish them from public schools. These include a decentralized system of governance, high academic expectations, small enrollment and class size, and shared values.

Themes:

- a. Friendship and Needs:** Think five to ten years down the track, who will play a vital role in your life? Will you still be friends with the ones you call friends now? What really is the definition of true friendship? And how do Charlie and Slade portray this, in the film *Scent of a Woman*? Furthermore, why is friendship so important in society? Why does it have such a big impact on our lives? Some people think it gives us

security and a feeling of wanting to be needed, but is that all we really need? Charlie and Slade are two men, polar opposites it would seem, each struggling with life choices. One is plagued with a moral crisis while the other is a walking crisis, yet these two seem to find in each other the strength to face their particular problems. Charlie Simms is a 17-year-old boy, who goes to a private, rich boy's New Hampshire boarding school, and is on a full scholarship. He crosses paths with Lieutenant Colonel Slade, an obnoxious retired colonel with a very limited appreciation of women. He intensely despises himself, and is undergoing a rapid physical deterioration as he mentally contemplates his forthcoming death. The film follows the mismatched pair over the course of the weekend, as they begin to nurture a true friendship through their series of adventures.

- b. Integrity:** The point of the film is that Charlie's integrity is not for sale. He is not going to give up others (no matter what they did) to save his own future. Your character is based on your own decisions and should not be dictated by the acts of others. The great dilemma in Charlie's life is whether to become a snitch. The filmmakers seem to take the position that informing on another is always wrong, no matter how illegal, harmful, or stupid the incident concerned is. Charlie's classmates perpetrate a stupid prank with the sole intention of putting down another person. Add to this the fact they are perfectly satisfied to sit back in silence to let Charlie take the fall for something he didn't do, and people would be at a loss as to why Charlie should be expected to feel any loyalty toward them at all. But that is the beauty of youth, the beauty shining in the incorruptible moral strength of a young man who determines to remain true to himself no matter what happens.
- c. Crossroads in Life:** The Colonel's speech at the committee meeting really tells much. "Now I have come to the crossroads in my life. I always knew what the right path was. Without exception, I knew, but I never took it. You know why? It was too damn hard. Now, here's Charlie. He's come to the crossroads. He's chosen a path. It's the right path. It's a path made of principle that leads to character. Let him continue on his journey ... It's a valuable future ... It's gonna make you proud one day. I promise you." Most people know what are principle, honesty, and conscience. But few are courageous enough to carry them out, because they have to struggle with all the evils of human nature and fight all those temptations. This process is painful indeed.

Conflicts:

- a. Integrity and Courage vs. Wisdom and Experience:** Charlie Simms, a young prep school student who agrees to look after a blind, lonely retired Lieutenant Colonel Frank Slade during Thanksgiving holiday. Thrown into the dazzling city of New York, Charlie is in for even more surprises when the two of them spend a wild weekend. During the unexpected trip, Charlie grows up as he learns some important things from the seemingly violent and mean former army soldier, while the Colonel regains his self-confidence and passion for life through the young boy's quality character of integrity and courage. Frank teaches Charlie how to see and Charlie teaches Frank how to feel.
- b. Face the Music vs. Run for Cover:** Charlie is accidentally involved in some rich boys' mischief. The incident is taken by the headmaster as a serious challenge against the school authority. The headmaster believes that Charlie can identify the

guilty parties. Charlie finds himself in a dilemma. Should he hold his integrity and keep silent, or accept a free ride to Harvard?

The Colonel says there are two kinds of people in this world: those who stand up and face the music and those who run for cover, which best illustrates people's different reaction in the face of a clash between one's principle and one's interests. Charlie chooses to stand up and face the music, while his mischievous schoolmates decide to run for cover.

- c. To Live vs. to Die:** The Colonel used to be a brilliant soldier, brave, courageous, and smart and with glory. He served on Lyndon Johnson's staff. He enjoyed his life and the bright future. However, one accident destroyed his eyes and turned him into a blind man. Now he is living in the dark. He is bad-tempered, angry, harsh, and desperate. He doesn't have any hope and courage for living. He is in a dilemma like Charlie. The Colonel is facing his crossroad in life, to live or to die. Charlie saves the Colonel from his suicidal attempt, and we wonder will he try to live a normal life now, taking advantage of all that the blind can do regardless of not having eyesight? There are some small signs of reform: Outside, after the disciplinary hearing, a woman shows some interest in Frank in spite of his blindness and bluntness; and when he walks up the driveway to his apartment, Frank actually speaks kindly to his niece's playing children.

Performances:

Scent of a Woman won the Academy Award for Best Actor (Al Pacino) in 1992. Other nominations for the Awards are Best Picture, Best Director (Martin Brest), and Best Adapted Screenplay.

Scent of a Woman was a popular success when it was released in 1992. This movie proves again that Pacino is one of the greatest actors of our time and that we all should be very glad he chooses to portray Colonel Frank Slade in this film; no one else could have done it so competently. The story of *Scent of a Woman* stands and falls with Pacino's acting and the liveliness of his character. It is touching and makes you smile and leave you behind with the feeling that you've just have had the pleasure of meeting Colonel Frank Slade, a crazy but interesting man.

Pacino established himself during one of the film's greatest decades, the 1970s, and has become an enduring and iconic figure in the world of American movies. Born on April 25th, 1940 in Manhattan, New York, Pacino's parents divorced when he was young. His mother moved them into his grandparents' house. Pacino found that one of his favorite activities was to repeat the plots and voices of characters whom he had seen in the movies. Bored and unmotivated in school, the young Pacino found a haven in school plays, and his interest soon blossomed into a full-time career.

With his intense and gritty performances in *Scent of a Woman*, Pacino is an original in the acting profession. His Method approach would become the process of many actors throughout time, and his unbeatable number of classic roles has already made him a legend among film buffs and all aspiring actors and directors.

In 2007, Pacino won American Film Institute Life Achievement Award.

Unit 11 The Hours (2002)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. Who is Virginia Woolf? What novel is she writing? How devoted is she to the writing of the story?

Virginia Woolf is a very famous British writer in early 20th century. At the time, she is writing a novel named *Mrs. Dalloway*. She is so devoted to her writing that she is almost absorbed in her heroine's fate and remains detached and dreamlike in the real life.

2. Who is coming to visit Virginia? Is Virginia happy to see her? Why or why not?

Her sister Vanessa is coming to visit her from London. Virginia feels happy to see her because she takes Vanessa as her only connection with life in London. Also her desired life and her real life are enormously disconnected. Therefore, Virginia needs children and relatives to relieve her overly stressful life and lonely soul.

3. Why is Virginia so touched by the death of the bird? What does she say about death to the girl?

It gives her a chance to witness death, and she finds the bird so peaceful after death. She says: "When we die, we return to the place where we came from; we look smaller. That is one of the things that happens."

4. Why does Vanessa say to her little daughter that Virginia is a fortunate woman? Does she understand what is going on in Virginia's mind?

She knows that Virginia is living two lives. One is her own life, and the other is the life she is making up in her novels. She says Virginia is fortunate because she can always explore the truth of life in her novels and face life as it is. In contrast to Virginia, she thinks that her life of taking care of children and husband everyday is trivial.

She can understand what is going on in Virginia's mind, but she cannot personally feel the problem Virginia is faced with.

5. Why does Virginia's husband try to persuade her to stay in the countryside? Why does she insist on going back to London? Why does he compromise finally?

Virginia's husband wants her to stay in the countryside because the doctor suggests country life can do good to her and get her relieved from the mental illness. However, Virginia feels disconnected and restrained staying in the countryside. She wants to return to London for that is the place where she can feel the tempo of life. Her husband cannot understand her, but as she insists she will rather die than escape life, being confined to such a rural place, he compromises out of his love for her.

6. What does Virginia say to her husband in her last letter? Why does she commit suicide?

She expresses her gratitude for her husband's love and care for her during all the years. However, she cannot recover from her mental illness and she does not want to make life so hard for her husband. Therefore, she commits suicide.

7. Who is Laura? What kind of family does she live in? Does she look happy and confident?

Laura is a housewife living in California in the 1950s. Her husband has a decent job and they are a typical American middle-class family, owning a house in a good neighborhood and raising a kid in the family. However, she looks very depressed, over-sensitive and unhappy.

8. What is Laura reading during the day? Does she like it? Why or why not?

She is reading Virginia's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. She likes the novel very much because she feels herself living a life just like Mrs. Dalloway, who has no happiness and confidence inside, but has no courage to face life, and always pretends to be happy and confident in front of others.

9. Does Laura's husband notice that there is something wrong with his wife? Why or why not?

The husband is too busy with his work to notice the wife's problem. He is devoted to his own job and lifestyle, taking it for granted that if he supports the family well and feels happy, his wife should be happy too.

10. What does Laura suggest doing to celebrate her husband's birthday? Does she really feel excited about the idea? Then why does she make the suggestion?

She suggests making a birthday cake to show her love and concern for her husband. But actually, she has no interest in it at all. She makes such a suggestion as a final desperate attempt to cover her real feeling of frustration and depression, to convince others and especially herself that she enjoys such a life and feels satisfied.

11. Who comes to visit Laura? What does she confide to Laura? Why does she always put on a happy and confident look?

Kitty, a neighbor and friend, comes to visit her. She confides to Laura that she is going to have an operation soon and if it fails, she will never get pregnant. Such a possibility leaves her in a worried, unhappy and almost desperate state because she loves her husband so much that she cannot bear the idea of leaving him no children at all. However, she always puts on a happy and confident look because she does not want others to look at her as a loser in life and she has no courage to face the problem at all.

12. How does Laura comfort her neighbor, Kitty? Why does she feel so sympathetic and close to Kitty? Does she say anything about her own problem to Kitty? Why or why not?

