Reading the World
Contemporary Literature from Around the World

Reading the World is a superb literary collection that brings together the voices of contemporary, critically acclaimed writers from all over the world, including many Nobel laureates, as well as one classic literary selection from each region of the world. The literary selections reflect a global view of literary, social, and geopolitical traditions that will help readers become citizens of the world.

Reading the World has a special focus on research so readers can extend their literary and cultural knowledge by using a variety of research strategies. Research activities throughout the book and a Research Handbook at the end teach and reinforce essential research skills, such as using electronic sources and judging the validity of sources.
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Acknowledgments
Who Are These Strangers?

In Reading the World: Contemporary Literature from Around the Globe, you will read stories and poems in English with the flavor of elsewhere. The writers come from all over the world—Mexico, Ireland, Nigeria, Iraq, China—and include many Nobel Prize winners. In addition, the book includes an older “classic” selection from each region of the world. Reading the World’s focus on research, with numerous research activities and a Research Handbook, will help you appreciate world literature as you develop your research skills.

Many of the writers in this book have had lives as intriguing as their poetry or prose. Like South African Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, they have been imprisoned for being of the wrong race, faith, or political belief. Many started out in one country and ended up in another in search of a safe place to write.

No matter what a writer’s origins, certain themes and events have been hard to run away from in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Injustice still permeates countries with histories of colonial rule and civil war, or with stark divisions between rich and poor. Devastation from war and environmental disasters has led to massive worldwide emigration. Millions of people are having to figure out where they fit in this globalized world.

Other themes are ever present, everywhere. Girls in many cultures struggle to find freedom and respect. Family and community life bring both solace and conflict. Love, beauty, and laughter are necessary components to the good life.

Reading literature from around the world is unlikely to teach you everything there is to know about a culture. But it may help you to consider which differences among cultures actually matter. The Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Gwendolyn Brooks, a champion of ordinary people, said, “I believe that we should all know each other, we human carriers of so many pleasurable differences. To not know is to doubt, to shrink from, sidestep or destroy.”

For the curious and open-minded, literature is one of the best places to go for clues to the tantalizing question: Who are these strangers—my neighbors on this shrinking planet Earth?
In the 20th century, Europe was ravaged by two world wars, saw the rise and fall of fascism and communism, and began to live with the threat of the atomic bomb. The impact of these events on all areas of human life, including literature, was enormous.

A movement called modernism emerged in the first decades of the 20th century, its representatives seeking a radical break with traditional Western ideas. After the catastrophe of World War I (1914–18) and the collapse of European monarchies, many writers felt they could no longer describe the world’s harsh new realities in the time-honored ways. Modernist literature substitutes the traditional techniques of storytelling with innovations such as stream of consciousness, fragmentation, and unconventional ways of representing characters.

The term postmodernism is often applied to literature and art after World War II (1939–45). Influences on literature included the experience of the Holocaust; the rapid development of technology, including nuclear weapons; and the continuing spoilage of the natural environment. These things eroded Western morale even more than the first war had done. Works of postmodern literature blend literary genres and mix the serious with the playful, resisting classification along traditional lines.

The literature of the absurd, one branch of postmodern writing, depicts a world without continuity or meaning. Absurdist writers often use black humor, combining the genres of tragedy and comedy to convey this attitude.

Not all literary works since World War II can be characterized as postmodern. The aim of neorealism, especially prominent in Italy, was to describe the human condition authentically.
Neorealistic works often convey a tragic view of human existence, marked by solitude and alienation.

The 1950s signaled an era of high hopes and deep disappointments. Writers began to attack what they perceived as the materialism, complacency, and shabby values of the middle class. The 1960s saw renewed political and social concern among the young, prompted by the Vietnam War, the emergence of the “third world,” and the rise in western democracies of both liberating and reactionary factions. Well into the 1990s, many postwar writers concentrated on their own time period and its conditions. The contemporary European reading public expects writers to confront the problems of society, not sit in the ivory tower of art.

In Eastern Europe, World War II and its aftermath made a deep impact. The euphoria of liberation was soon followed by radical changes in the political and social structure. Communist regimes were established, with the Cold War well under way by mid-century. The Stalinist doctrine of socialist realism demanded uncritical optimism about progress toward a “classless society.” These governments insisted that writers create purely positive heroes who were healthy and active, never questioning their roles in society. This constituted a sharp break with earlier literature, in which protagonists were generally male, alienated from society, and unable to find a useful purpose in life. Many Eastern European writers had trouble adhering to this formula and openly resisted it; as a result, their work was censored and suppressed, some were imprisoned, and others were sent into exile.

