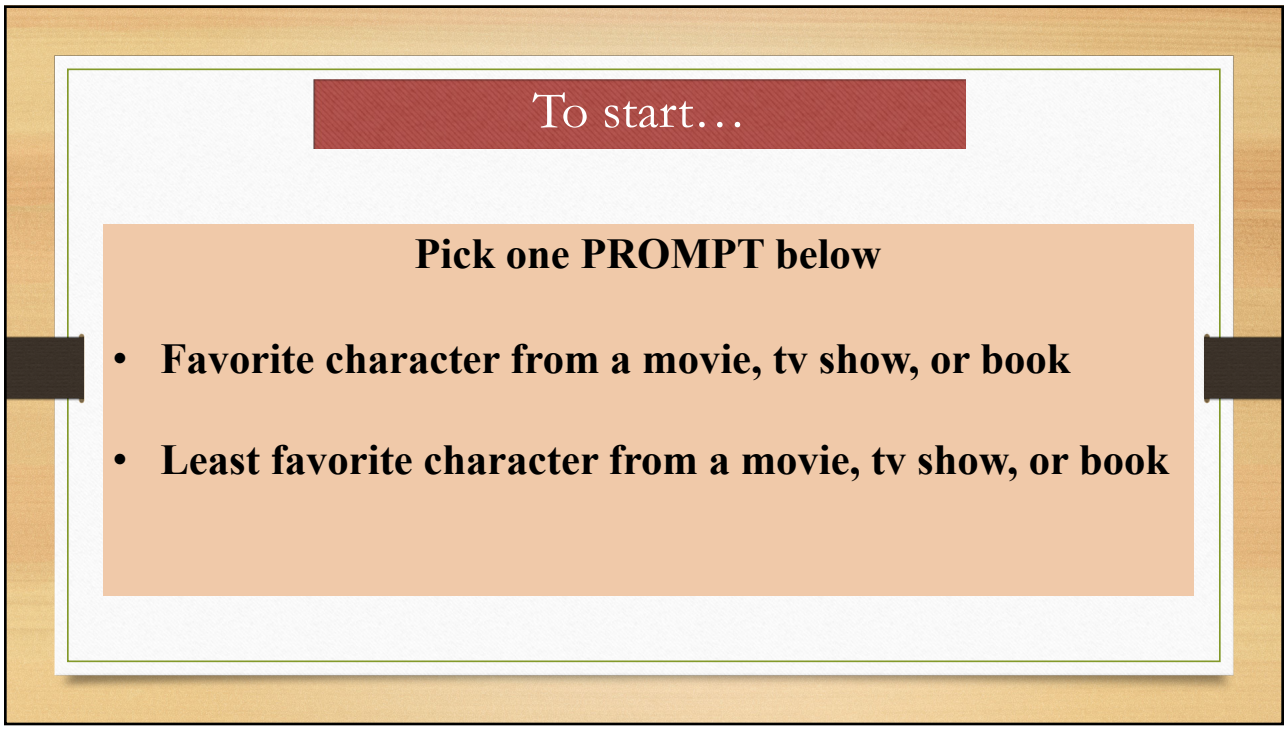
Synthesizing Stories:
From Pages to Play
Linhhai H. Nguyen
IATE Fall Conference – Moraine Valley Community College
10/25/25

1


To start…
Pick one PROMPT below
Favorite character from a movie, tv show, or book
Least favorite character from a movie, tv show, or book

2

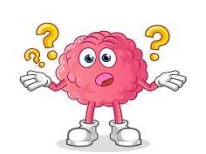
To start…

Using the character you just picked, identify the following for the character:

- Three key personality traits/characteristics
- A trademark possession or physical trait
- Three common settings the character is often interacting in

3

Share out!



- Find a person with card that has a different letter than yours!

4

Next challenge…

- With your partner, create a scenario where your two characters might meet! (Setting)
- Based on each character's personality traits, what possible "problem" might arise if they meet? (Conflict)
- Be ready to share out!

5

That opening activity was a small glimpse into the thinking and playful process for the

"Synthesis Play"

6

In the remaining slides, I'll share an overview of the following:

1) Framing the narrative and story structure
2) Including activities that focus on "character details" and development
3) Sharing student samples

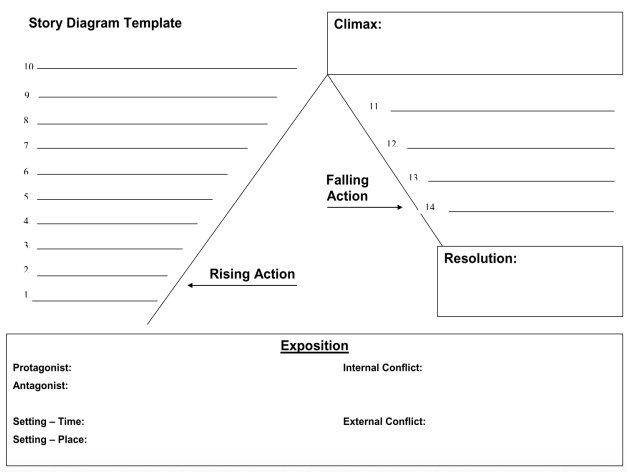
7

Begin with story structure!

