



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2008 Volume II: American Voices: Listening to Fiction, Poetry, and Prose

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## Getting Into Character: Finding Voice in Realistic Fiction

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.02.07, published September 2008

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A good writer can write from the voice of someone unlike himself. This is what professional authors do all the time, they take a fictional character and give him voice and thought and sell it to the reader as something believable. Middle school students can do this very task, if given the right instruction and right models. This unit is designed to exemplify uses of voice in young adult contemporary realistic fiction. Writing a character in realistic fiction requires that the author use a style that is indicative of human nature. The unit is designed for an eighth grade literacy classroom that is implementing the readers/writers workshop. The unit will introduce and discuss various use of voice in young adult novels, whereby students will be able to apply that knowledge to their own writing strategies and write from different voices/different character voices. The goal is for these middle school students to use voice as a means of writing fiction through the perspective of characters unlike themselves and create an original short story in the genre of realistic fiction. Writing from this outside voice allows students to strengthen themselves as writers.

A variety of contemporary realistic fiction novels will be used as guides. The following books are used as guides for this unit: *Becoming Naomi Leon* by Pam Munoz Ryan, *Heat* by Mike Lupica, *Stuck in Neutral* by Terry Trueman, *The Taking of Room 114: A Hostage Drama in Poems* by Mel Glenn, *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers, *Don't Call Me Ishmael* by Michael Bauer, *Notes From the Midnight Driver* by Jordan Sonnenblick, and *I'd Tell You I Love You But Then I'd Have to Kill You* by Ally Carter.

(Developed for Language Arts and Literacy, grade 8; recommended for Language Arts, grades 7-8)

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