Mikhail Gorbachev, president of the former Soviet Union, introduced the policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (reconstruction) in the early ’90s, freeing up the Communist societies of Eastern Europe and leading to the demise of Soviet-style communism. Previously suppressed books and new works of long-silenced authors could now be published. The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s brought Eastern and Western European countries much closer together. In the larger picture, how an increasingly global economy and the threat of worldwide terrorism will affect Europe remains to be seen. What is certain is that human tragedy and comedy will continue to shape European literature.

The Literature of Europe
Literary Map of Europe

Tomas Tranströmer  Sweden

Graham Greene  England

T. S. Eliot  England

Stevie Smith  England

W. H. Auden  England

Dylan Thomas  Wales/England

Frank O’Connor  Ireland

Seamus Heaney  Ireland

Karel Čapek  Czechoslovakia

Eugene Ionesco  Romania/France

Heinrich Böll  Germany

Dante Alighieri  Italy

Alberto Moravia  Italy

Italo Calvino  Italy

Federico García Lorca  Spain
Background
In the early 1800s, no country called “Germany” existed. Rather, the German-speaking people were divided among hundreds of small kingdoms, duchies, and principalities. Throughout the century, the desire of these people to unify into one country—into a nation—was powerful. Two influential writers who benefited from and advanced German nationalism were a pair of friends, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) and Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805). Goethe, besides being a poet, playwright, and novelist, was an able scientist whose studies of plants influenced Charles Darwin. His masterpiece was a massive, two-part poetic drama *Faust*, which tells about the man who trades his soul to the devil in return for knowledge.

Schiller, a poet, playwright, and historian, is widely remembered for his poem “Ode to Joy.” This was set to music in the last movement of Ludwig van Beethoven’s 9th Symphony.

Germany and the United States
Among the many costs of a dictatorship is that it often drives a country’s most talented intellectuals into exile. Germany under Nazi rule during the 1930s and 1940s was no exception. As the Nazis tightened their control, scientists, musicians, and filmmakers sought refuge in other countries. So did writers. Thomas Mann, the Nobel Prize-winning author of *The Magic Mountain*, fled and eventually settled in the United States. So did Franz Werfel (1890–1945), author of the novel *The Song of Bernadette*. Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956), perhaps the 20th century’s most significant playwright, also spent time in American exile.

Research: Summarize
Few, if any, works of German literature are as deeply revered as the anonymous epic poem the *Nibelungenlied*, written around 1200. It tells the tragic story of the legendary dragon-killer Siegfried. Adaptations include *The Ring of the Nibelung*, a gigantic four-part opera composed between 1848 and 1874 by Richard Wagner; and Fritz Lang’s classic, two-part silent movie of the epic, which premiered in 1924. Find a concise synopsis of this epic. Then, briefly summarize its story in a one-minute oral report.
The Balek Scales

Heinrich Böll

Before You Read

As a young man, Heinrich Böll (1917–1985) was conscripted as a German soldier during World War II. He was later taken as a POW by the Americans. Horrified both by war and Nazism, Böll faced the “frightful fate of being a soldier and having to wish that the war might be lost.” He described his wartime experience in his first novel, The Train Was on Time. After this he began to explore the spiritual and moral emptiness of postwar Germany in works like Billiards at Half-Past Nine and The Clown. Committedly pacifist and anti-authoritarian, Böll believed that literature plays a critical role in shaping human society. As he wrote upon winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1972, “Art is always a good hiding place, not for dynamite, but for intellectual explosives and social time bombs.”

World Context  Like his famous compatriot Günter Grass, Böll is known for the social criticism and antimilitarism in his writing. He fervently believed that Germany had a mandate to remember its terrible past. He also criticized the corruption in Germany’s Catholic church.

LITERARY LENS: THEME

Think about the theme, or underlying meaning and message, as you read this story.

Where my grandfather came from, most of the people lived by working in the flax sheds. For five generations they had been breathing in the dust which rose from the crushed flax stalks, letting themselves be killed off by slow degrees, a race of long-suffering, cheerful people who ate goat cheese, potatoes, and now and then a rabbit; in the evening they would sit at home spinning and knitting; they sang, drank mint tea and were happy. During the day they would carry the flax stalks to the antiquated machines, with no protection from the dust and at the mercy from the heat which came pouring out of the drying kilns. Each cottage contained only one bed, standing against the wall like a closet and reserved for the parents, while the children slept all round the room on benches. In the morning the room would be filled with the odor of thin soup; on Sundays there was stew, and on feast days the children’s faces would light

1 flax: a crop cultivated mostly for its fiber and seed
up with pleasure as they watched the black acorn coffee turning paler and paler from the milk their smiling mother poured into their coffee mugs.

