



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2004 Volume II: Children's Literature in the Classroom

Sacred Cows for High School Creative Writing Students

Curriculum Unit 04.02.10
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Introduction

As a creative writing teacher, my job is to help students find a voice with which to decipher the complexities of their own lives with due regard for the world we all inhabit. I selected animal stories -- in particular, stories about cows -- as the topic of my curriculum unit because I felt that they offered a kind of walkinthewoods approach to idea generation and subsequent writing assignments. Animal stories also give us a break from the frenetic pace many of us find ourselves in and remind us to revere nature by bringing us to an organic and sensory understanding of how to survive in the world. They show us patterns of organization that enhance life and that employ minimal or at least, an economy of destruction in doing so.

Stories about mammals, insects, reptiles, and fish comprise a genre of Animal Storytelling that may well have begun during the Stone Age (60,000 -- 10,000 BCE) as can be seen in Paleolithic cave paintings. Lascaux in France is one of the most beautifully painted caves of a pre-historic people, and now one of the best known. In many early civilizations animals were revered either as sacred themselves or as gods and goddesses represented in animal forms. The exaltation of animals continues to this day in story and in film. In the past few years, there have been such blockbusters as *Finding Nemo*, *Ice Age*, and *A Bug's Life* (animated films) as well as more grown-up fare in the films *Seabiscuit* and *Hildago*, both movies about exceptional horses. Animals have featured prominently throughout literary history in mythology, fairy tales and fables, legends, satire, fantasy, poetry, novels, and horror fiction. Many of these writings show respect for the integrity of the non-human protagonist. Even those stories that fall into the horror fiction genre engender awe for the power -- and often intelligence -- of the antagonistic beast to the extent that the frailty of our human condition is exposed. Tokyo may have enough juice to electrify Godzilla, but left to our own physiology -- no claws, no fangs -- we'd be goners.

The *Sacred Cows* curriculum unit uses stories and information about animals to discuss various themes that deal with human behavior. The unit begins with a light-hearted look at cows mirroring human foibles in the children's story *Click, Clack, Cows That Type* and several Gary Larson cartoons featuring bovines. It then focuses on ideas about food and eating. We will read "To Serve Man," a short story by Damon Knight, which challenges human arrogance with respect to our place in the food chain. The unit progresses to themes that deal with hunting and survival using historical information about early hunter/gatherers for whom there appears to have been mutual reverence and a sense of reciprocity in sacrifice where animals were concerned.

Contrasting such sensibilities, we will read another short story by Richard Connell, "The Most Dangerous Game," wherein the hunter becomes the hunted. Issues of greed will be explored in viewing the film *Dances with Wolves* wherein a viable food source -- the buffalo -- is on the brink of extinction because of the fur trade and the Sioux are equally endangered by the U.S. government. Students will also learn about the Christian/Indian hybrid religion of the Ghost Dance that inadvertently led to the infamous massacre at Wounded Knee. Lastly, the unit ends with the children's book *The Story of Ferdinand*, a story about integrity and peace.

Reading is essential to a writer and reading (sometimes, viewing) materials, along with discussion prompts, accompany each section of the unit. The reading and writing exercises and projects in this unit have been designed to make students aware of a sense of *place* in their writings and to develop situations and characters that speak to philosophical concepts of sacrifice, reverence, and renewal. In evaluating student work, the following rubric is used:

Basic Writing Rubric

Five points each (50 points total):

- First Draft deadline and word-count met
- Correct format (Times New Roman, 12-point type; double-spaced; 1.25 margins)
- Correct form (short story, poem, news story, etc.)
- Filed in personal drive. (Personal drives are set up for students at my school, Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School, and can be accessed on any computer in the building)
- Peer-edited (for content, spelling, and grammar, and signed by student editor)
- Correct spelling
- Correct grammar
- Personal read-through (students read their papers aloud to themselves)
- Teacher-editing and conference (to discuss corrections and recommendations)

12.5 points for each (50 points total):

- Final revisions and personal read-through
- Final paper deadline met
- Shared oral reading and defense of work (class critique and discussion)
- Quality (based on the class's reactions and comments and the teacher's discretion)

In line with the "Higher Standards for Language Arts" (New Haven Public School arts standards based on state standards as outlined by the National Council for the Teaching of English and International Reading Association) prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing are included in the writing activities. Student writing will be featured in our school newspaper, *Cooperative Voices* and yearly anthology, *Metamorphosis*. There will be one major event, the Ghost Dance Poetry Reading, in which we will share our work with other students, parents, and teachers. The unit will end with a class anthology of animal short stories. The projected time frame for the entire unit is one marking period (approximately ten weeks).

"Udderly" Ridiculous

Click, Clack, Moo, Cows That Type

The cows in Farmer Brown's barnyard are becoming a problem. So begins *Click, Clack, Moo, Cows That Type*, written by Doreen Cronin and illustrated by Betsy Lewin, a story for children ages three to seven. Having found an old typewriter in the barn -- and being fairly literate bovines -- the cows have begun making demands by typing notes to the farmer. At first they request electric blankets for themselves since the barn is quite chilly at night. When the blankets don't appear, they leave a note on the barn door the next morning: "Sorry. We're closed. No milk today." The cows also enlist the hens in their cause and write another note requesting more electric blankets for the hens as well. When their demands still are not met, the hens join the cows in their strike and the farmer is greeted with another note the next morning: "Closed. No milk. No eggs."

Farmer Brown becomes very angry. He is tired of going to the barn each day expecting to milk the cows and collect eggs, but instead being met with demands and refusals. He's tired of hearing the "click, clack, moo; click, clack, moo" of his cows typing. He decides to type his own note, flatly refusing to give the cows and hens the electric blankets and demanding that they do what cows and hens are supposed to do: "You are cows and hens. I demand milk and eggs." Since the duck is a "neutral party," he is chosen to bring the note to the barn.

The next morning, the duck brings the cows' reply to Farmer Brown. The cows agree to exchange the typewriter for electric blankets. They ask the farmer to leave the blankets by the barn door and they will send the duck back with the typewriter. Farmer Brown accepts their offer thinking that finally, the cows and hens will be producing milk and eggs again and the "click, clack, moo" nonsense will be over. But, his hopes are all too soon cut short the following day when he hears "click, clack, quack; click, clack, quack" as the ducks start to type their demands for a diving board for their pond.

