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The Process of Becoming an Expository Writer

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UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: The Process of Becoming an Expository Writer

Grade Level: 10th

Subject/Topic Area(s): Non-fiction, Expository Writing, Culture, Cultural Identity, Personal Identity

Designed By: Valerie Vied

Time Frame: Nine Weeks

School District: KIPP San Antonio

School: KIPP University Prep High School

School Address and Phone: 319 E. Mulberry Ave.
San Antonio, TX 78212
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Brief Summary of Unit (Including curricular context and unit goals):

This unit examines short non-fiction texts centered on cultural awareness and understanding. Through analyzing model texts students will deduce organizational structures for expository writing and strategies used for effective communication. Through a variety of close reading activities, students will collect a bank of tools to incorporate into their own writing for small open ended writing assignments during the unit and the summative assessment at the end of the unit.

The performance task includes an artistic representation of culture and an expository explaining the significance of the images and symbols chosen. Students will learn to introduce an idea and logically explain the background, cultural significance, and impact on their lives and personal identities.

Unit: The Process of Becoming an Expository Writer
Grade: English II

Stage 1: Desired Results

Established Goals (Common Core Standards & TEKS)

Reading -9/10-1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	(9) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:
Reading Informational Text-9/10-2: Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.	(9A) summarize text and distinguish between a summary that captures the main ideas and elements of a text and a critique that takes a position and expresses an opinion;
Reading Informational Text-9/10-3: Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.	(9C) make subtle inferences and draw complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns; and
Reading Informational Text-9/10-4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).	(1B) analyze textual context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words;
Reading Informational Text-9/10-5: Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).	(9D) synthesize and make logical connections between ideas and details in several texts selected to reflect a range of viewpoints on the same topic and support those findings with textual evidence.
Reading Informational Text-9/10-6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.	(10B) analyze contemporary political debates for such rhetorical and logical fallacies as appeals to commonly held opinions, false dilemmas, appeals to pity, and personal attacks.
Reading Informational Text-9/10-7: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.	(11B) synthesize information from multiple graphical sources to draw conclusions about the ideas presented (e.g., maps, charts, schematics).
Reading Informational Text-9/10-8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.	(9B) differentiate between opinions that are substantiated and unsubstantiated in the text;
Reading Informational Text-9/10-9: Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address, the Gettysburg	

Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.	
Writing-9/10-2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content:	(15) Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes.
a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.	(15A) write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes: (i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures; (15B) write procedural or work-related documents (e.g., instructions, e-mails, correspondence, memos, project plans) that include: (i) organized and accurately conveyed information; (ii) reader-friendly formatting techniques;
b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.	(15A) write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes: (iii) a controlling idea or thesis; (iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; (v) relevant evidence and well-chosen details; and
c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.	(15Aii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;
d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.	(13C) revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed;
e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.	
f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).	(Ai) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;
Understandings	
<p><i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <p><i>Thematic Understandings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Personal identity has a function in and beyond writing <p><i>Content Understandings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A successful author commands the English language to fit his/her purpose -Writing is a recursive process and developing the skills to manipulate language requires grit -Style, syntax, and rhetorical strategies should be revised to clarify meaning 	

-Grammar, mechanics and spelling should be edited
 -An effective expository essay thoroughly explains the idea established in the thesis

Essential Questions

Essential Thematic Questions

-How can cultural experiences shape, impact or influence our perception of the world?
 -How does personal identity function in and beyond the contexts of writing?
 -What is the relationship between personal identity and cultural identity?

Essential Content Questions

-What is the writing process?
 -How do writers create an appropriate personal or cultural identity for a piece of work?

Knowledge & Skills

Students will know...

-the writing process
 -logical sequencing of a paragraph
 -types of support (facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations)
 -sentence structures: simple, compound, compound-complex, cumulative, periodic, balanced
 -key influences writers must consider to be effective: speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject and tone

Students will be able to...

-write by following the writing process
 -logically sequence paragraphs to develop ideas
 -distinguish appropriate uses for various types of support
 -identify and edit sentence structures, alter sentence structures based on purpose
 -analyze a text from the perspective of the writer by considering speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject and tone
 -compose a text with careful consideration of the speaker's identity, occasion, audience, purpose, subject and tone

Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

Performance Task:

Carefully consider all the cultural influences in your life. Which have shaped you into who you are today? Choose ten symbols to create an artistic representation of who you are and how you view the world. Which two are most significant? Compose an essay which describes the significance of the two symbols. Your goal is to explain what the symbols represent, break down the history of the influence in your life and explain how it impacted you as a person.

Other Evidence:

Concept formation
 TWIST analysis – tone, word choice, imagery, style, theme
 Culture definition
 Text chunking on a variety of texts
 Transition analysis
 Reordering of paragraphs for logical sense
 Revision of tone/word choice
 Separating main ideas from supporting details to form an outline
 Short writing assignments
 Open ended responses
 Essay drafting
 Peer editing/revision
 Self-analysis of essay

Stage 3: Learning Activities

(Steps taken to get students to answer Stage 1 questions and complete performance task)

