



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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The Difficult Task I Face: Adulthood

Curriculum Unit 13.01.09
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Introduction

On a warm, partially cloudy, and breezy day, Estrella and her extended family arrive at the barn. Peaches, oranges, avocado trees, biting sun, and two teenage boys who are picking peaches in the surrounding fields become Estrella's new reality. A little doll with whom she shares her thoughts, her frustrations, and her disappointments is still her best friend. Estrella, the protagonist of *Under the Feet of Jesus* by Helen Maria Viramontes, is a young teenager who is growing up and has to fight all the way to womanhood. She experiences rejections and prejudice for being the daughter of a migrant mother who cannot afford expensive clothes or health care when it is needed.

Migrant workers, poverty, family issues, rejections, bullying, exploitation, health care issues, and solitude are Estrella's everyday reality. Her journey toward womanhood is hard and made nearly unreachable by the constant struggles that she faces every day under the beating sun of a land that is rich and full of dreams but foreign to her. This is also what many of my students experience every day. They fight to be accepted in a world that is absolutely foreign to them because their parents are illegal immigrants and are misjudged, or are bullied for different issues, and/or are neglected by their families. I want to explore and discuss these issues with my teenage students because I might offer them an answer to their unanswered questions. Viramontes' s novel is a great start, but my unit will also include other visual and non-fictional readings to help my students grow and mature into adulthood, and to teach them the skills that they need once they go to college or start a career.

My decision to present fictional and non-fictional texts is also connected to New Historicism, a theory of literary criticism that states the importance of "crossing the boundaries separating history, anthropology, art, politics, literature, and economics." ¹ Every text, fictional or non-fictional, reflects different cultural perspectives and the combination allows the reader, in this case my students, to have a complete view of the teenager's dilemma of adulthood in a societal environment that is difficult, impossible, and/or hurtful.

Unit Overview

I want to start my curriculum unit with a specific essential question which will lead all our discussion, analysis, and various interpretations of the texts we study.

"How do I fit in?"

Since I want to prepare a unit that can be taught at different levels, the unit contains the reading of various texts, fictional, informative, and visual like movies or paintings. The novel, *Under the Feet of Jesus* by Helena Maria Viramontes, is one of the unit components and is the main text for my Advanced Placement students. The students who attend our regular English class -- in my district it is called College English -- may read the entire novel or few selected passages according to their capabilities. All students will be exposed to newspaper articles, essays, poems, and visual texts. Except for the novel and some texts I will select and bring to class, I also want my students to be actively engaged researching visual and non-visual texts.

The objective of my unit is to enhance my students' skills to infer, close-read, analyze, discuss, synthesize, evaluate, and connect the text to life. With this goal in mind, the unit is divided in three parts: the reading of the texts, fictional, visual, and non-fictional, the research of other sources connected to the unit theme, and the final assessment. Since the unit addresses a differentiated population, I have different activities and/or reading materials for each group of learners.

Part one

Advanced Placement Students

My Advanced Placement students begin the unit with the reading of Viramontes's novel which will be paired with some selected passages from *Go Tell it On The Mountain* by James Baldwin and *Johnny Got his Gun* by Dalton Trumbo, which present similar themes (the specific excerpts are in the Teaching Strategies Section of this unit). The first reading of the novel will be assigned as homework. In class, we will reread either entire chapters or specific excerpts. This section, however, focuses on the discussion of the main character, Estrella, and how she is characterized by the narrator. We will also discuss how the setting contributes to the characterization and what effects it has on the main character as well as on her family and the young boy she falls in love with, Alejo. Each class will also analyze and discuss the themes that emerge and what they tell us about human nature. This analysis, in particular, will help my students find responses to their wondering about life in today's society. Every segment of part one contains specific close-reading exercises (analysis), essay writings, and class discussions.

College Students

My College Students class begins the unit in a completely different way. First of all, our first lesson focuses on an initial analysis and discussion of the problems and issues they experience at school, with friends, and at home. We will write about these issues, and we will also discuss the causes and consequences. I will also ask them to research one or more lyrics about their most important issue and after the presentation of the lyric(s),

I will lead them to a close reading/analysis of the text. In particular, I want them to use a familiar and easy-to-understand text(s) to discuss the theme(s), and all the literary devices that the author has used to express his/her perspective of the problem. The second class will always focus on the initial understanding and discussion of the unit theme, but I will use visual materials. I also want to include a third lesson with a short article from *The New York Times*. The specifics of how these texts will be taught are in the Teaching Strategies section of this unit.

