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Modern Literature and the Arts, Seen through the Experience of American Immigrants

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> You, Whoever You Are
>
> You, whoever you are!.
>
> All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, indifferent of place! All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes of the sea!
>
> All you of centuries hence when you listen to me! All you each and everywhere whom I specify not, but include just the same! Health to you! good will to you all, from me and America sent! Each of us is inevitable, Each of us is limitless--each of us with his or her right upon the earth, Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth, Each of us here as divinely as any is here.
>
> Walt Whitman

Objective

Through this curriculum unit; Modern Literature and the Arts; Seen through the Experience of American Immigrants, students will further develop their knowledge of the connections between literature and the arts and be able to connect their personal experiences with people who have immigrated to the United States. They will also be able to use this knowledge throughout the academic and arts curriculum at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet Middle School and as they transition into high school courses. This unit will be set up so that it can also be modified and adjusted to work for children at all grade levels and for children with specific IEP goals.

Introduction

Walt Whitman says in You Whoever You Are, "Each of us here as divinely as any is here." Making the statement that anyone from anywhere has a right to live life and be a part of society. In the United States there are so many, including the children we teach, who can easily trace their ancestry back to other lands along with the stories of struggles and triumphs that brought them here. Keeping these stories alive and teaching them to our children honors those experiences. This unit is designed to do just that by teaching children an overview of the history of immigration in this country and exposing them to literature and art that has been and continues to be an integral contribution to our culture.

This unit will be taught to a Language Arts class of about twenty to twenty five eighth grade students at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet Middle School in New Haven, CT which is co-taught by a certified Regular Education English teacher and a certified Special Education teacher. The students in the class have mixed abilities and experiences because it is a Magnet school. There will be about three to five students who have Special Education IEPs.

About twenty five percent of the students in the school come from surrounding suburban schools where they may have little or no contact with immigrants or immigrant communities. Another twenty five percent live in the surrounding neighborhood which is primarily made up of Latin American communities. The other fifty percent live in other parts of the city of New Haven where contact with people from various immigrant groups is a daily experience.

The eighth grade Language Arts course is based on McDougal Littel's The Language of Literature, a text book containing a combination of short stories, plays, poems and excerpts from novels. The curriculum unit, Modern Literature and the Arts; seen through the Experience of American Immigrants while being taught in the Language Arts class will have parallel lessons with the eighth grade United States History course which has a similar student/teacher make up.

History Background

American Immigrants; Late 19 th Century through early 20 th Century

Throughout history people have moved from their homelands seeking refuge from poverty, oppression and other problems that made their lives difficult. Since the days of the early European explorers, beginning in 1492 with Christopher Columbus, The United States of America has been a country of immigrants. Groups of immigrants have come in waves depending on different situations such as wars, famines and religious persecutions in other parts of the world.

Although there has often been opposition from U.S. citizens and adjustments to be made to accommodate immigrants, their presence has helped make the U.S. a dynamic and unique country. Immigrants to the United States in 2006 numbered 37.5 million. (http://people-press.org).

Speaking to graduates of Portland State University in 1998 President Bill Clinton said: "The United States has

always been energized by its immigrant populations...America has constantly drawn strength and spirit from wave after wave of immigrants...They have proved to be the most restless, the most adventurous, the most innovative, the most industrious of people." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_to_the_United_States).

How immigrants adjust to their new homes in America and how U.S. citizens' attitudes toward them has evolved over the past century. In the early and mid 1900s immigrants were expected to blend in to the proverbial "melting pot" as expressed in this Sicilian proverb quoted by Thomas J. Ferraro in Ethnic Passages:

> Chi lascia la via vecchia per la nuova, sa quel che perde e non sa quel che trova. (Whoever forsakes the old way for the new, knows what he is losing but not what he will find).

In the 1990s, the mayor of New York City, David Dinkins declared that the city was a "salad bowl" and a "gorgeous mosaic" of various cultures. Consciousness of others' customs, beliefs and values increased over the latter half of the 20 th century, however there is still progress to be made. Today the subject of illegal immigration, peoples' fears of immigrants as terrorists and takers of American jobs continues in the forefront of American politics. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Dinkins).

