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Daughters Come of Age in Women's Fiction

Curriculum Unit 99.01.08
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Purpose and Philosophy of the Unit

This curriculum unit, “Daughters Come of Age in Women’s Fiction,” has several objectives. The main objective is to improve students’ ability to respond to, reflect on, and make connections between literature and their own lives. Using fiction written by women, students will explore the character development of daughters who are depicted in the literature. In addition, they will explore ways in which these daughters discover and claim their own identities, in some cases losing innocence, in other cases rebelling, and in other cases emulating their mothers. Fiction written by women will be the lens through which students will explore the roles of these daughters in their families. All of these issues will be focal points for students to examine their own experiences, as daughters or as sons, in the process of coming of age and in the roles they assume in their own families. Film, music, and art projects will be used to enhance the literature, offering opportunities to learn through several modalities. Learning will be demonstrated not only through written work, but through art and oral presentations made to the class. Finally, the writing process will be integrated throughout the curriculum to develop students’ ability to organize, plan, edit, and revise their written work, with specific emphasis placed on the development of several five-paragraph essays.

The curriculum is designed for use with high school students who have little or no success in earning credits at our “parent school,” a large, comprehensive, urban high school. The students have traditionally had attendance problems and low academic performance. In general, they are not skillful readers, and their writing skills are largely underdeveloped. These students are referred to the alternative program at Wilbur Cross Annex, where I teach, to give them a second chance in a smaller environment, where team-teaching and collaboration among academic disciplines are an integral part of the program’s philosophy and its success.

At Wilbur Cross Annex, at least fifty percent of the day is spent in team-taught classrooms. For the most part these classes are interdisciplinary, but it is also possible to collaborate and team teach within one’s own discipline. This unit may be taught with a teacher of another discipline or it may be taught in conjunction with the unit, “Mothers Represented in Short Stories by Women,” by Sandra Friday.

The fiction in this unit is multi-cultural, to expose students to cultures like and unlike their own. Approximately seventy-five percent of our student population is African American and Hispanic; a small percentage of the population is Asian. The unit will, therefore, include literature by Asian, African American, and Hispanic women writers. The issues they write about, aspects of which may pertain specifically to their own cultures, are also universal. Daughters across cultures assume or are given roles in their families. Coming of age and the passage from childhood may involve different customs and rituals, but the experience itself is universal. As students have the opportunity for exposure to other cultures through the literature, they will explore the cultural differences and similarities

Strategy For Introducing the Unit

It is important to begin a new unit in a way that will stimulate interest and engage the students, particularly those who lack motivation and have met with little success at school. We will begin with the film, *How to Make an American Quilt*, which traces a young woman’s journey home before her wedding to work on a college research project. While she is working on the research, the women in her life (mother, aunt, former

domestic now family friend) are working on a quilt for her wedding. Each of these women tell their stories about love and marriage, as the young woman shares her feelings of uncertainty about her upcoming marriage. Thus, the stories themselves become topics for exploring one's passage from daughter to wife and the uncertainty one feels when making this monumental decision and transition.

The tradition of quilting is age-old, and is an art form that connects history, culture, tradition, and family. The quilt in the film depicts the stories of each of the quilters. After viewing and discussing stories told by the women in the film, students will work cooperatively to make a "story quilt."

As examples of the art and for inspiration, I will introduce a book featuring story quilts, "Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts." This is an excellent collection that will provide a context within which students may connect their work on the class quilt with this important art form and tradition. The book contains many photographs of Ringgold's work, connecting contemporary art with the African American slave quilt tradition as a means to depict history. First, each student will design one quilt square (using construction paper) that depicts his or her own past, present, and future aspirations, thereby experiencing the "quilting tradition." Thus, they will begin this unit telling their own stories, represented on the class quilt, displayed in the classroom throughout the course. Then, after reading each story, they will design another quilt square depicting a character from the story. The quilt project will be a collective work in progress, completed at the conclusion of the unit. We will use this film and the art project to introduce the unit and the short story "Everyday Use," by Alice Walker.

Overview of Assignments

Students will use a guided, sequential process to produce two five-paragraph essays during this unit.

After reading the stories aloud and silently, students will participate in several whole group discussions. I will record their ideas on overheads, while they use graphic organizers to take notes to begin the pre-writing stage of the writing process. A lesson plan is included, along with sample graphic organizers, for this pre-writing activity.