Laura holds Kitty in her arms and kisses her on her lips. She feels so close to Kitty because just like Kitty, she is also covering her real disappointment of life and pretends to be happy and confident. However, she says nothing to Kitty about her problem because she has been used to keeping all her feelings to herself and she finds no way to share with others.

13. What does Laura decide to do after Kitty leaves? What does she say to her son before leaving him to the babysitter? Is the boy willing to let her go? Why or why not?

She decides to remake the birthday cake and then sends her son to a babysitter so that she can drive to a hotel by herself and commits suicide there. She says to her son that she has something to do and she has to leave him. The boy is unwilling to let her go because as he always stays with the mom and observes her closely, he

can sense her desperation, and he feels his mom will never come back to him.

- 14. Does Laura carry out her plan? What makes her change her mind? What does she say to her son on their way home? Does she believe in what she says?**

Laura does not carry out her plan because she still cares about her son and her unborn baby, and she is still longing for life. She reassures her son that she loves him and everything will be fine. However, she knows that she just cannot bear living such a depressed life, and she must do something to make a change.

- 15. What plan does Laura make on her husband's birthday? What kind of life does she live after leaving her family?**

She plans to leave the family after her second baby is born. She carries out her plan by the time and she goes to Canada working as a librarian there with all freedom and fulfillment. She believes that she finds her identity but still she does not find happiness, since a life without love and care can never be happy.

- 16. Who is Clarissa? What is she preparing for? Why is she so determined to hold the party?**

Clarissa is an editor of a newspaper, and she is the ex-girlfriend of Laura's son, Richard. Clarissa is preparing for a celebration party for Richard. She is determined to hold the party to show Richard, herself and all the others that both Richard and her are enjoying life, feeling happy and confident. The party is a way for her to escape the reality and cover the sad truth of the unhappiness and uncertainties in their life.

- 17. Does Richard like the idea of the ceremony and the party? Why does he agree to go to the party then?**

Richard hates the idea of the party because he is tired of pretending to enjoy life while life means nothing but suffering to him. However, he agrees to go to the party because he doesn't want to disappoint Clarissa.

- 18. Who is Louis? What does Louise say about Richard's latest book? What does Clarissa say in return?**

Louise is a close friend of Clarissa and Richard, and he used to take care of Richard with Clarissa. Louise does not think highly of Richard's latest book because he thinks it is just a narration of trivial happenings in real life. It writes too many details about a woman's life and has her kill herself without any obvious reason. Clarissa says in return that she feels sorry that Richard writes nothing about Louise in his book. She is indicating that Louise leaves Richard to her and goes to seek his own happiness.

- 19. Why does Clarissa think Louis is courageous? Why does she suddenly break down?**

She thinks Louise is courageous because he has the courage to do as he wants to do and to face life as it is. However, she has no such courage and her pretending to be happy and strong gives her too much pressure which makes her suddenly break down. Clarissa has been trapped for years in her relationship with Richard.

- 20. What does Clarissa's daughter find Clarissa doing before the party? Why is Clarissa so sad? What does she say about happiness?**

She finds Clarissa crying before the party. Clarissa is so sad because Richard is reluctant to show up at the party and he has never been positive and encouraging to the things she has done for him. His sarcastic attitude makes her feel her life is

trivial.

She tells her daughter how happy she was when she was still young falling in love with Richard. But during the years after that, she has lost her taste of happiness.

21. Why does Richard call Clarissa Mrs. Dalloway? Why does he commit suicide?

He feels Clarissa is unhappy and unconfident. He knows that she does everything to please others and only by doing so can she fool herself, pretend to be happy and confident, and keep refusing to face life as it is. Her attitude toward life fits exactly in the description of Mrs. Dalloway's life in Virginia's novel, so he keeps calling her that way.

Richard loves Clarissa but he feels he is struggling and suffering just to satisfy Clarissa. Clarissa is living just for him. Finally, he cannot bear the pressure any more and commits suicide. He wants to give Clarissa the chance to think of her own life.

22. Why does Laura come to visit Clarissa? What does she say about her son and his novel? How does she feel about the death of her family members? Does she regret her choice?

Laura is invited by Clarissa as a surprise guest at Richard's party. She reads her son's novel and she believes her son is describing her life in the book. She feels sorry that her son makes her die in the story but she can understand. She feels sad about the family members' death. She doesn't feel happy when she outlives all her family members. She says it is meaningless to regret when there is no choice. That is all you can bear. "It was death. I chose life."

23. Do the three ladies have anything in common? What do they want most in life? Can they have it? Why or why not? How do they release themselves from the suffering?

Answers to these questions may vary.

24. Why does Virginia write such a story of *Mrs. Dalloway*? What does she want to say in this novel? What does the title of the movie *The Hours* imply?

Answers to these questions may vary.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is based, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

- a. Virginia Woolf:** Virginia Woolf is a British author who made an original contribution to the form of the novel. She is also a distinguished feminist essayist, a critic in *The Times Literary Supplement*, and a central figure of Bloomsbury Group.

Virginia Woolf's books were published by Hogarth Press, which she founded with her husband, Leonard Woolf, a critic and writer. Originally their printing machine was small enough to fit on a kitchen table, but their publications later included T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* (1922), fictions by Maxim Gorky, E. M. Forster, and Katherine Mansfield, and the complete 24-volume translation of the works of Sigmund Freud. In her works, Woolf developed innovative literary techniques in order to reveal women's experience and find an alternative to the male-dominated view of reality. In her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf argued that John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells and other realistic English novelists dealt in surfaces but to get underneath these surfaces one must use less restricted presentation of life, and such devices as stream of consciousness and interior monologue abandon linear narrative. She often dealt with marital disappointments and frustrations ironically. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf wrote: "So that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball."

- b. **Mrs. Dalloway:** *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) formed a web of thoughts of several groups of people during the course of a single day. There is little action, but much movement in time from present to past and back again. The central figure, Clarissa Dalloway, married to Richard Dalloway, is a wealthy London hostess. She spends her day in London preparing for her evening party. She recalls her life before World War I, her friendship with the unconventional Sally Seton, and her relationship with Peter Walsh. At her party she never meets the shell-shocked veteran Septimus Smith, one of the first Englishmen to enlist in the war. Sally returns as Lady Rosseter, Peter Walsh is still enamored with Mrs. Dalloway, the prime minister arrives, and Smith commits suicide.
- c. **Women's Liberation Movement:** Woolf's works best reflect women's liberation movement. This movement is for the political, social, and educational equality of women with men; the movement has occurred mainly in Europe and the United States. It has its roots in the humanism of the 18th century and in the Industrial Revolution. Feminist issues range from access to employment, education, child care, contraception, and abortion, to equality in the workplace, changing family roles, redress for sexual harassment in the workplace, and the need for equal political representation. The women's liberation movement is the social struggle which aims to eliminate forms of oppression based on gender and to gain for women equal economic and social status and rights to determine their own lives as are enjoyed by men. In the 1960s, the women's liberation movement burst suddenly into the public consciousness and quickly grew into the largest social movement in the history of the United States.

Women's liberation was a continuation of the 19th-century women's rights movement, but that struggle had been dormant since the 1920s and even the founders of second-wave feminism knew little about the women and men who preceded them. From the Enlightenment, for example in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in England in 1792, women of the educated classes began to promote the rights of women in education, work and so forth. Harriet Taylor was the real author of *The Subjection of Women*, published under the name of her husband John Stuart Mill; similarly, Mary Ann Evans (known by her pen name George Eliot) was the real author of the writings of Herbert Spencer on women's liberation. Notions of women's emancipation in this period were often associated with emergent Utopian socialist movements.

Themes:

- a. **Meaning of Life:** What does it mean to be alive? This is the question that *The Hours* poses through its three women characters in three different periods of time. Although the movie fails to give ready answers, it clearly demonstrates that living should be of personal freedom that expanded greatly during the decades involved. This freedom includes many aspects. For Woolf, this may be her way of making a statement on liberal feminism, but then, human responsibilities and conscience remain the governing facts of life. The movie also shows that suicide comes in different ways for different reasons. The life chosen should be a life of meaning, that is, the hours of living should be hours full of loving.
- b. **Individual Happiness:** The philosophical heart of this film is that individual happiness is the highest good in anyone's life, and the brave are those who have the courage to put personal fulfillment above any other entanglement. To sharpen the point, it's not that Laura's unhappiness is hard to grasp, though she never talks to her nice-guy husband, or anybody else, about what she's feeling. Laura owes nothing to her husband and children, not even an explanation, and that her pursuit of happiness should trump everything else—and that this should be obvious to any fair-minded viewer. It's superficial to think that happiness comes easy; some people have everything, and yet are still estranged from themselves. It's even more superficial, though, to think the point of life is to find personal happiness. Most people outgrow that egotistical worldview after their teenage years, and come to understand that the task is to live a meaningful life, if not a happy one. A meaningful life is to be found in love, in living nobly and selflessly in the service of something or someone greater than oneself: family, friends, country, humanity, or some combination thereof. The secret to happiness is paradoxical: You find it most truly and deeply through loving others more than you love yourself. Only a father can know how joyful it feels to cradle his crying newborn at three in the morning. Only a saint or a hero knows the joy of dying so that others might live.
- c. **Suicide:** If you cannot gain happiness, you may choose suicide. Demanding to return to London, Virginia tells her husband, "My life has been stolen from me. I'm living in a town I have no wish to live in. I am living a life I have no wish to live ... If it is a choice between Richmond and death, I choose death." Pregnant Laura drops her son off at the sitter's house, checks into a hotel with the novel, and plans to commit suicide. Richard taunts Clarissa Vaughan for her devotion to him, calling her "Mrs. Dalloway," with the implication that she is wasting her life in service to him. "Just wait till I die," he tells her. "Then you're going to have to think of yourself. How are you going to like that?" In the end, Richard commits suicide by throwing himself out his high-rise bedroom window. In his final words to Clarissa, he tells her that she's got to let him go, that he must do what he feels is best for himself.

