

## **Finding a Story in a Bridge (Preferably a Fallen Bridge)**

**Janelle A. Price**

**Pittsburgh Rogers CAPA**

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### **Overview**

London Bridge is falling down,  
Falling down, falling down,  
London Bridge is falling down,  
My fair Lady.

Build it up with wood and clay,  
Wood and clay, wood and clay,  
Build it up with wood and clay,  
My fair Lady.

Wood and clay will wash away,  
Wash away, wash away,  
Wood and clay will wash away,  
My fair Lady.

Build it up with bricks and mortar,  
Bricks and mortar, bricks and mortar,  
Build it up with bricks and mortar,  
My fair Lady.

The English nursery rhyme or singing game “London Bridge” chronicles the rise and fall of many of the bridge structures that have spanned the River Thames between Southwark and London city. The rhyme, as commonly recited today, was first published in *Tommy’s Thumb’s Pretty Song Book* in 1744, (Cuddon 604) but various stories claim it to be much older due to the historical events captured in it. One such example is what is often thought of as the destruction of the bridge in approximately 1024 A.D. by Vikings. This bit of history could be highlighted in the lines, “Silver and Gold/Will be Stolen Away” (Alchin “Nursery”). This simplistic capturing of a story revolving around a bridge disaster encapsulates what students will accomplish in this unit. They will create a realistic fiction short story centered on the actual destruction of a bridge similar to what Thornton Wilder wrote in his 1928 Pulitzer Prize winning novella, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. Wilder’s work is a fictional 1714 study by a monk investigating whether it was God’s will or chance when five Peruvians are killed in the collapse of an osier bridge. While the unit’s culminating project revolves around students creating a realistic fiction story, it begins with students investigating their own city through its bridges.

Since Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is often cited as the “City of Bridges,” students will first examine the basic architecture styles of the city’s bridges through a website devoted to them. After becoming familiar with the basics and history of the city’s bridges, they will read Plato’s “Allegory of the Caves” from book seven of *The Republic*. The purpose of their reading and analysis of this excerpt will be to utilize the reality distortion exemplified through the captive’s view and ultimately apply such a lens in their story writing. But before they begin writing, students will read the unit’s anchor work, Wilder’s novella, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, and investigate bridge disasters and failures for their story’s background.

I have found the Wikipedia site “List of Bridge Failures” to be the only website that chronicles bridges falling down—no matter what the reason, and the site does this well. The website lists the location, type of bridge, date, reason or why the bridge came down, along with other pertinent information. Most of the entries have a link to additional information such as a video or still pictures. Having students access this site offers two important dimensions to the unit. First it will help students develop the setting and characters for their culminating project, and second students will use the incident they choose to create a 3-5 minute PowerPoint assisted speech presenting it to the class (Appendix One). Their product will be graded using the Pittsburgh Public School District’s speech rubric.

After completing the speech, the class will begin reading Wilder’s *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. During the reading, students will begin drafting their characters through a character cluster chart (Appendix Two), and writing their first short story draft. The unit will wind down with students participating in two peer review workshops followed by revision sessions, and conclude with a Gallery Walk in which all students’ work is displayed.

While this twenty-five (25) day unit was created for the eighth grade Creative Writing

Majors I teach, I believe with very little tweaking it would work well in most ninth through twelfth grade classrooms. The hardest section of the unit is Plato's "Allegory of the Caves," but by using the Internet website "Allegory of the Caves" by Benjamin Jowett at [http://www.bcg.com/about\\_bcg/si/sg/exhibits/1868/1098889073839.html](http://www.bcg.com/about_bcg/si/sg/exhibits/1868/1098889073839.html), the reading's difficulty is greatly lessened. Finally, I feel that the unit's work will be interesting, if not enjoyable, for students and teachers, too.

## **Rationale**

I feel this unit covers several glaring gaps and areas not well scaffolded in a Communications or English Language Arts classroom. The most glaring issue, to me, is that American novelist and playwright Thornton Wilder is ignored in the English Language Arts' curriculum. Wilder won one of the three Pulitzer Prizes awarded to him for *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. The book is the ideal work for this unit as it dares to question whether there is a reason or design in one's life and, thus, their death. The novella fascinatingly develops four of the five individuals caught on the San Luis bridge when it collapses as well as several other characters. The fifth victim appears to be ancillary to the general plot, but when analyzed, follows the pattern.

The crafting of the characters is, well, phenomenal and an important element for students to chronicle and learn from. What also makes the work a good teaching tool is the questioning of whether humans' lives and deaths are carefully orchestrated or happenstance. This philosophical dilemma is perfectly posed in the work as all five of the major characters are at a crossroad in their life, and philosophy is another area not dealt with very much, or at all, in the curriculum.

Philosophy is centered on general areas or problems through reasoned argument, and reasoned argument is a fundamental necessity in all writing. A fictional piece, particularly when striving for realistic fiction, must seem reasonable or possible. A way to easily access one of the foundations of philosophy, that is readily adaptable for the majority of middle school, is through an excerpt of Plato's *The Republic* titled "Allegory of the Caves." This piece offers an even greater dividend in that it pushes what one perceives and how they perceive it. In order to have students craft a story chronicling a victim before they become a victim, or what is termed a flashback, they will need to work backwards and with history. They will need to make a reality much like the prisoners in Plato's cave, who see only shadows of things and think the shadows are reality.

Finally, in structuring this unit I will follow the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning's Disciplinary Literacy Principal in English instructional pattern. This pattern has been in effect in the Pittsburgh Public Schools for the past two years, and has become fairly ingrained in all teachers, particularly ELA instructors.

## Background for Teaching

### Plato—Brief Biography

The reading section of this unit begins with an excerpt from Plato’s philosophical work, *The Republic*, titled “Allegory of the Caves.” As I mentioned previously, I believe this piece is very accessible and will stimulate students’ imagination.

In teaching “The Allegory of the Caves,” I would begin by having students brainstorm on what they know about Plato. After giving them a few moments in which they individually record their thoughts (QuickWrite), the entire class can share their responses. Their responses should be charted in order for students to add new thoughts and ideas at different times throughout the unit. After a whole group share, the following information on Plato and *The Republic* can be presented to the class. (Alternatively, students can be directed to review the sites listed in the “Additional Sources for Teachers and Students” section, and report on their findings. This can be accomplished individually or in small groups.) After the reading, the class can revisit the chart to add any new information.

Aristocles, or Plato as he is more commonly known, lived in Ancient Greece around 427 B.C. to 347 B.C. He is hailed as a Classical Greek philosopher, mathematician, writer, and founder of the Academus or Academy, the first institute of higher learning in the Western world.

Born in Athens, Plato’s parents were members of the ruling class. His mother was named Perictione, and his father—Ariston. Plato had three siblings—two brothers and one sister, and two step-brothers. Often he would use his family members’ names for characters in writing such as his older brother, Glaucon, who is in conversation with Socrates throughout “The Allegory of the Cave.” A popular legend associated with Plato’s early life tells of bees settling on his lips, but not stinging him. This was thought to foretell that he had been bestowed with the gift of discourse or rhetoric. As a youth, Plato would have been schooled in grammar, literature, philosophy, music, and athletics. It is believed he traveled to Egypt, Cyrene, and Italy for additional schooling.