Writing conferences with each student and the teacher will be student centered to fully involve the student in the process of editing and revising the essay. A lesson plan is provided for this activity.

Students will produce a story quilt to depict their own lives and the daughters represented in the literature. A lesson plan for this activity is provided.

Students will interview a member of their family about an assigned topic and write a summary of the interview.

In the short story “Everyday Use,” by Alice Walker, the issue of skin color and privilege is raised. Students will interview a member of their family to explore how and to what extent the issue of skin color has been a part of their experience. They will work cooperatively in small groups to brainstorm questions they might ask during the interview, and then in a large group make a model questionnaire. They may choose to audio-tape this interview or to take notes. Finally, they will submit a typed summary of the interview to the instructor.

A Daughter’s Worth is Affirmed in “Everyday Use,” by Alice Walker

Students will use this story as a basis for examining the character development of each daughter and the conflict presented in “Everyday Use,” by Alice Walker. The major writing activity for this story is a five-paragraph essay discussing the conflict, character development, and universal theme of the story, for which lesson plans are provided. In addition, students will conduct an interview with an older family member or friend (discussed in the previous section, *Overview of Assignments*) to explore how that person has experienced the issue of skin color. Finally, students will choose a daughter from the story and design a quilt square depicting her character. This square, and all others, will be added to the story quilt on display in the classroom.

“Everyday Use” is narrated by the mother and it is set in the rural South. She and her daughter, Maggie, are awaiting the arrival of Dee, her other daughter. The yard has been carefully raked in anticipation of this event; Maggie and her mother have worked hard on it. The difference between the daughters is made evident immediately, through the narrator’s voice, “Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes...She thinks her sister has held life always in the palm of one hand, that no is a word the world never learned to say to her.”¹

Introducing Conflict

The differences between the daughters and their roles in the family are focal points for discussion. In fact, the daughters are complete opposites. Dee is the daughter who has left home and was college educated, through money raised by the work and efforts of her mother and younger sister. As Dee is stylish, educated, and self-confident, Maggie is uneducated, physically scarred from a house fire that occurred when she was a child, and accustomed to being in the background. Mama’s dream of appearing on TV with the daughter who has “made it,” and who embraces and appreciates her is the antithesis of Dee’s condescension during this visit. This introduces the conflicts in the story—conflicts about who and what are valued in families and in society, the conflict depicted in the relationship of the sisters, and the conflict between traditional values and contemporary values.

Examining Character Development

The question, “What does it mean to be intelligent?” will be a starting point from which to begin a discussion about the sisters and make connections with their own lives. In a whole group discussion, students will identify each daughter’s talents; their responses will be recorded on the blackboard. They will then reflect on and list the ways in which they are intelligent.

Dee, described as “lighter than Maggie with nicer hair and a fuller figure,”² is accustomed to getting what she wants. At the time of the visit, we learn that she has taken a new name, Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo, symbolically obliterating her roots and family.

While “Everyday Use” revolves around Dee’s visit and the mother’s attention is focused on the event, Maggie

is a central character. She is the daughter who remained home, rooted in tradition and the old ways. She is the daughter whose work, always in the background, helped raise the money to educate her sister and made it possible for Dee to attend college.

The Issue of Color: Discussion, Interview, and Summary

Students will discuss the issue of skin color, using the question “What is the significance of the description of Dee having a lighter complexion than her sister?” This will speak to a custom of light skin having more privilege and value in society. Does this still exist today? In what ways have students, or their mothers and grandmothers, experienced this in their own families or in society? A selection from *Maud Martha*, by Gwendolyn Brooks, can be used to further illustrate how the issue of color is raised in another African American family. As in “Everyday Use,” the daughter with the lighter skin is more privileged than her darker-skinned sister. This issue is also addressed in “The Story of My Body,” by Judith Ortiz Cofer, which could be used as another supplemental reading. As a homework assignment, students will interview a member of their family about these issues.

