



Character Portrayal in Reading and Writing Poetry

Guide for Curriculum Unit 89.02.03

by Marie P. Casey

The objective of this unit is to give high school students a background in the literature of American poetry. I have selected poetry with three criteria: one, the poem is an American classic; two, the poem represents an important regional influence such as Afro-American poetry; three, the poems of English literature which are classics and have strongly influenced American poetry.

I suggest two major texts, "Sleeping on the Wing" and "Black American Poets" with inclusions of photocopies of Frost, Shakespeare, Afro-American folk poetry and spirituals. Moreover, this unit will endeavor to connect and use the students' present experience of streets and life and music with the experience and feelings of poems of older times and similar experiences.

This unit will have the students write their own poetry from their own experiences. Some of these writing exercises will imitate forms of authors studied (e.g. lesson plan 3) and others will be free verse or poems of their own choice. I have included a personal experience of teaching poetry to a junior class, along with a poem written by a student, Danny Gorham. Finally, I have compiled a selection of poets's biographies, many of whom are Afro-American. I feel that these biographies will be helpful to teachers and of great interest to students as they know more about the writers of other poems studied.

(Recommended for American Literature - Poetry Unit, basic and college preparatory, grade 11)

Key Words

Poetry Afro-American Literature Character Portrayal Writing Instruction

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