Conflicting reports site Plato as receiving the nickname “Platon” meaning broad from his wrestling coach either due to his vigorous and full frame, or because of the breadth or wide range of his gift of speech. Other scholars believe that Plato never was originally named Aristocles (which was his grandfather’s name), and that the name was falsely applied to him in later ages. The conflict over Plato’s real name is symbolic of how unreliable 2,000 year old biographical information can be, and the problems with his work being recognized.

Plato was a pupil and ardent supporter of Socrates, a noted Athenian teacher and philosopher, who was put to death (through a dose of poison) because his views contradicted the politics of the ruling party. After Socrates' death, Plato wrote *The Republic* (sometimes counted as thirty-five dialogues) and at least 10 letters casting Socrates and a young Glaucon (remember Glaucon is the name of Plato's elder brother) in a series of dialogues or conversations expounding upon subjects ranging from justice, truth, beauty, the soul, and the need of the enlightened to enlighten others. Surprisingly, Plato only mentions himself one time in any of his writings, and it is only a blurb about having contributed money to aid in releasing Socrates from prison.

Plato died in his eightieth year (347 B.C.), but his Academy continued for almost a thousand more years (until 529 A.D.) It was closed by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I because he felt the school supported the spread of Christian faith.

In the Western World, Plato's works were unheard of until the mid-15th century when copies of his writings were given to George Gemistos Plethon. At the time, the Western World's knowledge of Plato was only that he was a teacher of Aristotle, who was considered to be "THE" Ancient Greek philosopher. Plato's work had never been studied outside of the Byzantine Empire. Plethon would lecture on Plato's works, but it would not be until the Renaissance that Plato's ideas would be widely embraced, and held responsible for the leaps in art and the sciences that characterized the time period. In later years, Plato's work in logic and mathematics would be credited with a similar surge in understanding and growth as well.

Plato's "Allegory of the Caves"

This excerpt from Plato's *The Republic* is also referred to as the "Theory of Forms." The section is heavily, and accurately, provided and dissected on numerous websites. One of the best is "Plato: Book VII of *The Republic*: The Allegory of the Cave" at <http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/platoscave.html>. I like this site as it provides a brief summary, the full excerpt, and an artist's interpretation of the cave.

The gist of the excerpt is that a group of people are chained against a wall inside a cave. The people can not see each other or anything except the wall in front of them. There is a fire behind the prisoners and objects are periodically placed before the fire so that their shadows are cast on the wall for the prisoners to see. The prisoners believe that the shadows are paraded before them, are all there is to reality. They never experience anything more about them (touch, hearing, seeing, smelling, or tasting). One prisoner escapes his/her chains and goes out of the cave. He/She experiences the real world, which at first he/she has trouble believing is the true reality.

The purpose in introducing Plato's excerpt is to allow students to begin thinking about reality—theirs and others. This will allow an exploration of what is reality, what is each

person's reality, and how each of us experiences it. Students will be able to open their imagination to the perception of others' reality, which is important when they try to capture the lives of others like Wilder does in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

Some general items to know about this excerpt are: it is told in dialogue form, which is how the majority of Plato's *The Republic* is written; Socrates is speaking with his pupil, Glaucon; and the piece has many interpretations including basis of knowledge, nature of justice and truth, need of the philosopher to enlighten others, the difficulties one experiences in facing a different belief than what they had understood, and examining the unexamined (Jowett 1). Depending upon the age of the students being taught, some of the interpretations may come to them. All will aid students in their discussions and later writings, but students do not need to make every connection. The purpose of the piece is to have students examine reality, the making of it for an individual, how we make it, and factors necessary. These are important characterization building points.

Questions that can be presented to students are: How do we define reality? How does this piece make one question what they assume they know? Is questioning our reality a good thing? How does Socrates create a setting for his story? How is his setting effective? How can we use the example of the reality of the prisoners in creating our stories? What other universal truths or metaphors can be interpreted through Socrates' story?

#### Background on Thornton Wilder

Playwright and novelist Wilder lived from April 17, 1897 to December 7, 1975. He was born in Madison, Wisconsin. His father, Amos Parker Wilder, was a United States diplomat and owner and editor of a newspaper. Wilder's mother was active in literary circles and a lover of poetry. He had one older brother, Amos, a professor at Harvard and poet, and three younger sisters of whom one was a noted writer—youngest sister Isabel, another a noted poet—Charlotte, who eventually had to be committed to an asylum, and the third a zoologist—Janet Wilder Dakin. Wilder had a twin brother who died at birth.

Like his father and older brother, Wilder attended Yale University, but he first served in the U.S. Coast Guard during World War I. In 1926 Wilder received an M.A. in French, began teaching at a small prep school, and his first novel, *The Cabala*, was published. In 1927 *The Bridge to San Luis Rey* was published and catapulted Wilder into critical and financial success. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for *The Bridge to San Luis Rey* in 1928. Wilder quit his job at the prep school, and began a life of writing and teaching in colleges from Hawaii to Harvard although throughout his life he considered himself a teacher first, and a writer second (Konkle).

In 1938 Wilder received a Pulitzer Prize in drama for his play *Our Town*, the work he is best known for today. During World War II, he served in the Army Air Force receiving several commendations and earning the rank of lieutenant colonel. A second Pulitzer Prize in drama

was awarded to him in 1942 for *The Skin of Our Teeth*.

Wilder would continue writing plays—a total of 30 of which many were one-acts, and an additional five novels. He also acted on stage in several of his plays most notably as the stage manager in *Our Town*. Wilder received many awards in his later life such as the German Book Trade Peace Prize in 1957, a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963, and a National Book Award for his second to last novel, *The Eighth Day*, but his works are not mainstays in most curriculums and many have gone out of print (Rogers 124). As Bruce Bawer notes for a 2008 article on Wilder titled, “An Impersonal Passion,” “Wilder was highly acclaimed and popular during his lifetime and his works are still read and performed, yet he does not generally receive the adulation of some of his contemporaries” (1). Outside of “Our Town,” there is also little academic criticism on his works as well.

For more information on Wilder, I suggest the gushy Thornton Wilder Society at <http://www.tcnj.edu/~wilder/> or the plainspoken Yale archives of his papers at <http://webtext.library.yale.edu/xml2html/beinecke.WILDER.nav.html>.

### *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*

For the past few decades, Wilder has been best remembered for his plays, and then only sparingly. In fact, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* had been out of print until then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair quoted the book’s last lines during a memorial ceremony for the victims of the Twin Towers Terrorist Act or 9/11. Ten days after 9/11, Blair said to the world “But soon we will die, and all memories of those five will have left Earth, and we ourselves shall be loved for a while and forgotten. But the love will have been enough; all those impulses of love return to the love that made them. Even memory is not necessary for love. There is a land of the living and a land of the dead, and the bridge is love. The only survival, the only meaning” (Jordan). While the last two lines’ punctuation is off, the words are exact. Within a few months, a new addition of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* was on the shelves. This is ironic as *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* is repeatedly credited with being “the progenitor of the modern disaster epic in literature and film-making, where a single disaster intertwines the victims, whose lives are then explored by means of flashbacks to events before the disaster” (“Thornton Wilder”). It took a world disaster to have the genre-originating work returned to print. Adding to the irony is that every time someone watches the towers collapse, she/he becomes a witness like Brother Juniper (Banks xvi).