Universal Theme: Maggie’s Value in the Family is Affirmed

At the end of the visit, Wangero decides that she must have the family quilts that had been promised to Maggie. Once again, she discusses her sister as if her sister as if she was not even present: “Maggie can’t even appreciate these quilts! She’d probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use!”³ The conflicts in the story are brought to a climax when the mother responds, “I reckon she would. God knows I been saving ‘em for long enough with nobody using them.”⁴ Even now, Maggie is ready to give them and accede to the wishes of her sister. But finally, the mother makes a decision that fully affirms Maggie’s worth. She does something she has “never done before,” when she “hugged Maggie...dragged her on into the room...and snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero’s hands and dumped them into Maggie’s lap.”⁵

For the first time in her life, Maggie is fully acknowledged; she is no longer invisible and her importance in the family is completely recognized by her mother. The theme of coming of age in the case of Maggie the affirmation of her place and value in the family will be analyzed and discussed in the pre-writing stage of the writing process for the five-paragraph essay. Again, students will cite evidence from the story to frame the discussion and support their own ideas.

Alienation and Loss of Innocence in “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oates

From this story, we will move to “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oates. There are two sisters depicted in this story June is the archetype of the dutiful daughter and Connie is a rebellious teenager. The story is set in what might be “Anytown, USA,” a seemingly quiet town three miles from the local mall, the place where teenagers hang out. As in “Everyday Use,” the sisters are polar opposites, and students will examine how each character is depicted.

The conflict between and among family members is introduced immediately, and as the story progresses, the conflict between childhood and a loss of innocence develops from Connie’s chance encounter with a stranger. Students will respond in writing to several pre-reading questions: “What are the ways in which teenagers rebel and break away from their families, in search of their own identities and independence? What does it mean

when one tries to grow up too fast? The responses will be shared with the group, serving as a basis for introducing the story.

This story will serve as a springboard for several discussions: first, students will discuss mother/daughter conflict in the story and relate this to conflicts with their own parent or guardian; next, students will discuss the rivalry between Connie and her sister, relating it to sibling rivalry in their own families; finally they will discuss Connie's "two identities" her public persona and her persona at home, relating her behavior and experience to their own experience.

The film *Smooth Talk* (Joyce Chopra, 1986) will be used to compare and contrast the character development in the film version of the story with the text. Students will list similarities and differences between the two versions and discuss them in class. In a writing assignment, students will write a short critical review of the film.

For the two culminating activities, students will design a quilt square depicting Connie's character development in the story and then they will write a five-paragraph essay discussing Connie's alienation from her family, explaining the conflicts within the family, the conflict inherent in coming of age, and the conflict between good and evil, ending with her loss of innocence at the hands of an evil stranger.

Exploring Mother/Daughter Conflict

This story is narrated by a third-person observer, and it opens by introducing Connie and the conflict within her family. At fifteen, Connie's appearance is important, as is her concern about how she appears to others: "She had a quick nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors or checking other people's faces to make sure her own was all right."⁶ Connie's mother is immediately critical and remains that way throughout the story. She challenges and demeans Connie with questions that prohibit any response: "Stop gawking at yourself, who are you? You think you're so pretty?"⁷ Although Connie does not answer her mother, these words provoke her to "look right through her mother, into a shadowy vision of herself as she was right at that moment."⁸

The mother/daughter conflict is, thus, introduced immediately. While Connie knows she does not want to grow up like her mother, the mother seemingly seeks to repress that part of Connie that reminds her of herself. Students will discuss the interaction between the two and relate this to a common experience mothers trying to prevent their children from making the same mistakes they once made.

Examining Conflict Between Sisters

The mother's words, "Why don't you keep your room clean like your sister? How've you got your hair fixed what the hell stinks? Hair spray? You don't see your sister using that junk,"⁹ introduce the sharp contrast between Connie and her sister, June. At twenty-four, June still lives at home, and she is described as "so plain and chunky and steady that Connie had to hear her praised all the time by her mother and her mother's sisters."¹⁰ June is the standard by which Connie is measured and the person to which she is endlessly compared. Students will discuss the tension inherent in the sisters' relationship, and use this as a basis for examining their relationships with their own siblings.

Discussing Alienation

The endless comparisons and the constant criticism illustrate the tension among the women in the family, while underscoring the lack of positive communication. Even the father participates by not participating. He

was “away at work most of the time and when he came home he wanted supper and he read the newspaper at supper and after supper he went to bed.”¹¹ There is literally no one in the family that Connie can rely on for support or for advice about teenage issues and decisions; she is virtually alone. This tension and the lack of communication and support ultimately make Connie vulnerable to the influences, good and evil, outside of her home.

