

Finding the 'I' in Diversity

Celebrating and Appreciating Uniqueness in a Culturally Diverse Society

Unit Four: Peeling Off Our Labels: Changing Minds and Changing Lives

Peeling Off Our Labels:

Changing Minds and Changing Lives

Melissa Leanne Givens

Rationale

The unit, *Peeling Off Our Labels: Changing Minds and Changing Lives*, will use different literary genres to demonstrate the successes of individuals who have experienced and suffered much at the hands of economic failure, racism, and seemingly impossible circumstances. By acknowledging the existence of the human inclination to essentialize and, subsequently, limit people due to superficial differences in previous units, students will explore through a critical theory approach ways of overcoming prejudice, economic struggle, and the effects of stereotype in their lives. By reading literature by successful African-American, Caucasian immigrant, and various other authors who have all overcome intense adversity in their lives, I hope to reduce the affects of negative self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotype threat in the lives of the students in my classroom. It is necessary for marginalized students to experience “pedagogy of hope” so they may be able to meaningfully experience the world they inherit upon graduation despite the perceived and often very real limitations placed on them by society.

By approaching this unit from a critical theory standpoint, as a class we will be looking at the “fundamental issues of power and their relationship to the greater societal forces that affect schools.” We will further this idea by examining the ways these societal forces exist outside the classroom and permeate the potential for success for students. As critical pedagogy “asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others are not,”¹ the constructions of race, ethnicity, and economic status will be troubled and students will be encouraged and mentored through the literature we read to overcome and engage the superficial differences that constitute race and wealth so as to raise the expectations they have of themselves and encounter their world while seeing through different eyes.

Robert T. Tauber, an educational psychologist plainly states, "What we expect, all too often is exactly what we get." It is on this statement alone that I have based my approach to educating students about their potential for success. Self-fulfilling prophecy (SFP) is an extremely powerful force in children's minds, "impacting students either to their benefit or to their detriment."² This concept is based on the idea that "we form certain expectations of people or events, we communicate those expectations with various cues, people tend to respond to those cues by adjusting their behavior to match them, and the result is that the original expectation becomes true," thus creating "a circle of self-fulfilling prophecies."³ In short, if students in my classroom are facing adversity and continue to think that because of their circumstances they will never "get out of the ghetto" as Walter Dean Myers states in *Bad Boy*, they will *NOT* get out of it based on SFP. Therefore, through the readings of Myers' *Bad Boy*, Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust*, August Wilson's *Fences*, and other select poems, students will be presented with examples of people who have expanded the limiting places or circumstances in their lives and have grown to become contributing members of society.

By beginning the unit with Hesse's *Out of the Dust*, students will immediately be exposed to the devastation of world events on the economic well being of Midwestern Americans in the 1930's. Hesse's narrative poem addresses issues such as drought, hardship (in every sense of the word), economic depression and poverty, an ethnically diverse community, and death. By embracing her identity, the persona, Billie Joe, conveys to the readers of this narrative, that one cannot ignore where she comes from or what she is made of, but must grip tightly to what opportunities this identity can bring forth in her life.

From Hesse's novel, we will move to August Wilson's play, *Fences* where the main characters challenge and confront every type of constraint under which the world tries to place them. This play is especially appropriate for my critical theory approach in that the children risk everything they hold valuable to become more than what their racial past guarantees, rising up against the traditional ways of knowing and understanding with which their parents identify.

The unit will conclude with a focus on hope. Herbert Kohl states, "Creating hope in oneself as a teacher and nourishing or rekindling it in one's students is the central issue educators face today"...for "hope can be sold, it can be taught or at least spread, it can survive in the strangest and most unlikely of places. It is a force that does not disappear."⁴ Kohl goes on to say, "Hope makes it possible for children to become active creators of their own values. It allows them to experiment with the consequences of moral choice. As early as five, children have ways of countering and overriding reality, of entertaining ideas, values, and ways of living that go beyond what they experience...children encounter the possibility of choice and the ability to make themselves - that is, to create ways of being in the world that differ from those of their parents, friends - and the culture, rather than being fully made by the world they are born into. It is this ability to imagine the world as other than it is that leads to hope and the belief that even the most oppressive and difficult of conditions are not absolute."⁴

For our focus on hope, we will be reading Kathi Appelt's poem "The Twirling Queen of Dogwood, Texas" which explores themes such as being true to one's heart and what results when a person follows her dreams. We will be reading this poem concurrently with our reading of "Apply Yourself!" by the same author, which asks the question, what really matters? By encouraging my students to look beyond the superficial -- beyond the color of skin or the house in which someone lives, hope will hopefully spring forth from the idea that what truly matters is that for which we aspire and what it is that we do with those aspirations. The final piece of literature we will experience is Lisa Mueller's poem, "Hope" which speaks of its inability to be conquered, even in silence.

Through our critical theory approach to the issues of race, socio-economic status, and limiting circumstances, students will have the opportunity to question the meaning of every major label society places on them by using the critical thinking skills they will have developed throughout this unit. By experiencing the successes of the lives about which they read, students will begin to peel off the labels the world has put on them and look at the world with a renewal of hope despite the voices around them that say, "You can't do it." Their answers will become, "Yes we can."

