

“Preface to a *Call to Arms*” and “A Madman’s Diary”
by Lu Xun

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10th Grade
Non-Western World Literature
Time requirement: Three 90 min. periods detailed and two optional lessons provided

1. *Summary*

“Preface to a *Call to Arms*”: In this first person narrative essay, Lu Xun recounts the experiences that led him to concentrate his academic efforts in a literary fashion rather than as a physician. He clarifies his intent of shifting from medicine (healing the body) to literature (healing the mind). This work is also riddled with doubt, pessimism, and disillusionment. Lu Xun fears that his efforts will work to inspire a desire for change in those that have no power to control their ultimate destinies.

“A Madman’s Diary” begins with an objective narrator who claims to be childhood friends with two brothers; the younger of these two brothers has recently been treated for madness. During a visit between the narrator and the elder brother, the narrator is given a copy of the younger brother’s diary. The remainder of the tale is told in diary-entry form through the first person perspective of the younger brother, the “madman” as self-proclaimed in the diary’s title. The reader is told that the madman has since been cured and has recently taken “an official post.”

The diary entries are numbered consecutively, and with each entry, the narrator’s paranoia becomes further defined. He records his impression that all of those around him are involved in some type of conspiracy, evident in their ominous stares. Initially, the madman claims to have no fear toward these nefarious glances; however, over time, he becomes increasingly fearful of those around him, including his own brother.

Eventually, the narrator surmises that everyone, his doctor and brother included, are out to consume him. As a means of proving his theory of rampant cannibalism, the narrator turns to several recent encounters he has had, local stories he has heard, and even classical Chinese literatures and practices that encourage cannibalism.

By the end of the diary, the madman has accepted his diabolical fate and surrenders himself to the likelihood of being eaten. In a final burst of grief, the narrator attributes the death of his sister during childhood to cannibalism, fearing that he also ate the meat of his sister and that the mother was either powerless in the situation or unaware of what was happening.

Despite the fact that the reader is told that the madman has been cured and assimilated, there is no sign of his recovery in the diary itself. His last entry ends in a hope that “perhaps there are still children who haven’t eaten men?” and a desperate plea to “save the children” (Lu Xun, “A Madman’s Diary” 15).

2. *Historical/Literary Context*

Historical Context of “A Madman’s Diary” (also translated as: “Diary of a Madman”):

After many decades of turmoil under foreign oppression, China entered the twentieth century in rebellion. Dr. Roderick MacFarquhar, Harvard University chair of the department of government, highlights that

“between 1840 and 1890, China lost several wars to foreign powers, ceding land and granting indemnity payments after each. The country also suffered a vicious internal war, the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64), in which 15 million to 20 million people lost their lives” (MacFarquhar).

In such an unstable environment, those least educated and most in need of power, were yearning for the opportunity to overthrow those in control and forge a stronger national identity. The Boxers, working initially as a religious organization, offered such hope and refuge. The Boxers later moved their focus to a political ideology that blamed and targeted Westerners in China—as well as those that adhered to Western practices (MacFarquhar). The rebellion began by attacking missionaries in the Shandong area and by June of 1900 led to the entire takeover of Western communities in Beijing (MacFarquhar). This outburst of violence was defeated within months through the united strength of internal and external Western powers; however, the Chinese citizenry continued to suffer physically, economically, and spiritually under the oppression of foreign powers and the corruption of those in power. The drive for national pride and identity had not been satiated and never fully waned.

Lu Xun’s “Diary of a Madman,” written eighteen years after the Boxer Rebellion and decades prior to the establishment of a People’s Republic of China, is both anti-Confucian and anti-Feudalistic. This story supported a growing political climate and set the story up as “an extension of pre-Republic reform efforts” (Owen). At the time, Chinese military defeats by both Japanese and European forces caused scholarly debate as to the legitimacy of strict Confucian teachings in the modern era (Owen). However, despite overthrowing the Qing Dynasty in 1911, attempts at establishing a Western-inspired government were weak and resulted in continued corruption under Jiang Jieshi, eventually returning China to its position of defeat and vulnerability (Huang 6). The aftermath of these failures inspired a new wave of intellectuals, such as Lu Xun, to establish *The New Youth*, a literary magazine distinctly tied to the New Cultural Movement (Huang 6). This movement was not only critical of outmoded Confucian thought but was equally critical of the ideas of many prominent Western thinkers, including Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Darwin, and Rousseau (Huang 11). Lu Xun was an insatiable reader, searching largely for the truth of what the Chinese citizenry, and humanity in general, were lacking. Dr. Stephen Owen, Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University, defines Lu Xun’s quest as a search to answer three guiding questions: *What is the ideal human nature?*, *What is most lacking in the Chinese national character?*, and *What is the cause of such a disease?* Owen surmises that Lu Xun “sought to address this ‘disease’ through literature” and “enlighten and embolden” the people of China (Owen).

Shortly after Lu Xun’s publication of “Diary of a Madman” in 1918, a student demonstration, inspired by the writings published in the *New Youth*, was held in Tiananmen Square in protest of “the government’s weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, which gave Germany’s concessions of the Shandong peninsula to Japan rather than returning it to China”

(Owen). This demonstration expanded beyond the realm of student unrest and included “strikes of workers and merchants and a nation-wide boycott of Japanese goods” (Owen). The collaboration of both student intellectuals and common workers helped to fuel a united front for Chinese social change and paved the way for leaders such as Mao Zedong to position themselves to fulfill this call.

