

## Putting It All Together Lesson

### “The World Is Not a Pleasant Place to Be”

#### Teacher Overview

#### Skill Focus

Levels of Thinking		
Remember	Understand	Apply
Analyze	Compose	Reflect
Close Reading	Grammar	Composition
<b>Reading Strategies</b> Annotation Determining Author’s Purpose Determining Main Idea Inference Paraphrase <b>Literary Elements</b> Diction connotation denotation vocabulary Imagery <b>Figures of Speech (Figurative Language)</b> Personification	<b>Mechanics</b> Punctuation <b>Usage</b> Predicate Nominative/Adjective Pronoun Antecedent <b>Parts of Speech</b> <b>Phrases</b> Infinitive <b>Syntax Techniques</b> Repetition	<b>Types (modes)</b> Narrative Persuasive <b>Multiple Modes</b> Imaginative Personal

#### Materials and Resources

- Copies of lesson for students
- Objects that illustrate difficult vocabulary words in the poem such as a globe, a picture of a stream flowing into a river, an ocean, clouds, and people alone and/or with family and friends.

#### Lesson Introduction

In this lesson, students will explore connotative values in the diction of a contemporary poem, interpret personification and create their own examples, acquire new vocabulary words through close reading, and analyze the grammatical structures in a poem, noting how the author’s use of these structures enhances the poem’s central idea. Depending on the level of proficiency of the students, teachers may wish to use the “One Skill at a Time” resources listed at the end of the Teacher Overview before tackling the “Putting It All Together” lesson outlined here.

#### TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

##### Activity One

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with concrete examples that will build prior knowledge connections. Begin the activity by showing objects and/or photographs to give the students a visual connection to the important concepts in the poem. For example, a globe, a picture of a stream flowing into a river, a photo of an ocean and of clouds, and pictures of people alone and with friends/family would be appropriate items for this activity. Create a Gallery Walk by placing the items on a table and having students explore the objects while they complete the chart. Students should share their responses with the class.

##### Activity Two

The purpose of this activity is to model reading of the poem and to provide oral language practice for students. In the Additional Resources section of the Teacher Overview, a website is

provided for audio of an actual reading of the poem by Nikki Giovanni. This reading can be used in addition to the reading outlined in the lesson.

### **Activity Three**

The purpose of this activity is to have students contemplate the importance of the title. The questions are devised to continue building connections to prior knowledge by engaging personal experiences and relating them to the central idea of the poem. The activity is most successful when questions one through five are answered individually and then shared with the class. Questions six and seven can be completed as a class as they can be an excellent opportunity for discussion.

### **Activity Four**

The purpose of this activity is to dive further into the title by exploring its grammatical structures and contemplating how these structures add meaning to the poem. Examples of prefixes and their meanings and predicate nominatives are integrated into the lesson, but students who struggle with these concepts might need to complete a "scaffolding" lesson to help them practice the skills. The Additional Resources section at the end of this overview provides support material. Advanced classes can further explore how the predicate nominative grammatical structure naturally lends itself to creating metaphors.

### **Activities Five and Six**

The purpose of these activities is to evaluate students' comprehension through paraphrasing and to explore the absence of punctuation throughout the poem. Because paraphrasing can be a difficult task, the whole class should discuss this activity. Once the paraphrasing activity has been completed, students should be grouped into literature groups to complete the punctuation activity. A jigsaw approach can be used to facilitate this activity. Once the students are grouped, each group should be assigned a stanza. Students should then share their answers with the class.

### **Activity Seven**

The purpose of this activity is to highlight the support the author provides to develop her opinion and to identify the indefinite pronouns and discuss the effect they create. Examples of indefinite pronouns are integrated into the lesson, but a scaffolding lesson may still be necessary to help struggling students practice the skill. Additional Resources are provided at the end of the Teacher Overview. It might be necessary to discuss questions five and six with the entire class since students need guidance in understanding the effect of the author's use of an indefinite pronoun.

### **Activity Eight**

The purpose of this activity is to provide an opportunity for students to visually interpret the images in the poem. By creating their own visual representation of the images, students will develop a concrete understanding of an abstract thought. Have students create a gallery of their visual interpretations to be used as a resource throughout the study of the poem.

### **Activity Nine**

The purpose of this activity is to identify personification and explore its effect on the images created in the poem. Assigning literature groups for this activity will allow students to actively engage in discussion about a difficult concept. Have students share their examples of personification with the class. This is another opportunity to create a gallery of student work.

### **Activity Ten**

The purpose of this activity is to explore the author's use of a possessive pronoun in an unexpected way. The use of the possessive pronoun as a form of personification is a difficult concept. For this reason, review the examples as a class and guide the students through the complete activity to encourage questions and comments. Examples of possessive pronouns are integrated into the lesson, but additional resources are provided at the end of the Teacher Overview.