Alienated by the criticism and lack of communication, Connie is virtually a stranger within her family. As many teenagers do, Connie behaves differently when she is with friends than the way she behaves at home. The narrator states that Connie has two separate identities—the one at home, where she is picked on and alienated, and another with her friends: “Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home...”¹² At home Connie is the defiant child, for whom sex is not an option; away from home she is a young woman, exuding sensuality and desire.

In a class discussion, students will relate the two sides of Connie to their own experiences, exploring how they are perceived by and behave when they are with their families and how they are perceived by and behave with their friends. Does their behavior in these situations change? How so? If so, does their behavior define who they are? Why or why not?

Identifying Loss of Innocence

Against this backdrop, Connie has a chance encounter with a stranger at the local drive-in restaurant, where teenage girls and boys gather to flirt and spend time making out in cars. On the way out of the restaurant, she happens to glance at a boy in the parking lot. The description of the event foreshadows danger lurking beneath the surface, ultimately culminating in Connie’s loss of innocence at the hands of this stranger. As this boy stares at Connie, his lips widen into a “grin,” and he wags a finger, laughs, and says, “Gonna get you, baby.”¹³ The stranger finally does get Connie during a second encounter, when she is alone at home. At first, Connie is still innocent enough to participate in what seems to her, at least on the surface, a relatively harmless game; they begin a conversation. But as the conversation progresses, so does Connie’s realization that this is no game; she is in great danger. The tension and realization of danger mounts; this intruder is evil and Connie’s innocence is ultimately shattered, as the story builds to a terrifying climax.

As a prelude to the culminating essay assignment, students will watch *Smooth Talk*, a film based on the story. They will discuss how the characters and the tension are developed in each and analyze similarities and differences; after this discussion they will write a review of the film. Next, each student will design a quilt square depicting aspects of Connie’s character that are presented in the text. Finally, they will write a five-paragraph essay discussing Connie’s alienation and conflict within the family; the conflict inherent in her growing sense of becoming a woman played out in the two sides of her personality; and finally, the terror of her loss of innocence at the hands of an evil intruder in her life.

Leaving One’s Homeland for a New Life in “Picture Bride,” by Yoshiko Uchida

From “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” , we will begin with an excerpt from *Picture Bride*, a novel about a Japanese daughter who breaks away from her family and traditional values. This daughter’s passage from childhood to adulthood involves leaving her native land. This story will expose students to

Japanese culture and traditions, including the custom of arranged marriages. Further, students will examine the roles of daughters and women in Japanese culture, as depicted in the first chapter of the novel.

Students will read background information about mail order brides to gain a historical perspective on the subject. This information will be taken from a teacher resource kit, "The Shadow of Hate: A History of Intolerance in America," developed by the Southern Poverty Law Center. This resource kit includes a magazine, "Us and Them," which provides an article about mail order brides and the prison camps that Japanese Americans were subjected to during and after WWII.

Picture Bride, by Yoshiko Uchida, opens with Hana Omiya standing at the rail of a ship, taking her away from her native country, Japan, to America, where she will marry a man she has never met. The turbulence in the opening scene bespeaks Hana's uncertainty about her decision to leave her home and the difficulty in leaving her childhood behind: "Hana Omiya stood at the railing of the small ship that shuddered toward America in a turbulent November sea....Her body seemed leaden and lifeless, as though it were simply the vehicle transporting her soul to a strange new life, and she longed with childlike intensity to be home again in Oka Village."¹⁴

Hana and Her Sisters: Tradition vs. Modern Ideas

The conflict between Japanese tradition and modern ideas is developed through the depiction of Hana and her sisters. Hana is the youngest of four sisters; at twenty-one she is the only one who is yet unmarried. At the age of twenty-one, the matter of "finding a proper husband for her had taken on an urgency that produced an embarrassing secretive air over the entire matter."¹⁵ Students will discuss the differences between current marriage customs in their own cultures and the custom of arranged marriages in Japanese culture. They will discuss the reasons people marry and have married and explore the options of marrying or not that women have today. Is there stigma attached today to unmarried women? What pressures do women face in our society to marry?