The gist of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* is in 1714 between the Peruvian cities of Cuzco and Lima, an Italian monk by the name of Brother Juniper witnesses the collapse of a centuries old osier (rope) bridge with five people on it. The tragedy causes Brother Juniper to question why these five people, and why at this time. He ponders God’s plan in whether the people were killed as a reward or as a punishment. In an attempt to answer his questions, Brother Juniper begins a quest to examine the lives of the five victims, but really only four are well-drawn. The

fifth—Jaime, whether it is because he is a young boy or Wilder felt Jaime's association in the book was sufficient, speaks little and is mainly characterized through others. How the victims are intertwined in life and in death shows an amazing attention to detail providing further evidence of how well constructed the story line is.

The characters who die in the bridge collapse are: Marquesa de Montemayor—one of the richest women in Lima, Pepita—the Marquesa's maidservant and Abbess Dona Maria's heir apparent, Esteban—a young man, orphaned and whose twin brother recently perished, Uncle Pio—a manager/actor who raised and trained the noted actress Camila Perichole, and Jaime—Camila Perichole's and Viceroy Don Andres' son. The other characters are Brother Juniper, the Abbess Madre Maria del Pilar, Dona Clara—the Marquesa's daughter, Viceroy Don Andres—Jaime's father and Camila Perichole's lover, Conde Vicente d'Abuirre—son-in-law to the Marquesa and Dona Clara's husband, Camila Perichole—the famed Peruvian actress (a further note on Camila Perichole is her surname is in reference to the opera "La Perichole" about a poor Peruvian street singer), Captain Alvarado—a true legendary figure who saved Manuel from committing suicide, and Manuel—Esteban's twin.

The book is a scant 93 pages long and falls into the category of a novella due to a word count from between 17,500 to 40,000. The word novella is an Italian word meaning novelty, and was first applied to shorter works in the mid-14th century. In the 18th century, the Germans began applying the term to shorter works, too. Today the term is stamped on all such shorter novels.

Brother Juniper's witnessing of the bridge collapse (he witnesses it as he is approaching to cross), frames the story, but his role is tiny. His supposed crafting of the victims' lives in order to try to explain why they died takes over the work. A twist, though, is that the story is told not by Brother Juniper but by a third person omniscient narrator, who recounts what the Brother learned and much more. According to the narrator, all of Brother Juniper's records are burned along with him. Another interesting point is that every character's circle of influence touches all of the other characters in not the distance of "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon," but in a one degree or less. The fact that Brother Juniper's quest leaves no clear answer and causes his own death adds to the plume de force.

Reflecting on Brother Juniper's role, his quest, and the outcome of his quest, allows for a ready connection to Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." For many students the connection will probably be an easy transition and something they will enjoy exploring through discussion and example. If it isn't an easy transition or if you are teaching middle schools students, you may want to tread carefully. Allow the students to take the lead, and listen to them. Do not force explanations on them. Another strategy is to expand discussion times whether it is for whole and/or small group.

Questions that can be used to prompt understanding and discussion about the two readings: reality—how two people can experience the same thing, yet each have a different story or

experience; what is one's responsibility to others and to herself/himself, what can happen to someone who does not open themselves to new experiences or education, how can you explain that the appearance of something or someone is not always what is really transpired, and justice as in Brother Juniper's case in which he is burned to death for trying to uncover truth.

I could find little in the way of criticism on *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and even though this unit uses the work more as a creative writing springboard, I felt the need to include what I could find as students need to understand, extend, and appreciate the work in order to properly use it. Therefore, I have included the following notes followed by interpretative information.

First, the Perennial Classic edition I used for this unit includes an excellent "Foreward" by Russell Banks. Banks is a fiction and non-fiction writer and poet of over 20 novels, short story collections, and poetry books. He has received many accolades including the Best Short Story and O. Henry Awards. Two of his books, *Affliction* and *The Sweet Hereafter* have been made into movies (Wands). If you choose to have your students read Banks' "Foreward," I would wait until after they have completed the work as it will enhance their reading and just make better sense.

One proposal on *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* that Banks puts forth is that the work is a moral fable in the veins of John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. The work certainly meets the majority of a fable's characteristics—it is brief and does sermonize (moral part) at the end (remember Blair's use of it for the 9/11 memorial service), but there are no talking animals or inanimate objects and there is evidence that there really was such a bridge in Peru which collapsed around the early 1700s ("Afterward" 113). Two out of four traits, but Steinbeck and Hemingway did not use talking animals or objects and who is to say there was never such a pearl or a fish?

The "Thornton Wilder Society" quotes Wilder as crediting three sources for his inspiration in writing *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, but Banks only cites two of them. The Society quotes the sources as: a one-act play by the French playwright Prosper Merimee set in Latin America with a courtesan as a main character of which Wilder saw when he was at Yale, arguments with his father concerning the Puritan view of God as a strict "schoolmaster" versus a more compassionate being, and from the Bible the Gospel of Luke's reference to a tower that fell killing 18 people (the latter is what is not cited in Banks) (Konkle 1).

The aforementioned article by Bawer in the *Hudson Review* on Wilder and his works begins with Bawer expressing his consternation that Wilder is largely ignored in the literary canon. He uses his own education as an example. Bawer recalls that throughout his schooling—undergraduate to studying for his American Literature oral doctoral exams, Wilder's works were never included or mentioned. Bawer comes to the conclusion that the lack of attention toward Wilder are that his life was too commonplace (no major fights or drunken incidents ala Fitzgerald and Hemingway), Wilder's inability to project enough emotion into his works, and his unwavering aura of being an intelligent, and sometimes smug, narrator in all his works (501-

515). My impression is that while Bawer believes Wilder's works should be in the forefront of American literature, this will not happen because of Wilder's inability to morph into any other persona than Thornton Wilder.

On a critical analysis level, Bawer ruminates on the reasoning for Brother Juniper's need to investigate why God allowed the five individuals to be killed. He stresses that Brother Juniper's dilemma becomes one of did the disaster occur because the victims were good and this was their reward, or was it because they were too evil and needed punished? Bawer adds that Brother Juniper's quest doomed him from the start, and that most readers would all too soon figure this out as "the world is simply too complex, the human heart too mysterious, and the ultimate truths of the universe forever inscrutable" (505). If we thought Brother Juniper could answer the universal question of how the moment of our death is decided, then we could only end like Brother Juniper.

