



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2015 Volume I: Teaching Native American Studies

Contemporary Native American Fictional Accounts of Hope and Fear

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Introduction

Arnold Spirit Junior, a teenager living on a reservation with his family, fights the prejudice of his classmates and reacts to the injustices of a failing school system. Fear, poverty, and alcohol are a constant presence in his life in a system that isolates him because of his Native American identity. Lyman and his brother Henry Junior have a similar experience of fear, isolation, and loneliness. Isolation, loneliness, and feelings of desperation are also part of the everyday life and experiences of the women involved in a difficult fight of survival against abuse in their family, in their land, the reservation.

In this unit, the students read the novel *The Absolutely True diary of a Part Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene) ¹, *The Red Convertible* by Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain/Ojibwe) ², the play, *Sliver of a Full Moon* by Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee) ³, and poems written by Native American writers. The goal is to make students reflect on how a person reacts to hardships. They learn that injustices, prejudice, loneliness, and poverty can be defeated as characters in these fictional works reveal. They also learn that change and hope in a different future can be real and achievable. This unit also teaches students to appreciate and understand American Indian arts while practicing the new Common Core Standards.

Institutional Setting

This unit addresses two English ten classes and three AP English Literature classes in the New Haven Public District. All lessons in these two groups of students aim to understand, interpret, analyze, and evaluate written texts. The District curriculum requires the application of the above mentioned skills to a variety of texts which include written texts – fictional and informative -- visual texts, films, paintings, and commercials without excluding oral texts. The students' approach to the interpretation of the text is quite superficial because they are not used to spending time either reading and reflecting, or looking at the many different details the text presents. The same applies when they are asked to listen to someone's story. They accept and believe anything internet and media say without reflecting and deciding independently, or they dismiss whatever they

read or listen as meaningless. This particular group of students needs to understand what the written, oral, or visual message really conveys, its purpose, and the specific audience it addresses.

The school these students attend is an art school whose mission is to cultivate different artistic talents while maintaining a high level of rigor in the academics. The arts encourage and motivate everyone and help grasp difficult topics or concepts -- each class is rich of individuals with a vivid creativity in many different fields and a great variety of learning styles. At the same time, students often miss regular instructions in the 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 it. The College students (according to the New Haven Public District the term College students refers to a basic course of English) 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 (the teacher shows them how to write or what strategy they need to follow for reading and understanding), we do (the teacher and the students repeat the same writing or reading together so it becomes more familiar), and they do (the students have learned and can write or read proficiently) -- in combination with continuous references to the visual arts.

Unit Overview

In this very particular environment, the unit starts with the following essential questions: “What is the world around me like? Why? What do I fear and want? What can I do to change myself and society?” It can be taught at different levels to reach all the different learners in grade ten classes and in the AP classes. It also includes differentiated strategies and/or lesson plans because the school has chosen to implement mastery learning (it means that students become responsible for their learning and once they master the level in which they are placed at the beginning of the year, they can pass to a more challenging one while sitting in the same class). This unit, then, contains different fictional, visual, and non-fictional texts to cover all the students’ needs (the photographs and/or any artifact from the Yale Art Gallery or at the Metropolitan Museum of New York are listed in this Overview and in the Teaching Plan).

1. Advanced Placement Students

The students in the Advanced Placement class read *The Red Convertible* by Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain/Ojibwe) ⁴ and the play, *Sliver of a Full Moon*, by Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee) ⁵. The focus is on the characters, the narrator, internal and external conflicts, setting, symbols, and themes. It also contains a series of different activities to teach how the author uses different literary techniques and literary devices to characterize and to convey thematic ideas. In the meantime, students are engaged in class-discussion and various writings: brief responses that help shape the class-discussions and formal analytical and argumentative essays. Before concluding this section, the students determine, discuss, and write about the

themes of authority, power, isolation, and poverty related to the short story, *The Red Convertible* , and the play, *Sliver of a Full Moon* . While the students are reading and discussing the short story and the play, they also read some poems, *Repatriation Soliloquy* by Alice Azure (Mi'kmaq), *I Found Him on a Hill Top* by Ella Wilcox Sekatau (Narragansett), *Sad Country Songs* by John Christian Hopkins (Narragansett), *Homeland, Attic Dawn*, and *Pan's Song* by Jayne Fawcett (Mohegan) ⁶ and/or visual texts that focus on the same thematic ideas of the texts (the specific titles will be in the Lesson Plans Section).

