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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2012 Volume II: Storytelling: Fictional Narratives, Imaginary People, and the Reader's Real Life

Reading, Writing, and Recidivism: Healing to Learn through Memoir and Vignette for Adjudicated and/or Traumatized Youth

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I work with youth in the juvenile justice system. This unit is intended to address the effects on high school aged students of the tightly braided cause-and-effect relationships among traumatic experience, academic deficiency, and recidivism in the classroom. It should be noted that many contemporary high schools, especially in high-poverty or inner city situations, encounter students similar to mine, who are already involved in the juvenile justice system. All or parts of this unit would be appropriate for any students facing these realities.

Research and personal experience with at-risk students helped to shape this unit, which pairs therapeutic writing practices with more traditional writing and literacy exercises to explore the genre of vignette. The summative product/outcome will be, for each student, a bound copy of his/her vignettes (five-ten) that reflect growth in all stages of the writing process, from brainstorming to final editing, as well as an understanding and appreciation of the genres of vignette and memoir. They will have read and studied multiple examples of vignettes and memoir and learned from the process of emulation and analysis, hereby increasing skills in reading and writing and addressing the risk of recidivism through academic and literacy empowerment.

(Developed for English/Language Arts, grades 9-11; recommended for English/Language Arts and High Risk Youth, grades 9-11)

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