

***Aunty Lee's Delights Lesson Plan 4***  
 The Amateur Detective in *Aunty Lee's Delights*  
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**Overview:**

This lesson is designed to explore another generic trope of the cozy mystery: the amateur detective. Students will compare Aunty Lee to the major police detective figure, SSS Salim. To determine what makes Aunty Lee a more effective detective, students will conduct both a character analysis and an intersectional analysis of Salim and Aunty Lee. The lesson covers information from the first twelve chapters of the novel and is designed to follow previous lectures that cover some of the basics of life in Singapore, as well as discussions on the generic tropes of the cozy mystery genre.

The Intersectional Reading activity in this lesson is adapted from the “Intersectional Reading” exercise included in Diana Fuss and William A. Gleason’s *The Pocket Instructor, Literature: 101 exercises for the college classroom* (Fuss and Gleason 66–70).

**Objectives:**

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Define what intersectionality is and how it can be used as a method in literary studies
- Conduct an intersectional literary analysis through a comparison between Aunty Lee and Salim
- Compare the varying intersectional factors that shape a person’s ability to navigate social interactions and their access to information, particularly intersections of race and class

**Class Structure:**

*2 minutes:* Recap

- Remind students about previously covered content by asking two to three students to remind the class about the following topics.
  - The conventions of the cozy mystery genre
    - Amateur detective (typically a woman), has some form of a gimmick to solve mysteries (e.g. food), does not contain violent descriptions compared to other detective genres, such as the hardboiled detective mystery.
  - Singaporean sociocultural dynamics
    - Very low crime rate, punitive (harsh penalties for chewing gum), complex diasporic history (former British colony, comprised of diverse ethnic groups from China, Malaysia, and India)
  - Singaporean cuisine
    - The food reflects different conceptions of Singaporean identity (Aunty Lee’s decree that local ingredients means local food), reflects the ethnic diversity of Singapore.
  - After reviewing these three topics, the instructor will remind students of another convention that has yet to be covered: the amateur vs professional detective.

*2 minutes:* Filling in the Gaps of Policing in Singapore

- Provide some background information about policing in Singapore, using textual evidence on pg. 80 to ground this information. This information will be context for the modeling activity.
  - First, clarify where Salim is located in the greater hierarchy of the Singapore Police Force by providing students with an image that displays the different ranks. Senior Staff Sergeant (SSS) is positioned near the lower-middle ranks ([Singapore Police Force Ranks](#)).
  - One important detail to mention is that anyone can climb the ranks up to Station Inspector (one rank above Salim) without any degrees. This will be relevant to draw on during the modeling activity.
- Show students images of the Bukit Tinggi Police Station, where Salim is currently appointed. Provide the following quote to fill in details about the location:
  - “SSS Salim was the newly appointed officer in charge of the Bukit Tinggi Neighbourhood Police Post, which included Binjai Park in its jurisdiction. This was a quiet, mostly upmarket residential area with few problems. The main reason for having a neighborhood police post there was because of the presence of the Swiss embassy, the International Community School, the Canadian International School, the German European School, and the homes of some of the wealthiest residents in Singapore” (Yu 80).
- Summarize important details from the passage. Salim works in a rich, upper-class area that also has connections to larger international communities (the Swiss embassy, schools from Canada and Germany). This detail is important for the modeling activity, as part of his concern about his post is his socioeconomic position relative to the upper-middle class residents.

*6 minutes:* Modeling an Intersectional Analysis

- Instructor will then provide students with passages from pgs. 80–81 and 150.
  - “SSS Salim Mawar was just trying to find his feet. Awarded the Singapore Police Forces Overseas Scholarship, he had graduated from the National University of Singapore with a bachelor of law (honors) and almost immediately proceeded to obtain his master’s of philosophy in criminology and law from Cambridge University. This was his first official post since returning to Singapore. He was well aware (some had said it to his face in warning) that he was being groomed to be one of the token Malays in the leading party. He was also well aware many of the English-educated, middle-class Chinese in his homeland treated him as more of an outsider than he had been in England” (80).
  - “His aide, Officer Pang, though Chinese (and speaking English, Mandarin, and Cantonese as well as a smattering of Malay and Hokkien) did not share this advantage [of physically blending into his environment]” (81).
  - “SSS Salim knew he was a responsible, hardworking man who had risen through the ranks through his own efforts. He could do a good routine job. But when it came to cases like this, he felt unskilled compared to officers with more qualifications—for example Commissioner Raja, who not only had a law degree from a Singapore university but further degrees in criminology and criminal psychology from Cambridge and Harvard...” (150).

