

CLASSROOM (MIDDLE SCHOOL) READING GUIDE

About the Book

Nonwhite and Woman: 131 Micro Essays on Being in the World, edited by Darien Hsu Gee and Carla Crujido, is a collection of true stories made up of 300 words or less. We want to support you in guiding your students to write their own micro essays. These questions work best if each student has access to a classroom copy of the book.

Writing short narratives is fun but challenging, and the result is a powerful piece of writing that can pack a punch. This guide will help students reflect on literary and storytelling choices made by the *Nonwhite and Woman* writers and inspire students to write creatively. This discussion and exercise will take approximately 80-90 minutes and can be broken up into two days.

Prep [5-15 minutes]

Select in advance 3-5 essays from the collection to read out loud to the class – have them follow along or select students to read each one. Two essays we recommend for this age group are Shaina Nez’s “My Daughter’s Future Bullies” (pp. 105) and Alyssa Jocson Porter’s “Collector’s Item” (pp. 64). These essays have been selected because they tackle topics that are relatable to students. We recommend selecting 2-3 additional essays to teach alongside our suggestions.

- Optional: before you begin, play the video of Lucille Clifton reading her poem, *won’t you celebrate with me*.

Reflect [20 minutes]

We recommend having students reflect on these questions individually for ten minutes and then spend the next ten minutes discussing their responses in small groups of 2-3.

- What was your favorite essay? Why?
- Which essays feel similar to your own experiences? Which ones feel different?

- What do you think of this shorter form? Is something left out? Does it feel like enough?
- In “My Daughter’s Future Bullies,” Shaina Nez uses two unconventional forms for her essay: a letter and a list. Why do you think she chose to write her essay this way?
- If you were going to write a micro essay in the form of a letter, who would you write to? What would you say?
- Specific objects are often strongly tied to childhood memories. In “Collector’s Item” (pp. 64), Alyssa Jocson Porter remembers a Filipina Barbie given to her by her mother. As you read her essay, what stands out to you? What objects evoke memories for you?

Share [15 minutes]

Divide the class into small groups of 2-3 students, and have them discuss the following questions:

- Choose an essay you found interesting and read it aloud to your group. Why did you choose this essay to share with your group? What did you like about it? Did you notice anything new about the essay after hearing it read out loud?
- In listening to the other essay(s), what did you notice? Was there a particular line, phrase, or word that jumped out? How did you feel at the end of that essay?

Optional

Invite one of the contributors for a live Zoom to read her work and engage in a Q&A with the students

Write [15 minutes]

Have the students take turns reading aloud pages 241-242 of the “Crafting a Micro Essay” guide. They should write for ten minutes.

If there is more time or if you plan to work on micro essays throughout the week, have them write one per day and/or one as homework. When time is up, remind the students to title their piece and count the number of words (not including the title).

We have included some suggested prompts that would be relatable for students. Write these prompts on the board and have them choose one. If time allows, we encourage you to ask students to brainstorm prompts to add to the list.

- Write about your name. Who gave it to you, what does it mean, does it fit you? Do you have a nickname? How do you like to be called?
- Write about being “the new kid.” How did it feel? Why were you new?
- Write about a birthday party, one that you went to or one of your own. What happened or didn’t happen?
- Write about getting or losing a pet.
- Write about a family trip. Who was there? What happened? Did the trip change anything for you or your family?

Revise [12 minutes]

Revision is a necessary part of good writing, but it doesn’t have to be hard. Try these simple techniques and allow ten minutes to revise the essay of your choice. Remember to revise your title (if needed) and re-count the number of words.

- Highlight or underline the sentences or words that stand out.
- Review your essay and revise wording to help your ideas come across more clearly. Reading the essay aloud can help you catch unclear wording or grammar.
- What is your essay *not* including – what did you leave out?
- What do you want the reader to know? What was hard/difficult/important/confusing about what you are writing about?

Share [20 minutes]

Have the students return to their groups and discuss the following questions:

- What did you find most difficult about writing in the micro form? What was most surprising? What do you feel most proud of?
- Read your micro essay aloud to your group. As your classmates read their essays, write down at least two things you liked about their essay, or that stood out. Share this with them at the end.

Teacher Resources

A full resource list is available at the back of the book (pp. 251 -256). In addition, you may find this helpful:

- YouTube video of Lucille Clifton reading *won't you celebrate with me*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM7q_DUk5wU&t=1s
- Diversifying Curriculum: Read “Why Diverse Texts are Not Enough”: <https://triciaebarvia.org/2019/07/18/why-diverse-texts-are-not-enough/>
- *Literacy is Liberation* by Dr. Kimberly N. Parker
- Girls Write Now annual anthologies: <https://girlswritenow.org/stories/anthologies/>

Book Information

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