

**Journal Entry 1**

Daniel Akpovi

School of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University

WCS 100L: Introduction to World Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Gabriela Christie Toletti

January 31, 2026

## **Topic B - About Video "The Danger of the Single Story" by Chimamanda Adichie**

### **Journal Entry Prompt:**

What does Chimamanda Adichie warn us about? What does she mean by "the single story"? What is according to her, the danger of hearing only a "single story" about another person or country? What examples of "the single story" does she give? What are the connections between the concepts of "single story", "stereotype", and "power"? Why do you think she felt compelled to share these ideas about "the single story"? Is her speech effective? Explain. What are your thoughts about the issues raised by the author in her speech? Can you give examples of having been faced with "a single story" in your life? What do you take from this speech? Was the speech instructive, thought provoking, and/or interesting? Explain. (8 sentences minimum)

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### **Journal Entry**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns listeners about a common habit: reducing people or places to one repeated narrative. She calls this habit "the single story." A single story narrows human life down to one angle and then shuts out curiosity, nuance and empathy. Adichie argues danger grows when one narrative becomes the default point of view. People start to expect one script, then judge anyone who does not match that. An entire population's life is reduced into symbols and their dignity suffers. Fear and pity take the place of attention. She shares several examples of the "single story". As a child in Nigeria, Adichie read many British and American books, then wrote stories of snow, blue eyes personage, and foreign food. Adichie learned one story about her family's houseboy, Fide, that is focused on poverty. A visit to his village revealed skill and creativity, especially in the making of woven baskets.

In college, a roommate assumed Africa meant disaster and assumed Adichie lacked English. A professor even dismissed her novel as “not African” because characters lived middle class lives. Adichie also admits a “single story” about Mexicans shaped by U.S. media, then a visit to Guadalajara showed ordinary life and sparked shame. The concept of "single story" is connected to stereotypes because if something is repeated it seems true. “Single story” also links to power as groups that control publishing, news, and education determine which stories is told and which ones get ignored. I have been faced with such a "single story" thinking in some everyday conversations. Being of African origin I have been asked countless of times questions that do not make sense to me; like, do people keep lions as pets back in Africa? Another one is that on hot summer days when I complain about the heat, coworkers would tell me that I should not complain since I am from Africa, as if Africa has one climate and as if my experience with weather should go according to some stereotype. Comments like these demonstrate the substitution of one simple picture for actual knowledge, when many parts of Africa are cooler than parts of the United States, and heat is experienced differently depending on the place and the time of year. Adichie's talk is effective because it remains personal and specific. It pushed me to look for multiple sources, listen actively and treat people as whole.

**Journal Entry 2**

Daniel akpovi

School of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University

WCS 100L: Introduction to World Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Gabriela Christie Toletti

February 07, 2026

**Story or Poem Chosen: "I'm your Horse in the Night" by Luisa Valenzuela**

**Journal Entry Prompt:**

Write this journal entry about one of the following short stories or poems: About "Charles Atlas Also Dies", "Can You?", "The Ballad of the Two Grandfathers", "I'm your Horse in the Night", "Phantom Palace", "The United Fruit Company", or "Poet's Obligation"

Why did you choose to write about that particular short story or poem? What is the main topic of the story you decided to write about? What message(s) was the author trying to convey? Is it effective? Would you recommend that literature selection to others? Explain. Does the literature selection express or portray aspects of the culture and history of Latin America or the Caribbean? Explain. (8 sentences minimum)

