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Voices Carry: The Power of Writing to Create Change

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Introduction

“I had writing. In there, I wrote myself back together. I wrote myself towards a stronger version of myself.” – Roxane Gay¹

Lives have been saved and destroyed by power. Everyone wants to feel they have the power to control their own destiny, the power to live their own lives, and the power to say something and to be heard. Throughout history and literature, gender has been one way used to raise people up and keep others down.

While power is not an issue exclusive to women, it does impact women in greater numbers than men. As a result, the issue tends to be of particular interest to women who write. In studying female writers and what they have to say, it is my goal for my students to find their own voice especially during the turbulent times we live in. I want my students to be able to find their own strength.

In language arts class, we study reading and writing and how authors craft their stories while looking at what issues they deem important. Since the story of Eden, literature has attempted to define and influence the roles of men and women in society. The person who tells that story is as important as the story itself. How would the story of Adam and Eve be different if it was specifically told the point of view of Eve? Or Adam for that matter? Or how might it have been impacted if it was translated by a man? Or translated by a woman? These are questions that are important in understanding a story and understanding an author’s message.

The issues that appear in literature tend to be a reflection of place and culture. In terms of history, it is often the victors who decide what happened. With men traditional leveraging their strength into power, it is often the male point of view that is shared while female experience is often suppressed. This is no different in literature. There is an ongoing debate about the abundant presence of dead, white men in the public-school literary canon. Writers like William Shakespeare and Ernest Hemingway are names that are common to many children and young adults across the country while writers like Sandra Cisneros, Toni Morrison, Nadine Gordimer, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are less familiar. It is my hope that in the course of my unit to rectify this situation.

During this course of study, students will read the short fiction of writers with a broader perspective. It is my

hope that through experience of the work of a group of diverse female writers that students will be able to examine an author's text and life experience in order to determine their point of view. They will be asked to learn about different writers, analyze what aspects of their life are important, determine why it is that they chose this topic to write about, and cultivate their own views about what the writers view as important. Also, during this process, they will have the opportunity to write about what they determine is important.

Roxane Gay states that writing itself is a political act.² I would agree. I think writing is a way for the writer to exert their power. My students often feel they have no voice, but there are a multitude of ways for underrepresented voices to be heard including, but not limited to, expressing political power. As young people, it is important for my students now to start thinking about what is important to them. In their research, Xu, Mar and Peterson found experience has an important impact on political views. It is important for my students to have experiences.³ While my students don't have the right to vote, they have the ability to cultivate their voice to determine what issues are important to them and what their stance is on those issues. In the long term, this will be very important when they do reach the age to become voters.

It is my hope that through the study of writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sandra Cisneros, Toni Morrison, and Nadine Gordimer, among others, that my students will start to see how women have regained their power through writing. I want my students to find their voice like Roxane Gay, who overcame adversity and found her inner strength, her inner voice, through the written word.⁴ This is what I want for my students. I want them to be able to cultivate their own voice to share with the world so they can be heard. One of the ways we will do this, just as Gay talks about in finding her own voice, is through reading the writing of powerful women and my students' own writing.

Rationale

"Engaging youth in writing for social change is necessary because it helps youth locate their own power, participate in democracy, and write for authentic audiences (Bender-Slack, 2010)." ⁵

I teach seventh and eighth graders at an urban magnet school of about 500 students. Despite being a magnet school, most of my students don't choose to be there or don't choose to stay because they are interested in the school's theme. Often, my students are starting off from a place of no power; they have no say in how they have entered my classroom. Most of my students have spent the majority of their lives in my school starting in Pre-K 3 and now preparing to enter their final year as eighth graders. Some are there because the school district found an opening for them. Some of them have been given limited opportunities to experience life outside of New Haven. A large number struggle to see reading as a way of exploring alternate worlds or writing as a way of expressing themselves. And why should they? When they try to express themselves, they are often told they are talking back. In trying to voice their concerns, they are rewarded with a write up or a phone call home. Why should they speak up? All of them want to be heard.

Middle school is critical year in young people's education. It is the point where many decide if they enjoy education and proceed forward with this positive mindset regarding schooling. As a result, many children in different cohorts fall behind particularly students of color.⁶ In order to prevent this, I think it is important for students to experience a plethora of writers who will give the students not only role models but situations to

build their social emotional well-being.

In this unit, I want my students to learn why it is important to express an opinion and why it is important to be able to express that opinion in various forms. As has been demonstrated by current events, people need to be able to hear a message through multiple forms and people need to be able to share their messages in a variety of mediums.