Certainly the pressure for Hana to follow tradition and marry is great; the options open to women are few. We learn that her mother objected to Hana's desire to go to Tokyo to seek employment as a teacher, and so Hana finds for herself another option. Hana's other option comes by way of a conversation she overhears between her mother and an uncle discussing a Japanese merchant in America, who needs a wife. Overhearing the conversation, and having heard about "picture brides who went (to America) with nothing more than an exchange of photographs to bind them to a strange man,"¹⁶ a seed of possibility is planted in Hana's mind. She might not realize her dream of traveling to Tokyo and teaching, but she would be able to live a completely different life in a new and exciting land.

Although Hana's mother objects to the idea of Hana going to America to marry, the uncle and the men in the family persuade her otherwise, and preparations begin, exemplifying the patriarchal tradition in Japanese society. Once an agreement to the marriage is almost settled, the future husband begins writing letters to Hana. None of the letters reveal anything personal about him; there is no intimacy in them. According to Japanese tradition it would be improper for a man to "bare his intimate thoughts" and Hana accepts that; still she "read and re-read Taro's letter, trying to find the real man somewhere in the sparse unbending prose."¹⁷

While Hana seeks to find the "real man" in her letters and in the snapshot she has of him, her sisters and their husbands are eager to see her go. Hana thinks to herself that her sister's husband will be "pleased to be rid of her...the spirited younger sister who stirred up his placid life with what he considered radical ideas about life and the role of women."¹⁸ Students will use this statement and find evidence from the story to discuss and

analyze the differences between Hana and her sisters, using graphic organizers. An interesting topic for discussion might evolve from asking students whether they think either of Hana's sisters could be jealous of Hana's opportunity, and requiring them to support their opinions with information from the text.

Predicting Hana's Future

Finally, through sea-sickness and homesickness, Hana reaches America, and nothing about the event meets her expectations. She is sent to an immigration building on Angel Island, where she is examined for diseases: "It was bewildering, degrading beginning, and Hana was sick with anxiety, wondering if she would ever be released."¹⁹ When she finally is released and meets Taro Takeda, he does not even resemble the man in the snapshot she had been given. It seems that Hana's dreams of a better life are dashed by the reality she faces.

In the chapter's closing paragraph, Hana emotionally makes the break with the home she has left and there is optimism in her words, "I am in America now."²⁰ But the Japanese culture she has left behind, is there too; according to custom she covers her mouth while she laughs, and she does not dare sit too close to Taro Takeda. Hana has begun her journey into her future, while retaining what she needs from her past.

As a final writing activity for this story, students will write an essay predicting what Hana's life will be like in America. They will ponder such questions as, "Did she or did she not make the right decision to marry Taro? Was her decision to come to America one that she will regret? Or, will she be happy with her decision?" They will be required to cite evidence from the story to support their predictions.

A Life-Changing Event in Nicholasa Mohr's "An Awakening...Summer, 1956"

I will introduce this story with a pre-reading activity, to which students will respond in writing and then share responses with the class: First, they will answer the question, "What are some qualities or characteristics about yourself are you proud of?" Then they will write about an experience when someone judged them unfairly, strictly on the basis of race. Students will have the option of sharing or not sharing their experiences with the class.

In Nicholasa Mohr's "An Awakening...Summer, 1956," the central character is a young Puerto Rican woman who has chosen to leave her homeland, where for over than ten years she had worked at a church school. This young woman makes her choice, seeking a new life. To start her new life with a support system, she has been invited to spend the summer in Texas with a good friend, Ann, and her family. When she arrives at the bus station earlier than anticipated and when she cannot reach Ann, the young woman must wait several hours to be picked up.

Despite Ann's letter with the warning, "Now, please wait at the bus depot, don't wander off,"²¹ the young woman walks down the street to a convenience store/cafe to buy a cold drink and rest. She had not noticed the sign next to the door, "No Coloreds, No Mexicans, No Dogs Will Be Served on This Premises."²² Her encounter with the proprietor forces her to confront the racism that she had never anticipated. Rather than backing down and going away, she forces the issue and stands up for herself. In her defiance, the young woman refuses to submit to racism and fully affirms her own self-worth and power. This can be the topic for a stimulating discussion, asking students to share an experience when they stood up for their or for someone else's rights.