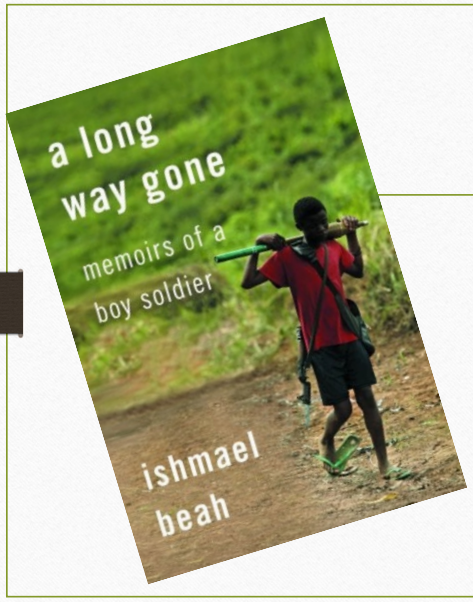
Freytag's Pyramid!

- **Start with short stories as a class; fill the pyramid together**
- **Have them complete one with peer**
- **One on own**
- **One for their own narrative assignment**

Helpful video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ty1A7N_typc&t=35s



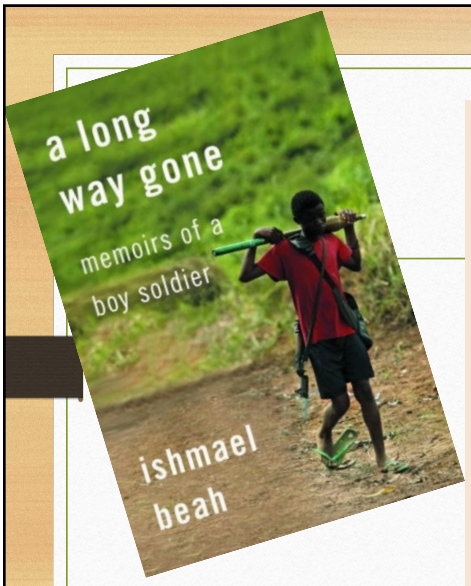
8



Novel Unit #1
A Long Way Gone

- Setting
  - Many changes
  - How does environment impact character actions?
- Character conflicts
  - Differing desires and/or motives can create conflict
  - How can conflicts be resolved?

9



Novel Unit #1
A Long Way Gone

- Text-to-Art Analysis

1) Think about ONE key event or character detail that appears in those chapters.

2) On the FRONT SIDE of the paper, ONLY include your DRAWING; take the time to color and make it "pop!"

3) On the BACK SIDE, you must include the QUOTE and PAGE NUMBER of where the event/detail appears in the book.

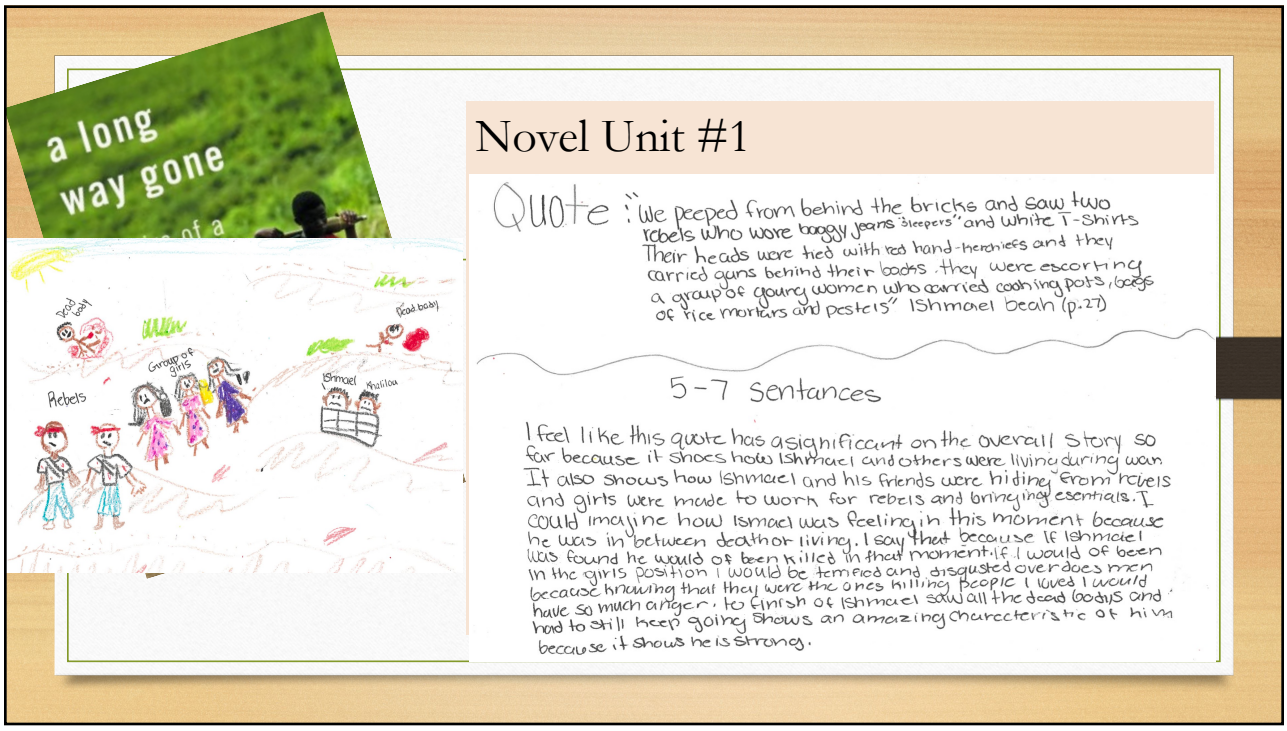
4) Additionally, in 5-7 sentences, you need to explain why this quote/detail is significant to the overall story or character so far.