Peeling off Our Labels: Changing Minds and Changing Lives

Goals and Assessment

- 1. Student will demonstrate his ability to express personal voice through his entries in a Writing Notebook.**

Each day of the unit, students will be given a topic, and on occasion, may write on a topic of their own choosing in their Writing Notebooks. Topics will be related to assigned readings and previous or upcoming class discussions. The development of voice in writing, evidence of critical thinking skills, and self-reflection in response to given topics will be emphasized. Grammatical correctness will not be stressed. See following rubric. Journals will be checked weekly for completion and will be assessed by the rubric at the end of each six-week unit.

Reflective Thought 35 points

- There is a strong connection between the topic provided and student writing
- There is a recognizable personal voice
- Demonstrates critical thinking on assigned topic

Completeness 50 points

- Student writing responds to provided topic
- Regular dated entries

- Complete and up-to-date table of contents

Development 15 points

- Demonstrates completeness of thought
- Full, complete information in support of the writer's position.

- 2. Student will demonstrate growth in thought regarding his ability to overcome potentially limiting circumstances through his interactions with the texts by writing reflective response papers and creating a map of his growth.**

Students will refer to their Writing Notebook entry pertaining to their initial stance on each pertinent subtopic as well as to the class discussions and reading of texts for each subtopic and develop a Reflective Response paper communicating a new stance on each subtopic. If the student has not changed his views regarding a subtopic, he may say so and provide a strong explanation of his position. See following rubric.

Content

Level Four

- Strong, clear connection between experiences with literature with many references to assigned literature throughout writing
- Strong evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Incorporates prior stances on topic from referenced entry in Writing Notebook and new ideas from textual experiences

Level Three

- Clear connection between experiences with literature with several references to assigned literature throughout writing
- General evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Refers to prior stances on given topic, but does not show a clear connection between previously held views and newly formed ideas regarding topic

Level Two

- Poorly developed connection between experiences with literature with few references to assigned literature throughout writing
- Vague evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Does not refer to prior stances on given topic, but does state newly developed ideas regarding given topic

Level One

- Lacking connection between experiences with literature with no references to assigned literature throughout writing
- No evidence of critical thinking or reflection on given topic
- Does not refer to prior stances on given topic and does not state newly developed ideas regarding given topic

Organization

Level Four

- Clear, steady progression of ideas
- Controlling thread, theme, and idea evident throughout writing
- Strong support presented in a clear and logical manner

Level Three

- Text occasionally strays into peripheral support
- Vague theme and idea evident throughout writing
- Supporting ideas generally presented in a logical order

Level Two

- Inconsistent progression of ideas
- Theme and idea weakly presented throughout writing
- Supporting ideas clear but repeated

Level One

- No clear progression of ideas
- Controlling thread, theme, and idea not evident throughout writing
- Prevalence of irrelevant ideas throughout writing

Style

Level Four

- Engages the reader and sustains interest
- Takes many risks in vocabulary and structure using language in attempt to add variety to writing
- Recognizable personal voice

Level Three

- Initially engages reader, but does not sustain interest
- Word choice and structure is varied and few risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- Recognizable personal voice

Level Two

- Contains little to engage reader and does not sustain interest
- Word choice and structure is unvaried and minimal risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- Weak use of personal voice

Level One

- Does not engage reader and does not sustain interest
- Repetitive word choice and structure and no risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- No recognizable personal voice

Mechanics

Pass

- Few errors, not distracting to the reader

Fail

- Many errors causing great distraction to the reader

From the Reflective Response paper, students will create, in whatever genre most comfortable to each student, an entry to include in the Map of Personal Growth they will be creating throughout the school year. The Growth Map will serve as a representation of each student's personal experience and thought progression through his engagement with classroom activities, discussions, and literature. See following rubric.

*Each student will assess their own entry for the Map of Personal Growth by the same rubric used by the teacher. The two grades will then be averaged to attain the final grade for the entry.

Written Explanation

Pass

- Strong, easily recognizable connection between creative representation and reflective thought pertaining to topic

Fail

- Weak, indecipherable connection between creative representation and reflective thought pertaining to topic

Creative Representation

Pass

- Entry is unique and original to student, and represents reflective thought pertaining to topic
- Current with previous entries
- Incorporated into ongoing Map by due date

Fail

- Entry is not original or unique to student, and represents no reflective thought pertaining to topic
- Not current with previous entries
- Not incorporated into ongoing Map by due date

- 3. Student will demonstrate fluency in interpretation and comprehension of both fiction and nonfiction literature by writing reflective response papers.**

At the end of the six-week unit, student will be required to generate a Reflective Response Paper referring to the two previously written Reflective Response Papers demonstrating their synthesis of the unit as a whole. This final Reflective Response Paper should make a connection between class discussions, activities, and literature and the individual student's personal experiences with all of these. This text will serve as the primary assessment of the student's engagement with the literature and his attempt to make a personal connection with his readings as well as his interpretation and comprehension of fiction and nonfiction writings. See following rubric.

