Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards
Focus: Life is a Cabaret: Prewar Europe in Art and Literature[1]

Overview
The focus of this unit, which would fit well into a course on modern or world literature, is to understand the interaction of art, music, and literature in pre-WWII Europe. Students will present information (including information from divergent perspectives), will make use of several forms of digital media, and will develop a presentation using appropriate organizational strategies and standard English to communicate.

Standards
- **SL.11-12.4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal ideas.

- **SL.11-12.5** Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence to add interest.

- **SL.11-12.6** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Objectives
- Students will explore the culture of prewar Europe and the period's social tensions and concerns as reflected in its art, literature, and music.
- Students will design a presentation incorporating several forms of art, music, literature, or other formats or media in order to provide insight into the prewar culture of Europe and to enhance understanding of the topic.
- Students will develop a clearly-organized presentation in standard English appropriate to a general high school audience at the 11th- and 12th-grade level.

Supplies Needed
- Internet access
- Access to presentation programs such as PowerPoint

Before the Lesson
Overview
Students should understand that the period of time between the first and second world wars in Europe may have been brief, but it was incredibly rich in developments of art, architecture, film, music, science, and philosophy. It

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[1] For the central idea of this unit, I am forever indebted to Mrs. Edna Mae Roten, a teacher whose professional career ended well before the widespread use of the personal computer in school classrooms. Through use of old-fashioned slides, laminated pictures, and music on LP records, she was able to communicate a rich diversity of information about the prewar period to her extraordinarily fortunate students. Though it is possible Mrs. Roten never heard the word "multimedia," she would have instantly appreciated the concept it represented. It is regrettable she passed away before the advent of PowerPoint. She would have loved it.

was a time of economic depression and rising political tensions as well, one that laid the groundwork for the rise of the National Socialist party in Germany and the eventual horrors of the Holocaust to follow. Prior to the beginning of the project, which can serve as a culmination of a modern or world literature unit, students ideally should have read at least one major poem, novel, or set of stories from some of the following authors and works (or works of comparable literary value from this period):

- **T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men"**
- **T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"**
- **Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis"**
- **Franz Kafka, "The Trial"**

In the context of a modern literature or world literature course, students will explore this period's art, culture, literature, and history and present their findings to other students.

Activity 1: Introducing the Project
Students should be introduced to the project. Teachers' expectations should be reviewed thoroughly and example projects (if available from previous classes) should be shown. The directions below may be reprinted for the students' reference.

Activity 2: Research
Research may be done in or out of class. In the initial stages of the project when students are brainstorming, it may be helpful to have research take place in the classroom or computer lab, wherever access to the Internet is available for individual student use. At the end of this lesson, a list of possible works has been provided, but obviously it is not all-inclusive. Teachers should feel free to add on or adapt it to the needs of their individual classes and students.

Activity 3: Thesis Consult
Students should develop a thesis statement governing the project. The thesis should address an overall point or message that each of the works (the art, the literature, the film, et cetera) is communicating about a central motif or concern of the period, specifically fragmentation, alienation, mechanization, isolation, or dehumanization -- central issues of this troubled time.

Before proceeding further into the project, the student should consult with the teacher about the validity and scope of the thesis. Some obvious areas of concern for the teacher should be these (again, not an all-inclusive list):

- **Is the thesis "old news" -- that is, has the student oversimplified a complex topic by expressing it in the form of a cliché or truism?**
- **Can the thesis be made more sophisticated by including contrasting ideas -- that is, "Although X idea was true in the early years, Y idea became true in the later ones"?**
- **Has the thesis accounted for each of the "anchor works"?**
- **How does each of the student's works fit into the larger, overall message?**

Activity 4: Outline Consult
Students should develop a clear, purposeful outline accounting for each piece she or he will include in the presentation. In the directions below, students have been given several suggested, classic outline orders in which

they may present information (e.g., chronological, comparison-contrast, genre), but teachers should feel free to add further strategies for structuring and presenting information.

Students should consult with the teacher regarding their outlines before proceeding further with the project.

Some obvious areas of concern for the teacher should be these (again, not an all-inclusive list):

- Has the student accounted for the anchor texts? In what way does each anchor text provide a message about the central motif the student has chosen?
- Has the student accounted for each of the 3-2-1 pieces? In what way does each piece of art, text, or music communicate a message about the central motif the student has chosen?
- Does the order the student has chosen make logical sense?
- Is there a more effective order in which the pieces could be assembled?
- Is there a piece which "doesn't fit" the overall message or structure?

Activity 5: Narration Consult

Students should develop spoken narration for this project; however, this narration can take a variety of forms. Students can do the classic "PowerPoint narration" approach in which they speak before an audience, introduce the slides, explain how each piece of art or literature contributes to the overall thesis, and so on. Conversely, students can narrate one of the works of literature or nonfiction, selecting particularly poignant or appropriate pieces to accompany the artwork (see basically every film Ken Burns has ever made for outstanding examples!) or can embed pre-recorded narration into their projects.