Day	Date	Time	Details
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1	08.26	52	<p><i>Objective: recognize a flipped lesson, navigate through new material, record notes, recognize criteria for success</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Flipped less introduction – unit focus, thematic vocabulary (culture, subculture, symbol, perspective, stereotype, customs, assimilation, diversity, ethnocentrism, cultural norms) and criteria for success -Students record notes as we view the first flipped lesson together as a class -Brainstorm influential images/memories/objects/experiences -Lifework: quilt square
2	08.27	87	<p><i>Objective: classify elements of culture into categories, extend knowledge to create a comprehensive web of cultural elements, identify subordinate clauses and describe the function of a subordinate clause, breakdown a non-fiction text into organizational chunks, analyze the author’s design and structure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Concept formation: culture word sort. Students sort examples of entertainment, music, food, religion, language, and government from five countries. -Comprehensive culture web – brainstorm as a class the vast components of every culture -Mini-lesson on subordinate clauses -“Funny in Farsi” by Firoozeh Dumas. Chunk text into intro, body and conclusion, analyze author’s design and structure
	08.28		
3	08.29	52	<p><i>Objective: identify effective and ineffective communication, construct small group discussion guidelines</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Partners sit back to back, one describes an existing sketch of a robot while the other attempts to recreate the picture based on directions, partners switch with a new picture -Whole class debrief of activity to discuss effective communication -Partners write three norms to guide classroom discussion and group work, record each one on a piece of printer paper, post around the room, class votes on top five
4	08.30	52	<p><i>Objective: separate the organizational chunks of an essay, explain the organizational structure of an essay, identify transitions and explain the function of transitions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -“Time to Look and Listen” by Magdoline Asfahani, teacher models chunking structure and identifying transitions through a think-a-loud process -Review the process with students -Students complete a worksheet that covers essay structure, grammatical structures, transitions
5	09.03	87	<p><i>Objective: explain the organizational structure of an essay and infer author’s purpose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students work in groups of three to deconstruct “What Happiness Is” by Eduardo Porter, “The Corner Store” by Eudora Welty and “What Are Friends For?” by Marion Winik -Groups of three will prepare a short presentation of the chunking process and their findings in the text -Discuss other terms and how our experiences shape our perspective (competition, wealth, success, superstar, failure, poverty, luxury, beauty, friendship, commitment, peace, success, freedom, love, liberty, trust, hate)
	09.04		
6	09.05	52	<p><i>Objective: explore individual and group perceptions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students view a slideshow of pictures (flag, logo, house, family portrait) one at a time and write down the first five things they think of when they see the photo. Encourage them to think of the photos as symbols for other ideas or things. Ask a student to stand up and share, anyone who wrote something similar should stand

			<p>as well. Then ask students if anyone has an idea that was not mentioned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss why they had different/similar perceptions, connect it back to the essential question -Exit Ticket: Based on the activity students write for five minutes and answer the question: How can cultural experiences shape, impact, or influence our perception of the world?
7	09.06	52	<p><i>Objective: organize a text into a logical progression of ideas, examine the relationship between ideas and how ideas are developed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Each paragraph from “A View from the Bridge” by Cherokee Paul McDonald will be on a small sheet of paper and students unscramble the text by putting the paragraphs into an order that makes logical sense -Exit Ticket: Debrief questions about the process that focus on what information helped them put the pieces in order and how they knew where to begin.
8	09.09	52	<p><i>Objective: analyze the tone, word choice, imagery, style, theme and thesis of a “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Make a prediction based on the title -Student hypothetically discuss the assignment given in the poem as if it were assigned to them, ask them to connect the assignment to the title -Ask three students to read the poem aloud, each reading a different part (teacher’s directions, Hughes’ narration, and the assignment) -In small groups, students analyze the poem using the TWIST strategy <p><i>Objective: create a bank of organizational structures to use as tools when writing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Revisit texts read thus far and discuss the organizational structures -Break down texts by sentence, determine the function of each sentence -Create an outline for each organizational structure
9	09.10	87	<p><i>Objective: determine the effective organization of a paragraph, structure paragraphs in a way that makes sense, extract main ideas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Revisit texts and break down paragraphs to determine the purpose of each sentence -Develop a model for structuring paragraphs
	09.11		
10	09.12	52	<p><i>Objective: develop ideas coherently and cohesively</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Based on previous work, students will begin writing paragraphs on a variety of topics while evaluating each other based on the model established in the previous class period
11	09.13	52	<p><i>Objective: brainstorm a list of influences for our classroom, reach a consensus on two we want to focus on as we compose a class essay</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher will lead the class through a discussion of influences on our classroom culture
12	09.16	52	<p><i>Objective: compose an outline for our class expository essay</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In small groups, students will decide which expository essay structure/mode best fits our purpose
	09.17	87	<p><i>Objective: compose an expository essay as a class, essay must include an introduction, body, and conclusion with a purpose/content specific organizational structure, as well as transitions</i></p>
	09.18		
14	09.19	52	<p><i>Objective: brainstorm a list of possible influences to use in final project</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce tracking system for the writing process, class by class competition. Students own the process and add a sticker in the appropriate column after completing each step in the writing process -Students will consider all facets of culture and brainstorm a list of ideas to include in their final projects

			-Lifework: Students should begin collecting and assembling the components they want to put into their project and any materials they need
15	09.20	52	<i>Objective: select appropriate outline for expository essay</i> -Based on the outlines previously created, students will create an outline for their expository essay (before doing this, students must finalize which elements they wish to incorporate into their cultural memoir)
16	09.23	52	<i>Objective: Compose a coherent thesis statement</i> -Revisit thesis statements from model texts, create a list of strategies used to write thesis statements
17	09.24	87	<i>Objective: compose a rough draft of an expository essay</i> -Revisit model text introductions, consider different strategies and create a list of approaches -Craft a purposeful introduction -Continue drafting essay based on the previously selected outline
	09.25		
18	09.26	52	<i>Objective: type rough draft of an expository essay</i> -Mini-lesson on format and Google docs -Transfer handwritten essay to a typed version
19	09.27	52	<i>Objective: peer edit for revision suggestions using the tuning protocol</i>
20	09.30	52	<i>Objective: revise based on feedback from peers</i>
21	10.01	87	<i>Objective: separate essay into chunks, identify relationships between ideas, revise as needed</i>
	10.02		
22	10.03	52	<i>Objective: revise an altered model text for appropriate word choice</i> -Teacher alters a model text by omitting objective tone words and adding subjective, emotionally charged or slang words -Mini-lesson: dictionary and thesaurus skills -Students identify and correct the errors
23	10.04	52	<i>Objective: revise expository essay for appropriate word choice</i> -Students revise their own essays for appropriate and various word choices
24	10.07	52	<i>Objective: revise expository essay for transitions</i> -Revisit model texts and review transition and their function -Revise individual work
25	10.08	87	<i>Objective: compose final draft, evaluate essay on rubric, reflect upon strengths and areas of growth</i> -Students type final draft into a Google document
	10.09		
26	10.10	52	<i>Individual Writing Conferences</i>
27	10.11	52	<i>Individual Writing Conferences</i>
28	10.14	52	<i>Buffer Days</i> <i>Make-up missing assignments, review, re-teach</i>
29	10.15	87	
	10.16		
30	10.17	52	
31	10.18	52	