Content

Level Four

- Strong, clear connection between experiences with literature with many references to assigned literature throughout writing
- Strong evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Incorporates prior stances on topic from referenced entry in Writing Notebook and new ideas from textual experiences

Level Three

- Clear connection between experiences with literature with several references to assigned literature throughout writing
- General evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Refers to prior stances on given topic, but does not show a clear connection between previously held views and newly formed ideas regarding topic

Level Two

- Poorly developed connection between experiences with literature with few references to assigned literature throughout writing
- Vague evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Does not refer to prior stances on given topic, but does state newly developed ideas regarding given topic

Level One

- Lacking connection between experiences with literature with no references to assigned literature throughout writing
- No evidence of critical thinking or reflection on given topic
- Does not refer to prior stances on given topic and does not state newly developed ideas regarding given topic

Organization

Level Four

- Clear, steady progression of ideas
- Controlling thread, theme, and idea evident throughout writing
- Strong support presented in a clear and logical manner

Level Three

- Text occasionally strays into peripheral support
- Vague theme and idea evident throughout writing
- Supporting ideas generally presented in a logical order

Level Two

- Inconsistent progression of ideas
- Theme and idea weakly presented throughout writing
- Supporting ideas clear but repeated

Level One

- No clear progression of ideas
- Controlling thread, theme, and idea not evident throughout writing
- Prevalence of irrelevant ideas throughout writing

Style

Level Four

- Engages the reader and sustains interest
- Takes many risks in vocabulary and structure using language in attempt to add variety to writing
- Recognizable personal voice

Level Three

- Initially engages reader, but does not sustain interest

- Word choice and structure is varied and few risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- Recognizable personal voice

Level Two

- Contains little to engage reader and does not sustain interest
- Word choice and structure is unvaried and minimal risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- Weak use of personal voice

Level One

- Does not engage reader and does not sustain interest
- Repetitive word choice and structure and no risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- No recognizable personal voice

Mechanics

Pass

- Few errors, not distracting to the reader

Fail

- Many errors causing great distraction to the reader

4. Student will virtually live the experience of a hypothetical person through In-Role Writing in order to expand his life experience beyond himself.

At the beginning of the unit, students will generate a list of potentially limiting characteristics as a class in an introductory activity and perform interpretive role play with an individually chosen selection of these characteristics through In-Role Writing throughout the unit. Students will assume these characteristics in journal exercises in an attempt to experience their world outside of school from another person's perspective. Entries will be made into a Character Notebook showing the student's attempt to assume to "role" of another person in the student's individual life. The entries will be based on teacher-provided prompts and the student's writing topics of choice.

Completeness

Pass

- Three dated entries for every week of the unit

Fail

- Less than three dated entries for every week of the unit

Development

Pass

- Assumes role of designated character
- Consistent representation of character throughout writing

Fails

- Inconsistent representation of character throughout writing

Style

Pass

- Recognizable personal voice
- Risks in ideas and language

Fail

- Indistinguishable voice in writing
- Does not take risks in ideas or language

Mechanics

Pass

- Minimal errors, not distracting the reader

Fail

- Numerous errors, significantly distracting the reader

Other forms of assessment will be given throughout the unit including quizzes over pertinent vocabulary and assigned readings.

Day One

- Take roll **5 mins**
- Introductory Activity **45 mins**
See Handouts
- Pass out Vocabulary Sheet during this time
See Handouts

Day Two

- Writing Notebook Exercise **7 mins**
See Writing Notebook
Take roll during this time
- Administer Reading Quiz **5 mins**
See Handouts
- Discuss student vocabulary; use vocab words as a launch for **10 mins**
discussion of Out of the Dust
Continue discussion from Day One regarding what we want people to see when they look at us
- Discuss Out of the Dust pgs. 3 – 33
Prompts:
What do you think Billie Joe looks like? What kind of person do you think she is? Pgs. 3 –5
What is your PIANO? Pgs. 13 –14 Is there something in your life which provides and escape from reality for you?

Day Two Cont

- Notice the poor lifestyle of Billie Joe's family pgs. 21 – 22 – COULD YOU IMAGINE CHEWING ON MILK?
Discuss "Breaking Drought" pg23. What rain has fallen in your life to bring about growth and change?

20 mins

- Reading Time for Bad Boy **8 mins**

Day Three

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
See Writing Notebook
Take roll during this time
- Reading Quiz **5 mins**
See Handouts
- Introduce In-Role Writing/ Explain **15 mins**
See Handouts
- Discuss Out of the Dust pgs. 58 – 59 **15 mins**
Prompts:
"Wild Boy of the Road"
Ask students what their dreams are? What do they want to do when they get out of school? What is it that keeps them going when times get rough? Tell them about how when I was a senior in college, I focused on the fact that I was graduating in less than a year and that I would have a paying job. My light at then end of the tunnel was what kept me going through the tunnel at all. Focus on the quote: "Someday I'll leave behind the wind and the dust/and walk my way West/and make myself to home in that distant place/ of green vines and promise." **What is your place of green vines and promise?**
- Response/ Reaction Explanation **10 mins**
See Handouts

Day Four

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
See Writing Notebook

- Take roll during this time
- Check Vocabulary Notebook **5 mins**
- **Reaction Paper Due**
- Take up papers **3 mins**
- Continue discussion of Hesse pgs. 34 - 59 **25 mins**
- Prompts:
 “Tested by Dust” pg. 37
 Do you think it’s appropriate for people to get special consideration in school because of extenuating circumstances? Think about some situations in your lives that distract you from school? Have you ever taken a standardized test and felt like you were fighting a losing battle? Ask students if they knew that standardized tests are biased against minorities or marginalized students? Ask students: **How are you marginalized? How are you different?**

D a y F o u r C o n t

- Response Paper Explanantion/Distribution of Rubric **7 mins**
- See Handouts
- Students select entry from Writing Notebook to revise and turn in on day eight.
 - See Handouts

D a y F i v e

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- See Writing Notebook
- Take roll during this time
- Literature Circles Activity **25 mins**
- Students begin working in class on their Reflective **20 mins**
 Response Papers . Lead discussion on question posing and critical thinking.
- Prompts:
 What kind of questions are good questions to ask?
 Open-Ended
 Non-leading
 Ex. What is really happening here?
 Critical Thinking:
 What are the underlying power forces going on?
 What are the things in Billie Joe’s life that are really holding her back? When the dust storm is over, what will be left of her life?