Lu Xun’s Early Life and Influences:

Lu Xun was born Zhou Zhangshou in 1881. His name was later changed to Zhou Shuren, which “has long been regarded by his scholars as his real name” (Fang 3). He later adopted the pen name Lu Xun. Born in Zhenjiang Province to a family of declining wealth, Lu Xun’s family struggled due largely to his father’s various illnesses, including tuberculosis (Fang 3). This illness prevented his father from continuing the family legacy of Lu Xun’s grandfather, “a learned scholar in the Royal Academy,” but, luckily, Lu Xun and his brothers—largely due to the support of extended family—were able to attend school, which included Lu Xun’s advanced education in Japan (Fang 3). As Lu Xun explains in his “Preface to a *Call to Arms*,” his original studies in medicine, inspired by his father’s inadequate medical care, were later overshadowed by his desire to write, as a means to enlighten the minds of his fellow citizens.

Lu Xun began his literary career by translating (from Japanese) and publishing a collection of Western stories in 1909 (Fang 5). Lu Xun engrossed himself in both foreign literature—including the premier writers of Japan, Russia, Germany, and France—as well as the classical literature of his own country. It is at this time that Lu Xun read a Japanese translation of Nikolai Gogol’s “Diary of a Madman,” the inspiration for his own story of the same name, depending on translation. Though inspired by a Russian story and modeled after Gogol’s own protest, there are distinct differences that separate the two works and exemplify the unique mindset of the Chinese people and the unique nature of their dilemma at this point in history. Illuminating the differences, Dr. Owen states:

“Both [stories] are written in the form of a diary, and both depict the diarist’s descent into madness as a result of the oppressive systems in which they live. However, in Gogol’s story, as the diarist descends into madness, the diarist moves further away from truth and reality. In Lu Xun’s story, the diarist’s descent into madness brings him closer to truth and reality – the reality that the chaotic backwardness of Chinese society is chipping away the spirit of the Chinese people” (Owen).

In fact, Lu Xun’s adaptation of the story is much darker, more violent, and lacks the comical element of Gogol’s version. Lu Xun himself, during this point in his literary study, “had largely lost faith and hope in the Chinese people, especially after a failed attempt to find enough compatriots in Tokyo to launch a literary magazine before he returned to China” (Fang 5). His disillusionment permeates the story, and overcoming his own defeatist attitude becomes an evident lifelong struggle for Lu Xun.

Lu Xun's Personal Life:

Because of his near-deity status, portions of Lu Xun's personal life have been highlighted more than others, often glazing over the author's interpersonal weaknesses. However, these shortcomings might offer a deeper glimpse into the author's overall personal struggle and thematic perspective. Themes of the disadvantaged are easy to link to his early life, but his sympathetic view of female oppression in conjunction with his often apathetic narrative viewpoint can also be somewhat correlated with his personal relationships. Lu Xun all but abandoned his first wife (the result of an arranged marriage), which left her unable to marry or pursue other romantic relationships. He did provide financially for her, both during and after his death, but his affections were devoted to his second, more publicized, wife (Fang 23). Lu Xun was also witness to the mistreatment of his step-grandmother, his grandfather's second wife, who was abused and stigmatized because of her lack of surviving children—causing her own illegitimacy within the family (Fang 23). Zhihua Fang in his preface to “New Year's Sacrifice”—a work by Lu Xun that reveals the persistent abuse of women in rural China—claims that Lu Xun was sympathetic to the sufferings of women because of his own failings. In this widely published short story, Lu Xun writes from the perspective of both victim and perpetrator, instilling a narrator who turns his back to rural problems rather than intervening to find a solution. True to his established form, his characters, like himself, are never wholly innocent (except, perhaps, the children).

Lu Xun's Lasting Impact:

Though “Diary of a Madman” remains Lu Xun's pivotal work, his influence far exceeds the bounds of this single story. According to Michael Berry's account in *A History of Pain*,

“Throughout his corpus of work, Lu Xun (1881-1936) illuminated the dark cultural forces already present in the Chinese tradition. His fictional legacy has influenced subsequent generations of Chinese writers and created a strong tradition of writing trauma in modern Chinese fiction” (Berry 28).

Lu Xun established key themes and conflicts that continue in modern Chinese fiction. His exploration of the excess of the city versus the struggle of the country, his commentary on tradition versus modernity, his focus upon violence and “cultural cannibalism” persist as literary and artistic motifs (Berry 29). Through “Diary of a Madman,” Lu Xun “[laid] the foundation for a long tradition of focusing on violence, barbarism, and cannibalism (both literal and metaphoric) within modern literature” (Berry 29).

The scene that Lu Xun himself describes in the “Preface to a *Call of Arms*”—the beheading of a Chinese spy—and the apathy of those who viewed the display sets the stage for Lu Xun's often violent narrative tone. An important element of this violence incorporates not only those who inflict pain, but those—including the reader—who are spectators of such disgrace. Lu Xun causes the reader to be a culpable witness to atrocity, and he leaves an impact of either confronting one's dispassionate stance or facing the responsibility of influencing positive change. Berry highlights that in “reading Lu Xun's account of the traumatic beheading, we can pinpoint at least five levels of spectatorship bearing witness to

the event” (Berry 30). Berry goes on to note these five spectators as the apathetic, those who enjoy the spectacle, those that “clap and cheer” to escalate the event, the critical observations of the writer himself, and those who view the violence through his lens (Berry 30). From Lu Xun’s perspective, none of these internal or external spectators are free from criticism.

