*Grade 12* ► *Unit 6*

**European Literature: Twentieth Century**

**Using Auden’s term “Age of Anxiety” as a focal idea, students consider both the breakdown and affirmation of meaning in twentieth-century literature in this final six-week unit.**

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**Overview**

* + Through the close reading of “dystopian” works such as *Pygmalion*, *1984*, and *Rhinoceros*, students consider the problems inherent in fashioning a perfect society or perfect individual. At the same time, they also consider how authors of the twentieth century affirm the possibility of beauty and meaning—for instance, in Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, Federico García Lorca’s *Poem of the Deep Song*, or Thomas Hardy’s “The Darkling Thrush.” To gain a deeper appreciation of the role of beauty in twentieth-century literature, they appraise connections between poetry and music: for instance, the relation of Eliot’s *Four Quartets* to a Beethoven quartet, and the relation of Federico García Lorca’s poetry to the rhythms of flamenco music. Examining how authors rework classical stories and themes (e.g., in Anouilh’s *Antigone* or Camus’ *Caligula*), students ponder how historical context affects an enduring story or theme. Students complete research papers in which they consult literary criticism and historical materials. They engage in discussions resembling college seminars, where they pursue focused questions in depth over the course of one or two class sessions. At the close of the unit, students have the opportunity to research the literature they have read over the course of the year and the concepts they have studied.
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**Focus Standards**

* + These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.
    - **RL.11-12.3:** Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).  
      **RL.11-12.6:** Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
    - **RL.11-12.10:** By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.
    - **RI.11-12.5:** Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.
    - **W.11-12.7:**Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
    - **W.11-12.8:** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
    - **SL.11-12.1(a-d):**Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues,* building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
    - **L.11-12.6:**Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/CCSSI_ELA_Standards.pdf) (1.5 MB)

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**Suggested Student Objectives**

* + - Read works of the twentieth century, focusing on the earlier decades.
    - Consider aspects of modernism (such as anxiety) in their historical context.
    - Explain both the breakdown and affirmation of form and meaning in modernist literature.
    - Analyze dystopian literature, considering the problems inherent in fashioning a perfect person or society.
    - Consider how poems in this unit reflect on poetry itself and its possibilities.
    - Write research papers in which they consult literary criticism and historical materials.
    - Consider the implications of modern versions of classical works.
    - Examine the musical allusions and their meanings in twentieth-century poetical works in seminars.
    - Pursue focused questions in depth over the course of one or two class sessions.
    - Understand absurdist and existential philosophy as it applies to literature and theatre.
    - Research the literature they have read over the course of the year and the concepts they have studied.
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**Suggested Works**

* + (E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

**Literary Texts**

Teachers may make the literary selections in a number of ways. They may select works across the genres, or they may focus primarily on a particular genre. The selections should address the ideas of anxiety and beauty in some manner and should offer contrasting responses to the tension and crises of the twentieth century.

**Novels**

* + - *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (Thomas Hardy)
    - *Pan: From Lieutenant Thomas Glahn’s Papers* (Knut Hamsun)
    - *Steppenwolf* (Hermann Hesse)
    - *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (Doris Lessing)
    - *1984* (George Orwell)
    - *Brave New World*(Aldous Huxley)
    - *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Erich Maria Remarque)

**Novellas**

* + - *The Metamorphosis* (Franz Kafka) (E)

**Plays**

* + - *Antigone* (Jean Anouilh)
    - *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Bertolt Brecht)
    - *Caligula* (Albert Camus)
    - *Pygmalion*(George Bernard Shaw)
    - *Rhinoceros* (Eugene Ionesco) (E)
    - *Waiting for Godot* (Samuel Beckett)
    - *King Lear* (William Shakespeare)
    - *Hamlet* (William Shakespeare)

**Poems**

* + - “The Darkling Thrush” (Thomas Hardy)
    - “Archaic Torso of Apollo” (Rainer Maria Rilke)
    - “The Second Coming” (William Butler Yeats)
    - *Poem of the Deep Song* (Federico García Lorca) (selections)
    - *Four Quartets* (T. S. Eliot) (EA)
    - *The Wasteland* (T. S. Eliot) (EA)
    - “Conversation with a Stone” (Wisława Szymborska)
    - “Suicide in the  Trenches” (Siegfried Sassoon)
    - “Counter-Attack” (Siegfried Sassoon)
    - “The Old Huntsman” (Siegfried Sassoon)
    - “Dreamers” (Siegfried Sassoon)
    - “The Daffodil Murderer” (Siegfried Sassoon)
    - *The Age of Anxiety: A Baroque Eclogue*(W.H. Auden) (EA)

**Informational Texts**

**Historical Nonfiction**

* + - *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche)
    - *Letters to a Young Poet* (Rainer Maria Rilke)
    - *The Courage to Be* (Paul Tillich) (selections)
    - *The Ego and the Id*(Sigmund Freud) (selections)

**Speeches**

* + - “Their Finest Hour” (House of Commons, June 18, 1940) (Winston Churchill) (EA)

**Essays**

* + - “Crisis of the Mind” (Paul Valéry)
    - “The Fallacy of Success” (G.K. Chesterton) (E)