European

In the 1890s about three and a half million immigrants came to the United States. This changed dramatically between 1910 and 1914 when over nine million people immigrated to the U.S. During World War I and into the 1920s immigration decreased due to restrictions imposed as a reaction to the previous wave of immigrants. (http://people-press.org).

Often they were encouraged by recruiting agents, known as padrones to Italian and Greek laborers. Steel mills coal mines and quarries attracted people from Italy, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. People from Greece worked in textile mills, Russian and Polish Jews worked the needle trades or pushcart markets of New York. Although there were advertisements of free or cheap farmland in America in pamphlets distributed in many languages throughout Europe, only a few agricultural workers moved to western farmlands. Most immigrants moved to the cities, looking for the chance to improve their lives. (http://people-press.org).

Nearly twelve million, mostly poor, immigrants from Europe were required to enter through the processing center at Ellis Island, New York. The screening, which usually took about three to four hours, included a list of twenty nine personal questions about the immigrant's family, money, religious and political views, and work experience. There was also a medical screening. Those deemed unhealthy or undesirable in any way were separated from the others, and sent back to where they came from. (http://www.history.com/content/ellis-island/timeline).

Life was not easy for these new immigrants. Safety regulations and laws to protect workers had not yet been established. Adults and children often worked long hours in dirty, dangerous conditions for very little pay. (Dorf, et al. p.488).

To ease the difficulty of adjusting to a new country, many immigrants lived together in ethnic neighborhoods where they continued to practice the language, customs and culture of their homelands. (Dorf, et al. p.488).

Asian

The California gold rush in 1849 attracted many Chinese immigrants, mostly single men who worked mining gold, on railroad construction or in low wage factory jobs. Some returned home to China after several years of working and saving money to bring back to their families. Those who stayed often opened their own businesses such as laundries and restaurants. Unfortunately, Chinese people were subjected to racism and competition from European immigrants. This led to the Chinese Exclusion Act, passed by Congress in 1882. Nearly a hundred years passed before Chinese people were allowed to immigrate again to the United States. Further legislation was written in 1924 which virtually put a stop to all Asian immigration to the U.S. (http://www.asian-nation.org).

Change came in the 1960s with: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished the restrictions from 1924. Now, instead of restricting immigrants on the basis of nationality, "family unification" is emphasized. From the enactment of this significant legislation to the year 2000 thousands of people from Asian countries have come to the United States; 176,000 from Japan, 204,000from Pakistan, 150,000 from Thailand, 206,000 from Cambodia, and 198,000 from Laos. (http://www.asian-nation.org).

Latin American

Coming from Mexico, the Caribbean Islands, and although they are not technically immigrants, Puerto Rico; Latin American immigrants have had a significant influence on American culture. The U.S. census estimates that 11.2 percent of the United States population is Latin American, grown from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000. The popularity of Latin American music and food and the prevalence of Spanish/English signs and advertisements, demonstrates that their influence is more than demographic. (www.prb.org).

The subject of illegal immigrants is a major issue surrounding Latin American immigrants. Although attitudes of native born Americans towards Latin American immigrants have become more positive in the past twenty years, ambivalence in opinions and the political quandary over illegal immigrants continues. Some fear that immigrants, especially those from Mexico, will take away jobs from native born Americans while others state that immigrants take the jobs that other Americans don't want.(http://people-press.org).

Background Information

Immigrant Literature

Immigrant literature as referred to in this unit is a depiction of the personal experiences of people who are immigrants to the United States. These stories are told through various genre including fiction and memoir. Teaching literacy through literature and including multicultural literature in curriculums has recently become a more common practice. Chinese, Latin American, Irish, and Indian authors appear in required reading lists for elementary through post secondary school students. Educators look to choose books and stories that focus on common human themes to dispel the prejudices and stereotypes of the past and to form a sense of connection among differing cultures and groups. (http://findarticles.com).