As of this writing, people throughout the United States have been on lockdown for weeks getting their own view of the world through the media. As nonstop reporting of the worldwide pandemic continues, the news cycle has only seen a shift with the coverage of the murders of three African Americans: George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. There are people who are outraged feeling a band-aid has again been pulled off a wound that never seems to heal. There are others that refuse to even consider the fact that there is even any wound other than one that is self-inflicted. In this search for understanding, people look to communicate with each other in order to bridge the gap of confusion. As my students witness all of this, I want them to be able to firmly communicate their thoughts and feelings in a way that that is both important to them and clear to their audience.

The healing process is a struggle for many. People are witnessing all sides of the conflict: they see the peaceful protests, they see the violence, they see they attempts for both sides to come together, they see people ruthlessly trying to keep both sides fighting. They can see that there is a world that is trying to keep people in a constant state of conflict and a world that hasn't valued their words. When left without options, what are they going to do? It is my hope this unit will continue to instill in my students the power of words.

In her TED Talk, Roxane Gay spoke of the power of those words and political theory. In her youth, Gay had her voice taken during a traumatizing experience and was only able to regain her inner strength through reading the work of powerful women and developing her own writing.⁷ Many of my students understand trauma. They live with it or the residual effects of it on a day to day basis. I don't want my students to feel stuck in this emotional state. I want my students to experience what Roxane Gay described above.

Content

Within the scope of this unit, the required background knowledge can be broken down into two major areas: (1) The Evolution of the Fight for Gender Equality and (2) Teaching Practices. In the first section, the history of the power dynamics between men and women in regards to the fight for equality is discussed starting with hunter-gatherer societies to modern day American politics. In the second section, key teaching practices which will be used in this unit will be dissected. Once this knowledge is unpacked, the teacher will be ready to teach the unit.

The Evolution of the Fight for Gender Equality

Over millennia, many groups have been marginalized on the basis of gender, race, religion, and ethnicity among other labels. Despite the repression, most groups have fought for their rights to be free with some achieving their goals and others failing. In this unit of study, we will specifically examine how women have risen up to regain their own power in search of equality. While not all my students identify as female, all of my

students understand the desire to be considered equal. They know that society has a way of elevating some while keeping others down. It is through this study of strong women writers that my students will develop their critical reading and writing skills when it comes to author's voice while cultivating their own voice.

Over the past hundred years, cis women have redefined what it means to be female and trans women and men have fought to be able to identify as their true selves. In the process, cis males have struggled to develop a definition that keeps up with the evolution of their counterparts. It is important for my students to understand the complexity and intersectionality between gender, race, and culture. In studying a writer's work, they must study the author in order to unpack some of the issues and history surrounding the issues in which the writers are speaking to.

Prior to the Women's Rights Movement of the 19th Century

Historically, large sections of the male population have used their power to stifle women. In early hunter gather tribes, men and women were able to split their duties. In examining these cultures, researchers have found that women thrived because they were able to care for their child while gathering vegetation for their sustenance. In fact, most of the protein consumed by people of this time was not the meat that was hunted by man but from the yield of female foraging. In this culture, women were able to hold their own without much support from men. As time passed, society changed and with the advent of the simple plow the world evolved into a society dictated by male focused agriculture. The plow required a level of brute strength that was more suited to males leaving women with much less power than they previously possessed. ⁸

As society progressed, women were able to regain some rights. During the industrial revolution, women like Mary Wollstonecraft spoke out against the tyranny of the ruling gender. Wollstonecraft made the argument that women had a significant role as they were the ones who were educating the children, who are the future of nations. This led to her publishing "The Vindication of the Rights of Women." ⁹ While early efforts were not successful, these actions laid the groundwork for the work that would be done in the centuries that would follow. As industrialization made the need for physical strength less attractive, women were entering the workforce. It was through labor that women were starting to regain some of the previous freedom they previously enjoyed during the time of the hunter-gatherer culture.

Entering the Political Scene

In the 19th century, women started to leverage their economic position into political agency. As women found themselves more involved in political movements such as anti-abolitionism, women started to leverage this political knowledge into action towards achieving gender equality. ¹⁰

While white women often found some power within this movement, women of color often had issues important to them overlooked to the point that they were often regulated to the back of the line, metaphorically and physically. Instead, individual women of color, such as Ida B. Wells, achieved more power through writing, specifically journalism.