STAAR English II Expository Writing Rubric

1	2	3	4
Organization/Progression			
The organizing structure of the essay is inappropriate to the purpose or the specific demands of the prompt. The writer uses organizational strategies that are only marginally suited to the explanatory task, or they are inappropriate or not evident at all. The absence of a functional organizational structure causes the essay to lack clarity and direction.	The organizing structure of the essay is evident but may not always be appropriate to the purpose or the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is not always clear because the writer uses organizational strategies that are only somewhat suited to the expository task.	The organizing structure of the essay is, for the most part, appropriate to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is clear because the writer uses organizational strategies that are adequately suited to the expository task.	The organizing structure of the essay is clearly appropriate to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is skillfully crafted because the writer uses organizational strategies that are particularly well suited to the expository task.
Most ideas are generally related to the topic specified in the prompt, but the thesis statement is missing, unclear, or illogical. The writer may fail to maintain focus on the topic, may include extraneous information, or may shift abruptly from idea to idea, weakening the coherence of the essay.	Most ideas are generally related to the topic specified in the prompt, but the writer's thesis statement is weak or somewhat unclear. The lack of an effective thesis or the writer's inclusion of irrelevant information interferes with the focus and coherence of the essay.	The writer establishes a clear thesis statement. Most ideas are related to the thesis and are focused on the topic specified in the prompt. The essay is coherent, though it may not always be unified due to minor lapses in focus.	The writer establishes a clear thesis statement. All ideas are strongly related to the thesis and are focused on the topic specified in the prompt. By sustaining this focus, the writer is able to create an essay that is unified and coherent.
The writer's progression of ideas is weak. Repetition or wordiness sometimes causes serious disruptions to the flow of the essay. At other times the lack of transitions and sentence-to-sentence connections causes the writer to present ideas in a random or illogical way, making one or more parts of the essay unclear or difficult to follow.	The writer's progression of ideas is not always logical or controlled. Sometimes repetition or wordiness causes minor disruptions in the flow of the essay. At other times transitions and sentence-to-sentence connections are to perfunctory or weak to support the flow of the essay or show the relationships among ideas.	The writer's progression of ideas is generally logical and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and sentence-to-sentence connections are sufficient to support the flow of the essay and show the relationships among ideas.	The writer's progression of ideas is logical and well-controlled. Meaningful transitions and strong sentence-to-sentence connections enhance the flow of the essay by clearly showing the relationships among ideas, making the writer's train of thought easy to follow.
Development of Ideas			
The development of ideas is weak. The essay is ineffective because the writer uses details and examples that are inappropriate, vague, or insufficient.	The development of ideas is minimal. The essay is superficial because the writer uses details and examples that are not always appropriate or are too briefly or partially presented.	The development of ideas is sufficient because the writer uses details and examples that are specific and appropriate, adding some substance to the essay.	The development of ideas is effective because the writer uses details and examples that are specific and well chosen, adding substance to the essay.

<p>The essay is insubstantial because the writer’s response to the prompt is vague or confused. In some cases, the essay as a whole is only weakly linked to the prompt. In other cases, the writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the expository writing task.</p>	<p>The essay reflects little or no thoughtfulness. The writer’s response to the prompt is sometimes formulaic. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates only a limited understanding of the expository writing task.</p>	<p>The essay reflects some thoughtfulness. The writer’s response to the prompt is original rather than formulaic. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a good understanding of the expository writing task.</p>	<p>The essay is thoughtful and engaging. The writer may choose to use his/her unique experience or view of the world as a basis for writing or to connect ideas in interesting ways. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a thorough understanding of the expository writing task.</p>
<p>Use of Language/Conventions</p>			
<p>The writer’s word choice may be vague or limited. It reflects little or no awareness of the expository purpose and does not establish a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice may impede the quality and clarity of the essay.</p>	<p>The writer’s word choice may be general or imprecise. It reflects a basic awareness of the expository purpose but does little to establish a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice may not contribute to the quality and clarity of the essay.</p>	<p>The writer’s word choice is, for the most part, clear and specific. It reflects an awareness of the expository purpose and establishes a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice usually contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.</p>	<p>The writer’s word choice is purposeful and precise. It reflects a keen awareness of the expository purpose and maintains a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice strongly contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.</p>
<p>Sentences are simplistic, awkward, or uncontrolled, significantly limiting the effectiveness of the essay.</p>	<p>Sentences are awkward or only somewhat controlled, weakening the effectiveness of the essay.</p>	<p>Sentences are varied and adequately controlled, for the most part contributing to the effectiveness of the essay.</p>	<p>Sentences are purposeful, varied, and well-controlled, enhancing the effectiveness of the essay.</p>
<p>The writer has little or no command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Serious and persistent errors create disruptions in the fluency of the writing and sometimes interfere with meaning.</p>	<p>The writer demonstrates a partial command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Some distracting errors may be evident, at times creating minor disruptions in the fluency or meaning of the writing.</p>	<p>The writer demonstrates an adequate command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although some errors may be evident, they create few (if any) disruptions in the fluency of writing, and they do not affect the clarity of the essay.</p>	<p>The writer demonstrates a consistent command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although minor errors may be evident, they do not detract from the fluency of the writing or the clarity of the essay. The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the essay.</p>