5) Be ready to share this aloud and explain your thinking if called on.

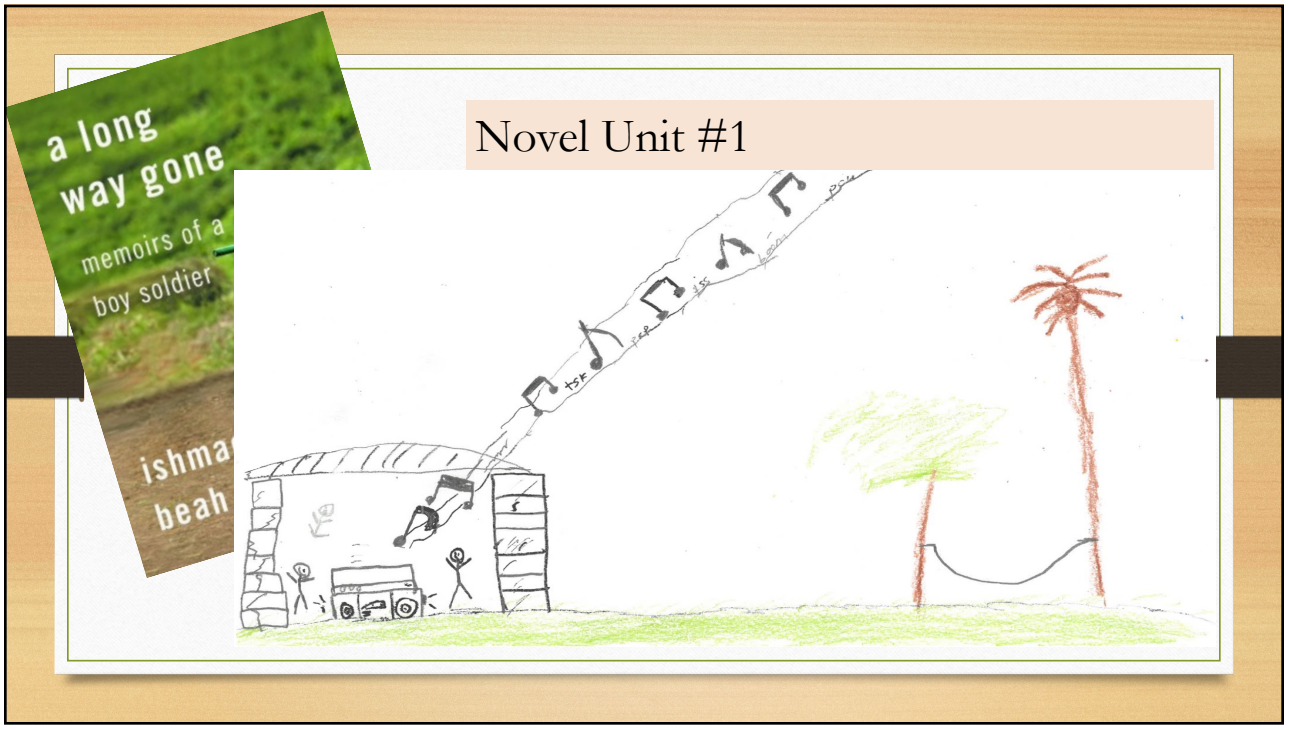
10

a long way gone
memoirs of a boy soldier
ishmael beah
Novel Unit #1
A Long Way Gone
Dead body
Group of girls
Rebels
Dead body
Ishmael
Khalilou