Conflicts:

- a. **Pains vs. Love:** Virginia, the depressed writer drowns herself in 1941. In her will she writes to her husband, "Dearest, I feel certain that I'm going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of these terrible times, and I ... What I want to say is that I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You've been entirely patient with me and incredibly good. Everything is gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer. I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been."

Virginia wants to die because she fears that her madness is returning again and she won't be able to go through it. She wants to free herself and spare her loved ones. On the contrary, she values life. She once says to her husband, "Someone has to die in order that the rest of us will value life." In her eyes, death isn't merely the end of a depressed being but a sign to tell people how beautiful life is. So at the end of the movie, she says in the voice-over, "Look at life in the face. To know it for what it is. To love it for what it is."

b. Death vs. Life: Laura Brown can't find her identity of a wife and mother. There is no fulfillment in her life. The misery caused by this is no less than that caused by conventional disasters one experiences. Therefore, she intends to die because she isn't brave enough to break the shackles of life. But as the reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* goes on, the yearning for combating with the present situation awakes. Laura changes her idea. She is not going to commit suicide. Instead she leaves her husband and the two children and goes to Canada to work as a librarian. She abandons the family, the place where she feels suffocated and goes to a place where she can breathe. As what she says to Clarissa later, "There are times when you don't belong and you think you're going to kill yourself ... What does it mean to regret when you have no choice? It is what you can bear ... It was death. I chose life." Laura was struggling and is still struggling.

c. Avoiding Life vs. Looking at Life in the Face: Clarissa Vaughan faces not her own death but Richard Brown's death. Her life is a mess. Clarissa can't define her relationship with Richard—her ex-lover. She gets caught up in some way and lives desperately. As an editor, she doesn't lack social life—busy schedule and a circle of friends. And she is an expert on holding parties. Again on this day, she is busy preparing a party for Richard, a writer-poet whose most recent work just won some major prize. She is kind of leading a life of Mrs. Dalloway, "always holding parties to cover the silence." It is until Richard's death that she stops hiding her fears and begins to face life as it is. In a sense, Richard's death brings her a new life because only then can she get rid of the indefinite feeling toward Richard and only then can she look at life in the face and love it for what it is.

Performances:

The Hours won Oscar Best Actress (Nicole Kidman) and was nominated for eight Academy Awards, including Best Supporting Actor (Ed Harris), Best Supporting Actress (Julianne Moore), Best Costume Design (Ann Roth), Best Director (Stephen Daldry), Best Editing (Peter Boyle), Best Original Score (Philip Glass), Best Picture (Scott Rudin, Robert Fox) and Best Adapted Screenplay (David Hare).

The Hours contains some rather dense and weighty material, and will have the strongest appeal for those who are familiar with *Mrs. Dalloway*. They will regard *The Hours* as a brilliant, literate motion picture. Those who don't know Woolf from Bronte will find Stephen Daldry's film to be pretentious and glacially paced.

The Hours is a triumph of acting. The portrayal most likely to garner notice is Nicole Kidman in large part because she undergoes a physical transformation that renders her nearly unrecognizable. Wearing a prosthetic nose and buried under layers of makeup that hide her beauty, she comes across as being sickly, homely, and somewhat demented. However, although Kidman's acting is strong, she overshadows neither Julianne Moore nor Meryl Streep, both of whom give taut, tightly controlled performances. These three impeccable actresses make *The Hours* a thing of beauty.

Unit 12 Central Park (2004)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. Who are the designers of Central Park?

Frederic Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Olmsted led a life of dilettante until 1857. When he entered the competition to build Central Park, he had no experience in designing anything like it. Olmsted joined forces with Calvert Vaux, an established architect. Together they created a plan, which some consider the greatest work of art of the 19th century.

2. What is their notion of building the park?

Their notion is to build a park that would be a democratic park, a park open to all of the people. It should present rural scenes with the sense of pastoralness and peacefulness, and act as a healing device between the classes.

3. Why was there a need for such a park in the 1850s?

The 1850s was a boom time. Big money was pouring in. People were getting richer and richer. They were confident that the city of New York would become a world-class metropolis, so they needed a world-class park there as well. Besides, there was a sense among the rich that the gap between the rich and the poor was dividing the city into two parts, and they wanted something to be done to soften the hard feelings between classes.

4. Where else can you find such success in urban landscape besides New York?

You can also see such success in cities from Boston to San Francisco, Washington D.C. to Seattle across the United States.

5. How do people value Central Park?

Central Park will always be America's first people's park, not just the most famous, but in the heart of many, the best.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects:

- a. The history of Central Park;
- b. The taste of nature that Central Park offers to the people in New York;
- c. The future greening programs of Beijing (or your city);
- d. Whether we need a Central Park in Beijing (or your city) or not.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

a. The history of Central Park

Central Park is one of the urban wonders of the world, a green oasis in the great concrete, high-rise landscape of New York City. Originally conceived in the salons of wealthy New Yorkers in the early 1850s, the park project spanned more than a decade and cost the city ten million dollars. The purpose was to refute the European view that

Americans lacked a sense of civic duty and appreciation for cultural refinement and instead possessed an unhealthy and individualistic materialism that precluded interest in the common good. The bruised egos of New York high society envisioned a sweeping pastoral landscape, among which the wealthy could parade in their carriages, socialize, and “be seen” and in which the poor could benefit from clean air and uplifting recreation.

The creation of a “Central Park”

After years of debate over the location, the park’s construction finally began in 1857, based on the winner of a park design contest, the “Greensward Plan,” of Frederick Law Olmsted, the park superintendent, and Calvert Vaux, an architect. The city acquired 840 acres located in the center of Manhattan, spanning two and a half miles from 59th street to 106th Street (in 1863 the park was extended north to 110th Street) and half a mile from Fifth Avenue to Eighth Avenue. The terrain here was unsuitable for commercial building and the site for the new park offered rocky vistas, swamps which would be converted into lakes, and the old city reservoir. These varied elements would be refined, enhanced, diminished, and eradicated to create a park in the style of European public grounds, with an unspoiled countryside appearance. To this end, Olmsted and Vaux’s plan included four transverse roads to carry cross-town traffic below the park level. Architectural structures were to be kept to a minimum—only four buildings existed in the original plans for the park—and the design and building material of the bridges were chosen to assure that they were integrated as naturally as possible into their surrounding landscapes. Thousands of Irish, German, and New England-area laborers toiled ten-hour days under the direction of architect-in-chief and head foreman Olmsted. In the winter of 1858, the park’s first area was opened to the public; December of that same year saw New Yorkers skating on the 20-acre lake south of the Ramble. The final stages of the park’s construction began in 1863, with the landscaping and building of the newly acquired area from 106th to 110th Streets.

The park of the wealth

In the first decade of the park’s completion, it became clear for whom it was built. Located too far uptown to be within distance for the city’s working-class population, the park was a distant oasis to them. Train fare represented a greater expenditure than most of the workers could afford, so in the 1860s the park remained the playground of the wealthy. The afternoons saw the park’s paths crowded with the luxurious carriages that were the status symbol of the day. Women socialized there in the afternoons and on weekends their husbands would join them for concerts or carriage rides. Saturday afternoon concerts attracted middle-class audiences as well, but the six-day work week precluded attendance by the working-class population of the city. As a result, workers comprised but a fraction of the visitors to the park until the late 19th century, when they launched a successful campaign to hold concerts on Sundays as well.

The park of the people

As the city and the park moved into the 20th century, the lower reservoir was drained and turned into the Great Lawn. The first playground, complete with jungle gyms and slides, was installed in the park in 1926, despite opposition by conservationists, who argued that the park was intended as a countryside escape for urban dwellers. The playground, used mostly by the children of middle and working class parents, was a great success; by the 1940s, Central Park was home to more than

20 playgrounds. As the park became less and less an elite oasis and escape, and was shaped more and more by the needs of the growing population of New York City, its uses evolved and expanded; by the middle of the 20th century, ball clubs were allowed to play in the park, and the “Please Keep off the Grass” signs which had dotted the lush meadows of the park were a thing of the past.

Central Park today

In the 1960s and 1970s the park’s maintenance entered a decline; despite its growing use for concerts and rallies, clean-up, planting, and general maintenance fell by the wayside. Many parts of the park were in sad disrepair, from the low stone wall which surrounded it to the drainage system that kept the transverses from flooding. During the early 1980s, there was a massive attempt to involve New Yorkers in the upkeep of their beloved park, including the “You Gotta Have a Park” campaign and the formation of a private fundraising body, the Central Park Conservancy to fund repairs projects. Today, as the major site of most New Yorkers’ recreation, the park hosts millions of visitors yearly engaging in such activities as roller skating, fine dining, watching free performances of Shakespeare in the park, and relaxing and sunbathing in the meadow.

b. The taste of nature that Central Park offers to the people in New York

Central Park has served as the focal point for New York City for 150 years. It plays a central role in the life of this city and its people, serving as a place for escape, camaraderie, respite, relaxation, peace, recreation, and more importantly, learning. A variety of educational programs are conducted by or through Central Park. Therefore, besides providing a perfect recreational place for the metropolitan people, the park sets up another higher objective—disseminating knowledge for the education of all, including architecture, sculpture, botany, zoology, painting and so forth.

The original conception of Central Park’s function is to provide mental and spiritual refreshment for people. Later new ideas were constantly added. Today the function of education has become an integral aspect of the general conception. New Yorkers as well as visitors from other places benefit from the perfect environment of learning, researching and discovering in the Park. They like referring to the Park as “an outdoor classroom.”

The function of education is well performed in education programs and related programs conducted by the staff in the Central Park Conservancy, the managerial organization of the Park. Sustained efforts have been made to produce a series of dynamic, instructive and inspiring programs. Currently the education programs involve diverse disciplines and target people at all ages. The programs consist of “Continuing Education,” “Keeping it Green—Community Service,” “School of Group Classes” and “Children’s Education,” etc.