- Starting with the passages from 80–81, the instructor will work through the text to identify background details about Salim, mirroring what students will practice themselves for the Close Character Reading Handout. The instructor should write these details on the board, organizing them as a list based on these factors.
  - Education: Singapore Police Forces Overseas Scholarship, National University of Singapore, Cambridge University
  - Ethnicity: “Token” Malay
  - Class: Lower-middle class
- The instructor will then turn to the passage on pg. 150 and briefly conduct a similar analysis of Commissioner Raja, mostly focusing on his education (Singapore, Cambridge, and Harvard).
- The instructor will model an intersectional analysis by asking students to consider why Salim feels unqualified, despite these feelings of insecurity supposedly stemming from the Commissioner’s superior educational background, which are qualifications Salim shares.
  - Focus on the intersections between Salim’s education and his status as a “token Malay.” Salim likely feels disqualified because (1) he did not come from a wealthy background and relied on a scholarship to fund his education, which can be perceived negatively as a “handout” and intensifies his outsider status to other middle-class Chinese; and (2) he does not see his education as a reflection of his skills, in part because he is placed in an area that does not allow him to gain the experience he wants.
  - As you tease out how these different categories intersect, emphasize that they are contextual based on Salim’s social and geographic setting.
- After modeling, explain to the students that what you just did is called an intersectional analysis. Provide a formal but easily understandable definition of intersectionality, so that students can draw connections between the modeling activity and the formal definition.
  - Intersectionality describes overlapping or interdependent systems of discrimination and privilege related to age, disabilities, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, sex, socioeconomic status, sexuality, etc.

*10 minutes:* Close Character Reading Handout / Small Groups Part 1

- Place students into small groups of no more than 3. Give each group the “Close Character Reading Handout” and tell them to look at pgs 155–157. Ask students to identify how various factors of the characters’ identity inform their ability to be detective figures. Each group will be provided with suggested pages to look at but will be encouraged to find other examples to fill out as much detail as possible.

*10 minutes:* Intersectional Reading Handout / Small Groups Part 2

- After students have filled out their handout, they will be given the “Intersectional Reading Handout.” Using the information they filled out in the first handout, students will now consider how these various factors intersect together. In doing so, they will return to some of their previous conclusions on what makes each character an effective detective figure and determine how these intersections complicate their ability to be a detective.

*20 minutes: Class Discussion*

- Ask each group to share their observations from one category. As they share, the instructor will fill out a clean copy of the handout. If their impressions appear vague, ask them to explain how the text led them to these conclusions.
- The following questions can be used to guide discussion and help students relate their findings to the convention of the amateur vs professional detective.
  - Who do we think is the more effective detective?
  - What would the novel be like if Salim was the lead? Do we think he would be able to figure out what is going on without Auntie Lee?
  - Do we think Auntie Lee needed Salim to conduct her investigation successfully or that she would have figured it out on her own? What gives you your impression?
  - The convention of the amateur detective being a woman typically leads to the amateur detective being treated less seriously. How does Auntie Lee complicate this idea that her gender might be more of a barrier than a strength in her detective work?
- End the discussion with a recap.
  - An intersectional analysis allows us to recognize how various facets of one's identity (gender, ethnicity, education, class) can complicate one's ability to navigate spaces and social situations.
  - We see this through a comparison of Auntie Lee and Salim. The amateur detective, often gendered as female, is better equipped to navigate certain social situations, but is often not taken seriously. Despite the limitations gender might place on Auntie Lee, her class, ethnic status, and gender intersect in such a way that allows her better access to information and even resources from the police than Salim, as an active officer, has for this case.

**Sources:**

“CMPB | Ranks and Drill Commands.” *Central Manpower Base (CMPB)*, <https://www.cmpb.gov.sg/web/portal/cmpb/home/life-in-ns/saf/ranks-and-drill-commands>. Accessed 18 Mar. 2024.

Fuss, Diana, and William A. Gleason. *The Pocket Instructor: Literature: 101 Exercises for the College Classroom*. Princeton University Press, 2015. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/purdue/detail.action?docID=4009304>.

### Handout Part 1: Close Character Reading

Salim and Aunty Lee both come from different (yet similar) gender, race, and class backgrounds. Using textual evidence, discuss how these different subjectivity factors inform these characters and their abilities as detective figures.

<i>Subjectivity Factor</i>	<i>Salim</i>		<i>Aunty Lee</i>	
	Details	Textual Evidence	Details	Textual Evidence
Gender				
Race				
Class				

### Handout Part 2: Intersectional Reading

Referring back to the details you pointed out in the first part of the handout, discuss how these character details are complicated, affirmed, and/or challenged when these different factors are read intersectionally.

<i>Intersecting Factors</i>	<i>Salim</i>		<i>Aunty Lee</i>	
	Details	Textual Evidence	Details	Textual Evidence
Gender and Class				
Gender and Race				
Class and Race				