



A Special Education Curriculum Unit Dealing with Death, Depression and Suicide Using Poetry

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In my experience as a special education teacher I have always been disturbed by my students' attitudes towards death. Because of their attitudes, I began to take courses to counsel students. Many of their own personal lives are touched by depression and death. Due to the rampant drug use in New Haven, they are exposed to people who are slowly committing suicide. Keeping this mind, I wanted to write a curriculum teaching students to understand their feelings as well as helping others and becoming alert to potential suicide situations among their peers. To do this I will use poetry as my vehicle. Using poetry will enable me to expose my students to poetry and familiarize them with the reading of poetry.

The unit will be divided into three parts: the first dealing with feelings of depression, the second dealing with suicide, and the third dealing with death. I will have poems for each section. The first step will be reading and analyzing what the poet is trying to say. Then I will take it a step further and have students do experiential exercises to have them personalize the poet's experience. In the first section I would like to have the students write their own poems.

Essentially, I am using poetry to have students learn the signs of depression and suicide to help themselves identify feelings they may have. We will study death so that hopefully they will learn to respect life more.

(Recommended for Poetry/English or Affective Education unit for special education students, grades 3 - 12)

Key Words

Suicide Death Depression American Adolescence Hughes Langston Adolescent Poetry Psychology Special Education Poetry

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