

Topic: Theme analysis through the question “What does it mean to grow up?”  
For: 12th grade English

**Text Set:**

1. *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sánchez (Novel)

- a. Description: Fifteen-year-old Julia Reyes’ life is turned upside down when her older sister Olga is killed by a semi-truck on her way home. Olga was the “perfect Mexican daughter,” and after her death, Julia is expected by her family to take up that same role. However, Julia has never been “perfect” in her family’s eyes, as she is outspoken to the point where it gets her in trouble, and she suspects that Olga wasn’t “perfect” either. This leads Julia to investigate her sister’s true self, which leads her to discover a few secrets her sister was keeping from everyone as well as a secret from her family’s past. Through all of this, Julia is maturing into the young woman she wants to be, not the one her parents want her to be.
- b. Relevance: A major theme in this book is coming of age, but more importantly, it’s about realizing that nothing is as clear cut as it seems. Julia realizes just how complicated the world and everyone in it really is, and this allows her to come to terms with who she is. This is a critical aspect of what it means to grow up.

2. *Moonlight* by Tarell Alvin McCraney (Movie)

- a. Description: Chiron is a young black man growing up in Miami who is slowly coming to terms with his identity, including his sexuality. Throughout his life, he is faced with many other challenges as well, such as bullying, his mother’s drug addiction, and even jail time. This film deeply examines the intersectionality of Chiron’s identity.
- b. Relevance: Similarly to the previous text, this film has a coming of age theme, though it is told from a different perspective. Chiron is on a journey of self discovery to figure out how his core identities (male, black, and gay) fit together. The message of this film is to not let others tell you who you should be, which is an important thing to realize about growing up.

3. *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (Graphic Novel)

- a. Description: Marjane, or Marji, is a young girl living in Iran during the Iranian Revolution. As such, she experiences the cultural upheaval that this revolution

brings to Iran during her formative years, including the rise of religious extremism. Marji rebels against the new rules that are imposed on her by the revolution until her parents decide to send her to Austria for her own safety. There, she attends a boarding school to finish her education before returning to Iran where she deals with depression for a time. She decides to go to art school where she meets Reza, who she eventually marries and divorces before leaving Iran for a final time.

- b. Relevance: Once again, coming of age is a prevalent theme in this book and it's told from yet another perspective. Because Marji is already sure of who she is, her biggest obstacle is finding out where she belongs. This is another big part of growing up, and just like in the book, this belonging may be physical or emotional.
  
4. "Adolescence" by Adrienne Su (Poem)
  - a. Description: The speaker of this poem is describing the chaotic nature of adolescence through the lens of natural imagery. The poem acts as an introspection of sorts, looking back on the speaker's time spent in adolescence and reflecting on it.
  - b. Relevance: This poem acts as more of an overview or introduction into the topic. It still explores the coming of age theme that goes along with what it means to grow up, though it is done from a more broad perspective. The main takeaway from this poem is that it's important to look deeply into your own thoughts and actions to determine who you are as a person.
  
5. "As We Grow Up" by Andrew Guy (TEDTalk)
  - a. Description: Andrew Guy talks about the struggles he faced when growing up and how these struggles shaped him into the person he is today. In his talk, he asks the question of whether we gain or lose parts of ourselves as we grow up. He discusses the need for resiliency starting from childhood and talks about how giving up means never becoming the person you were meant to become.
  - b. Relevance: This video is included mainly as a call to action for students as Andrew Guy conveys a motivational tone throughout. Still, it connects to the topic in that it explains that growing up is a necessary part of life and that you shouldn't let obstacles prevent you from accomplishing that.

## Text Complexity Analysis:

*I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sánchez

### 1. Quantitative Measures

- a. Quantitative Analyzer Tools
  - i. Lexile: HL730L
  - ii. ATOS: 4.7
  - iii. Flesch-Kincaid: 78.45 (7th grade)
- b. Readability
  - i. Reading ease is 81.6 out of 100
  - ii. Understood easily by 11 to 12 year olds

### 2. Qualitative Measures

- a. Meaning:
  - i. This book seems relatively straightforward, but there is a need to read between the lines in order to really grasp the underlying message. There are elements to the overall meaning that are very apparent but those ideas do not allow the reader to understand the bigger picture. Therefore, some deep reading will be necessary.
- b. Text Structure:
  - i. The text is a chapter book with each chapter being relatively short. Paragraphs with exposition and other details are typically on the shorter side as well though there are some longer paragraphs as well. There is a decent amount of sentence variation including long, drawn-out thoughts as well as shorter, more straightforward lines.
- c. Language Features:
  - i. The language used in the book is relatively easy to understand as it's told from the perspective of fifteen-year-old Julia. However, Julia is characterized as a lover of poetry, meaning some of the language used is a bit more challenging than you would expect from another narrator of a similar age. Additionally, because Julia comes from a Mexican family, some Spanish words are used throughout the book that students may be unfamiliar with.
- d. Knowledge Demands:
  - i. There is a heavy emphasis on Mexican culture throughout the book, so providing some background information would be helpful for students. Specifically, an understanding of the culture's values and beliefs about family is necessary for understanding the main character's thoughts and

actions. Additionally, specifics about art and poetry, including examples, are frequently referenced by the narrator and may need to be explained.

### 3. Reader and Task Considerations

#### a. Major Instructional Areas of Focus:

- i. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- ii. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- iii. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

#### b. Potential Challenges:

- i. There is some unfamiliar vocabulary used throughout the book which could make it difficult for students to understand the text. Additionally, there are no visuals to guide readers through difficult sections of the text or to break up the walls of text on each page. This may be especially tough for students who have difficulty focusing on the text.

#### c. Differentiation:

- i. I would provide a list of unfamiliar words used in each chapter before reading and help students come up with short definitions that will help them. Also, I could provide relevant visuals during the reading or have students visually represent what they think is happening. If reading is done outside of class time, I will provide an audio version of the text as well for students who have trouble focusing on the text.