

Anne Barnhart

NEH The Immigrant Experience in California through Literature and Theater

Lesson Application

Unit 1: Perspectives--Context

Established Goals & CCSS Standards for the Unit:

Students will **read a variety of texts and cite strong and thorough textual evidence** to support **analysis of what the texts say as well as inferences** drawn from the texts. Individually and in small groups, students will **determine the central idea and theme** of the texts, including **how it emerges and is shaped by details**. They will **write and orally present concise summaries of the texts**. In terms of author's craft, students **analyze characterization** (speaker/listener in poetry) and the complexity of character/speaker. **Understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meaning** are reviewed and scaffolded. In responses to literature, students will **introduce and develop a topic**, through both objective and subjective tones while attending the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

Key Ideas and Details

RL.9-10.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.9-10.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.9-10.3. Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Writing Standards

W.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Language Standards

L.9-10.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Essential Question

What forms an individual's perspective? What do we need/what do we need to do in order to evolve our perspectives about ourselves and/or the world? In what ways do stereotypes, prejudices & assumptions impact that transformation ?

NEH Immigration Institute-Inspired Lesson(s)

Before reading Sherman Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, we need to build some collective thinking around the larger context of the perspectives of native & colonizing peoples that grew from the immigration of Europeans in the formative years of what we now know as the United States of America. Focusing on primary sources between 1700-1775 intersected, this mini-unit is designed to access a variety of views and how those views have changed--but also what views have stayed the same. This unit is part a larger introduction to set the context for reading the novel and will come in between an introductory activity around absolute truth & what absolute "truths" we "know" about Native American Indians, and a follow-up Spokane Tribe/Alexie Background/ Stereotype-Assumptions- Prejudices jigsaw activity.

Note: Last year (my first time teaching the novel), I did not bring in the layer of native/migrant/ immigrant but I will incorporate both the frame and the techniques from the NEH Immigration Institute as demonstrated below.

RELATED UNIT CONCEPTS AND SKILLS

- WRITE informative/explanatory **texts** to convey complex **ideas**
- DEVELOP the **topic** through appropriate **support**
- CITE **evidence** to ANALYZE a text's explicit **content** and **implications**.
- ANALYZE nuances in the **meaning of words with similar denotations**.
- DETERMINE **meaning** of words and phrases including connotative and denotative meaning.
- ANALYZE **impact** of word choice.
- PROVIDE a **concluding statement**.
- PRESENT **information, findings** and **supporting evidence**.

General Outline:

I. *Journal Activity*

- A. **Entry:** Respond to the following quote from F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Crack-Up." Maybe you write about what you think he means, maybe about a moment you've known this to be true, maybe about what kind of future we might have if more people could have this kind of "intelligence," or maybe even what it takes to be able to function in this way:
"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function."
- B. **Share-Out:** a Phrase, a Line, or a Passage from response. Focus on what patterns we notice.

II. *Opposing Ideas Documentary Theatre Pairs*

- A. Using primary source material from National Humanities Center's "European Americans and Native Americans View Each Other, 1700-1775,"
<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/peoples/text3/indianscolonists.pdf>, students will be paired with contrasting views.
- B. Together the pairs will read the pieces alone and then aloud with the focus of contrasting views.

- C. In the spirit of a Ping Chong + Company Undesirable Elements interview-style approach, student pairs will further engage in both primary source “views”* by fill out the following questionnaire for each:

The goal in the following is to represent the source without changing each source’s words. Eventually you will be able to make artistic choices of which words to leave in and which to leave out, which to repeat and which stand on their own, etc. But for now, just use the text to answer the questions verbatim.

| View #1: _____ | View #: _____ |
|--|--|
| <p>Introduction of Name/Date/Location What is your primary source’s name?</p> <p>What year & what geographical area did he “view this from”?</p> <p>What Identity Is Portrayed? What is his race/ethnic background?</p> <p>What is his occupation--please transfer the full description which can be found in smaller, italicized font.</p> <p>Stories of the Other Are there any unique stories your source recounts?</p> <p>What Do You Think of When... How does he characterize the “other”--identify key phrases and lines that reflect the tone & attitude of your source.</p> | <p>Introduction of Name/Date/Location What is your primary source’s name?</p> <p>What year & what geographical area did he “view this from”?</p> <p>What Identity Is Portrayed? What is his race/ethnic background?</p> <p>What is his occupation--please transfer the full description which can be found in smaller, italicized font.</p> <p>Stories of the Other Are there any unique stories your source recounts?</p> <p>What Do You Think of When... How does he characterize the “other”--identify key phrases and lines that reflect the tone & attitude of your source.</p> |

***Please note all views in the source are males--this is not exclude the female voice. I will continue to seek**

- D. Students will watch a clip from a Ping Chong + Co. production to be able to glean stylistic techniques. We will have a small-group-then-large-group discussion around impact.
- E. Pairs will then create a script to represent their “opposing ideas” into a mini-production. They will focus on representing each view separately but also make purposeful decisions for impact of who is speaking when, how, and why.
- F. Students will workshop with me & rehearse.
- G. The class will produce a contiguous production of the pieces.
- H. As audience members they will focus on one key observation, one key interpretation, and one key implication in terms of our focus on perspectives and absolute truth.