Finally, Bawer finds fault with Wilder's mood in the book. (Remember tone is the author's voice and mood is how the author makes the reader feel when reading.) While Banks classifies the mood as "antique" (xv), Bawer believes it is evidence of Wilder's prose feeling like "a little of this goes a long way, and for this reader, anyway, the book feels throughout like a self-conscious performance, a stylistic experiment—an attempt (and a brilliantly successful one, at that) to persuade middlebrow readers that they're encountering something literary and profound..." (505). Or simply that Wilder is unable to connect with his reader well (see above on Wilder's tone) because he is trying too hard to impress them. While this might be true, the greatest accomplishment of the book and the reason why it propels this unit is its vivid characterization.

The character that most haunts the reader is the Marquesa de Montemayor. Wilder modeled the Marquesa's letter writing after the French writer, Mme. de Sevigne (Wilder Society). de Sevigne was a 17th century French aristocrat who wrote letters recounting life at the court to her married daughter living in Provence. There is no indication that their relationship was strained like the Marquesa and her daughter, Dona Clara. Whether it is because the Marquesa's story is first or that her story, which another victim, Pepita, is part of, is crafted tightly (only 15 pages compared to Esteban's at 23 and Uncle Pio's at 27), her story, like her position in society, overshadows all. Through the Marquesa's story, we learn of all the other characters except the twins Esteban and Manuel and Captain Alvarado.

Wilder's unfolding of the characters begins with the Marquesa, a woman, and ends with two women, the Abbess and Dona Clara. The work in between is dominated by women as well. He also seems to enjoy presenting a dualism in the women to the point of creating two pairs of doppelgangers. A doppelganger is defined as a dark double of an individual and one of the pair usually has to be destroyed for the other to reach the next plateau or growth as an individual.

The clearest pair of doppelgangers is Camila Perichole and the Abbess. They are alike in wanting a legacy, but so different in what they want to be remembered for and their personal

morality. The Abbess wants someone to continue her work with the sick and poor—a fine goal, but she wants them to continue for the glory of the Abbess's name. Camila is an actress. Not an honorable profession for a woman in the 18th century even if she is considered the best. She wants fame and money, and to use love on her own terms. Neither achieves what they want; the way they want it, but Camila is the one who symbolically dies only to serve under the Abbess. Camila does so after she is stripped of her beauty and her children. I was left with the thought that Camila will carry on the Abbess's work for the goodness of the task and her soul, and that the Abbess had realized her error in trying to put herself above God and others.

The other possible doppelganger pairing is Pepita and Dona Clara. Pepita, an orphan, is the good one; she tries her best to aid the Marquesa as a dutiful servant. Confused and feeling abandoned by the Abbess, who secretly has chosen Pepita to be her replacement, Pepita is abused by the Marquesa and the other servants. Whereas Dona Clara hates her mother, the Marquesa, and treats her indifferently. Dona Clara even purposely marries a Spaniard so she would have to move to Spain. The Marquesa painstakingly crafts letters to Dona Clara, but Dona Clara pays little attention to them. Although she covets the gifts and money the Marquesa sends. Just as the Marquesa realizes the sacrifices Pepita has made in caring for her and wants to change things, both die in the bridge collapse. Only after the Marquesa is dead does Dona Clara realize her mother's love. This is evidenced in her need to come back to Peru, and as if to close the loop for both sets of doppelgangers, the Abbess speaks the final lines of the book. The lines are the moral lesson of the fable, and now further immortalized through Blair's historic use of them.

Esteban and Manuel's story follow the Marquesa's and Pepita's. Interestingly, Wilder includes a set of male twins in the work and he was a twin. While Wilder's twin brother died at birth, Manuel and Esteban are much older—young men in fact when death comes and all due to love. The boys are more like mentally joined Siamese twins sharing every thought, feeling, and experience. Wilder uses the typical stance that when one brother is hurt, the other feels the pain, and that they have their own secret language. Camila Perichole blunders into their lives, never really paying them much attention, and both fall in love with her. Love opens a gulf between them. Manuel removes himself from any dealings with Camila Perichole, but it doesn't heal the rift between them. He dies from a fever and Esteban is racked with sorrow and guilt. Like the Marquesa, Esteban undergoes a transformation the night before he is killed in the bridge caving in. He is about to kill himself due to his grief but reluctantly submits to being saved by Captain Alvarado. Alvarado convinces Esteban to start a new life on the seas. His moment of clarity, like the Marquesa's, is short-lived. Manuel dies the next morning crossing the bridge.

The Abbess also plays a huge role in Esteban and Manuel's story. They were orphaned soon after birth and she raised them in her monastery. Esteban and Manuel were favorites there, but as young men their attractiveness forced their removal from life at the monastery. Together they began living and fending for themselves in the town.

Uncle Pio and Jaime are the last two victims to have their story told. Jaime's role in this part of the story is very brief—briefer than Pepita's. The story centers on Camila Perichole more than Uncle Pio, but her story is his story. Until this section Camila, who is continually addressed not by Camila, but as “the Perichole” is not kindly thought of by a reader. She appears vain and vindictive, although still one-dimensional. Here a reader is given her whole story, and sentiment changes toward her. For all the fame and praise given to her, Camila suffered and continues to suffer for it. As a child, she was sold by her parents to Uncle Pio, and he began training her for the stage. He pushed her mentally and physically, but never cruelly. Their relationship swings from her being dependent on him, to him being dependent on her, to her needing him again. It is at the point she accepts Uncle Pio back to help that Camila is further traumatized. Camila turns Jaime over to Uncle Pio so that Jaime can return to Lima to be educated. Uncle Pio and Jaime step onto the bridge, and....

The stories of the victims end and an eleven page epilogue follows. Here is where Brother Juniper's character is best presented and the ends of the story are neatly concluded. The reader learns of the Brother's meticulous search for details and even how he tries to tally the worth of the victims through a spreadsheet in his unrelenting quest for an answer. Brother Juniper becomes a likeable, though naïve character. We also learn that the Brother never knew as much about the victims as the narrator has revealed to us about them. This is learned because the narrator pointedly informs us.

The tone of this section is different. It is more aloof, but the tone fits as an epilogue. First, Brother Juniper's life revolving around the disaster is explained. Then the survivors with their varying struggles to go on are highlighted. The most significant are Camila, the Abbess, and Dona Clara.

Camila comes to the Abbess to find solace and we soon learn has stayed to work in the monastery. Dona Clara also comes to the Abbess for solace. All three have changed. They appear humble, but the Abbess, who has clung to her faith and work, is the example we are left with. Her parting words, and the last words of the novella, are to Dona Clara. They are also to the reader who is searching for the meaning of life and death. The Abbess shows us that God is not the angry God or “schoolmaster” like Wilder's father thought, but one of love. We must look for love and keep love within us. Love must be our guide on this earth and it must be our legacy.

In the Perennial Classic 2003 edition of the work, there is an “Afterword” written by Tappan Wilder, who is the nephew and literary executor for Thornton Wilder. The “Afterword,” while a bit eclectic, traces the public reception and roots of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, as well as Thornton Wilder's life. At the end are two letters from former pupils and an essay by Thornton on Mme. de Sevigne. Most of the information contained I have chosen to quote from other sources in keeping with a true academic endeavor. I would not assign this for in-class reading, but highlight sections depending upon the level and interest of the students. Most certainly I would not assign the section on de Sevigne. The student letters are interesting and show how

Wilder had never been to Peru at the time he wrote the novella, but the setting never has a strong presence in the work. The characters truly take over the story.