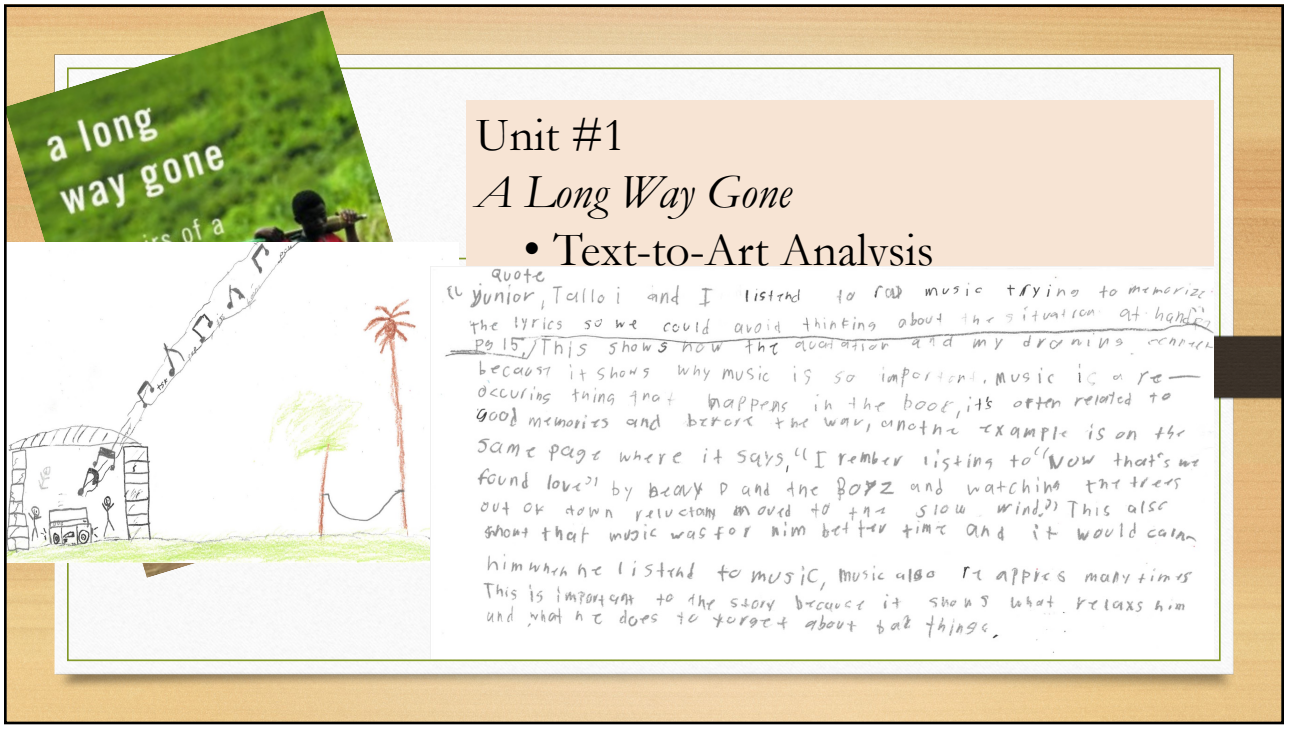
11


a long way gone
Novel Unit #1
Quote: "We peeped from behind the bricks and saw two rebels who wore baggy jeans 'sleepers' and white T-Shirts Their heads were tied with red hand-kerchiefs and they carried guns behind their backs. they were escorting a group of young women who carried cooking pots, bags of rice mortars and pestels" Ishmael beah (p.27)
5-7 sentances
I feel like this quote has a significant on the overall story so far because it shows how Ishmael and others were living during war. It also shows how Ishmael and his friends were hiding from rebels and girls were made to work for rebels and bring/get esentials. I could imagine how Ismael was feeling in this moment because he was in between death or living. I say that because if Ishmael was found he would of been killed in that moment. If I would of been in the girls position I would be terrified and disgusted over does men because knowing that they were the ones killing people I loved I would have so much anger. to finish of Ishmael saw all the dead bodys and had to still keep going shows an amazing characteristic of him because it shows he is strong.

12


a long
way gone
memoirs of a
boy soldier
Novel Unit #1

13

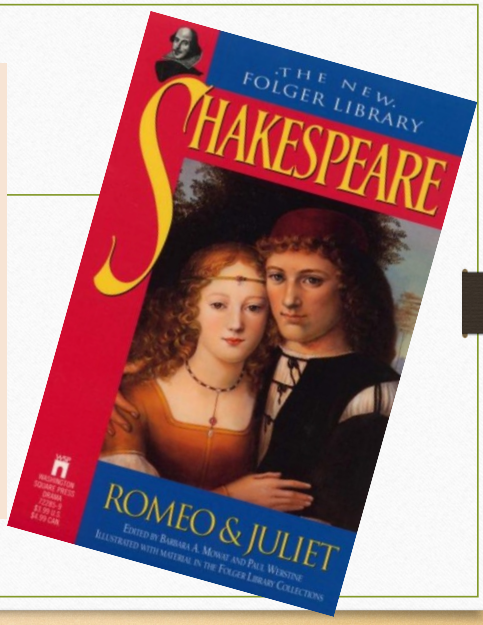

a long
way gone
Unit #1
A Long Way Gone
• Text-to-Art Analysis
quote
"junior, Tallo i and I listed to rap music trying to memorize
the lyrics so we could avoid thinking about the situation at hand"
pg 15 This shows how the quotation and my drawing connect
because it shows why music is so important. Music is a re—
occuring thing that happens in the book, its often related to
good memories and before the war, another example is on the
same page where it says, "I remember listing to "Now that's me
found love" by Bravy D and the BOYZ and watching the trees
out of dawn reluctam moved to the slow wind." This also
shows that music was for him better time and it would calm
him when he listed to music, music also re appires many times
This is important to the story because it shows what relaxs him
and what he does to forget about bad things.

