

# **AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH STUDY OF *LOST NAMES: SCENES FROM A KOREAN BOYHOOD***

**GRADE:** 12

**AUTHOR:** Lisa Pupo

**SUBJECT:** Literature

**TIME REQUIRED:** Twelve 50-minute class periods

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- Analyze literary devices in *Lost Names*
- Critically address the narrative technique in *Lost Names*
- Understand Korean culture as seen through *Lost Names*
- Understand the historical circumstances of Korea during the Japanese occupation
- Evaluate root causes of the Japanese colonization of Korea

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

Nakazawa, Keiji. "Barefoot Gen." *SPICE, U.S.-Japan Relations, The View From Both Sides of the Pacific*, 1993.

Keller, Nora Okja. *Comfort Woman*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

*Hidden Korea*. VHS. PBS Documentary Video, 2001.

Ellington, Lucien. "History as Literature, Literature as History. *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood*." *Education About Asia*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Fall 1999)

Takahata, Isao. *Grave of the Fireflies*. 1988.

Japan and Korea Map, National Geographic Society.

Ku, Dae-yeol. *Korea Under Colonialism: The March First Movement and Anglo-Japanese Relations*. Seoul: Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1985.

Kim, Richard E. *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1970.

*Modern Marvels*, "Warfare in the Cold" TV Program. The History Channel (Video Excerpt)

Kang, Hildi. *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices From Colonial Korea 1910-1945*. Ithaca: 2001.

Kim, Hyun-Seok. *YMCA Baseball Team*. DVD. Directed by Kim Hyun-Seok. Seoul, 2002.

## **PROCEDURES:**

### Anticipatory Set (Day One)

1. As students enter the classroom on the first day of this unit, they are handed an "official" notice. They must report to the cafeteria lobby to register a new surname, as Spain has achieved a hostile annexation of the United States. Additionally, no spoken or written English will be tolerated. Students must all speak and write in Spanish.
2. When students enter the cafeteria lobby, several Spanish teachers are present. In Spanish, the teachers order students to enter the line and remind them to prepare a new Spanish surname to replace their current family name. If students are unable to produce acceptable surnames, the Spanish officials will provide them. It may be helpful to have an interpreter on hand.
3. Any student who voices protest is sent immediately to the office and does not reappear during that class period. A special area should be set up in the main office (for instance a

conference room) and students should be escorted. The lesson should proceed with a willing Vice Principal or other school employee giving instructions.

4. Students return to the classroom with their new Spanish names. They are then given a dictate from the administration as to new rules which will be enforced effective immediately.
5. The new rules may include the replacement of courses and extracurricular activities with those found in Spanish schools and the replacement of cafeteria selections with Spanish foods.
6. Towards the end of the period, the teacher will hand out a written assignment, due at the beginning of the next class.
7. Discuss: What if today's role-playing activity had been real? What was your immediate reaction to having your culture replaced by a foreign one? How did you feel about having to change your name? About changing your academic courses? About losing your freedoms? Did you think about rebelling? What could you and your fellow students have done?
8. Note to teachers: You can be as grandiose or as contained as your circumstances allow. The scenario can be staged within the classroom. You might include such additional elements as a prerecorded news bulletin announcing the Spanish annexation of the United States. Let your constraints or resources determine how to stage this portion of the lesson. However you arrange the lesson, some help from colleagues may be necessary.

