



In Search of Self: Adolescent Themes in the Twentieth Century Short Story

Guide for Curriculum Unit 83.03.02
by Gwendolyn Richardson

The problems of society and its inability to solve them seem to be intensified in our schools and among the youth of today. The young are meeting with the confusions and contradictions of an ever changing society. This unit will provide an opportunity for the student to explore the problems of adolescence through literature. Literature is a reflection of life. Drug abuse, sexual concerns, value conflicts, peer pressure are all realistically treated in literature; therefore, by reading about the lives and experiences of others, the student will hopefully gain insight about his own life.

The first half of the unit deals with teaching the student how to interpret a piece of literature as a reflection of life. This section includes an introduction to the short story as a literary type and discussions on the various elements of plot, theme, setting, character, and point of view.

In the second half of the unit, the student will then read selections of short stories that deal with aspects of adolescent development. The student will relate the problem presented in the story with present day situations that he can identify with in class discussion.

This unit can be used in lieu of the traditional reading program; however, I would suggest that you use it with students on or near an eighth grade level or above in reading. It should stimulate discussion and offer an alternative to the watered-down basals that we are currently using. It includes many activities and special projects that can be used to hold student interest. Suggested selections for use given in the unit can easily be substituted for ones that are available for your use. With all the problems that our adolescents are now encountering, any effort to give them additional insight into their complex lives will be worth the time spent.

(Recommended for 8th grade Reading and, 8th and 9th grade English)

Key Words

Twentieth Century American Short Story Adolescence

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