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**Journal Entry**

I chose Luisa Valenzuela's "I'm Your Horse in the Night" because this story does not look away from state violence, something that I am a little bit familiar with given me origins of an African country. The story is about a woman who receives her lover, a political dissident called Beto, during a secret visit by night. They share intimacy with the danger outside, and events following show his death and her interrogation by the authorities. Valenzuela demonstrates how military dictatorships in Argentina in the 1970s used disappearance as a systematic tool of terror and examines how people hang on to private truth when public reality is turned into a lie. I found the choice effective because the voice abruptly changes from sensual warmth with music and cachaca to sudden horror, and mental scrambling match the instability of life under dictatorship. I would recommend this text to everyone who is looking to understand Latin American history through personal narrative

rather than dry textbooks, as the story makes statistics about political repression very human. The literature selection absolutely portrays specific aspects of the Argentine culture and history, particularly the "Dirty War" period when the military juntas disappeared thousands of leftist activists; references within the text to throwing victims from helicopters into rivers align with the documented historical atrocities committed between 1976 and 1983 (Aguila, 2006). Valenzuela captures the unique cultural atmosphere of Buenos Aires, with the Brazilian music of Gal Costa, and the Afro-Brazilian religious language of "macumba," while revealing the machinery of state terror.

**Reference:**

Aguila, G. (2006). Dictatorship, Society, and Genocide in Argentina: Repression in Rosario, 1976–1983. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(2), 169-180,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520600703040>.

**Journal Entry 3**

Daniel Akpovi

School of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University

WCS 100L: Introduction to World Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Gabriela Christie Toletti

February 14, 2026

## **Topic - About "Juan and Maria; Yesterday" & "Juan and Maria; Today"**

### **Journal Entry Prompt:**

Comment about the local and the universal themes and conflicts presented in these works.

If you are writing about and "Juan and Maria:" What similarities can you identify between "Juan and María; Yesterday" and "Juan and María; Today". What messages regarding migration is author Dino Armas trying to convey? Do these plays have open endings? Explain. What is, in your opinion, the intended audience of these plays? Are these plays effective? Are the topics in these plays current? Comment about the local and the universal themes and conflicts presented in these plays.

If you are writing about "Doña Mercedes": What are the main topics of this story? Comment on the research articles you read about this story. Why did you decide to write about this story? What is Magical Realism? How is the concept of Magical Realism relevant in this story? (8 sentences minimum)

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### **Journal Entry**

Reading Dino Armas' "Juan y Maria; Yesterday" alongside "Juan y Maria; Today" is a bit like seeing the same moment twice, but from two different angles. Time has moved on but the pressure has not. In both plays Juan and Maria appear as a couple on the brink of leaving, and Maria's pregnancy makes migration a question of survival and responsibility, not adventure. And then there is the suitcase. It is sitting there with them, almost like a third person. It contains the hope of a new beginning, but also everything that they are about to

lose. But you feel fear beneath it all: for them, leaving means walking out into the unknown with no guarantee that they will be treated with respect or feel stable. The biggest contrast comes from the direction of the trip. “Yesterday” shows arrival by ship, with hope, soft soil, peace, and “new stars” as a fresh start. “Today” flips the image: departure by plane, passports in hand, tears held back, and anxiety about being labeled “spics,” “foreigners,” or “those people,” plus fear of hard winters and violence abroad.

To me, Armas is saying that migration cycle repeats because people do not leave for fun. Systems push them out, through war, politics, jobs that disappear, and unequal treatment. Both plays have no closures at the end, I think that is on purpose, we do not get the nice end of the story, and so we are left sitting in the same uncertainty as the characters. I think that is why these plays work for everyone, but above all for people who never had to think about leaving home. The simplicity of the scenes and the dialogue being direct make the plays current because it is still the same conversations people have about borders, labor and who gets to be a part of it.

**Journal Entry 4**

Daniel Akpovi

School of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University WCS

100L: Introduction to World Literatures and Cultures Dr.

