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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2017 Volume II: Literature, Life-Writing, and Identity

Identity in Transition: Narrative Repair for Changing Times

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Sudden illness, death, family changes, and other tragedies can shatter safe routines and everyday comfort at any age. For middle grade students, changing bodies and the nerve-wracking transfer to middle or high school adds to the inevitability of transition. Many students feel *subjected* to change. An apartment eviction can mean a sudden school switch or double-bunking with relatives across town. In precarious moments of transition, identities are especially at risk and in desperate need of attention. In order to support students during unwanted change, this unit combines four research-based identity strategies with reading and writing goals. Using a bibliotherapeutic approach, students analyze how characters in novels and poems face change. Then, students participate in writing projects designed around acts of self-affirmation, identity broadening, and positive future-looking stories. The research, activities, and strategies in this unit offer ways to shore up student identity while meeting important academic goals. Although designed for middle grade students, the unit can be adapted for other grades by switching texts.

(Developed for Language Arts/Writing, grade 5; recommended for Language Arts, Writing, and Reading, grades 4-6)

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