The parents went off early to the flax sheds; the housework was left to the children: they would sweep the room, tidy up, wash the dishes and peel the potatoes, precious pale-yellow fruit whose thin peel had to be produced afterwards to dispel any suspicion of extravagance or carelessness.

As soon as the children were out of school they had to go off into the woods and, depending on the season, gather mushrooms and herbs: woodruff and thyme, caraway, mint and foxglove, and in summer, when they had brought in the hay from their meager fields, they gathered hayflowers. A kilo² of hayflowers was worth one pfennig³ and they were sold by the apothecaries⁴ in town for twenty pfennigs a kilo to highly strung ladies. The mushrooms were highly prized: they fetched twenty pfennigs a kilo and were sold in the shops in town for one mark⁵ twenty. The children would crawl deep into the green darkness of the forest during the autumn when dampness drove the mushrooms out of the soil, and almost every family had its own places where it gathered mushrooms, places which were handed down in whispers from generation to generation.

The woods belonged to the Baleks, as well as the flax sheds, and in my grandfather’s village the Baleks had a château⁶ and the wife of the head of the family had a little room next to the dairy where mushrooms, herbs, and hayflowers were weighed and paid for. There on the table stood the great Balek scales, an old-fashioned, ornate bronze-gilt contraption, which my grandfather’s grandparents had already faced when they were children, their grubby hands holding their little baskets of mushrooms, their paper bags of hayflowers, breathlessly watching the number of weights Frau Balek had to throw on the scale before the swinging pointer came to rest exactly over the black line, that thin line of

² kilo: a kilogram, a unit for measuring
³ pfennig: a German monetary unit comparable to a penny
⁴ apothecaries: pharmacists
⁵ mark: a German monetary unit
⁶ château: French word for a large house in the countryside
justice which had to be redrawn every year. Then Frau Balek would take the big book covered in brown leather, write down the weight, and pay out the money, pfennigs or ten-pfennig pieces and very, very occasionally, a mark. And when my grandfather was a child there was a big glass jar of lemon drops standing there, the kind that cost one mark a kilo, and when Frau Balek—whichever one happened to be presiding over the little room—was in a good mood, she would put her hand into this jar and give each child a lemon drop, and the children’s faces would light up with pleasure, the way they used to when on feast days their mother poured milk into their coffee mugs, milk that made the coffee turn paler and paler until it was as pale as the flaxen pigtails of the little girls.

One of the laws imposed by the Baleks on the village was: No one was permitted to have scales in the house. The law was so ancient that nobody gave a thought as to when and how it had arisen, and it had to be obeyed, for anyone who broke it was dismissed from the flax sheds, he could not sell his mushrooms or his thyme or his hayflowers, and the power of the Baleks was so far-reaching that no one in the neighboring villages would give him work either, or buy his forest herbs. But since the days when my grandfather’s parents had gone out as small children to gather mushrooms and sell them in order that they might season the meat of the rich people of Prague or be baked into game pies, it had never occurred to anyone to break this law: flour could be measured in cups, eggs could be counted, what they had spun could be measured by the yard, and besides, the old-fashioned bronze-gilt, ornate Balek scales did not look as if there was anything wrong with them, and five generations had entrusted the swinging black pointer with what they had gone out as eager children to gather from the woods.

True, there were some among these quiet people who flouted the law, poachers bent on making more money in one night than they could earn in a whole month in the flax sheds, but even these people apparently never thought of buying scales or making their own. My grandfather was the first person bold enough to test the justice of the Baleks, the family who lived in the château and drove two carriages, who always maintained one boy from...
the village while he studied **theology** at the **seminary** in Prague, the family with whom the priest played taroc\(^7\) every Wednesday, on whom the local reeve\(^8\), in his carriage emblazoned with the Imperial coat of arms\(^9\), made an annual New Year’s Day call and on whom the Emperor conferred a title on the first day of the year 1900.