### **Activity Eleven**

The purpose of this activity is to identify the infinitive phrases and to discuss their purpose in the poem. Examples of infinitive phrases are integrated into the lesson, but additional resources are provided at the end of the Teacher Overview.

### **Activity Twelve**

The purpose of this activity is to identify the author's use of repetition and evaluate its effect on the poem's meaning. Discuss questions three and four as a class. Elicit volunteers to share answers with the entire class.

### **Composition Activity One**

The purpose of this activity is to imitate the author's style through the use of a Cloze Passage. Students should share by orally reading their poems to the class. Encourage students to publish their completed work in a campus newsletter, literary magazine, or campus webpage. To extend this activity, challenge students to write a poem with the title "The World **Is** a Pleasant Place."

### **Composition Activities Two and Three**

The purpose of these activities is to provide TAKS essay practice as well as persuasive writing practice. The following rubric is an excellent tool to evaluate student progress and can be downloaded from the Texas Education Agency website.

TAKS Writing Rubric for Fourth and Seventh Grade

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/release/taks/index.html>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources are provided as extension activities for the skills in this lesson. They may be used in conjunction with the appropriate activities or as additional practice for skills that may need further reinforcement.

### Author Biography

Nikki Giovanni Home Page

<http://nikki-giovanni.com/>

### Audio Reading of Poem (scroll down to number #202)

<http://www.smithsonianglobalsound.org/containerdetail.aspx?itemid=1726>

### Extension Activities

Learning Metaphors

<http://www.mcte.org/bpw/dorholt.pdf>

### “One Skill at a Time” Grammar Activities

#### Adjectives

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/>

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/adjectives.htm>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skills/words/grammar/interestsentences/adjectives/>

#### Nouns

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/>

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/nouns.thm>

#### Pronouns (Possessive)

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/pronouns1.htm>

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/>

#### Pronouns (Indefinite)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/>

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/pronouns1.htm>

#### Pronoun Antecedent Agreement

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/>

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prouns.htm>

#### Predicate Nominatives

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/objects.htm#predicate>

#### Infinitive Phrases

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar/>

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/phrases.htm#infinitive>

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/verbs.htm#gerunds>

## Putting It All Together Lesson

### “The World Is Not a Pleasant Place to Be”

#### Activity One: Getting a Sense of the Details

You are going to read and discuss a poem written by Nikki Giovanni. To get ready to read the poem, the class will do some warm-up language exercises.

1. List on the chart the objects/photos your teacher provides.
2. With a partner, brainstorm the feelings and situations you associate with these objects.

Describe the object/ photograph	Places you might see or use this object/scene	Feelings you have about the object/photograph

### Activity Two: Interactive Read-Aloud

Read the poem aloud, speaking in unison with your classmates and teacher. Imitate the emphasis and pitch of your teacher’s voice while reading the poem dramatically.

#### The World Is Not a Pleasant Place

The world is not a pleasant place  
to be without  
someone to hold and be held by

a river would stop  
its flow if only  
a stream were there  
to receive it

an ocean would never laugh  
if clouds weren’t there  
to kiss her tears  
the world is not  
a pleasant place to be without  
someone

—Nikki Giovanni

### Activity Three: Exploring the Title to Engage Prior Knowledge

1. In the title of the poem, the author describes the world as a place that is **NOT** \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What does the word “pleasant” mean? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The word “pleasant” is an **adjective**. An **adjective** is a word that describes a **noun** (a person, place, thing, or idea). Which noun does the **adjective** “pleasant” describe? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Rewrite the title of the poem replacing “pleasant” with a synonym (a word with a similar meaning):  
The World Is Not a/an \_\_\_\_\_ Place  
adjective
5. List three reasons why you feel the world might **NOT** be “a pleasant place.”
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.

6. Now look at the picture below. Why do you think the world is **NOT** "a pleasant place" for the man in the picture?



[http://www.caross.ca/photopages/lonliness\\_b.html](http://www.caross.ca/photopages/lonliness_b.html)

7. List three details from the picture that support your answer.

- A.
- B.
- C.

### Activity Four: Exploring the Grammatical Structure of the Title

Another way to express the same idea in the title is to use a **prefix**:

# The World Is an Unpleasant Place

The words that have changed are “not” and “pleasant.” By adding the **prefix** *un-* to the word “pleasant,” the idea of “not pleasant” is expressed in one word.