2. Sophomore Students

This group of students reads *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* ⁷ as main text. They also research lyrics and/or poems that reflect similar themes like authority, power, isolation, and poverty. They read an article from *The New York Times* "Games on a Reservation Go By" in a Blur by Michael Powell, the short story, *From Here to There*, by Elsie Charles Basque (Mi'kmaq), the poems, *Tarzan Brown* by John Christian Hopkins (Narragansett), *Progress* by Lindsay Marshall (Mi'kmaq), and *For the Children* by Ella Wilcox Sekatau (Narragansett) ⁸ . While they are reading the novel, they analyze the setting, characters, symbols, conflicts, and theme(s). They also learn how to close-read shorter passages focusing on how the literary devices used by the narrator characterize or convey meaning. Numerous in-class discussions follow with written reflections about concerns and/or questions that either the novel or the class discussions arise.

3. Advanced Placement Students and Sophomore Students

Both groups start the unit with a visit to the Yale Art Gallery to see and analyze some paintings or photographs of the North American Indians and/or any other artifacts the museum has. The students start an in-depth analysis of the Native American cultures through an anthropological research. They can use both the traditional research methods and social media to gather as much data as possible. The plan is to prepare a field trip to the two Native American museums in the state of Connecticut and possibly interview some people on what it means to live inside a reservation. As source materials, the student can also use photographs, videos they can shoot, as well as any other documents they can find. They will conclude this research with a short video in which they compare and contrast the cultural context of the text they read and today's reality.

4. Summative Assessment - Advanced Placement Students

As final assessment, the students prepare a creative project portraying the community they have studied. They 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.

5. Summative assessment - Sophomore Students

This group of students, too, completes the unit with a creative project. They can choose to write: a speech (this satisfies our present curriculum but it also responds 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 (those students who have any kind of special needs as indicated by Strassman in the article, "Differentiated Instruction in the English Classroom"). ⁹ The specific prompt is in the Lesson Plans Section.

Unit Objectives

The objective of this unit is to enhance my students' skills to infer, close-read, analyze, discuss, synthesize, evaluate, and connect the text to their life. Every lesson plan has specific objectives so that it is possible to measure the students' learning, reflect on the outcome of the lesson, and plan the follow up accordingly – differentiated instruction. It also includes many plans with models on how to analyze/close read, determine the theme, and synthesize. These daily objectives are stated according to the Bloom's taxonomy to 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, the unit implements the following objectives for the daily lesson plans:

1. read and understand, interpret, analyze and discuss *The True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene), *The Red Convertible* by Louise Erdrich (Turtle- Mountain/Ojibwe), *Sliver of a Full Moon* Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee), and poetry
2. read, understand, interpret, analyze, and discuss non-fictional texts – newspapers articles, paintings, photographs, and/or video clips/short movies
3. understand the concepts of specific rhetorical and literary devices like point of view or narrative perspective, diction, allusions, figurative language, tone, syntax, and structure
4. analyze, discuss, and write how setting, point of view or narrative perspective, diction, allusions, figurative language, tone, syntax, and structure reveal meaning
5. analyze, discuss, and write about the theme(s) of the fictional texts
6. learn to prepare appropriate questions for interviews
7. research information for the targeted community
8. compare and contrast the various oral, written, and/or visual documents, and draw the appropriate conclusions
9. compare and contrast the social and psychological environments emerging from each fictional works and present-day reservations
10. write analytical essays and the final creative project.

Teaching Plan

The unit begins for both the Advanced Placement students and the others in the two sophomore classes with a visit to the Yale Art Gallery. This “warm-up” activity helps students visually understand the representations of Native American culture before they start reading any texts. The other goal responds to our school mission statement of celebrating the arts in each student and in all we do to awaken a diverse community of students-artists to their individual power as creator, thinkers, and leaders for the twenty-first century.

