



Through Film and Literature, in Cultures around the World, Children Grow up on Anxiety

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.01.08
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This unit focuses on what I call the essential questions that are not only found on the Language Arts CAPT but are some of the best questions to challenge students who need to sharpen their skills in learning about and responding to short stories in both literature and film. Once students have practiced responding to these questions and learned to identify what makes stories effective, as a final project, they will explore writing and actually putting together their own stories based on the theme of this unit. Through viewing stories in film and reading stories that *produce*, *use*, and *resolve* anxiety in children in diverse cultures around the world, students will discover that children all over the world grow up as they experience anxiety, sometimes layers of it, simultaneously. They will be encouraged to make connections between anxiety that they experience or that their friends experience and the anxieties that the children in the stories experience.

The stories selected to exemplify anxiety begin with the autobiography of Geoffrey Canada, *Fist Stick Knife Gun*, in which he recalls his childhood where, at the age of five, he experienced the anxiety of learning that he had to fight his best friend to establish himself in the pecking order on the street in the Bronx. The final story takes place in a distant continent with three half-caste, (as they were labeled) aboriginal girls in the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, escaping from a racist internment camp and walking 1,200 miles along a fence to their home, anxious all the while that the police and a tracker pursuing them will catch them and return them to the camp/prison. All the stories selected, which also include children in Iran and in China, stretch the students' empathy beyond themselves and test the universality of emotion.

(Recommended for English and Social Studies, grades 9-12.)

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