



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2003 Volume I: Geography through Film and Literature

The Geography of Learning: Creating the World through Film and Literature

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Rationale

Horrified by how little my at-risk high school students at the Wilbur Cross Annex know about the whereabouts of almost *everything*, from local to global, I am challenged to find creative and effective ways to illuminate the world. Relying on **film**, **literature**, **maps**, **field trips**, and **creative arts activities**, it is my intention to hook my students and "wind them in" to the *geography* of learning. For my unit, I have chosen the title "The Geography of Learning: Creating the World through Film and Literature" because, through the various mediums -- film, television, literature, maps, and of course through actual physical contact -- we all create our own geography of the world by the extent of our exposure to it and our ability to imagine it. Some people have created for themselves a world the size of a walnut, while others create a world that is continuously expanding. Unfortunately, most of my students have secured themselves in a walnut, or at best a coconut, where they have learned to navigate or, as they say, "maintain." To venture outside seems risky, unpredictable and unnecessary. Having achieved a level of comfort through familiarity within their limited geography, they stay, more or less, inside "the hood," fearful of the unfamiliar and unknown that lies beyond.

Through field trips, film, literature, and creative arts activities, I hope to present opportunities for my students to create a broader view of the geography of the world. Because I am an English teacher, my students have been conditioned to expect to read stories, plays and poetry; they do not expect to study films and geography and do creative art. But, films are stories, and geography comes out of film. It is through this added element of "visual literacy" that I plan to facilitate their learning in both content and skills, asking them to discuss and formulate opinions about the people who live in the geography of the films and literature, and ultimately to write about them in a formula five-paragraph essay. (See lesson plan #'s 2 and 3.)

At the Annex, because we are a program of approximately 150 students, our English classes are not separated into grades, but rather incorporate grades ten through twelve. Therefore, even though only a percentage of my students in each class will be required to take the Connecticut Academic Performance Test in Language Arts that all tenth graders must take, I plan CAPT-like lessons and activities, based on the premise that the skills incorporated in these lessons and activities are useful for everyone, regardless of their grade level or what tests they may be required to take in the future. Exploring geography as I define it in the following section, students will learn and sharpen among other skills: observation, gathering evidence, comparison,

reflection, discussion, and essay writing.

The theme of geography as objective *place* and subjective *space*

In this unit, I have divided geography into two categories: that of *place* and that of *space*. The geography of *place* is simply an objective naming of things: lakes, rivers, oceans, parks, streets, buildings, mountain ranges, countries, deserts, and the like. The geography of *space* is defining or describing one's relationship to these objective things; it is a subjective consciousness of how people adapt to and live in these *places*. For example, I crisscross New Haven from one end to the other, shopping, keeping appointments, visiting people, eating in restaurants, going to plays, the library, etc. I could put all of these *places* on a map of New Haven, and simply say, "I know where these places are." But, if I describe my relationship to these places, then the map becomes subjective. These are familiar *spaces*: streets I travel, stores where I routinely buy clothes, food, and furniture, theaters where I regularly go to the movies or plays, the houses of friends where I socialize. Now they are more than objective *places* on a map; they are subjective *spaces* that I identify with my daily living.

Our subjective *spaces* are for many of us the *center of the world*. We don't know much, if anything about the geography beyond. The *places* that we may barely know about in other parts of the world are the *center of the world* for millions, even billions, of other people. One of my objectives is to expose students, through experience and observation, to what happens when people move from their (familiar) subjective *spaces*, to (objective) unfamiliar *places* that are someone else's (subjective) familiar *spaces*, the *center of the world* for someone else. Another aspect of space and place is that *space*, for the most part, is familiar enough that we know what to expect and *place* is unfamiliar and we simply do not know what to expect.

Field trips for exploring the local geography of *place* and *space*

This eight-week unit will give the students I teach at the Annex the opportunity to develop their geographical literacy, commencing with exploration of their own neighborhoods as *place* and *space*, and then widening the circle to take in *all* of New Haven. A recently published guide to New Haven should be helpful in planning local field trips, giving students an overview of their city. Most of my students rarely travel outside of their immediate neighborhoods. Therefore, the first creative arts activity I plan to implement is a student-designed alphabet book that features various geographies of *place* and *space*, beginning with their neighborhoods, and then expanding to all of New Haven. During this activity, students will consider the assumptions they make about their geographical and social space, which will provide a framework for exploring the films and literature in the unit. While it is not necessary that the book be specifically an *alphabet* book, it gives the book structure: twenty-six letters, A to Z.

Their own neighborhoods will make up their first alphabet book, making an alphabet of *places* on the maps of their neighborhoods, then, expanding this same book to include their own details about their relationship to these *places*, making it an alphabet of *space* as well. To get started, I will explain to the students that we are going to develop an alphabet directory of their neighborhoods. I will assign a "Do now!" to be created in the

first ten minutes of each class period for the first week of school. Students will keep an on-going list of the places and streets they went to or passed by on a regular basis, mapping the neighborhood in this linear fashion. This activity will raise students' visual awareness of their daily activities. At the beginning of the following week, they will brainstorm on the board all the places they came up with and add any they think of at the moment. Then, I will assign each student, using his or her own list and the collective list, to make up an urban alphabet of places and streets which are part of his or her daily or routine living. Part of the assignment will be to vary the scale of their entries that make up the alphabet so that some entries may be as personal as their bedrooms and others may be as public as nine squares. Obviously, not everyone will be familiar with every site in the brainstorm, and it isn't necessary that they be. Actually, this in itself will demonstrate that people's daily lives travel different paths.

Next, students will assemble the alphabet book, following the instructions in *The Young Author's Do-It-Yourself Book* listed in the **Working Bibliography** , and begin to give serious thought as to how to represent each site named in their alphabet. They could consider simply making a drawing of the place or street named (perhaps including people they see on this street), or they could make a collage that represents it, or they could use a photograph of the place. They will need to think creatively as to how they want to represent the twenty-six sites in their book.

Then, they will describe, in a few sentences, their relationship to each site in the book. For example, if "H" is represented by their home, they will write a few sentences about: (a) what they like doing there, (b) how they feel when they are there, and, perhaps, (c) what that place means to them. Following these guidelines for each site, they will then add these descriptions to the book, making it a book of subjective *spaces* rather than just a book of objective *places* they know. These are the sites where students have come to know what to expect.

It is here, when the students begin to describe their relationship to each site, that they will do another kind of brainstorming, answering the question, "What are the assumptions we make in those subjective geographical *spaces* that are familiar to us?" I discuss this at length in the section: **A framework for comparing the geography of place and space in the films and literature** . First the students must brainstorm what is essential to their expectations in any given subjective *space* . If the *space* is "home," their expectations will likely include things such as shelter in which they feel a degree of comfort, clothing in which they are warm and *hip* , food they are used to, transportation options, ways of getting the money they need to buy what they need, electronic devices that keep them current, (see the section to which I referred for a more extensive list). They will enter these items on the left side of a graphic organizer, with a brief description of what their assumptions are. For example, on the left side, they might write: shelter that is warm and safe. On the right side they will write a couple of sentences describing specifically what shelter means for them and who else they assume will be sheltered there. They will do this for all of their assumptions. These assumptions about their subjective *spaces* will play a role and be a frame of reference throughout the unit as they explore, through the films and literature, assumptions that people make about their *spaces* in other places in the world. They also are likely to use, in their alphabet books, descriptions they have written on their graphic organizers. Once my students understand that their own assumptions depend upon their geographical and social *space* , they will be better equipped to see how this works for other people in other places in the world, who are, in this way, exactly like them.

Next, moving out of their own neighborhoods, students will gather and research New Haven sites for a more expanded alphabet book, at first, of *places* : "E is for East Rock that offers a view of most of New Haven and Long Island too." "C is for Cinque whose statue is seen in front of Town Hall on the New Haven Green." As they

identify places in New Haven that work in an alphabet book, they will visit as many of these as possible on field trips, making them somewhat akin to *spaces*. As students search for locations and sites to fill in the alphabet, they will also be learning the history and significance of them. "N," for example, could represent the Nine Squares of the original New Haven. These Nine Squares are represented in many places in New Haven where students could see them. The New Haven Savings Bank at the corner of Church and Elm has a large map of the Nine Squares on the wall of its lobby. The *Greater New Haven Visitor's Guidebook 2002* has a full page, mapping the Nine Squares with the New Haven Green in the center. On a field trip, a bus could drive us around the perimeter of the Nine Squares.

With each letter and site, students will render a drawing, photograph, or collage on the opposite page. These alphabet books could be relatively sophisticated for their peers or they could be designed for children. Art activities continue to be an invaluable medium by which my students open themselves to learning.

Beyond New Haven: *place* and *space* in the film *Finding Forrester* set in New York City

Once they have become aware of their relationship to their own "hoods" and to the whole of New Haven, a next logical step will be to focus on something that will take them on an adventure beyond their home turf. We will view the film *Finding Forrester* in which Rob Brown plays a black inner city teen-ager from the Bronx, named Jamal, who conceals from his peers and public school teachers his intellect and his genius for writing, and is recruited to attend a private school in Manhattan and to play on their basketball team. Sound familiar? Jamal's journal falls into the hands of a Pulitzer-prize winning author William Forrester, played by Sean Connery, who also lives in the Bronx, and who has, over the years, become a recluse. Forrester, an agoraphobic, lives in a walk-up, even having his groceries and clothing delivered, so he won't have to face the larger world. As the story unfolds, Forrester gradually becomes a mentor to Jamal, critiquing his writing and helping him overcome racial prejudices he experiences at the private school, while Jamal gradually brings Forrester out of his self-imposed isolation, reintroducing him to Manhattan, and helping him overcome his agoraphobia. The *spaces* in which these two characters live and the *places* in which they *learn* to feel comfortable are good fodder for our study of objective and subjective geography. Here too is an opportunity to explore the assumptions that each character makes about his subjective *space* and what happens when he moves outside of it.

Jamal cracks the *walnut* in which Forrester has chosen to live when, on a dare from his peers, he sneaks into "the window's" (a term the boys use to objectify Forrester whom they do not know) apartment one night, after they think he has gone to bed. Frightened by Forrester, Jamal runs out and leaves his backpack with his journals in it. But before Forrester jumps out and scares Jamal to death, Jamal has the opportunity to see that Forrester has shelves and shelves of books, which, of course, intrigue the writer in Jamal. Forrester critiques the journals and, a few days later, throws them out the window in the backpack. So begins a tempestuous but rich relationship between the aspiring writer and his mentor. Jamal makes a genuine but abortive attempt to get Forrester out of his reclusive environment, but it is Forrester himself who decides to stand up for Jamal at his prejudiced, private, precious school in Manhattan, biking from the Bronx into Manhattan to rescue his young friend from overt prejudice and humiliation when his teacher tries to prove that Jamal could not possibly have written a highly sophisticated, erudite essay that he has submitted in a writing competition. It is Forrester's determination to rescue his protégé, Jamal, that results in Forrester's epiphany that gives him back

the world. His assumptions are altered with the size of his world, and as a result, his *space* expands, reaching across an ocean.

Beyond Manhattan to the *places and spaces* in the film *Emerald Forest* set in the Amazon rainforest

Next we move from our "American place" into the larger world. *Emerald Forest* was filmed in the vanishing Brazilian rainforest, where an indigenous community of Amazons, aptly called the Invisible People, raises a Euro-American child who they capture when he wanders off from the sight of a huge dam that his engineer father is building, at the expense of several thousand acres of rainforest. Ten years later, when the boy's father, who has been searching for him, finds him in full ceremonial dress, as a young man fully acclimated to the Invisible People's life style, in what has become his geographical and sociological *space* in the rainforest, the compelling question must be answered, "Does his son *want* to return to a modern, urban society, a *place* he no longer identifies with home?" The boy's real father is challenged to choose to sacrifice what was just an objective *place* for the "progress" that the dam represents, or to choose the geographical and sociological *space* that is home to the indigenous community that now includes his own son.

The opening shots in the film show the remote and impersonal (objective) rainforest at a great distance from the balcony of the engineer's apartment, in urban Brazil. The movie then drops us into that rainforest and intimately into the lives of the Invisible People for whom it is the *center of the world*. Conversely, there is a traumatic scene in which the engineer's son, now grown in the rainforest, must re-enter the city that is, by now, a *place* completely foreign to him, to try to locate his birth-father.

There are many opportunities to explore the geography of *place* and *space* in film like this that juxtaposes two worlds. The boy's real father, when immersed in the subjective *space* that has become his son's world, experiences an epiphany about his view of the rainforest and the humanity for whom it is home.

The rainforest is also home to an indigenous community of cannibals known as the "Fierce People" who come very close to killing the engineer in his quest for his son. Modern civilization, introduced in the form of a semi-automatic rifle by the engineer, inadvertently brings crushing losses to the Invisible People. This community that has raised the boy, refers to the men who are bulldozing the rainforest as the "Termite People" because they see them eating up the trees with their earth-moving equipment to make way for the dam. It certainly would be possible to generate an Internet search in conjunction with this film on the controversy surrounding the annihilation of the Brazilian rainforest in the name of "progress."

An urban culture meets the Outback Aboriginal in the film *Walkabout*

Another film that juxtaposes the urban world and wilderness is *Walkabout*, set in the '50's Australia, a place as distant as can be from New Haven. The plot concerns a teen-age aboriginal boy engaged in his right of passage from boyhood to manhood, on his "walkabout" in the Australian Outback, encounters a Euro-Australian urban eight-year old boy and his thirteen-year old sister who have lost their way in what is for them

a totally hostile landscape, the Outback, and who have never laid eyes on a naked black boy. This film is based on the novella *Walkabout* by James Vance Marshall. However, in the opening scenes, the film does not follow the novella, where the children from the suburbs of South Carolina are the only survivors of a cargo plane crash in the Outback. Instead, it shows their father driving them from an urban Australian city into the edge of the Outback, ostensibly for a picnic, but in fact he tries to kill them, and ends up committing suicide. This leaves them to fend for themselves as they wander into the wilderness. Like the opening of the film *Emerald Forest*, where the rainforest is first seen objectively, from a distance, in the novella *Walkabout*, the urban, American children have flown thousands of feet over the Outback, a geography that is just an area on a map to them. The movie, *Walkabout*, juxtaposes a brick wall representing the city, with the desert, which represents the unmapped Outback, just beyond. While the opening of the film and novella are significantly different, both explore how we identify geography effectively as *place* or *space*, depending on our direct and indirect experience with it. Both novella and film also explore issues of racial prejudice, which is especially apparent in the novella where the children are from a suburb in South Carolina in the '50's.

The film effectively juxtaposes the Aborigine boy, stalking and spearing a kangaroo and killing it by clubbing it with a rock, against a butcher in urban Australia chopping a side of kangaroo ribs with a meat cleaver in a butcher shop that advertises kangaroo meat. In fact, the film makes a lot of the bush boy stalking, killing, and roasting, in an open fire, various small mammals and reptiles, for their sustenance. Against this necessity, the bush boy (and the viewer) watches Australian hunters with high-powered rifles driving around in a jeep, slaughtering water buffalo for sport, and leaving the carcasses to rot. The viewer also watches the bush boy's profound grief at the sight of this wanton slaughter. This is an opportunity to question to what extent these hunters are objectifying these animals as merely theirs for the shooting. In this sense, do they consider the Outback as merely a *place* that they use and then abandon to their urban *space*. Is this, in some way, related to what the white man did to the buffalo herds that sustained Native Americans?

Another important difference between the film and the novella is the handling of the bush boy's death. The novella is clear in pointing out that Aborigines are capable of, and susceptible to, "mental euthanasia," willing themselves to die. In the novella, it is shocking but believable that the bush boy, mistaking Mary's terror of him, thinks he sees the Spirit of Death in her eyes, and resigns himself to prepare for his death. Marshall explains in the novella that, though the Aborigines are physically tough, they have no resistance to this concept of the Spirit of Death. In the film, the bush boy, after delivering them back to the edge of civilization, decorates his body with feathers and white dye, does a ritual dance that frightens Mary even more than before, and hangs himself in a tree. In the film, Mary merely brushes a couple of ants from his chest when they find him dead in the tree, and then they hike to the paved road that symbolizes their return to modern civilization. In the following section, I discuss the deeply moving and very different scene, in the novella, in which the bush boy dies.

Comparing the film *Walkabout* with the novella *Walkabout* on which it is based

The students will read the novella *Walkabout* by James Vance Marshall before they watch and study the movie, to compare the film with the literature. In the preceding section, I have identified some of the distinct differences between the novella and the film, such as, the children in the novella being from the suburbs of Charlotte, South Carolina while, in the film, they are from urban Australia. In the novella, Mary attempts to reassure Peter that they will simply walk the rest of the way to Adelaide, not realizing that they are some 1,400 miles from it. It soon becomes apparent that the children are no match for the unforgiving wilderness. But to their great fortune, they meet up with a thirteen or fourteen year-old Aborigine boy on his walkabout. He has never laid eyes on white children, and they, being from South Carolina in the '50's have never seen a

naked black boy. While Mary, being thirteen and female, struggles with the horror of this phenomenon, both children quickly realize that the bush boy is their only hope for survival.

Learning to communicate and cooperate, the three children undertake their own walkabout together, the bush boy breaking his tribal law by including the children in his journey, knowing that they would perish without his help. At the outset of the novella, Mary, Peter's big sister, is Peter's protector because in South Carolina that was her role. But, gradually, in the Outback, eight year-old Peter, who is less inhibited than his thirteen year-old sister, adapts more quickly and is less offended by the bush boy's blackness and nakedness. In fact, as the journey unfolds, it is Peter who gradually becomes Mary's protector. It is curious, exuberant Peter who learns survival skills from the bush boy. Both children learned to live as if they were shadows of the bush boy and because they are children, they adapt to the desert, well enough to survive.

If ever there were a dichotomy between subjective *space*, the suburbs of South Carolina , and the objective *place* , the Australian Outback, that the children have been dropped into, it is this. And they must adapt to this new place and make it their *space* or die.

Meanwhile, the bush boy misreads Mary's fear of him as something the Aborigine understands as the Spirit of Death. In the novella, confronted with what he thinks is the Spirit of Death, the bush boy *wills* himself to die, instead of hanging himself. In both the novella and the film, the impact of Mary and Peter's presence in the bush boy's walkabout brings about the end of his life.

The gradual adaptation of Mary and Peter to the Outback is represented in several ways in the novella. Gradually, the children shed their clothing, until both are basically naked, just as the bush boy is naked. Gradually, Peter learns the bush boy's language, because as Marshall says, it is far more useful than the French that Mary "is so proud of." Peter systematically picks up hunting and food gathering skills from the bush boy. The children learn to sleep in the open next to a fire. And finally, when Mary cradles the bush boy's head in her lap as he lies, dying, she experiences an epiphany when she comes to see the world as one and that the bush boy is as they are, and not to be feared. "Then very gently she eased the bush boy's head onto her lap; very softly she began to run her fingers over and across his forehead. . . . And in that moment of truth all her fears and inhibitions were sponged away, and she saw that the world, which she had thought was split in two, was one" (*Walkabout* , p. 123).

Socially and geographically, Mary and Peter are about as far removed as is possible from their original subjective *space* . Their world, as they knew it, disappeared. Food they have been accustomed to eat, shelter they have relied upon, clothing they expect to wear, water available on tap, language they have employed to communicate, even the learned assumption that Mary the elder of the two is in charge, and the learned prejudice of racial superiority of whites, all evaporate in the Outback. Unless they are able to make this foreign *place* their *space* , and abide by its standards, they will perish.

Lesson plan # 1: Students create a framework, based on their own assumptions about their daily lives, that they will use in comparing the geography of *place* and *space* in the films and literature

Objective: The students will create a framework based on their assumptions about their *space* to guide their observations when viewing their own geography and that of the characters in the films and novella. This

framework will serve as a basis for their observations, discussions and in their essays.

One way to manage the juxtaposition of *place* and *space*, is to develop a framework that the students can apply to each film and piece of literature they study. Actually they can begin using this framework when they start thinking about the *places* and then describing these as *spaces* in their own neighborhoods, and when they expand their exploration to their city.

Categories that come to mind are our **assumptions** about: how and where we get food and what that food is, what we consider comfortable shelter, what clothing is necessary for us in our space and where we get it, how the clock dictates our day, how we get around in our space, language we depend upon to communicate and the technology such as computers and cell phones that carry that language, how we understand the mores and rules that govern our space, and how we defend ourselves, if need-be, when someone intrudes into our space, because in each of these films and in the literature, people's spaces are invaded. A scene from the film *Emerald Forest* comes to mind when the chief of the Invisible People who is also the boy's surrogate father says to the boy's real father who has found them in the rain forest, "You have come to the center of the world." As I mentioned earlier in the unit, we all believe that our *space* is "the center of the world."

The students, thinking about their own daily lives, will brainstorm the social and geographical categories that would be used in the *framework*. While they might need some guidance, they could have the satisfaction of creating this framework themselves, rather than having it imposed by the teacher.

With these graphic organizers about their own assumptions and expectations in their subjective sociological and geographical *spaces*, students will be able to make observations about the assumptions and expectations of the main characters in the films and literature regarding these categories, and how they alter their way of thinking about these categories, and in several cases radically alter their lifestyle. On the graphic organizers, they will record their observations and evidence to back them up. Not all categories will apply to each character. But several main characters undergo changes, beginning with a set of assumptions and expectations, and then as a result of events, they experience an epiphany that alters their assumptions and expectations. This framework can be used not only for their own life styles and the life styles of the characters in each film and piece of literature, but it can then make it possible for students to compare their own life styles with those of the characters in the films and literature, both individually and as a class. The role geography plays in these life styles will be significant. Ultimately this framework of categories can be used to develop an essay, giving the students the opportunity to practice the writing process. **(see Lesson Plan # 3)**

Lesson Plan # 2: Presenting the flashlight as a perfect metaphor for the formula five-paragraph essay

Objective: The students will have an understanding of the parts of the five-paragraph essay as a result of a presentation of a visual metaphor (the flashlight) that embodies all of these parts.

I have found that when I assign a five-paragraph essay, it is crucial that I not only clarify the parts of the essay and their make-up, but that I present a visual metaphor that embodies all of these parts. The vast majority of the students I teach at the Annex do not have an understanding of how to tackle writing an essay. I have

found that the parts of a "flashlight" very effectively represent all of the parts of the five-paragraph essay. Usually I draw this flashlight, without naming the parts, on a transparency and project it on a screen. I hand out this same unlabeled flashlight to my students. Because some of them have been in my classes previously, the minute I ask what in the world a flashlight has to do with the five-paragraph essay, hands go up.

Students tell me what to write next to the parts, starting with the tiny light bulb that represents the **thesis** . The threads of the bulb screw into the neck of the body and represent the three **controlling idea sentences: a, b, and c** . These four sentences make up the introductory paragraph. Students are often relieved when they learn that the introductory paragraph *can be* as simple as four sentences: a thesis and three controlling idea sentences. Students who are familiar with the flashlight metaphor always point out how the three controlling idea sentences actually *set up* the next three paragraphs.

These three controlling idea sentences, copied from the introductory paragraph, open the next three paragraphs, which in the flashlight are the three batteries. The **controlling idea sentences** in the introductory paragraph **become the topic sentences that open each of the three support paragraphs**, which in the flashlight metaphor are the *juice* that power the light.

This is where the graphic organizers that the students have completed come in. It is these organizers on which the students have made observations and gathered evidence that the students will use as the *juice* in their support paragraphs, or in their batteries, to stay with the metaphor. What they discover is that they have already done the hard work of making observations and gathering evidence and now, they are ready to use this in their essays.

When I ask what makes up the fifth paragraph, previous students know it is the **conclusion** , and that it is a variation of the introductory paragraph. It can be as simple as a variation on the thesis statement and the three controlling idea sentences in the introduction. But, in the flashlight metaphor, it is this end piece that must be screwed on securely if the batteries are to connect and make the light shine. Students come to understand that unless all the parts of the flashlight are in place, the light, which is the point of their essay, will not shine. Their idea will not get across.

It is also easy to impress upon them that if a battery is missing or put in upside down, the contacts will not be made. Putting the batteries in so that each contacts the other is an effective way to discuss **transitions between paragraphs** . These contact points are what connect each part to the next in the flashlight.

Metaphor for the five-paragraph essay

(chart available in print form)

Lesson Plan # 3: The five-paragraph essay as a culminating activity

Objective : Using the observations and evidence they have gathered on their graphic organizers, students will write a five-paragraph essay, in which they discuss how well they think three different characters in the films and literature, because of their experiences, develop a respect for or adapt to an objective *place* that was previously not part of their experience.

Using the observations and evidence they have gathered on their graphic organizers, students will write a five-paragraph essay, in which they discuss how well they think three different characters in the films and literature, because of their experiences, develop a respect for or adapt to an objective *place* that was previously not part of their experience. In each case, because of their experiences, the characters adjust their assumptions, in some cases abandoning their assumptions altogether, and come to think of these objective *places*, in varying degrees, as subjective *spaces* . In each case, these characters experience something of an epiphany, coming to a new understanding about themselves and about the world.

In each of the films and in the novella, the students will have examined how we objectify the people who live in *places* we know only as locations on a map. For example, in the opening scenes of *Finding Forrester* , the boys, at home in their *space* on the blacktop basketball court in the "hood" across the street from Forrester's apartment, know absolutely nothing about Forrester except that he watches them, and they refer to him in a completely impersonal way as "the window," a *place* they do not know.

In *The Emerald Forest* , the engineer of the dam, who is also the father of the boy who has grown up with the Amazons, is resolute that once he finds his son, bringing him back to "civilization" is only a matter of course, objectifying the life and humanity of the Invisible People with whom the boy has made his home and developed his world view for the past ten years.

In *Walkabout* , Mary and Peter, at first, seem to think that the bush boy's *raison d'etre* is to rescue them from the Outback and set them on a course to Adelaide, objectifying him as their way out, and not considering that this is his home, where his family lives, or what sociological people he might be a part of.

In the five-paragraph essay, students will write about how successful they think each of three main characters in film and/or literature has been in adjusting his or her assumptions to accommodate a new *place* . In discussing the degree of success of these characters, students will **first** make observations about what the characters assumptions and expectations were, prior to their encounter with a *place* outside of their social and physical geographical *space* . **Next** , they will describe what happened to them to bring about their altered, expanded view of the *place* where they found themselves, and **then**, they will discuss what that altered, expanded view is. In the case of each character, students will express how well he or she adapted to the *place*.

Students will have completed a graphic organizer with these assumptions for each main character; therefore, as they prepare to organize and write their essays, they need not panic and start scrambling for content.

I have found that, first, students I teach need to learn that the most dependable place to look for their thesis is in the assignment. How often, over the years, when we assign an essay, students begin looking around, as if they expected to pull the thesis out of thin air. There is panic in their eyes, or, as if often the case with my students, resignation that they cannot possibly write an essay . They have no idea where to begin. Therefore, the first task I model is how to craft a thesis out of the assignment. Once students learn to look within the assignment, they become confident about crafting their thesis.

Students will be expected to assess their essay for form: does it follow the formula five-paragraph essay (flashlight), and content: have they made a case for how well each character adapted to *place* , with observations and evidence?

Language Arts CAPT activities in this unit

One of the questions that always appears on the Language Arts CAPT is: *Do you think this story is effective literature? Explain your answer* . With my students, over the years, I have tried to clarify the abstract term: *effective literature* , and we have come up with a means of evaluating a piece of literature, or for that matter, a film, to try to answer that question, so that when my students are confronted with it on the CAPT, they will not feel bewildered; they will have the tools to write about it.

In each of the films we view and in the novella *Walkabout* that the students will read, students will be asked to discuss this CAPT question: " *Is this an effective film or novella?* " based upon the following criteria that seem to work well for this purpose: **1.** Is there a major **conflict** that is working itself out throughout? **2.** Does a **character change** or grow in understanding about him or her self or about the world, in some way? **3** . Is there a universal theme or **lesson** that the film director or author conveys?

This question of *effectiveness* is presented to the students at the outset, prior to reading or viewing, so that they can make observations and gather evidence as they read the literature or view a film. For this purpose, students use graphic organizers as a means of recording their observations and evidence. Developing an opinion about the *effectiveness* of the literature or film by using graphic organizers to answer questions 1 - 3 sets the stage for the students to discuss it and/or to write a five-paragraph essay, based on my model in **Lesson Plan # 2** in this unit. Each question 1 – 3, answered on a graphic organizer, becomes a support paragraph in the essay. The students quickly realize that they have already recorded their observations and gathered their evidence for their essay.

They also discover, in discussions, that while their observations may vary from other students, it is the evidence they have gathered that backs them up, and that will determine whether they will stick with their own observations or alter what they think.

For most of the students in my program at the Annex, learning a formula for writing a standard five-paragraph essay, and practicing the skill of using that formula, is very empowering, and a confidence-builder. Students also learn the steps of the writing process and the satisfaction of revising their own writing, until they are proud of their work. This marking period, I have team-taught with a science teacher, and we have assigned two major projects, both including a five-paragraph essay based on observations and evidence recorded on graphic organizers.

Language Arts Standards in this unit

Because my classes are made up of students in grades ten through twelve, I have adopted Standards from both tenth and eleventh grades. Students who are in twelfth grade will be expected to meet these standards at a higher level.

In **Grade 10** , the Standard I focus on is **Content Standard 1.0 Reading and Literature** , but I am including **Grade 11 Content Standard 5.0 Viewing** with this standard because visual literacy is such a significant part of this unit: ***Students will read/view (in the case of films) a wide variety of genre***

including multicultural selections. Students will demonstrate strategic reading/viewing skills before, during and after reading/viewing.