For the educator, making careful selections of immigrant literature is important. Often students have been exposed to literature and mass media that propagates stereotypes and misconceptions about various immigrant groups. People of Asian and Middle Eastern decent are often quite vulnerable to these prejudices. It is important to teach children to compare and contrast values held by different cultural groups as well as the political, historical and sociological background of the literature presented in the classroom. (http://findarticles.com).

Several literary pieces featured in McDougal Littel will be taught in this unit. These are a mixture of fiction, nonfiction and poetry. The authors of these works come from immigrant families or they have had life experience in immigrant and ethnic communities.

Biography of Gary Soto

In April 1952, Gary Soto was born to working-class Mexican-American parents in Fresno, California. He began working in the fields of the San Joaquin Valley as a child. He was not motivated to do well in school, but in high school he began to love reading and writing poetry. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Soto).

In 1976 he earned his MFA from the University of California, Irvine where he studied poetry and he won the United States award of the International Poetry forum for his first collection of poems, The Elements of San Joaquin which was honored by The New York Times Book Review where six of the poems from the book were reprinted. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Soto).

Soto's work is a reflection of life in the Latino culture of California and the influence of well known poets such as Pablo Neruda, Edward Field and others. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Soto).

Gary Soto lives in northern California where he has written three novels and several books of poetry. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Soto).

"Born Worker" by Gary Soto

This work of fiction is a reflection of the childhood experiences of Gary Soto. The protagonist, José, is a Mexican American immigrant, in his early teens, living in California. Soto begins by describing how hard work permeates José's life:

"They said that José was born with a ring of dirt around his neck, with grime under his fingernails, and skin calloused from the grainy twist of a shovel. They said his palms were already rough by the time he was three, and soon after he learned his primary colors, his squint was the squint of an aged laborer. They said he was a born worker." (Applebee, et al, p.84).

Both his mother and his father have taught him through example that life is about hard work and José has taken that to heart. He seems to feel most at home when he is deep into strenuous, physical labor. The conflict occurs when José's spoiled middle class cousin, Arnie, appears. Arnie is seeking to exploit José's work ethic by finding jobs for him, watching him work and then splitting the pay with him. José is suspicious of the plan but does it anyway. José is hard at work one day for an elderly white man, Mr. Clemens, while Arnie is lounging, when the plot takes an interesting twist. Mr. Clemens, trying to retrieve his hearing aid as it rolls into an empty pool, falls and injures himself. Arnie wants to run but José is moved with compassion and calls 911. When help arrives Arnie is back to spinning his version of the story to the police. José walks away, contemplating what he has learned about the difference in his integrity and character and that of his cousin.

The story illustrates an example of poor immigrants working hard to simply survive. José and his parents don't complain. They feel good about their ability to work and the independence and dignity they maintain. There is also a contrast between Arnie and José. Each is ambitious, yet the essence of each one's character causes ambition to manifest in two very different ways; Arnie as the dishonest, lazy, conniver and José as the hard working honest young man.

After reading this story students will be assigned an essay which addresses the CMT Strand A-Making Reader/Text connections:

> Are you more like Arnie or more like José? Explain, giving examples from the text and from your own life.

Biography of Laurence Yep

Laurence Michael Yep was born in 1948 in San Francisco, California to a Chinese American family. Living in San Francisco, he was exposed to a variety of cultures and ethnicities. He attended high school that was predominately white and he lived in a neighborhood that included African Americans, Chinese Americans and other diverse groups. This gave him firsthand experience of what it felt like to be an outsider which became a major theme in many of his future writings. (http://eolit.hrw.com/hlla/authorbios/index2.jsp?author=8laurenceyep).

Yep has written in a variety of genre for adults, young adults and children. His work includes dozens of novels, plays, science fiction, fantasy, mystery and historical novels. He won the Newbery Honor Book award in 1975 for Dragonwings. (http://eolit.hrw.com/hlla/authorbios/index2.jsp?author=8laurenceyep).