My grandfather was hardworking and smart: he crawled further into the woods than the children of his clan had crawled before him, he penetrated as far as the thicket where, according to legend, Bilgan the Giant was supposed to dwell, guarding a treasure. But my grandfather was not afraid of Bilgan: he worked his way deep into the thicket, even when he was quite little, and brought out great quantities of mushrooms; he even found truffles, for which Frau Balek paid thirty pfennigs a pound. Everything my grandfather took to the Baleks he entered on the back of a torn-off calendar page: every pound of mushrooms, every gram of thyme, and on the right-hand side, in his childish handwriting, he entered the amount he received for each item; he scrawled in every pfennig, from the age of seven to the age of twelve, and by the time he was twelve the year 1900 had arrived, and because the Baleks had been raised to the aristocracy by the Emperor, they gave every family in the village a quarter of a pound of real coffee, the Brazilian kind; there was also free beer and tobacco for the men, and at the château there was a great banquet; many carriages stood in the avenue of poplars leading from the entrance gates to the château.

But the day before the banquet the coffee was distributed in the little room which had housed the Balek scales for almost a hundred years, and the Balek family was now called Balek von Bilgan because, according to legend, Bilgan the Giant used to have a great castle on the site of the present Balek estate.

My grandfather often used to tell me how he went there after school to fetch the coffee for four families: the Cechs, the Weidlers, the Vohlas, and his own, the Brüchers. It was the afternoon of New Year’s Eve: there were the front rooms to be

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7 **taroc**: a kind of card game  
8 **reeve**: an administrative official  
9 **Imperial coat of arms**: the royal symbol or emblem
decorated, the baking to be done, and the families did not want to spare four boys and have each of them go all the way to the château to bring back a quarter of a pound of coffee.

And so my grandfather sat on the narrow wooden bench in the little room while Gertrud the maid counted out the wrapped four-ounce packages of coffee, four of them, and he looked at the scales and saw that the pound weight was still lying on the left-hand scale; Frau Balek von Bilgan was busy with preparations for the banquet. And when Gertrud was about to put her hand into the jar with the lemon drops to give my grandfather one, she discovered it was empty: it was refilled once a year, and held one kilo of the kind that cost a mark.

Gertrud laughed and said: “Wait here while I get the new lot,” and my grandfather waited with the four four-ounce packages which had been wrapped and sealed in the factory, facing the scales on which someone had left the pound weight, and my grandfather took the four packages of coffee, put them on the empty scale, and his heart thudded as he watched the black finger of justice come to rest on the left of the black line: the scale with the pound weight stayed down, and the pound of coffee remained up in the air; his heart thudded more than if he had been lying behind a bush in the forest waiting for Bilgan the Giant, and he felt in his pocket for the pebbles he always carried with him so he could use his catapult to shoot the sparrows which pecked away at his mother’s cabbage plants—he had to put three, four, five pebbles beside the packages of coffee before the scale with the pound weight rose and the pointer at last came to rest over the black line. My grandfather took the coffee from the scale, wrapped the five pebbles in his kerchief, and when Gertrud came back with the big kilo bag of lemon drops which had to last for another whole year in order to make the children’s faces light up with pleasure, when Gertrud let the lemon drops rattle into the glass jar, the pale little fellow was still standing there, and nothing seemed to have changed. My grandfather only took three of the packages, then Gertrud looked in startled surprise at the white-faced child who threw the lemon drop onto the floor, ground it under his heel, and said: “I want to see Frau Balek.”

“Balek von Bilgan, if you please,” said Gertrud.
“All right, Frau Balek von Bilgan,” but Gertrud only laughed at him, and he walked back to the village in the dark, took the Cechs, the Weidlers, and the Vohlas their coffee, and said he had to go and see the priest.

Instead he went out into the dark night with his five pebbles in his kerchief. He had to walk a long way before he found someone who had scales, who was permitted to have them; no one in the villages of Blaugau and Bernau had any, he knew that, and he went straight through them till, after two hours’ walking, he reached the little town of Dielheim where Honig the apothecary lived. From Honig’s house came the smell of fresh pancakes, and Honig’s breath, when he opened the door to the half-frozen boy, already smelled of punch, there was a moist cigar between his narrow lips, and he clasped the boy’s cold hands firmly for a moment, saying: “What’s the matter, has your father’s lung got worse?”

“No, I haven’t come for medicine, I wanted . . .” My grandfather undid his kerchief, took out the five pebbles, held them out to Honig and said: “I wanted to have these weighed.” He glanced anxiously into Honig’s face, but when Honig said nothing and did not get angry, or even ask him anything, my grandfather said: “It is the amount that is short of justice,” and
now, as he went into the warm room, my grandfather realized how wet his feet were. The snow had soaked through his cheap shoes, and in the forest the branches had showered him with snow which was now melting, and he was tired and hungry and suddenly began to cry because he thought of the quantities of mushrooms, the herbs, the flowers, which had been weighed on the scales which were short five pebbles’ worth of justice. And when Honig, shaking his head and holding the five pebbles, called his wife, my grandfather thought of the generations of his parents, his grandparents, who had all had to have their mushrooms, their flowers, weighed on the scales, and he was overwhelmed by a great wave of injustice, and began to sob louder than ever, and, without waiting to be asked, he sat down on a chair, ignoring the pancakes, the cup of hot coffee which nice plump Frau Honig put in front of him, and did not stop crying till Honig himself came out from the shop at the back and, rattling the pebbles in his hand, said in a low voice to his wife: “Fifty-five grams, exactly.”