First of all the teacher creates groups of four students with different abilities so that they can learn from each other. Most likely, one of the sophomore classes has honors students and regular students since this school is

trying to implement a new teaching method based on mastery learning. This also means that students can challenge themselves in the course of the unit and show mastery of the required skills even before concluding the regular school year. Each group analyzes one of the following paintings that the Yale Art Gallery has in its collections of the American Indians: *Indian Summer* by Joseph McNamara, 1992-19993, *Indian Summer* by Roy Dean De Forest, 1984, *Indian Dance* by Edwin Austin Abbey 1897, *Bicentennial of Indian* by Fritz Scholder (Luseino) 1974 (students can also visit Fritz Scholder website for more images of his paintings ¹⁰), and *Indian Family* by Nathaniel Currier ¹¹ (I do not have the year), and one of the following photographs by Edward Curtis: *Kills in Timber – Oglala*, *The Ancient Arapaho*, *The Blackfoot Country*, *On the Little Big Horn – Apsaroke*, and *Bull's Shoe's Children*, *Piegan*. ¹²

Each group has to first observe the painting and the specific details (the students usually have five to eight minutes so they can also start taking some notes) and then they have to describe all the details they see. When they have finished, each group shares out their observations. After sharing, students can ask clarifications or any other appropriate questions. The next task is to focus on the colors, lines, and shapes used by the artist to convey the image. They also have to add what they think the artist was trying to convey with any of the colors, lines, or shapes drawn in each painting, and the purpose and message of the painting. According to the students in the group, they also have to determine the audience the artist is trying to address based on some specific details they notice in the painting. Each group spends about twenty minutes or more and then they share out their analysis. Clarifying questions and other reflections may follow.

When the students return from the trip to the Yale Art Gallery, they write a short essay in response to the following prompt, "After observing the painting assigned to your group, discuss the artist's message and purpose. Add also your reflections on your initial understanding of the American Indians." They complete this essay in class and then, as homework, they complete their initial study with a research project. The first part includes the research, description, and analysis of three or more artistic pieces from the collection on line of the Metropolitan Museum. Some suggestions can be: *Dream of Vision of Himself Changed to a Destroyer or Riding a Buffalo Eagle* by Black Hawk (1880-1881) or *Wind Spirit* by Frances Blackbear Bosin (1995) ¹³. They have to respond to the same question the teacher has asked for the painting at the Yale Art Gallery. The second part of the project is to research, describe, and analyze artifacts or paintings from the Connecticut tribes, Pequot and Mohegan. They can conclude the research project with one of the following documents: a video illustrating the results of their work or a detailed documented essay of the project.

A. The Red Convertible by Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain/Ojibwe) ¹⁴ for Advanced Placement students

After concluding the warm-up activities, the students read *The Red Convertible* by Louise Erdrich as homework first, so in class they have the opportunity to reread it (rereading is an important strategy to clarify misinterpretations and to improve the overall comprehension) and start a close analysis of the text. While they are rereading, they have to take thoughtful annotations of specific literary techniques and/or devices used by the author to characterize the two brothers, Lyman and Henry Lamartine. Specifically, the students start looking at how the short story is structured: does it start chronologically or it does not? Then, the story is clearly divided in three parts so it is important to understand why the author has chosen this technique and how the same technique helps characterize the two brothers. They also take notes about the syntax displayed in the story: possible fragments, simple and/or complex sentences, where and why (always as tools used by the author to characterize Lyman and Henry). Setting is another important component and the students have to determine how the place (where the brothers grew up, the family, the places they visited, and the river)

and the time when the different scenes take place affect the characters and develop the themes. Other important notes should include the point of view, tone, possible changes, imagery, and figurative language.

In class, they start with a closer look at the title. They analyze the two major words of the title, “red” and “convertible,” and reflect on how the word “red” conveys both the tragedy these two brothers experience and the strong bond that kept them tightly together. The word “convertible” can lead to a deeper discussion of the specific characteristics of a convertible car compared to a non-convertible car and the connections to the characterization of the two brothers. In groups of three or four students, they connect the various connotations for the word “red” and the word “convertible” to specific moments in the short stories. This activity is very important for the students in this AP group because they need to strengthen the reading strategies to comprehend and analyze literature. A class discussion will follow together with the response to the following prompt:

“The title of the short story is symbolic of the relationship between Lyman and Henry. In a well-organized essay, discuss what these symbols reveal of the two brothers and of the social values they hold.”