Teachers should consult with students to verify that they have chosen at least TWO of these methods (or have devised some other approaches) and determine how effective these choices would be at communicating the student's message in the project.

Assessment: Judging the Presentations

Teachers should ideally develop their own rubrics for this assignment, as the ability level and needs of classes are highly variable; however, some basic guidelines might be helpful and are included below.

Superior	These projects satisfy all the criteria for a satisfactory presentation AND exceed it in the following ways: • **Complexity**. The student selected a challenging approach (e.g., to explore divergent thought within one motif or the interaction of two or more motifs) rather than a simpler task. • **Development**. The student went above and beyond the minimal level, including far more than two anchor texts and the 3-2-1 pieces. • **Analysis**. The student's analysis of the art, anchor texts, and other elements was detailed and sophisticated. • **Innovation**. The student's use of media or narration was original, compelling, and interesting.
Satisfactory	The student's project adequately fulfilled all of the required elements, particularly the following: **Thesis**. The thesis expressed a coherent and appropriate message about the student's motif. • Note: Without this element, a project should not be graded in the "satisfactory" category. **Organization**. The organization was clear and obvious. Though not necessarily original or

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	innovative, the organization was appropriate and consistent. **Analysis**. The analysis of the two anchor texts and the 3-2-1 pieces was appropriate. Each one was clearly tied to the project's major motif. At the lower end of this range, the student may not have exceeded the minimum requirements or may not have exceeded them much. **Narration**. Narration was presented in two forms, both of which were appropriate for the task. Narration was clear, audible, and focused on exploring and explaining the thesis of the work.
Unsatisfactory	The student's project did not meet a satisfactory level of mastery in ONE or MORE of the following ways: **Thesis**. The thesis may not have clearly expressed a message ABOUT the motif, but may have substituted a simpler task such as substituting motif for theme (e.g., "This project is about alienation"). **Organization**. The organization did not follow a coherent, logical order. One or more elements (the anchor pieces or 3-2-1 selections) may not have been included in the project or may have been included very superficially, with minimal discussion. **Analysis**. Analysis stayed largely on the surface level of the text or art. The student did not clearly tie the work to the motif or explain what message each major text conveyed about the motif. Major texts may have been included superficially, with minimal discussion or relevance. **Narration**. Narration was not presented in two different forms, was not clear, or was not purposeful. Narration may not have been expressed in standard English or may have been inappropriate for the context.

Student Directions

Presentation Project: Art and Literature of Prewar Europe
Overview: You will be doing research on a particularly rich period of European literature, art, music, and culture, looking at how the tensions and concerns of this era are reflected in its creative productions. Using several "anchor pieces" as the foundations for your project, you will explore how other creative productions from this period commented upon and existed in conversation with your "anchor pieces" about a prominent motif.

Step One: **Choose Your Motif**	Your project will be organized around a central motif and each of your pieces will make some kind of commentary ABOUT this motif. Choose wisely!
	MOTIF LIST • **Fragmentation** • **Alienation** • **Isolation** • **Mechanization** • **Dehumanization**
	Note: If you have another motif you would like to explore, propose it to your teacher BEFORE engaging in any work on this project, please.
Step Two: **Read the "Anchor Pieces"**	Some pieces in this project will serve as "anchors" or foundations around which you will build your project. You will need to have read ONE poem and ONE story from the list below (for a total of two works) and explore how or in what way the two required pieces give us insight into the motif you chose. For example, what message does "The Trial" communicate about alienation?
	• T. S. Eliot, "<u>The Hollow Men</u>" • T.S. Eliot, "<u>The Waste Land</u>" • Franz Kafka, "<u>The

	Metamorphosis" Franz Kafka, "The Trial"
Step Three: **Find 3-2-1**	You will need to find a minimum of the following elements from European art, literature, and culture in the period from 1918-1933 to include in your presentation. **Each piece must make a comment or provide some insight into the motif you have chosen.** Please feel free to use the list of possible resources below or see your teacher for approval of off-list resources BEFORE incorporating them into your presentation. • **Three pieces of visual art** from this period. This may include painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, advertising, propaganda, or other visual art form. • **Two pieces of literature, journalism, nonfiction piece, or film** from this period. These two pieces will be chosen **in addition** to your two "anchor pieces" (for a total of four pieces of literature or film) • **One piece of music** from this period. The music may be classical, popular, or from a theater or musical production.
Step Four: **Plan and Organize Thesis**	Once you have chosen the motif, read the two anchor pieces, found your "3-2-1" elements, you will need to synthesize the information into a coherent thesis that your presentation will explore and develop. Answer the following questions to help you develop an appropriate thesis for this project. **1. What message does X piece of literature (or art, or music) communicate about my motif?** For example, what does "The Hollow Men" communicate to us about fragmentation? What is Kafka's message about alienation in "The Metamorphosis"? **2. Why do I think so? What proof do I have?** For example, what is the perfect scene to demonstrate that Kafka is communicating XYZ idea about alienation in "The Trial"? **3. How does this piece of literature fit into the history or culture of the time? How is it reacting to the major events of the time – or predicting them?**

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4. Repeat this process for each literary, artistic, or musical piece you intend to include.