The following prefixes convey the meaning “not”:

**in-    dis-    un-    im-**

incorrect (in + correct) = not correct

disorganized (dis + organized) = not organized

unpleasant (un + pleasant) = not pleasant

impossible (im + possible) = not possible

Although the word has changed, it is still an adjective that describes a **predicate nominative**. A **predicate nominative** is a noun that follows a linking verb (*be, is, am, are, was, were*) and renames or identifies the subject of the sentence.

**Example:**    The world is an unpleasant **place**.  
                          subject    verb            adjective            predicate nominative

The word “place” follows the linking verb “is” and renames the subject of the sentence “world”; therefore, it is a **predicate nominative**.

Practice creating sentences using **adjectives (with prefixes)** and **predicate nominatives** by filling in the blanks below.

**Example:**     The world is an impossible puzzle.

adjective            predicate nominative

a. The world is a/an \_\_\_\_\_  
adjective                      predicate nominative

b. The world is a/an \_\_\_\_\_  
adjective
predicate nominative



### Activity Five: Putting the Poem into Your Own Words

Listen to your teacher read the poem one more time. As a class, paraphrase the main idea of each stanza. You may make notes about the class discussion below.

The World Is Not a Pleasant Place		SUMMARY NOTES
The world is not a pleasant place to be without someone to hold and be held by	STANZA 1:	
a river would stop its flow if only a stream were there to receive it	STANZA 2:	
an ocean would never laugh if clouds weren't there to kiss her tears	STANZA 3:	
the world is not a pleasant place to be without someone		

### Activity Six: Grouping the Independent Clauses

Notice that the poem does not have any punctuation. In poetry, this is a common choice an author makes to create a flow of ideas. As a class, group the **independent clauses** (complete sentences, each with a subject and a verb) by placing brackets [ ] to show where each sentence begins and ends. Place a period at the end of each sentence. Reread the poem aloud, pausing at the end of each sentence. How does this change the flow of the poem when it is read aloud?

## Activity Seven: Indefinite Pronouns and Their Effect

In stanza one, the author introduces a situation in which the world is not a pleasant place. Underline the lines that illustrate this idea.

The world is not a pleasant place  
to be without  
someone to hold and be held by

1. Summarize the author's idea by filling in the following sentence:

The world is **NOT** a pleasant place when \_\_\_\_\_.

2. What point do you think the author is trying to make?

3. In stanza one, the author uses an **indefinite pronoun**. An **indefinite pronoun** is a pronoun which refers to a person, place, or thing in a more general way.

Examples of Indefinite Pronouns			
something	each one	others	someone
whoever	one [self]	a certain one	everything
a lot/much/many	some, a few	another one	everyone
one	some, several	anyone	

4. Identify the **indefinite pronoun** in stanza one.

5. Rewrite the first stanza, replacing the indefinite pronoun with a specific noun.

### Original:

The world is not a pleasant place  
to be without  
someone to hold and be held by

### Example:

The world is not a pleasant place  
to be without  
a **mother** to hold and be held by

### Write your version here:

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6. How does this substitution change the meaning of the poem?

7. Why is the use of an **indefinite pronoun** more effective?

### Activity Eight: Picturing the Images

1. In **stanzas two and three**, the author gives examples to support the point she makes in the first stanza. Look at the two stanzas again and fill in the chart below by

- bracketing [ ] the strongest **images** (descriptions that appeal to one or more of the five senses) in each stanza of the poem
- drawing a picture that illustrates the image the author creates in each stanza
- listing the emotions the pictures convey

Stanza	My Illustration	Emotions
a river would stop its flow if only a stream were there to receive it		
an ocean would never laugh if clouds weren't there to kiss her tears		

2. Look at the two illustrations you created. What do the two pictures have in common? Based on the images you created, what do you think the author is trying to say?

3. In stanza two, the word “if” is followed by a reason why a river would stop its flow. Copy the lines that show **why** the “river would stop its flow.”

4. What conclusion can you make about the river based on this line?

5. In stanza three, the word “if” is followed by a reason why the ocean would never laugh. Copy the lines that show **why** the “ocean would never laugh.”

6. What conclusion can you make about the ocean based on this line?

7. How do the **images** (descriptions that appeal to one or more of the five senses) in stanzas two and three support the idea the author presents in stanza one?

### Activity Nine: Personification and Its Effect

In stanza three, the author uses a technique called **personification** to describe the ocean and the clouds.

**Personification** is a type of figurative language an author uses to give a non-living object human qualities.

**Example:** The rainbow smiled at me.

A rainbow cannot smile. Smiling is a human action, but the author may have decided to describe the rainbow in that manner because the shape of a rainbow and a smile are similar.