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Performance Task: Becoming an Expository Writer

Pre-Writing and Idea Gathering:

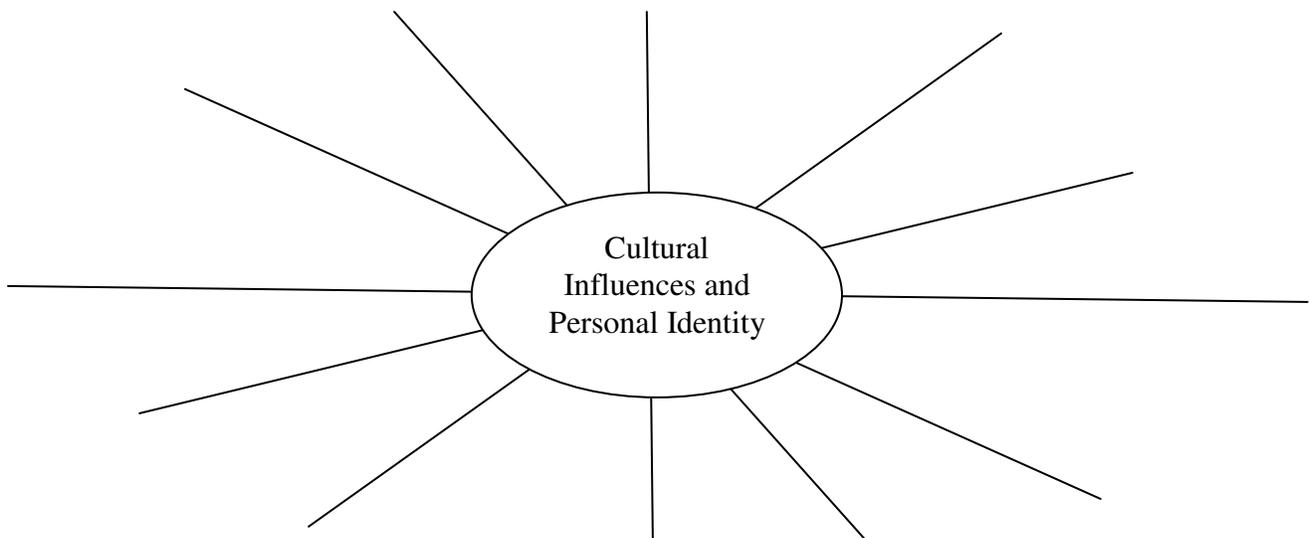
1. Review the categories on our culture web from the beginning of this unit and generate a list of symbols that most identify yourself and your culture on the web below.
2. Select ten symbols and gather materials to create an artistic representation of your cultural influences. You may consider using actual artifacts or you can recreate images of the symbols using paint, sculpture, collage, found materials, water colors, paper, ink, pastels, or any other medium.

Creating:

3. After gathering your ideas and deciding what to create, arrange the objects or images for your project.
4. Carefully consider which two symbols from your project are most influential in your life. You will write your expository essay on these two symbols.

Polishing the Project:

5. As you think about your artistic representation, think about the questions others might have about your culture and identity. Write these down so you can address them in your essay.
6. **Your essay should describe the significance of the two symbols. Your goal is to explain what the symbols represent, break down the history of the influence in your life and explain how it has impacted you as a person today.**
7. Carefully consider the relationship between the two symbols and decide on an organizational structure that fits the content of your essay.
8. Focus your thesis statement.
9. Outline your essay.
10. Draft your essay. Use the tools and strategies we studied during the unit to shape a sound explanation.
11. Edit your draft for errors.
12. Chunk your text to ensure the organization of ideas makes sense. Make sure you address possible questions from the audience.
13. Revise based on peer feedback.
14. Compose your final draft.
15. Be prepared to share and explain your artistic representation of your culture to a small group.



An excerpt from *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America* by Firoozeh Dumas

When I was seven, my parents, my fourteen-year-old brother, Farshid, and I moved from Abadan, Iran, to Whittier, California. Farid, the older of my two brothers, had been sent to Philadelphia the year before to attend high school. Like most Iranian youths, he had always dreamed of attending college abroad and, despite my mother's tears, had left us to live with my uncle and his American wife. I, too, had been sad at Farid's departure, but my sorrow soon faded-not coincidentally, with the receipt of a package from him. Suddenly, having my brother on a different continent seemed like a small price to pay for owning a Barbie complete with a carrying case and four outfits, including the rain gear and mini umbrella.

Our move to Whittier was temporary. My father, Kazem, an engineer with the National Iranian Oil Company, had been assigned to consult for an American firm for about two years. Having spent several years in Texas and California as a graduate student, my father often spoke about America with the eloquence and wonder normally reserved for a first love. To him, America was a place where anyone, no matter how humble his background, could become an important person. It was a kind and orderly nation full of clean bathrooms, a land where traffic laws were obeyed and where whales jumped through hoops. It was the Promised Land. For me, it was where I could buy more outfits for Barbie.

We arrived in Whittier shortly after the start of second grade; my father enrolled me in Leffingwell Elementary School. To facilitate my adjustment, the principal arranged for us to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Sandberg, a few days before I started school. Since my mother and I did not speak English, the meeting consisted of a dialogue between my father and Mrs. Sandberg. My father carefully explained that I had attended a prestigious kindergarten where all the children were taught English. Eager to impress Mrs. Sandberg, he asked me to demonstrate my knowledge of the English language. I stood up straight and proudly recited all that I knew: "White, yellow, orange, red, purple, blue, green."