Part Two

Advanced Placement Students

This second part of the unit focuses on the same objectives of reading analyzing, comparing, discussing and writing how different authors present the unit themes – coming of age and immigration -- and how specific problems or issues contribute to the characterization, but it also includes the students' research of other texts -- visual or non-visual, plays, novels, and poems written in different centuries – and articles from newspapers. They have to analyze the text, determine and discuss the theme or themes that illuminate(s) the work while comparing it to today's issue(s). At the end of each class, either as homework or as a closing activity, the students will write a creative piece in which they use the literary devices we have seen and analyzed to illustrate the theme(s). This section of the unit concludes with the reading of two essays, *Dwellings* by Linda Logan and *No Name Woman* by Maxine Hong Kingston, on the same themes: coming of age and immigration.

College Students

This group of students will read poems and lyrics which present and/or discuss the unit topic (the specific texts are in the Teaching Strategies Section), and some excerpts from the novel *Under the Feet of Jesus*. The students, who have a good reading level, will read the entire novel as homework and will analyze the excerpts I will bring to class. These students will also prepare a power point presentation of the plot, so they can fill in the parts that the struggling students will not read.

The fictional texts will be paired with other non-fictional texts: articles from the newspapers, editorials, and visual texts. I want to use paintings, photographs, video clips or short films on the same topic(s). At the same time, the students will research their own sources (articles, painting, and photographs) in our library and Art Gallery. They will analyze these sources following the strategies they have learned (the instructions for this analysis are in the Lesson Plan section), and will present them to the class for discussion. Before concluding this part two of the unit, I hope to make a visit to the Yale University Art Gallery and/or British Center.

Final Assessment

Advanced Placement Students

During the entire unit, my students and I have identified, analyzed, discussed and written how the various authors have used various literary devices to characterize and present their perspective of the unit themes.

The AP students can choose the genre: a short story, a sonnet, a satirical piece, a one-act play or comedy, or a novella based on one of the unit themes. The specific prompt is in the Lesson Plans Section

College Students

Since the unit will be based on differentiation, I will give my sophomores the opportunity to choose what to write: a speech (this will satisfy our present curriculum but it will also respond to the new standards) or a creative piece – a poem, a lyric, or a brief short story, and/or short film for the struggling students. The specific prompt is in the Lesson Plans Section.

Rationale: Students' Context

This unit addresses a very specific population composed of a good group of Advanced Placement students and another quite large group of sophomores who attend a regular College class – according to our district the college class includes all those students who are struggling readers, or have low intrinsic motivation, and/or have specific needs due to emotional and behavioral problems. Both populations are formed by students from different ethnicities, mostly African-American and Latinos with free or reduced lunch status.

Since my school is an art school, its mission is to cultivate different artistic talents while maintaining a high level of rigor in the academics. On one side, this aspect is an excellent tool I can use to encourage the interest of the strugglers or to introduce difficult topics or concepts. Each class is rich with individuals with a vivid creativity in many different fields and a great variety of learning styles. At the same time, my students often miss regular instructions in academics because they are involved in numerous rehearsals throughout the school year.

This particular context opens up a variety of possibilities in the selection of teaching strategies and learning styles. To begin with, the AP students do not reflect the "traditional" population of students who enter the class with adequate skills and knowledge. These students have good writing skills but they have never been exposed to a rigorous curriculum covering a variety of texts from all literary genres like drama, fiction, poetry from the sixteenth century on. Their first hardship is reading and understanding canonical texts, not to mention poetry since our curriculum does not include poetry. The College students struggle because they lack motivation and because of reading difficulties they proudly hide with the commonest excuse: this text is slow and boring. My students learn through continuous and differentiated modeling and scaffolding – a useful combination of I do (I show them how to write or what strategy they need to follow for reading and understanding), we do (we repeat the same writing or reading together so it becomes more familiar), and they do (they have learned and can write or read proficiently) -- in combination with continuous references to the visual arts.