14

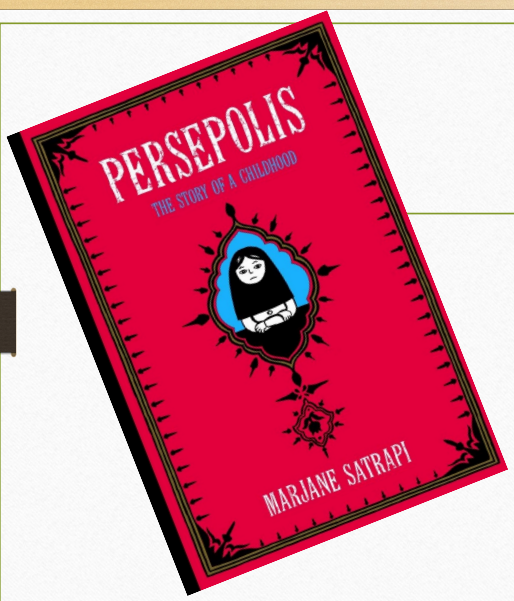
Unit #2

Romeo and Juliet

- Dialogue
  - Emphasize structure/format
  - How can dialogue reveal insight into characters' motives and personality traits?
- Props
  - How can individual props be iconic/trademark of specific characters?



15



Novel Unit #3

Persepolis

- Setting
  - Use visuals of graphic novel to discuss setting and character development
  - Continue discussing how does environment impact character actions
- Props
  - Continue discussion of symbolic objects
  - Continue examining how iconic/trademark items can be props (preview Synthesis Play project)

16

The Synthesis Play

Keep in mind…

1) Not meant to replace end-of-unit assessments like a multiple-choice test
2) More of a creative writing assignment, so not meant to replace "the unit essay"

17

The Synthesis Play

It *CAN*…

1) Reinforce skills emphasizing careful reading and locating textual details
2) Encourage critical thinking and information synthesis
3) Enable students to collaborate, have fun, and engage in creativity!

18

The Synthesis Play

World Lit/Comp
Synthesis Play

Names: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Content: The play…

____ has at least one central character from *A Long Way Gone* who reveals traits specific to that character AND possesses a prop specific to him/her **(20 points)**

____ has at least one central character from *Romeo and Juliet* who reveals traits specific to that character AND possesses a prop specific to him/her **(40 points)**

____ has at least one central character from *Persepolis* who reveals traits specific to that character AND possesses a prop specific to him/her **(40 points)**

____ has at least one character that undergoes a personal change **(20 points)**

____ has a resolution that resolves the conflict and is believable **(20 points)**

19

The Synthesis Play

Performance: The performers…

____ perform a play that's AT LEAST 3 minutes in length **(20 points)**

____ use loud, clear, and effective vocal variety to enhance the play **(20 points)**

____ use body language, gestures, and actions to enhance the play **(20 points)**

Grade = _____/200

*** If you are marked as an "UNEXCUSED ABSENCE" on PERFORMANCE DAY, you automatically LOSE ALL PERFORMANCE POINTS under the "performance" category; therefore, don't disappoint yourself and your group members.**

20

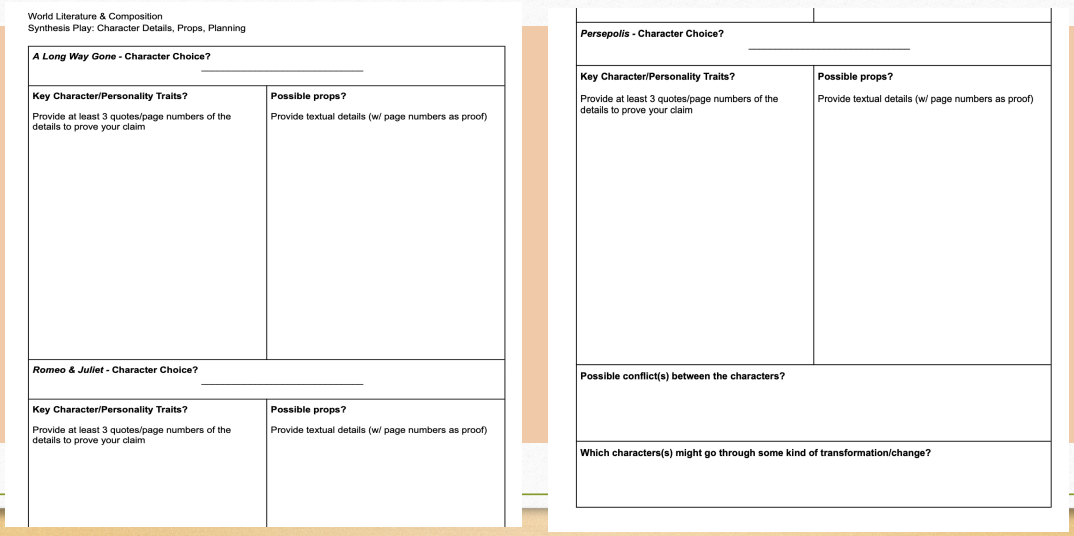
The Synthesis Play

On work days…

- Provide copies of the books/texts they'll need
- Create space/format for them to take notes/plan (don't accept written scripts until planning sheet is submitted/checked)
- Be ready with tips for locating details of characters and suggestions for conflict/resolutions