Education for children has always been a big concern of the program organizers. The Children’s Education Committee works in conjunction with the Central Park Conservancy’s Education Department to introduce public and private school children to Central Park’s wonders. Every Wednesday during the school year, docents go into the schools in Manhattan to take students on a “virtual field trip” of the Park, where students learn about the Park’s natural wildlife, ecosystems, architecture, and history. This interactive slide tour shows the familiar and unfamiliar Park. Docents discuss students’ Park experiences and their role as Park stewards. The program provides an

exciting educational experience for school children and is a wonderful introduction to other Conservancy programs.

The program of “School Group Classes” provides children with good opportunities to learn from and enjoy the unique natural and cultural resources in parks. Exciting pre- and post-visit classroom activities enhance students’ learning, both in the Park and in the classroom. Here is a particular outdoor class called “Dirt on Dirt.” In this class, children are supposed to learn some of the science behind the soil and water in the urban jungle; explore the hidden world of compost; find out if soil cools down faster than water; see how a giant rainstorm affects their drinking water without getting wet and join the Conservancy’s Soil and Water Lab Scientist to explore the natural world. What an exciting and helpful class!

You may be surprised to find that the Central Park Conservancy sets up the Youth Leadership Programs. Take one program named “ROOTS” (Restoration of the Outdoors Organized by Teen Students) for example. ROOTS students learn about horticultural restoration and woodland management through hands-on restoration projects in the Hallett Nature Sanctuary and other natural habitats. By offering such programs, they provide a stimulating way for high school students to learn about the environment, meet teens with similar interests, discover the variety of career opportunities that are available in the areas of parks and recreation, develop leadership skills, and foster a sense of stewardship for Central Park and other natural environments.

There are also a lot of programs for adult education covering various disciplines. Such programs are called Continuing Education. “Central Park across the Curriculum” is just a latest program, which provides teachers and other educators with training, materials, and technical assistance. The program is interdisciplinary by design and open to schoolteachers, after-school and home-school providers, community organizations, and other New York City groups that work with students. Those who apply for such programs can study the anatomy, physiology and ecology of Central Park’s trees and flowers in the class of “Trees and Flowers Kit;” or explore the landscapes designed by Frederic Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux and to use their creativity to design passive and recreational landscapes of their own in “Art and Design Kit;” or discover lost villages, churches and the transformation of Central Park’s landscapes into areas for passive and active recreation for people from all over the world in “History and Social Studies Kit.”

Another kind of program is especially worth mentioning here—the one named “Keep it Green—Community Service.” Students who participate in it will assist with one of the following: raking, mulching, planting, weeding, etc. These hands-on projects combine Park stewardship with an environmental education component and are a fun, meaningful way for students to serve their community. A true win-win program, isn’t it?

c. The future greening programs of Beijing (or your city)

Construction of city green land in Beijing

Beijing Municipal Administration Center of Parks will concentrate on enhancing the ecologic environment construction, creating better human habitat environment and promoting sustainable development. And more efforts will be made to increase the total urban green land and to improve the management level for urban landscaping and constructions.

1. Green land construction in districts

In order to host the 2008 Olympic Games successfully, the government has put

forward the conception of “Green Olympics, Hi-Tech Olympics, People’s Olympics.” In order to meet the demands of “Green Olympics,” the Administration Center speeds up the construction of green land in central districts. The construction of the East Royal City Wall Relic Park, the Changpu River Park, the Ming Wall Relic Park and the Yuquan Park improves the ecologic environment, creates more recreation space for citizens, lessens the heat island effect and remedies the imbalance of green land development.

2. Green land construction along city roads

There should be more green land and more beautiful scenes along city roads, which are important elements of a city’s image. In order to improve the situation, the Beijing municipal bureau enlarges the green land along newly built roads while gradually rectifying the existing roads. The rectified roads include such major roads like Airport Road, Chang An Avenue and its extension, 2nd Ring Road, etc.

3. Green land construction in communities

The green land construction in communities is going on stably. The design and construction of lands are of higher quality. There are 100 more hectares green lands each year.

4. Green land construction in courtyards

People are becoming more and more conscious of the refreshing and beautifying functions of green lands. For enterprises and governmental organs with their own courtyards, considerations have been made to better design and maintain these courtyards. There used to be a lot of walled courtyards, the beauty of which is locked between the walls. In recent years, the bureau has removed the walls of most courtyards in order to present the public with an open view of the green lands.

d. Whether we need a Central Park in Beijing (or your city) or not

Pros

The existing parks in Beijing have failed to attract a large crowd to relax, entertain and exercise on a regular basis to some degree. They have failed to bring nature to the heart of the city. The New York Central Park is a successful and imitable example for us to build a Central Park in Beijing.

Cons

It’s not feasible to build a Central Park in Beijing. First, it is hard to find a proper location, with the city being highly developed and densely populated. Second, it is very expensive for the construction and daily maintenance of such a park. Thirdly, the Central Park may not fit in with the image of Beijing. It makes one feel awkward to imagine a natural park with recreational facilities and entertaining equipment among glazed tiles and red bricks.

Unit 13 Life of Pi (2012)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

1. When Martel, the novelist, comes to meet Pi Patel, what does he expect from the Indian immigrant who moved to live in Canada many years ago?

Martel is caught in despair for not being able to think of another story which is worth writing after the success of his first novel, and he decides to try his luck with Pi because he is told by an Indian stranger in a chance encounter that one of his folks, Pi has a most unusual story which may attract many people.

2. How does Patel get the name “Pi”? What does it stand for?

Patel is named as Piscine by his father after the name of a swimming pool in France and he is very much annoyed with the name because kids at school give him a nickname “Pissing” after it. At the beginning of a new school year, he introduces himself as Pi which is both the short term of his name and a tribute to the irrational number with infinite length. In the film, the name of Pi may also bear a symbolic meaning which indicates the irrationality of numerous human beings being born into the world.

3. What does Pi say to Martel about faith and doubt after recalling his pursuit of faith for all the years?

Instead of being converted to a single religion, Pi follows all the religions he gets the chance to know. He believes while faith may help a man think rationally, it is doubt that keeps faith a living thing because the strength of faith cannot be learned until it is tested.

4. What does Pi’s parents do for a living? Are they religious? What does the family think of Pi’s devoted pursuit of a religious faith?

Pi’s father is a zookeeper and his mom helps his dad run the business which is their major source of income. Pi’s mom adopts her religious belief in Hinduism after her family. Pi’s dad drops his faith in religion after his life was once saved by western medicine and then turns to worship the reason of science. He takes Pi’s explorations in different religions as blind worships which is quite against the spirit of reason. Though his mom seems to be the only one in the family who believes in the soothing power of a religion, she takes Pi’s behavior as a child’s effort in looking for the right religion for himself.

5. Who is Richard Parker? Why does Pi go to feed it despite his father’s warnings?

Richard Parker is the given name of the tiger in the zoo. It was named originally as “Thirsty” for being caught by the lake, drinking water but later, due to a clerical error, the tiger got the name of its hunter, Richard Parker. Pi goes to feed the tiger because he believes he sees its soul in its eyes and thus he wants to get close and say hello to it.

6. What does Pi’s father do to warn him not to come close to the tiger again? Why does he feel so strongly about it?

Despite the mother’s protest, Pi’s father insists to have the boy see in his own eyes how the tiger can snap his prey in a most violent and blooded way. He takes it as a

lesson to teach the boy that animals are rather man's enemies than playmates. He claims that what Pi sees in the tiger's eyes is nothing but his own reflection and the best thing to do with animals is to keep them locked up or at least distanced.

7. Why does Pi go to learn music and how does he meet Anandi? How do they come close to each other?

As Pi explains, after his father prevents him from getting close to the tiger, life loses part of its excitement. The boredom and irrationality of school work make him feel it necessary to search for something that may bring back meaning to his life. Music gives him such an outlet and he comes across Anandi once he goes to play rhymes for a dance class. Pi is eager to know the symbolic meaning of Anandi's final move in the dance and the girl explains to him that gesture means to say that the god of love is hiding in the forest. The lively talks about dance, love, and the tiger bring the youthful hearts so close that they soon fall in love with each other.

8. Why does Pi's father decide to move the whole family to Canada? What is his plan? Is Pi willing to leave India?

While a nationwide uprising throws the country into a state of emergency, the zoo is losing its business and to make things worse, the city council stops its support to the zoo. Being caught in a financial difficulty and a strong sense of insecurity, Pi's father decides to move the family to Canada. He learns that his animals can sell a much higher price there so he plans to take the animals with them and he believes that with such an amount of money, the family can get soon settled down and have a new start there. He buys all of them the tickets to board a ship owned by a Japanese shipping company and it is not until the last minute that Pi comes to know this family decision. He feels very sad to leave India because he has to leave Anandi, leave the very familiar way of life behind and head for an unknown future.

9. What is the challenge the father has to face during their sailing in the Pacific Ocean? How does he solve the problem?

Pi's father is not experienced in taking care of the animals and he can only hope that the drugs can help the seasick animals and things may get better when they get their supplies at Manila.

10. Why do Pi's parents have a dispute with the cook? How do they cope with it?

Pi's parents get into trouble with the cook because the guy is so racist and hostile that he bluntly refuses to serve vegetarian food to them. The Asian sailor gives them some comfort by persuading them that on the ship, gravy can be considered simply as flavor instead of meat which implies that for the sake of survival, they have to excuse themselves for dropping the religious practice.

11. What happens to Pi and his family on that stormy night? Who are together with Pi in the ark? How do they make their ways onto the ark?

