

Dear ELA teacher:

Thank you for participating in Purdue's 2022 Big Read! You are in for a treat. [*Mexican Gothic*](#) is richly layered with interesting characters, feminist thought, postcolonial critique, Gothic and horror tropes, and intertextuality. It is also a lot of fun.

Throughout my 18 years as a high school English teacher, there were various times where I was asked to teach a lesson someone else had created. I always found that difficult--and not very enjoyable. I enjoy teaching most when I have fully engaged with the materials and thought through what approaches would work for my own students. At the same time, I rarely had time to develop all my materials from scratch. I always appreciated having ideas and resources that I could adapt to my unique context.

These are the considerations I weighed and tried to balance in creating high school English materials for teaching *Mexican Gothic*. I didn't think writing lesson plans would be the best use of time for the reason I mentioned above, as well as because teachers and schools have different requirements for how lesson plans should be structured. I also decided against creating a unit plan, since some of teachers might only have a few weeks to spend on the novel, while others might take an entire quarter.

Instead, I took the approach of creating a sort of "menu" of activities and assessments based on state standards and focused on various concepts. I've tried to strike a balance between traditional and creative assessments that involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Each activity has a different focus, but they all have the same format and share the following features (items 1-8 are in the Teacher Guide; item 9 is on a separate page):

1. Standard(s) addressed: one or two key standards you can address through the activity/assessment
2. Concepts and skills: key ideas and skills students will learn and practice
3. Objectives: what students will learn and be able to demonstrate
4. Suggested timeframe: at what point(s) relative to the reading of the novel you may want to introduce the activity/assessment
5. Synopsis: a brief summary of the activity/assessment
6. Grading/assessment--suggestions for how you might assess and grade student mastery of the objectives and standards
7. Differentiation: ideas for differentiating for ELLs, struggling readers/writers, and/or gifted students
8. Teaching resources (where applicable): links to various web pages, articles, and videos that I have curated, along with a brief description of each, which you can use with/provide to students
9. Student jobsheet (where applicable): a one-page document with detailed, step-by-step instructions for students on completing a standards-based assessment related to the activity

You should feel free to use any or all of the activities, in any order you choose. In addition, you should feel free to adapt them in any way that suits you and your students, especially the student job sheets, which are designed to be flexible.

Here's a brief overview of the activities/assessments:

- The **standards** addressed are drawn from the Indiana Academic Standards for English Language Arts, Grades 11-12 (I chose this grade band because the content of the novel may be more suitable for older students). They include a range of standards selected from each category, including reading (fiction and nonfiction), writing (narrative and research), speaking and listening (presentation), and media literacy.
- **Concepts** addressed include symbols, character development, characterization, colonialism, feminist criticism, form, genre (Gothic fiction), historical context, intertextuality, point of view, and postcolonial criticism.
- **Skills** practiced include analyzing literary features, analyzing and synthesizing informational texts, conducting research, creating presentations using digital and other media, narrative writing, perspective-taking, public speaking, and theme development and identification.
- Student **products** include a character map/family tree, an informal speech, a one-pager, a compare-contrast essay, a creative retelling of a passage, a multimedia presentation, and an “anti-colonial” board game. These are suggested assessments; others could be developed to integrate with the activities and assess the objectives and standards.

Realistically, there may be too much material here for the time a typical high school English class has to devote to the study of a single novel--hence the “menu” approach. Each of the activity/assessment documents is designed so that it can be used *a la carte*. Moreover, each is meant to be used at several times in the course of reading the novel; none of them is a quick, single-shot activity.

Good luck to you and your students as you tackle this novel!

Sincerely,



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Mexican Gothic and “The Yellow Wallpaper”: Genre and Intertextuality (Compare & Contrast)

Teacher Guide

Standard(s) addressed:

- 11-12.RL.2.2 Compare and contrast the development of similar themes across two or more works of literature and analyze how they emerge and are shaped and refined by specific details.
- A related student writing assignment could address various writing and/or grammar/usage standards.

Concepts and skills:

- Genre/form
- Gothic fiction
- Feminist literature/criticism
- Intertextuality
- Comparing and contrasting
- Theme development/identification

Objectives:

- Students will understand the concept of genre and its relationship to form
- Students will be able to explain the conventions of Gothic fiction and identify some of them in a short story
- Students will understand some of the ideas and concerns underlying feminist approaches to writing and understanding literature
- Students will understand and provide examples of the concept of intertextuality
- Students will be able to identify a theme shared by two works of literature and explain how details in the texts shape and refine that theme
- Students will understand how eugenicist ideologies influenced both white feminism and Gothic fiction in the early 20th century

Suggested timeframe: Ideally, students will read “The Yellow Wallpaper” twice--once at the beginning of the unit, before starting *Mexican Gothic*, and once again at the end--each time reading for a different purpose (see **synopsis** below).

Synopsis: Before starting *Mexican Gothic*, teachers should introduce the concepts of form and genre, the conventions of Gothic fiction, and some of the basic ideas behind feminist literary criticism. Then have students read “[The Yellow Wallpaper](#)” by Charlotte Perkins Gillman, either independently, in small groups, or with a class. Have students look for examples of Gothic fiction conventions and point out ways in which the story raises concerns about the treatment of women. After finishing *Mexican Gothic* and discussing possible themes, have students reread “The Yellow Wallpaper,” this time for a different purpose: looking for shared themes and examples of

intertextuality, where Moreno-Garcia seems to refer to or build on themes in Gilman's story. In addition, have students explore Gilman's eugenicist politics and discuss how the eugenics movement shaped feminism and Gothic fiction.