The next class activity is to teach how to analyze an excerpt from the same short story. This step is important because the second essay they have to write at the AP exam is the close reading of an excerpt from a short story or a novel. The first passage for this activity tells about Henry’s return from the Vietnam war and his difficulties of integration, “When he came home, though, Henry was very different, and I’ll say this: the change was not good ... Then I walked out before he could realize I know he’d strung together more than six words at a time.”¹⁵ After reading and annotating, the students respond to some specific questions:

1. Lyman says that when Henry came home he was different, “the change was no good.” However, he immediately adds, “you could hardly expect him to change.” What does Lyman imply? Also, what does it suggest about Lyman?
2. Why does Lyman say, “you could hardly expect him to change.” Why does he change the point of view and what does the connotation of “hardly” suggest?
3. What are the changes Lyman notices? What do they suggest? How do these changes affect the relationship between the two brothers and the family?
4. What does the metaphor, “the sound of a choking man,” reveal? What does it suggest about Lyman’s attitude? Why?
5. The same sound “stopped up the throats of other people around him.” What does this convey about Henry?
6. Lyman bought a color TV but he regrets it. Explain why and what it conveys about Lyman and Henry.
7. How does the figurative language used to describe how Henry reacts in front of the color TV set characterize him?
8. How does Lyman react when he sees his brother biting his lips? Why? What does this scene reveal about both brothers?
9. Lyman uses a simple sentence, “Blood was going down his chin.” What is the effect of this syntactical choice?
10. What is the effect of the imagery the same sentence conveys?
11. The mother does not trust any doctor outside the reservation because “they just give them drugs.” Lyman does not seem to agree at first but then he does, and adds, “... so let’s just forget about it.” What does it reveal about him?
12. How do you interpret Lyman’s decision to damage the red convertible? What does this action add to Lyman’s characterization? Specifically, what literary devices support your interpretation?

13. What does Henry's reaction to the damaged car reveal? How? So what can you conclude about this character?
14. What does this event reveal about Lyman?

After this close reading activity, each group analyzes how the point of view characterizes the two brothers and reveals the problems they face and/or try to solve. They also reflect on how the point of view helps convey thematic ideas. They will be prompted as follows:

1. What message does the story convey about the idea of authority?
2. Do you notice any form of isolation or loneliness? If so, how is it revealed and what does it illuminate of the work as a whole?
3. Does the story imply the idea of change or hope? If not, why?
4. What other thematic ideas does the short story convey? Discuss these themes.

They analyze how setting affects the characters and what it illuminates of the work as a whole. They also identify and analyze the personal conflicts of the main characters and the conflicts of the society depicted in the story.

Before concluding this part, the students read some historical excerpts to better understand how the Native Americans interact or do not interact with American society, and the degree of assimilation in today's society. These excerpts are assigned as homework readings and are listed in the Lesson Plans Section of this unit. Another reason for assigning non-fictional excerpts in this class derives from the fact that these AP students have potential skills but they need a lot of instruction in the form of supporting strategies to overcome the difficulties in comprehension and analysis. They are, in fact, at what Jean Piaget calls the concrete-operational stage. They cannot think abstractly and do not understand what can be inferred from a written or visual text. The goal is to move them from this initial stage to the formal-operational one in which they are able to solve abstract problems. ¹⁶

To conclude this part with the Advanced Placements students, the students write an essay in response to the following prompt: "After reading the short story, *The Red Convertible* by Louise Erdrich (Mountain Turtle/Ojibwe), write a well-organized essay discussing Lyman's characterization through literary devices like point of view, figurative language, or syntax."

B. The Sliver of a Full Moon by Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee) ¹⁷ for Advanced Placement Students

Since this play has not been published yet, the students listen to the reading of the play as homework first and take notes of the most relevant facts, feelings, and reactions they notice. In class, they start from their initial reactions to the play and then they listen to it again. One of the first prompt to which they respond as initial activity is: "What is the most important problem these women experience? How do they react? Do they find support? If they do not, what causes this lack of support? What illuminates the work as a whole?"

After this initial approach, each group selects a specific scene and analyzes it for tone, conflict, language and/or details, figurative language or imagery. They also take notes of the major literary devices and then discuss their effects in conveying the themes of the play. Their next step is to create specific questions for close reading. They can use the questions previously used for the excerpt from the short story as a model. This activity is very important to help them learn how to analyze a piece of literature on their own, a skill that is primary for the exam they take at the end of this course. In class, each group shares out both the questions

and the responses. In the meantime, they read other brief excerpts (they are listed in the Lesson Plans section of this unit) containing historical information on how some tribes have achieved the authority to prosecute non-Native people inside their reservation.

They conclude this part of the unit with an essay in response to the following prompt: “In literary works, the law of a country may be a hindrance to justice favoring therefore a state of suffering. Use the play you have just discussed, and in a well-developed essay analyze how the law can create injustice and what it reveals about the perpetrator and the victim of this injustice.”