There is a disastrous shipwreck on the stormy night. Pi survives it because at the time when the seawater starts to flood in, he is wandering on the deck and has the time to take a quick action. Though he desperately attempts to look for his parents and brother, he is forced out by the seawater and is then thrown by the sailors into the ark. The ship goes down so fast that no one else seems to have a chance to survive the disaster except the zebra who jumps in the ark and breaks its leg, the tiger Richard Parker who jumps into the ocean and struggles onto the ark, the hyena who enters the ark without being noticed and the Orange Juice who climbs onto a bag of floating bananas, drifts close to the ark on the next morning and is finally

dragged onto the ark by Pi. Pi is very sad to know that just like how he lost his family, Orange Juice also lost her son in the shipwreck.

12. What happens to the zebra? What does Pi do with it? At what moment does Richard Parker jump out all of a sudden and how does Pi react to all this?

The zebra is attacked and eaten by the vicious hyena. Pi feels so disgusted and scared but all he can do at the moment is to yell and cry in a hysterical way. It is not until Orange Juice is killed by the hyena in a sudden attack that Pi is about to burst out. But before he takes any action, Richard Parker jumps out with a snarl at the particular moment and launches a deadly attack to the hyena. Pi is so much taken aback by the violent power of the tiger that he quickly runs for his life and later escapes onto a raft which is tied to the ark and keeps a safe distance from it as well. Pi is in deep sorrow for the loss of his family and he is also pretty shocked by the violent killings on the ark. Most of all, he is caught in extreme fear of the tiger whom he takes as the biggest threat to his life.

13. What stuff does Pi find in the ark which may help him survive? What tips does he get from the brochure? Is he successful in dealing with the tiger?

Pi finds cans of food, some useful tools including an axe, a writing pad with a pencil and a brochure which gives instructions for survival after a shipwreck. Besides tips about how one should never lose hope and how to catch fish, it also gives detailed instructions about how to deal with a Bengal tiger on the ark. Pi tries all the plans but none of them works, so the tiger is still taking control of the ark as its territory and Pi has to keep a distance from it.

14. When the tiger falls into the water, what does Pi want to do at first and why does he change his mind later?

When the tiger falls off into the water, Pi takes the opportunity, jumps into the ark, swings the axe to keep it away from the ark and he even attempts to kill it at first. But he changes his mind at the last minute when he sees the eyes of the tiger begging for his mercy.

15. Why does Pi cry so hard when he has to catch and eat fish? How does he excuse himself for such a behavior?

Killing is strongly against Pi's faith but he cannot resist the temptation for survival. Pi cries in grief and he somehow takes the fish as a sign of mercy to keep him living on.

16. What happens that forces Pi to confront the tiger when the flying fish keeps pouring in? How does Pi get the big fish and what does he do with it?

On the day before, Pi moves all the supplies from the ark to the raft but to his despair, the raft is knocked over by a giant whale later at night. Fueled by great hunger, his natural instinct somehow gives him the courage to compete with the tiger for food and territory, facing the tiger, staring right into its eyes and yelling at the top of his lungs. The tiger is finally overwhelmed by his determination and decides to share the territory with him. He then cuts the fish into pieces and uses them as baits to teach the tiger gradually how to share food and how to live along with him.

17. What does Pi learn about communicating with the tiger and what does he think of it after going through all the nights with it, wandering hopelessly on the ocean?

It occurs to Pi that though the tiger cannot be tamed and befriended, it can be trained. After this long time of drifting along with it in the ocean, Pi comes to see that he cannot survive without the company of Richard Parker. The fact that he has to share the ark with the tiger keeps him alert all the time and gives him a life purpose, without which he will lose the motivation for living on.

18. What does Pi see while staring into the deep water under the starry sky? How does he feel at the time?

After drifting on the ocean for days, Pi starts to get confused and while staring into the deep water of the ocean, he sees the illusions of the animals, the ship, and the face of his mother. He feels lonely, depressed and devastated, almost losing his sober mind and his hope for life.

19. Why does Pi feel so excited as they are stuck in the horrible storm? What makes him so angry later?

For a moment, Pi is totally overwhelmed by the beauty and power of the storm. He hurries to get the tiger exposed to this moment but he soon sees how the storm shows no mercy and scares the hell out of the tiger. He then confronts the storm and the supreme power behind it out of anger and despair.

20. What kind of island does Pi see in the time of despair?

When Pi is on the edge of breakdown, thinking the tiger and himself are doomed to die, he wakes up on a morning to see that the ark is drifting ashore on a floating island network of algae. The island is in a shape of a female body and it is covered with a large forest of trees whose roots are stretching on the surface of the island looking like a network of veins in a human body. The island is inhabited by numerous meerkats and its fresh water and rich food supplies help both Pi and Richard Parker regain their strength and vitality.

21. What does he discover about the real nature of it?

When the day is giving way to the night, Pi is shocked to find out the carnivorous nature of the island. The tooth of a dead man he sees at the heart of a lotus flower as well as the bones of fish floating in the acid water convince him that the island may look like a paradise in the daytime for someone who gets lost in the middle of the ocean, but it will turn into a hell in the evenings.

22. What does Pi leave behind and how does he feel about the encounter with the island?

On the next morning, he takes off the red string from his wrist which is a gift from Anandi and ties it on a branch. Afterwards, he hurries back to the ark with enough food supplies and leaves the island with the tiger with no hesitation. Though he is very much frightened by the island, it indeed supplies them with water and food which save their lives.

23. Why is Pi crying so hard while being saved on the Mexican shore? What does he regret?

When the ark finally makes its way to the beach of Mexico, Pi is spotted and later saved by the local people. He is weeping aloud not simply because he is finally relieved for being saved after going through all the hardships, but also because he sees a moment ago Richard Parker heads into the jungle without turning back to give him a look. He regrets a lot for not being able to say goodbye to the tiger and he feels sorry that though he believes there is a soul in the tiger and expects to see an affectionate expression from it, it leaves for where it belongs to without showing any hesitation.

24. Who comes to see Pi in the hospital after he is saved? Do they accept Pi's story? What makes the story too hard to be accepted by them?

When Pi is still in hospital, two Japanese investigators from the Japanese shipping company come to ask him about the shipwreck so that they can submit a report to the insurance company. However, after listening to Pi's story about how he survives with the tiger Richard Parker, they find the story hard to believe. On the one side, it offers no explanation of the shipwreck, and on the other side many of the details cannot be proved. To make it worse, the story about the floating bananas, the Bengal tiger, the brochure which teaches how to deal with a tiger, the carnivorous island inhabited by meerkats are even going against common sense. They claim that they will not leave the boy alone unless they get some facts which can give sound explanations for what happens to the ship and to the boy afterwards.

25. What is the second story that Pi gives to the others?

To satisfy the two Japanese investigators' demand, Pi tells another story in which he makes his way into the lifeboat with the sailor, the cook and his mom while all the others die in the shipwreck. In this story, the cook kills and eats the body of the sailor who breaks his leg while jumping into the boat. And Pi's mom is killed to protect Pi from the cook's attack. To get a revenge for his mother's death, Pi kills the cook and eats his body in order to live on.

26. What similarities does Martel see in the two stories?

For a moment, the novelist Martel is quite taken aback on hearing the second story, but he soon sees the connection between the two and he claims that though both offer no explanation for the cause of the shipwreck, the characters in the two stories share so many things in common that he can tell the zebra is the sailor, hyena the cook, Orange Juice the mother and the tiger is Pi himself.

27. Which story does Martel choose to believe and why?

Martel prefers the story with the tiger though it offers no explanations, no proofs and goes all the way against common sense. He prefers it to the other story because different from the one who depicts nothing but man's selfishness, cruelty and desperation, this story carries the message of strength, hope, and self-recognition.

28. What does Pi say about the two stories and about Martel's choice?

Pi seems to be satisfied with Martel's choice, saying that though one may find the story incredible and hard to be proved, he still chooses to believe it. The choice between the two stories work like a test to prove that it is out of faith that man chooses to believe in something unbelievable and that is why Martel is told by the stranger that Pi has a story which may attract many people.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie:

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students

are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

a. The Author: *Life of Pi* is a 2012 American adventure film based on Yann Martel's 2001 novel of the same name. Yann Martel is a novelist and short-story writer, born on June 25, 1963, in Salamanca, Spain, to Canadian parents. When Martel was a young boy, his parents joined the Canadian Foreign Services, and the family moved frequently, living in Alaska, Costa Rica, Ontario, and British Columbia. Martel went on to study philosophy at Trent University in Ontario, where he discovered a love for writing. After graduating in 1985, Martel lived with his parents and worked a number of odd jobs while continuing to write fiction. He made his debut with a short-story anthology, *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios* (1993), to be followed by a novel, *Self* (1996), but neither book received much critical or commercial attention. In 2001, Martel's international literary reputation was sealed with the publication of *Life of Pi*, a runaway bestseller that went on to win the prestigious Man Booker Prize (awarded each year to the best English-language novel written by a Commonwealth or Irish author) and had since been translated into thirty languages. *We Ate the Children Last*, his second collection of short stories, appeared in 2004; and the novel *Beatrice and Virgil* in 2010.

b. The Novel and Its Historical Context: *Life of Pi* is a fantastical story of a boy marooned on a small lifeboat with a group of animals including a huge Bengal tiger, an odyssey of mystery and survival. It is set against the tumultuous period of Indian history known as the Emergency. In 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was found guilty of her 1971 election campaign and was ordered to resign. But Gandhi declared a state of emergency, suspending constitutional rights and giving herself the power to rule by decree. The Emergency lasted for 21 months and was officially ended in March 1977 when Gandhi called for a new round of elections. The historical legacy of the Emergency has been highly controversial: While civil liberties in this emerging democracy were severely curtailed and Gandhi's political opponents jailed, abused, and tortured, India's economy experienced a much-needed stabilization and growth. In *Life of Pi*, Pi's father, a zookeeper in Pondicherry, India, grows nervous about the current political situation. Speculating that Gandhi might try to take over his zoo and he would be faced with depressing economic conditions, Pi's father decides to sell off his zoo animals and move his family to Canada, setting the main action of the novel into motion.