H a n d o u t s

- Introductory Activity
- Vocabulary Directions
- Reading Schedule
- In-Role Writing
- Reaction/ Response
- Response Paper Rubric
- Reading Quiz Day Two
- Reading Quiz Day Three

W r i t i n g N o t e b o o k

- **DAY/TOPIC**

- 1/ None
- 2/What characteristics do you look for in a friend? Girl/Boyfriend? Why? What really matters to you about people?
- 3/ What do you believe will make you successful? What dreams do you have? What do you hope to do in life?
- 4/ What are some things you do to overcome adversity in your life? How do you handle stressful situations? What do you think you would do if you lost everything you had due to some natural disaster?
- 5/ Respond to this quote: To prejudice people, that’s human nature. But to overcome those prejudgments, now that’s character! – Megan Wessels. What are some ways we can overcome

our prejudgments of other people? How can we make people get over prejudgments about ourselves?

Day Two

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Discuss Hesse pg 104 –149
Open discussion with class discussion of writing notebook
Have students pick out poems that spoke to them
Prompts:
There's a lot of tragedy in Billie Joe's life (pg 107). How would you deal with such great amounts of loss?
What's the symbolism of "Scrubbing Up Dust?"
How has the death of Billie Joe's mother affected her thus far?
Discuss ANALOGY on pg 112 and its usefulness in imagery
Pay close attention to Billie Joe's image of herself and her attitude toward her father. How do you think this will affect her life? Her near future? (pg. 113-114)

35 mins

- Remainder of class devoted to Dust or Bad Boy **15 mins**

Day Three

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Discuss Hesse pg 153-189
Discuss writing notebook exercise **10 mins**
- Check Vocabulary **10 mins**
- Students will read and prepare for class discussion while I walk around the room and check vocabulary.
- Reflective Response Due
- Discuss vocabulary
Have students get into pairs and define terms and collaborate on meanings

15 mins

- Discuss vocabulary and have an open discussion of the novel
Students direct the discussion **15 mins**

Day Four

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Reaction Papers Due
Hand in **5 mins**
- Discuss student papers/reactions **15 mins**
- Discuss Hesse, page 190-End

Prompts:

Ask students what they think about the opening poem of this section

Introduce Extended Metaphor → ask students to remember this idea for our reading of Fences.

How is the piano BJ's mother? (pg. 193 –194) What do the following lines mean in the scope of the poem? "Uncomplaining you accept the cover to your keys and still you make room for all that I place there."

Possible answers: that through her death, BJ's mother was liberated from this life and does not have to complain anymore; even though BJ's mother's death is BJ's fault, BJ feels that her mother is still making room for her, still speaking to her through the piano. Have students bring up any other poems they'd like to discuss. **30 mins**

Day Five

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Discuss In-Role Writing and hand in **15 mins**

Prompts:

How is your character doing? What has s/he gone through this week?
What trials has s/he faced?

- Finish Hesse

15 mins

Prompts:

What did you think about the novel? How does it relate to your lives? What would you do if a “dust storm” came into your lives? Has one (symbolically)?

- Literature Circles Activity

20 mins

- Check Writing Notebook during Literature Circles Activity

H a n d o u t s

- Day One Activity

W e e k T h r e e D a y O n e

- Writing Notebook Exercise

5 mins

- Take roll during this time

- Play Sam Cook’s “A Change is Gonna Come” during writing exercise

- **Activity**

Have students get into groups and discuss the possible meaning of fences in their lives (symbolic meanings) Additionally have them think about how they think fences might be used in the play (Fences by August Wilson) **15 mins**

- Discuss what students came up with in groups

Prompts:

What are some symbolic fences in your lives?

What “fences” things in your lives? What do they hold in?

What “fences” keep things out of your lives? What do they keep out?

30 mins

- Independent Reading of Fences or Bad Boy

5 mins

D a y T w o

- Writing Notebook Exercise

5 mins

- Take roll during this time

- Introduce Context of Fences by August Wilson and background information

See Handouts

Cover highlights of handout; ask students to focus on the fact that Wilson overcame the challenges life presented him

- Discuss the use of the word “Nigger”

Reiterate the context of the play → African-Americans during this time were referred to and referred to one another as “nigger;” this term is not derogatory the way it is used in this play; additionally, this play was written by an African-American about African-Americans

15 mins

- Discuss Act One, Scenes One and Two

Get in groups and discuss Troy’s character → brainstorm about what may have shaped and molded him into the character he is **10 mins**

- Discuss group work

Prompts:

possible answers to group work: “He had a hard life;” My response → okay, that’s a generalization. Did all African-American males have hard lives during this time? Can we categorize all of them? Isn’t that putting a label on them and thus limiting them due to their label? Are there ever situations where generalizations are appropriate? My thought → generalizations are more appropriate in reference to explaining the past than predicting the future

15 mins

- Discuss how prejudices have affected Troy’s life; introduce idea of stereotype threat and self-fulfilling prophecy...Troy thinks that because he’s failed in the past and that all of the people to whom he’s close have failed, that he and the rest of his family will fail in the future. Because Troy believes this, he is likely to fail indeed. **10 mins**

Day Three

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Vocabulary Notebook and Reflective Response Check **10 mins**
Students read and prepare for discussion while I check homework
- Students get into pairs and discuss vocabulary **15 mins**
- Discuss reflective response papers (students bring up issues from their papers) **15 mins**
- Discuss Fences Act One, Scene 3

Prompts:

How is Troy perpetuating oppression in his life in reference to our discussion of self-fulfilling prophecy yesterday? What are the oppressive forces at work here?