Ida B. Wells was a staunch advocate for advancing rights for African Americans through activism and journalism. In 1884, Wells purchased a first-class railway ticket only to be told she would have to be seated in the car designated for African Americans. When she refused, Wells was arrested. When the case went to trial, the local court found in favor of Wells, while, later, the supreme court rejected the ruling of the lower court. During this time, Wells began to write about her case. It was through writing that she continued to explore her

activism and develop her voice and political power. Wells would eventually operate her own paper which she used to further exert her political expression. Later, Ida B. Wells would ask her readers to question issues such as the funding of African American schools, the widespread practice of lynching, and the role of gender equality in the political field. With her work with the National Equal Rights League, Wells fought for a woman's right to vote. ¹¹

The suffragist movement continued to work towards its goal into the 20th century. During this time, they faced several hurdles. Despite finding allies, they were unable to move their work to a large enough political stage successfully. In the end, however, the suffragists were triumphant. In 1920, the 19th Amendment was passed in the United States finally bestowing women with the right to vote. This was one step closer to true equality.

Since the ratification of this amendment, the fight for equality took on new directions as well as new issues developing. In order to see women achieve true equality, the women's movement evolved into seeking the right to gain control over their own bodies as well as the right to equal pay. While the first battle resulted in the Roe v. Wade decision, the second battle was less than successful. The fight for the passage of the Equal Rights Act (ERA) was met with resistance by many including some groups of women. This conflict highlighted some of the issues that had developed outside as well as inside the women's movement. In trying to achieve rights for the majority, sometimes smaller divisions of women (women of color, women in poverty, homosexual women) often saw their needs put to the back.

Equal Rights Act & Gender Equality for All

The Equal Rights Act was born out of the work done by the women had achieved the right to vote. This was not enough. In the decades following, women such as Alice Paul began to commit to the work required in order to improve rights for everyone. Paul drafted an early version of what would become the Equal Rights Act. In 1972, the bill finally made it through both houses and was up for individual state ratification. It was at this stage the bill died. In order for it to go forward, the bill needed to be adopted by all 50 states in a seven-year time span. This did not occur. ¹²

The main contention of the ERA was to establish true equality as it has been established in the 15th and 19th amendments. ¹³ The passage of the ERA would have not only have benefited women, but also men. While historically men have maintained power, the power dynamic between men and women has shifted over time. The technological revolution altered the workplace and the skills required to be successful in that environment. While women do struggle to get to the top, it is being shown that the gap between the men at the top and the men at the bottom is growing¹⁴ . As a result, serious social issues have developed among men as a result.

In 2015, men made up 93% of the US prison population. Internationally men make up 79% of the all murder victims and 66% of the successful suicides.¹⁵ Men in power certainly benefit, but the men at the bottom are struggling to cope in the modern world. It is important that, in order to cope, men and women are both financially and politically escalated. It is important to look at how we are educating people in order to better prepare them for the world they are entering.

Teaching Strategies

Engaging middle school students in writing is typically a difficult task. It's the time of the class when students suddenly need to use the bathroom. In particular, my students struggle with this. One of the reasons is they

don't see the value in it the way that Roxane Gay speaks about in "Confessions of a Bad Feminist." In her article "Self Directed Writing: Giving Voice to Student Writers," Kim Brian Lovejoy explains what I see as the root of my problem. At the start of the article, Kim asks herself, and in essence all teachers, "whether I have taken the time to connect with students' lives, hear their stories, understand their frustrations, and discover what each brings to the classroom."¹⁶ While I consider myself very good at knowing my students through daily conversations, I realize I do not use writing to promote this connection. Lovejoy suggests the solution to this issue is self-directed writing.

Self-directed writing is a multi-step writing process where students are asked to first to generate a form of pre-writing called expressive writing and then to be provided an opportunity at a later date to develop that writing into one of three types of writing: mature expressive, transactional, or poetic.

At the initial expressive stage, the student is generating writing for themselves. Self directed writing is a chance for students to say what they have background knowledge on in a way they feel most comfortable. This includes the possibility of allowing students to write in their home language. Joan Wynn writes about the importance of not making one language superior to another. When doing this we give white students a higher pass. She feels it is critical that conversations are built around the variance in language and celebrating it.¹⁷ It is why it is important to allow students to utilize their home language at this stage rather than focusing on the formal elements of writing.