Later, we learn that, after working in the community with her friend, the community embraces her. But this initial experience with racism, and her ability to stand up for herself, marks a life-changing event. The young woman realizes that her future must involve working with those involved in the struggle for civil rights and fighting oppression. It also affirms her self-identity, as illustrated in the statement, “Consciously for the first time in her life, the young woman was proud of all she was, her skin, her hair and the fact that she was a woman.”²³

Making Connections

This story illustrates the extent to which one event can change a person’s life and it provides opportunities to discuss issues about human rights and problems that exist today, even as we approach a new millennium. Students will be encouraged to envision their roles in making society better, after discussing several questions, including:

What values are necessary to make our society one where all people are treated with dignity and respect?

What are some ways that an individual can contribute to making life better for all people?

What are some of the obstacles? What are some of the rewards?

After participating in this discussion, students will complete an informal writing assignment in which they imagine themselves making a contribution to society by working to solve a problem that exists today. They will identify first the problem and explain why they consider it important. Then they will explain what role they might take in finding a solution. Finally, they will explain some of the obstacles they might face and the rewards they might gain from the experience.

Another story by Nicholasa Mohr, “The Wrong Lunch Line,” also explores issues of racism and exclusion. This story could be used as a supplemental reading. In addition, the poem, “Child of the Americas,” by Aurora Levins Morales, could be used to extend discussion about pride in one’s heritage, self-determination, and the issue of color.

Conclusion

Thus, these stories serve as the foundation for the curriculum unit, *Daughters Come of Age in Women’s Fiction*. They are multi-cultural and offer many opportunities for students to explore the universal experience of coming of age and make connections between the literature and their own lives. The quilt project, film, and oral presentations are vehicles with which to further engage students using several modalities. I anticipate spending an average of two weeks on each story, thus using a full marking period to teach the unit.

Lesson Plan I: The Story Quilt

Rationale

The story quilt project will be used to both introduce the unit and offer the opportunity for students to demonstrate learning using art. Our students respond positively to hands-on art projects, where they can express themselves creatively.

Objectives

Students will design five quilt squares during the unit. The first square will depict their past, present, and future aspirations. They will design four other squares, each of which will depict one character from each of the stories in the unit.

Students will make two oral presentations: one telling their own story, depicted on their quilt square. Then they will choose one square they have designed for a character from a story and explain how it represents that character.

The quilt, which will be a collective work in progress, will be displayed throughout the unit and will be completed at the end of the unit.

Note: The quilt may be made from construction paper or by gluing fabrics to paper. You will need sufficient art supplies for each student in the class.

Activity 1

Introduce the film, *How to Make an American Quilt*, to provide an engaging context from which they will become part of the quilting tradition. You may want to discuss the importance of quilting as an art form and vehicle for preserving family history. As examples of the art and for inspiration, you may introduce books featuring story quilts. One such book, "Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts," is an excellent collection that will provide a context within which students may connect their work on the class quilt with this important art form and tradition. At this point, students will then design a quilt square that depicts their past, present, and future aspirations. When they are finished, each student will explain this or her square to the class, thus beginning the unit by telling his or her own story.

Activities 2-5

Students will design a quilt square representing one character from each story they read during the unit. Using evidence from the text, they will decide what aspects of the individual's character and/or events the character they wish to portray. At the conclusion of the unit, students will choose one of the quilt squares they have made and then explain to the class what the square represents.

Overview for Lesson Plans II and III: Teaching The Writing Process

Rationale

These lesson plans use a sequential writing process to write a five-paragraph essay discussing the elements of conflict, character development, and universal theme of the story “Everyday Use,” by Alice Walker. As part of the language arts requirement for the State CAPT examination, students are asked to write a definition of good literature and then discuss how the piece they read meets or does not meet their definition. I have found providing a basic definition which states three elements that the story should have conflict, character development, and a universal theme or lesson provides students with a structured model with which they can frame their response. This model and classroom practice makes my students more confident in their ability to respond to the CAPT. The writing process includes pre-writing and organizing the information they will use in the essay, using graphic organizers. The second stage is the revision process, during which I schedule writing conferences with each student. After the conferences, students are ready to produce the final draft of the essay. Students must hand in all graphic organizers and the rough draft, along with the final essay, to receive full credit for the assignment. This process provides a structured model that students are comfortable using to write the essay.