How is Troy a tragic character? What personal traits make him classically tragic?

Page 37, Do you think Troy really doesn't like his son?

What is revealed to us about Troy on page 39?

Why does Troy treat Cory the way he does? **10 mins**

Day Four

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Discuss and hand in reaction papers
Students use papers to generate topics for discussion **20 mins**
- Discuss Fences, Scene One, Act Four

Prompts:

What is Rose's role in the play? Her name indicates that she is loving, nurturing and kind.

Being a nurturer can be both good and bad → Rose nurtures Cory's dreams to become a football player, but she also nurtures Troy's flaws by not helping him change. She is extremely compassionate and never raises her voice. She is extremely practical, yet plays the numbers.

Why do you think Wilson gave Rose this "character flaw?" **20 mins**

- Free Write:
Rose seems to be one of those people who always make everyone around her feel good. Do you have a "Rose?" Is there someone or something in your life that acts as a source of hope?

Day Five

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Discuss In-Role Writing and Hand in
Student papers generate discussion **15 mins**
- Literature Circles Activity **30 mins**
- **Assignment for the weekend:**

Think about the extended metaphor of death and baseball. How does this metaphor further our understanding of Troy Maxon? **5 mins**

Writing Notebook

- **DAY/TOPIC**

- 1/ **There is just enough room in this world for all the people in it, but there is no room for the fences which separate them.**
- 2/ **Nobility comes from being superior to another. True nobility comes from being superior to one's former self. – Hindu Saying**
- 3/ **Man must learn to act, to choose, to become all he dares to become, or else, time, chance, and the will of others will make choices for him. – Allen Wilson**
- 4/ **A positive person doesn't refuse to see the negative; he just refuses to focus on it. – Tommy Harper**
- 5/ **Right is not what someone gives you; it is what no one can take away. – Ramsey Clark**

H a n d o u t s

- Contextual Material Fences

W e e k F o u r
D a y O n e

- Writing Activity /Take roll during this time **20 mins**

Prompt:

How is life like baseball? Use examples from the play, in-role writing, and your own experiences. TO BE HANDED IN AT THE END OF CLASS.

- Life Map Activity:**

See Handouts

20 mins

- Remainder of class if students finish early used for independent reading

D a y T w o

- Writing Notebook Exercise

5 mins

- Take roll during this time

- Discuss Fences, Act Two, Scene One

Prompts:

Open discussion with discussion of writing notebook activity

How is Rose trying to keep people in?

Is Troy obliviousness to why the fence is being built consistent with his character thus far? Do you think he's really oblivious or just unwilling to see? Is it just a coincidence that Cory doesn't really want any part of building the fence – especially since he's trying to get out? Are there fences around you – think back to the first day we experienced this play and the activity we did....Are there some fences that you want and others you don't? Are there fences around you that you were once unaware of but are now cognizant of?

45 mins

D a y T h r e e

- Writing Notebook Exercise

5 mins

- Take roll during this time

- Vocabulary and Reflective Responses Due

Students get into pairs and discuss vocabulary as I walk around room and check for homework

15 mins

- Discuss reflective responses

Prompts:

What have you learned about this time period? How has your opinion of people based on superficial differences changed? Have you become more aware of how labels overtly and subtly affect your lives and futures?

- Discuss Act Two, Scenes Two, Three, and Four

Prompts:

We see Troy confronting death again. This time, Troy recognizes that he needs to build a fence to keep death out (pg 77).

What do you think about Troy having a baby with Alberta? What about Rose taking care of Tory's baby with another woman?

In light of our writing topic for today, what health has Troy sacrificed in order to have been with Alberta?

30 mins

D a y F o u r

- Writing Notebook Exercise

5 mins

- Take roll during this time

- Reaction Papers Due

Discuss reactions based on student papers (hand in) **15 mins**

- Finish Fences, Act Two, Scene Five

Prompts:

A lot of time has passed; cover the end of the play

10 mins

- Discuss symbolism in play

FENCES: character's lives change around the fence-building project; to Rose, the fence is a symbol of her love and desire; Cory and Troy reluctantly work on the fence. Bono points out that sometimes fences keep people out and push them away. Bono tells Troy that he pushed

Rose away by cheating on her. Troy's lack of commitment to finishing the fence parallels his lack of commitment to his marriage. The fence is only finished at the final scene of the play when Troy dies and the family reunites. The wholeness of the fence comes to mean the strength of the Maxson family and ironically the strength of the man who tore them apart, who also brings them together, one more time, in death. **20 mins**

Day Five

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- In-Role Writing Due (discussion and hand – in) **15 mins**
- Literature Circles Activity **30 mins**

Handouts

- Life Map Activity
- **DAY/TOPIC** Writing Notebook

1/None

2/ **Some people build fences to keep people out...and other people build fences to keep people in. -- August Wilson**

3/ **The greatest mistake we can make is to sacrifice health for any other advantage. –Arthur Schopenhauer**

4/ **Life without commitment is one long wait. – Anonymous**

5/ **You can only measure a person by what makes him or her angry. -- Anonymous**

Week Five

Day One

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- **Activity: Patterned Interview** **50 mins**

Day Two

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Discuss Kathi Appelt's "Apply Yourself"
See Handouts
I will read the poem aloud to the class **5 mins**

- Students get into pairs and record their initial reactions to the poem
What does it mean? What do you understand? What do you have questions about?
- Commence as a group again to discuss what students come up with in pairs.