Lu Xun’s influence on the development of modern literary themes in China cannot be overstated. Many, including Mao Zedong himself, viewed Lu Xun as “nothing less than the intellectual forefather of the Chinese Communist Revolution” (Lee 191). In fact, his work “became the cornerstone of the New Culture Movement, which sought to modernize China by adopting Western modes of thought” (Owen). Despite this strong association between the writings of Lu Xun and the Chinese Communist Revolution, his work did not lose influence in the post-Mao era. Lu Xun’s name and his writings are “repeatedly invoked in the ‘struggle against’ enemies of all hues, to justify the political positions of different, even opposing, factions” (Lee 191). His work continues to inspire revolution and rebellion, regardless of the oppressor at hand. In this, his work transcends his time and place, offering inspiration across cultural boundaries, including into the Western world.

Throughout his evaluation of Lu Xun, Leo Ou-Fan in *Voices from the Iron House* emphasizes that although Lu Xun has been used as the face of social and political reformation, that a clear political agenda is not apparent in Lu Xun’s early work. According to Lee, Lu Xun’s ideas were simply too emotional, too visceral, and too personal to be overtly political rather than artistic. In his view, Lu Xun was “a highly ‘intellectualized’ writer who transformed his ideas and emotions—the inner ‘demons’ of his mind and psyche—into artistic structures of meaning which decry the superficial effort to extract merely ‘revolutionary’ messages” (Lee 191). Certainly there was some political intent in Lu Xun’s work, identifiable simply by the title of his short story collection, *Call to Arms*. However, a clear-cut analysis of his political intent cannot be defined, and was, perhaps, even indistinct to him. Lu Xun desired a change in the hearts and minds of Chinese citizens, but the expected form of that change is indistinct in his writings. Although Lu Xun has worked conveniently into various political agendas, his voice resounds with the reader because of his passion, rather than merely political impact. The average human being can identify with the ills of marginalization, dehumanization, and degradation expressed in his work. Simply put, Lu Xun wrote for, about, and in support of the average citizen.

Despite this everyman perspective, Lu Xun somewhat excused himself from the masses. He was charged with the duty of informant, but was burdened with the perspective of falling outside of the disadvantaged class. Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker, Professor Emerita of Chinese Literature at the University of Michigan and author of *Ideology, Power, Text: Self-Representation and the Peasant “Other” in Modern Chinese Literature*, highlights that writers of the May Fourth movement, including Lu Xun, criticized both the peasantry and their oppressors. Feuerwerker contends that “intellectuals had to search for newly self-defined roles as observers, writers, and impresarios, while simultaneously and awkwardly repositioning themselves on that very same stage” (Feuerwerker 55). She goes on to argue that “no matter how rigorously attention was focused on the broad external world, realist writers could not be as self-effacing as they might proclaim to be” (Feuerwerker 55). In this

evaluation, Lu Xun transcends the confines of the Maoist agenda, defends *and* criticizes the average citizen, and struggles to find his place in this scheme of advantage and disadvantage. Perhaps his discomfort in being both victimized and culpable is what allows him to persist as a relatable figure.

In contrast to his initial creative pursuits and more abstract commentary, by the time of his death in 1936, most of Lu Xun's writing was devoted to "zawen," explained by Zhihua Fang as "a unique kind of short essay in which he mostly discussed contemporary social and political issues" (Fang 5-6). He continued to be disappointed in the limited progress he saw being made in China and likely felt that these essays "would be a more effective and powerful tool" than his previous literary writings (Fang 6). However, it is his literary writing that persists, and these writings, such as "Diary of a Madman," continue to inspire the literary landscape of modern China.

3. Discussion Questions and Answers

- 1) What was Lu Xun's initial field of study and what inspired him to turn to literature instead?

Lu Xun initially studied medicine, due largely to the fact that he felt that his father's care during his many illnesses was grossly inadequate. After viewing a film in a Japanese classroom that depicted the Chinese as weak and ignorant, a scene that inspired the Japanese students to cheer, Lu Xun realized that there was no point in healing the body if the mind remained diseased. Lu Xun states that

"The people of a weak and backward countrying the body if the mind remain in father's care during his many illnesses or to witness such futile spectacles; and it doesn't really matter how many of them die of illness" (Lu Xun, "Preface to a Call to Arms" 4).

He switched his focus to literature in hope of beginning to encourage the Chinese populous to look for modern solutions to prolonged problems.

- 2) According to the preface, what is Lu Xun's internal conflict in exposing the current turmoil in his society?

Provide direct quotation from the text to support your observations. He fears that he may enlighten some to societal, political, and familial, problems, but they will remain powerless to change the situation. He fears that such awareness would be cruel rather than merciful. He offers the metaphor of the iron house to illustrate this fear of conscience:

"would be cruel rather than merciful. He offers the metaphor of the iron house to illustrate this fear of conscience: change the situation. He fears that such doesn't really matter how many of them die of illness" (Lu and ignorant, a scene that to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making those

unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you think you are doing them a good turn?" (Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary, 4).

- 3) What is the significance of having the story told through a second-hand narrator interspersed with the "madman's" personal account?

The initial narrator is dispassionate, removed, and unaffected by the suffering of the madman. He likely represents the general, unenlightened, populous. Through the madman's account, the reader can experience the descent into madness and view the problem through the eyes of a victimized party.

- 4) Is it important that the madman and his brother are unnamed? Why?

Choosing to leave the characters nameless causes these characters to take on both an "everyman" and "no man" identity. The characters are simultaneously depersonalized--viewed as insignificant--and allowed to take on the identity of any and all repressed members of the society.

- 5) What is the significance of the familial relationships in the story? How can these interactions be related to or contrasted with purported traditional Chinese values?

