



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1995 Volume IV: Coming of Age in Ethnic America

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## **Male Image Building Utilizing the Writing Process**

Curriculum Unit 95.04.03  
by Kevin S. Miller

### **I. OVERVIEW**

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This Unit was constructed to serve a dual purpose. Its primary goal is to introduce upper-elementary and middle school students to the process of writing utilizing the “Writing Workshop Approach.”

The writing workshop is based on the assumption that a “workshop” is an environment where craftspeople are actively engaged in creating, exploring, and manipulating materials or ideals for the sake of artistic expression. The leader of the workshop is to serve as a guide or resource-motivator to a small group or individuals within this community.

It is very important to remember that each workshop group member is an individual with different limitations, skills, and beliefs. Each activity constructed will be unique and at different stages of completion.

In order to accommodate this type of setting, it is advantageous to have a risk-free environment with many opportunities for the individual artist to share his or her works that are in progress. There is also a need to develop responsibility and nurture the quality of maturity in group members to assure that they can work independently.

In this setting the writers will be given the freedom to explore and investigate topics that interest them. They will have total autonomy to select themes to write about. In this way their writings will become therapeutic. This type of forum will encourage self examination and open the door to inner reflections of beliefs and morals.

This approach does not restrict the participant to an assigned physical area; therefore, there is the need for mobility. The classroom must be designed with this fact in mind. The use of “centers” would be an asset for this type of space setup.

There must be resource materials in designated places and instructional-visual aids to help the learner solve problems independently. The media center(library) and its personnel must perform an integral part in the dispersal of needed information. The writer must have unlimited access to the media center and be exposed to the way of using technology(internet) to gather information.

In this Unit the basic tenets of a “workshop” will be implemented as stated in the previous paragraphs. There

will be many examples of how to set up the environment that is conducive for this style of learning to take place.

The Unit will contain classroom diagrams and other visual aids to help the user of the unit setup his/her classroom. There will be models of learning centers and the materials needed in them to make them effective.

This Unit will provide students with the opportunity to apply academic and social skills. It will address a student's proficiencies, stress intrinsic motivation, and encourage students to determine what they want to work on. The students will potentially become experts about their needs. The lessons will be student driven which means that there will be minimal teacher lecturing. Due to this fact, "mini-lessons" geared to students deficiencies will be suggested.

The Unit will look at different assessment tools to develop these mini-lessons. There will be a great deal of emphasis on portfolio assessment.

The Unit will provide examples of how to incorporate sharing among students. There will be a section devoted to student-teacher and student-student conferencing. The Unit will also provide suggestions on whole class sharing (Author's Chair).

The lessons in the Unit will have social development activities in them to assure that students have the necessary skills to handle independent and small group assignments. The P.Q.S.(Praise, Question, and Suggestion) system will be discussed.

The second aspect of this Unit is to introduce inner-city students especially males to the great literary works about African, African- American, and Hispanic(Latino) males.

It is imperative that young students in an urban setting be exposed to positive characters in all genres of written art. In "Pop" culture there are too many negative images of men of color. In this Unit there will be an attempt to explore the myths and reality of men of color. The lessons will make the students look at the many aspects that led to the one dimensional and grotesque figures in many characterizations of men of color.

One of the main thrusts of this Unit is to get young male students to examine their past and write about their future. The male students this Unit is targeted for are the ones growing up in a hostile and unsupportive community. The young men who feel helpless, but wear the deceptive armor of strength. The ones who have been conditioned to believe that conviction, morality, truthfulness, and honesty are signs of weakness. The boys who think they are men based on their biological makeup with no regard to their mental development. The ones who are growing up in a matriarchal sub- system, but unconsciously do not value women.

This Unit will explore the possibility of using writing as a form of therapy to expose these boys to the inner and outer destructive forces that are threatening their existence.

This Unit will take on the task of giving all students a voice. It will challenge their belief systems about the world around them. It will give them a forum to express themselves in a creative and less destructive way. It will eventually give them the security they need to form a new community, the "community of writers."

The following suggested themes could be used to enhance this Unit by the user:

\*The Triangle trade and the brotherhood of Hispanic and African males.

- \*Black Exploitative films of the 70's and 90's.
- \*The external coercive forces that cause the breakup of the family.
- \*The church loss of control and influence with the youth.
- \*Matriarchal families.
- \*Vietnam War and Civil Disobedience connection with drug epidemic.
- \*Abortion is not an alternative in our community.
- \*The right to bear arms.
- \*Lynching and its connection to the worth of life of a minority male.
- \*Is the only way out suicide?
- \*The "street" as Daddy.
- \*The sports conspiracy.
- \*Picking cotton or sling'en cane(cocain) is there a difference.
- \*The Minority women Madonna or Bitch?
- \*The jail culture.
- \*Materialism and its poisonous expression.
- \*Islam vs. Christianity is there a viable choice?
- \*Media creation of minority leaders.