Themes:

a. The Will to Survive: *Life of Pi* is a story about struggling to survive through seemingly insurmountable odds. The shipwrecked inhabitants of the little lifeboat don't simply acquiesce to their fate: They actively fight against it. Pi abandons his lifelong vegetarianism and eats fish to sustain himself. Orange Juice, the peaceful orangutan, fights ferociously against the hyena. Even the severely wounded zebra battles to stay alive; his slow, painful struggle vividly illustrates the sheer strength of his life force. As Martel makes clear in his novel, living creatures will often do extraordinary, unexpected, and sometimes heroic things to survive. However, they will

also do shameful and barbaric things if pressed. The hyena's treachery and the blind Frenchman's turn toward cannibalism just show how far creatures will go when faced with the possibility of extinction. At the end of the novel, when Pi raises the possibility that the fierce tiger, Richard Parker, is actually an aspect of his own personality, and that Pi himself is responsible for some of the horrific events he has narrated, the reader is forced to decide what kinds of actions are acceptable in a life-or-death situation.

b. Man and Animal: There's an interesting blurring of divisions between man and the natural world in *Life of Pi*. Human beings become more animalistic; animals become more human. The novel warns against projecting human values onto the animal world. However, the novel also admits it's impossible to experience anything without a way-of-being. The trick, therefore, is to make concessions to other species. Animals in the zoo, while essentially retaining their instincts, take on certain domestic, human-like traits. Human beings in the wild, while still retaining a few human traits, become more animalistic. Through this exchange human beings may learn the spiritual truth about themselves and the natural world.

c. Fear: If people have nothing to fear but fear itself, what about the fear of fear itself? Does that count as two fears or is it still one fear? It's this type of mind game the protagonist has to avoid on the lifeboat. Pi has to fight against being crippled by fear, as he goes about the everyday business of survival. He definitely has a lot of things to be afraid of—bone-crunching waves, man-eating sharks, and the conniving tiger, to name a few. Of course, fear also takes on an existential component in the novel, meaning that Pi also has to deal with the terror of isolation, meaninglessness, and boredom. When faced with the latter types of emptiness, maybe fighting off sharks and the tiger doesn't sound so bad. Pi has realized that in order to conquer his fear he cannot continue to hide from it. He must be brave and face what he is afraid of if he wishes to survive, or else this fear will build until it is too difficult for him to overcome.

Conflicts:

a. Man vs. Self: Throughout the movie, Pi is at a constant struggle with himself. He must decide what is more important to him, surviving or staying true to himself. To face this inner conflict with himself, he creates a scapegoat to do what he cannot make himself do, that is, Richard Parker. When he is forced to kill the chef in order to survive, he forces himself to think that it is Richard Parker that does it, not him. Even though Pi is becoming physically weak, he refuses to become mentally weak. During the 227 days of being isolated in Pacific Ocean with Richard Parker, Pi struggles to keep himself alive. From the first day he was stranded on the lifeboat alone with several wild animals, he constantly doubts whether he has a chance of surviving, and if it's worth it or not. He says to himself that some people give up as soon as they try, and some will try and then give up. But others, like himself, will keep fighting and fighting, no matter what the situation is, or how small the probability of success is. Even though Pi has his doubts and many near-death experiences, he still finds the will, courage, and desire within himself through self-struggling to continue on with his journey.

b. Man vs. Society and Nature: Pi is forced to fight against society at a very young age when he begins to practice multiple religions. He is often harassed and kicked out of temples when the priests see him. He must face all these discrimination simply

because he believes in more than one religion and that is not acceptable in the society in which he lives. When Pi leaves for Canada with his family and the Tsimtsum sinks, Pi is left stranded at sea in a lifeboat. “Everything was screaming: the sea, the wind, my heart. From the lifeboat I saw something in the water. I cried, ‘Richard Parker, is that you? It’s so hard to see. Oh, that this rain would stop! Richard Parker? Richard Parker? Yes, it is you!’ I could see his head. He was struggling to stay at the surface of the water.” Pi must then face the harsh conditions at sea and fight against the elements in order to survive. He faces hunger and dehydration from the sun although he is surrounded by an ocean full of fish. Ultimately nature takes everything from Pi including his family, and his family’s fortune.

- c. **Reason vs. Faith:** This tension between reason, logic, and argument, lies at the novel’s core. The human capacity for reason conflicts with faith repeatedly, nowhere more poignantly than in the chapters showing Pi adrift on the Pacific Ocean, where his faith, not his reason, enables Pi to survive: “I was alone and orphaned in the middle of the Pacific hanging onto an oar, an adult tiger in front of me, sharks beneath me, a storm raging about me. Had I considered my prospects in the light of reason, I surely would have given up and let go of the oar, hoping that I might drown before being eaten.” Pi’s refusal to consider his predicament “in the light of reason” opens up space for his faith to flourish, and this faith sustains him even through the darkest, most fearful moments. Fear, Pi realizes, is “life’s only true opponent,” and he holds back the fear with his faith, no matter what religion embodies that faith.

Performances:

Ang Lee is an Academy Award-winning director, producer and screenwriter whose films include *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Life of Pi* and so on. Lee attended the Taiwan Academy of Art and then traveled to the United States, where he studied at the University of Illinois and New York University. Lee’s directorial debut was *Pushing Hands* (*Tui Shou*) in 1991. Later films include *Sense and Sensibility* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. In 2006, Lee became the first Asian to win an Academy Award for Best Director.

Life of Pi wins the Academy Awards for Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Visual Effects, and Best Score. Besides, it is also nominated for Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Sound Mixing, Best Sound Editing, Best Original Song, and Best Film Editing. Lee finds rich and clever ways to translate even Pi’s stillest moments, with the film unfolding through intricate flashbacks, whimsical voice-overs, harrowing sea hazards and exquisite flashes of fantasy and hallucination. The computer-animated tiger is remarkably life-like, seamlessly blended into the live action.

The screen-writer David Magee made visuals the intangible, translating Yann Martel’s book about a boy and his tiger simultaneously lost at sea and exploring the cosmos in search of dry land. Magee struggled to find the right voice and tone for the screenplay. The book *Life of Pi*, after all, ranged in content from philosophical musings to the slapstick silliness of a young schoolboy. How to encompass both in one screenplay? It wasn’t until late June of 2009, during a trip to South India that Magee and director Ang Lee took to gather ideas and images for shooting locations, that the screenwriter found the answer. Magee has done a marvelous job in turning the book to a screenplay, and still keeping the essence of it. He has balanced extremely well the playfulness of youth with the seriousness of the subject matter.

To film what was largely thought to be unfilmable—a philosophical novel that revolves around little more than a boy and a tiger on a lifeboat—Lee and his crew struggled heroically for a solution. Ultimately their prayers were answered by technology in the form of visual effects and 3D filming. “It was a tough one, but really worth it,” Lee said at a screening of the special features included on the film’s Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, and DVD release. “I’m not just talking about the Oscar but the whole journey. It was really worth it.” Lee said bringing Pi and the tiger to the screen was difficult, but constructing a visual representation of a philosophical abstraction was even more so. He had a water tank constructed in his hometown to serve as a stand-in for the Pacific Ocean and spent a year making a pre-visualization in the form of an animated version of the film to serve as a guide.

According to the visual effects supervisor Bill Westenhofer, almost 86 percent of the scenes featuring Richard Parker use a computer-generated tiger, with the remaining scenes using a real tiger—usually when the story calls for the tiger to be in a completely different location (i.e., the water) from teenage actor Suraj Sharma, who plays Pi. In order to accomplish this, Lee and the effects studio needed to invest more than the usual time in the pre-visualization stage of production, mapping out every detail of where the tiger would be in each scene and exactly what he’d be doing. Lee, Sharma, and the effects team also spent considerable time studying real-world tigers in order to determine how they might react to situations presented in *Life of Pi*. The film also used animated technology to create the animals and insert them into scenes. Only one animal—a hyena, which was used in about seven shots—was on set. Everything else, including Pi and the Tiger, was designed in a studio. But Sharma had to act as though they were in the boat, and remember not to walk on certain parts of the vessel if an animal was supposed to be there. The writers also worked alongside the production team and continually changed the script to make it work.

Unit 14 One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)

II. Questions for Thoughts

The following answers are given only for reference, and the students are encouraged to present their own understandings of or opinions on these questions.

- 1. What does McMurphy do to make him first get imprisoned and later be transferred to a mental hospital?**

He is arrested on charge of raping a girl who's only 15 years old. He has a record of 5 arrests for assault. He is regarded as belligerent and resentful in attitude toward work in general and the record says he always talks when unauthorized. But the real reason that sends him to the mental hospital is to have him evaluated to determine whether he's mentally ill or not.

- 2. How does McMurphy greet the hospital staff and the patients on his arrival at the hospital? Does he feel upset or uneasy? Why or why not?**

He greets everyone cheerfully and he is not upset at all. His plan is to stay in the hospital for a certain period of time to escape the hard life in prison. After such an observation period, he believes he can get out of there as he plans.

- 3. What are the routine treatments that a patient has to receive everyday in the hospital? Who are ensuring that all of these be properly done?**

Every morning in the hospital, the patients will come in groups to do some breathing exercises and then they will sit in a circle to have a group therapy, discussing their personal problems with all the others in the group. With the help of a young nurse and some guards, Miss Ratched, the head nurse, is ensuring that all of these be properly done.

- 4. Who are McMurphy's fellow patients? Why are they kept in the mental hospital? Why does McMurphy say that they are no crazier than the guys outside in the streets?**

They are Harding, Cheswick, Taber, Martini, Billy and Chief. Some of them, like Taber, are kept there because they are regarded as some people who are violent and thus may endanger others. Some, like Harding and Billy, cannot get along with other people naturally, so their families send them in the hospital and they stay there voluntarily.

Answers to the third question may vary.