C. Homeland by Jayne Fawcett (Mohegan) ¹⁸ for Advanced Placement Students

While working at the short story and the play, the students also read, discuss, and analyze some poems written by Native American writers for a better understanding of the unit themes. They begin with this poem, *Homeland*, which underlines the displacement and loneliness the speaker feels in spite of the rich heritage that seems to be lost “in pathless woods unknown.” The first activity is to read and annotate for poetic devices: rhyming, allusions, imagery, figurative language, and tone.

Immediately after, the students write their initial reflections in response to the following prompt: “What is your understanding of the word “homeland” and the feeling it may arise? What is your homeland and what values does it hold for you? What do you expect from your homeland? Why?” They also have to compare and contrast their understanding of homeland, the values it holds to the speaker’s understanding and values of homeland. In class or as homework, they further analyze the poem by responding to the following questions:

1. What does the allusion, “My Kingdom Come” add to the meaning of the poem?
2. Why does the speaker identify “the Home” with his/her “lineage”?
3. What is the “heritage” the speaker receives? Why?
4. What does the speaker recognize to his/her “Heritage”? Why?
5. Why is the speaker stating, “you’re not alone” and immediately after, “Where is My Home”? What is the effect of this juxtaposition?
6. The speaker repeats the word “hundred” twice. What does that convey? What is the effect on the reader?
7. What does the image of the owl and lonely wolf convey?
8. What does the speaker mean when he asserts that the “lonely wolf” replies “Pretend”? What is the message it conveys?
9. What is the tone of the poem? Do you notice any changes in tone? If so, where and what are the effects?

Other poems that the students read and analyze are: *Repatriation Soliloquy* by Alice Azure (Mi’kmaq), *I Found Him on a Hill Top* by Ella Wilcox Sekatau (Narragansett), *Sad Country Songs* by John Christian Hopkins (Narragansett), *Attic Dawn*, and *Pan’s Song* by Jayne Fawcett (Mohegan) ¹⁹. They read the poems and analyze them as homework first (the specific questions for these poems are in the lesson plans section). In class, they discuss each poem and determine the theme or themes for each of them. They conclude this part on poetry with two essays in response to the following prompts:

1. Choose one of the poems we have read and discussed in class, and write a well-developed essay in which you analyze the speaker’s experience and how the same speaker conveys the significance of this experience through specific poetic devices.
2. The poems *Homeland* by Jayne Fawcett (Mohegan) and *Sad Country Songs* by John Christian Hopkins

(Narragansett) reflect on similar concerns. Read them carefully and then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing the poetic techniques each writer uses to explore his/her particular situation.

D. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene) ²⁰ for the Sophomore Students

The first activity the students complete before reading the novel is to reflect on the title in response to the following prompt: "What does the author mean with "Absolutely True Diary"? What is a diary? What is the effect of the word "absolutely"? Would the meaning change without the word "absolutely"? What do you think it is about? The students write their responses in their journal, share their reflections, and the teacher takes notes on the board. They can also be challenged with another prompt to analyze the meaning and effect of "Part-Time Indian": "How can an Indian be Part-Time? What do you think the author mean with "Part-Time"? Can you predict what story it can tell? Also, look at the drawings on the cover of the novel. What do they suggest? What do you expect? Why?"

If students need a richer "warm-up" to elicit their interest and curiosity, the teacher can use some of the drawings from the text on page 6, 12, 57, 88, 128, 174, and 213 to describe and discuss. In class, each group receives a copy of one drawing and they have to analyze it by responding to the following questions

1. What do you see? What don't you see but you expect to see?
2. What is the story connected to this drawing?
3. Can you determine the feelings of the protagonist? Specifically, what makes you state what his feelings are. What could be the problem?
4. Try to briefly write what the plot will tell.

After these initial activities, the students start reading the novel for which the teacher can take three to four weeks, or more according to the students' reaction or more specific needs (the activities for specific needs are detailed in the Lesson Plan section of this unit). One possible plan is to assign one chapter every day as homework followed by a second rereading in class because there may be a good number students who do not read at home. Modeling is the best method to teach them how expert readers do make knowledge of the text. Therefore, during the in-class reading, the teacher will model how to understand meaning through the context when they encounter difficult and unknown words. She/he will interrupt the reading to say aloud what she/he thinks and how she/he uses specific details to analyze the characters and their attitudes. In the same way, the teacher can teach them how to notice tone and how to identify the connotations of some words, figurative language, imagery, repetitions, and irony. The teacher should model reading and analysis for the first chapters and then the students and the teacher together will be thinking aloud for three or four other chapters, and if necessary even more. After that, the students should have learned how to read and analyze proficiently on their own. The teacher intervenes only if some students continue to struggle.

