

First Literary Explorations in...

Ancient Wisdom Literature

An MYP Language and Literature guide

A proverb asks us to take a small piece of language seriously. We can read it in a few seconds and still have plenty of work to do. What does its image mean? Why are its two parts arranged in this way? What does it ask us to value, and what happens when we try to live by it?

This unit follows those questions from language and form into the virtues, vices and values of Proverbs. Students compare translations, make specific connections to life, and use a passage from Ecclesiastes to test what they have learned. They then put an interpretation into writing and make something from it for a new audience.

At a glance

- **Subject and level:** MYP Language and Literature; Year 2 / Grade 7.
- **Texts:** Four to six short selections from Proverbs in KJV and NET; one shared passage from Ecclesiastes; and a brief comparison with a proverb from another tradition.
- **Time:** 3–6 weeks at four 50-minute lessons per week. The core takes 12 lessons, or 10 hours. More time allows closer reading, further Ecclesiastes study and revision.
- **Assessment:** Analysis of one proverb, a modern adaptation and a short explanation of the choices behind it.

The MYP framework

Key concept: Communication

Related concepts: Style, structure, purpose

Global context: Identities and relationships

Exploration: Beliefs, values, moral reasoning and individual choice.

Statement of inquiry: Poetic form and figurative language shape how values are communicated and how readers interpret, apply or question them in different contexts.

NB: We are reading these books as literature. Students need to understand their claims and account for their own responses. They are free to question those claims; no affirmation of religious belief is required.

Ancient Wisdom: questions worth pursuing

Factual

- What distinguishes a proverb from other literary forms?
- How do metaphor, simile, personification and metonymy communicate meaning?
- What are synonymous, antithetic and synthetic parallelism?

Conceptual

- How does form shape meaning? How can so few words carry so much?
- How do translation, context and audience influence a reading?
- What changes when we encounter a claim within a longer passage rather than as a saying on its own?

Debatable

- Can ancient wisdom remain useful across times and cultures?
- Does literature have the authority to tell us how to live?
- Are the values we encounter universal, culturally constructed, or both?

What students should learn to do

Students should explain the work done by figurative language and parallel structure, distinguish literal meaning from an implied claim, and infer the virtues, vices and values at issue. They should compare translations and show how a difference in wording can affect a reading.

From there, they should test a claim in a specific situation, consider its limits, and adapt their reading methods for a longer passage. Their writing should connect evidence to an argument; their creative choices should serve a particular audience.

Approaches to learning

- **Communication:** Paraphrase difficult language, cite precisely and explain an interpretation in writing and discussion.
- **Thinking:** Work through images and parallel structures, test applicability, and carry or adapt a method across texts.
- **Social:** Invite someone into the discussion, listen for disagreement and build on a competing idea.
- **Self-management:** Annotate, outline, revise and explain what changed in your understanding.

Learner profile: Thinker, communicator, principled, open-minded, reflective.

Ancient Wisdom: teaching the unit

Language and form communicate meaning.

Three lessons. Begin with a definition of the proverb and a shared example. Paraphrase it. Work through the difficult words before asking what its images mean. Introduce metaphor, simile, personification and metonymy across suitable examples; then examine synonymous, antithetic and synthetic parallelism.

Keep returning to what a device does. If students identify a metaphor, have them explain the comparison and what it helps us understand. If they name a kind of parallelism, have them explain the relationship between the lines. Use the features present in the proverb; there is no reason to hunt for all of them in every example.

The 3 V's belong to real life.

Three lessons. Infer the virtue, vice and values, then compare a selected proverb in KJV and NET. Discuss a specific contemporary decision in which its advice might matter. “This helps us be good” gives us very little to examine. A student deciding whether to repeat a rumor gives us something to work with.

Compare briefly with a proverb from a student’s language or a tradition you introduce. Use discussion and an Atlas round to test the connections students are making. Ask what changes with the situation, and whether there are circumstances in which the advice needs qualification.

A longer passage asks more of its reader.

Two lessons. Read one shared passage from Ecclesiastes with enough context to follow the speaker’s thought. Track claims, images and recurring ideas. Which tools from proverb study still help? What else must we attend to when a thought develops across several verses?

Ask students to decide whether the passage reinforces, qualifies or challenges a claim they met earlier. Require a short comparison with evidence and one question they still have. Choose a passage that makes this investigation worthwhile, and leave the conclusion open to the reading.

Put the interpretation into words.

Four lessons. Use the Single Paragraph Outline to arrange the claim, evidence and reasoning. Model the movement from language and form to the 3 V’s and a concrete application. Students draft, receive feedback, revise, and create the adaptation and commentary described next. Use two connected paragraphs if the argument needs them.

Core and extension: Everyone reads the shared Ecclesiastes passage. Further passages, independent inquiry and additional translation comparisons belong to the longer version of the unit.

Ancient Wisdom: Wisdom for Now

How does a proverb communicate a value, and what should a modern adaptation preserve, change or challenge for its audience?

1/ Explain the proverb

Choose one studied proverb. Write **250–350 words**, in one or two connected paragraphs, explaining its claim and how its language and form communicate it. Include:

- Analysis of at least two relevant details or features.
- A brief KJV–NET comparison, with a precise reference from each and an explanation of a similarity or difference in effect.
- An explanation of how one choice may influence a reader.
- A specific contemporary situation in which the claim is useful, limited or open to challenge.

Cite the book, chapter, verse and translation. Work out what the proverb says before deciding what to do with it.

2/ Adapt it for an audience

Choose a particular adolescent audience and situation: students deciding what to do about a rumor, for example. Preserve, change or challenge the proverb's claim through one of these forms:

- A short narrative or script of **120–200 words**.
- A **60–90-second** oral or dramatic piece.
- A visual composition with carefully chosen wording.
- A contemporary proverb with a brief accompanying scenario.

Keep it small enough to make and revise in class. Its success depends on what your choices communicate.

3/ Explain your choices

In **100–150 words**, identify the audience and explain what you preserved, changed or challenged, and why.

Explain two choices and their intended effects; connect one to the original text. Show how the new audience or situation affects the meaning. If others performed with you, identify your contribution.

Notes for the teacher

The analysis explains the proverb; the commentary explains the adaptation. Keep the two jobs clear. Grade the reading, reasoning and communication, including a well-supported challenge to the proverb. Agreement with it earns nothing by itself.

Use paraphrases, annotations, translation comparisons, the 3 V's, seminar notes, the Ecclesiastes comparison and outlines to guide teaching. Atlas rounds and the Ecclesiastes work remain formative. The word ranges are suggestions, not grading criteria. Offer vocabulary and syntax help, bilingual planning, models and rehearsal as needed. A short proverb can still be difficult English. Use the school's agreed assessment access arrangements.

Some notes on the methods

Three kinds of reading

Skim reading: Look over the text. Notice the title, length, opening, ending and repeated words or ideas. Get your bearings and decide what you want to find out.

Superficial reading: Read through to get the whole. Keep going when a word or passage is difficult; mark it for a return. Here “superficial” means an initial reading for the gist. It has a purpose. Students need some sense of the whole before they can make much of its parts.

Analytical reading: Return to those parts and ask how they work together. Annotate, make a claim, find evidence, and test whether the rest of the text supports it. Readers can move among these approaches as their purposes change.

CER and the Single Paragraph Outline

A claim says what you think. Evidence gives your reader something to examine. Reasoning explains how that evidence supports the claim. Students often need the most help with that last step: putting a quotation after a statement does not explain their relationship.

The Single Paragraph Outline makes the arrangement visible before students draft. Establish the topic, audience and purpose; gather details; then organize a claim, supporting points, evidence and reasoning. Write the topic and concluding sentences with that argument in view. A second paragraph can begin with a second outline.

What is an Atlas Map?

In Atlas Seminar, the **Territory** is the text or source, the **Legend** is a concept or claim about it, and the **Ink** is the method or constraint used to connect them. The resulting creation is the **Map**. It might be a scene, drawing or recitation; “Map” names its job, not its shape.

The teacher assigns the same Ink to the teams for a round. Teams choose their Territory–Legend pairing, make the Map and present it. Other teams try to recognize the pairing. After the reveal, discuss what made the connection visible and what readers saw differently. The rulebook explains the full process.

NB: Recognition gives useful feedback, but a vote cannot settle the quality of an interpretation. Look at the text, the choices and the explanation before making an assessment judgment.

Assessment: what counts as evidence?

Use these task notes with your school's Year 2 descriptors, and share the expectations before students begin. The achievement-level descriptors remain the basis for assessment.

A: Analysing — strands i–iv

In **Ancient Wisdom**, look for an explanation of language, form and reader effects, supported by precise references. The KJV–NET comparison should explain what the similar or different wording does.

B: Organizing — strands i–iii

The argument needs an order a reader can follow and clear connections between ideas. References should identify the biblical book, chapter, verse and translation. The commentary should explain creative decisions without repeating the analysis.

C: Producing text — strands i–iii

Use the **adaptation**, together with the commentary and evidence of the student's contribution. Look for engagement with an idea, imaginative treatment, deliberate stylistic choices and details chosen for an audience.

D: Using language — strands i–iv

Use the individual analysis and commentary, and the adaptation where appropriate, to assess vocabulary, sentence control, register, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Collect oral evidence when assessing pronunciation. Add **strand v** when every assessed student has an observed or recorded opportunity to use non-verbal communication.

A group can make the Map. Each student must show the thinking.

Keep each student's analysis and commentary, along with a planning note or identifiable written, visual or oral contribution. Observe the work. If a contribution is unclear, ask for an individual explanation or revision. A group product alone cannot show what each student can do.

Planning across the year

The IB guide provides criteria for Years 1, 3 and 5; use your school's Year 2 progression. All strands of all four criteria must be assessed at least twice across the year. Plan accordingly; each unit need not carry every strand.

Reference: IB Language and literature guide, updated April 2023. Use the school's current Programme Resource Centre copy for the official requirements and descriptors.