**Art, Music, and Media**

**Music**

* + - Ludwig van Beethoven, String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Op. 132 (1825)
    - Flamenco guitar music (such as that performed by Carlos Montoya or Paco Peña)
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**Sample Activities and Assessments**

* + **Note:** *After reading and discussing a work or pairing of works as a class, students prepare for seminars and essays by reflecting individually, in pairs, and/or in small groups on a given seminar/essay question. In this way, ideas are student generated. (Seminar/Essay assignments include more than one question. Teachers may choose one or all the questions to explore in the course of the seminar; students should choose one question for the essay.) Seminars should be held before students write essays so that they may explore their ideas thoroughly and refine their thinking before writing. (Click* [*here*](http://commoncore.org/free/index.php/maps/grade_12_unit_6/) *to see a sample seminar scoring rubric.) Page and word counts for essays are not provided, but teachers should consider the suggestions regarding the use of evidence, for example, to determine the likely length of good essays. In future iterations of these maps, links to samples of student work will be provided.*

**Collaborate**

Reflect on seminar questions, take notes on your responses, and note the page numbers of the textual evidence you will refer to in your seminar and/or essay answers. Share your notes with a partner for feedback and guidance. Have you interpreted the text correctly? Is your evidence convincing?(RL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.1)

**Seminar and Essay**

How does Auden’s “September 1, 1939” (in *The Age of Anxiety*) shed light on the works studied in this unit? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

How did the war-era poetry of Sassoon contribute to the shaping of existentialism as a philosophy? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

How do *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Sassoon’s war poems influence and contribute to the existential movement? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Compare Anouilh’s *Antigone* with Sophocles’ *Antigone* (which students read in grade 9). Cite at least two sources of outside literary criticism. Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4,SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Was Orwell’s classic novel *1984* prophetic?  Consider the rise, fall, and endurance in the twentieth century of political regimes that restrict personal freedoms.  Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4,SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Compare the outcasts of two dystopian works in this unit, *1984* and *A Brave New World*. How are their struggles different? How are they similar? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

What social values are discarded in the dystopian works *1984* and/or *A Brave New World?* Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Hesse is a master of blending fantasy and reality. He claims his novel *Steppenwolf* has been “violently misunderstood.” Consider it as an existential novel. Why could it easily be misunderstood? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4,SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Relate the loss of hope and despair to one of the dystopian novels in this unit to Hardy’s poem “The Darkling Thrush.” From where does this hopelessness derive in both texts? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4,SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Consider *Mother Courage and Her Children* as an allegorical, moral tale where war is depicted as a business. What moral is presented by the story? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4,SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

How is Gregor Samsa’s transformation in *The Metamorphosis* a metaphor for the existential experience? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4,SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Examine how each author reworks classical stories and themes in Anouilh’s *Antigone* and/or Camus’ *Caligula*. Consider how historical context affects an enduring story or theme. Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.2, SL.11-12.1 W.11-12.5, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Consider the musical allusions and their contribution to the meaning of twentieth-century poetical works using Eliot’s *Four Quartets* and/or Lorca’s *Poem of the Deep Song*. What musical characteristics highlight the themes in the poetry? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Paying close attention to the storm scenes and the role of the fool in *King Lear*, how could the play be regarded as an existential work?  Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Paying close attention to Hamlet’s soliloquies, how can *Hamlet* be regarded as a work of existentialism? How does it apply to Auden’s concept of anxiety? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

“The Second Coming” is an allegorical poem that describes the state of Europe after WWI. How do the metaphors in the poem convey meaning?  Does it reveal an existential world view? Why or why not? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Seminar and Essay**

Compare and contrast how *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Pygmalion* are both concerned with fashioning the perfect individual. How do these texts conform to Auden’s Age of Anxiety? Write an essay that uses specific textual evidence that supports an original, concise thesis statement. (RL.11-12.4,SL.11-12.4 W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8, L.11-12.6)

**Oral presentation**

Recite a one- to two-minute passage from one of the texts. Include an introduction that discusses:

* + - How the passage deals with the question of meaning and meaninglessness; or
    - How the passage comments, directly or indirectly, on historical events. (SL.11-12.4)

**Research Paper**

Using texts from this unit or additional outside sources, write a research paper that answers the essential question**: “**Why (in literature) might the twentieth century be regarded as the Age of Anxiety?” Use textual evidence to support an original thesis statement designed to answer this question. (W.11-12.7, W.11-12.8)

[Scoring Rubric](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/Socratic_Seminar_Rubric_SP.doc)

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**Additional Resources**

* + - [**Dystopias: Definition and Characteristics**](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson926/DefinitionCharacteristics.pdf)(ReadWriteThink)  
      This pdf handout discusses the differences between utopia and dystopia, as well as the characteristics of a dystopian society.
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**Terminology**

* + - absurd
    - affirmation
    - negation
    - anxiety
    - dystopia
    - existentialism
    - free verse
    - modernism
    - neologism
    - postmodernism
    - rhetorical device
    - satire
    - totalitarianism
    - understatement