"The Great Rat Hunt" by Laurence Yep

In this memoir, Laurence Yep relates his experience of having childhood asthma and the disappointment he felt at not being able to excel at sports as his father and brother did. This was especially difficult for him because sports had been the vehicle through which his father had found acceptance as an immigrant to America. Yep felt that he could never really be approved of or close to his father if he was always indoors struggling to breathe, while his brother was outdoors tossing a baseball with his father. His opportunity to prove his "manliness" and to bond with his father comes when evidence of a rat appears in the family grocery store. The elusive rodent survives poison pellets, traps and a store wide fumigation. Yep's father, fed up and desperate, borrows a rifle from Henry Loo to shoot the rat. Despite his mother's obvious disapproval, Laurence seizes this opportunity for bonding and he and his father set out on the rat hunt. Father and son do engage in conversation and get to know each other while they build a makeshift barricade by the rat hole. When Laurence believes he sees the rat, he and his father never get to shooting it because they run away in a panic. This presents them with another chance to relate honestly. They talk about how they ran away and they share their experiences of feeling afraid. Through this conversation Laurence sees a gentle, approachable side of his father. Later, when the rat seems to have mysteriously disappeared, his mother claims, "That rat laughed itself to death."

Yep's story presents the theme of parent/child relationships between first and second generation immigrants

in a way that all students can relate to. Whether they are immigrants or not, the problem of a child feeling misunderstood by and wanting to connect with a parent is universal. To making reader/text connections after reading this story students will answer the following questions in an essay:

Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in? What did you do to try to fit in? How was

your experience like or unlike a character from "The Great Rat Hunt" experi-

ence? Explain, using examples from the text and from your own life.

Biography of Julia Alvarez

Although Julia Alvarez was born in New York City on March 27, 1950, she spent her early childhood in the Dominican Republic, moving back to New York when she was ten years old because her father's involvement in a plot to overthrow Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, the ruling dictator, was discovered. (http://www.notablebiographies.com/A-An/Alvarez-Julia.html).

Having been exposed to many American customs and learning to speak English at American schools, Julia felt like an American when she lived in the Dominican Republic, so she was surprised by the culture shock she felt when her family returned to the United States. (http://www.notablebiographies.com/A-An/Alvarez-Julia.html).

In the Dominican Republic, her family and extended family were upper class and well respected. Her father was a doctor who ran a hospital near their home. Julia and her parents, sisters, aunts and cousins spent long vacations at their second home on the seashore in Boca Chica. Moving to New York meant being crowded into a cramped apartment in Brooklyn in a neighborhood where she felt misunderstood. Alvarez explains in the short story Names/Nombres that she felt very un-American due to her extensive name. Julia Altagracia Maria Teresa Alvarez Tavares Perello Espaillat Julia Perez Rochet Gonzalez is her full name which includes the names of several relatives. She felt even less able to fit in when her peers could not pronounce her name correctly, the best they could do was call her "Judy." She found solace in reading books and, eventually, writing. (http://www.notablebiographies.com/A-An/Alvarez-Julia.html).

She graduated from Middlebury College in Vermont in 1971 and earned a master's degree in creative writing from Syracuse University in 1975. Eventually she became a professor at Middlebury College where she began to write poetry and stories. In 1984 her collection of poems titled Homecoming, was published. She gave up teaching in 1997 to devote all of her time to writing.
(http://www.notablebiographies.com/A-An/Alvarez-Julia.html).

"Something to Declare" by Julia Alvarez

The story of leaving her home in the Dominican Republic is told in this memoir, published in 1998, by Julia Alvarez. She describes in beautiful detail the joys of her carefree, privileged childhood on this tropical island and how the escalating dangers of a dictatorship took that away from her. Every night a black Volkswagen sat at the end of their driveway preventing them from leaving because her father's involvement with a plot to overthrow the dictator was discovered. In a contrived tone, an aunt tells her and her sisters that they are going on a vacation to the United States, "Wouldn't you love to go…and see the snow?" trying to convince them that they were lucky. As Alvarez and her family arrive in New York City, she contemplates the papers that made them "free" as she wistfully remembers her beach vacations that she may never have again, at Boca Chica in the Dominican Republic.

