



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Using the Sonnet and Other Poems to Unlock the Speaker's Voice

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by Denise D. Hall

How can teachers assist middle-school students with understanding the speaker's voice in poetry? Strategies for understanding voice in poetry will be an integral part of this unit. The speaker's voice in poetry must be understood if the poem is to be understood. For example, when the student reads a poem, he or she should not assume that the writer of the poetry is also the speaker. In many poems, the speaker is someone else. The teacher can assist students with this task by providing rich poetry to students and allowing the students to unravel the poems to identify the speaker. Why is this so important? When students develop a voice in writing, that speaker's voice transcends their writing and also demonstrates their unique understanding of the topic. Middle school students often read a poem and believe that the person writing the poem is also the speaker; however, the author often invents a voice to speak through. Through the use and implementation of this unit students will be introduced, exposed to, and taught how to develop voice in writing.

(Developed for English/Language Arts, grade 8; recommended for English/Language Arts, grades 6-10)

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