

ENRICHED
CLASSICS

**Simon & Schuster Classroom Activities
for the Enriched Classic edition of
Kon-Tiki by Thor Heyerdahl
0-671-72652-8 • \$5.99 / \$8.99 Can.**

Activities created by Katie Gideon

Each of the three activities includes:

- NCTE standards covered
- An estimate of the time needed
- A complete list of materials needed
- Step-by-step instructions
- Questions to help you evaluate the results

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Lesson Plan #1

“Our Brown Admirers”
(A Lesson in Biased Language)

Students must be conscious of the fact that *Kon-Tiki* was originally published in 1950. Since then, our world has changed irrevocably--and so has our vocabulary. This introductory activity is designed to help students acknowledge what they may perceive as inadvertent prejudice in the text, analyze that prejudice, and then move beyond it. The graphic organizer assists students in moving beyond knee-jerk reactions and towards meaningful synthesis.

This lesson takes one fifty-minute class period to introduce and includes two nights of homework. You will need about ten minutes of class on the second day to reaffirm students' understanding of the assignment before students independently continue the activity as they read the text.

NCTE Standards Covered:

- 1.** Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

- 3.** Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

- 9.** Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

- 12.** Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

What To Do:

1. Begin class by introducing the definition of "connotation." Explain to students that connotation is the implicit rather than explicit meaning of a word and consists of the suggestions, associations, and emotional overtones attached to a word. Give them a simple example--for instance, what might be the connotative difference between the words "scrawny" and "petite"? Then, ask students to explain the connotation of the following words/phrases:

- backwards
- civilized
- primitive
- child of nature

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2. Further develop students' awareness of the power of word choice. You might relate this to issues of discipline. For instance, ask students to imagine that they are principals. Both emails describe the same event. And yet, which teacher email would require a more immediate and/or serious response?

Email A: "Please discipline this student. He used disrespectful and threatening language before exiting the classroom without my permission."

Email B: "You must meet with this student immediately. Upon receiving his failing grade, he used six expletives and slammed his fist into the desk. He then yelled, 'You better change this, or I'm going to kill you' before running out of class."

Obviously, Email B is much more disturbing. Discuss this with your students until everyone agrees that word choice is a powerful way of conveying meaning.

3. Now, remind students that *Kon-Tiki* was originally published in 1950. Since then, our world has changed drastically--and so has our vocabulary. Pass out copies of Handout #1. Explain to students that they have a difficult task before them: they must read Heyerdahl's text closely, noting any phraseology with troubling connotations for today's society. They must explain why those phrases may be troubling. Finally, they must make an educated guess as to why Heyerdahl used the phrase in the first place. He clearly didn't use these words and phrases to offend 21st-century readers. What was he actually trying to say? Though we don't know for certain, we can certainly make educated guesses.

4. Go over the example used on the handout. Explain that students will be recording their own data as they continue to read the text. Answer any questions students may have about the assignment.

5. As students are reading, you may wish to point out potentially troubling passages. For instance, Heyerdahl states: "We on the raft were the objects of close attention from sinister-looking individuals on land, an unfavorable mixture of Indian, Negro, and Spaniard" (pg. 55). "Sinister" and "unfavorable" convey negative connotation. Is Heyerdahl acting as an unbiased observer in this moment, or is something else happening?

6. Please note: it is important to place the connotation analysis within a larger framework. Students shouldn't come away from *Kon-Tiki* thinking that Thor Heyerdahl was racist, or that we should judge past societies according to our own values and expectations. Rather, this activity should open a conversation regarding the differences between authorial intent and reader reception. It should enhance, rather than detract from, students' overall appreciation of the text. (In order to highlight that biased language is used in every society--including their own--you may wish to have students analyze some current newspaper articles, as well.)

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Kon-Tiki* (978-0-671-72652-2) for each student

Copies of Handout #1 (Xerox as double-sided)

dictionaries

How Did It Go?

Were the students able to identify potentially troubling terminology used by Heyerdahl? Could they infer non-malicious motives behind Heyerdahl's use of the terminology? Could they articulate why these terms and/or phrases might be troubling in today's society? Did the analysis of the language enrich their appreciation for the text?

Lesson Plan #2

“The Raft Began to Take Shape”
(A Lesson in Visualizing Text)

In an account as detailed and complex as *Kon-Tiki*, students may struggle with using Heyerdahl's words to create mental images. In order to fully appreciate the text, students must be able to picture the adventurers' raft in their minds. This may be especially difficult for English language learners--which is why students will build models of the raft for this activity.