The following Monday, my father drove my mother and me to school. He had decided that it would be a good idea for my mother to attend school with me for a few weeks. I could not understand why two people not speaking English would be better than one, but I was seven, and my opinion didn't matter much.

Until my first day at Leffingwell Elementary School, I had never thought of my mother as an embarrassment, but the sight of all the kids in the school staring at us before the bell rang was enough to make me pretend I didn't know her. The bell finally rang and Mrs. Sandberg came and escorted us to class. Fortunately, she had figured out that we were precisely the kind of people who would need help finding the right classroom.

My mother and I sat in the back while all the children took their assigned seats. Everyone continued to stare at us. Mrs. Sandberg wrote my name on the board: F-I-R-O-O-Z-E-H. Under my name, she wrote "I-R-A-N." She then pulled down a map of the world and said something to my mom. My mom looked at me and asked me what she had said. I told her that the teacher probably wanted her to find Iran on the map.

The problem was that my mother, like most women of her generation, had been only briefly educated. In her era, a girl's sole purpose in life was to find a husband. Having an education ranked far below more desirable attributes such as the ability to serve tea or prepare baklava. Before her marriage, my mother, Nazireh, had dreamed of becoming a midwife. Her father, a fairly progressive man, had even refused the two earlier suitors who had come for her so that his daughter could pursue her dream. My mother planned to obtain her diploma, then go to Tabriz to learn midwifery from a teacher whom my grandfather knew. Sadly, the teacher died unexpectedly, and my mother's dreams had to be buried as well.

Bachelor No. 3 was my father. Like the other suitors, he had never spoken to my mother, but one of his cousins knew someone who knew my mother's sister, so that was enough. More important, my mother fit my father's physical requirements for a wife. Like most Iranians, my father preferred a fair-skinned woman with straight, light-colored hair. Having spent a year in America as a Fulbright scholar, he had returned with a photo of a woman he found attractive and asked his older sister, Sedigeh, to find someone who resembled her. Sedigeh had asked around, and that is how at age seventeen my mother officially gave up her dreams, married my father, and had a child by the end of the year.

As the students continued staring at us, Mrs. Sandberg gestured to my mother to come up to the board. My mother reluctantly obeyed. I cringed. Mrs. Sandberg, using a combination of hand gestures, started pointing to the map and saying, "Iran? Iran? Iran?" Clearly, Mrs. Sandberg had planned on incorporating us into the day's lesson. I only wished she had told us that earlier so we could have stayed home.

After a few awkward attempts by my mother to find Iran on the map, Mrs. Sandberg finally understood that it wasn't my mother's lack of English that was causing a problem, but rather her lack of world geography. Smiling graciously, she pointed my mother back to her seat. Mrs. Sandberg then showed everyone, including my mother and me, where Iran was on the map. My mother nodded her head, acting as if she had known the location all along, but had preferred to keep it a secret. Now all the students stared at us, not just because I had come to school with my mother, not because we couldn't speak their language, but because we were stupid. I was especially mad at my mother, because she had negated the

positive impression I had made previously by reciting the color wheel. I decided that starting the next day, she would have to stay home.

The bell finally rang and it was time for us to leave. Leffingwell Elementary was just a few blocks from our house and my father, grossly underestimating our ability to get lost, had assumed that my mother and I would be able to find our way home. She and I wandered aimlessly, perhaps hoping for a shooting star or a talking animal to help guide us back. None of the streets or houses looked familiar. As we stood pondering our predicament, an enthusiastic young girl came leaping out of her house and said something. Unable to understand her, we did what we had done all day: we smiled. The girl's mother joined us, then gestured for us to follow her inside. I assumed that the girl, who appeared to be the same age as I, was a student at Leffingwell Elementary; having us inside her house was probably akin to having the circus make a personal visit.

Her mother handed us a telephone, and my mother, who had, thankfully, memorized my father's work number, called him and explained our situation. My father then spoke to the American woman and gave her our address. This kind stranger agreed to take us back to our house.

Perhaps fearing that we might show up at their doorstep again, the woman and her daughter walked us all the way to our front porch and even helped my mother unlock the unfamiliar door. After making one last futile attempt at communication, they waved goodbye. Unable to thank them in words, we smiled even more broadly.

After spending an entire day in America, surrounded by Americans, I realized that my father's description of America had been correct. The bathrooms were clean and the people were very, very kind.

“Time To Look and Listen” by Magdoline Asfahani

I love my country as many who have been here for generations cannot. Perhaps that's because I'm the child of immigrants, raised with a conscious respect for America that many people take for granted. My parents chose this country because it offered them a new life, freedom and possibilities. But I learned at a young age that the country we loved so much did not feel the same way about us.

Discrimination is not unique to America. It occurs in any country that allows immigration. Anyone who is unlike the majority is looked at a little suspiciously, dealt with a little differently. The fact that I wasn't part of the majority never occurred to me. I knew that I was an Arab and a Muslim. This meant nothing to me. At school I stood up to say the Pledge of Allegiance every day. These things did not seem incompatible at all. Then everything changed for me, suddenly and permanently, in 1985. I was only in seventh grade, but that was the beginning of my political education.

That year a TWA plane originating in Athens was diverted to Beirut. Two years earlier the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut had been bombed. That seemed to start a chain of events that would forever link Arabs with terrorism. After the hijacking, I faced classmates who taunted me with cruel names, attacking my heritage and my religion. I became an outcast and had to apologize for myself constantly.

After a while, I tried to forget my heritage. No matter what race, religion or ethnicity, a child who is attacked often retreats. I was the only Arab I knew of in my class, so I had no one in my peer group as an ally. No matter what my parents tried to tell me about my proud cultural history, I would ignore it. My classmates told me I came from an uncivilized, brutal place, that Arabs were by nature anti-American, and I believed them. They did not know the hours my parents spent studying, working, trying to preserve part of their old lives while embracing, willingly, the new.

