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Whose Voice Is It Anyway? Using Film to Teach Voice

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.01.04
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As teachers we strive daily to push young minds to their fullest academic potential. This is indeed a challenge in today's classroom that is an eclectic mix of diverse learners. Our job is that much more challenging as we seek ways to get students to think critically so that they are not just prepared to meet state standards, but so they are prepared for the life that awaits them beyond their school days. In English curriculum for middle and high school students, a major goal is improving student writing by developing their awareness of voice and its power to impact their writing. I believe that we can use the engaging power of film to authentically awaken students' awareness of voice and its function. Since we cannot deny the connection of reading and writing, this unit trains students to listen to the voice of film (visual text), but it will also prepare them for dealing with written text. We will strengthen their ability to apply strategies that will aid in comprehension and critical thinking skills. As students progress through this unit, they will reinforce their knowledge of the elements of fiction; this vocabulary is a foundation for what they will use throughout their academic careers. They will analyze two films paying particular attention to the voice of each film with opportunities for guided and independent practice. Ultimately, students will be able to demonstrate an awareness of voice in written text through a culminating assessment. We can use the creative power of film to captivate students' attention while helping them develop this crucial trait.

(Recommended for English, grades 7-9.)