E. Analysis and Discussion of The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene)

After reading each chapter, the teacher can divide the class in groups of three or four (the composition of the groups should change every time according to how the students reach or do not reach the lesson objectives). Each group has a different task to differentiate for the specific learning strengths and/or weaknesses of the group. Specifically, the teacher can plan to divide the entire novel in five parts (1-53; 54 -103; 104 -149; 150 – 198; 199 to the end), one per group. The students have to first summarize the excerpt, and then they respond

to the following analytical questions:

1. What is the first thing that stands out about the protagonist in this excerpt? Support your response with specific text references.
2. Describe the setting in your excerpt and discuss whether this setting has any influence on the protagonist, Arnold Spirit.
3. Discuss how the protagonist interacts or does not interact with the other characters and discuss the reasons behind his choices.
4. Discuss how the author characterizes Arnold Spirit? Look at some literary devices like repetition, figurative language, imagery, and tone.
5. What is the theme or what are the thematic ideas that emerge from your excerpt? What makes you say that? What is the message your excerpt conveys?

The teacher can help respond to these questions with specific strategies that are illustrated in the Lesson Plans Section.

Before concluding this part of the novel, the students engage in a class-discussion on the major themes – poverty, loneliness, fear, and hope – by responding to the following prompts:

1. List the values that you noticed among the characters of the community of this novel.
2. Discuss the effect that these values have for the characters and their community.
3. List all possible differences you notice between Arnold's experiences and the experiences of today's teenagers. Discuss these differences.

After this group discussion, the students write a two-to-three pages reflections on the differences and similarities between the protagonist and today's teenagers. As homework, they can read the short story, *From Here to There* by Elsie Charles Basque (Mi'kmaq) ²¹. The students conclude by writing a two pages essay in which they compare and contrast the themes of the novel and of the short story.

F. Poetry

While the students are reading the novel by Sherman Alexie (Spokane/ Coeu d'Alene), they can also read the following poems, *Tarzan Brown* by John Christian Hopkins (Narragansett), *Progress* by Lindsay Marshall (Mi'kmaq), and *For the Children* by Ella Wilcox Sekatau (Narragansett) ²². The teacher should read each poem aloud along with the students so they learn to hear the tone. They then annotate for poetic techniques like rhyme, figurative language, and imagery. These specific poems are a great opportunity to discuss the themes of the unity more in depth but they can also become models to which the students can refer in order to write their own poems (unit summative assessment). The teacher should use the same poems to teach students how the author uses specific poetic techniques to convey a specific message. To complete the analysis of each poem, the students respond to the following questions:

1. Who is the Speaker? How do you know? Does the Speaker change? If so, what is the effect?
2. What is the problem?
3. What is the message or the moral/theme?
4. Who is the audience the Speaker is addressing? Why?
5. What is the tone?

Lesson Plans - Examples of Teaching Methods

Resources

As previously mentioned in the Teaching Plan section, the AP students and the sophomores students integrate the major texts with the following excerpts to better understand what the American Indians experienced when they colonists took possession of their lands.

1. "Powhatan" from *American Colonies* by Alan Taylor (pp.125-127) ²³
2. "Encounter" from *American Colonies* by Alan Taylor (pp.127-129) ²⁴
3. "Violence" from *American Colonies* by Alan Taylor (pp. 131-133) ²⁵

They also read:

1. "education became a crucible for assimilation...it made it hard because, for men, there were few jobs." from *Blood Struggle* by Charles Wilkinson (pp.53-55) ²⁶
2. "A prolific writer ... as he believed, the divine decree – a matter profoundly important to him." from *Blood Struggle* by Charles Wilkinson (pp. 92-93) ²⁷
3. "Indian affairs had taken ... for non-Indians to enter the reservation." from *Blood Struggle* by Charles Wilkinson (p. 125) ²⁸
4. "The Indian movement had a complicated relationship ... just as they did in America as a whole." from *Blood Struggle* by Charles Wilkinson (pp. 129-130) ²⁹
5. "Ultimately, the progress envisioned ... to preserve and enhance in the future." from *Blood Struggle* by Charles Wilkinson (pp. 241-242). ³⁰

Since the sophomores read Sherman Alexie's novel, they can read the following articles from *The New York Times* too:

1. "Games on a Reservation Go By in a Blur" by Michael Powell (this will be assigned when we read about the narrator's basketball game) ³¹
2. "Review: 'The Plains Indians,' America's Early Artists, at the Met" by Holland Cotter ³²
3. "Immortal Images of Native Americans" by Timothy Egan. ³³

Scramble

This strategy is appropriate for those students who are not motivated and are struggling readers. The teacher should not model it because "not knowing how to do it" triggers more thinking.