Students will be well prepared by the time they view films or read literature to know the objective of viewing each film or reading the novella. For this, they will draw on their prior knowledge from the first two weeks of class. They will use graphic organizers during viewing and reading. They will formulate opinions as to the effectiveness of the film or literature and demonstrate comprehension through class discussions and the writing process. Students will view films that represent three very diverse cultures.

This unit also addresses the **Content Standard 2.0 Writing** in both **Grades 10 and 11** because it emphasizes the writing process that may be seen in **Lesson plans #'s 2 and 3** and in my discussion of Language Arts CAPT, just preceding this section.

Student self-assessments give them a voice in their performance

I have found that when students have completed a major project that includes many parts, they derive great satisfaction in critiquing their performance. It is an effective way to learn what they think of their learning in skills, content, and critical thinking, and it is an excellent vehicle for learning what I did well and where I need to make changes in the project design. What students think of the project and how they think they performed is an effective teacher-assessment tool.

Obviously, this is an ideal place to learn whether and how students have grown in their awareness and understanding of their own social and geographical *space* , and how that *space* expands by choice and by fate.

Maps, local to global, are integral to the unit

Because I am always bewildered at how little my students know about locations of things, both local and global, I plan to have a globe of the world, maps on the walls, and each student will have handouts of the parts of the world they are studying through field trips, films, and the novella. They will jot notes and identify places on these map- handouts that will become a part of their final portfolio made up of their: alphabet books and related work, graphic organizers, flashlight metaphor for the essay, essay drafts, self-assessment, and maps. My students often surprise themselves with their success, when they have a body of work to show for the time, creativity, and thinking they invested in a class project, and not just a bunch of loosely related papers, helter-skelter in a notebook or folder.

Working Bibliography for teacher and students

The Emerald Forest, Dir. John Boorman, Embassy Pictures Corporation, 1985. (113 min. VHS / DVD) An engineer moves his family to the Amazon rainforest in Brazil to build a huge dam in the river. His young son wanders off and is raised by a community of indigenous people in the rainforest. By the time the father finds him some ten years later, he has fully acculturated to the lifestyle of the indigenous people, calling the chief, "father." His own father, who realizes that even though he has finally found his son, it is not so simple as merely taking him back to his family in the city. He is faced with the dilemma of finishing the dam project, and burying the very land where his son and his community live in the rainforest or abandoning the dam that he has spent ten years building and saving the land.

Finding Forrester , Dir. Gus Van Sant, Columbia Pictures, 2000. (133 min.VHS / DVD) Based on an unlikely relationship between a hip, urban, African-American teen-age boy with a penchant for basketball and writing, and a reclusive, sixties-something Euro-American, Pulitzer Prize winning writer who becomes the former's mentor. Both have a lot to learn about the lifestyles, *places* , and fears of the other.

Gutherie, Donna, Nancy Bentley, Kathy Keck Arnsteen. *The Young Author's Do-It-Yourself Book* . Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, 1994. This marvelous book takes students step-by-step through the process of assembling a storybook, or in the case of this unit, an alphabet book.

Mamis, Josh, editor. *Greater New Haven Visitor's Guidebook* . New Haven, CT: Greater New Haven Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2002. This book gives an overview of the highlights of greater New Haven including: historical, cultural, outdoor, accommodations, shopping, dining, and nightlife, with a road map of Greater New Haven, and a detailed street map of the original nine squares that make up downtown New Haven.

Marshall, James Vance. *Walkabout* . Littleton, MA: Sundance Publishing, 1959. An urban girl and her brother, thirteen and eight respectively, from South Carolina in the 1950's are the only survivors of a cargo plane crash in the Australian Outback. Their survival depends on a chance encounter with a thirteen year-old Aborigine on his walkabout. Abandoning his walkabout, which contradicts his community's tradition, he teaches the children survival skills and leads them in the direction of modern civilization. But his encounter with the children proves fatal to the Aborigine when he feels rejected by one of the children.

Walkabout , Dir. Nicolas Roeg, 20th Century Fox, 1971. (100 min. VHS / DVD) Based on the novella by the same name, by James Vance Marshall. Two urban Australian children abandoned in the Australian Outback meet up with an Aborigine on his walkabout, his rite of passage. Going against his community's traditions, he abandons his walkabout to teach them the skills they need to survive in the Outback and he leads them out of the wilderness, but as the result of the encounter, he loses his own will to live.

Websites:

www.us.imdb.com

One of the most, if not *the* most, comprehensive Internet Movie Databases

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