- 5. How do the patients like Harding, Cheswick, Taber, Martini, Billy and Chief react to the head nurse Miss Ratched's rigid rules in the hospital? In what way is McMurphy different from all of them?**

They all accept such rules. Harding is very willing to cooperate. Cheswick and Martini follow her order blindly. Billy is afraid of her and thus does everything as he is ordered. Taber does not care too much. Chief just turns a deaf ear to what she says and he allows the nurse and the others to decide what he should do.

McMurphy is totally different. He wants to be himself and he believes everyone has the right to complain and challenge the rules when it goes authoritarian.

- 6. What does McMurphy complain about the music? Does Miss Ratched take his suggestion into consideration? Why or why not?**

He wants the nurse to turn off or at least turn down the music for it's so loud that people can hardly think and talk with each other in such loud noise. Miss Ratched

politely refuses him. She insists that some old men in the hospital have nothing to enjoy except the music played in the ward, and they can hardly hear the music if it is lower.

7. In the group meeting, what are the patients supposed to do and what are they not allowed to do? How does Miss Ratched keep the order?

They're supposed to tell the group about their own problems to the group and then start and participate in an open discussion of those private problems. However, they are not allowed to speak freely. They have to follow Miss Ratched's guidance and instruction.

Miss Ratched will set the topic, direct the discussion by raising questions and calling someone to speak up in the group. If she finds someone breaking the rule, she will have the guards to take them away.

8. What seems to be Mr. Harding's problem? Is he a cooperative patient in Miss Ratched's group therapy? Why or why not? Does the discussion bring out any positive effect on him?

Mr. Harding suspects his wife is seeing other men and this makes him quite uneasy. But the real problem of him seems to be that he is indulged in his speculation of some very abstract subjects, which makes him almost unable to communicate with others.

However, he is very cooperative in the group therapy because it gives him a chance to talk about his speculation and makes him feel he is superior in the group. But the discussion brings no positive effect on him. The nurse just lets him talk on and on, without making any efforts to help him find his real problem, or make him feel at ease with others.

9. What seems to be Billy's problem? How does Miss Ratched's group therapy affect him?

Billy feels so nervous in front of people that whenever he speaks, he stammers a lot and cannot express any idea in an articulate way, which makes him even more unconfident. He knows his own problem quite well and feels deeply ashamed of himself, but he finds no way to get out of it. When he falls in love with a girl but has no courage to speak up to her, he begins to commit suicide. Sometimes, daydreams can become his only way to escape from reality and make himself appear normal in front of others.

However, Miss Ratched interrupts his daydreams and exposes all his problems to others in a very unsympathetic way. The therapy turns Billy into a man with no dignity and no privacy. Billy is left there helpless, nervous, deeply ashamed of himself and thus more awkward in his communication with others.

10. Are the other patients cooperative in the group therapy? Why or why not? How does this treatment affect them?

Most of them are not very active in the discussion. Some are not interested and have no idea about the subject. The therapy cannot help them in any way. Some are indulged in their own world, and this therapy cannot help them learn how to communicate in a most natural way and thus means nothing to them. Some are too nervous to think and speak out in the group, and this therapy only forces them to speak and thus makes them even more tense and nervous.

In a word, the therapy is not patient-friendly and the patients' reactions are not taken seriously. Miss Ratched fails to make a good evaluation of their response,

insisting they are making progress in the therapy. Thus, instead of helping them, the therapy only serves to make them feel worse.

11. Why does McMurphy demand to watch the World Series on TV? Why does Miss Ratched refuse to consider his proposal? Then, why does she twice call for a vote on it?

He makes such a demand because most men are longing to watch the game and as a man, he believes he has the right to do so. Besides, he knows that it can give the patients a taste of freedom, full excitement in life, and thus help them regain their confidence and vitality. However, Miss Ratched insists that the group therapy is a carefully worked-out schedule, which most of the patients have long got used to. Therefore, changing the schedule can be very disturbing to them. She requires a vote of majority rule because she wants to put on a show of democracy so that McMurphy cannot accuse her of being authoritarian. Besides, she knows the patients so well that she can be very confident that they dare not launch a direct challenge of her rule and thus McMurphy is doomed to lose. Then, she can have very well-grounded reason to refuse his request.

12. What are the results of the two rounds of vote? Why do the other patients feel hesitant to support McMurphy at first? And later, what makes them change their attitude?

In the first round of vote, McMurphy gets only three votes. Later, he gets nine votes, and finally 10 votes, a majority with no doubt.

The patients are hesitant because they are already institutionalized. Though they all want to watch the game and they all long for a change of the system to give themselves a taste of freedom, they are too nervous about the possible price they have to pay for launching such a protest against the authority and thus dare not to take any real action. For years, they are trained to do what they are told to do, and they have lost the courage and ability to express themselves and to make protest when they find something unsatisfactory.

However, McMurphy's persistent struggle and his words and behavior finally inspire them, giving them the courage to express themselves.

13. Why does Miss Ratched declare that the second vote is invalid? Does McMurphy accept his defeat?

She insists that the other nine members of the ward who are too mentally disabled to participate in any activities should also be included, so McMurphy has to get one more vote to win. Finally, when McMurphy manages to persuade Chief to vote for it, she says the meeting is adjourned and thus the vote is closed, so what he gets later is invalid.

However, McMurphy does not accept such a defeat. He sits in front of the TV screen, shouting and screaming about the game excitedly as if he is really watching the game. Other patients get together around him one after another, hailing with him. Though they cannot watch the game, they are obviously enjoying themselves, launching an open challenge against Miss Ratched's rule.

14. How does McMurphy manage to bring all the patients in the group out for fishing? What does this experience bring to the patients?

He has Chief stand right down the fence of the hospital, and then he stands on Chief's shoulder and manages to climb across the fence outside the hospital. Later, when the patients are getting outside in the yard, McMurphy leads them into the

hospital bus and drives them away. Then, he brings a girl named Candy into the group and takes them all to the port. He lies to the ship owner that they are a group of doctors from the mental hospital, wanting to rent the boat and going on fishing.

The patients haven't been out for a long time. Now that they come out to explore the world all by themselves, they are all enlightened. Once again, they are brought back to the society, resuming their connection with the outside world. Besides, they find themselves capable enough to accomplish a lot of things. This experience makes them realize they are no different from men outside and thus they have the right to live a free, respectable and dignified life as they will.

15. Why does McMurphy make such an adventure? And why does he return to the hospital?

McMurphy finds life in the hospital is making everyone inside of it institutionalized. It deprives of him and the other patients the basic rights of man in enjoying life. Therefore, he wants to take them out to let them know the world better and know themselves better. And, he wants to show to the nurse and the hospital authority that he and the others are not men who have no ability to take care of themselves, and thus they should not be declined of their basic rights. He returns to the hospital because he wants to show it to the nurse. Besides, he believes that he can soon get out of the hospital, so there's no need to escape.

16. How do the doctors decide on McMurphy's case? Who insists on keeping him in the hospital? Why?

The doctors give him an interview and later analyze his situation. Most of them see no or at least few evidence of mental illness in him, though they all agree that he may be dangerous. The chief doctor suspects McMurphy is putting on everything on purpose, so he suggests McMurphy be sent back to the work farm.

However, Miss Ratched insists on keeping him in the hospital because she believes the hospital should take the responsibility to give McMurphy a treatment and thus help him to learn how to make peace with the institutions.

17. Is the head nurse, Miss Ratched, a highly respected figure in the eyes of the hospital staff members? Why or why not?

She is regarded as the finest nurse in the hospital. She is very faithful to the rule of authority in the hospital, and she can carry out the set schedule and practice in a very strict way. She works diligently in keeping the rule and she always appears kind and reasonable in front of the patients. With her devotion, persistence and a strong sense of responsibility, Miss Ratched has become in a way the representative of authority rule in the hospital before the patients.

18. In another group meeting, how does Miss Ratched refute McMurphy's argument that the patients are deprived of their personal freedom by the hospital? Do the other patients take his side this time? Why or why not?

She tells McMurphy that the hospital never forces the patients to receive the treatment. Instead, except for few of them, they are all here by their own choice. McMurphy is very surprised to know that this time, Miss Ratched is quite right in saying so. He has no one to count on in this argument, for they all admit that they stay there voluntarily and all they focus on are things about timetable and cigarettes that are too trivial to worth a fighting compared to their submission of all their rights to the hospital.

19. How is the dispute escalated into a fighting between the staff and Cheswick, McMurphy and Chief? What is the result?

Some patients like Cheswick start to challenge the order and rule. Not able to focus on the most fundamental issue of their staying in the hospital, Cheswick and others keep demanding for some trivial rights. When being continuously neglected by the nurse, Cheswick bursts out and gets to a point of breaking up. Seeing the situation running out of control, McMurphy smashes the window of the nurse room, takes out the cigarettes he is demanding for, but still he's too late to make Cheswick calm down and the latter is caught up by the guards. To protect Cheswick, McMurphy starts fighting with the guard, and later when the guard is getting McMurphy under his knees, Chief stands out to give him a hand. Finally, the three of them are all sent to take electric shocks.

20. How does McMurphy get close to Chief and finally discover his secret?

Unlike all the others, McMurphy treats Chief not as a dumb and deaf person, but as a normal man with full potentials. Though at first, Chief turns a deaf ear to him and all the others believe he cannot make sense to Chief, he keeps inviting Chief to join their games, and to come back to the community. Gradually, Chief is touched by McMurphy's persistence in challenging the unfair treatment imposed on the patients. He develops a sense of sympathy, trust and openness to McMurphy. After fighting together, Chief speaks to McMurphy and thus makes McMurphy know that he is just fooling the hospital, pretending to be deaf and dumb.

21. Why does McMurphy decide to escape with Chief only? Does Chief want to escape? Why or why not?

McMurphy finds Chief is the only man in the hospital who is showing contempt at the authority and who is fighting against them in his own way. McMurphy believes Chief is the only one who has not been tamed into a blind follower of the rule, and thus they may have a lot in common.