My grandfather walked the two hours home through the forest, got a beating at home, said nothing, not a single word, when he was asked about the coffee, spent the whole evening doing sums on the piece of paper on which he had written down everything he had sold to Frau Balek, and when midnight struck, and the cannon could be heard from the château, and the whole village rang with shouting and laughter and the noise of rattles, when the family kissed and embraced all round, he said into the New Year silence: “The Baleks owe me eighteen marks and thirty-two pfennigs.” And again he thought of all the children there were in the village, of his brother Fritz who had gathered so many mushrooms, of his sister Ludmilla; he thought of the many hundreds of children who had all gathered mushrooms for the Baleks, and herbs and flowers, and this time he did not cry but told his parents and brothers and sisters of his discovery.

When the Baleks von Bilgan went to High Mass on New Year’s Day, their new coat of arms—a giant crouching under a fir tree—already emblazoned in blue and gold on their carriage, they saw the hard, pale faces of the people all staring at them. They had expected garlands in the village, a song in their honor, cheers and
hurrahs, but the village was completely deserted as they drove through it, and in church the pale faces of the people were turned toward them, mute and hostile, and when the priest mounted the pulpit to deliver his New Year’s sermon he sensed the chill in those otherwise quiet and peaceful faces, and he stumbled painlessly through his sermon and went back to the altar drenched in sweat. And as the Baleks von Bilgan left the church after Mass, they walked through a lane of mute, pale faces. But young Frau Balek von Bilgan stopped in front of the children’s pews, sought out my grandfather’s face, pale little Franz Brücher, and asked him, right there in the church: “Why didn’t you take the coffee for your mother?” And my grandfather stood up and said: “Because you owe me as much money as five kilos of coffee would cost.” And he pulled the five pebbles from his pocket, held them out to the young woman and said: “This much, fifty-five grams, is short in every pound of your justice”; and before the woman could say anything the men and women in the church lifted up their voices and sang: “The justice of this earth, O Lord, hath put Thee to death . . . .”

While the Baleks were at church, Wilhelm Vohla, the poacher, had broken into the little room, stolen the scales and the big fat leather-bound book in which had been entered every kilo of mushrooms, every kilo of hayflowers, everything bought by the Baleks in the village, and all afternoon of that New Year’s Day the men of the village sat in my great-grandparents’ front room and calculated, calculated one tenth of everything that had been bought—but when they had calculated many thousands of talers and had still not come to an end, the reeve’s gendarmes arrived, made their way into my great-grandfather’s front room, shooting and stabbing as they came, and removed the scales and the book by force. My grandfather’s little sister Ludmilla lost her life, a few men were wounded, and one of the gendarmes was stabbed to death by Wilhelm Vohla the poacher.

Our village was not the only one to rebel: Blaugau and Bernau did too, and for almost a week no work was done in the flax sheds. But a great many gendarmes appeared, and the men and

10 talers: silver coins
11 gendarmes: law-enforcing soldiers
women were threatened with prison, and the Baleks forced the priest to display the scales publicly in the school and demonstrate that the finger of justice swung to and fro accurately. And the men and women went back to the flax sheds—but no one went to the school to watch the priest: he stood there all alone, helpless and forlorn with his weights, scales, and packages of coffee.

And the children went back to gathering mushrooms, to gathering thyme, flowers, and foxglove, but every Sunday, as soon as the Baleks entered the church, the hymn was struck up: “The justice of this earth, O Lord, hath put Thee to death,” until the reeve ordered it proclaimed in every village that the singing of the hymn was forbidden.

My grandfather’s parents had to leave the village, and the new grave of their little daughter; they became basket weavers, but did not stay long anywhere because it pained them to see how everywhere the finger of justice swung falsely. They walked along behind their cart, which crept slowly over the country roads, taking their thin goat with them, and passers-by could sometimes hear a voice from the cart singing: “The justice of this earth, O Lord, hath put Thee to death.” And those who wanted to listen could hear the tale of the Baleks von Bilgan, whose justice lacked a tenth part. But there were few who listened.

