



Recapturing Our Lost Youth: Using "Little Red Riding Hood" to Engage Reluctant Readers

Guide for Curriculum Unit 17.01.01

by Aaron J. Brenner

Too many of our teenagers were not read to when they were little and therefore have no nostalgic attachment to nor any interest in reading now. Simply telling them that reading is important to their success will not help these students form the socio-emotional connections to literature they did not make when they were younger. We have to give them the skills to make comprehension and complex literary analysis more gratifying than the mindless consumption of whatever easy entertainment their televisions and computers offer. If we can get them to need stories, and poems, and essays in the same way they seem to need the applications on their cell phones, then we can restore what was lost to the distractions, shortcomings, and traumas of their less than perfect childhoods. To do so, we must make reading feel fun and meaningful again (or for the first time) – rather than something that tortures our students and exposes their ignorance. This unit offers a multicultural exploration of the classic folktale “Little Red Riding Hood” as a path toward nurturing the bonds that literature creates between people and communities, giving us a sense of security, belonging, and purpose.

(Developed for English 3, grade 11, and Creative Writing, grades 11-12; recommended for English, History, Humanities, and Creative Writing, grades 5-12)

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