Unit Objectives

The focus of this unit is to teach my students how to analyze fictional and non-fictional texts before writing a creative text. I want my students to apply their artistic talents as a vehicle to understand difficult literary passages and make sense of complex and ambiguous narrators or characters. Every lesson plan has specific objectives to have a clear idea of the skills I am going to touch upon in order to measure the students' learning, reflect on the outcome of the lesson, and plan the follow up accordingly – differentiated instruction. These daily objectives are stated according to Bloom's taxonomy so I can easily equilibrate the activity from the lowest to the highest intellectual skills. The Bloom taxonomy includes six levels of intellectual behavior connected to learning: knowledge (recall data or information), comprehension (understand the meaning), application (use a concept in a new area), analyze (break down concepts into components), evaluate (make judgments), and create (create a new product or point of view).

Taking into account the long term goals, I will specifically implement the following objectives for the daily lesson plans:

1. read and understand, interpret, analyze and discuss excerpts from the novel *Under the feet of Jesus* by Helena Maria Viramontes, newspapers articles, photographs, and/or video clips/short movies;
2. understand the concepts of specific rhetorical and literary devices like point of view or narrative perspective, diction, allusions, figurative language, tone, setting, syntax, and structure;
3. Analyze, discuss, and write how the author uses literary devices to reveal meaning;
4. determine the purpose(s) and audience of each visual and non-visual document/text;
5. write close analysis of both the written and visual documents;
6. discuss the close analysis of the written and visual documents with peers;
7. compare and contrast the various written and visual documents, and draw the appropriate conclusions;
8. write analytical essays;
9. choose a genre and write a fictional and/or non-fictional work.

Teaching Strategies

Advanced Placement Students

Before assigning the novel, I want my students to research some background information about the author and the socio-economic conditions of her native city, East Los Angeles, and the living conditions of the working poor, the homeless and undocumented people. This initial work is important because my students do not know anything about the social environment H.M. Viramontes recreates in her novel. I will suggest that they

search in the archives of *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* , which has interesting videos about migrant people and their daily struggles. They can also search in the archives of Historical Newspaper in the USA from 1700s to 2000s, and in those of the Library of Congress. My students will work in groups and they will write a brief paper illustrating the results of their research. In class, each group will present the results of their research and during that presentation I will lead them to analyze, discuss, and reflect on the various texts they have found (photographs, videos, or written texts).The specific strategies for the newspaper articles are in the Lesson Plans Section.

For the visual texts (photographs), I will ask them

- What details do you see?
- How do these details contribute to the theme of the visual text?
- What do they tell you about the migrant people? How?
- What is the tone/atmosphere of the visual text? How do you know?
- Who do you think is the audience? Why?
- What is the occasion? What detail(s) reveal the occasion? Why? How?
- Do you notice bias or prejudice? Why? How? So what?

For videos or video clips, I will ask the same questions, but I will also ask them to focus on how the film has been structured. For instance, I will ask

- Do you think that the director of this video might have started the clip with a different image? If so which, and what result might have been achieved? More effective? How? Less effective? How?
- What would you change in the video? Why?

When the research results have been presented and discussed, my students will start reading the novel. I plan to assign them one chapter at a time and since we do not have class every day but every other day, I expect to finish the first reading of the text in a couple of weeks.

In class, I will begin the study of this novel with a brief writing activity (Quick Write) where they will have the chance to express their initial reactions and reflections about the characters and their conflicts. During our discussion, I will also ask them:

- What does the entire novel tell you about human nature?
- Do you notice differences and/or similarities between the main character's experience (and/or Perfecto, Estrella's step-father and/or Petra, Estrella's mother) and the videos, articles and photographs you researched? How?

Soon after these initial reflections I will focus on the first chapter of the novel. The class will be divided in groups of four and will analyze the characterization of Estrella, her mother, Petra, step-father, Perfecto, and Alejo, Estrella's love, through:

- Setting
- Diction
- Imagery and figurative language
- Syntax.

For each literary technique, the students will have to explain how the literary device reveals the character and how it helps the reader understand who the character is. The group which will analyze the importance of setting will have to determine how the environment affects or does not affect Estrella or any other character. They can also determine whether setting contributes to tone, or whether it foreshadows the character's inner feelings. (The specific instructions on how to analyze each literary technique are in the Lesson Plans sections). Each group, then, will share. At this point, I expect my students to reflect on possible differences and/or similarities between the fictional text and the videos, photographs, and articles they have previously analyzed.