The madman's initial concern is with the people throughout his community. He starts by noting the odd looks of Mr. Zhao: "Mr. Zhao had a strange look in his eyes, as if he were afraid of me, as if he wanted to murder me (Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary," 8). He goes on to observe that "There were seven or eight others who discussed me in a whisper. And they were afraid of my seeing them. So, indeed, were all the people I passed" (8). However, he eventually fixates on the fact that his brother is among the cannibals and intends to feed on him. In a conversation with his brother, he admits, "They want to eat me, and of course you can do nothing about it single-handed; but why must you join them? (13). A more horrific realization is the madman's fear that the death of his sister during childhood was unnatural and that the family, himself included, fed upon her flesh (Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary," 15). The fact that one would abuse family members in such a manner is in complete opposition to Confucian values and the tradition of filial piety. He mocks the hypocrisy of the traditional values that the society claims to adhere to, shedding light on the inheritance of abuse within the family and the community, rather than the professed brotherly love.

- 6) What commentary is made about the role/sacrifice/victimization of women in the story?

The madman portrays the daughter (his sister) and their mother as innocent victims of the society (Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary," 14-15). He admits that he may have unwittingly played a part in the death and consumption of his sister, but

that the mother was either unaware of or unable to stop this atrocity. Both the mother and the daughter suffer the abuse without participating in this abasement.

- 7) What evidence of hope is offered in the story?

The continued hope of the madman that perhaps some of the children have not yet been schooled in cannibalistic ways, and his ending plea to "save the children," offer hope those future generations can overcome the current atrocities.

- 8) Explain the paradoxical nature of the madman's being cured? Why is it important that the madman now works as an office clerk?

If the society perpetuates corruption, then the "madness" of the narrator ironically confirms his sanity. If the society supports and encourages corruption, then the fact that he is cured leaves two possibilities open: he has either been cured by becoming a cannibal, or he has been killed and possibly eaten. Because he obtains he obtains "an official post"—a position of control and power—the former proves most likely (Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary," 7).

- 9) The madman imagines literal cannibalism, what might cannibalism represent figuratively?

The cannibalism likely represents the overall abuse and corruption of those in power against the general population.

- 10) When does the madman express to have no fear and when does he admit to being afraid? Who is he most afraid of?

The madman initially claims that he is not afraid, even though he feels that his neighbors, and their dogs, want to kill and eat him: "I was not afraid, however, but continued on my way" (Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary," 8). It is not until he suspects that the children are being groomed as cannibals as well that fear ensues: "But then what of the children? At that time they were not yet born, so why should they eye me so strangely today, as if they were afraid of me, as if they wanted to murder me? This really frightens me, it is so bewildering and upsetting (Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary," 8).

- 11) What symbols are employed throughout the text? What might these symbols represent (Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary")?

- i. Moon (7, 8, 11 (lack of moon), 12): A traditional Chinese symbol that often creates the mood of the story and also portends joy and tragedy, depending on the lunar phase. The mention of the moon is also interspersed with the absence of light and total darkness. The employment

of the moon in this story links this modern work to its forbearers and likely has somewhat of an ironic usage.

- ii. *Confucian texts (9): The madman in the story can only think of cannibalism when he reads through “Confucian Virtue and Morality” (9). The symbol works ironically in order to point out the hypocrisy of those schooled in Confucian teachings; these people are neither virtuous nor moral.*
- iii. *Dogs (8)/Wolf (9)/Hyena (11): These animals appear to represent the animal nature of man.*
- iv. *Children (throughout): The children offer hope for the future.*
- v. *Mother and Sister (14-15): As discussed in question 7, the mother and daughter represent the suffering of women within the society in general.*

12) Why has Lu Xun persisted as a prominent literary and historical figure in China even to present day?

His message remains a powerful one for humanity in general. Every society has its dark side and he reminds the reader to continue to fight and hope for a better future.

4. **Activities**

Day 1 (90 minutes): Web Quest on Chinese History and Making Connections through Current Political Protest.

- I. Required Resources: Student access to an iPad or computer with internet connection. A copy of the Web Quest (Appendix 1)
- II. Topic Introduction (5 minutes): Introduce the topic and historical time period: Students will be accessing information about China between the periods of 1900-1950s as a background for the story “A Madman’s Diary” by Lu Xun (1918). Ask students if they have any prior knowledge about this time and place. Record any prior knowledge on the board.
- III. Web Quest Introduction (5 minutes): If students will work individually, then all students are responsible for reading the information in the web quest and recording their answers to each question. Alternatively, students may be paired or placed in groups of three. In groups, each student will be required to read and discuss each question, with one group member charged with recording the group answers.
- IV. Web Quest (60 minutes): Allow students to work in groups or independently to complete the quest. Walk around to assist students with work and to monitor progress.
- V. Conclusion (15 minutes): As a class, discuss some of the answers that students had for each question. Add to and amend the prior knowledge on the board. Wrap up this discussion by reviewing the varied responses for the final web quest question (Task

3, Quest 4) that asks student to identify current political hot topics. Take up student web quest responses for assessment.

- VI. Homework Introduction (5 minutes): For homework, students are to locate and print a current news article that discusses the political issue that they used for their response to the final question of the web quest. They should be prepared to write about and discuss their chosen piece.

Day 2 (90 minutes): Review of Political Protest and Introduction to Lu Xun.