## II. GOALS

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- (1)To be able to work in small and large groups.
- (2)To be able to use the Media Center( library) .
- (3)To understand the structure of a sentence.
- (4)To understand the component of a paragraph.
- (5)To understand conferencing.
- (6)To learn how to proof read an essay.
- (7)To become resourceful-independent learners.

### III. Key Elements of Unit

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#### A. Classroom Setup

Since students will be encouraged to use each other as resources, it is suggested that you setup desks in groups of four. It will also be advisable to group students heterogeneously.

The ideal cluster of four students would be two boys and two girls. It is suggested to have students with different academic abilities placed in the same group. The teacher should be aware to assign students with different personalities and temperaments. This will enable students to learn to work and cooperate with people of diverse backgrounds and capabilities. This acquired skill will help them in future social endeavors.

It is recommended that centers be used. Centers are designated spaces set up that house specific materials or aids. These planned areas insure that students have the capability to work independently.

The classroom should be set up to afford students ample opportunity to move from center to center without disturbing others.

The following is a list of propose centers:

- (1) R & S(Resources and Supplies)- this area should be stocked with paper, pens, pencils, crayons, scissors, construction paper, glue, and other materials to aid in the development of the written product.
- (2) Reading Section- this area should have books and other forms of written materials that are grade appropriate to expose the students to good literature. This section should contain African-American literature.(A Bibliography of African-American Literature is provided in the back of this Curriculum.)
- (3) Portfolio Section-this area houses the works in progress. Each student should have a folder of some sort to keep their writings in.
- (4) Editing Section-this area should have the necessary aids to help students edit their own works. The students will have many lessons(mini-lessons) instructing them about editing and proofreading. These lessons will give students the opportunity to be expose to well written material and the flow of the english language. Charts will also be made based on the information gained in these lessons and be displayed in this section and around the classroom. The students will also have examples of corrected materials to view. There will also be a chart in this corner of editing and proofreading symbols.
- (5) Conference Section-this area should be in a part of the room where students can discuss and share their works without disturbing others. This section should be comfortable and inviting.
- (6) Publishing Section-this area should have the tools needed to bind or laminate finished products. There should be at least a typewriter and computer with a word processing program. There should also be room in this section to display “finished” works. (A Classroom Setup Diagram is provided in the back of this curriculum.)

## **B. Social Development**

Due to the nature of this Unit, and its emphasis on developing young minority males self-esteem it is important that each lesson has a social development activity connected. The New Haven Board of Education has adopted the "Second Step" program for its elementary schools. This is a program design to promote social development.

There are many lessons that deal with diversity that should be implemented in this Unit. The user of this Unit is encourage to look through the Second Step program and utilize the materials already developed

## **C. Mini-Lessons**

This Unit does not promote teacher lecturing on specific and isolated language art skills. Open guided instruction is however useful when a number of students are in need of basic writing skills in order for them to independently continue working on there writing projects.

Mini-lessons are designed around the written work generated by the students. The teacher will began to notice certain writing errors by students after conferencing with them. If the teacher starts to see a negative writing trend among students, the teacher can address this matter in an open lesson. There will also be times when a teacher needs to expose all the students to a writing skill. The mini-lessons will serve as the vehicle to promote these new language art skills to the entire class.

## **D. The Art of Cooperating and Sharing**

Groupshare is a word I have coined. It is the act in which students share information, labor, and/or ideas with no emotional or intellectual attachment. The individual learns to give for the sake of the task and does not expect to be compensated. The person is also consciously aware that the thing shared with the group no longer exclusively belongs to him/her.

The teacher who is going to implement this curriculum will need to nurture students in the art of cooperating. This can be started with dividing the responsibility of a project to each member of a group. Equal distribution of labor and giving students an opportunity to solve and maintain a project will give them the confidence to work with others in the future.

Division of labor among students can best be achieved in cooperative learning team jobs (Science for Life and Living, 1992 )

**COMMUNICATOR:** This student is responsible for asking the teacher or another team's communicator for help. If the team cannot resolve a question or decide how to follow a procedure, for example, the communicator is the only team member who may leave the team and ask the teacher for help or talk with the communicator of another team. The communicator shares with the other teammates any information obtained from another communicator or the teacher. The communicator is not the only one who talks to the teacher. All team members should be able to report on the team's results.

**MANAGER:** The manager is responsible for picking up and returning the supplies and equipment that the team needs. The manager also informs the teacher if something is damage or broken. All teammates are responsible for cleaning up after an activity and getting the materials ready to return.