When this discussion is over, but before passing to the second chapter of the novel, I want my students to respond to the following prompts:

- The first two pages of the novel present a dramatic situation. Read the excerpt carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, show how Viramontes's techniques convey the impact of the environment on the main character, Estrella.
- In the first chapter of Viramontes's novel, Estrella and her family are confronted with a mystery which leads them to start an investigation. Write an essay in which you identify the investigation and discuss what it reveals about human nature.
- Creative assignment: In this chapter, Estrella remembers her "real father." ² After reading this page, write the letter Estrella writes to her father. Remember that you are the author now, you are the first person narrator but you might want to include other literary devices like imagery or figurative language.

We will pass, then, to the second chapter of the novel which focuses on Estrella, Alejo, and Perfecto and their respective struggles with their work in the fields, and their intimate relationships. In class, I will open the lesson with a ten minutes writing. On the board, I will write the following prompt:

- "Alejo struggled His grandmother has reassured him, this field work was not forever. ... Estrella carried a full basket with the help of a sore hip and kneeled before the cluster of grapes. ... Perfecto Flores thought it best not to get angry." ³ Describe and discuss the conflicts these characters face in this part of the novel

Immediately after sharing their reflections and initial analysis of the conflicts Estrella, Alejo, and Perfecto face, I will ask them to close read:

- Estrella's experience in the fields picking grapes in comparison to Alejo's
- Perfecto's struggle with the memory of his early love
- Alejo's poisoning with pesticides.

Each group will have to analyze the character's experiences from the narrator's perspective, diction, and syntax. A share-out will follow the group work, but, before concluding this part, I will ask my students to rewrite some passages from chapter two in first person point of view:

- "Alejo struggled ... to mother's pull" ⁴
- Alejo's grandmother ... his money order" ⁵
- "Estrella gathered ... the approaching night" ⁶
- "Perfecto contemplated ... he forgot his way home?" ⁷

After rewriting in first person point of view, they will add their reflections of the effect(s) a different narrator has in conveying conflict.

Before continuing our analysis of Viramontes's novel, I will assign my students Part One of *Go Tell It On The Mountain* by James Baldwin. I expect them to read it, take notes about the main character, his family, his environment, and conflict, so they can compare to Viramontes's characters, setting, and conflict.

When we start our analysis of chapter three, I will follow the same strategies I have used for the previous two chapters, and after the in-class group work and discussion, I will assign them the passage describing Alejo's health struggle with the pesticides poisoning:

- "With the help of Perfecto Flores, Gumecindo carried his cousin into the bungalow ... her face looking as if she took her sleep seriously." ⁸

They will first read and annotate, then they will respond to the following prompt:

- After reading this scene from chapter three, analyze the speaker's attitude toward Alejo and Estrella. You may want to take into consideration literary techniques as organization, tone and imagery.

Before passing to the next chapter, I will also ask my students to discuss Estrella's and Alejo's journey to adulthood. What difficulties and/or struggles do they encounter? How do they overcome them, or don't? Why? How does Estrella's journey illuminate the work as a whole?

In the last two chapters of the novel, Estrella begins to act more and more as an adult, and the author constantly compares her to her mother, Petra, who is silently torn between letting Estrella pursue her journey or stop time and keep her innocent for ever. Estrella's journey to adulthood ends after the family leaves Alejo in the hospital and returns to the shack. Estrella is finally a woman, but instead of feeling liberated, she feels filthy. The excerpt that follows is an intense page where mother and daughter are juxtaposed (Estrella took off the muddied dress ... the mother was trying to hide her back inner body ⁹). I will assign this passage and expect a thorough comparison of Estrella's attitude and Petra's attitude. They can analyze the two women's attitudes through the use of diction, details, narrative structure, and syntax.

Before concluding the novel, I will assign them the ending excerpt of the novel in which Estrella finds comfort at the barn. ¹⁰ In class, we will discuss how the imagery contributes to reveal who Estrella has become. I will also touch upon the theme of womanhood and its meaning in the novel. In particular, I want my students to compare Petra and Estrella and their femininity. Who is the woman they depict? How different is this woman

from other models they know? How is this woman different or similar to the model they recognize with? What makes Petra and Estrella different? How? Why? To complete this paper, I expect my students to analyze an excerpt for the novel *John Got His Gun* ¹¹, research other essays, poems, and any articles or videos they can find.