5. Synthesize these elements into a coherent whole. Ask, "ALL TOGETHER, what is the major message these works send about X motif?"

At this stage of the project, please meet with your teacher to explain your thesis and discuss how each piece relates to the larger motif. Your teacher may suggest that you seek complexity (rather than avoid it!) by modifying your focus, or s/he might suggest works which fit your project in addition to those you have chosen.

Step Five: **Plan and Organize Presentation**	Once you have a solid idea of what specific message or point each piece you have chosen will be making, you will need to assemble your pieces in a coherent order for presenting to your audience. Some suggested orders include the following. Please be aware that these are NOT the only orders in which you could reasonably arrange your information. **1.** **Chronological Order** In this arrangement, all pieces are grouped by their date of composition, usually from earliest-latest. The focus here is, "How did attitudes about X motif develop over this period of time?" **2.** **Genre Order** In this arrangement, visual art, literature, or other pieces are grouped together, e.g., all the art first, all the architecture second, all the literature third. The focus here is, "How did these different disciplines all address X motif in their different ways?" **3.** **Comparison-Contrast** **Order** In this arrangement, visual art, literature, and other pieces are grouped by comparison and contrast. Works which are communicating similar messages about X motif are paired with works which are communicating very different messages about X motif. The focus here is, "What were the different messages about X motif during this era?" Again, these are not the only possible orders; they are only the most traditional. At this stage, you will wish to consult with your teacher to discuss the order of presentation.

Step Six: **Plan Your Narration**	**You will be narrating the presentation**, speaking clearly before an audience. There are several forms this narration can take. **Choose at least TWO.** 1. **Classic verbal narration** You will speak aloud, using prompt cards, outlines, or the slide information to help guide your narration. Convey a clear perspective, use standard English, and clearly communicate your line of reasoning. Your narration may be formal or informal as appropriate to the subject and topic. 2. **Embedded narration** Some presentation software allows you to pre-record your narration and embed it into the presentation itself. Please follow guidelines above for "classic verbal narration." 3. **Film** You may incorporate a short film of yourself as appropriate -- reading one of the Eliot poems, for example, or reenacting a scene from one of the novels or nonfiction pieces. 4. **Recitation** You may read aloud or recite one of the pieces -- for example, a letter or document from the period, a particularly meaningful quote that sheds light on the artwork or other information displayed on the slide, part or all of the poetry or stories -- the possibilities are very extensive.
Step Seven: **Present Your Work**	Your teacher will specify length of speech or number of slides, although 4-6 minutes should probably be a minimum time for a project of this scope. The following are general tips for a presentation of this nature. 1. Presentations may be done on PowerPoint or other presentation software. Please make sure your PowerPoint or presentation is compatible with classroom equipment or bring a laptop to hook up to a projector. 2. **You will be narrating the presentation**, speaking clearly before an audience. Please make sure your narration is clear, focused, and audible. 3. Music may be embedded into the presentation or played separately. 4. Each slide should be easily read. Please do not overload the slides with a great deal of text in small font. 5. Slides should feature the following traits: **Note**: Individual slides may have some (but not all) of this information; however, all slides should possess clear relevance to the thesis. 　　* Information about the pre-WWII period 　　* Relevant moments or selections from the two "anchor pieces"

*Artwork or text

Note: On slides featuring art, the title of the work and the artist's, architect's, or filmmaker's name must be present.)

6. Description or information of HOW this piece (this work of art, this text, this building, this piece of music) communicates a message about the motif you have chosen as the central focus of your presentation.
7. A slide near the end that acts as a summation of the major thesis for this project.
8. Your final slide needs to be the Works Cited for this project. Using MLA style, please credit all sources.

Student Resources: Places to Start

The following is an (admittedly brief) list of places to start researching the wide array of art, photography, film, architecture, and literature of this period. Please feel free to add works as needed or appropriate.

Art	• Dadaism • Cubism • Kathe Kollwitz
Architects and Architecture	• Walter Gropius • Bauhaus School • Functionalism
Literary and Philosophical Movements	• Imagism • Futurism • Dadaism • Existentialism
Film and Theater	• Kurt Weill and Bertoldt Brecht • *The Threepenny Opera* • *Metropolis*
Music	• Kurt Weill and Bertoldt Brecht • Arnold Schoenberg • Stravinsky • Note: The 1960s rock group The Doors covered a Weill/Brecht song, "Whiskey Bar." • Cabaret culture
Science	• Quantum physics • Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle