

## Environmental Uncanny Lesson Plan

### Required Materials

#### Physical:

- Print out story if desired

#### Digital:

- “Floating” by Pitchaya Sudbanthad: <https://www.guernicamag.com/floating/>

### Stage 0 - Scaffolding

#### Students Already Know:

- Students should be familiar with plot devices such as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution
- Students should be familiar with the literary term “setting”
- Students should have already read “Floating” by Pitchaya Sudbanthad
- Students can watch OSU’s “What is the Uncanny” video before this lesson
- This lesson could be preceded by the following lessons:
  - Narrative Arc
  - Cli-Fi
  - Setting

#### Key Terms/Vocabulary:

Throughout the lesson, the teacher should highlight and clearly define these terms (and how they may change)

- Setting (n): The environment or surroundings in which a person or thing is ‘set’; the literary framework of a narrative or other composition
- Agency (n): Ability or capacity to act or exert power; active working or operation; action, activity
- Animate (adj): Endowed with life, living, alive; (esp. in later use) alive and having the power of movement, like an animal.
  - Animacy (n): The quality or condition of being alive or animate; animate existence; an instance of this.
- Climate Change (n): An alteration in the regional or global climate; esp. the change in global climate patterns increasingly apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and linked largely with increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses caused by human activity
- Imperialism (n): The extension and maintenance of a country’s power or influence through trade, diplomacy, military or cultural dominance, etc.

#### Literary Terms

- Supernatural (Freudian) Uncanny (from <https://www.freud.org.uk/2019/09/18/the-uncanny/>): The uncanny arises when childhood beliefs we have grown out of suddenly seem real. Freud called it ‘the return

of the repressed'. Examples of situations that can provoke an uncanny feeling include inanimate objects coming alive, thoughts appearing to have an effect in the real world, seeing your double (the doppelgänger effect), representations of death such as ghosts or spirits, and involuntary repetitions.

- See also: OSU's "What is the Uncanny?" video

- Environmental Uncanny (from Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*): "The environmental uncanny is not the same as the uncanniness of the supernatural: it is different precisely because it pertains to nonhuman forces and beings...animals...and freakish weather events have no human referents at all" (32). Ghosh's example is "freakish weather events" that "are the mysterious work of our own hands returning to haunt us in unthinkable shapes and forms" (32).

### Stage 1 – Desired Results

**Content Standard(s):**

*These standards are pulled from the Common Core State Standard Initiatives. Feel free to reference state-specific standards when necessary*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5

- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6

- Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

**Understanding (s)/goals**

Students will understand that:

- The general theory of the Uncanny (that which is familiar and repressed in the past has returned haunt the present in an unfamiliar form)
- How the Uncanny raises questions about that is a rational or irrational belief
- Climate change has changed how the Uncanny operates in fiction (Supernatural Uncanny vs Environmental Uncanny)

**Essential Question(s):**

- What is the Uncanny?
- What is the Environmental Uncanny?
- How do we determine what is rational?
- How do we determine what is irrational?
- How are our understandings of the

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How the form/function of the Uncanny changes in the Environmental Uncanny</li> </ul>	<p>irrational and rational changing in light of climate change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do shifting notions of the irrational and rational evoke the Environmental Uncanny?</li> </ul>
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**Student objectives (outcomes):**

Students will be able to:

**Identify the components of the Environmental Uncanny**

**Analyze the Environmental Uncanny in a piece of literature**

**Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence**

**Performance Task(s):**

Identify and analyze aspects of the Environmental Uncanny in “Floating” by Pitchaya Sudbanthad

**Other Evidence:**

**Stage 3 – Learning Plan**

**Learning Activities:**

**1. Free Write**

- Think back to when you were younger. What were some of the “childish” ways you thought about or understood the world?

**2. Pair + Share**

- Share your freewriting thoughts with a partner near you

**3. Class Share**

- Gather thoughts on what our “childish” understandings were.
- Pose the question: Why did you abandon those beliefs?

**4. As a class, students will watch Oregon State University’s Literary Terms Series: The Uncanny in Climate Fiction video**

**5. Give students “Identify, Analyze, and Application” worksheet about “Floating” (questions are below and worksheet is attached). Worksheets can be completed individually or in groups.**

**6. If time allows, share answers from the worksheet as a class, particularly the Application/Reflection questions.**

Identify:

- Who models the “rational” in this story? What are these models of rationality?
- Who models the “irrational” in this story? What are these models of irrationality?
- What is the “childish” understanding of the world as animate?
- What is the unfamiliar form the environment is now taking?
- Who/what is being “haunted” by this unfamiliar form? Can you determine why?

Analyze:

- How does the haunting form of environment comment on a repressed understanding of the environment?
- What is the haunting revealing about the character and their understanding of the environment?
- What societal/cultural structures or understandings might also be haunted by the Environmental Uncanny? What does this haunting reveal?

Application/Reflection (Can be used as a wrap-up question for the lesson if students share their responses)

- What kinds of “irrational” or childish ways of understanding the world have, in actuality, actually turned out to be realistic and rational?
- Our examples so far of the Environmental Uncanny have revolved around weather events. Can you think of other ways we might see the Environmental Uncanny haunting us through other non-humans in our environment?
  - examples might include animals, plants, viruses, buildings (like the video example), etc

**Differentiation**

- For higher-level learners:
  - Teacher could ask students to perform Step 5 with a previous in-class reading OR from “When We Are Ruins, Dance on Us” by M Jesuthasan
  - Teacher could ask students to perform Step 5 with a previous in-class reading OR from “The Last Almond” by Zoe Young
- For ELL students:
  - Teacher could provide translation materials of any written handouts, OR allow students to use translation technologies
  - Teacher could collaborate with ESOL teacher/aid if available
- For students with learning accommodations:
  - Teacher should allow any screen-readers and use transcripts when needed

# The Environmental Uncanny

On another piece of paper, answer the following about “Floating” by Pitchaya Sudbanthad

## **Identify:**

- Who models the “rational” in this story? What are these models of rationality?
- Who models the “irrational” in this story? What are these models of irrationality?
- What is the “childish” understanding of the world as animate?
- What is the unfamiliar form the environment is now taking?
- Who/what is being “haunted” by this unfamiliar form? Can you determine why?

## **Analyze:**

- How does the haunting form of environment comment on a repressed understanding of the environment?
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## **Application/Reflection:**

- What kinds of “irrational” or childish ways of understanding the world have, in actuality, actually turned out to be realistic and rational?
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