Chief has no strong motive to escape because what happens to his father makes him believe that he cannot get an opportunity to live an independent and uncorrupted life outside. He finds nowhere to escape the persecution imposed by the society. Therefore, he'd rather stay in the hospital, turning a deaf ear to whatever they say to him and thus manage to be left alone and remain to be himself.

22. What is McMurphy's plan for escape? How does he say goodbye to his fellow patients?

After Miss Ratched leaves, McMurphy has some girls drive to the hospital with liquor, and get the watch drunk. Then, he starts a farewell party with all the patients in the ward. Before the watch wakes up and the nurse comes to work on next morning, he will slip out of the hospital with the girls.

To say goodbye to his inmates, he prepares a wonderful party with drinks and loud music. They drink, dance, and have a lot of fun. He wants to give them a last chance to enjoy themselves.

23. What does McMurphy do for Billy before his leaving? Does he do a right thing?

Before he leaves, he finds Billy feel sad and helpless without him hanging around. Then he decides to give him a change to regain his confidence and vitality right at the moment. He has long noticed that Billy is very fond of Candy, but is too shy to speak up to her. Under his arrangement, Billy is sent to the girl to sleep with her as

he longs for.

Answers to the second question can be open.

24. What happens on the next morning? Why doesn't McMurphy just run away?

Next morning, all the patients and the watch get so drunk that no one wakes up when the nurse comes back to her work. McMurphy is also drunk and sleeps over. The nurse is extremely angry with this. She demands all the patients stand in line and soon she finds Billy missing, sleeping with a girl in bed. The boy's face is shining with happiness and confidence, and for the first time, he does not stammer while speaking in front of people. However, Miss Ratched makes no appreciation to Billy's change. Instead, she threatens to tell what the boy does to his mother, who obviously is a very arbitrary parent whom Billy is always afraid of. Then she demands Billy tell her who is responsible for this. The boy is driven crazy and finally breaks down. Soon, he kills himself in the office.

Meanwhile, McMurphy has a good chance to escape from all this. However, he does not run away because of Billy. On seeing the death of the boy, he throws himself at the nurse but is soon caught up by the guards.

25. Why does Chief finally decide to escape with McMurphy? How does he manage to do so?

Chief decides to escape with McMurphy because what happens makes him realize that he should not allow himself to stay in such a place for the rest of his life, and that he should not be beaten by the hospital rule and give up hope and struggle for his freedom. However, he soon finds out that after being forced to take some treatment, McMurphy has totally lost his senses and become a real mentally disabled man. He knows McMurphy will never let himself be beaten in this way. He will rather die than be deprived of freedom and independence. Therefore, Chief decides to kill McMurphy and let his soul free, escaping the hospital with him. He takes out the tank, smashes the window and jumps outside the institution.

26. Does McMurphy finally succeed in challenging the rule of the head nurse Miss Ratched?

Answers to this question may vary.

V. Research Activities

Four basic aspects of the movie

Background: historical background, social background, the novel from which the movie is adapted, the author of the novel, production of the movie, etc.

Themes: the main ideas that the movie intends to convey to the audience.

Conflicts: conflicts within oneself, conflicts with others, conflicts with the society, conflicts between events, conflicts of ideas, etc.

Performances: actor, actress, director, playwright, song, music, awards, etc.

These four aspects, however, can never be clear-cut; they are often interrelated. The information provided below serves as some supplementary material only. The students are free to present any material relevant to the four aspects. Their presentations should include both factual information and their own opinions or comments.

Background:

The movie is based on the 1962 counter-culture novel by Ken Kesey, which was adapted into popular stage play in 1960s and 1970s. Ken Kesey was born on September

17, 1935 in La Junta, Colorado and was raised in a religion household. In 1959, when he volunteered to be a subject in experiments with hallucinogenic drugs, his life underwent a dramatic change. Near the end of the experiments, he began working the night shift in a mental ward. He started to feel that the patients were not really crazy after all, just more individualized than the society was willing to accept. Kesey was enrolled in a creative writing program, while working as an orderly in a psychiatric ward. He got ideas for this book by working at the ward and seeing what went on.

The plot, based on the script by Bo Goldman and Lawrence Hauben, is set in Oregon psychiatric hospital in 1963. The background is the world of an authentic mental hospital (Oregon State Hospital in Salem, Oregon), a place of rebellion: An energetic wise guy, an anti-hero is against the Establishment, institutional authority and status quo. The novel's secondary characters were based on real-life individuals whom Kesey met while working at the Veterans' Administration Hospital. As research for the novel, he worked the graveyard shift in the psychiatric ward and actually subjected himself to a real-life shock treatment. The setting of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* takes place at the end of the 1950s, when many of the nation's younger generation began to challenge conformity. The nurse personified the power and control exhibited by large government and businesses. The Beat Culture began at this time and continued with other counter-cultures and finally to the hippies of the 1960s.

Theme (Combine):

Ken Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* deals with control, manipulation and destruction. These elements are portrayed in the novel by what is referred to as the "combine." A combine is a farming machine that is used for cutting, threshing and cleaning. In *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the combine is a metaphor for society and how it controls, manipulates and destroys people. The combine exists both inside and outside the ward. In the novel, the nurse is a "high- ranking official" of the combine and has the black boys under her command. The nurse's psychiatric ward is a repair shop for the combine, where people who do not conform to society's accepted behavior are outcast and are to be repaired. In *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the combine does three main things. It controls the patients of the psychiatric ward by instilling great fear into them and then manipulates them by playing on these fears. Finally the combine seeks to destroy anyone who resists conforming.

Conflicts:

- a. Individual vs. Society:** The main action of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* consists of McMurphy's struggles against the strict rules of Nurse Ratched. Ratched's ward at the hospital is a society in itself, for it has its own laws and punishments. McMurphy as an individual challenges the rules. The movie portrays the individual's struggle against a conformist society as a noble and meaningful task. One day McMurphy is asking the Nurse for the permission of watching the World Series. The Nurse refuses the request by saying that changing the carefully worked-out schedule might be very disturbing to some inmates. What McMurphy starts here is not just a trivial dispute about the schedule or the game, but a first-time challenge against the authority of the institution over the individual patients.
- b. Indifference vs. Compassion:** At the meeting of therapy, Ratched seems to care and help Billy upon the matter of his relationship with his girlfriend. However, throughout this so-called therapy, the Nurse shows no real concern for the patient.

With no compassion and willingness to help, she has been taking a critical stand, forcing her ideas upon the patients and looking down upon them as someone inferior. Thus, she feels free to probe into their privacy and turns a deaf ear to their protest.

- c. **Sanity vs. Insanity:** The movie questions our society's definitions of sanity, which seems to ask all people to conform to the same standards of behavior. When McMurphy discovers that many of the inmates are at the hospital voluntarily, he wants to know why: "You, you're not exactly the everyday man on the street, but you're not nuts." Billy replies that they don't have the "guts" to get along in outside society. Ironically, Nurse Ratched's methods are designed to undermine the men's confidence, instead of encouraging it. In this way, the society's definition of "insanity" is something that an individual is dehumanized and replaced with an automaton that dwells in a safe and blind conformity. McMurphy is the person who sees through this sham. By showing his fellow patients how to create their own standards of sanity, McMurphy leads a bunch of institutionalized robots back toward their humanity. In the process, he suffers greatly and in fact lays down his life.

Performances:

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest is one of the greatest American films of all time. It wins all five of the top Academy Awards, for Best Picture, Best Actor (Jack Nicholson), Best Actress (Louise Fletcher), Best Director (Milos Forman) and Best Adapted Screenplay (Lawrence Hauben and Bo Goldman). Other nominated awards are Best Cinematography (Bill Butler and Haskell Wexler), Best Film Editing, Best Score (Jack Nitzsche) and Best Supporting Actor (Brad Dourif).

Jack Nicholson's performance is one of the high points in a long career of enviable rebels. Jack is a beloved American presence, a superb actor who even more crucially is a superb male sprite. The joke lurking beneath the surface of most of his performances is that he gets away with things because he knows how to do, wants to do, and has the nerve to do. His characters stand for freedom, anarchy, self-gratification and bucking the system, and often they also stand for generous friendship and a kind of careworn nobility.

If Jack's performance is justly celebrated, Louise Fletcher's, despite the Oscar, is not enough appreciated. This may be because her Nurse Ratched is thoroughly contemptible, and because she embodies so completely the qualities we all (men and women) have been taught to fear in a certain kind of female authority figure—a woman who has subsumed sexuality and humanity into duty and righteousness. Dressed in her quasi-military nurse's costume, with its little hat and its Civil War-style cape, she is followed everywhere by the small, unspeaking nurse who is her acolyte.

Milos Forman, born in Czechoslovakia in 1932, has become one of the greatest interpreters of American manners and mores. A leader of the Czech New Wave, his early films like *Loves of a Blonde* (1965) and *The Fireman's Ball* (1967) won worldwide audience with their use of paradoxical humor. After the Soviet crackdown, Forman fled to America, where he has had extraordinary success. He sees his adopted land in terms of its best nonconformist and outsider traditions, at a time when conformity is the new creed. His McMurphy succeeds and prevails as a character, despite the imperfections of the film, because he represents a cleansing spirit that comes along now and again to renew us.

The film's title is derived from a familiar, tongue-twisting children's folk song (or nursery rhyme) called "Vintery, Mintery, Cutery, Corn." The ones that fly east and west

are diametrically opposed to each other and represent the two combatants in the film. The one that flies over the cuckoo's nest (the mental hospital filled with "cuckoo" patients) is the giant, "deaf-mute" Chief:

Vintery, mintery, cutery, corn,
Apple seed and apple thorn;
Wire, briar, limber lock,
Three geese in a flock.
One flew east,
And one flew west,
And one flew over the cuckoo's nest.