**TRACKER/CHECKER:** The tracker is responsible for the team's progress through the steps of a team activity.

The tracker keeps the team focus on the task. As the checker, the student is responsible for making sure that the team understands and completes the team task. The checker points out the teams task and makes sure the team talk about the task before they began.

COACH: The coach is responsible for encouraging teammates to practice the team skills. The coach reminds teammates to practice the team skills and congratulate teammates when they use a skill. The coach inspires the team to work cooperatively by looking for positive examples.

The teacher must spend time teaching and encouraging the students to really perform their jobs. The teacher must be a role-model. The teacher must set aside time in the day to reinforce the different roles.

## **E. The Writing Conference**

The conference is a very essential part of the writing process. It is the place were the student redefines, discover and clarifies what he/she wants to express.

There are many types of conferences. In this Unit I will focus on three(3) of them. They are as follow:

### 1. The Individual Conference

This conference is between a student and the teacher. It is usually a short conference to go over what the child has written or to help students who are stuck. These conferences mainly are to get the student to focus and for general content problems.

### 2. The Group Conference

This conference is made up of no more than five(5) to six(6) students with the teacher to discuss focus, content, direction and expression of completed drafts. They should all be looking for strong points in the individual writings and building on them.

### 3. Publishing Conference

These conferences are totally student-based. The student review published works with the aim of selecting one for wider audience publication.

The most important thing to remember when evaluating your conferences is that if you as the teacher has done most of the talking, your conference has failed. You most allow the students to arrive at their own opinions and decisions.

## **LESSON I**

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OBJECTIVE: To teach students how to brainstorm and order their writing.

To introduce students to family structure and the advantages of having a rational and responsible male figure in the family makeup.

MATERIALS: Walt Disney's The Lion King video tape, television set, V.C.R., Blackboard and chalk.

## PROCEDURE:

1. Background information on video.
2. Show video.
3. Open classroom discussion.
  - A. Why do you think they call Simba's home The Pride Land? Why was Pride Rock a major place for all the animals?
  - B. What kind of father was Mufasa?
  - C. What was the role of Simba's mother and the other lioness?
  - D. How would you describe Uncle Scar?
  - E. What kind of relationship did the lions and hyenas have? Why did Uncle Scar make a pack with the hyenas?
  - F. What do you think about Simba giving up his father's philosophy of responsibility and taking the philosophy of Pumbaa and Timon which was "Hakuna Matata"?
  - G. What was the turning point in Simba's life?
  - H. What was the role of Rafiki?
  - I. What does the "Circle of Life" mean?
  - J. What was wrong with the way Uncle Scar was ruling the Pride Land?
  - K. Mufasa means "trustworthy one". How did he show he deserved this name?
  - L. Simba means "symbol". How was Symba a symbol to us all?
4. List possible writing topics generated from this discussion on the blackboard.
5. Students can choose one or pick one of their own and place it in the center of their paper and circle it.
6. Demonstrate how to brainstorm on blackboard while students do it at their seats.
7. Have students discuss their brainstorming activity with another student.
8. Then have students start to organize their work(order) in the following fashion. Have them read their brainstorms through and decide which idea would be good to start with and number that idea 1. Ask them to decide which idea would make a good ending? Then have them circle it and label it ending. Then have them circle their other main ideas in the order they wish to use them.

NOTE: Students will need lots of practice with the planning and ordering process. You want it to become second nature for them to note down ideas and make a quick plan before they start any writing assignment.

CLOSURE: Students will do a “web” of a topic at home.

Students will write one sentence about a man, woman, and friend they know who fits one of the characters in The Lion King.

## LESSON II

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### **Objective:**

To introduce the students to the art of listening to other people share their writings.

To expose them to African-American poetry.

### **Materials:**

Overhead projector, screen, chart paper, color markers, tape, book of choice, chair(special in some kind of way), blackboard and chalk.

### **Procedure:**

1. Put the Poem

“We Real Cool” or any poem written by an African-American on the board.

“We Real Cool”

We real cool. We

Left school. We

Lurk late. We

Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We

Jazz June. We

Die soon.



—Unknown Author

I, too, sing America  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen.  
When company comes,  
But I laugh  
And eat well  
And grow strong.  
Tomorrow,  
I'll sit at the table  
When the company comes.  
Nobody 'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.  
Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed-  
I, too, am American.

—Langston Hughes 2 Read the poems to the class.

