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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2011 Volume I: The Art of Reading People: Character, Expression, Interpretation

Reading Between the Lines: The Secret Lives of Characters

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.01.09, published September 2011

by Nancy Ventresca

This unit was created for use with fifth-grade Reading Enrichment Students. These are students who are in the top 10 per cent of the grade level, based on a standardized reading test. My purpose for writing the unit was to encourage these students to be consistently critical in their reading, particularly in the area of character analysis. I chose a variety of literature pieces, including a short novel, a short story, video and a poem. The activities are individual and collaborative in nature, with a variety of choices for student products. Technology has also been incorporated for those who have access to it. The culminating activity requires students to synthesize all they have learned about character analysis and reading body language in a written piece.

Although I developed this unit with a particular group of students in mind, it can easily be adapted to other grade levels and readings. Appendices include suggestions for further research and alternative sources for literature.

(Developed for ELA Enrichment, grade 5; recommended for English/Language Arts, grade 5 Enrichment and grades 6-7)

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