With the initial expressive writing, students are given more flexibility in their writing choices. To start with, students generate a topic list on their own, which will be shared with the class. During the sharing phase, a class list of topics is compiled and students are then encouraged to either keep their initial topic or choose a more intriguing one from the list. Self directed writing's expressive stage differs from freewriting in that it isn't timed and it isn't constant. Its meant to be a calm writing experience, but with the idea that this is clearly a draft intended for their use and doesn't necessarily have to be completed.

This stage is not a one-time occurrence. Students are provided the opportunity to complete initial expressive writing assignments multiple times throughout the unit in order to build a large portfolio of work at the various stages. When students have the opportunity to choose what work they will expand upon, students will then share work. Students should self-select the piece they are sharing. Then, they revise it; a first draft shouldn't be shared. The purpose of discussion is for students to ask each other questions about the work in order to stimulate revision. ¹⁸

Prior to this the students have to work on the second step of the self directed writing. Once they have several expressive writing pieces, they should choose one to explore further in one of three forms. The first form is mature expressive writing that is similar to the initial in that it is still mostly focused on the writer. Where it differs is that is in the form which can be a letter, a diary entry, or a journal, for example. The second form is transactional writing which requires more evidence and typically appears in the form of a editorial or argument among others. The final form is poetic writing where the student is allowed to be creative and develop a poem, play, or story. ¹⁹

At the midway point and the end, students should be provided the opportunity to reflect on the process describing to the teacher what is and isn't working as well as how they feel about the process. This allows the students to take more ownership of the process and their writing. Also, to help with ownership, it is the student who decides what they are going to share, how it is going to be submitted, and what is going to be graded in the final publishing stage. There should still be evidence of the other work, but the summative

assessment would be just about the work that the student has chosen.

Activities

“Engaging youth in writing for social change is necessary because it helps youth locate their own power, participate in democracy, and write for authentic audiences (Bender-Slack, 2010).”²⁰

With this being an election year, I think it very important for my students to have a very soft start to understanding their own personal beliefs. Given that this is a language arts course, I think it is an easy bridge from traditional language arts to considering the political implications by exploring the point of view and the voice of different writers as well as the student’s own voice in writing. My main target is to have students consider the artist’s experience to determine what their point of view is and how this shapes their voice. To do so, I want my students to examine the perspective of women who write from various perspectives while considering the connection between the author’s point of view and the author’s voice. The essential question I’ll be posing to my students in my unit is how can writing be used as a tool to empower people? How have artists used their words to bring about change in their communities? Why is important for people to tell their own story?

Activity #1

To do this, I want to start with a video by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie about “The Power of the Single Story.” In this Ted Talk, Adichie speaks about her own experiences growing up in Nigeria and reading British writers. She says how this experience shaped her own writing as well as the impact experiencing Nigerian works had on her own writing.²¹ I think this will allow my students to have a very soft entry into self directed writing. After watching, students would generate a short list of topics based on Adichie’s TED talk and then complete an initial expressive writing assignment. From there, students would be asked to take the piece home and come in with a revised version of the assignment at the second stage: (1) mature expressive, (2) transactional, or (3) poetic.

Activity #2

Having reviewed the importance of crafting their own story, students will then be asked to read Frederick Douglas’ biography and his work, “The Meaning of July 4th for the Negro,” as homework. In response, they will draft a self-directed writing which they will share in class. In class, students will use their self-directed writing to stimulate discussion in small groups before a larger group conversation. An important question that students will need to answer is “What is Frederick Douglas’ purpose of writing this speech?”

Teacher will discuss that many things impact people and inspire them to create art. Teacher will ask the students about Breonna Taylor. After sharing a brief explanation of who Breonna Taylor is, students will be asked to read an article on Breonna Taylor, “For Breonna Taylor: Annapolis July 4th Mural Protests Police Violence against Black People.” Students will be directed to complete a close reading of the article while also keeping the question in mind “Why was the mural created? What do the creators hope people will understand after viewing the mural”

When students have completed the assignment, each group will present their ideas to class. Students will then be asked to generate a list of ideas of ideas / concepts that are important to them. Initially, the list will be generated individually before being shared with the class. Students should add to their own lists during class discussions as this list will be used throughout the unit.

After generating the list, students will be asked to create art that they feel represents something that is important to them. In creating their art, students will be asked to consider their message, the intended audience, and the type of art they wish to create. When students complete their art, students will be asked to give their work a title. Once work is completed, students will have the opportunity to have a gallery walk and to look through and see what each other created. During the gallery walk, students will be asked to choose different pieces belonging to their classmates and answer the question: What message is your classmate trying to share with you about the topic?