3. On the blackboard write the letters P.Q.S. Then explain the letters on the board represent the words praise, question, and suggestion respectively. Tell the students that if they want to comment on the poems they must either give a praise, ask a question, and/or give a suggestion.
4. Write a mix of sentences on the board that give a praise, ask a question and makes a suggestion.
5. Have the students identify the different sentences.
6. Brainstorm with the students to come up with a “Question Words Chart”. Explain that it will be posted in the room as a reference tool.
7. Place the “special” chair in the front of the room. Tell the student that the special chair is called the Author’s Chair and who ever sits in it has the whole class undivided attention. Explain to the students that each one of them will have an opportunity to read one of their works while sitting in the chair. Remind them that in order to comment on a person’s work they must use the P.Q.S. system.

3. Read one chapter of a book you have selected.

9. Ask the students to use the P.Q.S. system to review the chapter.

**Closure:**

Each student must prepare a poem to read in the Author’s Chair

## LESSON III

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**Objective:**

To introduce the students to the writing process and develop story starters.

**Materials:**

Maggie’s American Dream by James P. Comer, M.D., cassette tape of mellow music.

**Procedure:**

1. Read the chapter in Maggie s American Dream intitled “The Bad Father”
2. Discuss it with the students.
3. Ask the students to close their eyes and think of a wonderful place. A place where there is no crime, drugs, or violence. A place where they can be free and their family want have to worry

about anything. Continue with this story of this magical place until the children are relax. Then ask the students to let the writer inside of them come out

4. Start to play the music very softly.

5. Ask the students to open their eyes take out a piece of paper and a pencil and began to write.

Remind them to write down anything that comes to their minds. If they get stuck, tell them to write the last word the wrote over and over until new ideas that they can write come out.

6. At the end of this writing session ask for any volunteers who would like to share their work with the group

7 Mini Author's Chair

### **Closure:**

Ask the students to write about the most important event in there lives

## **Appendix**

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*(available in print form)*

## **STUDENTS BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Lewin, Hugh. *Jafta's Mother* . Carolrhonda Books, Inc. 1983

Little, Lessie Jones. *Children of Long Ago* . Philomel Books. 1988

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\*Mendez, Phil. *The Black Snowman* . Scholastic. 1989

\*Myers, Walter Dean. *Me, Mop, and the Moondance Kid* . Dell Yearling 1988

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- \*Taylor, Mildrid D. *Friendship, The* . Bantam Skylark 1987, 1989
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- \*Wagner, Jane. J.T. Bantam Doubleday. 1969
- \*Walter, Midred Pitts. *Justin & the Best Biscuits in the World* . Alfred A. Knopf. 1986
- \*Walter, Mildred Pitts. *Have a Happy* . . . Avon Camelot 1989
- \*These books have positive male characters.

## TEACHER'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Redmond, Eugene B. *Drumvoices*. New York: Anchor Books Doubleday 1976
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- Gendzier, Irene L. *Frantz Fanon* . New York: Vintage Books Random House 1973
- Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy* . New York: A Plume Book New American Library 1986
- Muhammad. W. Deen. *An African-American Genesis* . Chicago: Progressions Publishing Company, Inc. 1986
- Bontemps, Arna. *Great Slave Narratives* . Boston: Beacon Press 1969
- Kunaufu, Jawanza. *Countering the Conspiracy To Destroy Black Boys* . Chicago 1989

NOTE: The following books can be read aloud.

McDaniels, William. *Abdul and the Designer Tennis Shoes* . This book explores the areas of self-esteem, materialism, values, sports and relationships.

Carter, Sharon. *Jomo: A name to be Proud* . This book is about a young boy who was named after a famous African leader and how he learned to feel good about himself and his special name.

Giovanni, Nikki. *Ego-Tripping* . This is a collection of poetry written especially for young people. Giovanni writes about warriors, Black boys, Martin Luther King Jr.'s dreams, Black men, communication, being alone, Black power and more.

Adoff, Arnold. *Malcolm X*. This is a biography about the life of El Hass Malik Shabazz. It tells the story of how he transformed himself to become a world wide figure in the area of human rights.

Hudson, Wade. *Pass It On* . This is a collection of the best poetry for children by African- American poets. It includes such poets as Langston Hughes, Eloise Greenfield, Paul Lawrence Dunbar and Gwendolyn Brooks.

Browder, Anthony T. *From the Browder File: Essays on the African-American Experience* . This is a compilation of thought-provoking essays which covers controversial topics such as African history, religion, street-hustling, eating habits, and television.

Clarke, John Henrik. *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* . This reader shows Marcus Garvey in all his dimensions. Among the contributors are, in addition to Garvey himself, W.E.B. Dubois, E. Franklin Frazier and John Henrik Clarke.

Carson, M.D. Ben. *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* . This is the inspiring and moving story of an inner-city boy who grows up and become one of the most respected neurosurgeons in the world.

NOTE: These books may be order from the following company.

African American Images

1909 West 95th Street, Dept. SC

Chicago, Illinois 60643

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