



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Voices of Power, Voices of Change: Narrative Writing in the English Language Arts Classroom

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The current English Language Arts classroom is filled with Gen-Z students grappling with the polarizing political, personal, and institutional pressures that surround them daily. Ethnic Studies programs around the country have seen substantial success in their ability to increase students' critical thinking skills and academic achievement while developing their understanding of the interactions of race, class, gender, and sexuality from the experiences of multiple social groups. Despite the documented success of these programs in multiple settings, whether it be elementary to secondary schools, most school districts do not have an Ethnic Studies program or graduation requirement. However, any social justice oriented teacher has the ability to incorporate an Ethnic Studies lens to their curriculum. This unit aims to do two things. The first is to analyze how the current writing workshop works in tandem with oppressive educational frameworks to subdue creative and cultural values that add to the writer's voice and craft. This analysis includes the dangers of limiting the American cannon to a single perspective and strategies to directly counter traditional, dominant practices of teaching writing. The second is to postulate that students need the safety of the classroom to explore their feelings and perspective regarding our ever changing world. It's my intent to provide a framework for students to explore their voices through narrative poetry and prose as well as learn to utilize writing as a tool for self-discovery and advocacy.

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