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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1988 Volume III: Autobiography in America

Autobiography: Reflections in the Mirror

Guide for Curriculum Unit 88.03.08
by Pamela J. Greene

This unit is devoted to the exploration, through reading and writing, of a variety of people and how they look back on their lives through their autobiographical poems, stories and diary excerpts. We will attempt to determine how these people measure their own success. We will also explore the idea that the way we look at our lives, our attitude toward our past as well as the present, determines how successful we see ourselves. After each reading selection, the students will write about themselves through self portrait poems, poetry, diary entries or short narratives. Each student will also create a collage with a photograph as its focal point surrounded by images, written and pictorial, that reflect the feelings a student has had at a particular time in their lives.

My goal is to draw from my students a sense of themselves by having them focus on the tiny threads that weave the fabric of their lives. The reading I have chosen for them should serve as a catalyst to motivate them by learning about people with backgrounds similar to their own who have gained self awareness and success in their lives.

(Recommended for English classes, grades 7-12)

Key Words

Poetry Autobiography Afro-American Writing Instruction Special Education Autobiographies Journals

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