As last assignment before the final assessment, I will assign two essays, *Dwellings* by Linda Logan and *No Name Woman* by Maxine Hong Kingston. The first essay discusses coming of age conflicts, and the second illustrates the immigrants' social and personal struggles. As written assignment they will have to:

- Compare and contrast the conflict(s) presented in the essays and the conflict that Estrella, Perfecto, and Petra experience in the novel
- Analyze the effect figurative language, point of view, details, dictions, and tone have on the overall meaning of the essay.

College Students

The first lessons will be entirely devoted to discussing, writing and researching the theme of growing up before introducing the situation of migrant people and the related issues on labor protection. Specifically, my first class will begin with ten minutes writing:

- Growing up is an important component of everybody's life. Why? What issues does it imply? Why? What is your personal experience? Describe it.

I will let my students share their thoughts and briefly discuss the issue(s) they identify as obstacle(s) or problem(s).

When the discussion is over, I will show them a brief video, *Childhood and Growing up* by Gothikahl, which touches upon the speaker's numerous problems: solitude, a place to call home, his room, his freedom, and his bleak vision of coming of age. ¹² Next to the video, I will also give them the poem *A Path Between Houses* by Greg Rappave. ¹³ As homework, I expect them to write a poem on one of the issues we discussed in class today.

The next two or three lessons will continue with a similar plan, I will make them share their homework that can be the writing of a poem and a short video clip (they can use their smart phones for the video) with their observations, reflections, or complaint on the same theme of growing up. I will also use the materials they bring to class for textual analysis (the specific plans for the textual analysis is in the Lesson Plans Section). We will also read *Coming of Age at a Sour Time* published by Chrystia Freeland. ¹⁴ In groups my students will compare and contrast the differences between the old generations' obstacles and today's generations (the strategy for the textual analysis is in the Lesson Plans Section). Another article, which was published by Margiorie Kaufman in *The New York Times* on May 11, 2007, is *Girls Coming of Age Explored in a Novel*. This text is a review of the novel *What Girls Learn* by Karin Cook and it is also a great opportunity to analyze how the author of the article blends references to the novel and criticism. It will also help my students understand how to express tone in writing an analytical piece.

After having introduced the theme of 'coming of age', I will introduce the other theme, the migrants and their connected issues. As I did previously, I will write the following prompt on the board:

- Who is a migrant?

Many of my students might not know anything, but I hope to have someone who has some knowledge to start the conversations. If no one knows anything, I will show them the picture of the various photographs of the *Migrant Mother* by Dorothea Lange ¹⁵ and will ask them to describe the details they notice. Since there are five different photographs, each group will analyze one photograph, but they will all respond to the following questions:

- What details do you notice? Describe them accurately.
- What is the attitude of the woman? How do you know? Why?
- Who do you think she is? Why?
- Describe her life style. How do you know?

After sharing out their analysis and reflections of the *Migrant Mother* , I will juxtapose it to Maria Silver's *Migrant Mother's Life* published in *The Los Angeles Times* . ¹⁶ I will also assign them to research other photographs of migrant workers and I will also suggest them to start from the archives of *The Los Angeles Times* . I do not exclude, however, the possibility to search video clips on You Tube, copy them and bring them to class. This will certainly help them understand who the migrant is and his/her various issues.

My next step is to make them research, read, and analyze one or more articles from *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* (the specific articles I may assign are listed in the Lesson Plans Section together with the instructions for their analysis). When we discuss the articles and the photographs and/or videos, I will take the opportunity to show them how the author uses logos, pathos, and ethos. Once they have understood, I will ask them to write a brief letter to the editor of one the papers (most likely *The Los Angeles Times* since it often discusses the situation of the migrants, or *The New York Times*) arguing their vision on this topic.

At this point, my students are ready to read Viramontes's novel. I will assign it as homework and in class we will begin every lesson with a brief sharing of the pages they read followed by initial reactions and/or comparison to some of the previous articles and/or photographs we have analyzed about both themes: coming of age and migrants. My students will be responsible for researching and bringing to class lyrics, more photographs and/or any art work they create on the same themes.

In class, we will be spending the first thirty minutes of each class (until we finish the novel), or more, discussing the differences and/or similarities between Viramontes's characters and my students' visual or written texts. The leading questions might be:

- After reading this excerpt from Viramontes's novel, what character stands out to you? Why? How?
- What conflict do you notice? How?
- Present or describe your text (the student's text they have researched for homework).
- What stands out to you? Why? How?
- What is the conflict or problem it presents?

