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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2016 Volume III: "Over the Rainbow": Fantasy Lands, Dream Worlds, and Magic Kingdoms

Magical Multi-Culti Yellow Brick Road Realism: Using Imagination to Find Reality

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My alternative high school students' lives are so survival-oriented and rooted in immediacy and basic needs that the imaginative realms seem lost to them. This unit includes research into this problem and some practices specific to at-risk students that address it. We will read works that will de-familiarize students, creating a space where stories and writing are fresh and approachable. The texts are L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Gabriel García Márquez's short story *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, Octavia Butler's short story *Bloodchild*, and *The Subtlety or the Marvelous Sugar Baby*, an art installation piece by Kara Walker. Butler's and Walker's works will be more appropriate for older or mature high school students, but for younger students they could be substituted. My students tend to be struggling readers, so work throughout the unit will include appropriate reading strategies with an emphasis on visualizing the fiction texts. Other activities will encourage creative thinking about text. The two final products are a creative writing piece, which asks students to use many of the literacy skills acquired in the unit, and an art installation piece.

(Developed for English II, grade 10, English III, grade 11, and English IV, grade 12; recommended for Art, grades 11-12)

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