#### Anticipatory Set (Day 2)

1. Students will share their written responses, first with partners and then with the entire class. Allow at least 20 minutes for class discussion.
2. Challenge students to examine historical circumstances in the United States when similar events may have taken place. Possible examples include name changes as immigrants entered Ellis Island, or the Bureau of Indian Affairs, their schools, and the outlawing of Native American languages. Allow approximately 15 minutes for class discussion.
3. Hand out Richard Kim's *Lost Names* and briefly summarize the historical setting. A more complete historical background will follow at a later date, in connection with the novel.
4. Assign students the following guiding questions to be answered as they complete the reading assignment:
  - How are the literary elements of diction and syntax used to enhance the author's tone? Share examples.
  - Do you think the narrator's experience is representative of all Korean experiences? Why or why not?
  - How might the novel change if it was written by a Korean from a different socioeconomic class?
  - Are there sections in the novel when the narrator's voice is inconsistent with his age? How does this affect the narrator's reliability?
  - How do the characters embody the Confucian values of family hierarchy and duty? Give several examples.
  - Are Japanese characters within the story over simplified? Are they stereotyped? Explain your response.

Note to Teachers: In the AP class I teach, the majority of reading takes place independently and many of the major works are read in their entirety prior to discussion. In similar classes,

the remaining procedural steps should be completed after the students have read the novel. However, they could be incorporated into lessons designed to correspond to daily reading assignments.

1. Historical Perspective and Setting

The following contextual themes can be established through the introduction of corresponding techniques and materials listed beside them.

- A. Japanese Colonialism (lecture, class discussion, excerpts from *Korea Under Colonialism* and *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices From Colonial Korea 1910-1945*, YMCA Baseball Team film)
- B. Japanese Occupation of Manchuria and its relevance to Korea (guest lecturer Dr. Karen Kreider, Social Studies and Gifted Support instructor)
- C. Korean Climate (*Modern Marvels*, *Warfare in the Cold* video excerpt, Japan and Korea map)

2. Richard E. Kim: Literature as History

Students will read Kathleen Woods Masalski's interview of Richard Kim as published in *Education About Asia*, as well as the author's note at the end of *Lost Names*. The following guiding questions will be addressed.

- A. Do you think the narrator's experience is representative of all Korean experience? Why or why not?
- B. How might the novel change if written by a Korean from a different socioeconomic class?

Discuss students' initial responses to these questions as compared with the information found in the published interview.

3. Scenes from a Korean Boyhood

Have students work in pairs or small groups to answer the following questions.

- A. What aspects of typical Korean life can be seen in the novel? Can life be typical in the midst of war? Expand. (After discussion, show *Hidden Korea*, a PBS documentary video that explores the culture of the Republic of South Korea through its traditions and cuisine.)
- B. In many ways *Lost Names* depicts the beginnings of the narrator's maturation process. How does the reader see him change and grow emotionally?
- C. How do the characters embody the Confucian values of family hierarchy and duty? Give several examples.

4. History as Literature

*Lost Names* moves easily between genres. It can be analyzed as literature just as it can be used to document a period in Korean history. Discuss student responses to questions A and B. For question C, the teacher may want to employ an active engagement technique.

- A. How are the literary elements of diction and syntax used to enhance the author's tone? Share examples.
- B. Are there parts of the novel where the narrator's voice is inconsistent with his age? How does this affect the narrator's reliability?
- C. Find two examples from the novel where the imagery is particularly strong. Does the strength of the imagery lend itself to a particular message in the novel? Explain.

5. Historical Enrichment

Though *Lost Names* does not address the issue of Korean comfort women, for students of honors or AP caliber, there may be merit in introducing the subject as another example of atrocities inflicted on Koreans during the Japanese occupation and WWII.

- A. After providing students with some historical background on comfort women and the camps set up by the Japanese, read the following excerpt from *Comfort Woman* by Nora Okja Keller:

Chongsindae (Battalion Slave): Our brothers and fathers conscripted. The women left to be picked over like fruit to be tasted, consumed, the pits spit out as Chongsindae, where we rotted under the body of orders from the Emperor of Japan. Under the Emperor's orders, we were beaten and starved. Under Emperor's orders, the holes of our bodies were used to bury their excrement. Under Emperor's orders, we were bled again and again until we were thrown into a pit and burned, the ash from our thrashing arms dusting the surface of the river in which we had sometimes been allowed to bathe. Under Emperor's orders, we could not prepare those in the river for the journey out of hell.