There is also an “Acknowledgement” section following the “Afterword.” It is a very dry piece as like most extended thank yous. A four-page “About the Author” section follows, which is generally good, although it glosses over some thorny areas of his life while highlighting others.

### Planning for PowerPoint Speech on Bridges Falling Down

When students are assigned this portion of the unit, they should be given the assignment guide (see Appendix One) along with the Pittsburgh Public Schools’ Speaking and Listening Rubric available on the main website. This will allow them to have a clear expectation of what they will be graded upon.

Before students present their report, they should be instructed on proper PowerPoint building and presentation skills. If you use PowerPoints often in your teaching, review your strategies. There are also several websites that provide basic tips such as: “Microsoft PowerPoint 2000” introduction at <http://www.bcschools.net/staff/PowerPointHelp.htm> and The University of Rhode Island’s “PowerPoint Tutorial” at <http://homepage.cs.uri.edu/tutorials/csc101/powerpoint/ppt.html>. One caution—make sure the tutorial you choose is comparable to the PowerPoint edition students will be using.

For instruction in presenting, the following sites are helpful: “Six Minutes: Public Speaking and Presentation Skill Blog” at <http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/2008/02/27/speech-preparation-1-how-to-prepare-presentation/> and the University of Hawaii at Maui’s “Preparing Speeches” at [http://www.hawaii.edu/mauispeech/html/preparing\\_speeches.html](http://www.hawaii.edu/mauispeech/html/preparing_speeches.html).

Students should present the following information during their presentation: location, date, purpose of bridge, type of bridge (see note in next paragraph), reason, causalities, damage, and story—think beginning, middle, and end. For pictures they can use photos of the actual bridge, if available, pictures of the bridge type, and ones that elicit ideas of setting (these will help them in crafting their story).

Length of presentation depends upon class time available. I recommend limiting the speeches to four to five minutes with a clearly announced penalty for running over. While I seldom penalize a student for going a minute or two over, occasionally there is a student who will need reined in and it will help them realize their time or at least encourage practicing before presenting to prevent this from happening.

## Unit's Culminating Project—Writing a Disaster

Generally students love when they begin to write a story; it's in the middle of the story that they start falling apart. Thornton Wilder's example is good because it is not huge like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, but many will begin with a too ambition dream story. Some can pull it off, so do not discourage those that you think can. Do try to keep others more tightly reined.

I have attached a character charting (Appendix Two) for students to note how Wilder builds his characters. How characters are constructed in a story is one of the key lessons for this unit. Students should follow his example and learn how he builds through thoughts, action, and dialogue—all show.

The unit begins with their choosing a setting based upon a real bridge failure. Ideally the story they would like to create will follow. Try to have students center on only one to three main characters. The rule is short stories generally should have no more than six characters; although all writing rules can be broken by a good story. Also remind students that their piece needs to center on the characters before they die, not as the bridge collapses or after it has collapsed. This will help in avoiding scenes of blood and guts. Wilder only uses one line to describe the condition of the victims after the bridge failure. He writes, "The bodies of the victims were approximately collected and approximately separated from one another, and there was great searching of hearts in the beautiful city of Lima" (6). The emphasis should be on character and story, not gore.

Appendix Three is a story starter that some students will need and others not. The starter helps build characters, setting, and story. Points can be given for completion of the starter as well.

The following sites are helpful for students who have never attempted such an ambition undertaking before. They are: "Bruce Hale's How to Write a Story" at <http://www.brucehale.com/howto.htm> (good for younger students), "Advanced Fiction Writing.com" <http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/art/snowflake.php> (good for older students), and "Tips for Writing a Short Story" <http://www.write101.com/shortstory.htm> (a good general guide).

## Objectives

Students will be able to read and respond to the unique genre of a moral fable. They will learn the characteristics of a moral fable and its history. They will read independently and in small and large groups. Their responds will be oral through discussion groups and written in their Reader's/Writer's Notebook and other scholarly formats.

The unit includes a formal speech presentation that will follow the Pittsburgh Public School's rubric as well as state guidelines. This presentation will allow students to synthesize the information they have gathered while refining speaking skills.

Additionally, students will follow Pennsylvania State Standards in writing through informal and formal assignments with an emphasis on creative writing.

Note: Appendix Four has a complete listing of the Pennsylvania State Standards addressed in this unit using the soon-to-be old reference numbers. As of July 2009, the state is releasing a revised listing and adding an additional category.

### **Classroom Activities**

Day One—Access Prior Knowledge—Ask students to take a few minutes to write in their Reader's/Writer's Notebook on the following prompt, "What do you know and think about bridges?" Discuss as a class and record students responses on a chart. Introduce the unit—the works and the culminating project. Begin letting students explore the websites "Bridges and Tunnels of Pittsburgh" at: <http://pghbridges.com/> and About.com's "Architecture: Bridge Construction and Engineering" at: [http://architecture.about.com/od/bridgegallery/Bridge\\_Construction\\_and\\_Engineering.htm](http://architecture.about.com/od/bridgegallery/Bridge_Construction_and_Engineering.htm) To keep students accountable, a worksheet can be distributed to them which they must turn in for grading. The worksheet can have students list the Pittsburgh bridges they viewed along with type of bridge, purpose, and any history or trivia disclosed on the site as well as information on the architecture of bridges. The About.com site is easier for younger students. However, they will not find information on Pittsburgh bridges, so they will need to use the Pittsburgh site for that material.

Day Two—At the beginning of class, allow students to complete their investigation of the bridges of Pittsburgh. Leave ample time for students to discuss their findings. During the discussion time, bring up the prompt "What do you know and think about bridges? Add any new comments students may have. Homework—Distribute Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." Students are to pre-read for Day Three.

Day Three—Introduction to Plato's "Allegory of the Caves." You may want to begin class by Accessing Prior Knowledge on Plato. Have students write what they know about him in their notebooks. Discuss students' perceptions of Plato. Since the piece is short, the class can re-read his work. After reading, have students record the gist. Remember recording the gist includes listing characters and writing a brief summary of the piece. The summary can be written in bullet points or as a paragraph. Have students share their gist response in pairs/trios and then share as a whole group. Either as homework, or if still time, ask students to record three (3) significant moments (lines) in the text and explain why the moments they choose are significant (important for the understanding). Homework: Have students write a response to the following inquiry question—How can reality be so fluid?

Day Four—Open by showing one of the YouTube.com clips of “Allegory of the Caves.” My preference is the Insight22com one. After the clip, allow a few moments for students to discuss the interpretation. Homework Share—Have students share in pair/trios their significant moments and why they felt they were significant. Afterward share the significant moments as a whole group. Remember to have other students who picked the same quote share their reactions as well. Hold an inquiry based discussion on the question—How can reality be so fluid? Note: Additional prompts for this reading are listed in the “Background for Teaching” section. Homework—Distribute the PowerPoint Assignment Guide & Scoring Guide—Appendix One. For homework, students are to review it and in their notebook record two questions they have concerning it. They can also begin looking over the “List of Bridge Failure” website, if possible.