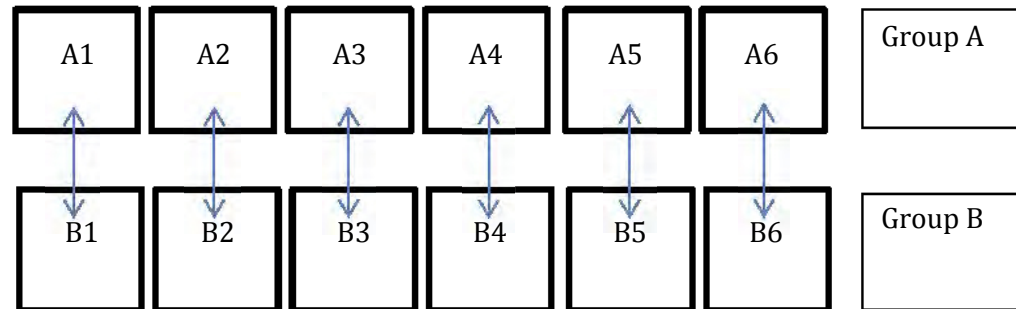
- I. Required Resources: Copy of “The Legacy of Lu Xun” PowerPoint (Appendix 2) and the Guided Notes for “The Legacy of Lu Xun” (Appendix 3). The instructor will need to review the Historical and Literary Background portion of this lesson plan document in order to properly discuss each slide.
- II. Writing Activity (25 minutes): Have students write an organized paragraph, with a clear topic sentence, supporting points, and conclusion that summarizes the article that they selected for their homework. Students should properly incorporate at least one direct quotation. Students will turn in this written assignment for assessment.
- III. Discussion (25 minutes): Have each student discuss the article that they brought in for class and briefly discuss the article. Discuss the relevancy of this activity to the story at hand: Lu Xun wrote allegorically to illustrate the social and political problems of his time. Many of the problems he discussed—abuse of power, lack of educational equality, apathy, and complacency—remain socially and politically relevant to our own time and place.
- IV. PowerPoint and Guided Notes (35 minutes): Hand out the guided notes and instruct students to record their answers to each prompt. Go through each slide in the PowerPoint and support each slide with relevant background information provided by the Historical and Literary Background portion of this lesson plan document.
- V. Homework Introduction (5 minutes): Pass out copies of both the “Preface to *A Call to Arms*” and “Diary of a Madman.” Both texts can be found in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* (translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang) or in *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories* (translated by William A. Lyell). Take this time to walk around the room and ensure that each student filled in their guided notes sheet. Have students complete a marked, close reading of these texts.

Day 3 (90 minutes): Discussion over the “Preface” and the story “Diary of a Madman.”

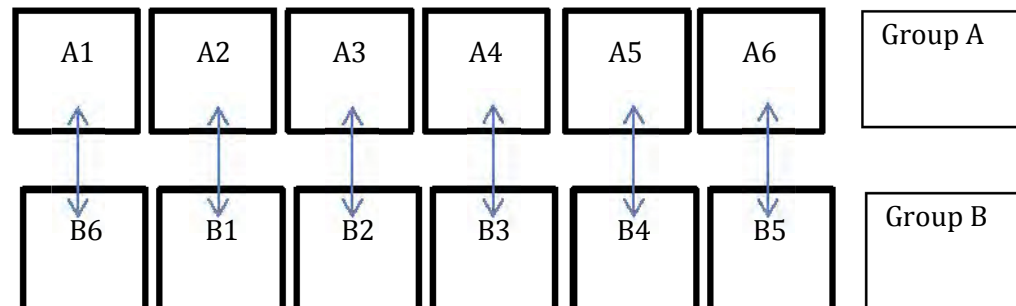
- I. Required Resources: Copies of the text, seed cards (Appendix 4), and discussion questions and answers from this lesson plan.
- II. “Seed Card” Discussion Starter (40 minutes): This activity is taken from “Growing Classroom Conversation: Seed Card Discussion” as presented by

Cecilia Boyce. However, the provided cards (20) for the discussion were created specifically for this lesson plan.

To begin the activity, divide students into two groups (Group A and Group B) and have the groups sit facing each other in two lines. The students facing one another (A1 and B1 for example) will begin by discussing the seeds on their two cards.



Once discussion has largely completed, row B will shift over one seat, with the last person in the row moving to the first position, and exchange cards with their new partners. Students will then resume the activity, continuing to discuss and exchange cards in this manner until they have completed two full rotations (or time is called).



- III. Discussion: Return to large group seating, and ask students to discuss some of the associations made during their paired discussion. Continue the guided discussion by inviting other questions and comments from students and then reviewing the questions and answers available in this lesson plan (you may want to provide printed questions to the students or simply pose the questions to them verbally).
- IV. Homework Introduction: Assign students the task of writing an organized paragraph, with a clear topic sentence, supporting points, and conclusion that investigates the theme, symbol, quotation, etc. that they found most interesting from the day's discussion. This assignment will be collected on the following day for assessment.

5. *Connections to other literary works (additional lessons)*

Additional Lesson (Optional):

Introduction to Nikolai Gogol's "Diary of a Madman" and Guy de Maupassant's "Diary of a Madman." A great activity is to have students read translations of these French and Russian versions of the story in order to discuss the similarities and differences. Each story is written as a social and political protest. In Gogol's story, which Lu Xun had read prior to writing his, the madman descends into insanity because of the medial nature of his job. His delusions are sad, yet, somewhat comical, as he believes that he can communicate with the dogs of the elite (since he is otherwise unable to communicate outside of his lowered social class). Gogol ends his story with the madman remaining insane and having illusions of grandeur. In Maupassant's version, the diary is that of a powerful judge who has recently passed away. After his death, his nephew reads the diary and discovers that the judge was a serial killer who murdered the innocent and also convicted others of the crimes he committed. The judge died as a revered man. Activities to consider: 1) Having students compare and contrast the stories in a formal essay that uses direct support from the stories. 2) Having students create an adaptation of their own "Diary of a Madman" based upon their chosen political issue from Day 1.