Gabriela Christie Toletti

February 21, 2026

## **Topic B - Comment about Maya Angelou's life and work**

### **Journal Entry Prompt:**

Write this journal entry about the topics of the videos by Maya Angelou's watched in class and about Maya Angelou's life and work. What messages is Maya Angelou's trying to convey? Is her work powerful? Is her work current and relevant? Would you like to learn more about Maya Angelou. Explain. (8 sentences minimum)

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### **Journal Entry**

After watching the "10 Rules for Success" video, I no longer see Maya Angelou as a distant celebrity writer. I saw someone who had to fight to claim her own voice. She talks through the things she tried, the times she fell short, and the choice she keeps making anyway, to try again. She gives a lot of pieces of advice. She says success can feel "more dangerous" than failure. Failure hurts, but success brings pressure. People expect more from you, and you have to stand by what you say. Another piece of advice is about anger; she says that anger does make sense, especially after injustice; however, she warns against letting anger turn into bitterness, because bitterness destroys the person carrying it. Angelou's list of ways to express oneself, such as writing, painting, dancing, marching, and voting, takes emotions and transforms them into something positive and useful. She also ties courage to every other virtue, as courage allows a person to continue doing what is right, even in face of fear.

Her life experiences support the message she sends. She survived childhood sexual abuse, and remained silent for many years, reading a lot, and memorizing poetry. Eventually, she found her voice again. She did a lot of jobs, such as being the first Black woman to be a

“streetcar conductor in San Francisco”, developed a career in both memoirs, poetry, film, education and civil rights work with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X. She wrote “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,” seven autobiographies, many poems and essays. In 1993, she even read “On the Pulse of Morning” at President Bill Clinton's inauguration (Wikipedia Contributors, 2018).

Angelou’s work feels strong because her messages stay clear and concrete: survive, tell the truth, keep learning, and treat people with dignity. Her writing hits hard because she turns pain into words that feel usable, like something you can carry with you. Her work is current because people still deal with racism and trauma, and people still face the same choice between anger and bitterness. I would like to learn more about her, especially how she built a writing life after everything she went through.

### References:

Evan Carmichael. (2017, May 20). DO THIS, if you can't change your situation. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55YJU1oQME&list=PLiZj->

[Ik9MmM1Nx9o1S0x5T9RHZvhcNmY7](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55YJU1oQME&list=PLiZj-Ik9MmM1Nx9o1S0x5T9RHZvhcNmY7)

Wikipedia Contributors. (2018, November 29). *Maya Angelou*. Wikipedia; Wikimedia

Foundation. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya\\_Angelou](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_Angelou)

**Journal Entry 5**

Daniel Akpovi

School of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University

WCS 100L: Introduction to World Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Gabriela Christie Toletti

March 07, 2026

### **Journal Entry Prompt:**

What are the main topics of this novel? Why do you think the author wrote this novel? What message(s) is the author trying to convey? Would you read another book by this author? Explain. What questions would you like to ask the author? As you read this novel, what did you learn about family dynamics, culture, politics, and history of Haiti and the Dominican Republic? In your opinion, does the author of this novel intend to express, portray, or instruct the reader regarding certain aspects of the culture history, or politics of Haiti and the Dominican Republic? Is the author effective? What parts of the novel interested you the most? Were parts of the novel surprising, moving, and/or shocking to you? Explain. (8 sentences minimum)

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### **Journal Entry**

I must admit that I did not read the full novel itself; I worked with the lecture documents and videos, and those materials gave me enough detail to understand the story, setting, and main concerns. Based upon those materials, the main topics of Edwidge Danticat's "The Farming of Bones" are memory, anti-Haitian racism, violence committed by the State under Trujillo, the struggle to maintain love despite danger, grieving and slow healing after experiencing trauma. Through Amabelle, a Haitian domestic worker living in the Dominican Republic, torn from her lover, Sebastien, who is working in the cane fields during the 1937 killings, this book appears to be an attempt to prevent people from disappearing into history as vague words. Danticat wrote this book because people who lived along the Massacre River appeared to have little or no knowledge of the events that occurred

at this location, and she sought to create a memorial that named suffering and kept it alive in the public memory.