This lesson will take two or three fifty-minute class periods, depending on your students.

NCTE Standards Covered:

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

What To Do:

1. As homework the night before, assign students to read the third chapter, "To South America." Tell them that their task is to visualize the raft.

2. The next day in class, begin by asking students what strategies they used to ensure that they understood what they read. Did anyone draw a sketch of the raft? Did anyone annotate their text? How many students just gave up, because the description was so detailed? Explain that, for a book like *Kon-Tiki*, it's imperative that students understand the details.

3. Split students into groups and inform them that they are to build a model of the raft. Pass out Handout #2 and go over the rubric for students. Show them the resources that will be available in the classroom--dictionaries, web access, art supplies, etc. Present them with a timeline for the

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project at your discretion. Also, caution students that they're not going to find an exact diagram of the *Kon-Tiki* raft anywhere; they're going to have to synthesize their reading, dictionary entries, and sailboat diagrams into an accurate model. Though the activity should be fun, it should also be taken seriously. As such, students should pay special attention to how they'll be graded.

4. Assist groups as necessary while they work.

5. After the models are due, create a museum display in a common area, where all students can appreciate their classmates' work. Allow your students time to circulate, comparing and contrasting the different models. How are they similar? How are they different?

6. You may wish to use the models as the unit continues. The visual aid may be especially helpful for students struggling with the text.

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Kon-Tiki* (978-0-671-72652-2) for each student

Copies of Handout #2 (one half-page per student)

Art supplies (popsicle sticks, glue, scrap cloth, etc)

Access to Internet

Dictionaries

How Did It Go?

Did the models created meet the standards set forth in the rubric? Did creating a model of the ship facilitate better understanding of the Chapter "To South America"? How did the model-building affect struggling students' understanding of and interest in the text? Do the models show pride in work? Did the students work efficiently and effectively in groups? As you continue reading, you may want to ask yourself: how can the models be used to facilitate better understanding and/or more enthusiasm for later chapters?

“Investigation Pure and Simple”
(A Seminar-Style Assessment)

Heyerdahl shares theories about prehistoric culture, and describes Polynesian societies as he encountered them. In describing these cultures, what does he reveal about his own? The following assessment activity is designed to challenge students’ synthesizing ability in an engaging, active way. In this lesson, students will critically examine the data they've collected on language use in *Kon-Tiki*. They will use this data to construct an ethnological study of Thor Heyerdahl's culture.

This lesson will take one fifty-minute class period to complete, and assumes that students have finished the entire book. It includes one night of homework.

NCTE Standards Covered:

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

What To Do:

1. The night before students have their seminar, have them respond to the following essay prompt for homework:

"When Heyerdahl first approaches specialists about his theory, one academic tells him that 'The task of science is investigation pure and simple...not to try to prove this or that.' And yet, we've noticed that, in describing prehistoric navigation and Polynesian culture, Heyerdahl also inadvertently reveals much about his own culture.

"Consider the data we've collected over the course of our reading. Is it ever possible to investigate something, purely and simply? Or, in contrast, do personal/cultural biases always affect investigation? What implications does your point-of-view hold for our reading of *Kon-*

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Tiki? What about in a larger context? Plan your response and support your position with specific points and examples from your observations, studies, reading, or personal experiences."

Students should bring their essays to class the next day, and may refer to them during the discussion that follows.

2. The next day in class, explain that students are going to discuss the opinions they revealed in their essays. Explain that you expect students to be specific and courageous in the conversation--it's actually a good thing if seminars generate disagreement, but that can't happen if participants only discuss generalities.

3. Next, post the overhead of Handout #3. Discuss expectations. How many students are present today? How many of those students should participate in order to create meaningful conversation? What are the methods and strategies we're hoping to see emerge in our conversation? For instance, students may decide that it's very important to refer to the text, but not so important to use humor. Annotate the overhead to record students' goals for the conversation.

4. Explain that students will lead their own conversation while you evaluate them on the overhead. The immediate feedback should provide useful guidance as they discuss the journal topic at length.

5. As students discuss, record what you see and hear on the overhead. Only interject if necessary.

6. After the conversation, ask students to reflect--both on the seminar, and on the discussion guidelines. Did they reach a greater understanding of *Kon-Tiki*? Did the discussion guidelines assist their conversation? Make additions and clarifications as necessary. The modified overhead can be used in future class discussions.