10 mins

- Introduce the idea of LITANY poems – where every line of the poem starts with the same words or phrases. We get litanies from liturgical or sacred chants. Use the Beattitudes as an example. **15 mins**
- Ask students to try their own litany surrounding the theme of what really matters to them beginning with the words: thank you; try this; because; I remember; tomorrow I will; let us sing; this is the; when you said; do you recall; etc **20 mins**

Day Three

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Vocabulary Discussion – Hand In **15 mins**
Students bring up ideas that are new to them and we discuss them as a class
- Continue discussion of "Apply Yourself"
Prompts:

What is it that you learned the "hard way?" Isn't it true that there's a difference between knowing something because someone has told you and knowing it because you have

experienced it? One of the ways we can get ourselves out of situations that we don't like or when we hope life will be better is to focus on what's really important. We must realize that our futures are made up of choices ONLY WE make. It all comes down to what we choose. People like Walter Dean Meyers and August Wilson had dreams and they chose to follow them – we must choose to do the same thing. **30 mins**

- Remainder of class used for independent reading if necessary

Day Four

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Discuss Kathi Appelt's "Twirling Queen of Dogwood Texas"
See Handouts
Read poem aloud to class **7 mins**
- Discussion Prompts:
Do you have dreams? What visions are you pursuing? Use Writing Notebook as a basis for discussion. The Twirling Queen shaped her future because she lived according to her visions... Who/what do you think is the source of the inner voice of the Twirling Queen – a higher power? Do you feel it's important for everyone to have a guiding force?
See stanza five – everyone needs a perfect fit for his/her life. **30 mins**
- Freewrite: What would you do with your life if you could do anything at all and didn't perceive any limitations standing in your way? What do you think you CAN do with your life?

Remainder of Class

Day Five

- Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- Take roll during this time
- Finish our discussion of dreams and planning for the future.
Prompts:
Sometimes inspiration happens by accident. Maybe you meet someone who tells you about an opportunity; or maybe you read about it while you are waiting for a haircut. Maybe someone inspires you from a distance...tell me about these things. **15 mins**
- **In-Role Writing Due – Hand In** **5 mins**
- Literature Circles Activity **30 mins**

Writing Notebook

• DAY/TOPIC

- 1/ May poetry be the focusing lens of our lives and may our hearts be the frame in which we fix the picture of life we encounter with each new day – Melissa Givens
- 2/ In the last resort it is highly probable that there could be a therapy which gets rid of all difficulties; they are necessary for life. – Carl Jung
- 3/ We truly become ourselves when we gain the capability to decipher between the magnanimous and the infinitesimal. – Melissa Givens
- 4/ Vision is where tomorrow begins, for it expresses what you and others who share the vision will be working hard to create. Since most people don't take time to systematically think about the future, those who do, and who base their strategies and actions on their visions, have inordinate power to shape the future. – Burt Nanus
- 5/ Look up, not down; in, not out; to those who keep pace with the sun, the day is perpetual morning. -- Thorough

Handouts

- "Apply Yourself" by Kathi Appelt
- "Twirling Queen of Dogwood, Texas" by Kathi Appelt

Week Six Day One

- . Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
- . Take Roll during this time
- . Read Lisa Mueller's "Hope" to class **5 mins**
See Handouts
- . Students get into pairs and discuss initial reactions to poem
What is the author trying to say? What does this poem mean to you?
15 mins
- . Give out Rubric for final Reflective Response and discuss the paper
See Handouts
Use the writing notebook activity as a basis for discussion.
This paper should communicate a full understanding and personal interaction with each of the texts we have studied during this unit.
15 mins
- . Remainder of the class used for prewriting and collaboration for reflective responses
- . Assignment:
 - . Come up with a theme for presentations for Friday
Day Two
 - . Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
 - . Take roll during this time
 - . Discuss student reactions to "Hope" based on group work from yesterday
10 mins
 - . Check and approve theme for portfolios for remainder of class
 - . Students will use class time to go through their writing notebooks and previously handed in reflective responses to determine which entries they will be using in their final presentations.
 - . Students should also use this time to create another Life Map entry
Days Three and Four
 - . Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
 - . Take roll during this time
 - . Walk to computer lab and getting settled in lab **10 mins**
Instructions:
Students will use the Internet, word processors and other computer programs to ready their work due on Friday.
40 mins
Day Five
 - . Writing Notebook Exercise **5 mins**
 - . Take roll during this time
 - . Student Presentations of Projects and Papers consisting of:
 - . In-Role Writing
 - . Vocabulary Notebook
 - . Writing Notebook
 - . Life Map
 - . Reflective Response
- . **DAY/TOPIC** **W r i t i n g N o t e b o o k**

1/It is not what happens to us that matters as much as what happens in us.

2/ Free write

3/ Free write

4/ Free write

5/ Everything that is done in this world is done by hope. – Martin Luther

H a n d o u t s

- “Hope” by Lisa Mueller
- Reflective Response Rubric

REACTIONS/RESPONSES

A reaction is something we do in immediate reply to something with which we interact. For instance, someone may say something to us that upsets us and we might immediately reply with something equally as angering. Reactions are knee-jerk replies to things that happen to us. For our purposes, in writing, reactions are the thoughts and ideas that we write down either, as we are reading something, or immediately following our reading of the material.