Reading & Discussion

Doreen Cronin's story about typing cows will be used in the unit to talk about plot, personification, and plot twists (or peripetia). In the opening two sentences of the book -- "Farmer Brown has a problem. His cows like to type." -- we can surmise the who, what, when, where, and why of the story.

Who?/ Farmer Brown and his cows.

What?/A problem or conflict with typing cows.

When?/ Whenever manual typewriters were in use (hence the "click, clack" sound).

Where?/ On a farm.

Why?/ Cows that are typing probably aren't giving milk.

From this beginning, we will continue to map the plot: exposition, complications, climax, peripeteia, and denouement. We will also discuss personification as a tool in story telling, especially with regard to children's stories. Here the cows are personified by their ability to use language as is demonstrated by their typing.

Click, Clack, Moo, Cows That Type ends with a twist (peripeteia). Everything seems to be sorted out when the cows agree to hand over the typewriter in exchange for the electric blankets. This could have been an agreeable ending for the story, but the author did something else. She gave us a surprise when the ducks, once in possession of the typewriter, begin making their own demands. We will discuss how this kind of surprise affects the reader as well as what needed to happen in the story to create the surprise? Plot twists that appear out of the blue are disturbing and annoying to a reader. The twist has to be connected to the story. Here, the duck had to be introduced as a character and had to have some relationship to the cows and the farmer. But since he was described as a "neutral party," his leadership qualities are unexpected.

We will also look at theme. In this case, technology as represented by the typewriter, is a Pandora's box. Once it's exposed to the world, it's just about impossible to subdue it. Students will be asked to look at other technologies that have changed our world and will write about how they have enhanced or hindered our existence.

Journal Writing

Like the cows in *Click, Clack, Moo, Cows That Type*, pretend you are an animal that has discovered a technical instrument and learned how to use it. What effect does this have on the people around you?

Gary Larson's Cows

On the cover of *The Far Side Gallery 3*, a cow appears as the "Mona Lisa." Moo-na Lisa? On page 22, a bull wearing a baseball cap stands behind the register at Henry's Hardware as Henry's asks him: "Hey, Johnny! This lady wants to know the difference in all these fertilizers!" Then there's a party scene. Beer-toting bulls are gathered in one corner and a few cows stand by the window with their brands in plain view. They are holding champagne glasses. It's animal attraction all right as the bulls decide how to divvy up the bovine beauties: "Bob, you take the 'Triple R,' you take the 'Circle L,' and I'll take the 'Lazy Q,'" (page 48) "Where 'minute' steaks come from" is the caption for a group of plywood thin, flattened cows standing in a field. (page 52) Three carefree, whistling cows pile on top of a tractor. The caption reads "Cow joyrides." (page 67) "Cattle

humor” is depicted by two cowboys bringing in a herd of cattle. A sign that says, “Trample me” is pinned on the back of one of them. (page 82)

For the purpose of this curriculum unit, I’ve selected cartoons depicting cows and bulls, but there’s no limit to the zoological, entomological, psychological, or mythological range of Larson’s imagination. Gary Larson’s cartoons often depict animals taking on human characteristics, but maintaining their special sensibilities. A bovine clerk working in a hardware store would obviously know about fertilizer. Larson’s animal cartoons also speak to food chain issues where life other than human is concerned. Cattle being rounded up by cowboys who will eventually lead them to slaughter know that they could rebel and trample their enemies to death. “Where ‘minute’ steaks come from” is perhaps a reminder that fast-cooking meat doesn’t come from paper doll-looking cows, but from the sacrifice of living animals.

Reading & Discussion

Students will view a variety of cartoons from Gary Larson’s *Far Side* calendars and books and will be asked to select their favorite among cartoons featuring animals. By discussing their selections, we should be able to understand the ridiculous nature of humor; that often what we see as funny is really something that doesn’t jibe with our ideas about reality. We will look for irony (or the unexpected) in the cartoons as well as how the animals are personified.

LESSON ONE: Mona Lisa versus Moo-na Lisa

Students will be instructed to compare DaVinci’s “Mona Lisa” to Larson’s rendition and write a paragraph or two describing the significance of the cartoon, which will, of course, largely be the product of imagination.

In Daniel Brown’s book, *The Da Vinci Code*, he suggests some hidden messages in Leonardo da Vinci’s most famous painting, “The Mona Lisa.” The horizon line on the left side of the painting appears lower than the right, which makes the left side of the face appear larger than the right side. Brown states that this configuration aligns with historical concepts of male and female where left was considered feminine and right, masculine and that Da Vinci believed that the human soul had to have both male and female aspects in order to be enlightened. The book goes on to say that the painting has been thought to be a self portrait and that computer analysis has confirmed some points of congruency in both the face in the painting and the face of the artist. Lastly, the title “Mona Lisa” is described as an anagram for “Amon L’isa,” representing Amon, the Egyptian ram-headed god of masculinity and fertility and Isis, the Egyptian goddess of fertility whose ancient pictogram was once called L’isa. Therefore, Amon L’isa represented the divine union of male and female and this idea, as it is represented in da Vinci’s painting, accounts for the Mona Lisa’s knowing smile. (Brown 119)

As for Gary Larson’s Moo-na Lisa (my title for the cartoon, not his), what mystery of the cow world underscores this work of art is hard to say, but it might be fun for students to imagine some. Not totally dissimilar to Da Vinci, Larson’s understanding of science has influenced his work and has won him high praise. As Stephen Jay Gould of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University says in his foreword, which appears in *The Far Side Gallery 3*: “Something amazing has happened to the doors and bulletin boards of academic corridors in the natural sciences. These blank spaces are traditionally festooned with bits of humor [Larson’s] chosen to make statements about serious issues in science or laboratory life.”