After the gallery walk, teacher will review responses and return the responses to the creators of the art. After reading their classmates responses, students will be asked to respond. Did your classmates understand your message? What do you feel you could add to this or take away in order to make the message stronger? This reflection will be completed as a homework assignment.

Activity #3

After completing the work on Douglas, students will examine how voice and point of view specifically interact in the work of Toni Morrison. In Morrison's, "Reticaif", my students will read about two girls, one black and one white, who are dealing with racism in children's home. Morrison chooses never to reveal the specific race of either Twyla, the narrator, or Roberta, her pal, only making it clear that one is white and one is black. In doing so, Morrison is challenging racial identities and forcing the reader to determine how different people truly are and what guidelines we are using to do this.

Prior to reading her story, my students will experience some of Morrison's own words on why she entered writing in the interview "Toni Morrison Talks About Her Motivation For Writing." Morrison speaks about how the writing scene was dominated by African Americans males, and that the African American female voice wasn't included.²² My students will hear why it was important for Toni Morrison as a woman to have her voice as a part of the conversation. In reflecting on Morrison's work, students will consider their thoughts on Morrisons work using a form of initial expressive writing that focuses on writing for themselves rather than for their teacher.

While reading the story, students will look for character details using a graphic organizer that will ask them to: (1) identify significant character actions, (2) identify a character trait this demonstrates, and (3) explain how this action explains the character trait. After completing the chart, students will be asked to draw physical representations of the two characters. Then they will share them with each other. Students will then do some initial expressive writing regarding which race each character is and what is Morrison arguing by making it unclear which race each girl is.

After reading the story, the students will go back to that initial expressive writing and proceed to develop a response at the next level. Options will include a more expressive approach (letter to Morrison), a transactional approach (typical written response), or a poetic option (a new interview between Morrison and herself).

Activity #4

Having already seen Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie speak, the students will then read her short story, "Olikoye". Prior to reading the story, students will be asked to reading Adichie's biography. As part of the prereading process, students will use the biography and review the video "The Power of a Single Story" to determine what they think might be important to Adichie and why.

In this story, Adichie tells the tale of a young woman giving birth at a hospital in Nigeria who is going to name her child after the minister of health who brought vaccinations to her village. In reading Adichie's work, it is very clear that she believes in vaccinations. While reading, students will be asked to keep their thoughts about Adichie in mind. Students will again be given the chance to perform an initial expressive writing task responding to Adichie's work.

During a second reading, students will determine the theme of the story using a graphic organizer. The four-column organizer will ask them to locate conflicts, determine solutions, decide what lesson the characters learned, and write a theme based on their understanding of what the character(s) learned.

After completing the initial expressive writing, my students will then examine a bit about the vaccination debate. They will read an article from ProCon.org on the appropriateness of vaccinating kids and will complete a simple pro / con graphic organizer. Then, students will be provided with the opportunity to watch two TED Talks on the subject of vaccinations providing both sides of the issue, "Why I Changed My Mind on Vaccinations" and "Why Parents Fear Vaccines."

Using Adichie's story, the videos, and statistics from the ProCon article, students will draw their own conclusions about the importance of vaccinations. In doing so, they will need to create a response that explains whether or not they feel vaccinations should be required by going through the first and the second stage of self directed writing.

Activity #5

From Nigeria, we will travel to South Africa and read the work of Nadine Gordimer. In Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time," a white family living in South Africa puts barbed wire around their home to protect themselves from 'undesirables' only for their young son to get caught in the wire. Prior to reading the story, students will be asked to read Gordimer's biography for homework. The students will then be asked to watch the Nadine Gordimer videos "In Conversation - Nadine Gordimer" and "Nadine on Racism." While viewing the students will be asked to answer the questions: (1) What was her experience with black people when she was younger? (2) How did this change? (3) What caused the change? After watching the video and answering the questions, the students will share their responses in small groups. After a brief class discussion on their responses, students will be directed to Nadine Gordimer's discussion on propaganda.