Translated by Leila Vennewitz

Read and Think Critically

Analyze, Interpret, Synthesize

1. **THEME** What do you think is the theme of “The Balek Scales”? Analyze the elements in the story which point to this idea.

2. In what line(s) does the author first reveal his sympathies?

3. Why do you suppose the author chooses to use a **first-person narrator** to relate this story? Explain what he gains by doing so.

4. What other institutions are bound to the power of the Baleks, according to Böll? Think about whether such relationships continue in any modern societies, especially your own.

5. **DEFINE A TERM** Böll was part of a literary movement called **trümmerliteratur**. Use a literary dictionary to define this term.
Europe: UNIT REVIEW

Key Ideas and Details

1. Review “Forbidden Fruit” and then write an objective summary of the plot. Are all parts of the story represented in your summary? If not, do the parts missing in your summary serve another purpose besides plot? If so, what is that purpose?

2. Compare the poems by Thomas, Smith, Auden, Szymborska, and Milosz. All are important 20th-century writers addressing a similar theme: death. Which poets address it in terms of the times they live in (and its threat of fascism) and which address it in a more personal way? Characterize each poet’s treatment of this theme, citing evidence from the poems.

Craft and Structure

3. World War II and Nazism influenced many of these European writers. Look at the selections by Auden, Greene, Milosz, and Ionesco for evidence of such influences. Why is war such a rich theme for writers? Compare the very different tones and perspectives these writers bring to bear on this subject.

4. Reread “First Frost” and pay special attention to the specific word choices. Identify any repeated sounds, and explain their cumulative effect on the poem’s meaning and tone.

5. Compare the word choice in “Clearances” and “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night” and the resulting tones. Which poem has a more formal tone? What word choices contribute to this tone?

6. Irony and black humor are often seen in Western European writing. Which selections in this unit display this sort of humor? Discuss why European writers, in particular, might favor this form of expression.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Find paintings or photographs of London after the German bombardments in 1940. Compare these to the description of the rubble in “The Destructors.” Analyze how each medium expresses the images and what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.

8. “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” contains many allusions. The line “There will be time” is an allusion to a poem by Andrew Marvell called “To His Coy Mistress.” The phrase “dying fall” following the famous lines about measuring life with coffee spoons is a reference to Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night. Choose one of these to research and write a paragraph explaining how Eliot drew on and transformed the original work.
Europe: RESEARCH PROJECTS

Speaking and Listening
1. Conduct a mock trial of Kugler from “The Last Judgment.” Have class members serve as judge, lawyers, jury members, and witnesses. Add details to the crimes mentioned in the story.

2. Give an oral report on one aspect of World War II. Use the Research Handbook to help you narrow the focus of your presentation.

Hands-On Project
Choose a European cuisine that you would like to learn more about. Demonstrate for your class how to make a dish from this cuisine.

Research Follow-Up
In the 20th century, some intellectuals adopted views known as existentialism or absurdism. Research one of these views, and prepare a short oral presentation describing how it is reflected in this unit.

Synthesizing Through Research and Writing
Choose one writer from this unit who wrote without fear of censorship and one who had to worry about censorship. In a two-page essay, explain how political conditions shaped their works.

CULTURAL REFLECTION
After reading the selections in this unit, write about any new understandings you might have about American culture, your family, or yourself.
Research Handbook

Some investigations begin with questions that are literally a matter of life and death. *Who killed this murder victim? How can we cure this disease?* Others are born from an observation. *Why does this author write so much about orphaned children?* Some are sparked by your teacher’s warning. “Your research papers are due . . . .”

Whatever your question, research skills can help you find information about any topic, from car stereos to the drum sounds in African poetry. But locating sources is just the beginning. By 2002, to keep up with the new technical information produced in just one day, you would have had to read more than 20,000,000 words. Even reading 8 hours a day, you couldn’t finish in less than a month. By that time, you’d be 5.5 months and billions of words behind (Murray, cited in Nelson, par. 10). Since 2002, rate of the production of new information has increased, making any effort to keep up with it even more daunting.

The vast amount of information available can feel overwhelming. But you can tame information overload. The handbook section on **Finding Information** will help you locate sources that are relevant to your topic. **Sharing Information** will help you select the best information and organize it so your audience finds it easy to understand.

**FINDING INFORMATION**

**What is my research topic?**

If “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step,” a research project begins with a single topic. The topic may be assigned by your teacher, or you may be allowed to research any subject that interests you. In either case, you need to decide what you’re trying to find out about before you begin your research. Otherwise, you’ll be wandering through the information jungle without a compass.

