In order for a house to stand, it must be securely framed. Without that inner structure, the house would collapse. So too with a book. In order for a book to stay in our minds, to “become our own” as we carefully read and learn, we need to form a structure on which to build our understanding. QTC’s are one method of forming that structure.

** quotes, things (objects, like props in a play,) characters: qtc’s**

As we read, making lists of QTC’s builds our familiarity with the book until we feel “at home” and the book has become “ours.” Using the method of QTC’s helps reinforce the students highlighting and note-taking skills. I use the following steps to cover most English skills, steps which may, of course, be adapted however a teacher pleases.

**Step 1:**
Outside of class, students read the book all the way through once. Summer reading list, perhaps. Teacher may make up a brief fact quiz (graded or not) for the beginning of the study so that students remember the essentials of character, place, time, events.

**Step 2:**
Reread slowly, dividing the book into sections (chapters, dated entries, etc.) to be assigned as homework.

I begin by reading the first sections out loud in class, stopping frequently to ask questions. Who/what/when/where/why? What **characters** are introduced? Who are they? How does the author describe that character? What words are used? What’s our impression of the character? What’s going on? What’s the setting? (Time/place/mood?) Are there specific **things** (dance, stars, rafts, the Devil’s Bathtub in the first section of Alice Bliss) which might be important to highlight in that section? Do these things appear later? “Let’s keep watch.” Are there **quotes** that might be important? (p.1 “Come home when the dance is done.”) Who says that? To whom? Why might that be important to the book as a whole? Hint: Are there other dances? Compare and contrast.

Often, I’ve found that students over-highlight, unsure at first how to catch information in single words rather than in whole paragraphs; therefore, I guide them, assuring them that their choice of QTC’s might not be the same as others’ but for the first few chapters, together we can choose what we think important. After each section, I ask students to pick a few of their highlighted words and copy them and the page numbers as notes in the blank space margin at the beginning or end of that section: 2-3 **quotes**, 2-3 **things**, new characters’ names with one or two word descriptions.

These brief synoptic notes at beginning or end of sections help students recall and connect the development of the story and important symbols/leitmotifs and themes.

**Step 3:**
After I’ve guided the students though the first few sections by reading aloud and highlighting in class, students prepare the next section at home (highlight/margin notes) and then individually take turns reading aloud and leading class discussion.

**Step 4:**
For the next few sections, students answer (by writing full sentences) a prepared question sheet based on the QTC’s of that section. This sheet is given as homework before class discussion. At the beginning of that next class, these papers are turned in for grading on content and form so both teacher and student can assess students’ progress in writing ability. Then the students can quiz each other (or the teacher) on the details they’ve discovered. Kids love this part! Together they choose which details to list in the margins. Choices may differ. YAY! The discussion reinforces learning.

**Step 5:**
Based on highlights, each student prepares a question sheet for each of a few more sections, with answers to those questions written on the back of the paper. In groups, students quiz each other on those questions. Perhaps students can practice peer editing on their writing before their papers are passed in.
Step 6:

Now they’re on their own, highlighting and note-taking in the margins for the remainder of the sections. Class discussion guides awareness of the book’s themes, referring to previous sections whenever applicable. I’ve found students “AHA!” discoveries often teaching me!

Throughout the study, teachers may give quizzes and tests as needed. As a culminating activity, I assign a project due the day before the final test. Students squawk until they realize the process of creating their project helps them study for the test which includes:

1. Short answer identification questions such as match the character with the action or who said a particular quote to whom. Usually, I give a list of characters to jog students’ memories.
2. A list of events to put in chronological order.
3. Students’ choice of one or two quotes or Things from the first part of the test as an essay to show the significance of the QT to the book as a whole.
4. IF I’ve actually managed to teach grammar based on sentences from the book, I might include a few grammar questions on identifying parts of speech from other sentences, or editing a short passage that I’ve purposely and egregiously rewritten.)