Grading/Assessment: There are a variety of concepts here that could be assessed in a variety of ways, especially after students finish reading *Mexican Gothic*. For example, a midterm or final test could assess students' understanding of genre and form, Gothic fiction, feminist literature/criticism, and intertextuality. Students could write an essay comparing and contrasting the treatment of a single theme or symbol in both texts, or comparing the narrator in the story with Catalina. Or they could attempt to write their own Gothic short story.

Differentiation: Written shortly before the turn of the 20th century, "The Yellow Wallpaper" has vocabulary and sentence structure that will be challenging for ELLs and struggling readers. [Pre-, during-, and post-reading strategies](#) could help these readers comprehend the text. Audio recordings are also available (see below). Advanced students could explore other examples of short stories in the Gothic tradition, such as H.P. Lovecraft's "[Herbert West: Reanimator](#)."

Teaching resources:

- This online copy of "[The Yellow Wallpaper](#)" may be a reprint of the original published in *New England Magazine*, complete with illustrations.
- [This page](#) has various audio recordings of the story.
- [This page](#) has a clear, student-friendly explanation of form and genre, how they are different and how they are related to each other.
- There are various videos available on Youtube designed to introduce students to Gothic fiction. [This one](#) provides a good overview including a brief history, examples, and clear explanations of the main conventions of the genre--many of which students will be able to identify in both "The Yellow Wallpaper" and *Mexican Gothic*.
- The [Random House study guide](#) for *Mexican Gothic* includes a two-page overview of Gothic romance and domestic noir, the two sub-genres of Gothic fiction that the novel riffs on and subverts (pp. 7-8).
- [This page](#) from Purdue's OWL is a good introduction to feminist literary criticism and many of the concerns raised in both "The Yellow Wallpaper" and *Mexican Gothic*.
- [This article](#) discusses Charlotte Gilman Perkins' eugenicist politics, as does [this one](#) (viewing it requires creating a free account). There are also many scholarly articles on the subject that explore more broadly the relationship between eugenics and early 20th-century white feminism, but some are behind paywalls.
- Moreno-Garcia's [master's thesis](#) examines eugenicist thought in the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft (after whom Howard in the novel was named) with a focus on its influence on Lovecraft's portrayal of women.
- [This video](#)'s purpose is to critique the "cheap" use of intertextuality in contemporary movies, but it also provides a helpful and entertaining overview of the concept--including the ways in which writers use intertextuality to subvert genre conventions (as Moreno-

Garcia does throughout *Mexican Gothic*) along with many examples from movies students will recognize. Note: two of the movie clips shown in the video contain the “f-word.”

Mexican Gothic and “The Yellow Wallpaper”: Genre, Intertextuality, Feminism, and Shared Themes

Compare-Contrast Essay: Student Job Sheet

Instructions: Write an essay in response to one of the following prompts.

- Identify a **theme** shared by “The Yellow Wallpaper” and *Mexican Gothic*. Possible **topics** might include patriarchy, power, male-female relationships, confinement versus freedom, reality and perception, etc. A shared theme is a message that emerges in both texts about any topic. **Compare** and **contrast** how each author develops this theme, using specific details from both texts to support your claims.
- Identify a **genre convention** of Gothic fiction that appears in both “The Yellow Wallpaper” and *Mexican Gothic*. **Compare** and **contrast** the way the two authors use this genre convention in their writing, including ways in which they use it to subvert the genre (if applicable). Provide specific details from both texts to support your claims.
- **Compare** and **contrast** the narrator of “The Yellow Wallpaper” with the character of Catalina in *Mexican Gothic*. How are the two women similar? How are they different? How might a feminist literary critic interpret the way these women are portrayed? Cite specific details from both texts to support your claims.
- Find two or three examples of **intertextuality** in *Mexican Gothic* in which the author may be alluding to or riffing on “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Analyze the passages, explaining how and why they allude to “The Yellow Wallpaper,” citing specific passages from the short story that Moreno-Garcia may have in mind. **Compare** and **contrast** the author’s craft and/or purpose in each passage.
- Although the subjects of race and eugenics are not explicitly mentioned in “The Yellow Wallpaper,” it is clear from much of the author’s other writings that she, like H.P. Lovecraft (another author of Gothic fiction alluded to throughout *Mexican Gothic*), held racist views and promoted eugenics as an important component of her advocacy for (white) women’s equality. After reading the articles provided by your teacher that discuss Gilman’s political agenda, **compare** and **contrast** her vision of feminism and her views on race and eugenics with those of Moreno-Garcia. What similarities and differences do you see in the way the two authors use Gothic tropes to explore their views?

Mexican Gothic: Character Relationships and Development (Doyle Family Tree)

Teacher Guide

Standard(s) addressed:

- 11-12.RL.2.3 Analyze how the author's choices impact character development over the course of a text (e.g. how the characters are introduced and developed).