Although it is also a memoir, "Something to Declare" differs from The Great Rat Hunt in that it is a direct experience of immigration. The urgency of the Alvarez family to leave their beautiful and beloved home to save their lives is softened by the love and care of the female adults who don't want to communicate their fears to the children.

Students will be asked to write essays that make Reader/Text connections as well as Text/Text connections since this is the third story related to immigration that they have read.

> How would you describe your home or a place that you visit with family where you feel relaxed and happy like Julia did as a child? Imagine how would you feel about leaving if you were in the same situation as she was? How would your relatives react? Use examples from the text and from your own life to explain. How is "Something to Declare" like or unlike either "The Great Rat Hunt" or "Born Worker?" Use evidence from each text to explain.

Biography of Amy Tan

Amy Ruth Tan was born on February 19 th , 1952 in Oakland, California to parents who were immigrants from China. Before meeting her father, Amy's mother, Daisy Tan, had been married and the mother of three daughters whom she was forced to leave behind in 1949 when she fled China just before the Communists seized control of Shanghai. While working for the United States Information Service after World War II, Amy's father, John Tan, immigrated to the United States in 1947. (www.amytan.net).

Amy spent her childhood in California living in Berkeley, Oakland, Fresno and other suburbs of the San Francisco Bay Area. Tragedy struck when she was fourteen, her father and her older brother both died from brain tumors. Amy, her mother and younger brother then moved to Montreaux, Switzerland where she eventually graduated from high school in 1969. (www.amytan.net).

While attending Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon she met her husband, Lou DeMattei. She attended four other colleges, graduating from San Jose University with a B.A. in English and Linguistics. (www.amytan.net).

Before she became a writer of fiction, Tan worked in several fields. She was a language development consultant for developmentally disabled children, and a freelance business writer for several computer and communication companies. (www.amytan.net).

While attending a writing workshop in 1985 she wrote "Rules of the Game," which later became part of the award winning The Joy Luck Club in 1989. She went on to write several more works of fiction which are acclaimed worldwide, translated into over 35 different languages. Many of her stories are assigned as required reading for students in middle schools, high schools and colleges. (www.amytan.net).

"Rules of the Game" by Amy Tan

Amy Tan opens the tale with an example of old world wisdom that Waverly Jong's mother imparts to her that she is able to apply to many things in life including the game of Chess. "Wise guy, he not go against wind. In Chinese we say, Come from South, blow with wind--poom!--North will follow. Strongest wind cannot be seen." Then she takes the reader on a tour of Chinatown in San Francisco in the 1950s describing the foods and how the people eat them, "…old country people sat cracking roasted watermelon seeds with their golden teeth and scattering the husks…" and tells stories of their family interactions.

Waverly, affectionately called Meimei, which means "little sister" is not a shy girl, whether she is teasing a white photographer about what food is served in Hong Sing's Diner, "Guts and duck feet and octopus gizzards!" or asking her mother, "What is Chinese torture?" or begging her brothers to let her play with the used chess set they received from a charity event at a local protestant church. Her initial curiosity turns into a quest to learn more about this mysterious American game. After her brother tells her to stop asking stupid questions she researches in the library, combs through dictionaries and discovers a world of strategy, logic, secrets and etiquette. She soon moves from playing with her brothers to joining tournaments in the park with the men who are experienced players.

It is her success in playing chess that causes a rift between her and her mother. Her mother is proud of her daughter's achievements and Meimei becomes angry at her mother's constant bragging which leads to a dramatic argument in public. Meimei is upset temporarily but not dismayed and the story ends without any resolution between her and her mother, but Meimei ponders her next move in life as if it were a chess game.