The Japanese believe they have destroyed an entire generation of Koreans. That we are all dead and have taken the horrible truth with us, but I am alive. I feel you, knowing you wait by my side until the time comes for me to join you across the river. I offer you this one small gesture each year, worth more than the guilt money the Japanese now offer to silence me: a bit of rice burned in your memories, and your names called over and over again, a feast of crumbs for the starving.

- B. Ask students to respond by immediately writing down adjectives that describe their feelings upon hearing this passage. Share in a large group, using student reactions as inspiration for class discussion.
- C. Challenge students to think of other historical circumstances when women have been sexually violated by invading or occupying forces. Discuss.

6. A Balanced View: The Japanese Under Western Influence

Within the context of the interview with Kathleen Woods Masalski, Kim states: "One exception I take is to anyone who says it's anti-Japanese. It's not. There are some bad Japanese characters in the book, but it is not anti-Japanese." Challenge students to examine

the historical influences on Japan prior to annexing Korea and the effects of WWII on Japanese citizens.

- A. Commodore Perry and the Black Ships (lecture, class discussion)
- B. Japanese emulation of Western imperialism (lecture, class discussion)
- C. *Grave of the Fireflies*, Isao Takahata (film excerpt, class discussion)  
The narrator and his sister are ordinary Japanese citizens. They must endure the hardships of war: their father fights in the Japanese navy and is assumed dead by the end of the film, their mother dies in a bombing raid, distant relatives become unwilling to share scarce food, the orphaned children become homeless and suffer from malnutrition. Ask students to respond in writing to the following statement: “Humankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to humankind.” John F. Kennedy
- D. *Barefoot Gen*, Keiji Nakazawa (cartoon excerpt, class discussion)  
In cartoon version, this story tells the tale of the first impressions and experiences of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, told through the eyes of a young boy named Gen. In this version, some of the dialogue bubbles are blank. In pairs, have students fill in possible dialogue and then compare their responses to the scripted version. (SPICE, *U.S.-Japan Relations, The View From Both Sides of the Pacific*)

### EVALUATION:

Students will prepare an essay response to one of the following prompts:

1. Using at least three additional outside sources, one of which must be a primary document, address the question: “Could *Lost Names* happen only in Korea?” Be certain to support your assumptions with historical evidence.
2. Is the narrative voice of a young boy an effective choice for *Lost Names*? If there are narrative inconsistencies throughout the novel, do they detract from the story or supplement the tale in some way? Be certain to include ample detail from the novel to support your assertions.
3. The following passage is from the final chapter of *Lost Names*.

“For thirty-six years, Lord, for thirty-six long years, we have been praying for this day,” my mother is praying, “and the day has come at last. You have blessed us with our freedom this day, Lord, and you have returned our beloved, the father of our children, to us safe and unharmed... and we pray for your wisdom and continued guidance as we step toward the unknown, toward the tomorrow in our new life. You have graced us with our country’s salvation and with our family’s salvation, and, when we look back on those years of darkness and persecution, when we look back on...”

My mother’s voice breaks down, and fighting her sobbing, she covers her face with her hands. My maternal grandparents, my sisters clinging to my father, and my baby brother by my mother... their heads bowed, my sisters sobbing now, my brother crawling up onto my mother’s lap – and I am sitting quietly, my eyes open, and I am saying:

“We are not going to cry anymore.”

Given your knowledge on what happens next in Korea (that the country is arbitrarily divided at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, that Koreans do not gain their independence until 1947, that the Korean War begins in 1950 and two million civilians and another 900,000 soldiers lose their lives, that today North and South Korea remain divided), is the hope felt by the characters toward their new life futile? What aspects of “character” are Koreans able to call upon to endure their difficult history? Be certain to utilize examples from the work to support your assumptions. You must utilize at least one additional outside source.