Second Additional Lesson (Optional):

Another popular story of Lu Xun's is "New Year's Sacrifice," published in *Chinese Short Stories of the Twentieth Century: An Anthology in English*, edited and translated by Zhihua Fang. The introduction to this story, details Lu Xun's sympathies for the suffering of women in China, and the story highlights the continued mistreatment of a poor, rural woman. The narrator, like that of the initial narrator in "Diary of a Madman," personifies the ignorance and apathy of the general public.

6. Citations

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Appendix 1: Historical Context Web Quest

“A MADMAN’S DIARY,” INTRODUCTORY WEB QUEST

READ:

Historical Context of “A Madman’s Diary”/“Diary of a Madman”:

After many decades of turmoil under foreign oppression, China entered the twentieth century in rebellion. Dr. Roderick MacFarquhar, Harvard University chair of the department of government, highlights that

“between 1840 and 1890, China lost several wars to foreign powers, ceding land and granting indemnity payments after each. The country also suffered a vicious internal war, the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64), in which 15 million to 20 million people lost their lives” (MacFarquhar).

In such an unstable environment, those least educated and most in need of a power, were yearning for the opportunity to overthrow those in control and forge a stronger national identity. The Boxers, working initially as a religious organization, offered such hope and refuge. The Boxers later moved their focus to a political ideology that blamed and targeted Westerners in China—as well as those that adhered to Western practices (MacFarquhar). The rebellion began by attacking missionaries in the Shandong area and by June of 1900 led to the entire takeover of Western communities in Beijing (MacFarquhar). This outburst of violence was defeated within months through the united strength of internal and external Western powers; however, the Chinese citizenry continued to suffer physically, economically, and spiritually under the oppression of foreign powers and the corruption of those in power. The drive for national pride and identity had not been satiated and never fully waned.

TASK 1:

GO TO THE [PERSPECTIVES ON CHINA WEBSITE](#). ACCESS THE TIMELINE TO THE LEFT, AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What important event happened in China at the beginning of the twentieth century? (1900)
2. In 2-3 concise sentences, summarize the details of this event (think *Who? What? Where? When?*)
3. Lu Xun first published “A Madman’s Diary” in 1918. What important event happened in China the following year?
4. Again, in 2-3 concise sentences, summarize the details of this event (think *Who? What? Where? When?*)

READ:

Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman," written eighteen years after the Boxer Rebellion and decades prior to the establishment of a People's Republic of China, is both anti-Confucian and anti-Feudalistic. This story supported a growing political climate and set the story up as "an extension of pre-Republic reform efforts" (Owen). At the time, Chinese military defeats by both Japanese and European forces caused scholarly debate as to the legitimacy of strict Confucian teachings in the modern era (Owen). However, despite overthrowing the Qing Dynasty in 1911, attempts at establishing a Western-inspired government were weak and resulted in continued corruption under Jiang Jieshi, eventually returning China to its position of defeat and vulnerability (Huang 6). The aftermath of these failures inspired a new wave of intellectuals, such as Lu Xun, to establish *The New Youth*, a literary magazine distinctly tied to the New Cultural Movement (6). This movement was not only critical of outmoded Confucian thought but was equally critical of the ideas of many prominent Western thinkers, including Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Darwin, and Rousseau (11). Lu Xun was an insatiable reader, searching largely for the truth of what the Chinese citizenry, and humanity in general, was lacking. Dr. Stephen Owen, Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University, defines Lu Xun's quest as a search to answer three guiding questions: *What is the ideal human nature?*, *What is most lacking in the Chinese national character?*, and *What is the cause of such a disease?* Owen surmises that Lu Xun "sought to address this 'disease' through literature" and "enlighten and embolden" the people of China (Owen).

Shortly after Lu Xun's publication of "Diary of a Madman" in 1918, a student demonstration, inspired by the writings published in the *New Youth*, was held in Tiananmen Square in protest of "the government's weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, which gave Germany's concessions of the Shandong peninsula to Japan rather than returning it to China" (Owen). This demonstration expanded beyond the realm of student unrest and included "strikes of workers and merchants and a nation-wide boycott of Japanese goods" (Owen). The collaboration of both student intellectuals and common workers helped to fuel a united front for Chinese social change and paved the way for leaders such as Mao Zedong to position themselves to fulfill this call.

TASK 2:

GO TO THE [MAO QUOTATION PAGE](#) AND CHOOSE AT LEAST THREE TOPICS TO REVIEW. LIST THE THREE TOPICS THAT YOU'VE CHOSEN AND WHAT MAO SAYS ABOUT EACH.

READ:

Lu Xun's initial popularity coincided with the rise of Chinese Communism. At the time, Lu Xun was closely associated with the movement and many saw his work as representative of the need for this political and social change. Mao Zedong, himself, often invoked the name of Lu Xun as a defender of communist ideology. Although Lu Xun's work was used to support the Communist agenda, his work has also been widely used to support other social and political protests (even in support of contradicting ideas). The intent of Lu Xun's work is to enlighten the populous of

problems within the society. Take a moment to review the propaganda that comes out of the Communist party to see some of the problems that affected the Chinese people in this era.

TASK 3:

VISIT THIS PAGE ON [CHINESE PROPAGANDA IN THE 1950'S](#), AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. Looking at the before cartoons. What were some of the problems that China faced prior to the Communist era?
2. Do these claims that Communism solved these problems seem legitimate? Why? Why not?
3. Many of these problems were investigated by Lu Xun, although he often does not paint a clear picture of a solution. Which of these issues are still important in our current political climate?
4. What other political issues are currently popular?