- I. We will have a stage-balcony debrief session.

III. *Modern Opposing Views*

- A. Following this exercise, we will break into groups to look at the modern “views” by accessing a study by Public Agenda, “a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that helps diverse leaders and citizens navigate divisive, complex issues and work together to find solutions.” Access the original source here:
<http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education2/walkingamile.pdf>
- B. In groups of four-five, they will choose one “opposing ideas” concept from the study and create a piece of Image Theatre to represent the power & perspectives inherent in the concept & look to see what it takes to equalize power narratives & how that relates to stereotypes/assumptions/prejudices.

Inspired by our work at El Teatro Campesino with Luis and Kinan Valdez, we will use a Theatre of the Oppressed technique to explore issues of oppression. The following is a description from Jeroen Robbe’s “Image Theatre: A Brief Exploration of a Theatre of the Oppressed Technique.” http://skillsharing.net/pdfs/theatre_of_opressed_guide.pdf

The Image of Transition Goal: exploration of an actual situation of oppression, discussing alternatives, exploring feasible strategies for change

In this exercise we start from an actual situation of oppression (real image), we discuss how the (ideal image) and finally we try to move from the real image to the ideal image (transition). First of all, like in many other image theatre exercises, you will need a story or topic to start from.

One person starts with creating the real image, representing the situation of oppression. He/she can take as much participants as necessary. Once the sculpting is finished, the facilitator will check if everyone agrees this is a good representation of the present oppression. If not other participants can suggest modifications. Verbal discussion should be restricted to a minimum, as in Image Theatre we use our bodies to discuss.

Once there is a consensus on the real image, the facilitator will continue by asking how the ideal image would look like. It is important to notice that in the ideal image all characters should remain present. It is too easy to just take away the antagonist from a scene. So the challenge is to have all characters (protagonist, antagonist, tritagonist) in an image where we still got rid of all oppression.

I always like to dynamize the real image before working on the ideal image. It helps participants to identify with their character and to find the necessary motivation to either break or maintain oppression and thus to have a useful exercise. One of the dynamization I like to do here is called 'interior monologue'. I tap on the shoulders of a

participant who then shares his/her thoughts from character. I give all characters the chance to share their interior monologue, as long or short as necessary.

Now the real and the ideal image are set, you invite everyone to return to the real image. In the next step the group will try to move from the real to the ideal image, step by step. I do this by clapping in my hands. Every time I clap everyone in the image can move one step.

In this one movement the protagonist (or 'oppressed') will try to move towards the ideal image (and thus liberation from the actual oppression), whereas the antagonist will try to maintain the situation of oppression. Tritagonists could have different options, depending on their orientation. Between some steps you can pause and invite the participants to evaluate where everyone is at that point and if their strategy is working.

The end of this exercise is unpredictable. Often a solution is found rather easily and we end up quite quickly with the ideal image. Therefore it is always important to question the process critically as a joker, without make any judgments yourself. The judgment is always up to the group! What has happened? What strategies did we see? Did they work? If so, was the change realistic?

Sometimes a group doesn't manage to get even close to the ideal image. Don't let them struggle too long to avoid a feeling of disempowerment, but rather go again to processing. Analyse what happened. What was the strategy? How did the oppressor(s) react? What else could be tried?

Both when a successful strategy is ultimately perceived unrealistic by the group or when the attempted strategy failed, it is useful to repeat the exercise and give them another try.

Summary: Why use Image Theatre?

- To explore oppression and injustice
- To have a non-verbal discussion
- To generate embodied knowledge
- To stimulate creativity and to look at topics from a different angle
- To explore alternatives

And...

- As a starting point to move from Image Theatre to Forum Theatre

IV. Bridge Activity

- A. Watch Bill Moyers Interview with Sherman Alexie up through 6 min 32 sec --“I try to be in that..and I fail often, but I try” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_F_jl3BE-k) in order to bridge from more global look into more “local” work with Alexie & the Spokane Tribe.

|