Concepts and skills:

- Characterization/character development
- Character analysis

Objectives:

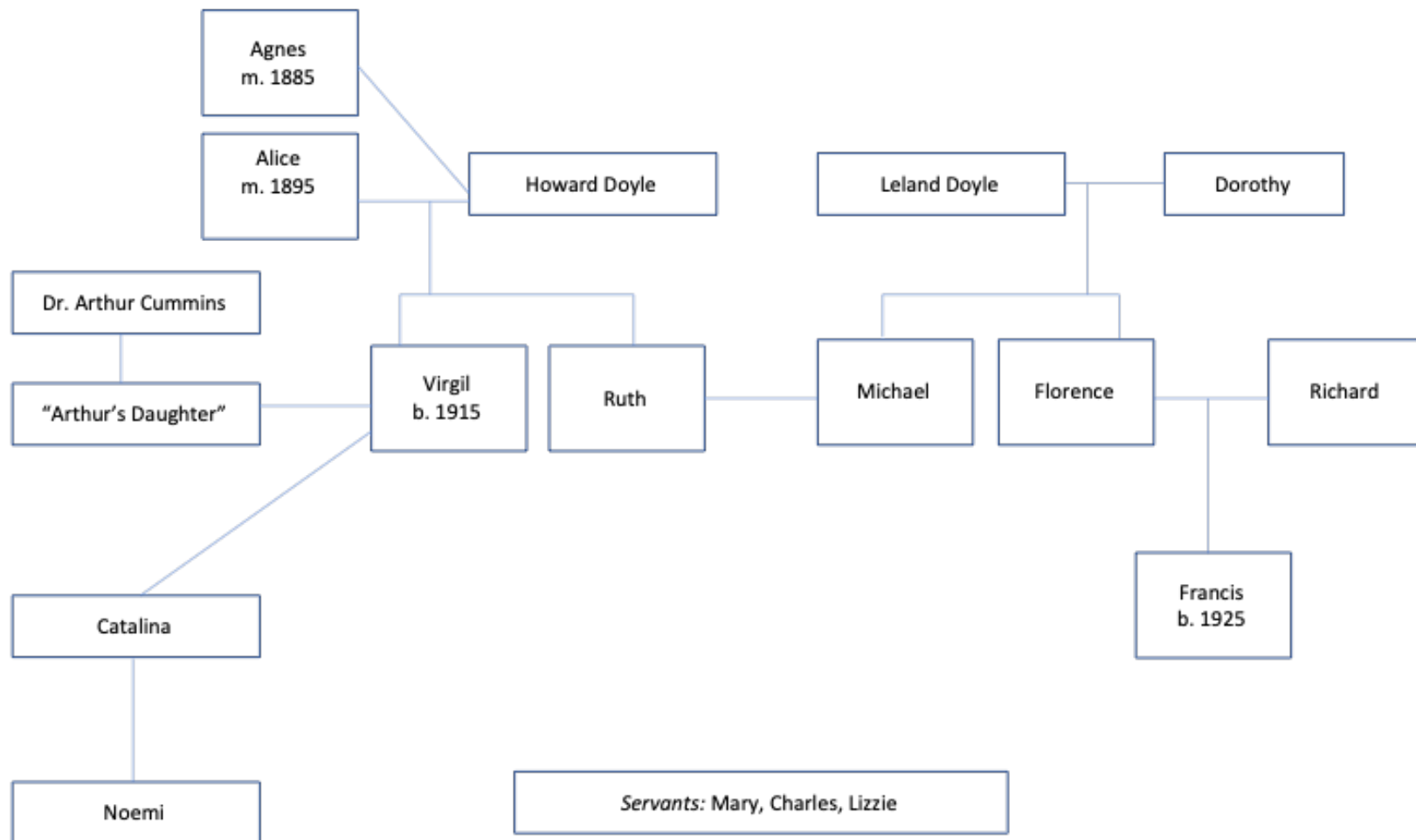
- Students will understand the relationships among the characters of *Mexican Gothic*
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of how Moreno-Garcia characterizes each character at the beginning and end of the novel and how each character develops over the course of the novel.

Suggested timeframe: Students should receive the double-sided handout at the beginning of the unit, completing the first side as each character is introduced. The other side should be completed at or near the end of the novel.