Footnotes (Website Links):

Perspectives on China Website URL:

http://athome.harvard.edu/programs/macfarquhar/macfarquhar_timelineset.html

Mao Quotation Page URL: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/>

Chinese Propaganda in the 1950's URL: <http://www.chinasmack.com/2012/pictures/1950-communist-propaganda-comic-predicts-china-60-years-later.html>

Appendix 2: Lu Xun PowerPoint (for the PPT version of this presentation, please email nbrunton@sasweb.org)

The Legacy of Lu Xun

English 10: Non-Western Literature
Mrs. Brunton

[1]

Xun's Influence



(Painting of Lu Xun)

“Throughout his corpus of work, Lu Xun (1881-1936) illuminated the dark cultural forces already present in the Chinese tradition. His fictional legacy has influenced subsequent generations of Chinese writers and created a strong tradition of writing trauma in modern Chinese fiction” (Berry 28).

[2]

Lu Xun's Education

- From a well-educated, financially declining family
 - Father's illness
 - Extended family support
- Initially studied medicine but changed to literature
 - "The people of a weak and backward country...strong and healthy they may be, can only serve to be made examples of, or to witness such futile spectacles; and it doesn't really matter how many of them die of illness" (Lu Xun, "Preface to a *Call to Arms*." Lau, Joseph, ed. 4).
- Highly self-educated
 - Chinese literature and philosophy
 - Chinese art and calligraphy
 - Western literature and philosophy
 - Lu Xun was on a quest to answer three guiding questions: *What is the ideal human nature?*, *What is most lacking in the Chinese national character?*, and *What is the cause of such disease?* (Owen).

3

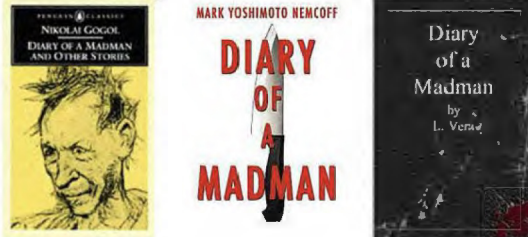
Other Biographical Influences



- The Struggles of Women
 - Lu Xun's first wife
 - The treatment of Lu Xun's Step-grandmother
 - Mother's self-education
- An Unjust Governmental System
 - "When Lu Xun was thirteen, his grandfather in Peking was accused of complicity in a bribery case and was detained in custody for seven years; every fall during this period the family had to send money to the Ministry of Punishment to insure that the grandfather would not be sentenced to death. This overt corruption certainly influenced Lu Xun's contempt for the traditional system of government" (Wagner).

4

Literary Influences



- Western writers, especially Soviet, German, and French writers (Kafka, Gogol, Molière)
- Gogol's "Diary of a Madman"
- Other versions of "Diary of a Madman": Guy De Maupassant, Mark Yoshimoto Nemcoff, L. Vera

5

"Diary of a Madman"

- Published in 1918, 18 years after the Boxer Rebellion and decades prior to the Peoples Republic of China
- Considered an "extension of pre-republic reforms"
- First published in *New Youth Magazine*, where Lu Xun was an editor.
 - Magazine closely tied to the New Cultural Movement
 - New Cultural Movement was critical of both traditional Chinese practices and philosophies as well as popular Western philosophy.
- Considered one of the instigators of the May 4th movement in 1919

6

Themes and Conflicts

- Lu Xun's early experiences and education in Japan
- Themes and Conflicts: City v. country, tradition v. modernity, violence and "cultural cannibalism"
- Apathy and spectatorship (the unnamed and/or apathetic narrator)



(Berry 30)

[7]

Protest and Revolution



(Song)

- Many, including Mao Zedong himself, view Lu Xun as "nothing less than the intellectual forefather of the Chinese Communist Revolution..." (Lee 191).
- However, even in the post-Mao era, Lu Xun's name and his writings are "repeatedly invoked in the 'struggle against' enemies of all hues, to justify the political positions of different, even opposing, factions" (191).
- Many relate and identify with the ills of marginalization, dehumanization, and degradation expressed in his work.

[8]

Citations

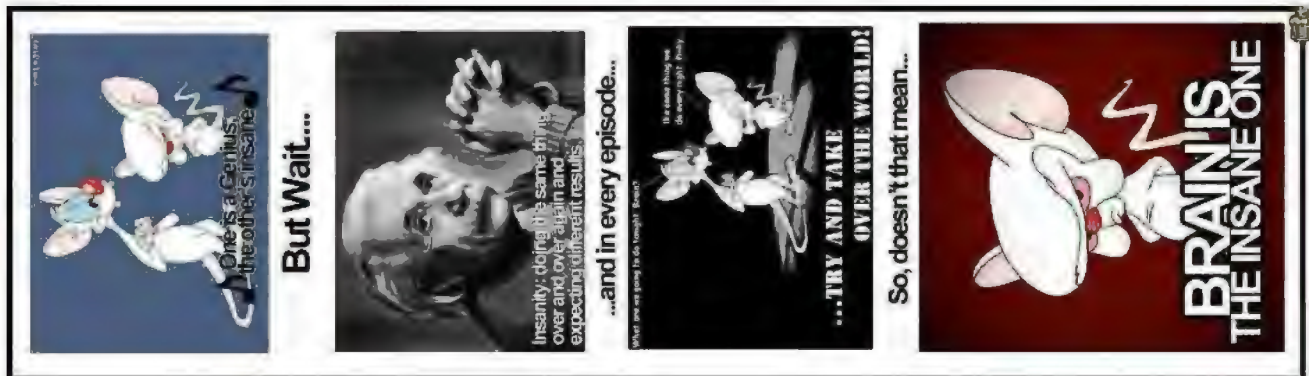
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Appendix 3: Notes on PowerPoint: A Legacy of Lu Xun

1. What subject did Lu Xun study initially? Why?
2. What were the topics of Lu Xun's independent learning?
3. What events in Lu Xun's life likely influenced his writing?
4. What were Lu Xun's literary influences?
5. When was "Diary of a Madman" published? What event did it help to incite a year later?
6. What themes are often associated with the writings of Lu Xun?
7. How has Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" been used by others?