Day Five—Review homework questions on the PowerPoint Assignment. Check on students’ ability to create a PowerPoint. If needed, demonstrate to the class how to create one or have them use one of the tutorial sites. If possible, show the “List of Bridge Failure” website to the class. Allow for independent work. Homework—Students are to choose the collapsed/destroyed bridge site they will use for their PowerPoint, which should also be the setting for their story.

Day Six—Begin with a Quickwrite—students are to record in their notebooks their plans for productively using the class time for independent work. Share responses as a class. Exit slip—have students write on a note card the bridge site they are planning to use for their PowerPoint project. Homework—Students are to continue working on their project. Remind students that they will be presenting on Day Eight.

Day Seven—Independent work day. If need to keep students on task, use beginning Quickwrite from Day Six and for an exit slip ask students to record their response to the question—How can they be a good audience for tomorrow’s presentations?

Day Eight—Review with the class their responses to yesterday’s exit slip, if you did not assign the question, have students record their responses to it—How can they be a good audience for the presentations? Share responses. Begin presentations. Homework—Distribute story starter & have students begin creating their culminating project story using it. This is due on Day Ten.

Day Nine—Finish presentations. When completed, have students reflect on their learning by assigning the Stepback questions, “How did this work help me as a student? How did it help me toward completion of the unit’s final assignment? Have students share their responses. Homework—Students should complete their story starters for tomorrow’s class.

Day Ten—Homework share—have students share their story starters in their pair/trio groupings. Then have a few students share with the whole group. Distribute Wilder’s *The Bridge to San Luis Rey*. After students have looked at the book for a few minutes, ask them to write in their notebooks what they know about Wilder or the book. Share responses in a whole

group setting. Introduce information on what a fable is and that the book falls into that category. Provide basic background information on Wilder—make sure students record pertinent information in their notebooks—good for letting practice taking notes. Homework—students are to read pages 5-9 (opening of story). They are to record the gist and write what is Brother Juniper’s request?

Day Eleven—open with reading the first paragraph of the work (page 5). Then ask students to record in their notebook their thoughts on the mood of the work as revealed in the opening. Have students share their thoughts in pair/trio groupings followed by a whole group share. Make sure students understand that this is a framing device and what that means. Also the teacher may wish to record students’ thoughts on the mood, etc. on chart paper for later review. Have students share the gist for this section as a whole group. After sharing, students are to record in their notebooks three significant moments from this section. Allot class time to complete the work. Students share their responses in pairs/trios and then as a group. Finish class by discussing the merits of opening a story using a frame. Homework—Students are to read pages 13-20.

Day Twelve—Entry slip—ask students to write their thoughts, problems, or questions they have regarding the reading. Collect and share with class & answer any questions or address problems. Have students write the gist for pages 13-20. Share as a whole group. Students are to record two significant moments for the section. This can be done in pair/trio groupings. Share moments as a whole group. Distribute character chart. Have students begin working on it. They are to finish it for homework.

Day Thirteen—Homework Share—students are to share their responses to the character chart in pair/trios followed by a whole group discussion. The teacher may want to record their responses on chart paper or a blow-up of the chart (Appendix Two) for later reference. Afterward have students respond to the following prompt in their notebook—How can charting another writer’s building of a character aid in your writing? Allot only a few minutes for their response and then discuss as a group. Homework—complete reading the Marquesa’s section. If possible, allow students to begin reading in class either in small groups, independently, or as a class.

Day Fourteen—Homework Share—Have students record the gist for the section they read. Allot time. Share responses in pair/trios followed by whole group. Students are to record three (3) significant moments in their notebooks along with their reasoning for choosing the moments. Students are to share their moments in a whole group discussion. Homework—Students are to complete their character charts for the Marquesa.

Day Fifteen—Begin by having students share their character charts for the Marquesa in pair/trio groups. Then discuss as a group. Distribute another character chart and have students complete it for Pepita. Share responses. Homework—students are to response to the following Inquiry Question in their notebook—Do you think the Marquesa underwent any kind of

transformation? If so, what do you think occurred? If not, why not? Remember students should use text support in responding to an inquiry question.

Day Sixteen—Host an Inquiry Discussion on the questions-- Do you think the Marquesa underwent any kind of transformation? If so, what do you think occurred? If not, why not? Following the discussion, begin reading the “Esteban” section. Homework—students are to read pages 41-to the break on page 52. Reading can be independently, as a whole group, in small groups, or a mixture of two or three. If finish reading in class, assign writing the gist for this section for homework instead.

Day Seventeen—Assign writing gist if did not for Day Sixteen. Have students share the gist in pair/trios followed by whole group. Assign recording two significant moments for the section. This can be accomplished in pair/trio groupings or independently. Share significant moments. Distribute two character charts for students—one for Esteban and the other for Manuel. Homework—students are to complete the character charts.

Day Eighteen—Homework Share—students are to share their responses to the character charting of Esteban and Manuel in pair/trio groups followed by whole group. Ask students to respond in their notebook to the following questions—What personality traits can only be ascribed to Esteban and to Manuel? Are they really that alike? Discuss as a group. Begin reading last part of “Esteban” section—pages 52-64. Students are to finish for homework and add any new information on the characterization of Esteban and Manuel to their papers..

Day Nineteen—Begin by having students record the gist for the last of the “Esteban” section. This can be done in pair/trio groupings or independently. Share as a whole group. Have students record two (2) significant moments for the section along with their reasoning why the moments are important to the story. Share as a whole class. Review any new information students may have discovered on Esteban and Manuel. Homework—Have students respond in their notebooks to the following question—Do you feel Esteban had undergone any type of change before he perished? Why or why not? Also ask students to review their story starters and make sure they bring them for tomorrow’s class.

Day Twenty—Homework Share—Students can share their responses first in pair/trios and then as a whole group. Pause in reading. Review methods of writing a short story. This can be done through first brainstorming followed by reviewing one of the websites or distributing a printout of one of the sites. Have students look over their story starters and make any additions or changes. Students can proceed to outlining and drafting, if possible. Homework—students are to continue working on their outlining or drafting. Tell students they will need to have five pages of their story written by Day Twenty-two.

Day Twenty-one—Entry slip—have students note the work they have accomplished on their story and any questions they have in their notebooks or on an index card. Review their responses either by collecting the index cards and reading or having students discuss them as a

group. Begin reading the final section of the book, “Uncle Pio” pages 67-81 stop at the end of the first paragraph with the line “...anecdotes of Brantome and the divine Aretino.” Students are to record the gist for this section. Share the gist as a group. Homework—Students are to record two significant moments for this section along with their reasoning as to why they are important.

Day Twenty-two—Homework Check—First check students’ progress with their stories. This can be done by simply performing a homework check of each students’ work—time consuming, but necessary in order to keep them on task. This check can be assigned grading points to further insure students have completed the assigned five pages. Homework Share--Students are to share their significant moments in pairs/trios followed by whole group discussion. Begin reading the last part of this section—pages 81-94. When complete, have students write the gist for it. This can be accomplished in pair/trio groups followed by whole group discussion. Homework—students are to record two significant moments for this section of the reading. Remind them to continue working on their stories.

