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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute

2005 Volume II: The Challenge of Intersecting Identities in American Society: Race/Ethnicity, Gender and Nation

Teaching Voice through Latina and African American Literature

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.02.03

by Kristen J. Grandfield

This curriculum unit is designed for high school students to read, write and discuss voice by reading Latina and female African American literature. Voice is a literary device used by authors to convey a particular mood or tone in his/her writing. The tone and mood are created by word choice and fluency; elements that make writing such a deliberate and precise act.

This unit uses the writing of Sandra Cisneros, Julia Alvarez, Nikki Giovanni and Ntozake Shange and asks students to identify elements of voice in each of the writer's work. Students will also write personal vignettes, poems and responses using the selected pieces as models. The goal of the unit is to have students recognize voice and the techniques writers use to create their voice and message. Students will produce a portfolio of their best work based on their understanding of voice and the writers.

(Recommended for English and Language Arts, grades 11-12.)

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