- What similarities or differences do you see?

The first time we will compare and contrast the novel and the student's researched text, I expect them to write their responses. After they have familiarized with the analytical process, they will respond orally.

After our daily initial comparison between the novel and other texts, we will analyze (close read) short passages (the specific passages and the analytical strategy will be listed in the Lesson Plans Section). We will also discuss the main character, Estrella, her conflicts in her family, at school, and as a migrant worker. Of course, we will analyze Perfecto, Estrella's step-father, Petra, Estrella's mother, and Alejo, the boy Estrella falls in love with, and their personal and social conflicts.

Before passing to the final assessment, we will read *No Name Woman*, an essay written by Maxine Hong Kingston.¹⁷ The author reflects on the struggles immigrants face in their survival journey in a new country. Even though Viramontes's novel deals with migrants who then return to their native country when the seasonal work ends, both immigrants and migrants experience similar social and personal issues. In class, we will read the texts and will first annotate for tone, imagery, figurative language, and theme(s). Once we have finished, I will ask them:

- What strikes you most? Why?
- What issues/struggles the aunt experiences? Why? And what is the cause of these issues?
- What does it tell you about human nature? What specifically in the text supports your claim?
- What similarities and/or differences do you notice?

Lesson Plans

Pre-reading strategies

I use the following pre-reading strategies with struggling readers both in AP classes and regular College classes. I usually address specific groups of students and the activity can be done in class or as differentiated homework to prepare the reading passage or pages which will then be analyzed and discussed in class.

- Choose phrases (fifteen or twenty) from the passage/pages the students will be reading
- Write them in scattered order
- Pass them to the students
- Ask the students to read these phrases
- Ask the students to write one page about what they think the excerpt is about.

Another possible pre-reading strategy can be:

- Select a quotation (I usually choose a quotation which focuses on the main idea of the passage) from the

excerpt

- Ask students to write one page reflections

I sometimes use this other pre-reading strategy:

- Select relevant words (ten or fifteen) from the passage we will read
- Write these words in a scattered order
- Ask the students to distribute those words in one of the following categories: character(s), setting, causes, outcome(s), and unknown words
- When they finish categorizing the words, ask them to write a Gist Statement (concise statement) and one paragraph reflections on what they think the passage may be about
- In class, ask the students to say/share how they categorized those words. Write them on the board together with their gist statements.
- Ask them to read the entire passage
- Discuss the meaning/main ideas/theme(s) of the passage or excerpt.

Annotations

Every time we read a text, I expect my students to work on annotations. Students work in pairs and each pair has a specific focus.

- Group 1: Highlight the passage for diction (connotation vs. denotation) and write "meaning statements" in the margins.
- Group 2: highlight the passage for images (sound, sight, touch, taste, and scent descriptions) and write "meaning statements" in the margins.
- Group 3: do the same for figurative language
- Group 4: point of view
- Group 5: syntax patterns
- Group 6: structure of the chapter or passage
- Group 7: tone
- Group 8: focus on characterization (setting/structure/imagery/symbolism/tone), and other literary elements or techniques.

Close Reading/Analysis of Narrative Technique

This strategy can be used to analyze various literary techniques like Point of View, Syntax, Diction, Figurative Language, Setting, or others. I usually determine what to analyze according to literary technique that is

relevant in the excerpt. The following steps can be used for the analysis of non-fictional texts too.

- Read the assigned excerpt or passage, and/or article
- Annotate it (I determine the purpose of annotation, i.e. diction)
- Write a brief summary of the excerpt (I usually tell them to synthesize the summary in no more than two sentences)
- Sharing Time/class discussion
- Read the excerpt a second time
- Determine the Situation:
 1. Speaker
 2. To whom (audience)
 3. Setting
 4. Occasion
- Determine the Structure of the text:
 1. Transition word/phrases
 2. contrasts/Juxtapositions/Tensions
 3. Repetitions
 4. Key Lines
 5. Outline: write a title or phrase to label the main meaning of each paragraph/stanza
- Look at the Language (diction):
 1. Type of diction (formal, informal, colloquial)
 2. Type of syntax
 3. Connotative words
 4. Imagery/figurative language
 5. Paradox
 6. Allusions
 7. Symbolism
- Tone

1. Changing or consistent

2. Words or phrases which create the tone

- Purpose

- Take notes on how that specific literary technique adds meaning to the theme/main idea

- Discuss the various interpretations as a class and take notes

- Write two pages analysis of how the author uses the specific literary technique to convey the theme of the passage.