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Kon-Tiki* (978-0-671-72652-2) for each student

An overhead of Handout #3

How Did It Go?

Did the immediacy of your feedback facilitate a better discussion? Were students able to include all elements from the rubric that you set as the class goal? Could students cite examples from the text to back their theories? Could they compare and contrast Heyerdahl's culture to their own? Could they successfully infer information about Heyerdahl's culture, based on prior knowledge and context clues? Did they address the larger issue, of whether or not "investigation, pure and simple" is ever truly possible?

Handout #1

Kon-Tiki: Biased Language

Quote	Loaded Term/Phrase	Heyerdahl's possible meaning/intent	Connotation in Today's Society
<p><i>"To westward there lived only the black-skinned primitive peoples of Australia and Melanesia, distant relations of the Negroes..." (pg.16)</i></p>	<p><i>"black-skinned primitive peoples"</i></p>	<p><i>Maybe Heyerdahl is just trying to be as descriptive as possible. Perhaps he means "primitive" to signify that the society has no formal writing structure and/or modern technology.</i></p>	<p><i>The word "primitive" suggests savageness and ignorance. "Black-skinned primitive peoples" connects being primitive to a specific skin color.</i></p>

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Quote	Loaded Term/Phrase	Heyerdahl's possible meaning/intent	Connotation in Today's Society

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Kon-Tiki Model: _____ / 40 points

Directions: Every group member will receive the same score for the first three categories, based on the quality of your finished product. Each individual will receive a different score for the last two categories, based on how you interacted with your group during work time.

CATEGORY	10	8	7	5
Model Accuracy	Model accurately reflects design elements and details as described in the text (and shown in pictures).	Model reflects most design elements and details as described in the text (and shown in pictures).	Model shows the basic raft, but lacks many of the design details.	No model OR model is seriously incomplete.
Neatness of Model	Model looks professional. Clean, sturdy, no glue blobs. Could be placed in a display case.	Model looks clean, with barely visible smudges and/or glue blobs. It seems sturdy.	Model looks like it has been fixed frequently with a few noticeable glue blobs and/or Scotch tape. Needs redoing to put in portfolio.	Model is dirty, disorganized, and falling apart. It has not been done with pride.
Labeling	Neatly and correctly labeled all 12 of the necessary items (listed below). May have labeled additional items, as well.	Correctly labeled all 12 of the necessary items (listed below).	Correctly labeled at least 9 of the 12 necessary items (listed below).	Correctly labeled less than 9 of the 12 necessary items (listed below).
Group Participation	Helps group stay focused and contributions greatly helped the group achieve its goals.	Participates in group activities willingly, contributing some valuable work and/or suggestions.	Participates in group activities. Did not distract others.	Does not participate willingly and/or frequently distracts others from their task.
Energy	Is quite enthusiastic about the project and stayed focused on the project at all work times.	Shows enthusiasm and focus most of the time.	Student works but sometimes loses focus, becomes frustrated, or needs frequent reminders.	Student rarely works unless reminded or bribed.

Labels must include the following terms:

bamboo cabin
bow
deck
mast
masthead
port

provisions/gear
radio
sail
splashboards
starboard
steering watch

Web-browsing for more assistance:

The Dictionary of English Nautical Language: <http://www.seatalk.info/>

Goddess Cruises Sailboat Diagram: http://www.goddesscruise.com/parts_of_boat.gif

Kon-Tiki Web Museum: <http://www.kon-tiki.no/Expeditions/>

Discussion Assessment: Overhead

Topic up for discussion: _____

Guiding Question(s): _____

Today's participation goal: ____ / ____ students actively speaking

Today's discussion methodology goal: ____ / 12 methods

- Honored the various perspectives of our classmates.
- Voiced original ideas.
- Demonstrated content knowledge.
- Used specific language in order to make a persuasive argument.
- Used humor to diffuse a tense moment.
- Cited evidence from the text.
- Made connection between ideas and "real world."
- Listened critically and built on the ideas of others.
- Invited others to participate (perhaps by asking open-ended questions?)
- Asked clarifying questions.
- Challenged the ideas of others without criticizing people.
- Showed respect for individual opinions and beliefs while honoring personal thoughts and questions.