1. Select ten to fifteen phrases from the excerpt the students will read as homework and reread in class for close analysis (if the activity takes place in class, divide the students in groups and assign different phrases from the same excerpt to each group).
2. Give them ten minutes to discuss what they think the phrases refer to and narrative/story the phrases relate to. For AP students, ask them to identify character(s) traits, conflict, and setting, or symbol.
3. After ten minutes ask them to write their reflections.
4. Sharing Time
5. Read the text aloud.

6. After reading the text, compare and contrast their predictions and the text.

The Most Important Word

This strategy is particularly helpful with the students who are in the sophomore classes to differentiate and address students who do not present serious reading problems and are motivated.

1. Students work independently and select the most important word from the assigned reading. It can be assigned as homework or it can be the first activity in class before rereading the excerpt.
2. Once they have this word they have to connect it to the main character, the conflict, setting, theme, and symbol.
3. They also have to write one paragraph explaining how the chosen word reveals something really important about the character, conflict, theme, setting, and symbol
4. Sharing time

Quick Write Activity

Every day, the teacher can start class with a ten minutes writing activity. This “Quick Write” activity is appropriate with the AP students and all those students who are not struggling readers/special educational needs/ESL, or those who need help with motivation.

1. Select one quotation with a specific detail/literary element like diction, setting, imagery, symbol, and/or literary technique like structure that you want to comment on either for its insightfulness or its power to make you see something.
2. Sharing Time: Teacher and students sit in a circle, read aloud, take brief notes, and discuss the various responses.
3. Ask the students to review their notes, decide the most relevant ones, and write them on a Post-It board.
4. Ask the students to write whether their initial position has changed after our discussion/sharing time, and why.
5. After reading the excerpt/passage, ask students to write an evaluation of whether their initial understanding/analysis has changed after the close read, and how.

Close Reading for Point of View

This strategy can be used for the AP and the sophomore students. Struggling students might need a quick revision of what the point of view is and how to recognize it grammatically.

1. Students select one short excerpt or the teacher assigns a specific excerpt
2. In groups, students are to rewrite the excerpt using a different point of view (from first person narrator to omniscient narrator, or intrusive narrator, or limited narrator)
3. Students annotate for major and most relevant differences
4. Share out
5. Write a two-pages reflection on what the change in narration suggests about the protagonist/character.

Narrator/Character's Analysis

This strategy allows students to decode the hidden thoughts and feelings of the character. The various body-parts represent the external clues that open his/her mind to the reader. It can be used with all students to

draw the final conclusions about the character before writing the closing essay.

1. Head: intellectual side of the character. What are his/her dreams? Visions? Philosophies he/she keeps inside?
2. Eyes: seeing through the character's eyes. What memorable sights affect him/her? How?
3. Ears: hearing through the character's ears. What does he/she notice and remember others saying about him/her? How is he/she affected?
4. Nose: smelling through the character's nose. What smells affect him/her? How?
5. Mouth: the character's communication. What philosophy does the character share? What arguments/debates? What images would symbolize his/her philosophy?
6. Arms: working. What is the character's relationship to work in general? To specific work?
7. Hands: the practical side of the character. What conflicts does he or she deal with? How?
8. Heart: the emotional side. What does he/she love? Who? Whom? How?
9. Torso: the instinctive side of the character. What does he/she like about himself/herself? What does he hide? What brings the character pain? What does he/she fear?
10. Legs: the playful side of the character. What does he/she do for fun?
11. Feet: the character's mobility. Where has he or she been (literally/figuratively)? How has he been affected by setting and/or travel?
12. Wings: the character's future. Where is he/she going?

Modification

The AP students have to identify four to five meaningful quotations for each body part and also to write an evaluation/analysis of each quote. The college students have to identify two important quotations for each part followed by commentaries. The weakest students have to identify one quotation for each body part followed by commentary.