Modification

For the struggling students who do not know how a literary or rhetorical technique conveys meaning or adds meaning to the text, I usually follow this strategy:

- Read the passage/excerpt/article

- Choose five words (I always give them a specific purpose: setting, or imagery, or figurative language)

- For each word, the students have to write first its denotative meaning, and then all the possible associations

- Write one paragraph including the word/quotation and all the associative meanings previously identified.

- Repeat this for each word the students have analyzed

- Write one or two pages analysis including all the previous paragraphs.

Excerpts from the Novel

- "Had they been heading ..." to "...We're her? Asked Estrella." (p.3-6)

- "Perfecto inspected ...would not mention the bird." (p.8)

- What Estrella remembered ..." to "... his not returning." (p. 12-14)

- "Go help your mother ..." to "... fanning himself with his hat." (15-16).

For chapters 2-5, each group (both AP students and college students) will be required to select passages which stand out to them or contain evidence of setting, imagery, figurative language, and/or syntax to close read/analyze and present to the class.

Articles from the Newspaper Los Angeles Times

- "Why a Border Surge?" by Robert C. Bonner, *Los Angeles Times* , June 26, 2012

- "In Arizona, Border Crossing Down, But Migrant death on Rise" by Cindy Carcanno, *Los Angeles Times* , June 5, 2013

- "Border Crossing Faces High Risk in South Texas" by Richard Marosi, *Los Angeles Times* , June 22, 2013
- "Caught in the Current of Reverse Migration" by Richard Marosi, *Los Angeles Times* , October 21, 2012
- "Back Story: Susan Straight's Familial Bonds Stand Test of Time" by Susan Straight, *Los Angeles Times* , October 17, 2010

Articles from The New York Times

- "Invisible to Most, Immigrant Women Line Up for Day Labor" by Bernstein, N., *The New York Times* , Aug. 15, 2005
- "Hiring Local for Farm Work is No Cure-All" by Kirk Johnson, *The New York Times* , Oct. 5, 2004
- "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Immokalee, Florida" by Mascia, J., *The New York Times* , June 15, 2011
- "For Migrant Workers, Legality Lowers Wages" by Sharp, K., *The New York Times* , Dec. 3, 1989.

Final Assessment Prompt: AP students

"In the course of this unit you have read, analyzed, and discussed different texts. You have studied a particular group of people, the migrants, from different perspectives, and you have seen the struggle Estrella, the protagonist of Viramontes's novel, faces. After considering the unit content and the essential question, 'How do I fit in?', write a brief short story or a poem, or lyric, or one act play which illustrate the struggles of fitting in. The struggles may be connected to cultural biases, prejudices, or any other issue(s) you want to focus on. As an author, remember to show the appropriate use of the literary devices and techniques you have learned and analyzed in the course of the unit."

Final Assessment: College Students

"Wherever one lives, he/she is confronted by different issues which affect him/her and make fitting-in quite difficult. Choose one or more specific issues that you know have a serious influence on any individual and write a speech or a poem/lyric, or prepare a five-minutes video responding to the unit essential question, "How do I fit in?", considering the problems or issues the environment presents."

Appendix: Implementing State and District Standards

The teaching implemented in this unit reflects the Common Core State Standards for Reading Fictional and Informational texts, Writing, Speaking and Listening, the College Board requirements for the AP English Literature and Composition course, and the Language Arts Curriculum for the New Haven Public District – our Language Arts Curriculum adheres to the CCSS standards. Specifically, this unit will teach students to analyze complex ideas and sequences of events in informational texts (newspapers articles, videos documenting migrants), explain how specific events or ideas interact and develop, and read and analyze complex thematic ideas, structures, and other literary techniques in fictional texts. It will also focus on the analysis of multiple interpretations of the stylistic choices made by the author and its effects on the thematic idea(s), the overall

meaning of the text, as well as its aesthetic impact. The unit will also focus on argumentative writing supported by valid reasons and relevant and sufficient evidence (essay and/or speech), informative/explanatory writing (student's documentary video clips), and narrative writing (short story, poems, and lyrics). Both the argumentative and the informative/explanatory writings will be sufficiently supported with evidence from literary and/or informative texts. The narrative writing will be the result of the student's personal research and /or the analysis of the texts presented in the unit. Throughout the entire unit students will initiate or present and discuss in groups and/or as a class. The application of differentiated instruction with flexible groups and modified strategies facilitates the achievement of the above mentioned standards.

