



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



The Situation is Gratifying: Home & Family

by Katja Foreman-Braunschweig

DURATION: 1.5 hours

GRADE LEVEL: High School

WRITING LEVEL: Developing Writers

FOCUS: home, family

EXAMPLE POEM

[The Situation is Gratifying](#)

by Carlina Duan

FOR TEENS, BY TEENS
A lesson plan from InsideOut's Youth Advisory Board

Check in | 15 minutes

If you could be anywhere right now, where would you feel the most at home?

OR Who is a family member that you miss?

Resource Building | 15 minutes

Make a few lists:

- Write a list of the **images** you associate with home. (EXAMPLE: smells, sights, sounds, etc.)
- Write a list of **phrases** that have been said to you, that have stayed with you for a long time.
- Write a list of **people** who are family to you, but who are **not** blood-related.

FREE WRITE | **Whatever comes to mind, write without stopping for 5 minutes.**

Close Reading | 20 minutes

READ | [The Situation is Gratifying by Carlina Duan](#)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does history affect this poem, both textbook history and the poet's personal history?
- What recurring images does the poet use?
- Why do you think the poet breaks this poem into three parts?
- What is your favorite line in the poem and why?



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

Think about your own home, your history, your personal narrative, experiences, and feelings. **Write a poem using the images, objects, and people from your earlier lists.**

Share Out | 15 minutes



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



the situation is gratifying by Carlina Duan

形势喜人 —Yan Guiming, October 1974

i.
mao makes thick lines in my red
book. ants make thick lines in
the sand. china makes a thick line
down a stratosphere. my father's name
is a thick belt around my waist. what I
should lose encircles me: chain link
fence, my sister's face—pruned & pitted
in the dark. last year I carried sweet
potatoes in a barrel & stored them
beneath a bed. last year I sold many
dark hunks of coal. my father came
home & took off his stethoscope.
my father came home & lined
his forehead with sweat. I was
a small line of army ants beneath
the bed. my father was a long line
of men who lost their jobs. I was
fighting for breath when they shut
down the universities. my sheets
stunk with sweet potato. my sheets
stunk. bodies rained sweat. *gratifying*
as in my sister chased me beneath
the persimmon tree but I was
quick, quicker. I descend from
a lineage of flat lines. we compose
a horizon. red pearl as in red sun as in
a father's mouth when he tells us
to shut up, things are *gratifying* while

his eyes cut what is sweet into tiny disks.

ii.
there is a myth about monkeys trying
to catch the moon inside a well. their
tails curl around each other as they
lower themselves into the water. they
push wet fists through the moon for
days, & on & on the water ripples.

iii.
what I am is monkey. pushing my hand
through the reflection of a moon. a decade.
a persimmon tree with all its leaves shaking
shadows onto yard. what I am is taut
line stitching me to my father, who is
also nation. who is also bone. no spoons
in the household but a rack of skinny
meat. no spoons in the household
but a line of daughters looking
their red books in the eye. *the situation*
is gratifying. the situation slid me across
a sink. my father was my father until
I watched him turn his mouth into
a pearl. soundless when the Red Guard
implied *counter-revolutionary action* & he
said nothing. flattened from my father
into a line of water. they took him away,
made my face river. made
an entire country flood.

[the situation is gratifying by Carlina Duan, Winter Tangerine](#)