Objectives

Students will review and use a structured format to write a five-paragraph essay explaining how Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” exemplifies good literature.

Students will complete a graphic organizer for each element in an agreed upon basic definition for good literature conflict, character development, and universal theme or lesson.

Students will write a first draft of the essay and then participate in a writing conference to identify revisions they will make. Students will revise the essay.

Students will produce a final draft of the essay on computers.

Lesson Plan II: Introduction and Prewriting Activities

Begin instruction with a whole group discussion and note taking activity to review the following format for a five-paragraph essay: Introductory paragraph, with a thesis statement and three controlling ideas; the body, consisting of three paragraphs, each of which begin with a controlling idea from the introduction; the concluding paragraph, summarizing the main ideas.

Then proceed to the next stage, guiding a student-centered discussion to model and practice writing the introductory paragraph.

I remind students that a thesis statement and three controlling ideas will frame the introductory paragraph. Then I model writing the introduction, using their ideas from the discussion. First I ask students to suggest possible thesis statements that could be used for this essay. Students choose the thesis statement they will use for their essay. Next, I ask them to suggest three controlling ideas that could be used to direct the three paragraphs in the body of the essay. A finished model for this assignment might look like this:

In order for a short story or piece of literature to be considered good literature it must have several elements. First, it must have a conflict that is resolved in some way. Next, there should be character development, where at least one character changes in a significant way. Finally, the story should have a universal theme that applies to people in general. Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" has all of these elements.

Activities 2/3/4: Using Graphic Organizers to Gather Information

A whole group discussion will introduce each of these activities, as students will begin the pre-writing process to complete a graphic organizer for each aspect of the story they will discuss in the essay. The graphic organizer is a chart with two sections; in the left section, students summarize each element of the story in their own words. As students participate in the discussion, their ideas are recorded on overheads, while they use the graphic organizer to take notes. Then, students work either independently or in small groups to find quotes from the text to substantiate these ideas. The quotes and page numbers are recorded on the right section of the graphic organizer. Copies of the graphic organizers follow this plan..

Finally, students will use the information on these organizers to write a first draft of the essay.

Graphic Organizer # 1: Conflict

We have agreed that Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" has a conflict a problem that gets resolved in some way by the end of the story. On the left side of this chart, identify the conflict or conflicts in your own words. Then, in the right section, find quotes from the text which will support your ideas.

What is or are the conflicts in this story?

Prove it! Support your ideas with quotes. Remember page numbers!

Graphic Organizer # 2: Character Development

We have agreed that Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" has character development. We will use this organizer to chart how one character develops and changes during the story. On the left side, state in your own words what the character was like at the beginning of the story and write down the ways in which she changes during the story. Later, in the left side, you will find quotes from the text to support your ideas. Don't forget to use page numbers.

Who is the character? How does she change? Use the prompts to show the change.

First:

Next:

Finally:

Prove it! Support your ideas with quotes. Remember page numbers!

First:

Next:

Finally:

@2H(after1H):Graphic Organizer # 3: Universal Theme We have agreed that Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" has a theme that speaks to the universal experience of affirming one's worth and values. We will use this organizer to gather the information we need. First, in your own words tell how Maggie's worth is validated and how this affirms her place in the family. Write this in the left section of the chart. Then find the quotes you will need and write them in the right section. Don't forget to include page numbers.

How is Maggie's place in the family affirmed? Why is this important?

Prove it! Support your ideas with quotes. Remember the page numbers!

@1H:Lesson Plan III: Conducting Writing Conferences As students complete their essays, I confer with each one to begin the revision process. The conference should be structured to make this activity student-centered, not just the teacher making corrections to the essay. I have a copy of the essay, while the student has the original to work on.

Always begin the conference by reinforcing the format for a five paragraph essay. First ask the student to identify the parts of the introduction to the essay by underlining the thesis statement and three controlling ideas. Next, then the student should underline the controlling idea in each paragraph of the body of the essay. Finally, the student should underline the main ideas summarized in the conclusion.

Next begin to discuss questions about the essay with the student, focusing on specific areas that

are problems for most students in the class. It is important to begin this stage of the conference by identifying the specific problems you will be looking for. These problems may include grammar using seen instead of saw, for example; punctuation and capitalization forgetting possessives or using apostrophes inappropriately; consistency of tense; and clarity of writing.