A response is a collection of ideas that comes to us after we have had time to reflect on the things with which we have interacted. Using the same example from above, we might, after we have thought about what we said to the person above, go back and apologize, having realized more effectively what the person was intending by their initial comment.

As we consider the readings with which we are engaging during this unit, you will be responsible for writing Reaction Papers for each assigned reading. **THESE ARE INSTEAD OF QUIZZES DAILY!** You will write down things that catch your eye as you are reading, concepts or ideas that you don't fully understand, or ideas you want to investigate further through classroom discussion. We will use these Reactions to launch our discussions of the texts each day.

In-Role Writing



Explanation:

During this unit, we will be keeping a personal journal through interpretive role-play. As a class, we have come up with characteristics which are potentially limiting in our society. From this list, you will choose characteristics and generate a character of your own design. This character description must include the following:

Gender
Age
Race
Religion
Economic Status
Name

During the course of this unit, you will write two journal entries per week projecting this character into particular situations in your lives. Each entry must take the reader through an everyday event or extenuating circumstance from the list of suggested situations I have provided. One journal entry per week must be written on a topic from the list. The other entry may also be from this list or you may choose to write on a topic of your own.

The grading rubric is attached.

Keep this journal as if it were your own personal diary. Remember, thick description and details are greatly encouraged. Get into the minds of your characters. Any genre of writing is encouraged: poetry, cartoon strips, artistic representations, etc. All work must be original.

Please use this opportunity to “live” life through the experiences of another person. This is your opportunity to live out dreams or live out nightmares. Your character choice is extremely important. I encourage you to design a character with which you are not all too familiar. Designing someone less fortunate than you could be of great benefit. **Entries are due every Monday.**

In-Role Situations

1. Attending a church meeting at a church of primarily a different race
2. Eating at a restaurant in the "wrong part of town."
3. In the locker room during a fight.
4. Being accused of taking something you didn't take
5. On the scene of a homicide
6. At the death of a family member
7. In a situation where someone drops his/her wallet and you see it
8. Walking down the street in your neighborhood
9. Going to your rival high school
10. In a gang
11. Hanging out with friends who make degrading jokes about you character
12. Any other experience you have had or have while participating in this activity.

Grading Rubric

Pass

- Two dated entries for every week of the unit

Fail

- Less than two dated entries for every week of the unit

Development

Pass

- Assumes role of designated character
- Consistent representation of character throughout writing

Fails

- Inconsistent representation of character throughout writing

Style

Pass

- Recognizable personal voice
- Risks in ideas and language

Fail

- Indistinguishable voice in writing
- Does not take risks in ideas or language

Mechanics

Pass

- Minimal errors, not distracting the reader

Fail

- Numerous errors, significantly distracting the reader

vocabulary

Each week, you will be responsible for reading assigned sections of reading. For each reading assignment, you will be asked to find three to five words that are new to you or you have been caused to think of in a new light due to your reading. If there are no words unfamiliar to you during your reading, you must pick out a phrase, concept, or image that is new to you.

In a notebook, you will record these new terms or ideas along with the definition you have either looked up or come up with to help you remember them during your reading.

Your Vocabulary Notebook will be checked twice weekly. Due dates will be announced in class at the beginning of the week.

REFLECTIVE RESPONSE RUBRIC

Content

Level Four

- Strong, clear connection between experiences with literature with many references to assigned literature throughout writing
- Strong evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Incorporates prior stances on topic from referenced entry in Writing Notebook and new ideas from textual experiences

Level Three

- Clear connection between experiences with literature with several references to assigned literature throughout writing
- General evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Refers to prior stances on given topic, but does not show a clear connection between previously held views and newly formed ideas regarding topic

Level Two

- Poorly developed connection between experiences with literature with few references to assigned literature throughout writing
- Vague evidence of critical thinking and reflection on given topic
- Does not refer to prior stances on given topic, but does state newly developed ideas regarding given topic

Level One

- Lacking connection between experiences with literature with no references to assigned literature throughout writing
- No evidence of critical thinking or reflection on given topic
- Does not refer to prior stances on given topic and does not state newly developed ideas regarding given topic

Organization

Level Four

- Clear, steady progression of ideas
- Controlling thread, theme, and idea evident throughout writing
- Strong support presented in a clear and logical manner

Level Three

- Text occasionally strays into peripheral support
- Vague theme and idea evident throughout writing
- Supporting ideas generally presented in a logical order

Level Two

- Inconsistent progression of ideas

- Theme and idea weakly presented throughout writing
- Supporting ideas clear but repeated

Level One

- No clear progression of ideas
- Controlling thread, theme, and idea not evident throughout writing
- Prevalence of irrelevant ideas throughout writing

Style

Level Four

- Engages the reader and sustains interest
- Takes many risks in vocabulary and structure using language in attempt to add variety to writing
- Recognizable personal voice

Level Three

- Initially engages reader, but does not sustain interest
- Word choice and structure is varied and few risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- Recognizable personal voice

Level Two

- Contains little to engage reader and does not sustain interest

- Word choice and structure is unvaried and minimal risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- Weak use of personal voice

Level One

- Does not engage reader and does not sustain interest
- Repetitive word choice and structure and no risks are taken using language to add variety to writing
- No recognizable personal voice