I tried to forget the Arabic I knew, because if I didn't I'd be forever linked to murderers. I stopped inviting friends over for dinner, because I thought the food we ate was "weird." I lied about where my parents had come from. Their accents (although they spoke English perfectly) humiliated me. Though Islam is a major monotheistic religion with many similarities to Judaism and Christianity, there were no holidays near Chanukah or Christmas, nothing to tie me to the "Judeo-Christian" tradition. I felt more excluded. I slowly began to turn into someone without a past.

Civil war was raging in Lebanon, and all that Americans saw of that country was destruction and violence. Every other movie seemed to feature Arab terrorism. The most common questions I was asked were if I had ever ridden a camel or if my family lived in tents. I felt burdened with responsibility. Why

should an adolescent be asked questions like "Is it true you hate Jews and you want Israel destroyed?" I didn't hate anybody. My parents had never said anything even alluding to such sentiments. I was confused and hurt.

As I grew older and began to form my own opinions, my embarrassment lessened and my anger grew. The turning point came in high school. My grandmother had become very ill, and it was necessary for me to leave school a few days before Christmas vacation. My chemistry teacher was very sympathetic until I said I was going to the Middle East. "Don't come back in a body bag," he said cheerfully. The class laughed. Suddenly, those years of watching movies that mocked me and listening to others who knew nothing about Arabs and Muslims except what they saw on television seemed like a bad dream. I knew then that I would never be silent again.

I've tried to reclaim those lost years. I realize now that I come from a culture that has a rich history. The Arab world is a medley of people of different religions; not every Arab is a Muslim, and vice versa. The Arabs brought tremendous advances in the sciences and mathematics, as well as creating a literary tradition that has never been surpassed. The language itself is flexible and beautiful; with nuances and shades of meaning unparalleled in any language. Though many find it hard to believe, Islam has made progress in women's rights. There is a specific provision in the Koran that permits women to own property and ensures that their inheritance is protected-- although recent events have shown that interpretation of these laws can vary.

My youngest brother, who is 12, is now at the crossroads I faced. When initial reports of the Oklahoma City bombing pointed to "Arab-looking individuals" as the culprits, he came home from school crying. "More, why do Muslims kill people? Why are the Arabs so bad?" She was angry and brokenhearted, but tried to handle the situation in the best way possible: through education. She went to his class, armed with Arabic music, pictures, traditional dress and cookies. She brought a chapter of the social-studies book to life, and the children asked intelligent, thoughtful questions, even after the class was over. Some even asked if she was coming back. When my brother came home, he was excited and proud instead of ashamed.

I only recently told my mother about my past experience. Maybe if I had told her then, I would have been better equipped to deal with the thoughtless teasing. But, fortunately, the world is changing. Although discrimination and stereotyping still exist, many people are trying to lessen and end it. Teachers, schools and the media are showing greater sensitivity to cultural issues. However, there is still much that needs to be done, not for the sake of any particular ethnic or cultural group but for the sake of our country.

The America that I love is one that values freedom and the differences of its people. Education is the key to understanding. As Americans we need to take a little time to look and listen carefully to what is around us and not rush to judgment without knowing all the facts. And we must never be ashamed of our pasts. It is our collective differences that unite us and make us unique as a nation. It's what determines our present and our future.

“What Happiness Is” by Eduardo Porter

Happiness is a slippery concept, a bundle of meanings with no precise, stable definition. Lots of thinkers have taken a shot at it. “Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony,” proposed Ghandi. Abraham Lincoln argued “most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” Snoopy, the beagle-philosopher in *Peanuts*, took what was to my mind the most precise stab at the underlying epistemological problem. “My life has no purpose, no direction, no aim, no meaning, and yet I’m happy. I can’t figure it out. What am I doing right?”

Most psychologists and economists who study happiness agree that what they prefer to call “subjective well-being” comprises three parts: satisfaction, meant to capture how people judge their lives measured up against their aspirations; positive feelings like joy; and the absence of negative feelings like anger.

It does exist. It relates directly to objective measures of people’s quality of life. Countries whose citizens are happier on average report lower levels of hypertension in the population. Happier people are less likely to come down with a cold. And if they get one, they recover more quickly. People who are wounded heal more quickly if they are satisfied with their lives. People who say they are happier smile more often, sleep better, report themselves to be in better health, and have happier relatives. And some research suggests happiness and suicide rates more in opposite directions. Happy people don’t want to die.

Still, this conceptual *mélange* can be difficult to measure. Just ask yourself how happy you are, say, on a scale of one to three, as used by the General Social Survey. Then ask yourself what you mean by that. Answers wander when people are confronted with these questions. We entangle gut reactions with thoughtful analysis, and confound sensations of immediate please with evaluations of how life meshes with our long-term aspirations. We might say we know what will make us happy in the future—fame, fortune, or maybe a partner. But when we get to the future, it rarely does. What we do seem to know how to tell the difference between lifelong satisfaction and immediate well-being, the immediate tends to contaminate the ontological.

During an experiment in the 1980’s, people who found a dime on top of a Xerox machines before responding to a happiness survey reported a much higher sense of satisfaction with life than those who didn’t. Another study found that giving people a chocolate bar improved their satisfaction with their lives. One might expect that our satisfaction with the entire span of our existence would be a fairly stable quantity—impervious to day-to-day joys and frustrations. Yet people often give a substantially different answer to the same question about lifetime happiness if it is asked again one month later.

