



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

Pathways to the Creative Imagination: “creative Writing 101,”

Guide for Curriculum Unit 95.04.06
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I am a writer, poet and playwright. I also teach two creative writing classes (Introduction to Creative Writing and a playwriting class) at the Cooperative High School for the Arts and Humanities.

The majority of the students assigned to this class are not avid readers. Those who are have had limited, if any, exposure to the ever-increasing number of African, African-American, Latin and Native American writers and their work. Likewise, I have recently noted that there seems to be a decrease in the emphasis on works by contemporary Third World male writers or themes which reinforce positive self-images for my male students. Thus I intend to include works and themes which fulfill this need. I want to 1) give them images that provide them with positive self- images as well as 2) assist them in developing the tools—writing ability, grammatical skills, etc.—to tell their stories and record their perceptions of themselves on their own terms. Therefore, I have set out to develop a curriculum which includes poetry, short stories, essays and excerpts from select novels of both renowned and emerging African, African-American, Latin and Native American writers. It is my objective to utilize these works (much like Kenneth Koch used the works of European and Western poets in his books *Rose Where Did You Get that Red?* and *Wishes, Lies and Dreams*) to construct writing exercises suitable for my first year creative writing students that contain themes with which they can readily identify. The lessons included in this paper fall under three categories:

I. Me

II. Worlds Converging

III. Building ‘Buff’ Imaginations

The exercises that fall under the category “Me” are designed to foster introspection as well as furnish students with the space to claim their future selves and help them to realize dreams. Through the lessons in the section labeled “Worlds Converging” the students have an opportunity to gain a new appreciation of the worldview of people from diverse cultures. Additionally, they will reexamine their own environment and the people closest to them from a new vantage point. The assignments devised for the segment designated “Building ‘Buff’ Imaginations” apply varied techniques and media to stimulate the imagination.

(Recommended for Creative Writing, English, African American Literature, Native American Literature, Latin American Literature; grades 9-12)

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