

Lesson Plan for the Outsider in Southern Culture

published in the online anthology [Nobody's Home: Modern Southern Folklore](#)

CCSS Standard(s): CCS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA R.1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 ([ELA Anchor](#))

Objective(s): To consider the modern Southern archetype of the Outsider

Essential Question(s): How does Southern culture view and treat people who behave in ways that stand outside of common norms?

Preparation for Teacher (Strategy and Purpose): Using Colin Wilson's 1956 book *The Outsider* as the basis for discussion, consider how Southerners both ostracize and tolerate outsiders. Writing for the website commentary.org, Sidney Hook had this share about Wilson's ideas:

. . . the "outsider" is the very model of the metaphysical man who has seen through the appearances of everyday life and who scorns the humanist and rationalist because of their desire to make the world, if not a kinder place, a less evil one in which to live.

Read and select from the following *Nobody's Home* essays to use in a unit on the outsider in Southern culture:

"True Believer" by Jack Wallace • "Tunnel Vision" by Clayann Gilliam Panetta • "Damn Yankee" by Lynn Magill • "The Opelika Symphony Orchestra" by Jeffrey Fox • "Long-Haired Disco Boys" by Terry Barr

All of these essays involve experiences with or without being an outsider in the South, as a person whose ideas or actions do not lie within the norms of Southern beliefs, myths, and narratives. Any or all of these can provide model examples for students to follow and offer an array of structures, tones, and voices.

Preparation of Students (Strategy and Purpose): The teacher will introduce the concept of the outsider in literature, preferably using Colin Wilson's ideas as a basis, and provide examples of this figure in modern Southern literature and film (Boo Radley in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Mick Kelly in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*). The teacher will then lead a class discussion about Southern norms that are perceived as inviolable, thus becoming mythic, and about the beliefs and narratives that underpin those myths. The teacher will compile a list of these norms to be used in further discussions.

In-class activities (recommended): The teacher will facilitate discussions of the selected readings. For this portion of the lesson, the small-group methods in [literature circles](#) or [Socratic seminar](#) may be useful.

Lesson Follow-up (Recommendations): The teacher will pose this two-fold semi-open question to students: *should a person regarded as an outsider remain in that place and try to fit in, give up on that place and leave, or continue defiantly to live in that place, and should the outsider be tolerated, accepted, made to change, or forced out by the mainstream?*

Technology: SmartBoard, Elmo, other device for sharing the texts

Tiered Instruction/Intervention/Differentiation: Accommodations per needs, IEPs, or 504s

Assessment: The teacher will give a short-answer test that asks students to choose answers to the above question and utilize examples from the selected readings as text evidence that supports their beliefs.

Homework: Students will read the selected essays and prepare their answers for the test.

Comments: This lesson asks students to consider formally (in an academic setting) some things that they have already consider informally many times: who fits in, who does not, and how outsiders should be treated by the mainstream. These readings and this lesson will provide them with opportunities to think about topics like bullying and norms outside of the everyday contexts that typically color those aspects of life.