



## Introduction

English teachers do what they do because they love books, because they get a charge from poems and stories and plays. But communicating that excitement to modern urban students proves difficult: for these students, the act of reading is a struggle, school is an arena of defeat, the people and ideas in books seem distant and silly. Yet we persist, haunted by the conviction that the literature we love is a locus of value, that reading it is an experience we owe our students—even the unwilling ones.

The units prepared by the eight fellows in this summer's seminar on Strategies for Teaching Literature address these problems. They consider ways to present various literary genres to various kinds of students, strategies for overcoming the hostility many students bring to a class on literature, exercises to widen and deepen each student's comprehension. The texts considered range from simple poems for children to absurdist drama. The approaches urged are as different as the teachers who made them, though each unit profited from being presented to the seminar for its scrutiny. If there is a principle of unity, it is the passionate conviction, shared by every member of the seminar, that literature celebrates the essentially human, and that teaching it remains a high and urgent calling.

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