The most important point made in the book is that politics affect daily life. A dictator's obsession with purity, for example, finds its way into day-to-day life through language tests, neighbors turning on neighbors and change in the community's rules. I also gained an understanding of how family and "like family" ties get complicated on Hispaniola. Although Amabelle grew up in a Dominican household, she was still seen as disposable as soon as race and nationality were mentioned. It appears to me that Danticat wants to show the reader's culture, history, and the exercise of power in the normal routines of everyday life, through dreams and through symbols. I think she does this well because of the emotional way she has detailed things in the book. The most shocking parts were how quickly safety disappeared, and how the border became a trap, rather than a line on a map.

Because the book hit me on both the emotional and historical level, I would read another Danticat book. She makes historical pain feel personal without turning it into a lecture. If I had the opportunity, I would ask her, "what conversation does she hope Haitian and Dominican readers who disagree about this book to have, and what topic should they face head-on?"

**Journal Entry 6**

Daniel Akpovi

School of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University

WCS 100L: Introduction to World Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Gabriela Christie Toletti

January 31, 2026

## **Journal Entry 6 - Module V - About "When Black Men's Teeth Speak Out"**

### **Journal Entry Prompt:**

Write this journal entry about a literature selection studied in class from Africa or the Middle East (see the attached document). Comments on topics such as gender roles, women's issues, race relations, and stereotypes. What message(s) are the authors trying to convey? Are the selections effective? Would you recommend one or more of these literature selections to others? Explain. Do these literature selections express, portray, or instruct the reader regarding aspects of the culture, history, or politics of certain regions of Africa? Explain. (8 sentences minimum)

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### **Journal Entry**

This week's literature selection that stayed with me was Yambo Ouologuem's poem "When Black Men's Teeth Speak Out." From my perspective as a Black person from Africa, the poem feels personal because it captures the weight of being seen through stereotype before being seen as fully human. While I was reading it, I felt the anger in it. I felt the sarcasm. The character in the poem is treated as if he were a threat. In fact, the people who are speaking to him seem to have made up their minds about him before he has had the chance to be heard. That felt a little too familiar to me. Too many times, Africa is portrayed through false images of wildness, poverty, violence, and backwards thinking; and people judge Black people based on these false images.

One thing that makes the poem so powerful is how Ouologuem takes all of these false images and stereotypes and throws them right back at the reader. He then shows them as ugly

and foolish. He shows how racism works by showing just how absurdly illogical it really is. The poem is loud. And I believe that is one of the reasons it works. It does not try to make the reader comfortable. Instead, it demands that the reader confronts the lies and fears that create the racial divisions that exist today. To me, the message is simple and clear. Racism strips people of their humanity, and stereotypes are dangerous because they turn real people into images that others feel comfortable judging.

I would recommend this poem to other students. It is short. It is sharp. It is honest. It is teaching a very valuable lesson about how much of Africa has been viewed through a colonial lens and racist views for centuries. It is not painting a soft and/or simple picture of race. Instead, it is pushing back against that. That means a lot. As someone from Africa, I think there is value in readings such as this. Readings like this allow Black voices to be heard for themselves.

**Journal Entry 7**

Daniel Akpovi

School of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University

WCS 100L: Introduction to World Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Gabriela Christie Toletti

April 11, 2026

### **Journal Entry Prompt:**

Write this journal entry about one of the literature selections listed in the course schedule for Asia. Why did you choose to write about that particular literature selection and what interested you about that selection? Before reading that particular literature selection, had you read another literature piece from that part of the world? Explain. What is the main topic of the poem, story, essay, or theater piece you decided to write about? What message(s) was the author trying to convey? Is it effective? Would you recommend that literature selection to others? Explain. Does the literature selection express, portray, or instruct the reader regarding certain aspects of the culture, history, or politics of Asia? Explain. (8 sentences minimum)

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### **Journal Entry**

I chose Mori Yokko's "Spring Storm" because, from my view as someone from Africa, the story felt familiar in a strange way. Not due to familiar settings. But due to the pressure surrounding success, pride and marriage. Initially, it appeared to be a straight success story. Natsuo successfully secures a big role after defeating thirty-four competitors, and thus you would expect a full happy scene. Not at all, but rather, her happiness is painful, almost akin to sorrow. That caught my attention. Then she goes home and lies to her husband and says she failed, even though she passed. At this point, the narrative becomes chilly.