Mechanics

Pass

- Few errors, not distracting to the reader

Fail

- Many errors causing great distraction to the reader



L i f e M a p A c t i v i t y

Through your Writing Notebook exercises and Reflective Responses you have turned in each week, you should

Reading Schedule Week One

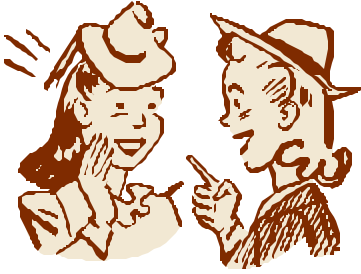
Day One: None

Day Two: Out of the Dust pgs. 3 - 33; Bad Boy independent, per lit circles schedule

Day Three: Out of the Dust pgs. 35 - 59; Bad Boy, lit circles

Day Four: Out of the Dust pgs. 35 -59 cont; Bad Boy, lit circles

Day Five: Bad Boy, Lit circles



In Your Own Words

Pick any of the poems from Hesse, pgs 60-103 that you found particularly compelling and paraphrase it or rewrite it using your own words, making it relevant to your life. You can use your In-Role character as the persona of the poem if you wish.

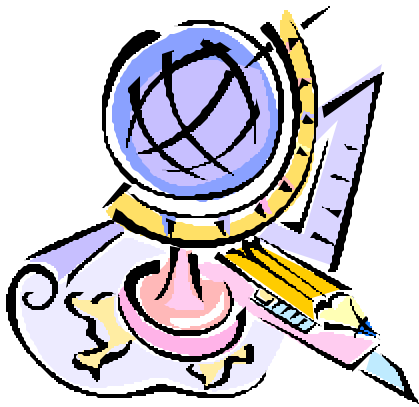
Example:

Motherless

If I could hear my mom's voice on the other end of the line
Anytime,
Or tell me that she thought everything was going to be okay,
Or sit and drink coffee with me, laughing the way she did,
Her nose all curled up and red
Telling me the whole time that I would make it and school wasn't so hard
After all,
Then maybe I wouldn't feel like I was all alone with school neverending.

9 December 2002

Modeled after "Motherless" by Karen Hesse
Pg. 148



C o n t e x t u a l I n f o r m a t i o n

Fences by August Wilson

Context:

August Wilson was named Frederick August Kittel when he was born to a German father and an African American mother in 1945. Wilson was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA. His father drifted in and out of his family. His mother and stepfather, David Bedford, mostly raised Wilson. When

Wilson was sixteen, he was accused of plagiarism at school when he wrote a sophisticated paper that the administration did not believe he could write. When Wilson's principal would not recognize the validity of Wilson's work, she suspended him and later ignored his attempts to come back to school. Wilson soon dropped out and educated himself at the local library, reading everything he could find. In the 1960's, Wilson steeped himself as a playwright. His work was nurtured through institutions like the Yale School of Drama, where the Dean of the Drama School at the time, theatre director, Lloyd Richards, recognized Wilson's talent. Richards later collaborated with Wilson in New York on Broadway. Fences was Wilson's second play to go to Broadway and won him the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Wilson won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama again in 1990 for his play The Piano Lesson.

Fences is Wilson's play about blacks in 1950's. Beginning in 1957, between the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Fences ends in 1965, but the themes of the play directly place its consciousness in the pre-civil-rights movement, pre-Vietnam-war-era-psyche. Fences takes place in a still latent time. Like the popular Sam Cooke song we listened to yesterday proclaims, "A Change is Gonna Come," but not quite yet.

In Fences as in Wilson's other plays, a tragic character helps pave the way for other blacks to have opportunities under conditions they were never free to experience, but never reap from their own sacrifice and talents themselves. This is Troy Maxson's situation. Troy's last name, "Maxson," is a compressed reference to the Mason-Dixon line, considered as the imaginary line originally conceived of in 1820 to define the separation between the slave states and the free states. Maxson represents an amalgamation of Troy's history in the South and present life in the North that are inextricably linked.

Wilson purposefully sets the play during the season Hank Aaron led the Milwaukee Braves to the World Series, beating the New York Giants. When Fences takes place, blacks like Aaron proved they could not only compete with white ball players, but that they would be leaders in the professional league. Since we could look back on history with 20/20 hindsight, Wilson asks his audience to put together what they know of American history with the way his various characters experience and perceive history through their own, often conflicted eyes.

All of Wilson's plays take place in his hometown of Pittsburgh, and *Fences* is no exception. The Pittsburgh of the Maxson's family is a town where Troy and other men of his generation fled from the savage conditions of sharecropping in the South. After Reconstruction failed, many blacks walked north, as far as they could go to become urban citizens. Having no resources or infrastructure to depend on, men like Bono and Troy found their way in the world by spending years living in shacks, stealing, and in jail. Wilson clearly draws a linear link between the release of the slaves to the disproportionate number of black men in our jails and in low-income occupations by arguing that the majority of a homeless, resourceless group let loose into a competitive and financed society will have a hard time surviving lawfully. Wilson's characters testify to the fact that the United States failed blacks after Lincoln abolished slavery in that the government's failure, made effective legally through Jim Crow Laws and other lawful measures to ensure inequality, continues to affect many black lives. Wilson portrays the 1950's as a time when a new world of opportunity for blacks begins to open up, leaving those like Troy, who grew up in the first half of the century, to feel like a stranger in their own land.