SAMPLE PROJECT

Alice Bliss has 306 pages. I might divide these by length into monthly sections (for instance: pp.1-3, 3-13, 13-26, 27-50, 50-70 and so on.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name______________________________</th>
<th>ALICE BLISS project</th>
<th>Date due______________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In _____ separate parts, each part representing a specific section, design a project that visually portrays important QTC’s and leitmotifs from our reading of Alice Bliss. Your project should include each of the following:

Checklist:

1. ___ book title (underlined or in italics) and author’s name: 10 pts.
2. ___ # (however many the teacher has assigned) distinct parts, each part representing a distinct chapter, in order. (part 1=first section of book, part 2= second section, etc.): 10 pts.
3. ___ numbers on each of the parts: 5 pts.
4. ___ pictures, drawings, magazine photos, colorful representations of each chapter’s important events: 20 pts.
5. ___ important quotes with page #s for each quote: 10 pts.
6. ___ careful proofreading for spelling and grammar: 20 pts.
7. ___ use of Magic Markers, pens, computer, paints, feathers, glitter, glue, etc. but no pencil, please! 10 pts.
8. ___ name of the artist (That’s YOU!) clearly visible: 5 pts.
9. ___ general neatness and organization. (Is your project easy to see, easy to read, easy to display?): 10 pts.

You may make a poster, mobile, or any other design, as long as all sections are clearly visible at a glance. Your project will be both outline and literary review, a visual summary to teach others what you have learned. Now it’s your turn to become the teacher. Have fun!
SAMPLE SYLLABUS/ SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT

*Through the Looking Glass*

A Senior Elective at Malden High School, Malden, Massachusetts

Created by Robin Doherty, Jim Valente and Connie Halks

How do the environments that we grow up in affect our perspectives? How does an individual resist culture and tradition? How can having multiple perspectives on a situation allow us to gain a deeper understanding? What is the role of heritage and culture on a person’s perspective? How does a person’s perception influence his or her understanding of a text? Why is it important to try to see ideas from another person’s perspective? How does one recognize author’s bias? What price is paid by resisting? What does the author want us to see? What new insights have been generated?

In this course we will explore these questions through different literary genres (i.e. novels, short stories, and nonfiction). Quarterly topic titles include Global Awareness, War, Gender and Identity, and Fantasy as a Reflection of Reality.

The goal is to help students attend to an author’s purpose, appreciating stories as providing the “looking glass” to see the lives of others and simultaneously for better self-reflection.

Some texts will include *Things Fall Apart, A Thousand Splendid Suns, Hamlet, The Stranger,* and *Alice Bliss.*

In addition to reading and responding to these novels as a class, students will read and discuss related nonfiction and additional works for independent reading and book clubs. There will also be a cinema component to the class, to include films ranging from *Slumdog Millionaire, Hotel Rwanda,* *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Matrix.*

Writing assignments will include the senior essay, literary analysis, creative projects, the use of “new media” and the completion of the senior research paper and writing portfolio. Students wishing to acquire honors level credit for the course will complete additional readings and critical review of selected authors’ work.

**A Sample Assignment for *Alice Bliss***:

After reading *Alice Bliss,* you will assume one of the following character’s perspective: Alice, Angie, Matt, or Ellie and write an epilogue to the story, from your character’s perspective. The epilogue may begin right where the book ends, a year after, five years after, etc., but you must assume the role of your character. In order to really know the in and outs of your character, you will need to track them throughout the text. This may be in the form of post-its, journal entries, taking notes, whatever way works. Your epilogue must contain textual evidence and primary sources.
“My students took to Alice Bliss like no other novel they’ve read in my class. They were quick to relate to the characters, eager to voice their opinions about the themes explored, and determined to understand what it is like for those dealing with such a moving subject matter. They gained a new perspective on growing up in a world that is always challenging—even in ways they never imagined possible.”
—Jim Valente, Malden High School, Malden, MA

“In Alice Bliss, Laura Harrington creates a captivating portrait of a family and a town infused with unexpressed grief from losses in war, conveyed with precision through Alice’s own adolescent perspective. Middle and high school students will connect to Alice’s realistic portrayal of strength, confusion, passion and love in this timeless local and global setting. Alice Bliss is the ideal anchor book for interdisciplinary studies, grades 6 through 12.”
—Ann Mechem Ziergiebel, Adolescent Education and Leadership Department, Salem State University