Appendix 4: Seed Cards

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 1



Citation: "Pinky And The Brain Are Insane." FunCork.com. N.p., 28 Jan. 2013. Web. 13 Aug. 2013.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 2



Citation: Paul, Hermann. “Boxer Rebellion.” Cartoon. Missed in History: The Boxer Rebellion. How Stuff Works, 29 May 2013. Web. 13 Aug. 2013.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 3



Citation: Cong, Ding. Diary of a Madman. N.d. Photograph. Lu Xun Biography. MCLC Resource Center, 2002. Web. 13 Aug. 2013.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 4



“Illustration for “Diary of a Madman” by L. Vera.” Cartoon. Deviantart.com. N.p., 2011. Web. 13 Aug. 2013. <<http://okayilie.deviantart.com/art/Diary-of-a-Madman-L-Vera-201286727>>.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 5

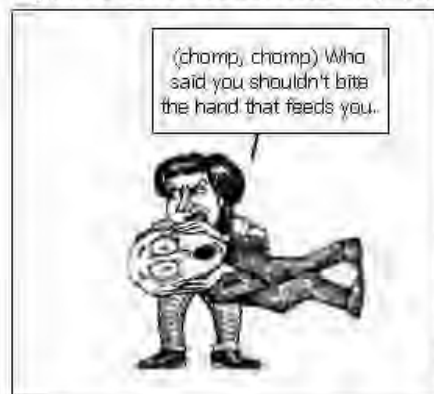
A Humanitarian Question by A George Carlin Fan



“A Humanitarian Question.” Cartoon. Cartoon Playground. N.p., 21 Apr. 2012. Web. 13 Aug. 2013.
<<http://www.funnytimes.com/playground/gallery.php?show=author&author=A%20George%20Carlin%20Fan#.UgqOzpJJ48w>>.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 6

Epicurean Cannibals by john horse



Horse, John. “Epicurean Cannibals.” Cartoon. Cartoon Playground. N.p., 07 May 2010. Web. 13 Aug. 2013.
<<http://www.funnytimes.com/playground/gallery.php?tag=cannibal#.UgqPlpJJ48w>>.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 7



Wong, Henry. “Thrown to the Wolves.” Cartoon. South China Morning Post. N.p., 14 Aug. 2012. Web. 13 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1293248/thrown-wolves?page=all>>.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 8



Mong, Adrienne. Hopes for a Better Life. N.d. Photograph. Worldblog.nbcnews.com. NBC News, 28 Jan. 2009. Web. 13 Aug. 2013. <http://worldblog.nbcnews.com/_news/2009/01/28/4376850-chinese-farmers-no-more?lite>.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 9



Dunbar, Brian. “Earth's Moon.” NASA. NASA, 23 Sept. 2011. Web. 14 Aug. 2013.
<http://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_2068.html>.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 10



Sartore, Joel. “Wolf.” National Geographic. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Aug. 2013.
<<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/wolf/>>.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 11



Shone, Robbie. China Girl. 2012. Photograph. Travel Photography. National Geographic. 2012. Web. 14 Aug. 2013. <<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/traveler-magazine/photo-contest/entries/40023/view/>>.

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 12

“...I came to the conclusion that those physicians must be either unwitting or deliberate charlatans; and I began to sympathize with the invalids and families who suffered under their hands.”

– **“Preface,” Lu Xun**

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 13

“The people of a weak and backward country, however strong and healthy they may be, can only serve to be made examples of, or to witness such futile spectacles; and it doesn’t really matter how many of them die of illness.”

– **“Preface,” Lu Xun**

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 14

“Now if you cry aloud to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making those unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you think you are doing them a good turn?”

– **“Preface,” Lu Xun**

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 15

“...the people referred to are all country folk, unknown to the world and of no consequence”

– **“Diary of a Madman,” Lu Xun**

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 16

“In ancient times, as I recollect, people often ate human beings, but I am rather hazy about it. I tried to look this up, but my history has no chronology and scrawled all over each page are the words: “Confucian Virtue and Morality.”

– **“Diary of a Madman,” Lu Xun**

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 17

“And I am afraid he has already taught his son; that is why even the children look at me so fiercely.”

– **“Diary of a Madman,” Lu Xun**

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 18

“I don’t know whether it is day or night. The Zhaos’ dog has started barking again. The fierceness of a lion, the timidity of a rabbit, the craftiness of a fox...”

– **“Diary of a Madman,” Lu Xun**

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 19

“I knew they were one gang, all eaters of human flesh. But I also knew that they did not all think alike by any means.”

– **“Diary of a Madman,” Lu Xun**

“Diary of a Madman” Seed Card 20

“My sister was eaten by my brother, but I don’t know whether Mother realized it or not.”

– **“Diary of a Madman,” Lu Xun**