

**CONTEXT** Since piloting our [Culture, Community, and the Classroom \(CCC\)](#) series in 2018, we have engaged traditional artists from diverse communities and connected them with public school teachers and museum educators in learning residencies. CCC uses a three-phase series model, starting with a 12-hour professional development workshop that includes artists, culture bearers, and regional educators learning together. The second phase pairs artists and teachers working together in a classroom. The final phase brings everyone who participated together in a program showcase to reflect on what was learned and to strengthen peer networks and connections. This lesson plan was shared with us by a teacher who participated in the CCC program. It can be adapted for use with a local artist in another region. Or, [Contact Us](#) to learn how to invite the named artist in this lesson to your learning space.

**WHAT WE LOVE** This lesson plan demonstrates that a visit from a guest artist can be integrated into a rigorous multi-class project that meets course requirements while also creating an opportunity for students to have a meaningful dialogue about cultural identity with a member of their local community. Teacher and author Cathryn Lally writes, “My students had been under the impression that culture was something that other people had but was not applicable to them. I was excited to see students analyze their own lives and consider (some of them for the first time) how their culture shapes their beliefs and values.”

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## **CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND THE CLASSROOM GUEST ARTIST LESSON PLAN**

**AUTHOR AND TEACHER:** Cathryn Lally

**GRADE LEVEL:** 9th

**SUBJECT AREAS:** English Language Arts

**SCHOOL:** Whitney Point High School, Whitney, NY

**ARTIST COLLABORATOR:** Gayane Dadian

**ART FORM:** Armenian Lullabies

**CURRICULAR CONNECTION:**

- Students understand how many cultures share similar values and how culture has an impact later in life.
- Students analyzed lullabies as texts.
- Students demonstrated their understanding of symbolism

**LESSON TITLE:** Analyzing Identity and Culture in Lullabies

**LENGTH:** Six days, 40-minute periods

**MATERIALS/RESOURCES:**

**Slideshows:** Culture and Identity; Example: Lullaby/Song Analysis; Lullaby Analysis Song Options; Example: Over the Rainbow by Harold Arlen; How to Interview; Culture & Lullabies; Write our Own Lullaby; Lullaby Symbolism

**Worksheets:** Worksheet Lullaby, Song, or Text Analysis; Gayane Note Taker; Values of Lullaby

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**LESSON PLAN OVERVIEW:**

Day 1:

- Culture slideshow: **Culture and Identity**

Day 2:

- Teacher example lullaby analysis: **Example: Lullaby/Song Analysis**
- Go over student options: **Lullaby Analysis Song Options**
- Students work in pairs (student or teacher selected, depending on the class) and pick one of the provided lullabies. Students can choose one not on the list if they get it approved by the teacher.
- Students complete the following worksheet with a partner **Worksheet Lullaby, Song, or Text Analysis**

Day 3:

- More time to analyze the lullabies.
- If students finish early, extend their learning by having them make a poster for their lullaby (on paper or online)
- Teacher example: **Example Over the Rainbow, by Harold Arlen**

Day 4:

- Students compare personal beliefs with their chosen lullaby. **Values of Lullaby**
- How to interview discussion/time to generate questions. **How to Interview**

Day 4:

- Gayane Visit #1 **Culture & Lullabies** slides 1-13
- Student notetaker **Gayane Note Taker**

Day 5:

- Analyze one of the Armenian lullabies (looking for the same information as with the U.S. ones). **Worksheet (Lullaby, Song, Text Analysis)**
- Write our own lullabies **Write Our Own Lullaby**
  - For time purposes, I adapted this activity. I had my first period class pick a theme, then had students work in pairs to write four lines. At the end of each period, each group shared and voted on which stanza they wanted to be used for the grade-level poem.
    - Each class's stanza built on the previous one.
    - Consider having students analyze two Armenian lullabies on Day 5 and moving the writing lullabies to Day 6 to allow students to write entire ones. Gayane's second visit would become Day 7, and so on.