Students will look at prints of Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* and Larson’s cow version of the painting. I will read the excerpt from *The da Vinci Code* (as described above) and will ask the class to imagine some mystical details about Larson’s cartoon. It might be interesting to note that if Amon L’isa is truly an anagram for Mona Lisa,

that the goddess Isis was often depicted with a solar disc between cow horns on her head. This, of course, is not a serious exercise, but is intended to strengthen writing skills using personification, irony, and humor.

Eating

A Personal Anecdote

In 1971, my family moved from Lake Tahoe, Nevada to Tampa, Florida. My father, an installation engineer, had just completed putting in a phone system for Harrah's Hotel and Casino. His next job would be for a department store chain in Florida. He and my mother decided to travel by car and so my parents, my kid brother, our dog, Rusty, and I saugaged a half dozen suitcases and us into my father's secondhand Chevy.

About 60 miles outside of Austin, Texas -- where we had stopped at Dusty's Steak House to eat earlier that day -- our trip was suddenly interrupted by one of the most exquisite sites that I have ever seen. I had been dozing in the back seat when my father's swearing awakened me. As I looked out the car window, I could see that we were in the middle of a vast plain of tall grasses. To my left, coming over a hill, was a parade of Herefords. I was familiar with the sleek cows of New Jersey since most of my childhood had been spent in the Garden State, but these creatures wore an abundance of curly fur, white about the head and legs, with large patches of auburn or black fur along their midsections. As the herd approached the main road, my mother continued what had become her mantra by then, "Red, slow down!" Of course, Red, my father, did just the opposite until we had to come to a screeching halt as the herd was just about to step onto the road.

Within moments, the cows surrounded our car. Rusty woke up and started barking. My father continued his swearing and my mother yelled at us to roll up the windows to guard against marauding cows. My brother and I sat in amazement, staring at these magnificent creatures with their striking colors and lumbering benevolence. As we held little interest for them, the cows casually moved on across the road and our path was clear to travel again.

In looking back -- about thirtyfive years, now -- I remember the awe that I felt for the Hereford. Ironically, I don't think I gave any thought at the time to the fact that less than a couple of hours earlier that day, I had probably devoured one of their relatives, or at least a few choice pieces of cow at Dusty's Steak House. It's not that I think that cows are people, too. They're not. They're cows. But if I had to raise, rope, slaughter, skin, butcher, and cook one, I don't think I'd ever eat meat again. Nowadays, I just go to the market and quibble over how much money I should spend for a decent cut of sirloin without a thought to the sacrifice that made the meat possible in the first place.

In order for people to live, animals (and plants) must die. The significance of this idea is usually not uppermost in our minds when we dine at an upscale restaurant or go food shopping at our local supermarkets. We no longer paint monumental murals, as did early huntergatherers in their cave paintings, in honor of those animals that have sacrificed their lives for us. Nor do we deify animals as gods and goddesses. Stop and Shop and Stew Leonard's aren't sacred tombs. But according to Joseph Campbell, in his book *The Power of Myth*, people living during the Paleolithic era saw the killing of animals as ritual acts. Campbell also suggests that killing animals had "a sense of guilt connected with [it]." (Campbell 90) Therefore, early huntergatherer peoples made a covenant with animals. Through ritual, animals were thanked for their willingness to sacrifice their lives and were assured transcendence and rebirth (which in turn replenished the food supply). Animals

were considered equals, or given their superior physicality viewed as gods, givers of life and inspiration. They were seen as models for how to live. We have remnants of this kind of thinking today, largely in eastern religious philosophy as it is represented by the practice of martial arts and yoga, wherein practitioners represent animal physiology in their poses or positions.

Journal Writing

After sharing the story above with my class, I will ask students to think about experiences that they -- or people they know -- have had with animals and to write about them in their journals. Afterward, students will share and discuss their entries.

To Serve Man

Damon Knight's short story, "To Serve Man," addresses issues of killing and eating, but in a rather ironic way. The Kanamit are grotesque-looking, pig-faced aliens who have come to Earth claiming to offer humanity health, happiness, and a world without war. Peter (the story's narrator) and his friend Grigori are translators at a U.N. session that is being held to find out why the Kanamit (whose only other languages are English and French) are really here. In very short order, the Kanamit have changed the Earth from a volatile planet threatened by its own technological capabilities to destroy itself into a Garden of Eden where there is more than enough for everyone, thereby eliminating the need for war. To ensure world peace, the aliens have also installed machines in every nation that "[create] a field in which nothing can explode" from hydrogen bombs to combustion engines. Thus, all the armies of the world are immobilized.

Both Peter and Giorgi leave their jobs at the U.N. since the institution will soon become obsolete. While Peter embraces this new world, his friend remains skeptical. Both decide to learn the Kanamit language to see if they can find out more about their intentions. They also put their names on a waiting list to leave Earth for a ten-year exchange program on the Kanamit home world. In the meantime, they work on translating a book that Giorgi lifted from one of the Kanamit staff. In a couple of weeks, they have been able to translate the title: "How to Serve Man," which seems to quash any suspicions about Kanamit altruism.

When Peter meets up again with Giorgi a couple of weeks later, he sees that his friend is very upset. Giorgi tells Peter that they are both booked on the next exchange program flight, which would have been excellent news were it not for the fact that Giorgi had translated the first paragraph in the Kanamit book. Giorgi relayed the terrible news to Peter. "How to Serve Man" was not a manual of good will and peace on Earth after all. It was, in fact, a cookbook.

Reading & Discussion

After the students participate in an oral reading of "To Serve Man" by Damon Knight, we will discuss the plot and theme of the story as well as the irony of how a world made peaceful had also become defenseless.

LESSON TWO: Food Chain Arguments

In "To Serve Man," Damon Knight presents a world in which humans are no longer at the top of the food chain. The off-world visitors from Kanamit are far superior in intelligence and technology and obviously feel justified in herding humans as a source of food. Students will be asked to write an epilogue to this story wherein a meeting has been granted to Peter and Giorgi to plead the case for humanity's survival. They will have to prove to the Kanamit why humans are worthy of their independence and freedom, which may be a difficult

argument since it was not until the Kanamit arrived on Earth that the planet was able to provide for all its people and eliminate the need for war.