Day Twenty-three—Homework Share—Have students share their significant moments in pairs/trios followed by a whole group discussion. Ask students to respond in their notebooks to the following prompt, “Using evidence from the text, who do you feel underwent a transformation before that fateful moment on the bridge—Uncle Pio or Camila? Both? Why or why not?” Allot time to respond and then have a group discussion. Homework—Students are to read the final section of the book titled “Perhaps an Intention.” After reading it, they are to record their thoughts on how it works as a frame to the story and why or why not is it successful?

Day Twenty-four—Homework Share—Have students respond to the prompt in pair/trios followed by whole group. After the whole group discussion, have students record the gist for it. Share the gist in whole group discussion. Students are to return to the text and record three significant moments in their notebooks along with their reasoning as to why they are significant. This can be done in pair/trio groupings. Share the significant moments with the whole group. Homework—Students are to answer the following prompt in their notebook—Citing evidence from the text—Do you think Brother Juniper’s quest was completed? (Note: May need to review what his quest was.)

Day Twenty-five—Homework Share—Have students respond to the following homework prompt—Do you think Brother Juniper’s quest was completed? in pair/trios followed by whole group discussion. If time, allow students to transition into working on their stories. Remind them that on Day Twenty-eight, they need to have a draft for peer review.

Day Twenty-six—Independent work on culminating story. Assist students as needed.

Day Twenty-seven—Independent work on culminating story. Assist students as needed.

Day Twenty-eight—Students are to exchange their story draft with a partner and complete a Peer Review Form (Appendix Five) for it. All papers need to be returned by the end of the class to their writer along with a review form. Note: Points can be assigned for the completed peer review forms.

Day Twenty-nine—Students prepare final copy of paper. Assist students as needed.

Day Thirty—Students prepare final copy of paper. Assist students as needed. Prepare for Gallery Walk—hang papers for display.

Day Thirty-one—Gallery Walk—distribute Gallery Walk Form (Appendix Seven) to students. Each student is to read two students' stories—excluding best friends and any work they read as part of the peer review assignment.

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Alchin, L.K. "Nursery Rhymes Lyrics and Origin" 16 November 2007 16 May 2009 <<http://www.rhymes.org.uk/index.htm>>

A fun site in which one can discover the origins and check lyrics of approximately 100 nursery rhymes.

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Cridlebaugh, Bruce S. "Bridges and Tunnels of Allegheny County and Pittsburgh, PA." 14 June 2009. 26 June 2009. <<http://pghbridges.com/index.htm>>.

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Coffee table sized book of bridges that have more than connected areas. Many of the bridges are innovative and architectural gems.

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<<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ei7LqbYb8M>>>.

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<[http://www.bcg.com/about\\_bcg/si/sg/exhibits/1868/1098889073839.html](http://www.bcg.com/about_bcg/si/sg/exhibits/1868/1098889073839.html)>.

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Nephew of Thornton Wilder discusses Thornton Wilder's life, inspiration, and history of the novella.

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<<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/allegory.html>>.

Kemerling, Garth. "Plato." 9 August 2006 16 May 2009  
<http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/plat.htm>

Robinson, Dave and Groves, Judy. *Introducing Plato*. New York: Icon Books, 2000.

A graphic novel style work that explains the basic theories and philosophies of Plato that heavily relies on illustrations. Wonderful way to introduce Plato to students of any age or level.

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## Appendix One

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **The Story of a Bridge Collapse**

#### **Speech with PowerPoint Assignment Guide**

We have discussed why bridges are built and what happens to areas that are connected by a bridge. Now we are going to begin looking at what happens when a bridge collapses either due to forces of nature or man. Your work for this assignment will ideally become the setting for your culminating project story.

The first step in successfully completing this assignment is to investigate the Wikipedia website “List of Bridge Failures” at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:Cite&page=List\\_of\\_bridge\\_failures&id=273348897](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:Cite&page=List_of_bridge_failures&id=273348897)

Or at the Google search bar type in (in quotes) “List of Bridge Failures”

Review the site; it is quite interactive as there are hyperlinks to pictures, further information, and even video.

The second step is to pick one (1) bridge disaster and present it to the class. Your presentation must have the following: title slide, location, date, purpose of bridge, type of bridge (see note in next paragraph), reason, causalities, damage, and story—think beginning, middle, and end, and an ending slide listing all websites used.

For pictures they can use photos of the actual bridge, if available, pictures of the bridge type, and ones that elicit ideas of setting (these will help them in crafting their story).

Total number of slides students have in their presentations—eight (8)

My PowerPoint presentation due date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Scoring Guide for Bridge PowerPoint

**Presentation Organization** (Rank from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest award of points.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Contains the assigned number of slides
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has a title slide
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has an ending slide with websites used listed

### Flow of Presentation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Definite flow from one slide to the next
- \_\_\_\_\_ Information is arranged logically and interestingly
- \_\_\_\_\_ PowerPoint enhanced presentation, did not take it over

### Use of Media

- \_\_\_\_\_ Slides are effectively arranged
- \_\_\_\_\_ Images interesting and documented subject well
- \_\_\_\_\_ Slides well labeled

### Presentation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Speaker presented information well
- \_\_\_\_\_ Voice projection and cadence good (no umms, likes, or gum chewing, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Speaker ready when turn came

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total Amount Points**

**Additional comments:**

Appendix Two

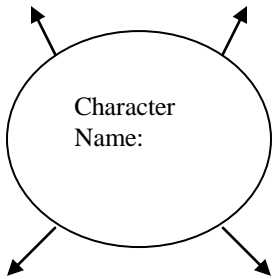
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Character Chart**

There are four (4) ways to make a character come alive to a reader. They are: 1. through physical description—from color of hair and eyes to what the character likes to wear, 2. the character’s thoughts, speech, feelings, and actions, 3. the way other characters think, act towards, express feelings, and talk about a character, and 4. direct comments about a character from the narrator. Fill in the graph below with textual references to the character you are charting and then make a decision about what type of individual they appear to be.

1. Physical description—eyes, hair, dress, etc.

2. The character’s thoughts, speech, feelings, & actions.



3. Other Characters think, act towards, express feelings, & talk about the character

4. Direct comments about the character from the narrator

**Analysis:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix Three

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Story Starter**

**Bridge Site Using in Story:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title Idea:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Setting Information:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The story line I would like to use is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Story point-of-view will be: \_\_\_\_\_

**Characters**

Main or protagonist—Remember the four ways to make your characters come alive.

**Physical Description:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How or what other characters will feel or say about this character \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What thoughts, feelings, etc. do you want the character to express? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Other characters will be:**

Character #2—give physical, what others will say/feel about them, what thoughts, feelings, etc. do you want the character to express?

---

**Story Starter (cont.)**

Character #3—give physical, what others will say/feel about them, what thoughts, feelings, etc. do you want the character to express?