Then, guide the discussion by asking the student to look at certain sections of the essay about which there are questions. In response to these questions, allow the student to make decisions about his or her own corrections and revisions. The student should take notes on his or her essay during this part of the conference.

After the conference, students will make corrections and then type the final draft of the essay. Before they hand in the assignment, they must spellcheck and proofread the essay carefully to make final corrections. Always encourage students to proofread and double-check each other's essays before handing a final copy.

All of the materials used to prepare the essay class note, the graphic organizers, and first draft must be handed in with the final essay to receive full credit for the assignment.

Endnotes

1 Walker, 1140 2 Walker, 1140 3 Walker, 1144 4 Walker, 1145 5 Oates, 903 6 Oates, 903

7 Oates, 903

8 Oates, 903 9 Oates, 903 10 Oates, 903 11 Oates, 903 12 Oates, 904 13 Oates, 904 14 Uchida, 5 15 Uchida, 6 16 Uchida, 7 17 Uchida, 8 18 Uchida, 9 19 Uchida, 11 20 Uchida, 13 21 Mohr, 52 22 Mohr, 56 23 Mohr, 59

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that describes the life and family of an African American woman growing up and

seeking fulfillment as an adult..

Cameron, Dan. *Dancing at The Louvre; Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other*

Story Quilts. University of California Press, 1998. A beautiful collection of Faith

Ringgold's quilts, connecting fine art to the African American slave quilt tradition.

Carnes, Jim. "Home Was a Horse Stall." *US and THEM: A History of Intolerance in*

America. Montgomery: Southern Poverty Law Center, 1995. 92-101. This article

provides information about mail order brides and historical information about how first generation Japanese Americans were placed into internment camps in the wake of WWII.

Chopra, Joyce, Director. *Smooth Talk*. Nepenthe Productions, 1986. A winner of Sundance Film Festival awards, this is a film adaptation of Joyce Carol Oates's "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. "The Story of My Body." *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings - An Anthology*. Ed. Roberto Santiago. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995. 132-142. This story describes one young girl's experience coming from Puerto Rico to live in the United States and how she deals with issues like color, ethnicity, body size, and language differences.

Mohr, Nicholasa. "An Awakening... Summer 1956 ." *Multicultural Literature Collection: Latino Caribbean Literature*. New Jersey: Globe Fearon, 1994. 50-60. A compelling story about a life-changing event for a young Puerto Rican woman who comes to the United States to seek a new future.

Mohr, Nicholasa. "The Wrong Lunch Line." *Puerto Rican Writers at Home in the USA: An Anthology* . Seattle, Washington: Open Hand Publishing, Inc., 1991. 153-156. This story is about two young girls who are best friends. One is Puerto Rican and the other is Jewish. When the Puerto Rican girl tries to go with her friend into the lunch line that serves Kosher food, she confronts prejudice that she never expects.

Moorhouse, Jocelyn, Director. *How to Make an American Quilt*. Universal City Studios, 1995. A film about a young woman who is about to be married. As her mother, aunts, and their friend work on a wedding quilt for her, they tell their own stories about love and relationships.

Morales, Aurora Levins. "Child of the Americas." *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings - An Anthology*. Ed. Roberto Santiago. New York:

Ballantine Books, 1995. 79. This is a wonderful poem that speaks to the issues of identity, self-esteem, and cultural heritage.

Oates, Joyce Carol. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" *Fictions* .

2nd ed. Ed. Joseph F. Trimmer and C. Wade Jennings. Orlando: Harcourt Brace

Jovanovich, Inc., 1989. 902-915. This story describes a young teenage girl's alienation from her family and how it leads to her loss of innocence at the hands of an evil stranger.

Uchida, Yashiko. *Picture Bride and Related Readings*. Evanston: McDougal Littell

Inc., 1997. A novel that describes the life of a mail order bride who leaves her native Japan to begin a new life in America.

Walker, Alice. "Everyday Use." *Fictions*. 2nd ed. Ed. Joseph F. Trimmer and C.

Wade Jennings. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1989. 1139-1146. The story an African American family and the conflict between contemporary life and traditional values, as a sister visits home to stake her claim on the family quilts.

Student Reading List

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