A Prehistoric Cathedral

Some of the earliest animal stories can be found in the magnificent prehistoric murals etched on the rock walls of the Lascaux Gallery. These caves were painted during a time when glacial ice was advancing and retreating, when the mountain ranges of Europe and Scandinavia were covered with snow, and when our earliest ancestors took refuge in caves warmed by their fires; fed and clothed by the fallen animals of their hunts.

On September 12, 1940, four teenage boys discovered the cave. Jacques Marsal, one of the four, became the chief guide for special groups authorized to visit the cave today. Located in southwestern France, the Lascaux cave contains 600 paintings and approximately 1500 engravings, along with a treasure of artifacts.

Within the subtle tones and sculpturelike renderings, the rock walls of Lascaux often serve to depict the shape of the animals. As Joseph Campbell states in *The Power of Myth*, "They are painted with the vitality of ink on silk in a Japanese painting . . . a bull that will be twenty feet long, [is] painted so that its haunches will be represented by the swelling of the rock." (Campbell 100)

The Lascaux Gallery considered the "Sistine Chapel" of the Paleolithic era depicts prehistoric animal scenes that include: aurochs (large wild ox now extinct), ibexes, horses, cows and bulls. The artistry with which these animals were drawn pays tribute to an aesthetic sensibility that has been recaptured in more modern times by such artists as Picasso. In fact, in a *National Geographic* article, "Art Treasures from the Ice Age Lascaux Cave" by Jean-Philippe Rigaud (Vol. 174, No. 4, p. 499) when Picasso visited the Lascaux cave, he said: "We have invented nothing."

The prehistoric painters of Lascaux lived between 18,000 and 11,000 years ago and are known today as the Magdalenians, named after La Madeleine, the site where the first evidence of their existence was found. Judging by the quality of the art displayed on the cave walls, the Magdalenians were experienced painters. "Engravings were made with incomparable sureness; drawings executed without erasures, without 'repentance'." (Rigaud 495) They may have been a school of artists and perhaps the same artists who painted the nearby Gabillou Cave (approximately 60 kilometers west of Lascaux), which features similar engravings and painting characteristics.

There is a sense of reverence for the animals portrayed in these caves. The hunted animals appear to be exalted. While their bodies supplied food for early humans, their images imply food for the soul. Campbell compares the solemnity of the Lascaux caves to the quiet majesty of a cathedral and suggests that Lascaux may have been a sacred place of initiation for boys becoming hunters. "These caves are the original men's rite sanctuaries where the boys became no longer their mothers' sons but their fathers' sons." (Campbell 101) Through this initiation, it is presumed that boys would not only learn hunting skills, but also would pay tribute to the animals they would eventually kill and eat.

Viewing, Reading & Discussion

A picture of a bull's head is held up for the class to see. Students are told that this is an image from a very famous mural and asked who they think painted it? They are asked what style of painting it is and given a clue that the artist is French. Some students may be aware of the Lascaux caves, but most will not. Afterward, students will go to their computers and log on to the Lascaux website: "The Painted Gallery at Lascaux," <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/espace.htm>>.

Students will take a virtual (website) tour of the Lascaux caves. They will enter the sloped entrance into the Great Hall of Bulls where the paintings extend about seventeen meters (approximately 55 feet) across both walls and upward seven meters (24 feet) onto the vaulted ceiling of the cave, which is six meters (20 feet) high. The paintings depict three groups of animals: horses, bulls and stags. A unicornlike horse can be seen chasing a herd of horses superimposed over a large, partially drawn bull. In the opposite direction, a few large wild oxen appear. The Painted Gallery extends off of the Great Hall of Bulls and similar paintings cover its walls and vaulted ceiling.

Students will view the murals in the Painted Gallery, which is a continuation of the Great Hall of Bulls. They will continue on through The Lateral Passage, a second, lower, gallery, which opens off the Great Hall of Bulls and leads to the Chamber of Engravings and further on to the Chamber of Felines. The Shaft of the Dead Man opens at the far end of the Chamber of Engravings and more silted up chambers follow in the same direction.

Students will also read "Art Treasures from the Ice Age Lascaux Cave" by JeanPhillippe Rigaud (*National Geographic* , Vol. 174, No. 4, October 1988, pp. 482-499) to learn about the discovery of the caves, their architecture, history, and preservation, and the Paleolithic artists who painted them.

After viewing the website and reading the article, students will participate in a conversation to discuss the discovery of the caves and their preservation, the Magdalenians who painted them, and the significance of what their paintings portray.

LESSON THREE: Reporting on Lascaux

The class will collaborate to write mini articles on Lascaux to include: the discovery of the cave; its preservation; layout; artwork; original artists and tools; the significance of the only human figure found in over 600 pictures; its ceremonial purposes. Students will use the materials that we have covered thus far as well as additional information that they find on the Internet or at the library. They will employ research skills to do web searches, take notes, share and document information (citations). They will rely on information from our discussion to guide their research and will be encouraged to generate more questions of interest about their respective subtopics. They will exercise their paraphrasing skills in their writing, which will be informed by their research. Lastly, they will learn the inverted pyramid construction of news writing (a lead that summarizes the major points of the article with supporting paragraphs descending in the order of the most important to the least). Each mini article should be approximately 250 words in length. These articles will later be used in our culminating spread in our quarterly newspaper.

The Most Dangerous Game

In contrast to the cave paintings of Lascaux that revered animals of prey, Richard Connell's short story, "The Most Dangerous Game," questions the sanctity of life, both animal and human, when the hunter becomes the hunted. Sanger Rainsford, a game hunter of considerable renown, is sailing to Rio to hunt jaguar in the Amazon. While sitting on the deck of his yacht, he hears gun shots. He leans against the railing, looks out on the water in the direction of the sound of the shots he's heard, loses his footing, and falls overboard. When he

surfaces, the yacht has pulled away too far for him to swim to. Remembering where the gun shots had come from, Rainsford swims in their direction. He hears a high pitched scream, but doesn't recognize the animal. Then another shot is fired and the screaming stops. Rainsford continues swimming until he makes it to a rocky shore. Exhausted, he climbs over the rocks to a level strip of land that marks the edge of a thick jungle and collapses.