Modification (appropriate for all the struggling students):

1. Read the passage/document.
2. Underline interesting, important, and/or unusual/unexpected words, phrases, and language structures.
3. Reread the passage/document.
4. Determine connections and draw arrows from one part of the passage to another to mark those connections.
5. Write a "Wonder Why" question for each interesting, important, unusual, or unexpected word/phrase. Write your theory(ies) and support it with clear references to the text.
6. Sharing Time: students share, discuss their interpretations, and take notes of the peer's thoughts in their journals.
7. Write how your interpretation of the passage/document has changed after the class discussion.

Close Analysis/Reading for Poetry

This strategy can be used to analyze various literary techniques like point of view, syntax, diction, figurative language, setting, or others. The teacher determines what to analyze based on the literary techniques that are relevant in the excerpt.

1. Read the assigned poem
2. Begin to brainstorm the title

3. Annotate it (I determine the purpose of annotation, i.e. diction)
4. Write a brief summary of the excerpt (I usually tell them to synthesize the summary in no more than two sentences)
5. Sharing Time/class discussion
6. Who is the Speaker?
7. To whom is he/she talking? How do you know?
8. Setting: Where is it taking place? Describe it? What does it convey?
9. What atmosphere does the setting create? How do you know?
10. Determine the Structure of the text:
 - a. Transition word/phrases
 - b. Contrasts/Juxtapositions/Tensions
 - c. Repetitions
 - d. Key Lines
 - e. Label the main meaning of each paragraph/stanza
11. What connotative words stand out? Why?
12. What about imagery or figurative language
13. What is the tone of the poem? Does it change? Where? How does the change affect meaning?
14. What are the words or phrases that create the tone?
15. What is the purpose for writing this poem?
16. 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:

1. Read the passage/excerpt/article
2. Choose five words (I always give them a specific purpose: setting, or imagery, or figurative language)
3. For each word, the students have to write first its denotative meaning, and then all the possible associations
4. Write one paragraph including the word/quotation and all the associative meanings previously identified.
5. Repeat this for each word the students have analyzed
6. Write one or two pages analysis including all the previous paragraphs.

Multiple Choice Strategies

Both AP and sophomore students need to understand the stem questions for multiple choices tests. Students react negatively to any multiple choice questionnaires and one way to help them overcome the fear and understand what the stem questions ask is to teach them how to write multiple choice questions.

1. Read the poem or the excerpt.
2. Annotate for diction, imagery, tone, or any other literary device you notice.
3. Look for patterns of technique and/or language
4. Look for difficult syntax that need to be paraphrased
5. Look for words whose meaning might be unusual or ambiguous
6. Create 5 questions focusing on

- a. Who the speaker is
- b. Identification of literary device in specific line/lines
- c. Meaning in context of an unusual word
- d. Choose an ambiguous word and ask to determine the suggested meaning in context
- e. Ask about the tone of the poem or excerpt.

Once they have created the questions they have to:

1. Write five responses
2. Three responses have to be clearly wrong
3. One of the two other missing responses has to be partially correct
4. One only response can be the right one

Summative Assessment Prompt for AP students

“After reading the short story, *The Red Convertible*, the play, *Sliver of a Full Moon*, and various poems, choose a genre – poetry, drama, or fiction – and write your own fictional work on one the unit themes (power, loneliness, fear, or isolation). Before writing the first draft, you are to meet with your teacher and define the genre, the setting, theme, point of view, conflict, literary techniques, and title. Your first draft and second drafts have to be revised by two peers. You will have a conference with your teacher after each draft. The final draft has to be formatted according to the MLA requirements.”

Summative Assessment Prompt for Sophomore Students

“After reading *The True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, various poems, and articles about American Indians, and after analyzing different photographs and/or painting, create your own text on one the thematic ideas we have discussed (isolation, fear, hope, authority, or power). You may choose to write a poem or lyric, or a two-page short story, but you can also choose to draw or take photographs. If you choose a visual genre, upload it as a video so it can be shared and discussed in class.”

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 teaches students to analyze complex ideas and sequences of events in fictional and informational texts (novels, plays, poems, video, and non-fictional texts documenting Indians tribes and culture), explain how specific events or ideas interact and develop, and read and analyze complex thematic ideas, structures, and other literary techniques. It also focuses 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, and its aesthetic impact. The unit teaches 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.

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Notes

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