



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2013 Volume II: Interpreting Texts, Making Meaning: Starting Small

Epigraph-allacy: Using Epigraphs to Elicit Student Interpretations

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The skill of interpretation requires students to begin with the small details of a text, such as background information and vocabulary. Once the details are understood, students proceed to make meaning from those details. And in the course of making meaning, interpretation requires students to address varying perspectives in order to create their own interpretative conclusions.

This curriculum unit is designed to give students a road map or skill set to understanding texts that offer multiple or even questionable perspectives. This unit provides teachers with ideas for developing the skill of interpretation with particular attention to epigraphs from Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*. Through the epigraphs, students will dissect and analyze the small details in order to gauge the reliability of the author-narrator. The goal of this unit is for students to readily practice the skill of interpretation. In doing so, students will learn that a single perspective is not always adequate for arriving at conclusions.

(Developed for Expository Reading and Writing Course [ERWC], grade 12; recommended for ERWC/English [High School], grade 12)

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