21

The Synthesis Play



World Literature & Composition
Synthesis Play: Character Details, Props, Planning

***A Long Way Gone* - Character Choice?** _____

Key Character/Personality Traits? Provide at least 3 quotes/page numbers of the details to prove your claim	**Possible props?** Provide textual details (w/ page numbers as proof)

***Romeo & Juliet* - Character Choice?** _____

Key Character/Personality Traits? Provide at least 3 quotes/page numbers of the details to prove your claim	**Possible props?** Provide textual details (w/ page numbers as proof)

***Persepolis* - Character Choice?** _____

Key Character/Personality Traits? Provide at least 3 quotes/page numbers of the details to prove your claim	**Possible props?** Provide textual details (w/ page numbers as proof)

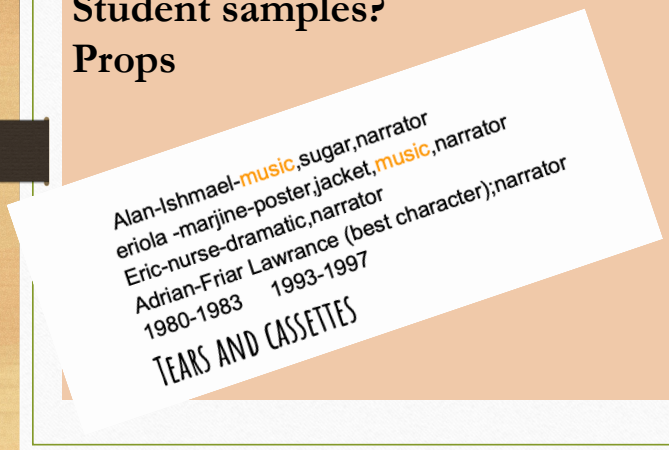
Possible conflict(s) between the characters?

Which characters(s) might go through some kind of transformation/change?