Annotated Bibliography: Resources for Teachers and Students

Beers, Kylene. *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do* . Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003.

An effective text with strategies for struggling readers.

Cohen, Samuel. *Essays. A Portable Anthology*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

Valuable source of non-fictional materials written by different authors in XVII, XVIII, XIX, and XX centuries.

Farstrup, Alan E., Samuels S. Jay. eds. *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction* . Newark: International Reading Association, 2002.

Duke, Nell K., Pearson P. David. *Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension* . Farstrup and Samuels 205-236.

A compelling chapter where the authors analyze, compare and contrast the validity of various strategies teachers use for an effective reading comprehension.

George, Paul S. "A Rationale for Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom," *Theory into Practice*, 44, no. 3 (2005): 185-193, www.jstor.org/stable/3496997.

Based on the theory of differentiated instruction, the article evaluates the benefits of heterogeneous classrooms and differentiated instruction.

Strassman, Barbara K, Jersey Ewing. "Differentiated Instruction in the English classroom: Content, Process, Product and Assessment," 48, no. 4 (2005): 358-359, www.jstor.org/stable/40016933.

Useful suggestions of methods and strategies to effectively teach in a differentiated classroom.

Veeser, H. Aram. *The New Historicism*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

Literary theory discussing the value of taking into considerations all possible cultural aspects in order to determine the truth.

Woolfolk, Anita. *Educational Psychology* . Allyn and Bacon: Boston, 20001.

An essential text in educational psychology based on the theories of some of the most important scholars like J. Piaget and L. Vygotsky. It prepares for teaching, counseling, speech therapy, or psychology.

Annotated Bibliography: Resources for Students

Baldwin, James. *Go Tell It On The Mountain* . New York: Laurel Book, 1952.

An American classic presenting the contrasting attitudes of two generations while dealing with the harsh reality of the rural South first and the northern ghetto after.

Bernstein, N. "Invisible to Most, Immigrant Women Line Up for Day Labor." *The New York Times* (The New York Times Company), Aug. 15, 2005.

Immigrant women and their exploitation connected to their search for a job.

Johnson, Kirk. "Hiring Local for Farm Work is No Cure-All." *The New York Times* (The New York Times Company), Oct. 5, 2004.

Interesting article discussing the issue of migrant workers in local farms.

Mascia, J.. "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Immokalee, Florida." *The New York Times* (The New York Times Company), June 15, 2011.

A compelling overview of present day migrant workers.

Sharp, K. "For Migrant Workers, Legality Lowers Wages." *The New York Times* (The New York Times Company), Dec. 3, 1989.

The articles discusses the problems of wages connected to the migrant's legal status.

Trumbo, Dalton . *Johnny Got his Gun* . New York: Citadel Press Book, 2007

The novel tells the story of a young Vietnam veteran who wakes up in a hospital badly wounded. While fighting his war wounds, he reminds his life in his family and his relationship with his father.

Viramontes, Helena Maria. *Under The Feet of Juses*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Interesting novel presenting the hardships of a migrant family and Estrella's difficult struggle of growing up.

Notes

1. H. Aram, Veesser. *The New Historicism*. IX

2. Helena Maria Viramontes. *Under the Feet of Jesus*. 12

3. Ibid. 52-76

4. Ibid. 52-53

5. Ibid. 54

6. Ibid. 59-60
7. Ibid. 78-79
8. Ibid. 98-99
9. Ibid. 170-171
10. Ibid. 171-176
11. Dalton Trumbo. *John Got His Gun*. 104-106
12. Gothikahl. *Childhood and Growing Up*
13. <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16043>
14. Chrystia Freeland. Coming of Age at a Sour Time. The New York Times, December 20, 2012
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/21/us/21iht-letter21.html?_r=0
15. Dorothea Lange. *Migrant Mother*. http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html
16. Marisa Silver. *Migrant Mother's Life*. Los Angeles Times. March 7, 2013.
<http://www.latimes.com/features/books/jacketcopy/la-ca-jc-marisa-silvers-mary-coin-photos,0,6070946.photogallery>
17. Maxine Hogan Kingston. *No Name Woman*. 190-204

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