



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1999 Volume I: Women's Voices in Fiction

Women Writers and the Contemporary Short Story

Guide for Curriculum Unit 99.01.11
by Douglas F. von Hollen

This unit offers teachers an approach to teaching the components of the short story that narrows the selections of material to literature which is both written by women authors and contemporary. There are numerous advantages to using this specific combination of material.

First, the short story is advantageous, because it is a form of literature by which our students are the least intimidated. It is not overwhelming in size, and it is often more easily understood than poetry.

The benefit to using contemporary literature is that it offers our students subject matter which is more closely related to their life experiences. With contemporary literature students are more likely to develop an interest in and not an aversion to literature.

Writing by women is important for two reasons. First, students need to be shown more examples of successful writing by women. The selections most anthologies offer do not reflect the fact that half of the world's population are women. Second, the writers themselves, and often their characters, are positive role models for the young women in our schools.

This unit contains numerous strategies to use. It offers suggestions on how to approach teaching the components of the short story such as plot, setting, and characters, and it offers approaches to ongoing assessment.

(Recommended for Language Arts and English, grades 6-10.)

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