Rainsford wakes the next day in the late afternoon. Looking around, he finds boot prints and shells from a 22 rifle. He tracks the prints through the jungle to a castle situated on a high bluff. There he meets General Zaroff and his over-sized henchman, Ivan. Zaroff is also a hunter and aware of Rainsford's reputation. He welcomes Rainsford to his home. Rainsford is duly impressed by the many mounted heads of animals that Zaroff has killed, especially the one of the cape buffalo. He asks Zaroff, "Is the cape buffalo the most dangerous of all big game?" Zaroff tells him that it isn't, that, in fact, the most dangerous game to be hunted must have "courage, cunning, and above all reason." It quickly becomes clear to Rainsford that the game Zaroff is talking about is human and that he has been conducting macabre hunting expeditions on his island.

Zaroff invites Rainsford to hunt with him. Rainsford, who is shocked and outraged, refuses and so becomes the target of Zaroff's next hunting expedition the following day. By the end of the story, Rainsford has killed Ivan and outwitted Zaroff. When he surprises Zaroff by appearing in his bedroom late that night, Zaroff congratulates him for winning the game. Rainsford says that he is still a hunted beast and tells the general to prepare to die. The general replies, "Splendid! One of us is to furnish a meal for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very comfortable bed. On guard, Rainsford."

In the last sentence, we find out that Rainsford has indeed killed General Zaroff, but we are not quite sure whether his new insight as a hunted beast has led him to enlightenment or has simply wetted his appetite for more killing: "He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided."

Reading & Discussion

Students will participate in a shared oral reading of *The Most Dangerous Game* by Richard Connell and will discuss the following: What does the word "game" mean in this story? How does a big game hunter differ from a prehistoric hunter? Why do game hunters often display the heads of their kills as trophies? How is this kind of display of game different than the cave paintings at Lascaux? Is it ethical to hunt animals for sport? Does hunting as a sport have any redeeming value? Why do some natural reserves have hunting seasons? Is Rainsford's opinion about prey changed after he becomes a hunted beast himself?

Journal Writing

The last sentence of "The Most Dangerous Game" suggests an ironic twist. We might expect that Rainsford would have learned a lesson from his harrowing experience of being hunted like a wild animal, but the story doesn't end with his reflection. Instead, he decides that "He had never slept in a better bed," Zaroff's bed, the man he has just killed. Students will be instructed to continue Rainsford's story a little further by making a journal entry in the person of Rainsford for the next day.

Dance of the Buffalo

Early Hunter/Gatherers

Toward the end of the Pleistocene (Ice Age), the primeval northern conifer forest of the North American continent was gradually being replaced by deciduous forest. Between 8,000 and 6,000 BCE, this forest was again replaced by perennial grasses, thus forming the Great North American Plains covering threequarter of a million square miles west of the Missouri River. By the time Europeans began their explorations westward, approximately fifty million bison roamed these plains. Hundreds of generations before their arrival, PaleoIndians hunted bison, as well as other game, and gathered seeds, tubers, nuts, and berries. By c.250 BCE to 1000 AD, plains people learned to plant maize. They used hoes made of bison scapulae to work the rich alluvial soil of the Missouri and its tributaries. They made earthenware pottery and erected sacred mounds in the shapes of animals.

In the central and western plains, which were more prone to drought, bison eventually became the main source of food. Long before the horse, Plains Indians hunted bison or buffalo on foot. The horse evolved 40 million years ago in the Americas, but became extinct by the end of the Pleistocene. Horses that had traveled westward to Eurasia via the Bering Land Bridge (now the Bering Strait) and across Siberia survived, and in 1493, Christopher Columbus reintroduced them to America on his second voyage. However, the absence of the horse did not stop PaleoIndians from hunting buffalo on foot with spears or bows and arrows. Because this method was impractical and dangerous, they devised a better system called the buffalo fall whereby a herd could be driven over a cliff and collected after they were incapacitated or dead.

In preparation for the buffalo fall, the Blackfeet built two rock walls on a high bluff. The walls were laid in the shape of a "V" with the narrow end opening at the precipice. At the bottom of the cliff, they built a stone wall corral called a pis'kun (deep blood kettle), wherein the animals that survived the fall could be quickly dispatched. (*The Native Americans* , Thomas 95). It was a brutal affair for the buffalo, but necessary for the tribe's survival and it appears to have been conducted with a good deal of reverence for their prey. The Blackfeet legend (below) is a story of resurrection that shows the renewal and rebirth of a major food source, the buffalo. It also suggests a kind of absolution for killing them. The buffalo dance in the story was reenacted in prehunt rituals, along with the singing of sacred songs and the incantation of charms. This sacred dance to make the buffalo come again would be revisited about a thousand years later by an Indian prophet whose followers would unwittingly provoke the infamous massacre at Wounded Knee in the late eighteen hundreds.

Reading & Discussion

While students are wrapping up their work from the last lesson, they will be given a homework assignment to record what they have eaten for dinner over a oneweek period. This lesson will begin with a discussion of their menu logs: what foods they liked best/least and how the food arrived at their tables. Students will then share in an oral reading of "Life on the Great Plains" and "Hunting Buffalo Afoot" (*The Native Americans, an Illustrated History* by David Hurst Thomas, et al, pp. 9095) to gain understanding about how some of the earliest inhabitants of our country put food on their tables. Afterward, we will discuss some of the differences in food acquisition and consumption between PaleoIndians and modern Americans.

Journal Writing

Students will be asked to imagine that they are buffalo and told that the Blackfeet have constructed a buffalo fall to capture them. The hunters need their flesh and organs to eat and will use their hide for clothing and shelter. It has been this way for a long as they can remember. They are then told to describe what happens: Do they escape the fall or sacrifice their lives for the Blackfeet?

A Legend of the Buffalo from the Blackfeet

The Blackfeet legend of the buffalo fall, as retold by Joseph Campbell in *The Power of Myth* (pp. 9698) begins with the Blackfeet tribe, frustrated because they are unable to get the buffalo to go over a cliff. One of the tribesmen's daughters spies the buffalo standing at the edge of the cliff and entices them to come over to her with the promise that if they do, she will marry one of them. All the buffalo fall to their deaths except for their leader, who approaches the girl and expects her to make good on her promise. Surprised and outraged, she protests, but the leader asks her to look at all his dead relatives lying at the bottom of the cliff. When she does, she feels obliged to go with him.