"Rules of the Game," which Amy Tan wrote at the beginning of her writing career and later, in 1989 included in the novel, The Joy Luck Club is based upon many of the experiences that Tan had growing up in various cities in the San Francisco Bay Area as a second generation Chinese immigrant. Although the "rules" appear to be about the game of chess, the story opens and closes with Meimei learning rules about life through interactions with her mother. Unlike, "The Great Rat Hunt," the main character does not come to feel closeness with a parent in "Rules of the Game." Instead she seems to become motivated to continue on despite their differences. There is no forgiveness and reconciliation at the close of the story.

Students will now have read four stories about immigrants in both fiction and nonfiction genres. Written assignments will be expanded to include: Self/Text Connection, Text/Text Connection, Compare and Contrast, and Synthesis.

> How are Laurence (The Great Rat Hunt) and Waverly (Rules of the Game) alike and how are they different? How would you compare their relationships with their parents? Use examples from both texts to support your answers.
> Of the four stories read: "Born Worker," "The Great Rat Hunt," "Something to Declare," and "Rules of the Game," which main character do you most identify with? Who do you least identify with? Use examples from your life and from the texts to support your answer.
> Imagine that two of the main characters from any of the four stories met each other. How would they relate to each other? What would they do together? Use examples from the texts to support your answer.

"The Other Pioneers" by Roberto Felix Salazar

In this poem Salazar is stating that the common belief about people in the United States, who are from Spanish speaking countries, is that they are more recent immigrants than those whose ancestors came from English speaking countries. However, he points out that much of the western part of the U.S. was settled by people from Spain long before, "...the Saxon and the Irish came..." He mentions, "...the towns soft-woven Spanish names." And fathers named, "...Salinas, de la Garza, Sanchez, Garcia..." (Applebee, et al, p.84).

After reading aloud "The Other Pioneers," students will be led by teachers in a discussion about immigrants and immigration. Some lead in questions would be:

Who really is an immigrant to The United States? Does that include people who

walked across the Beringia land bridge? Does someone who has a longer line

of ancestors born in the U.S. deserve to have more rights? What can people do

to work out differences between different groups? How can groups of people

from different backgrounds and cultures get to know each other better?

Next, students will choose an immigrant group to research and write a poem about them, imitating the style of Salazar.

Activities

In preparation for the study of immigrant literature students will do individual research on a variety of immigrant related topics such as: The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, U.S./Cuba relations in the 1960s, Puerto Rico as a U.S. Territory, Ellis Island, and political refugees from Haiti.

The unit will begin with short stories, memoirs and poems, from the McDougal Littel text, written by authors who immigrated to the United States. Born Worker by Gary Soto, The Great Rat Hunt by Lawrence Yep, Rules of the Game by Amy Tan, Something to Declare by Julia Alvarez and The Other Pioneers by Roberto Felix Salazar. After reading each selection students will write reflection essays. Assignments will be scaffolded, beginning with an essay showing reader/text connections, progressing next to text/text connections, compare and contrast and finally to synthesis.

Another section of the unit will be called Your Name. Several immigrant writers such as Julia Alvarez, Sandra Cisneros and Tony Johnston write about how they felt when their names were Americanized when they came to the United States or how Americans had difficulty pronouncing them. To practice making reader/text connections (CMT Strand A) students will write and illustrate pieces about their own names leading students to feel a connection with the author and the situation in which the story takes place. By realizing this connection, students are able to open to their own creativity in their written responses to text and in their original compositions and poetry.

To align this Language Arts unit to the 8 th grade students' study of United States History the next series of lessons will be a student research project. Students will work in groups to research specific immigrant groups who came to the United States in the past one hundred and fifty years. Those groups will include Chinese, Irish, Italian, Latin Americans, and Eastern European. Lessons will also include a section that will focus on immigrants in major U.S. cities and the communities and neighborhoods where immigrants settled such as Little Italy and Chinatown in New York City.

Sample Lesson

Lesson Title: Neighborhoods

Materials:

Books, Newspaper and Magazine articles, Internet articles.

Procedure:

Students will be divided into groups of two or three.

As a class students will brainstorm, with hints as needed from the teacher, to come up with ethnic groups to research.