Sigmund Freud argued that people “strive after happiness; they want to become happy and to remain so.” Translating happiness into the language of economics as “utility,” most economists would agree. This simple proposition gives them a powerful tool to resist Bobby Kennedy’s proposal to measure not income but something else. For if happiness is what people strive for, one needn’t waste time trying to figure out what makes people happy. One must only look at what people do. The fact of the matter is that people mostly choose to work and make money. Under this optic, economic growth is the outcome of our pursuit of well-being. It is what makes us happy.

This approach has limitations. We often make puzzling choices that do not consistently make us happier. We smoke despite knowing about cancer and emphysema. We gorge on chocolate despite knowing it will make us unhappy ten pounds down the road. Almost two thirds of Americans say they are overweight, according to a recent Gallup poll. But only a quarter say they are seriously trying to lose weight. In the 1980’s a new discipline called Prospect Theory—also known as behavioral economics—deployed the tools of psychology to analyze economic behavior. It found all sorts of peculiar behaviors that don’t fit economics’ standard understanding of what makes us happy. For instance, losing something reduces our happiness more than winning the same thing increases it—a quirk known as loss aversion. We are unable to distinguish between choices that have slightly different odds of making us happy. We extrapolate from a few experiences to arrive at broad, mostly wrong conclusions. We herd, imitating successful behaviors around us.

Still, it remains generally true that we pursue what we think makes us happy—and though some of our choices may not make us happy, some will. Legend has it that Abraham Lincoln was riding in a carriage one rainy evening, telling a friend that he agreed with economists’ theory that people strove to maximize their happiness, when he caught sight of a pig stuck in a muddy river bank. He ordered the carriage to stop, got out, and pulled the pig out of the muck to safety. When the friend pointed out to a mud-caked Lincoln that he had just disproved his statement by putting himself through great discomfort to save a pig, Lincoln retorted: “What I did was perfectly consistent with my theory. If I hadn’t saved that pig I would have felt terrible.”

So perhaps the proper response to Bobby Kennedy’s angst is to agree that pursuing economic growth often has negative side effects—carbon emissions, environmental degradation—that are likely to make us unhappy down the road. Still, it remains true that American citizens—and the citizens of much of the world—expound enormous amounts of time and energy pursuing more money and a bigger GDP because they think it will improve their well-being. And that will make them happy.

“The Corner Store” by Eudora Welty

Our Little Store rose right up from the sidewalk; standing in a street of family houses, it alone hadn't any yard in front, any tree or flowerbed. It was a plain frame building covered over with brick. Above the door, a little railed porch ran across on an upstairs level and four windows with shades were looking out. But I didn't catch on to those.

Running in out of the sun, you met what seemed total obscurity inside. There were almost tangible smells - licorice recently sucked in a child's cheek, dill-pickle brine that had leaked through a paper sack in a fresh trail across the wooden floor, ammonia-loaded ice that had been hoisted from wet crocker sacks and slammed into the icebox with its sweet butter at the door, and perhaps the smell of still-untrapped mice.

Then through the motes of cracker dust, cornmeal dust, the Gold Dust of the Gold Dust Twins that the floor had been swept out with, the realities emerged. Shelves climbed to high reach all the way around, set out with not too much of any one thing but a lot of things - lard, molasses, vinegar, starch, matches, kerosene, Octagon soap (about a year's worth of octagon-shaped coupons cut out and saved brought a signet ring addressed to you in the mail. Furthermore, when the postman arrived at your door, he blew a whistle). It was up to you to remember what you came for, while your eye traveled from cans of sardines to ice cream salt to harmonicas to flypaper (over your head, batting around on a thread beneath the blades of the ceiling fan, stuck with its testimonial catch).

Its confusion may have been in the eye of its beholder. Enchantment is cast upon you by all those things you weren't supposed to have need for, it lures you close to wooden tops you'd outgrown, boy's marbles and agates in little net pouches, small rubber balls that wouldn't bounce straight, frazzly kite-string, clay bubble-pipes that would snap off in your teeth, the stiffest scissors. You could contemplate those long narrow boxes of sparklers gathering dust while you waited for it to be the Fourth of July or Christmas, and noisemakers in the shape of tin frogs for somebody's birthday party you hadn't been invited to yet, and see that they were all marvelous.

You might not have even looked for Mr. Sessions when he came around his store cheese (as big as a doll's house) and in front of the counter looking for you. When you'd finally asked him for, and received from him in its paper bag, whatever single thing it was that you had been sent for, the nickel that was left over was yours to spend.

Down at a child's eye level, inside those glass jars with mouths in their sides through which the grocer could run his scoop or a child's hand might be invited to reach for a choice, were wineballs, all-day

suckers, gumdrops, peppermints. Making a row under the glass of a counter were the Tootsie Rolls, Hershey Bars, Goo-Goo Clusters, Baby Ruths. And whatever was the name of those pastilles that came stacked in a cardboard cylinder with a cardboard lid? They were thin and dry, about the size of tiddlywinks, and in the shape of twisted rosettes. A kind of chocolate dust came out with them when you shook them out in your hand. Were they chocolate? I'd say rather they were brown. They didn't taste of anything at all, unless it was wood. Their attraction was the number you got for a nickel.

Making up your mind, you circled the store around and around, around the pickle barrel, around the tower of Cracker Jack boxes; Mr. Sessions had built it for us himself on top of a packing case, like a house of cards.

If it seemed too hot for Cracker Jacks, I might get a cold drink. Mr. Sessions might have already stationed himself by the cold-drinks barrel, like a mind reader. Deep in ice water that looked black as ink, murky shapes that would come up as Coca-Colas, Orange Crushes, and various flavors of pop, were all swimming around together. When you gave the word, Mr. Sessions plunged his bare arm in to the elbow and fished out your choice, first try. I favored a locally bottled concoction called Lake's Celery. (What else could it be called? It was made by a Mr. Lake out of celery. It was a popular drink here for years but was not known universally, as I found out when I arrived in New York and ordered one in the Astor bar.) You drank on the premises, with feet set wide apart to miss the drip, and gave him back his bottle.