---

Character #4—give physical, what others will say/feel about them, what thoughts, feelings, etc. do you want the character to express?

---

Character #5—give physical, what others will say/feel about them, what thoughts, feelings, etc. do you want the character to express?

---

Character #6—give physical, what others will say/feel about them, what thoughts, feelings, etc. do you want the character to express?

---

Problems/Conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Rising Action: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Other information I would like to use: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix Four

### Pennsylvania State Standards Used in This Unit

#### Reading\*

1.1.8.G Demonstrate after reading understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text, including public documents.

- Make, and support with evidence, assertions about texts.
- Compare and contrast texts using themes, settings, characters and ideas.
- Make extensions to related ideas, topics or information.
- Describe the context of a document.
- Analyze the positions, arguments and evidence in public documents.

1.2.8.C Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre

1.3.8.A Read and understand works of literature.

1.3.8.B Analyze the use of literary elements by an author including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone and style.

1.3.8.F Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.

#### Writing\*

1.4.8.A Write short stories, poems and plays.

- **Apply** varying organizational methods.
- Use relevant illustrations.
- Utilize dialogue.
- Apply literary conflict.
- Include literary elements

1.5.8. D Write with an understanding of the stylistic aspects of composition.

- Use different types and lengths of sentences.
- Use tone and voice through the use of precise language.

1.5.8.E Revise writing after rethinking logic of organization and rechecking central idea, content, paragraph development, level of detail, style, tone and word choice.

1.5.8.F Edit writing using the conventions of language.

- Spell common, frequently used words correctly.

- Use capital letters correctly.
- Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses).
- Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
- Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

\*All standards are for 8th grade.

## **Pennsylvania State Standards Used in This Unit (cont.)**

### **Speaking and Listening\***

#### 1.6.8.A Listen to others.

- Ask probing questions.
- Analyze information, ideas and opinions to determine relevancy.
- Take notes when needed.

#### 1.6.8.C Speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations.

- Use complete sentences.
- Pronounce words correctly.
- Adjust volume to purpose and audience.
- Adjust pace to convey meaning.
- Add stress (emphasis) and inflection to enhance meaning.

#### 1.6.8.D Contribute to discussions.

- Ask relevant, probing questions.
- Respond with relevant information, ideas or reasons in support of opinions expressed.
- Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
- Adjust tone and involvement to encourage equitable participation.
- Clarify, illustrate or expand on a response when asked.
- Present support for opinions.
- Paraphrase and summarize, when prompted.

#### 1.6.8.E Contribute to discussions.

- Ask relevant, probing questions.
- Respond with relevant information, ideas or reasons in support of opinions expressed.
- Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
- Adjust tone and involvement to encourage equitable participation.
- Clarify, illustrate or expand on a response when asked.
- Present support for opinions.
- Paraphrase and summarize, when prompted.

#### 1.6.8.F Use media for learning purposes.

- Use various forms of media to elicit information, to make a student presentation and to complete class assignments and projects.
- Evaluate the role of media in focusing attention and forming opinions.
- Create a multi-media (e.g., film, music, computer-graphic) presentation for display or transmission that demonstrates an understanding of a specific topic or issue or teaches others about it.

\*All standards are for 8th grade.

## Appendix Five

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Peer Review Form

Please complete all questions as fully as possible. The classmate, whose draft you review, must sign that they have read your comments as well. This form must be returned to the writer whose draft you review by the end of the class.

1. Classmate whose draft I am reviewing is \_\_\_\_\_  
name

#### Protagonist

A. Protagonist's name and is it reasonable? \_\_\_\_\_

B. General characteristics of protagonist: \_\_\_\_\_  
Things such as age, hair & eye color, dress, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Any other background? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Other Characters

A. Are there additional characters? \_\_\_\_\_  
number--remember a short story should not have more than 6 characters

B. Explain if the characters or a character seems interesting? Mundane? \_\_\_\_\_

---

C. What else can you say about the characters? \_\_\_\_\_

---

### Peer Review Form (cont.)

#### Setting

A. What information is there concerning the specific bridge setting? \_\_\_\_\_

---

B. Does this seem realistic? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

---

#### Story

A. What is the main conflict of the story? \_\_\_\_\_

---

B. Does this seem interesting enough for a story? Explain why or why not. \_\_\_\_\_

---

C. How is the story going to begin? \_\_\_\_\_

---

D. Resolution or end--What does the writer propose? \_\_\_\_\_

---

E. Overall--what elements of the story seem realistic? \_\_\_\_\_

---

F. Finally, how can the writer improve their story? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**Sign-off:** I have reviewed this form & understand the feedback \_\_\_\_\_  
signature of writer

Appendix Six

### **Culminating Project Assignment Guide**

As you read Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, you charted the characters to see how he created such vivid personalities through flashbacks into their lives. His characters are more vibrant than the exotic setting of Peru, and how the reader begins to care about them makes the bridge collapse tragic. Remember though, the bridge collapse is not the center of the work. In this assignment, you will try to duplicate Wilder's story writing in your story of a bridge falling down.

#### General Assignment Guidelines

1. Your story should have a minimum word count of 1,250 words.
2. You should have at least one (1) draft that is submitted with your final copy.
3. All stories are to be peer reviewed by at least one other student and a Peer Review Form (Appendix Five) must be submitted with your final copy.
4. Font size must be no larger than 12 pt.
5. All work must be double spaced.
6. Your story must revolve around a bridge coming down whether it is through collapse, being torn down, destroyed in a war, etc.

7. Your characters need not die, but the bridge's coming down must signal the climax as it does in Wilder's story.

8. For grading purposes, the Pittsburgh Public Schools Narrative rubric will be used.

9. On \_\_\_\_\_ a draft of at least five (5) pages is due.

10. On \_\_\_\_\_ the final copy of the story is due.

Note: All stories will be displayed for a gallery walk on \_\_\_\_\_.  
If your story is not displayed, the penalty is one letter grade reduction.

## Appendix Seven

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Gallery Walk Report

Today's Gallery Walk is divided into two (2) sections. You will read two of your classmates' short stories and comment on each of them using this form. After reading their stories and commenting, take a few minutes and respond to the reflection question. This form must be complete for full assignment credit.

#### Short Story Review #One

1. Name of classmate's story read \_\_\_\_\_

Story's strength (must name at least two areas):

I. \_\_\_\_\_

II. \_\_\_\_\_

III. \_\_\_\_\_

Area writer can grow (suggest at least one way):

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Overall, I felt the effort was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**Short Story Review #Two**

1. Name of classmate's story read \_\_\_\_\_

Story's strength (must name at least two areas):

I. \_\_\_\_\_

II. \_\_\_\_\_

III. \_\_\_\_\_

**Gallery Walk Report (cont.)**

**Short Story Review #Two (cont.)**

Area writer can grow (suggest at least one way):

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Overall, I felt the effort was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part Three—Reflection**

Respond in full sentence and at least one (1) complete paragraph.

My thoughts on this unit's work—(Think about viewing other students' work, opportunity to peer review, how do you feel your work compared, how did others' work compare to yours, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