Suppose you’re assigned to write about magic realism in Latin American literature. “I don’t even know what magic realism is,” you might mutter. There’s your first question: *What is magic realism?* “Aren’t the ideas of magic and realism contradictory?” you grumble. There’s a second question: *How are these contradictions handled by Latin American authors?*
That brings up another question: *Which Latin American authors have I read?* As you think about the different authors you’ve studied, you realize that you enjoyed one author more than all the others. Now you’re starting to see how you might make this assigned topic fit your interests.

Suppose that you can choose any topic related to world literature. You may already have a question you want to research. Perhaps you’re curious about diaries kept during the Holocaust, or you want to read more contemporary Arabic stories. On the other hand, you may find it hard to think of a topic. Looking over this book’s Table of Contents or each unit’s list of research projects might give you some ideas. You can also start with yourself instead of with the literature. For example, as you sit at your desk trying to think of a topic, you might be listening to music. As you start to tap out the rhythm to a song, you remember that Léopold Sédar Senghor wanted his poems to capture the complex rhythms of African music. As you start to wonder about the relationship between drums and Senghor’s poetry, you realize that your interests have led you to a topic.

### Finding a Topic

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Assigned Topic</strong></th>
<th><strong>Self-Chosen Topic</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Analyze key words in the topic.</td>
<td>• Think about your questions or interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify what you already know.</td>
<td>• Make a list of topics you’d like to know more about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relate the topic to your interests.</td>
<td>• Choose a topic you want to explore.</td>
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### What questions do I have about my topic?

A saying among researchers and writers is that asking the right question is 90 percent of the answer. Ninety percent? Isn’t that exaggerating the importance of questions? You’ll have a chance to see for yourself as you do your research.

Now is a good time to start keeping track of your questions about your topic. You can use a log or research journal to record your initial questions and those that arise as you learn more about a topic. Your question log might look something like the one on the next page.
At this point, the research questions are pretty broad. So, it is good to start with sources that provide general background about the topic, such as encyclopedia articles and *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. One critic mentions that Senghor was influenced by the griots, or storytellers, the poet heard as a child. This helps answer the question about traditional African rhythms. However, you might have new questions.

Jan 16  
What are griots?  
What rhythms do griots use in their stories?  
How did the stories Senghor heard as a child shape his poetry?

At the beginning of your research, each answer you find is likely to suggest more questions. These questions will give you new directions to explore. At the same time, they keep you from getting lost and disoriented given the vast amount of information that exists. You will probably learn that Senghor was the first president of Senegal. This is a significant achievement, but it doesn’t relate to any of your questions. So you look for more information on griots instead of focusing on Senghor’s political career.

But what if the new questions are more interesting than the original ones? Many people find that new questions suggest a whole new topic. That’s why your teacher may want to go over your questions with you. At the beginning of your research process, it’s easy to change topics. You just need to be sure that your new subject will fulfill the assignment. The more
time and effort you have invested in a topic, the more important it is to talk to your teacher before changing your focus.

Once you feel that you’re familiar with the basic background information about your subject, review your questions. Which are the most interesting? Most important? Most likely to be questions your audience will have too? Choose ten or so questions to be the focus of your research. These questions will help you and your teacher track your progress as you dig more deeply.

**Where do I find information?**

The best place to start your research depends on two things: the topic and the assignment. To research a current topic, you might start with the Internet. But if you’re looking for reference books or back issues of magazines, you’ll find more resources at a library. The assignment might also specify that you use particular kinds of resources, such as a collection of references in the media center or personal interviews. The chart below shows some specialized resources for world literature and gives examples of different kinds of sources that your teacher might require. For example, say your teacher wants you to use at least two primary sources. *Primary sources* are firsthand information about a topic, such as eyewitness accounts, diaries, or historical documents. *Secondary sources* are materials based on firsthand sources, such as reference works and biographies. When you research literature, the works you study are considered primary sources. Critics’ comments are secondary sources.
Some people prefer to take notes on the computer. Information from electronic databases and Web sites can be saved as word-processing files or cut-and-pasted into a document. If you save an entire article, indicate the material you expect to use by emphasizing it with highlighting or bold type, adding headings, or using the Comments feature in your word processor. You might even start a rough outline by copying the best parts into a new document and arranging them in the order you think you might use them. If you do, remember these two additional steps: include information to identify the source and paraphrase instead of plagiarizing.

**How can I avoid plagiarizing?**

Writers have a saying, “Easy writing is hard reading.” When a writer just dumps words onto paper, the burden of sorting out what’s important falls on the reader. That’s not where it belongs, and your grade is likely to show it.