But he didn't hurry you off. A standing scale was by the door, with a 20 stack of iron weights and a brass slide on the balance arm that would weigh you up to three hundred pounds. Mr. Sessions, whose hands were gentle and smelled of carbolic, would lift you up and set your feet on the platform, hold your loaf of bread for you, and taking his time while you stood still for him, he would make certain of what you weighed today. He could even remember what you weighed last time, so you could subtract and announce how much you'd gained. That was good-bye.

I was thinking about how everybody can't be everything to each other, but some people can be something to each other, thank God, from the ones whose shoulder you cry on to the ones whose half-slips you borrow to the nameless ones you chat with in the grocery line.

Buddies, for example, are the workhorses of the friendship world, the people out there on the front lines, defending you from loneliness and boredom. They call you up, they listen to your complaints, they celebrate your successes and curse your misfortunes, and you do the same for them in return. They hold out through innumerable crises before concluding that the person you're dating is no good, and even then understand if you ignore their good counsel. They accompany you to a movie with subtitles or to see the diving pig at Aquarena Springs. They feed your cat when you are out of town and pick you up from the airport when you get back. They come over to help you decide what to wear on a date. Even if it is with that creep.

What about family members? Most of them are people you just got stuck with, and though you love them, you may not have very much in common. But there is that rare exception, the Relative Friend. It is your cousin, your brother, maybe even your aunt. The two of you share the same views of the other family members. Meg never should have divorced Martin. He was the best thing that ever happened to her. You can confirm each other's memories of things that happened a long time ago. Don't you remember when Uncle Hank and Daddy had that awful fight in the middle of Thanksgiving dinner? Grandma always hated Grandpa's stamp collection; she probably left the windows open during the hurricane on purpose.

While so many family relationships are tinged with guilt and obligation, a relationship with a Relative Friend is relatively worry free. You don't even have to hide your vices from this delightful person. When you slip out Aunt Joan's back door for a cigarette, she is already there.

Then there is that special guy at work. Like all the other people at the job site, at first he's just part of the scenery. But gradually he starts to stand out from the crowd. Your friendship is cemented by jokes about coworkers and thoughtful favors around the office. Did you see Ryan's hair? Want half my bagel? Soon you know the names of his turtles, what he did last Friday night, exactly which model CD player he wants for his birthday. His handwriting is as familiar to you as your own.

Though you invite each other to parties, you somehow don't quite fit into each other's outside lives. For this reason, the friendship may not survive a job change. Company gossip, once an infallible source of

entertainment, soon awkwardly accentuates the distance between you. But wait. Like School Friends, Work Friends share certain memories which acquire a nostalgic glow after about a decade.

A Faraway Friend is someone you grew up with or went to school with or lived in the same town as until one of you moved away. Without a Faraway Friend, you would never get any mail addressed in handwriting. A Faraway Friend calls late at night, invites you to her wedding, always says she is coming to visit but rarely shows up. An actual visit from a Faraway Friend is a cause for celebration and binges of all kinds. Cigarettes, Chips Ahoy, bottles of tequila.

Faraway Friends go through phases of intense communication, then may be out of touch for many months. Either way, the connection is always there. A conversation with your Faraway Friend always helps to put your life in perspective: when you feel you've hit a dead end, come to a confusing fork in the road, or gotten lost in some crackerbox subdivision of your life, the advice of the Faraway Friend—who has the big picture, who is so well acquainted with the route that brought you to this place—is indispensable

Another useful function of the Faraway Friend is to help you remember things from a long time ago, like the name of your seventh-grade history teacher, what was in that really good stir-fry, or exactly what happened that night on the boat with the guys from Florida.

Ah, the Former Friend. A sad thing. At best a wistful memory, at worst a dangerous enemy who is in possession of many of your deepest secrets. But what was it that drove you apart? A misunderstanding, a betrayed confidence, an un-repaid loan, an ill-conceived flirtation. A poor choice of spouse can do in a friendship just like that. Going into business together can be a serious mistake. Time, money, distance, cult religions: all noted friendship killers. You quit doing drugs, you're not such good friends with your dealer anymore.

And lest we forget, there are the Friends You Love to Hate. They call at inopportune times. They say stupid things. They butt in, they boss you around, they embarrass you in public. They invite themselves over. They take advantage. You've done the best you can, but they need professional help. On top of all this, they love you to death and are convinced they're your best friend on the planet.

So why do you continue to be involved with these people? Why do you tolerate them? On the contrary, the real question is, what would you do without them? Without Friends You Love to Hate, there would be nothing to talk about with your other friends. Their problems and their irritating stunts provide a reliable source of conversation for everyone they know. What's more, Friends

You Love to Hate make you feel good about yourself, since you are obviously in so much better shape than they are. No matter what these people do, you will never get rid of them. As much as they need you, you need them too.

At the other end of the spectrum are Hero Friends. These people are better than the rest of us, that's all there is to it. Their career is something you wanted to be when you grew up—painter, forest ranger, tireless doer of good. They have beautiful homes filled with special handmade things presented to them by villagers in the remote areas they have visited in their extensive travels. Yet they are modest. They never gossip. They are always helping others, especially those who have suffered a death in the family or an illness. You would think people like this would just make you sick, but somehow they don't.

A New Friend is a tonic unlike any other. Say you meet her at a party. In your bowling league. At a Japanese conversation class, perhaps. Wherever, whenever, there's that spark of recognition. The first time you talk, you can't believe how much you have in common. Suddenly, your life story is interesting again, your insights fresh, your opinion valued. Your various shortcomings are as yet completely invisible.

It's almost like falling in love.