Each group will be given an ethnic group in a given city or cities. Groups to include, but not limited to, are: Italian, Chinese, Hasidic Jews, Polish, Russian, Arab, Vietnamese, Sikhs, African American, Latino, etc.

Student groups will begin researching the following questions:

In your assigned neighborhood: What are some common foods? Do the people dress differently? What religion do they follow? What do the people from that neighborhood do to earn a living? What do they do for fun? Do they have any special holidays?

Lesson concludes with presentation of research results by each group using oral presentation backed up by a visual presentation such as: computer slide show, dramatic enactment, posters, original songs or dances performed for the class etc.

Students will be able to use information gained through research during writing assignments that reflect assigned written text.

Sample Lesson

Lesson Title: Names

Materials:

Written Texts:

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros pages 10&11; My Name (photocopy for each student, if possible, for highlighting and note taking).

Names/Nombres by Julia Alvarez (found in MacDougal Littel's The Language of Literature grade 7).

Any Small Goodness by Tony Johnston.

Writing materials: paper, pencils, pens.

Presentation equipment: overhead projector or chalkboard or chart paper and easel

Procedure

Day one: Class begins with a ten minute writing prompt. Students respond to these or similar questions presented to class: What does your name mean to you? Where did your name come from? Do you like your name? How do other people respond when they hear your name? Is your name common or unusual?

For the next ten minutes students will share as a whole class directed by the teacher or in small groups independently depending on the experience, abilities and behavior dynamics of the class.

Next, the teacher will read aloud to the class pages five to twelve, American Names, from Any Small Goodness. Then, students will read aloud as a class Names/Nombres. A brief class discussion will follow if time allows. Students will be assigned My Name from The House on Mango Street for homework.

Day two: Class begins with a ten minute writing prompt. Students write a reflection of their thoughts and feelings surrounding the three readings, including the homework assignment from the previous night.

Students will share briefly, about five to seven minutes, as a class before beginning the next lesson.

My Name is first read aloud by the teacher, then it is read by students using "jump in" reading. Next students will reread the passage silently highlighting phrases and/or words that appeal to them, (this is not a main idea exercise but a reflection of what stands out for them in the passage). Depending on the maturity of the class, they can participate in "jump in" reading of their highlighted words and phrases. It is up to the teacher to find an end point to this as it could potentially go on into eternity. Usually it finds an ending point when those who shared in the "jump in" reading have read what they wanted to share.

The last assignment of the lesson will have students writing their own passage about their own names imitating the style of Cisneros, with The House on Mango Street being used as a "mentor text."

Lesson concludes with sharing of student writing, then, students will have the opportunity to edit, revise and be given the option of publishing their work in various school wide venues. Student work can also be stored in individual or class portfolios.

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Appendix A

Connecticut Mastery Testing Content Strands

II. Reading Comprehension Strands and objectives

A. Forming a General understanding

The reader will demonstrate understanding of the text's general content by:

1. Determining the main idea or theme within the text
2. Identifying or inferring important characters, settings, problems, events, relationships and details
3. Selecting and using relevant information from the text in order to summarize events and/or ideas in the test
4. Using information from the text to make a prediction based on what is read
5. Using context clues to determine meanings of unknown or multiple-meaning words or figurative language.

B. Developing Interpretation

The reader will interpret and/or explain the test by:

1. Identifying or inferring the author's use of structure/organizational patterns
2. Drawing conclusions about the author's purpose for choosing a genre or for including or omitting specific details in the text
3. Using stated or implied evidence from the text to draw and/or support a conclusion

C. Making Reader/Text Connections

The reader will connect or associate the text with one's own life by:

1. Making connections between the text and outside experiences and knowledge
2. Selecting, synthesizing and/or using relevant information within the text to write a personal response to the text

D. Examining the Content and Structure

The reader will elaborate on the text and make judgments about the text's quality and themes by:

1. Analyzing and evaluating the author's craft, including the use of literary devices and textual elements
2. Selecting, synthesizing and/or using relevant information within the text(s) to extend or evaluate the text(s)

3. Demonstrating an awareness of an author's or character's customs and beliefs included in the text