



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

Learning About Self and Others Through Autobiography

Guide for Curriculum Unit 88.03.10
by Debbie Diane Sumpter

My unit will focus on the teaching of five autobiographical short stories: "My Furthest, Back Person, The African," "Where Nothing Is Long Ago," "On the Edge of The Barrio," "The Children's Transport," and "Puerto Rican Paradise."

The main objective of my unit is to explore the different cultural backgrounds of my students and also to have students explore themselves. Many students lack self esteem and a knowledge of who they are, and because of this, they tend to show little or no respect for their classmates and their classmates' cultures. I also found that students seem to have very little interest of the many different cultures that surround them. Because of these observations, I devised a unit that will help students learn more about themselves and others.

The five short stories chosen are all autobiographical and each writer represents a different culture. The different cultures are representative of the students I teach. The stories discuss tragedy, self realization, struggle, adolescence, and success. The themes brought out in the stories should evoke some sense of emotion from the students as they learn about different aspects of life that are faced by people of different cultures.

I have chosen different compositions to be written by the students, and each composition will reflect some aspect of the student's life. The compositions are to be shared with the class. This is one way for students to get to know their classmates on a personal level because the compositions are autobiographical.

The students will also keep journals to record and examine their lives for the duration of this unit. This will help students find out who they are and what they are about. The end result of this unit will hopefully bridge the gap between the different cultures, and help students gain a sense of self.

(Recommended for English classes, grade 10)

Key Words

General Ethnicity Autobiographies Journals Writing Instruction

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