22

The Synthesis Play

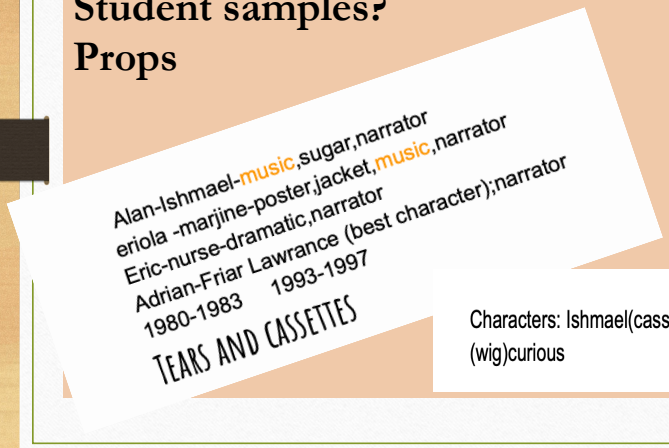
Student samples?
Props



23

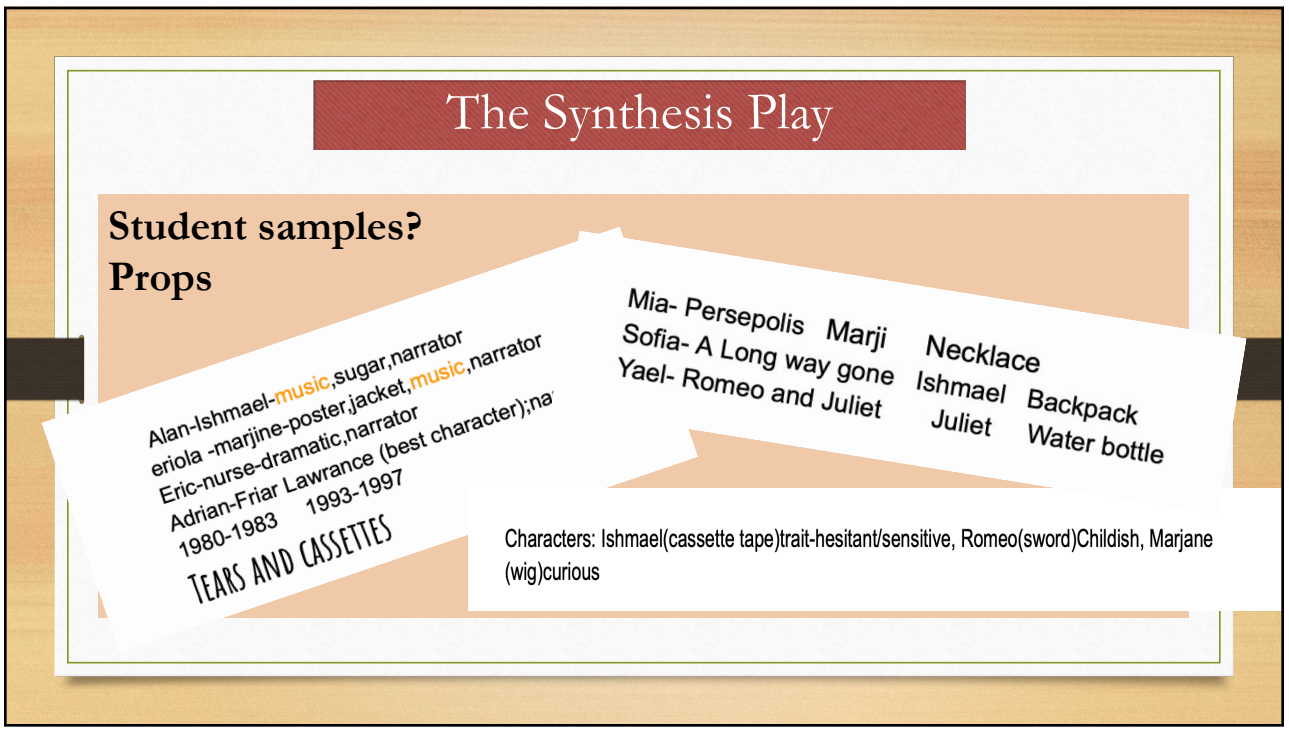
The Synthesis Play

Student samples?
Props

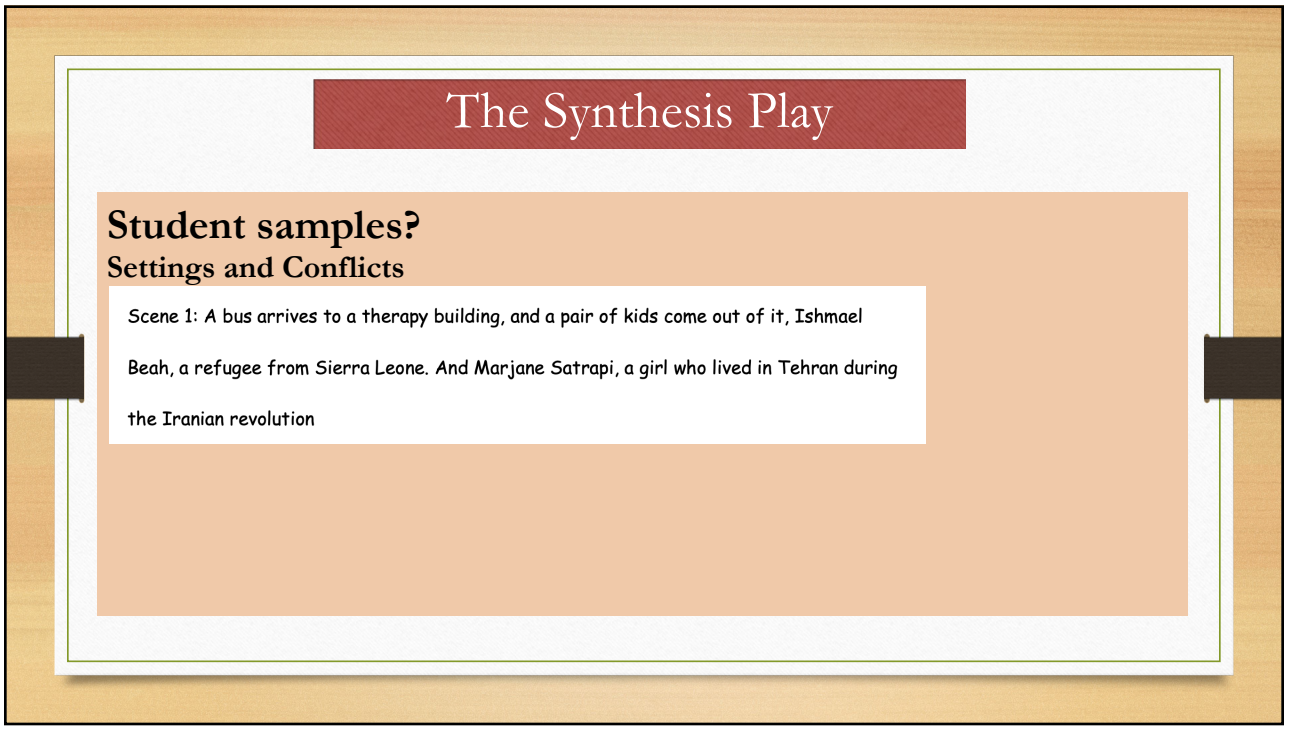


Characters: Ishmael(cassette tape)trait-hesitant/sensitive, Romeo(sword)Childish, Marjane (wig)curious