“Our school adopted Alice Bliss as the All-School Read last summer because of its female protagonist, its relevance to current social and political issues, and its sensitivity to the travails of contemporary families.”
—Tim Averill, Waring School, Beverly, MA

“I wanted my students to read Alice Bliss because I was so impressed with Harrington’s writing. I also wanted to find a book where the central character is a teenage girl. My students loved the book. They think I should teach it every year. It is a great book for creative writing classes or English classes. In my classroom, we talked about everything from how to write dialogue to why America went to war with Iraq. Harrington engages readers at the same time that she has so much to teach all of us.”
—Charlotte Gordon, Endicott College, Beverly, MA, author of Mistress Bradstreet and The Woman Who Named God

“My students immediately fell in love with Alice Bliss and her entire family; they are relatable, comical, and welcoming. This is the first text they have read that focuses on those left behind during war, an experience so close to them, as many know someone in the military or have relatives serving. Alice Bliss allowed my students to explore another perspective on war, a family’s perspective, one that is also important, but often left out. Alice Bliss fosters insightful, real world classroom discussions. The story is immersed with rich literary devices, allowing students to develop their critical thinking skills. Often, it is difficult to emotionally engage both male and female students; however, the story does just that.”
—Robin Doherty, Malden High School, Malden, MA

“What I liked best about teaching Alice Bliss was that it was a mirror that allowed my students to look at their own lives, their relations with their parents and peers, as well as with all the issues of growing up, in a real way. The book is close enough to their own experiences to resonate and also just far enough away to give them both perspective and safety.”
—James Watras, Waring School, Beverly, MA
Unit of Instruction: Adolescent Ways of Seeing/Interacting with the World
Lesson Title: *Alice Bliss*, by Laura Harrington—Left behind or leaving others bind?

**Step 1: Desired Results**

*Standards, benchmarks, other objectives as needed (e.g., IEP)—What should students know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the lesson?*

*Identify: Learner Outcomes, Standards*

Common Core State Standards (Massachusetts Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy, 2011): promote writing for certain purposes; W8.1—writing arguments; W8.2—writing informative/explanatory texts; W8.3—writing narratives; and, W8.6—using technology to produce and publish individual or shared writing products

*Learner Outcomes: students will create arguments, explanations, and narratives to be published in volumes, “Left Bind” and “Leaving Others Bind” through examination of Alice’s experiences*

**Step 2: Assessment Evidence**

*Performance task—What will students do to show what they have learned?*

During all day Literacy Jam, students will perform published works along with adaptations of Alice Bliss’ narratives and arguments: Performance Task Prompts (GRASPS): *Goal*—students’ task is author, actor; *Role*—students’ job is to write, revised peer edit and publish arguments, explanations, and narratives; *Audience*—students’ need to convince peers, community and family members; *Situation*—students’ challenge is to demonstrate publications, “Left Bind” and “Leaving others Bind”; *Product*—students’ will create and design publications; and, *Success*—students’ assessment tool is expected genre structures and register features from Common Core State Standards

**Step 3: Learning Plan**

*Learning activities (step by step from start to finish, detailed enough for another teacher to follow)*

- Read *Alice Bliss* for evidence of “left bind” and “leaving others bind” (page 163)
- Writing Workshop: four writing genres—recount, narrative, explanation, argument
- Explore sensory images from the text through portraiture, watercolor, new literacies (emerging technologies) and collage
- Locate text sets for differentiation, using the lenses of: perspective of being left bind and leaving others bind
- Empathize with another worldview from someone “left bind”
- Synthesize from diverse media to form new meanings of “left” and “leaving”
- Evaluate sources, art, digital images and student writing about the value and trauma of “being left” and “leaving others”
- Create student volumes of art and writing for publication

**Step 4: Reflection**

*What happened during my lesson? What did my students learn? How do I know? What did I learn? How will I improve my lesson next time?*

Adapted from Tomlinson and McTighe, Integrating Differentiated Instruction + Understanding by Design, ASCD, 2006.