The next day, her father tries to find her. He scouts for footprints and sees that she has gone off with a buffalo. He tracks her for quite some time. Eventually, he becomes too tired to go any further and so he sits down to rest near a wallow. Just as he does, a magpie visits him. He asks the magpie if it has seen his daughter and the bird tells him that his daughter is not far away; she is sleeping with the buffalo. He asks the magpie to fly over to his daughter and tell her that her father is here, which the bird does. The buffalo are asleep and the girl is horrified by the news since she knows that her father is in great danger. Her husband wakes up, takes off one of his horns and tells her to go to the wallow and get him a drink. She quickly goes to fetch the water and to warn her father. When she returns, her husband is suspicious. He bellows to wake the other buffalo. They wake up and dance with their tails in the air, then continue to dance over to the wallow where they trample her father to death. The girl is beset with grief by the brutal murder of her father and cries uncontrollably. Her husband tries to make her see that he has sacrificed far more than she has -- children, wives, parents -- but his bride is inconsolable. He then agrees that if she can bring her father back to life, he will let her go.

The young buffalo bride tells the magpie to find a piece of her father. The bird scouts around, picks up a small bone, and brings it to her. She takes the bone, puts it on the ground, and lies her blanket over it. She begins to sing a sacred song and as she sings, the bone regenerates a skeleton, organs, muscle, and flesh. She pulls away the blanket to reveal her father's body lying there. She continues her song and the music breathes life into the body of her father and he stands up.

When the buffalo husband sees what she has done, he asks her to do the same for the buffalo. "We'll teach you our buffalo dance, and when you will have killed our families, you do this dance and sing this song, and we will all come back to live again." (Campbell 98)

Reading & Discussion

Students will read "The First Storytellers," chapter three from of *The Power of Myth* by Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers (pp. 86112), which discusses the Lascaux caves when Campbell first visited them and hunter/gatherer peoples and their reverence for the animals they killed and consumed. In this chapter, Campbell suggests that prehistoric painted caves were sacred places where initiation rites took place and he also retells the Blackfeet legend of the buffalo fall.

Students will discuss why Lascaux might be considered a sacred place and why it would have been important

to early hunter/gatherers to show reverence to the animals that they killed. We will talk about the kind of reverence we have -- or don't have -- for our food sources today as well as how attuned to nature we are -- or are not -- and what has happened as a result with respect to world ecology. Lastly, we will discuss the significance of the legend of the buffalo fall with respect to ideas of resurrection and renewal.

LESSON FOUR: Legend Writing

Legends are based on historical fact; most often very loosely so. Students will be instructed to imagine themselves as one of the animal characters in this story, i.e., the buffalo or the magpie, and to retell the story of the father's resurrection and the teaching of the buffalo dance from that character's point of view. They are advised to review the historical information that we have covered about the buffalo fall and to keep in mind the writing pedagogy that we have covered with regard to plot and personification. Students' final work will be shared in a class reading.

Dances With Wolves

In the movie, *Dances With Wolves*, Lt. John Dunbar (Kevin Costner) yearns for the American frontier. As a decorated Union soldier who fought in the Civil War, his request to be reassigned to the West is granted and he takes command of an abandoned fort on the Great Plains. Initially, his only company are his extraordinarily loyal horse and a wolf with white paws that he befriends at the fort and names TwoSocks. (Dunbar is later named "DancesWithWolves" by the Sioux because of his affection for TwoSocks.)

While roaming the plains, Dunbar meets a young woman who has intentionally cut her hand. Pain and grief over the loss of her husband have brought her to the point of exhaustion and she collapses. Dunbar puts her on his horse and rides into the Sioux camp. There he meets a most indignant young warrior, Wind in His Hair, who grabs the woman off Dunbar's horse and drags her away. Seeing that he has not been greeted by the welcoming committee, Dunbar leaves the camp and returns to the fort. The next day, Kicking Bird, the tribe's holy man (Graham Green), Wind in His Hair (Rodney A. Grant), and a couple of other Sioux come to the fort. Dunbar makes them coffee, which is a new experience for them, and tries to communicate through pantomime. He is mostly interested in finding out about the buffalo.

When Dunbar next visits the Sioux camp, he is introduced to the woman he rescued. Her name is StandsWithAFist (Mary McDonnell) and she is the adopted daughter of Kicking Bird. As a young girl, rival Indians had attacked her family. She had been able to hide from the attackers and was later rescued by the Sioux. Although she has very little memory of speaking English, she is able to act as a rudimentary translator between Dunbar and Kicking Bird.

Dunbar becomes fascinated with the Sioux -- their customs, their camaraderie, and their reverence for life. He accompanies the tribe on a buffalo hunt and saves one of their young boys from being trampled by a buffalo. He marries StandsWithAFist and becomes a member of the Sioux family. Eventually, knowing what the U.S. government has in store for the Indians, he reveals the cache of weapons that he had hidden when he first arrived at the fort.

Viewing & Discussion

Students will view a video of *Dances With Wolves* (181 minutes; approximately three classes) and will be instructed to take notes in preparation for a film critique (below). We may also stop the video as questions or points of interest arise. The key focus of our

discussion following the film will be to compare the unthinking slaughter of the buffalo by fur traders with the buffalo hunt by the Sioux. It will also address John Dunbar's dilemma in knowing that U.S. Cavalry soldiers are on their way to push the Sioux, whom he has befriended, off their lands.

LESSON FIVE: Film Critique

Students will write a critique of the film, *Dances With Wolves*, which will include: Title, screenwriter, director, and producer, release date; biographical information on Kevin Costner, star, director and producer; two paragraphs of summary; Costner's purpose in making the movie; quality of various actors' performances; effectiveness of the film; recommendation.