The goal of this part of the lesson is for students to have a working definition of propaganda to use in order to analyze Nadine Gordimer's writing. In her interview, "In Conversation - Nadine Gordimer," Gordimer speaks of the need of the writer to avoid propaganda.²³ Using the definitions provided by the Mind over Media curriculum, students will be given several definitions of propaganda and will craft a definition as a group before being asked to keep or adapt their group definition for individual use.²⁴

Once students have their definition of propaganda, students will be asked to read Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time" looking to determine what the author's point of view is. To determine the author's point of view, the

students will consider what the theme of the text and what the author's opinion is on the subject. If modeling is needed, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Olikoye* can be used to demonstrate identifying point of view. Once they complete the reading, the students will be asked to look at their definition of propaganda and consider whether or not they determine Gordimer's story "Once Upon a Time" is representative of their definition. Students will be go through the self directed writing process of writing and initial expressive stage before developing a second response utilizing one of the three modes of self directed writing.

Activity #6

Next, students will work on Sandra Cisneros' "Woman Hollering Creek," which tells the story of a woman escaping domestic violence after living her entire life shaped by the media's portrayal of romance. Prior to the start of the reading, students will be asked to participate in the "Take a Stand!" activity described in the Relationship Violence lesson found in the Girls Only Toolkit.²⁵ The students will be asked to walk to different sides of the room (left or right) based on the statements read regarding gender and relationships. After completing the activity, students will be asked to reflect in the manner they deem appropriate with initial expressive writing. After giving the students an opportunity to share their writing in small groups, the class will write a definition of what they determine a healthy relationship would look like. For homework, students will be asked to read Sandra Cisneros biography, determine what they think Cisneros' view of relationships might be, and determine how this view of relationships would impact the story.

Using this definition and Cisneros' biography, the students will read the story "Woman Hollering Creek." While reading the story, the students will use their definition to determine whether or not Cleofilas is in a healthy relationship with her husband. Students will look for specific examples of interactions between Cleofilas and her husband. After gathering evidence, the students will determine if Cleofilas has a healthy relationship by their definitions. Also, students will examine Cleofilas' view of relationships based on her experiences with love in television programs. After the students use examples from the story of Cleofilas' view of relationships, students will then determine if they think that Cleofilas believes that she has a healthy relationship by her own definition.

Using the initial expressive writing and their responses to the text, students will then be asked to develop a response that answers the questions: what do I feel should a healthy relationship will look like. This should be a self directed prompt that goes through at least the initial expressive writing stage as well as the second stage.

Activity #7

In wrapping up the unit, the students will be asked to read an excerpt from the novel *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds. Prior to reading, the students will watch a video from CBS This Morning where Gayle King interviews Jason Reynolds. While reading, students will be asked to keep the Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie video in mind. Reynolds, like Adichie, makes several statements about not seeing himself in the stories he was asked to read in school.²⁶ Students will be asked to do some initial reflective writing answering the question: how are Adichie's and Reynolds's views of literature similar and different?

For homework, students will be asked to review Jason Reynolds' 2018 Printz Honor Acceptance speech. While reading, students will be asked to respond by writing a poetic piece where they write a short interview between themselves and Jason Reynolds on their mutual thoughts on writing.

In class, students will read a short excerpt from Jason Reynolds' novel *Long Way Down*. Prior to reading the

excerpt, students will have the opportunity to examine the arguments regarding gun control. While reading the pro / con article on gun control, students will choose a side of the gun control debate. Then, they will do a second reading where they identify three main points from their side of the argument as well as one point from the opposing view they want to argue against. Afterwards, they will develop an initial response to the question: where do you stand on gun control?

While reading the story, students will be asked to consider the interview, the speech, and their research to determine what Jason Reynolds' belief on gun control might be. After reading the excerpt, they will write a brief response that answers two questions. In the first part, the students will be asked to identify Reynolds' beliefs on gun control and give evidence from what they read to explain that. In the second part, students will be explaining if Jason Reynolds would agree with their argument earlier regarding gun control.

After completing this, students will have an opportunity to develop their initial expressive writing response on gun control further with the writing mode of their choice.

Activity #8

As a culminating activity, students are to gather examples of their writing to create a portfolio that demonstrates two things. The first element that should be included is an example of each form of self-directed writing: (1) expressive, (2) transactional, and (3) poetic. For each piece, they should be including the initial expressive piece. The second critical element is a final piece of writing using the self-directed style of their choice that answers the question: what is something that I want to see changed? This can be based on writing they have done in class or it can be a brand-new piece of writing.

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Appendix

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.10

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.1

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.B

Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.5

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 8 here.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.6

Curriculum Unit 20.01.02

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

End Notes

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- ²¹ TED. "The danger of a single story | Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie," YouTube video, 19:16, October 7, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg&t=459s>.
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