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ST. Louis University High School

NEH/GMU project

7/23/05

Course: Sophomore English

Time Frame: 5 to 6 class days, 45 minute periods

Primary Goal:

The primary goal of this unit is to teach students the complexity and significance of language, its uses and abuses, our reactions to it, and the socioeconomic pressures that influence it.

Secondary Goal:

The goal of this unit is to expose students to various characteristics of language and literature in the hope that such exposure will ultimately make them more understanding of and receptive to diverse cultures and will affect the way they use the privilege that they have now or will have in the future.

Background Information:

The students in this classroom will be college bound. They will have been accepted to the school through an admissions process that includes test scores, recommendations, and interviews. All will be male. A significant majority will be white, Catholic, and from Catholic grade schools.

Course Unit Objectives:

- The student will be able to recognize the role of language in shaping and defining reality.
- The student will be able to apply that recognition to what he hears/reads, and in what he says/writes, seeking in both, honesty.
- The student will be able to use that recognition as a tool to decipher (decode) others as well as himself.
- The student will learn to incorporate quoted material into the text of his essay.
- His comprehension and appreciation of literature will increase as he understands the power and the nuance of language.

LESSON PLAN

Day #1

By this time the students will have studied the characteristics of clichés, euphemisms, and connotation. They will come to class with examples from newspapers or any print media in which the use of one or more words has affected either positively or negatively what the writer gains by his word choice. (Usually the students bring examples from want ads or real estate or other advertisements.) If no one brings in up political language, I will introduce it with a reference to something like the choice of what a war is called, or why the Patriot Act isn't the Terrorist Act. We then talk about the moral implication ranging from the selling of a "vintage classic" to the military using terms such as "non-vital personnel."

I would then introduce passages from David Walker and Patrick Henry without identifying the authors.

Homework assignment:

worksheet with questions geared to force them to look closely at the two works; i.e. What can we assume about the two authors? What is the most likely time period for each? What is the probable reaction to these works? and other similar questions.

Day #2

Class begins with discussion of worksheets, what conclusions they have drawn, what confused them, what comments, observations, and questions they have.

(15-20 minutes).

Reveal the authorship of each; hand out more complete excerpts of each.

Do a close reading of the more complete handout.

Ask key question: have you been misled?

Hand out excerpts of Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

Assign that reading for day #3

Day #3

Discuss the reading.

Read aloud Paul Laurence Dunbar "Ante-Bellum Sermon."

Homework assignment:

worksheet

LIST or something similar

Day #4

Continue line by line reading.

Day #5

Continue poem discussion with added emphasis on big view rather than detail (line by line).

Homework assignment:

Read Paul Laurence Dunbar's "We wear the Mask"

Day #6

line by line analysis of "We Wear the Mask."

Homework assignment:

worksheet in preparation for an analytical essay compare the poems, stylistically, linguistically, thematically.

How does the first poem demonstrate the mask?

Why does Dunbar do that?

Day #7

Listen to responses.

Hand out Dunbar's "The Poet."

Evaluate the three poems in terms of language, reality, and power.

Assign rough draft for following day.

Day #8

Instructions and examples of how to incorporate quoted material in an essay. In class writing period.

The time frame is dependent upon how well the students pick up the objectives. Follow up with other poetry that comments on the ills of society: Anne Sexton's "Cinderella" and D.H. Lawrence's "Snake."

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