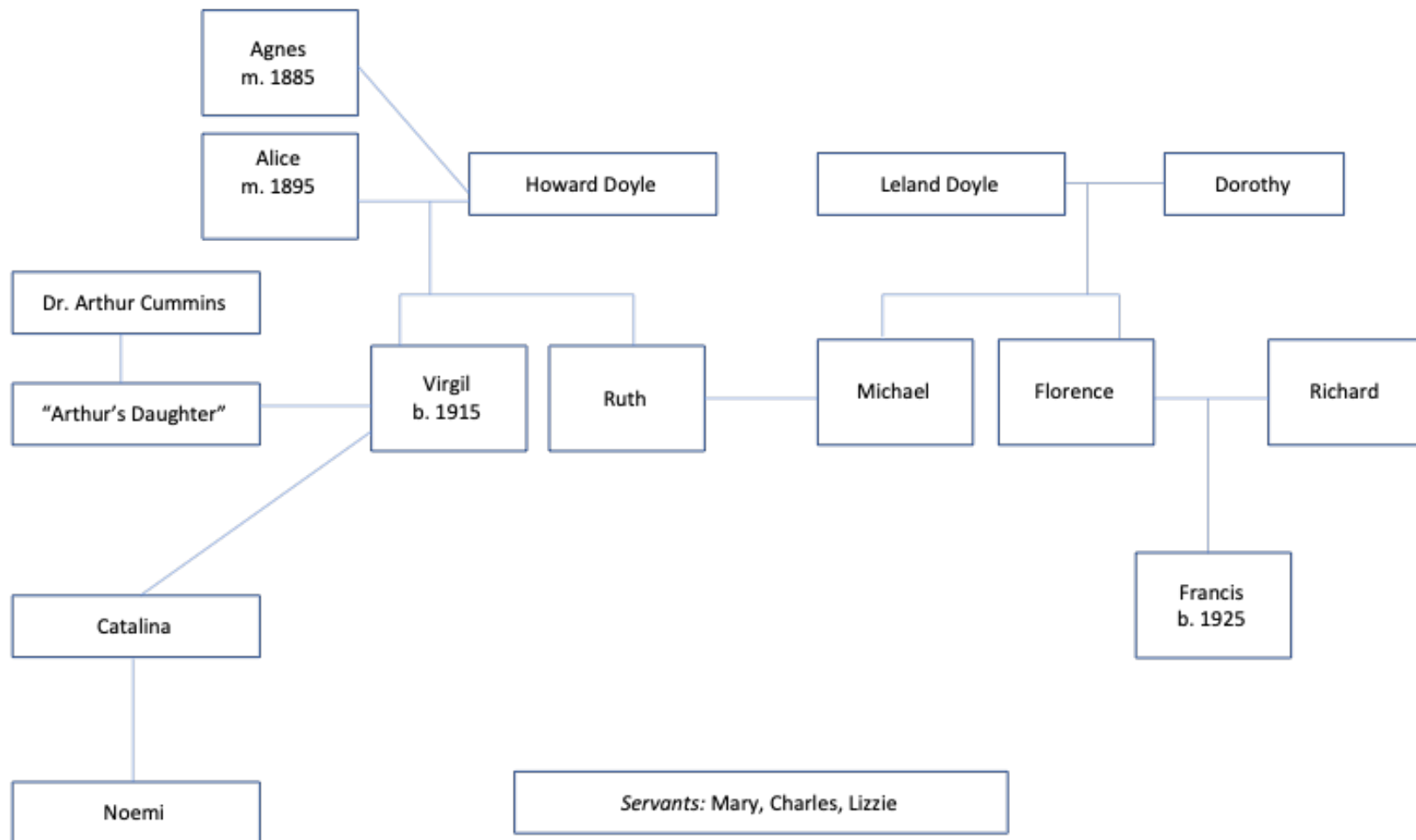
Synopsis: As each major character on the family tree is introduced, the teacher leads the class in a short discussion of any traits that are immediately revealed about the character, and students write notes about the traits next to the character's name. As they continue reading, students can add notes as space permits. As relationships among characters are revealed, the teacher can point these out and/or students can note the relationships on the lines connecting the boxes. At or near the end of the novel, students can use the back side of the map to note different traits that have been revealed and/or ways in which major characters have developed.

Grading/Assessment: If this activity is completed collaboratively, it may best serve as an ungraded guide students construct to help them keep track of characters as they read. This activity could also be paired with the Memory Bag activity/assessment.

Differentiation: This activity could be completed as a whole group, in small groups, or independently, depending on student needs and abilities.



This family tree is based on a graphic by Gina Isabel Rodriguez (<https://ginaisabel.com/contamination-of-the-self-mexican-gothic-annihilation/>)



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Mexican Gothic: Point of View (Narrative Writing)

Teacher Guide

Standard(s) addressed:

- 11-12.W.3.3 Write narrative compositions in a variety of forms that –
 - a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters.
 - b. Create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
 - c. (Other sub-points as desired)

Concepts and skills:

- Point of view
- Perspective-taking
- Narrative writing

Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain and identify examples of different approaches to authorial point of view (first person, second person, third person limited, third person omniscient), including the point of view used in *Mexican Gothic*
- Students will rewrite a narrative segment of *Mexican Gothic* from a different character's perspective, using a first-person point of view.

Suggested timeframe:

- This activity could be introduced sometime while students are reading the second half of the novel and completed at or near the end.

Synopsis:

- In *Mexican Gothic*, Moreno-Garcia uses a third-person limited point of view: the narrator, while not a character in the story, focuses on Noemi's perspective. After introducing (or reviewing) the various authorial points of view and their effect on narratives, assign each student a chapter from *Mexican Gothic* (or let them choose). Tell students they will be rewriting a chapter (or a shorter passage, depending on your students) from the perspective of a character other than Noemi. Students should pay special attention to that character's traits as they continue reading or reviewing the text, including the way the character speaks. Again depending on your students, you may want to give them passages/chapters to choose from or leave them open-ended. Another approach could be to have students rewrite the ending or add another chapter, again from a different character's perspective.

Grading/assessment:

- The product (see **student jobsheet**) is a narrative piece, so any narrative rubric should work for assessment, but teachers may need to adapt it to ensure that it is aligned to the

standard(s) you're addressing (11-12W3.3), as well as any grammar/usage standards teachers want to address. It should also include an element related to point of view.

Differentiation:

- For students who do not yet have the ability to craft a longer narrative based on a passage in the text, an alternative assessment could involve several short diary entries about the events of the book from the perspective of a character other than Noemi. Students who struggle with the mechanics of writing could record an oral version of their story from notes.