The Ghost Dance

After fur traders had hunted the buffalo to near extinction and as the West was won by corralling Indians onto reservations and their children into Christian boarding schools, politics and greed stood ready to oppress the Indian nations even further. As with the buffalo fall, they were driven to the precipice of ethnocide and pushed over the cliff into a pit of confined space and limited civil rights. Treaty violations, prohibition of native religious and cultural practices, and the advance of the Union Pacific Railway filled that "deep blood kettle" to the brim with more and more disenfranchised Indians and boiled the contents to vapors. For the Plains Indians, not only were the buffalo disappearing, so were they.

In 1889, during a solar eclipse, Wovoka, a Paiute shaman, claimed that he saw the Second Coming of Christ, and that the messiah had warned him of the evils of the white man. Word of Wovoka's vision spread throughout Indian camps and he became known as the Indian Messiah and the reincarnation of Jesus. Using the prehunt dance intended to bring the buffalo back to the plains, a hybrid religion that blended the Christian doctrine of Armageddon with Indian ritual was born, known as the Ghost Dance. Not only did the Ghost Dance promise that the buffalo would return, but it also claimed that an apocalypse would destroy the Earth; that the world would be recreated and Indians would rise from the dead to rule over it. This New World would be free of violence, starvation, and disease. Indians would be saved when they purged themselves of the evil ways of the white man that they had adopted; in particular, the imbibing of alcohol. ("The Wounded Knee Massacre, Ghost Dance Religion, www.bgsu.edu)

To participate in the Ghost Dance, people first sat in a sweat lodge as a purification process. Afterward, they dressed in sacramental white muslin shirts painted with red pigment depicting symbols the participants had envisioned while in the sweat lodge. Their shirts were embellished with feathers and each displayed the figure of an eagle. After donning their costumes, they joined hands to make a circle, in the center of which was a sacred tree (or symbol of a tree) decorated with religious offerings. Dancers looked toward the sun and shuffled counterclockwise as they chanted and sang songs of resurrection. The Ghost Dance could continue for days with participants falling to the ground as they saw visions of the messiah leading them to the Promised Land. Overall, the objective of the dance was to put its participants into a trance. Onlookers were forbidden to attend these rituals, which in turn made them more mysterious, even portentous to whites, who panicked, thinking that an Indian rebellion was beginning.

With complaints from homesteaders, reservation agents became alarmed and felt that military action was warranted. Ironically, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, who intended to convert the Indians to Christianity, didn't understand that what Wovoka was teaching had a great deal to do with Christian values. Wovoka had converted many to monotheism. He encouraged followers to begin farming and send their children to school.

Even so, the Bureau outlawed the Ghost Dance. ("The Wounded Knee Massacre, Ghost Dance Religion, www.bgsu.edu)

Toward the end of 1890 Seventh Cavalry troops rounded up a band of Hunkpapa Sioux who were preparing for a Ghost Dance -- two thirds of them, women and children -- at Pine Ridge Reservation, along Wounded Knee Creek. Five hundred soldiers, with four Hotchkiss guns, surrounded the band of Indians. Two days before the end of the year, all the Sioux men were called out and disarmed. A weapon was discharged and the Hotchkiss guns opened fire killing most of the men in five minutes. As the Indian crowd tried to escape, the guns continued to fire. In the end, twenty-nine soldiers and approximately 200 Indians were dead. Those who were able to escape, were either found and shot, or froze to death in the hills. (*The Native Americans* , Thomas 36566)

Reading & Discussion

So far students have learned about early hunter/gatherer peoples whose reverence for the animals they killed and ate was clearly depicted in their magnificent cave paintings. In contrast, we have read "The Most Dangerous Game," Richard Connell's short story that challenges the sanctity of life. We have learned of the buffalo fall and have read a legend that tells of the balance between humans and animals with respect to sacrifice; that the viability of our food sources depends on our reverence for their survival and a sincere appreciation for the life force they give us. Viewing *Dances With Wolves* , students became aware of a clash of cultures between the imperialism of the U.S. government bent on the acquisition of Indian lands and a group of indigenous people who had lived in harmony with the land throughout their existence. In this next reading, "The Wounded Knee Massacre, Ghost Dance Religion" (knee/Wkghost.html), students will revisit the buffalo dance as told in the Blackfeet legend and will see how it evolved into the hybrid religion of the Ghost Dance, which inadvertently led to the Wounded Knee Massacre.

Our discussion will address the irony of how the buffalo dance, which was initially intended to replenish the food supply by paying tribute to the sacrifice of the buffalo, created fear in white settlers and eventually served to annihilate a band of Sioux at Wounded Knee.

Journal Writing

Students will be given the following instruction for their next journal entry: Native Americans practiced the Ghost Dance in the hope that life as they had known it would be restored. They had lost much of their land, their way of life as hunter/gatherers, their children to Christian boarding schools, and were forbidden to practice their religious rituals. According to the Declaration of Independence, we, as American citizens, are endowed with certain unalienable rights -- life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. However, for many Americans, this endowment has come late or not at all. Our country, as well as our world, suffers from religious bigotry, prejudice, hunger, pollution, and poverty. If we were to perform a Ghost Dance today, what things would you want to see resurrected from the past? Describe what it is and how it would feel to have it back.

LESSON SIX: Ghost Dance Poetry Reading

Students will be asked to find poems about animals and plants. They may search the Internet or use one of the books that will be made available to them:

Rose, *Where Did You Get That Red*, *Sleeping on the Wing* and *Making Your Own Day* by Kenneth Koch.

The Edible Alphabet Book by Vicki Ragan.

Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon by Pablo Neruda

The Native Americans, An Illustrated History

We will discuss each poem selection for the following:

Rhythm -- beats/syllables per line

Rhymes and echoes -- alliteration, assonance, end rhyme, internal rhyme

Metaphor and simile -- What comparisons are made and what do they tell us?

Form -- Does the work fit a poetic form, such as: sonnet, list, limerick, ode, etc.?

Theme -- What is the poet telling us?

Evocation -- How does the poem make us feel?

Students will then brainstorm ideas to write their own poems, which may also address animals and plants, or more global ideas about what our world needs to survive as they wrote about in their last journal entry. These poems will take the forms of elegies, epitaphs, and odes, all of which are intended to show reverence to their subjects. We will review and critique students' original poems in the same way that we did their selected poems, and they will revise as necessary.

