

## LESSON PLAN TITLE: This Means That

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**Writer-in-Residence:** David Wade

**Grade Level:** High School

**Model Works Used:** “Pomegranate Means Grenade” by Jamaal May

**Literary Learning objective(s):** Students will be able to determine symbolism in text, utilize metaphor, alliteration and assonance

**Themes:** Metaphor, Symbolism, Choices

**MDE/SEL Standards:** Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

**Materials Needed:** internet, journal, writing materials

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### Opening Activity

Make three columns on a sheet of paper.

- In the first column, write the word “love”
- in the second column, the word “power”and
- in the third column, the word, “freedom”

Next, spend a few minutes listing in each column any *physical objects* you associate with each word. For example, in the love column, you might list “wedding ring, pizza, mom, etc.”

While it may be easy to list common symbols that represent each idea (like a wedding ring for love), try to be as personal as possible. What are objects or items that *you* love, or that make you feel powerful, or free? Be specific and creative—just make sure the objects you list can actually be touched or experienced physically.

### Pre-Discussion

If you are working in a group, share some of the objects you listed and why you chose them. If you are working alone, reflect on the following questions in your journal:

- There are different types of love. Which object most makes you think of romantic love? familial love? friendship? Why?
- Choose an object from the power column. What about it makes you feel most powerful?
- Choose an object from the freedom column. What about it makes you feel freest?

### Model Poem Discussion

Our poem for this lesson is [“Pomegranate Means Grenade” by Jamaal May](#). May wrote this poem for one of his former InsideOut students, Jontae McCrory, after being inspired by a poem McCrory wrote. May even uses a line from McCrory’s poem as an epigraph for “Pomegranate”.

Take time to read the poem twice, aloud, annotating as you read. (A useful strategy is to circle words you don’t know and underline moments that stick out to you for one reason or another.) Once you’ve read the poem and annotated, answer the following questions in your journal or via discussion.

## *Pomegranate Means Grenade*

[Jamaal May](#)

*The heart trembles like a herd of horses.*

—Jontae McCrory, age 11

Hold a pomegranate in your palm,  
imagine ways to split it, think of the breaking  
skin as shrapnel. Remember granada  
means pomegranate and granada  
means grenade because grenade  
takes its name from the fruit;  
identify war by what it takes away  
from fecund orchards. Jontae,  
there will always be one like you:  
a child who gets the picked over box

with mostly black crayons. One who wonders  
what beautiful has to do with beauty, as he darkens  
a sun in the corner of every page,  
constructs a house from ashen lines,  
sketches stick figures lying face down-  
I know how often red is the only color  
left to reach for. I fear for you.  
You are writing a stampede  
into my chest, the same anxiety that shudders  
me when I push past marines in high school  
hallways, moments after video footage  
of young men dropping from helicopters  
in night vision goggles. I want you to see in the dark  
without covering your face and carry verse  
as countermeasure to recruitment videos  
and remember the cranes buried inside the poems  
painted on banners that hung in Tiananmen Square—  
remember because Huang Xiang was exiled  
for these. Remember because the poet Huang Xiang

was exiled for this: the calligraphy of revolt.

Always know that you will stand nameless

in front of a tank, always know you will not stand

alone, but there will always be those

who would rather see you pull a pin

from a grenade than pull a pen

from your backpack. Jontae,

they are afraid.

- Which lines or phrases stick out to you the most? What about them draws you?
- What connection does May make between the pomegranate and the grenade?
- This poem relies heavily on *sound* to move it forward, especially [alliteration](#) and [assonance](#). Find three examples of each in the text and read them aloud. What effect do these intentional sounds have on your ear? On your tongue?
- Look up [Tiananmen Square](#) and [Huang Xiang](#). Why do you think May refers to this tragedy and the Xiang's exile in this poem? What comparisons is he drawing between young boys like McCrory and Xiang? How about the US military and China?
- Is there any cause you are passionate about to devote your art to? What is it, and why?

### Prewriting

Return to your columns from the opening activity. Select one word to use in the writing prompt.

### Writing Prompt

Write a poem in which some physical object symbolizes a larger idea. For May, this was a pomegranate that resembles a grenade, which represented the choice to create or destroy offered to his young students. For you, it may be your first car representing freedom, or a camera that represents your ability to see things from a unique perspective. Feel free to use words from our opening activity, or to start from scratch. As always, use images that engage our five senses!

**Share / Reflect:**

If working in a group, share your poems with one another. If working solo, reflect on the following: How do objects come to represent or symbolize something unique to people? How did your object become a symbol to you?

**Supplemental Materials**

Poem: “Pomegranate Means Grenade” by Jamaal May  
<https://poets.org/poem/pomegranate-means-grenade>

**Check/Highlight all that apply**

- Text by a contemporary/diverse author
- Translated text
- Visual Thinking Strategies
- Close reading or other analysis
- A step of the writing process
- Planning & Reflection Strategy
- New device, concept or theme
- Social-Emotional Learning
  - Self-Management
  - Social Awareness
  - Relationship Skills
  - Responsible-Decision Making
  - Self-Awareness