Teaching resources:

- [This animated video](#) provides a fun, helpful overview of authorial point of view.
- [This presentation](#), created by a Purdue graduate student for Big Read 2022, provides an overview of authorial point of view with specific reference to *Mexican Gothic*.
- Various children's books, such as *The Wolf's Story* and *The Other Side of the Story: Fairy Tales with a Twist*, retell well-known fairy tales from a different character's perspective. Many of these stories are available as read-alouds on Youtube and can be found quickly with a Google search and used as accessible models.

Mexican Gothic: Point of View and Narrative Writing

Creative Retelling: Student Jobsheet

Instructions:

- *Mexican Gothic* uses a third-person limited point of view, focusing on Noemi's perspective. Choose a segment of *Mexican Gothic* (a chapter or a shorter passage, depending on your teacher's instructions) that you would like to rewrite from a different character's perspective. The passage must include at least one other character in addition to Noemi. If you've finished the book, you could even choose to rewrite the ending or add a new chapter, but whatever you do, it must be from a different character's perspective.
- Choose a character (other than Noemi) who appears in the passage--or, if you're adding to the end, choose any character who would have something to say about the events at the end of the novel.
- Spend some time studying your character, jotting down some notes. What are they like? What do they want in the novel--what drives their actions? How do they talk and interact with others? What might their thoughts be about the other characters and about the events of the passage you chose?
- Rewrite the passage **from the perspective** of the character you chose. In your narrative, you are not only shifting the perspective from Noemi's to a different character's; you are also shifting the **point of view** from the third person to the first person. You must use the pronouns "I/we/us" whenever describing actions that involve your character or attributing dialogue to your character. Try to get into your character's mind and write in a voice that is consistent with what you know about the character.
- Your narrative should have a beginning, middle, and end that roughly follow the passage you chose to retell. It should include many of the details from the original passage (in your own writing), but from a different character's perspective.

Mexican Gothic: Characterization (Memory Bag)

Teacher Guide

Standard(s) addressed:

- 11-12.RL.2.3 Analyze how the author's choices impact character development over the course of a text (e.g. how the characters are introduced and developed).
- 11-12.SL.4.2 Create engaging presentations that make strategic and creative use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) to add interest and enhance audience understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence.

Concepts and skills:

- Characterization/character development
- Public speaking

Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of how Moreno-Garcia characterizes and develops a particular character
- Students will create presentations that engage their audience through the use of visual or other media

Suggested timeframe: This activity/assessment could be introduced at any time to let students choose characters, but students should not start preparing presentations until the class is at least halfway through the novel and the characters are sufficiently developed.

Synopsis: After selecting a character from *Mexican Gothic* (teachers may want to have a signup sheet so students choose a significant character and all significant characters are evenly represented), students track the author's characterization and development of the character. They choose a container of some kind (bag, purse, briefcase, suitcase, etc.) that symbolically represents that character in some way, three items for the bag that represent the character, and a significant line from the novel spoken by or about the character. They also write a statement of intent in which they explain their choices in light of the author's choices regarding the character. Finally, students prepare a two-minute speech in which they display and talk about their container and the items in it. See student jobsheet below for details.

Grading/Assessment: A rubric could include criteria based on both the above standards. Character development could be assessed on the basis of the Statement of Intent.

Differentiation: ELLs and students who struggle with public speaking could video their presentations and submit them to the teacher. Advanced students could be challenged to include digital media, such as a representative song or digital photos, in their presentation.

Mexican Gothic: The Memory Bag

Informal Speech: Student Jobsheet

Instructions:

- Choose one of the major characters from *Mexican Gothic*.
- As you read, use post-it notes to mark and annotate places in the text where you notice the author making specific choices that **characterize** (directly or indirectly) or **develop** your character.
- Select a bag or other container (NOT your backpack/purse or breakfast-to-go bag) that somehow represents your character. You may decorate this bag if you'd like, but it is not required.
- Select one significant line spoken by or about your character, write it down, and put it in your bag. This line should reveal something important about your character. Also select 3 items that have symbolic meaning that connect to your character.
 - Example: a "memory bag" for your English teacher might include a dictionary since they teach the English language. The dictionary symbolizes, or represents, the English language.
- Write a Statement of Intent that answers the following questions:
 - What kind of person is your character? How do you know?
 - What is this character's relationship to other characters?
 - Why and how is the selected line significant? How does the author characterize your character through this line?
 - How do these four symbolic items (the container and items in it) represent your character? Refer to the text to support your explanation.
- Prepare and practice a presentation based on your Statement of Intent.
 - You may not read the statement or use any notes.
 - Your presentation must be limited to two minutes, so time yourself while practicing.
 - Due Date: Be prepared to present your memory bag and hand in your Statement of Intent on _____.

Mexican Gothic: The Memory Bag

Student Worksheet

*Your teacher will not collect this page, but it may help you write your Statement of Intent and plan your presentation.

Who is your character for your Memory Bag? What are some of this character's traits? How do you know? How does the character develop over the course of the novel?

What line from the text will you use to represent this character? Why is it significant? How is your character characterized through this line?

What will you choose for your bag/container? How does this represent your character?

What three items will include in your bag?

Symbolic meaning?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

-
-
-

Don't forget to write your Statement of Intent! (this is the only thing you will turn in)

Mexican Gothic: Religious Symbols and Archetypes (One-Pager)

Teacher Guide

Standard(s) addressed:

- 11-12.RL.4.2 Analyze and evaluate works of literary or cultural significance in history for the way in which these works have used archetypes drawn from myths, traditional stories, or religious works, as well as how two or more of the works treat similar themes, conflicts, issues, or topics, and maintain relevance for current audiences.
- 11-12.W.5 Conduct short as well as more sustained research assignments and tasks to build knowledge about the research process and the topic under study.

Concepts and skills:

- Archetype
- Research
- Literary analysis

Objectives:

- Students will understand the concept of an archetype and will explore religious symbols and archetypes in *Mexican Gothic*
- Students will be able to explain how Moreno-Garcia uses and subverts symbols and archetypes drawn from Catholicism in *Mexican Gothic*

Suggested timeframe: Discussion of archetype and specific archetypes in the novel could happen at any point in the reading, but it may be helpful to wait until each archetype is introduced to discuss it. After the introduction and discussion of an archetype, students can watch for later references to the archetype and the various shades of meaning the author ascribes to it.

Synopsis: Throughout *Mexican Gothic*, the author draws on and ascribes meaning to various symbols from Catholicism. Like much Gothic fiction, the novel is set in a Catholic country, but the novel's heroine is Catholic, while the villainous Doyle family are Anglo descendants whose religious practices seem to pervert those of traditional Catholicism. For example, the Latin phrase frequently uttered by Howard Doyle, "*Et Verbum caro factum est*" ("And the Word became flesh") points to the religious tenet of incarnation. It is referenced in the Catholic mass that Howard, who sees himself as a kind of "colonial savior," grotesquely parodies as he enacts his own incarnational rite. Moreover, Virgil is an archetypal devil figure, an evil tempter whose seductive advances Neomi must resist. Though not Catholic in origin, the Doyle family crest, the ouroboros, may be read in this context as a symbol with religious significance. Have students choose one or more of these religious things to explore within and outside of the novel--tracking references in the text, including how its meaning is revealed, transformed, and subverted; and investigating the origins of the archetype and uses in other works of literature, film, art, etc.

Grading/Assessment: Students could demonstrate their learning about a particular archetype by creating a "one-pager," a single page with a central image and key sentence from the main text,

surrounded by smaller, related images and pieces of text (in this case, quotes from *Mexican Gothic* and from their online research). On the back of the page, they write an explanation of what they wanted to convey about the concept through the arrangement of their text and images. A rubric could assess their understanding of the archetype, their use of textual details to support their ideas, and their creativity. See **student jobsheet**.

Differentiation: Students who do not consider themselves visual artists could demonstrate their learning in a different way. For example, they could write a short story, poem, or song constructed around the archetype along with a written explanation of how various examples of the archetype in the text, along with their research, informed their work. Alternatively, students could write an essay analyzing the use of the archetype in the text and elsewhere.

Teaching resources:

- [This video](#) provides a short, helpful, entertaining overview of the concept of archetype, including a theory about how archetypes emerged and several examples.
- [This page](#) compiles quotations from Carl Jung about archetype in Christianity, many of which refer to incarnation, the mass, and the eucharist--all ideas referenced in Howard Doyle's utterance of "*Et Verbum caro factum est*" and his enactment of a grotesque "mass" in which he eats and drinks flesh.
- [This article](#) may be too advanced for many high school students, but it provides an interesting and relevant analysis of religion and sexuality in Gothic fiction, with a focus on Catholicism.
- An Italian version of the Blue Beard story called "[How the Devil Married Three Sisters](#)" provides a good example of the devil archetype that has parallels with the portrayal of Virgil in *Mexican Gothic*.
- The [Random House study guide](#) issued with *Mexican Gothic* contains, among other things, an illustration of the ouroboros (p. 6).

Mexican Gothic: Religious Symbols and Archetypes

One-Pager: Student Job Sheet

Instructions:

- Choose one of the religious symbols used in *Mexican Gothic*:
 - The novel's twist on the archetypal Gothic setting and plot in which Catholicism was often represented as "other"
 - The use of the devil archetype in the character of Virgil
 - The use/subversion of the virginal maiden archetype in the character of Noemi
 - The Latin phrase frequently uttered by Howard Doyle, "Et Verbum caro factum est" ("And the Word became flesh") points to the Catholic doctrine of incarnation, referenced in Howard's own grotesque religious rites.
 - The ouroboros. The Doyle family has adopted this symbol as its seal. An ancient symbol originating in Egyptian and Greek mythology, it takes on numerous meanings (including religious) in the novel.

- Find as many references as you can to your symbol or archetype in the novel. If you've chosen your archetype while you are still reading, be on the lookout for these, marking them with post-it notes as you find them. Note the meaning the author seems to be ascribing to it, and pay attention to whether that meaning changes with other uses.

- Research your symbol or archetype online, finding out as much as you can about its origin and the way it has been used in other works of literature, film, etc. Take notes on your findings.

- Create a **one-pager**, a single-page visual representation of your archetype that includes relevant quotations from the novel and from your research:
 - You should have one central image, created by you, that represents your symbol or archetype.
 - Underneath that image, include a sentence from the novel that you feel best exemplifies the use of your archetype in the novel.
 - Surrounding this image and sentence, include other short, relevant quotations from the text and research. Include small, related images with these where possible. These can be arranged in any way you wish.
 - On the back of your one-pager, write three short paragraphs. First, cite your research to explain your symbol or archetype and its origin, and give examples of how it has been used in other literature, film, etc. Second, analyze how Moreno-Garcia uses it in *Mexican Gothic*, focusing on the various meanings it takes on. Finally, explain your central image and your reason for choosing the sentence you chose, along with anything else you want to explain about your one-pager.

Mexican Gothic: Historical Context and Post-Colonialism (Games)

Teacher Guide

Standard(s) addressed:

- 11-12.RN.2.2 Analyze the development of similar central ideas across two or more texts and determine how specific details shape and refine the central idea.
- 11-12.ML.2.1 Evaluate the intersections and conflicts between visual and verbal messages, and recognize how visual techniques or design elements carry or influence messages in various media.

Concepts and skills:

- Historical context
- Colonialism and postcolonialism
- Reading, analyzing, and synthesizing informational texts

Objectives:

- Students will be able to discuss aspects of the historical context of *Mexican Gothic*, including the colonization of Mexico and exploitation of its resources by Spain and England
- Students will become familiar with basic aspects of postcolonial critical theory
- Students will read and comprehend several nonfiction texts and be able to articulate the central idea shared by the texts
- Students will understand how design elements of colonial-themed board games influence implicit messages about colonialism and use that knowledge to design games with counternarratives

Suggested timeframe:

- Students should learn about colonialism and post-colonial criticism prior to reading or early on in their reading of the novel. The nonfiction reading about board games and the game design assignment could occur at any point before, during, or after the reading of the novel, depending on the extent to which teachers want students to be able to root their game design in the events of the novel.

Synopsis:

- In order to appreciate the scope of Moreno-Garcia's purpose in *Mexican Gothic*, students need to understand the novel's historical backdrop--the colonization of Mexico by Spain and England and the exploitation of indigenous labor in the silver mines--as well as general concepts about colonialism and postcolonial critical theory. Here, students learn about the colonization of Mexico through a series of informational texts (see **teaching resources**) beginning with short introductory explanations by Moreno-Garcia. They also learn about general concepts related to colonialism through several articles critiquing popular board games in which players act as colonizers. Finally, students work in small groups to design games that challenge hegemonic narratives and values.

Grading/assessment:

- Students could be assessed on their comprehension of the non-fiction articles in a variety of ways--quizzes and tests, Socratic seminar, analytic essay. Their small-group game design (see **student jobsheet**) should include individual statements of intent, which could be assessed on a rubric based on standard 11-12.ML.2.1.

Differentiation:

- The informational text set is flexible; struggling readers could be assigned fewer articles to read; long articles could also be shortened and simplified. Teachers can read articles out loud with the class. Game design is difficult; students who may struggle with the creative and technical aspects of that assignment could instead research (and if possible, purchase and play) one or more of the anti-colonization games referenced in the text set and write evaluations of those games. On the other hand, gifted and/or enthusiastic students could be challenged to go beyond the requirements of the assignments and produce the game materials.

Teaching Resources:

- The [Random House study guide](#) for *Mexican Gothic* opens with a one-page note to readers about the colonial backdrop of the novel (p. 2), and it also includes a one-page description by the author of the colonized village on which the novel's setting is based (p. 5). This would be a good starting place for introducing the colonial context of the novel.
- [This page](#) from Purdue's OWL offers a concise overview of postcolonial literary criticism.
- [This 2021 Atlantic article](#) focuses on criticism of "Puerto Rico" and other board games that require players to "colonize" historic civilizations.
- [This 2021 Daily Worker article](#) grapples with the same issue as the *Atlantic* article, but in greater detail and with a slightly more academic approach. Note: This is a two-part article; the link to Part 2 is at the bottom of Part 1.
- [This article](#) offers very detailed, step-by-step advice on how to design a board game. [This Youtube video](#) introduces a very engaging Youtube channel that contains multiple videos devoted to how to design board games.

Mexican Gothic: Historical Context and Post-Colonialism

Game Design: Student Jobsheet

Instructions:

- After reading "[The Board Games That Ask You to Reenact Colonialism](#)" and "[Colonialism in and of Board Games](#)" (Parts 1 and 2), write a short reflection addressing the following questions:
 - In one or two sentences, how would you explain the central idea shared by these two articles?
 - What are some specific details from each article that support this central idea?
 - Do you agree with this central idea? Why or why not?
 - Do you have any experience with any of the board games mentioned in the articles, or other board or video games that involve aspects of colonialism? If so, do you think reading these articles will influence the way you play the games? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- Work with ___ other students to design an anti-colonial board game set in a Mexican mining village like the one featured in *Mexican Gothic*. Your game design must include the following, all addressed to players "You...":
 - **Game Overview.** This should include the premise/story of the game, the overall objective, the materials, the general process of the game, and how to win.
 - **Instructions for Setup.** Explain to players how to arrange the game materials and how to start the game.
 - **Rules.** You don't have to go into great detail, but explain the basic rules to players.
 - **Illustration.** Provide an illustration that shows the game board, materials, and setup.

You can use your imagination and be creative, but there are a few requirements your group must follow as you design your game:

- Your game may be cooperative or competitive (players could compete against each other or, more likely, work to "beat the game").
 - Your game must be set in a Mexican mining village like the one featured in *Mexican Gothic*.
 - Your game must be structured so that the players' objective involves preventing colonization or peaceably removing colonists from the village.
 - Your game must not involve or promote violence.
- On your own, write a Statement of Intent about your game. In this statement, explain how the visual and/or design elements of your game carry or influence messages about colonialism that provide a counternarrative to the games you read about in the articles.

Mexican Gothic: Enhancing Understanding through Research

Teacher Guide

Standard(s) addressed:

- 11-12.W.5 Conduct short as well as more sustained research assignments and tasks to build knowledge about the research process and the topic under study.
- 11-12.SL.4.2 Create engaging presentations that make strategic and creative use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) to add interest and enhance audience understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence.
- 11-12.SL.4.1 Using a range of informal and formal tasks, present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, address opposing perspectives, ensuring the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience.

Concepts and skills:

- The research process (formulating a question, gathering information, evaluating information, synthesizing information, avoiding plagiarism, presenting information)
- Creating multimedia presentations
- Public speaking

Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate ability to engage in the research process, from the formulation of a research question to the presentation of information
- Students will create engaging presentations that make strategic and creative use of digital media
- Students will present findings and supporting evidence appropriate to purpose and audience

Suggested timeframe:

- The timeframe is flexible; students could choose their topic and begin the research process at any point before, during, or after the reading of the novel. Likewise, they could present their findings before beginning or early in the novel so the class has a better understanding of references in the text as they read, or they could present late in the reading or after finishing the novel, when the significance of their research in light of the novel will be more clear. There are obviously advantages and disadvantages to each approach.

Synopsis:

- Students will choose from a list of research topics that emerge in the novel, or come up with their own as long as they can justify its connection to the text. They will formulate a research question, gather, evaluate, and synthesize information; and present the information in a multimedia format that is engaging and organized and avoids plagiarism. They will also explain the connection between their topic and the text and how researching the topic influenced or enhanced their understanding of the novel.

Grading/assessment:

- The suggested product is a short, individual multimedia presentation to the class (see **student jobsheet**). This could be graded using a rubric based on the three standards identified above. Alternatively, each component (research process, submitted presentation, and execution) could be graded separately.

Differentiation:

- To save time, the entire process could be carried out in small groups. This would also allow for grouping students who may struggle in ways that make sense given their needs and the dynamics of the class. Students who struggle with public speaking could be permitted to pre-record

Teaching resources:

- Possible research topics include (in no particular order): Mexican mining ghost towns, colonial silver mining in Mexico, the Spanish colonization of Mexico, the Mexican War of Independence of 1810, the arrival of British mining companies in Mexico in the late 1800s, the Mexican village of Real de Monte, the Indigenous population of Hildago, the Gothic romances of the 1960s, pulp fiction, Domestic Noir, eugenics and the discipline of anthropology in the 1950s (these could be separate or combined), hallucinogenic mushrooms, magic realism, weird fiction, racism and the horror genre.
- Other possible research topics include those explored in other activities/assessments: fairytale tropes and archetypes, the ouroboros, the Catholic mass, the origins of Gothic fiction, feminist literary criticism, postcolonial literature and criticism, colonial and anti-colonial board games.
- The [Random House study guide](#) for *Mexican Gothic* includes basic background information about several of the topics students could research and could provide a good starting place for some students.
- [Purdue's OWL](#) has a wealth of resources that can help students with the research process, including a [section](#) designed for high school instructors and students.
- [This page](#) from Common Sense Media catalogs, describes, and evaluates 24 of the best tools for classroom multimedia presentations.

Mexican Gothic: Enhancing Understanding through Research

Multimedia Presentation: Student Jobsheet

Instructions:

- From the list of topics below, choose one that you find personally interesting and haven't researched before. Alternatively, with approval from your teacher, you may research a different topic related to *Mexican Gothic* in some way.

Mexican mining ghost towns	the discipline of anthropology in the 1950s
colonial silver mining in Mexico	hallucinogenic mushrooms
the Spanish colonization of Mexico	magic realism
the Mexican War of Independence of 1810	weird fiction
the arrival of British mining companies in Mexico in the late 1800s	racism and the horror genre
the Mexican village of Real de Monte	fairytale tropes and archetypes
the Indigenous population of Hidalgo	the ouroboros
the Gothic romances of the 1960s	the Catholic mass
pulp fiction	the origins of Gothic fiction
Domestic Noir	feminist literary criticism
eugenics	postcolonial literature and criticism
	colonial and anti-colonial board games

- Formulate a research question about your topic. What do you want to find out? Be sure your question is not too broad or too narrow.
- Using resources suggested by your teacher, look for ____ sources about your topic that have the potential to help answer your research question. In addition to information, look for digital media, such as photos and videos, that could illustrate your topic.
- Evaluate each source you find for credibility, accuracy, and strengths and weaknesses using tools provided by your teacher.
- Begin gathering together and organizing your information into a format that will be interesting and engaging for your audience, using one of the multimedia presentation tools your teacher suggests.
- Check your presentation to ensure that all direct quotes are in quotation marks and all ideas that are not your own are properly cited.
- Practice and time your presentation, making changes where necessary to ensure that it is between ____ and ____ minutes.