Students will then collaborate on a chant that addresses the ideas of reverence and sacrifice that we have discussed so far in the unit. Rhythm and repetition will be the poetic devices focused on here.

In preparation for our *Ghost Dance Poetry Reading*, we will make a mobile of our sacred tree using twigs and branches strung together with florist wire. Each student will attach a metaphor taken from his or her original poem along with a picture (drawn, cut from a magazine, or retrieved from the Internet). Printouts of the metaphors and pictures will be mounted on construction paper, holepunched, and attached to the "tree" with florist wire. Our sacred tree will then be hung from the ceiling in the middle of the room.

Students will rehearse their poems. They will be asked to invite friends, family members, and teachers to the reading. On the day of the event, tables/desks will be pushed to the perimeter of the room and chairs will be arranged in a circle. Students will read their poems and the audience will be asked to discuss ideas they may have about them. The reading will end with the collaborative chant, copies of which will be supplied to audience members so that they may join in. If it is agreeable to the class, we may also choreograph a group dance in the style of the Ghost Dance, which could be performed along with the chant.

The Story of Ferdinand

Ferdinand is a very unusual bull. In his youth, he was quite different from the other young bulls who liked to “run and jump and butt their heads together.” Ferdinand prefers the peace of sitting under his favorite cork tree and smelling the flowers. Years pass and Ferdinand grows to be a very big and strong bull, but still he spends his days under the cork tree smelling the flowers while the other bulls practice fighting for the bull fights in Madrid. When men arrive at the pasture one day to pick the “biggest, fastest, roughest bull to fight in the bull fights in Madrid,” Ferdinand isn’t interested and so he goes to his cork tree to sit down. Unfortunately, he sits on a bumble bee and is stung. He jumps and snorts, puffs and butts, and paws the ground in a frenzy. The men are so impressed with him that they choose him for the bull fights, cart him up, and take him to Madrid.

On the day Ferdinand was to fight in the bull ring, he followed a parade of Banderilleros, Picadors, and the Matador. He was called “Ferdinand the Fierce” and all the bull fighters were afraid of him. But when Ferdinand entered the ring, “he saw the flowers in all the lovely ladies’ hair and he just sat down quietly and smelled.” He wouldn’t fight no matter what the Banderilleros, Picadors, and Matador did and so they took him home to spend the rest of his days sitting under his cork tree and just quietly smelling the flowers.

The Story of Ferdinand was written in 1936 by Munro Leaf and illustrated by Robert Lawson. It is a story that I had read many times to my children when they were quite young and one that continues to touch my heart to this day. Ferdinand marches to the beat of a different drummer. He has no interest in fighting and is not swayed by the peer pressure of seeing his contemporaries constantly pawing the ground and butting their heads together. He’s a loner who is happiest when he is sitting under his favorite cork tree and smelling flowers “just quietly.” Even when he was taunted and provoked by the bull fighters while he was in the bull ring in Madrid, he did not fight. Given his pacifism, which is seriously challenged, Ferdinand maintains his integrity.

C. S. Lewis, in his essay, “On Three Ways of Writing for Children” (*On Stories and Other Essays on Literature* , pp. 31-43), says that ideally the children’s story “is simply the right form for what the author has to say, then of course readers who want to hear that will read the story or re-read it, at any age.” With this in mind, I believe *The Story of Ferdinand* fits Lewis’s criteria. In very simple language, with some repetitive phrasing, Munro’s book serves as a kind of meditation: “He liked to sit just quietly and smell the flowers” is repeated several times throughout the story. Its message of pacifism is as important for young readers as it is for teenagers and adults. Most of us are faced with provocations in our lives, be they small or large: peer pressure, competition, economic concerns, relationship problems, etc. Ferdinand offers us the zen of sitting quietly as opposed to butting heads.

Reading and Discussion

From the civil disobedience of typing cows to the civil unrest of Native Americans desperately trying to resurrect their culture in the Ghost Dance, students have been introduced to ideas about the sanctity of all life and the price that we pay when we lose our reverence for it. Standing up for one’s belief in the face of great opposition requires great strength and integrity. History has given us a few stellar examples, among them, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Mahatma (great soul) of India and Martin Luther King. The fictional

character of Ferdinand also fits this mold with regard to his zen-like approach of simply sitting down. After sharing in an oral reading of *The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf, students will discuss the story in relation to the kind of conflicts that they come up against in their lives and will be asked if “sitting just quietly” might be a way to resolve them.

LESSON SEVEN: Animal Short Stories

In this last lesson of the unit, students will be instructed to review the information that we have covered as well as their journals and writing assignments. We will review some of the situations in the stories we have read: cows demanding electric blankets, a hunter becoming prey, the Blackfeet tribe in need of food, etc. Students will be asked to brainstorm for new situations that appeal to them in which an animal is a key character. Once they do, they can begin writing. Knowing exactly where the story will wind up is not important at this stage in the writing, but description about the setting and dialogue from the characters are. As students create the world of their stories and let their characters speak, they may find some interesting ideas unfolding. How their characters will solve problems or meet challenges -- or not -- should become an exercise in self-discovery.

After they have written their first drafts, students will peer-edit for content, spelling, and grammar. With respect to content, they will refer to the writing pedagogy that we have covered in the unit: plot (especially plot twists and irony), theme, and personification. In their second drafts, students should make revisions and fine-tune their stories to make sure that their themes are discernable. What are they really trying to say to readers? Why are their stories important? As readers, we don't want to be hit over the head with theme, but a good story will usually make us want to ponder a bit, which can result in a knowing smile or even an “Ah ha!” Those are the moments that acknowledge the writer's integrity.

Students will continue to write, edit, and revise their stories until they are satisfied that they are done. We will present the finished stories in class and discuss their merit with respect to descriptions, characterizations, and themes, i.e., *Are we transported to the author's world? Are we sympathetic to the protagonist? Are the complications presented challenging? Did we discover something about our world and ourselves?*

Final stories will be included in a class anthology of animal stories, which we will produce as a culminating activity for the unit.

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