1. Reread stanza three, looking for examples of **personification**. Fill in the chart below.

	Human Qualities or Actions	What do these human actions tell us about the ocean and the clouds?
<b>Ocean</b>		
<b>Clouds</b>		

2. How does the use of **personification** help create stronger images?

3. Rewrite the third stanza by creating your own examples of **personification**. Fill in the blanks below:

an ocean would never \_\_\_\_\_  
human action

if clouds weren't there

to \_\_\_\_\_ her tears  
human action

4. How do your examples of **personification** differ from the original examples? Do they change the poem's meaning? If so, why?

## Activity Ten: Pronouns and Their Antecedents

A pronoun is a word that is used in place of a noun. Possessive pronouns replace possessive nouns.

### Possessive Pronouns

Certain pronouns, called **possessive pronouns**, show **ownership**. Some are used alone; some describe a noun. When using pronouns, it is important to have an **antecedent** for each pronoun. An **antecedent** is the noun the pronoun refers to.

Used alone: **mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs, whose**

**Example:** Please sit at Ana's desk. That computer is **hers**.

*Note:* The word "hers" makes reference to Ana. That computer is Ana's.  
Ana is the **antecedent** of the possessive pronoun "hers."

Modify noun: **my, your, his, her, its, our, their, whose**

**Example:** Please sit at Ana's desk. That is **her** computer.

*Note:* The word "her" makes reference to Ana. That is Ana's computer.  
Ana is the **antecedent** of the possessive pronoun "her."

### ADDITIONAL NOTES:

The word **his** always refers to a masculine (male) antecedent.

The word **her(s)** always refers to a feminine (female) antecedent.

1. Circle the **possessive pronoun** used in stanza three:

an ocean would never laugh  
if clouds weren't there  
to kiss her tears

2. What is the **antecedent** of the **possessive pronoun**? \_\_\_\_\_

Does it refer to something feminine or masculine? If not, why do you suppose the author makes this creative choice?

3. How does the **possessive pronoun** add meaning to the third stanza?

### Activity Eleven: Infinitive Phrases and Their Purpose

The author uses **infinitive phrases** in stanzas two and three.

An **infinitive** is formed from the word "to" and an action verb.

It can be a **subject** of a sentence: **To learn** is important.

It can be the **direct object** of an action verb: Babies first learn **to crawl**.

An **infinitive phrase** includes an infinitive (to + action verb) and any complements or modifiers.

**Example:** The mother prepares [**to feed** her children].

1. Reread stanzas two and three. Circle the infinitives and underline the infinitive phrases in each stanza.

a river would stop  
its flow if only  
a stream were there  
to receive it

an ocean would never laugh  
if clouds weren't there  
to kiss her tears

2. What emotions are associated with the infinitive phrases in these stanzas?

The **infinitive phrases** create a feeling of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Activity Twelve: Repetition and Its Effect

1. In stanza four, the author repeats information from a previous stanza. Highlight the information in the stanza below.

the world is not  
a pleasant place to be without  
someone

2. In which other stanza do these words appear? Why do you suppose the author decided to repeat the information?
3. Compare the last stanza to the title. How are they the same? How are they different? Why do you think the author made that choice?
4. How does stanza four provide a conclusion for the poem? Explain your answer.

## Composition: Stylistic Model Imitation

Create a poem of your own following Giovanni's style. Use the cloze passage below to help you write your rough draft. When you are finished, create a final draft and be prepared to share your poem with the class.

The World Is Not a \_\_\_\_\_  
Adjective Predicate Nominative

The world is not a \_\_\_\_\_  
adjective predicate nominative  
to be without

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and be \_\_\_\_\_ by  
indefinite pronoun action verb past participle of action verb

a \_\_\_\_\_ would stop  
concrete noun

its \_\_\_\_\_ if only  
action

a \_\_\_\_\_ were there  
concrete noun

to \_\_\_\_\_ it  
action

a/n \_\_\_\_\_ would never \_\_\_\_\_  
concrete noun human action

if \_\_\_\_\_ weren't there  
concrete noun

to \_\_\_\_\_ her \_\_\_\_\_  
human action concrete noun

the world is not

a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ to be without  
adjective predicate nominative

\_\_\_\_\_  
indefinite pronoun



### **Composition: Personal Narrative**

Write about a time you experienced something unpleasant.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

#### ***Remember—You should***

Write about the assigned topic  
Make sure your writing is interesting to the reader  
Make sure that your ideas are clear and easy to follow  
Write about your ideas in detail so that the reader really understands what you are saying  
Check your work for correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and sentences

**USE THIS SPACE TO PLAN YOUR ESSAY**

### **Composition: Persuasive Writing**

In the poem "The World Is Not a Pleasant Place," Nikki Giovanni defines the world as an unpleasant place if you are alone. Do you agree or disagree? Write an essay explaining your opinion. Be sure to provide evidence for your answer.

**USE THIS SPACE TO PLAN YOUR ESSAY**