Prior to reading this selection, I had not read another literature piece from Japan. I know some things about Japanese culture, but not from fictions like this. What was interesting about this story was how success and fear were related within the marriage. Rather than responding to his wife's success with pride, Yusuke expressed his concern over

becoming invisible within her sudden fame by comparing himself to "Mr. Judy Garland." He also said that, should Natsuo become more known than him, their divorce would be the best answer. I enjoyed reading about another place in the world while still feeling some of the same emotions that I often experience in my own home place. In many African families too, success is not always a private thing, as it changes how people see you; it also changes roles in the family and puts pressure on love.

The main topic that I feel is explored in this story is the failure of a man to respond appropriately to the success of a woman. Instead of being proud of his wife's accomplishments, Yusuke was concerned about how his existence within the marriage would disappear with her growing fame. His desire for a divorce, should she become more famous, reveals a lot about Yusuke and his attitude towards his wife and their marriage. I believe the story is effective because the message it conveys is relevant in many families, more so than one might imagine. Also, nothing is safe in it. The storm, the elevators that were broken, the scene of Natsuo smoking and standing, all this is off. I would recommend this story. It makes a truthful statement about gender, ambition and how contemporary life alters past expectations.

**Journal Entry 8**

Daniel Akpovi

School of Cybersecurity, Old Dominion University

WCS 100L: Introduction to World Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Gabriela Christie Toletti

April 25, 2026

### **Journal Entry Prompt:**

Write this journal entry about one of the literature selections included in the course for Europe. Why did you choose to write about that particular literature selection and what interested you about that selection? What is the main topic of the poem, story, essay, or play you decided to write about? What message(s) was the author trying to convey? Is it effective? Compare at least one character in the literature piece to another character in another literature piece or in a film. Had you read another literature selection from that same author before this course? Explain. (8 sentences minimum)

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### **Journal Entry**

Frankly, I chose "The Guest" because I already read one of Albert Camus' novels, but this one made me uncomfortable in ways I did not expect. The story is set in a distant Algerian school house where Daru, a French teacher, has received an Arab male prisoner from Balducci, a gendarme. The local authorities require that he delivers the prisoner to the police headquarters in Tinguit. Rather than doing as he is ordered, Daru leaves the prisoner in the school for the night. The next morning, Daru provides for the prisoner and lets him choose between walking to the east to the police, or the south into the desert to freedom. The prisoner chooses the road to prison. Later, someone writes on the blackboard of the school: "You handed over our brother. You will pay for this."

Camus examines how moral choice works in a world that is absurd. He shows that simply acting according to our values or conscience will necessarily result in an ideal consequence. In this case, Daru acted with honor, yet he failed. The prisoner also made what can be seen as an honorable decision regarding his life. However, that decision condemned

Daru in the eyes of the Arab population. This is a lesson that we are responsible for our actions, not their outcomes.

At first glance Daru seems like the grandfather from Heinrich Boll's "The Balek Scales". In both stories, the grandfather and Daru expose the rigged scales and refuse to participate in the colonial violence, respectively. As a result, both face punishment for their refusal to compromise. In each story, the grandfather and Daru experience the loss of their village, and isolation and threats, respectively. Neither man in either story receives a happy ending, as moral stands can cost a lot to the protagonists.

Before this course, I had read Camus' "The Stranger", but in French though. The story in that novel also took place in Algeria where Meursault, a clerical worker who does not care social norms, got tried and sentenced to death after committing an absurd murder on a man on the beach because of the sun (Camus, 1942). While "The Guest" is much more focused and brutal than "The Stranger," both stories do not let the audience believe that good intentions necessarily save anyone.

### **Work Cited**

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. Vintage International, 19 May 1942.