Day 6:

- Gayane Slides 14-end (**Culture & Lullabies**)
- Students independently create cover art--either for the lullaby they created, one of the Armenian lullabies, or one of the optional lullabies.
  - Color and Image Symbolism **Lullaby Symbolism**

VOCABULARY:

- Culture
- Identity
- Lullaby
- Content specific words: literary devices (AKA writing strategies) such as characterization, simile, metaphor, juxtaposition, symbolism, etc.

PREPARING/PLANNING:

After talking with Gayane Dadian, I decided the best way to incorporate her work into my class would be to analyze the Armenian lullabies. To prepare for her arrival, I gathered a list of U.S. lullabies, so students could practice their analysis on a text they were familiar with before moving on to a text from another culture.

CLASSROOM VISITS:

- Visit 0

I prepared the students for the visit by creating a "How to Interview" mini lesson to go through with the students to ensure their questions were appropriate and detailed enough for 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The only information I gave students prior to Gayane's arrival was her name and that she sings Armenian Lullabies. I did not provide the students with Gayane's artist statement or portrait. I was worried that providing more information than her name and what she does (generally) would stifle, rather than curate, their questions.

- Visit 1

On her first visit, Ganaye answered some of the student-generated questions and went through slides 1-13 on a PowerPoint she had prepared (**Culture & Lullabies**). Students completed the corresponding fill-in-the-blank sheet that I created (**Gayane Note Taker worksheet**). I was not sure how engaged they would be, so this was a way to ensure they were listening. Gayane explained how lullabies connected to her personal story. She had a child soon after she moved to the United States, so singing Armenian lullabies was a way to stay connected to her identity and culture. As her daughter grew up in the U.S., she became familiar with popular U.S. lullabies. Gayane noticed the similarities between the two cultures, which helped her recognize that the values and beliefs she developed in Armenia were also relevant here. Gayane also read us several Armenian lullabies.

Connection to Curriculum: Gayane's presentation helped students understand how despite having different practices, many cultures share similar values. Furthermore, it provided an example of how one's culture can impact them later in life, even if they move away from where they are raised. Gayane's presentation on lullabies then gave us an opportunity to analyze lullabies as texts in between her visits.

- Visit 2

In her second visit, Gayane showed us a scarf she brought from Armenia that has the Armenian alphabet depicted as various animals and has the colors of the flag. Gayane went through the remaining slides on her PowerPoint (**Culture & Lullabies**) and explained the popular colors and symbols used in Armenian lullaby covers. In Armenia, it is popular to incorporate the nation's colors and popular symbols into lullaby covers and children's nurseries. The idea is that associating cultural colors and symbols with a safe environment will help develop a love and appreciation for their culture and country as children grow up. They are calmed by their own culture. Gayane specifically discussed the ornate rugs and cradles in the images.

Connection to Curriculum: Students demonstrated their understanding of symbolism by creating a lullaby cover (for either an Armenian or U.S. lullaby) and explaining why they chose the colors and symbols/images they used.

#### ASSESSMENT/DOCUMENTATION:

What the teacher loved:

Gayane is an amazing artist, and her goal is to get people to look at lullabies as the engaging art form they are. She wants people to recognize their inner child as they age and understand that the messages within these texts serve a purpose long past childhood. She was glad to be able to pass this information on and change students' perspectives regarding the role of lullabies.

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#### STANDARDS:

- New York State
  - 9-10R1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences; develop questions for deeper understanding and for further exploration.
    - Days 2,3
  - 9-10R2: Determine one or more themes or central ideas in a text and analyze its development, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; objectively and accurately summarize a text.
    - Days 2,3
  - 9-10R5: In literary texts, consider how varied aspects of structure create meaning and affect the reader.
    - Day 5
  - 9-10R6: Analyze how authors employ point of view, perspective, and purpose to shape explicit and implicit messages (e.g., examine rhetorical strategies, literary elements and devices).
    - Days 2, 3, 4
      - Day 4 involves analyzing the messages.
  - 9-10W4: Create a poem, story, play, artwork, or other response to a text, author, theme or personal experience; demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of techniques and genres. Explain divergences from the original when appropriate.
    - Days 5, 6



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