24


The Synthesis Play
Student samples?
Props
Alan-Ishmael-music,sugar,narrator
eriola -marjine-poster,jacket,music,narrator
Eric-nurse-dramatic,narrator
Adrian-Friar Lawrance (best character);na
1980-1983 1993-1997
TEARS AND CASSETTES
Mia- Persepolis Marji Necklace
Sofia- A Long way gone Ishmael Backpack
Yael- Romeo and Juliet Juliet Water bottle
Characters: Ishmael(cassette tape)trait-hesitant/sensitive, Romeo(sword)Childish, Marjane (wig)curious

25


The Synthesis Play
Student samples?
Settings and Conflicts
Scene 1: A bus arrives to a therapy building, and a pair of kids come out of it, Ishmael Beah, a refugee from Sierra Leone. And Marjane Satrapi, a girl who lived in Tehran during the Iranian revolution

26

The Synthesis Play

Student samples?

Settings and Conflicts

Scene 1: A bus arrives to a therapy building, and a pair of kids come out of it, Ishmael

Beah, a refugee from Sierra Leone. And Marjane Satrapi, a girl who lived in Tehran during

the Irani

These characters experience conflict and war in their lives, they just want to live their life against what their authorities say. However, they experience the death of loved ones and huge trauma.

One big therapy check.

Ismael, Marji, and Juliet decided to go to therapy for their 'troubles' in their past lifetime.

27

The Synthesis Play

Student samples?

Settings and Conflicts

Scene 1: A bus arrives to a therapy building, and a pair of kid

Beah, a refugee from Sierra Leone. And Marjane Satrapi, a g

the Iranian revolution

These characters experience conflict and

what their authorities say. However, they e

One big therapy check.

Ismael, Marji, and Juliet decided to go to t

The meeting

marjane Romeo and Ismael get to the coffe shop almost at the same time just 5 seconds apart

coffe worker " im giving out a free chocolate glaze donut whoever wants it come get it first one here gets it"

Marjane Ismael and Romeo run to the counter and they all bump into each other

Ismael "What THE FLIP my tapes" Ismael dropped his music tapes

Marjane "Hey watch it! I dropped my favorite book cause of you"

Romeo "my ROSEEE" Romeo reaches for rhe rose and starts crying

28

The Synthesis Play

Student samples?
Settings and Conflicts

Scene 1: A bus arrives to a therapy building, and a pair of kids

Beah, a refugee from Sierra Leone. And Marjane Satrapi, a gir

the Iranian revolution

These characters experience conflict and w

The meeting

marjane Romeo and Ismael get to the coffe shop apart

coffe worker " im giving out a free chocolate glaz first one here gets it"

Marjane Ismael and Romeo run to the counter and th

Ismael "What THE FLIP my tapes" Ismael dropped h

Marjane "Hey watch it! I dropped my favorite book ca

Romeo "my ROSEEE" Romeo reaches for rhe rose

Setting- Love in Verona

Marji is in the grocery store and runs into Ismael while she is there

Marji- "Excuse me sir do you work here"

Ismael- "No sorry ma'am"

Marji- "Oh I am so sorry to bother"

Ismael- "Are you new here"

Marji - "Yes I am struggling to get my way around here"

Ismael- "I can show you around here later we can get some coffee if that okay with you"

Marji- "That sound great I would love that"

Later in the afternoon around 5 pm marji and ismael head to starbucks to talk about verona

29

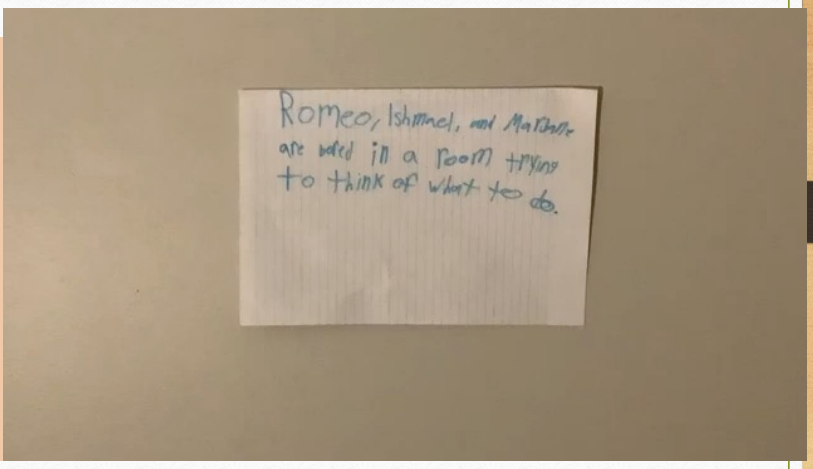
The Synthesis Play

Student samples?
Final Product

30

The Synthesis Play

Student samples?
Final Product



31

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Questions?

Linhhai.Nguyen@d214.org

Twitter/X: @teachwritenow

32