Ethical and legal issues are also involved. Since no one understands everything there is to know about a topic, you’ll need to use sources. But the stand you take on the subject and the way you organize the material should be your own. Using other people’s words and ideas without acknowledging them is called plagiarism. Best-selling authors who are accused of plagiarizing can wind up in court, being sued by the authors whose work they have stolen. When students are caught, penalties depend on the school. They range from loss of credit for the assignment to failing the course to expulsion.

Copying from the Internet is so easy that some people assume it’s all gain and no pain. However, teachers are always looking for new plagiarism busters. If your conscience doesn’t stop you from cheating, you might find yourself caught by your teacher or a plagiarism detection service.

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to use your own words or quotation marks. Using your own words for someone else’s ideas is called paraphrasing. You still need to credit the source from which you took the paraphrase, but you do not need to use quotation marks. When you copy someone else’s words, you must use quotation marks to acknowledge that you are using not just ideas, but exact words. Quote only ideas that are exceptionally well-stated or views that you want to make clear. For
example, if you are trying to disprove a critic’s opinion, quoting the opinion will help your audience follow your argument.

While there’s no question about when you need to use quotation marks, the line between plagiarism and paraphrase isn’t as clear. You may have no intention of stealing someone else’s words. However, if your paraphrase is too close to the original, you may find yourself slipping into unintentional plagiarism. That means you’ve kept too much of the author’s wording or organization. These examples illustrate acceptable and unacceptable uses of this passage from Ruth Behar’s review of Isabel Allende’s *Eva Luna* stories:

“And of Clay Are We Created” was inspired by the 1985 avalanche in Colombia that buried a village in mud. Among those trapped was Omaira Sánchez, a thirteen-year-old girl who became the focus of attention of news-hungry photographers, journalists and television cameras that fixed their curious and helpless eyes on the girl who kept her faith in life as she bravely met her death. In that horrid audience of onlookers, there was one man, a reporter, who made the decision to stop observing Omaira from the lens of his camera and lay down in the mud to offer her what comfort he could as her heart and lungs collapsed. Allende, who was obsessed by “the torment of that poor child buried alive,” wrote her story from the perspective of a woman—and she was that woman—“who watches the televised struggle of the man holding the girl” (15).
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<th>Unacceptable paraphrase</th>
<th>Acceptable paraphrase</th>
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<td><strong>Unacceptable paraphrase</strong>&lt;br&gt;• uses words from the source without quotation marks&lt;br&gt;• is too close to source’s organization</td>
<td>“And of Clay Are We Created” was inspired by a 1985 avalanche in Colombia. A thirteen-year-old girl trapped in the mud, Omaira Sánchez, became the focus of attention of news-hungry photographers. Allende, who was obsessed by “the torment of that poor child buried alive,” wrote her story as if she were the woman watching the reporter who tried to help the girl (Behar 15).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unacceptable paraphrase</strong>&lt;br&gt;• does use quotation marks but is too close to source’s organization</td>
<td>“And of Clay Are We Created” is based on an actual event, a 1985 avalanche that buried a thirteen-year-old Colombian girl in mud. The girl “became the focus of attention of news-hungry photographers” and a “horrid audience of onlookers” (Behar 15).</td>
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<td><strong>Acceptable paraphrase</strong>&lt;br&gt;• quotes any exact words taken from source&lt;br&gt;• does not depend on source’s organization&lt;br&gt;• shows why material is included</td>
<td>One reason that the relationship between Rolf Carlé and Azucena seems so real is that “And of Clay Are We Created” is based on an actual event, a 1985 Colombian avalanche that left thirteen-year-old Omaira Sánchez trapped in mud. As journalists provided live coverage of her ordeal, one reporter put down his camera to try to ease her death. Viewing “the torment of that poor child being buried alive” moved Allende to write a story told by a woman “who watches the televised struggle of the man holding the girl” (Behar 15).</td>
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<td><strong>Acceptable paraphrase</strong>&lt;br&gt;• uses quotation marks&lt;br&gt;• works quotation smoothly into the paper by identifying the source and showing why the quotation is used</td>
<td>Allende’s inspiration for “And of Clay Are We Created” came from the ordeal of a thirteen-year-old Colombian girl trapped in the mud after an avalanche. Reviewer Ruth Behar describes how watching television coverage of the 1985 disaster affected the author. “Allende, who was obsessed by ‘the torment of that poor child buried alive,’ wrote her story from the perspective of a woman . . . ‘who watches the televised struggle of the man holding the girl’ ” (15).</td>
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