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Raising Social Consciousness

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Overview

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.¹

Robert Kennedy best articulated the concept of social action in the preceding quote. The idea that every human being has the opportunity to effect change in the world through positive social action is exciting and empowering. However, one must first be aware of injustice and develop a social consciousness before one can take action.

As a teacher, I have an old fashioned, ethical view that it is not merely my job to educate my students in the content area but also to provide a measure of character education. I firmly believe that I can impart outstanding and engaging classroom instruction while simultaneously raising the social consciousness of my students.

Through this unit, my tenth grade English Language Arts students will acquire an appreciation for other cultures and respect the differences inherent in them. Building understanding, making connections, and developing empathy among diverse populations of students will enhance their ability to interact in a successful manner with our global community. This unit will be especially effective for high school students who have little experience of global cultures and lack the resources or incentive to explore those cultures on their own. The unit is intended for a tenth grade English Language Arts classroom but could easily be used by a social studies teacher to teach culture or geography.

Unit Synopsis

This unit is a nine-week comprehensive non-fiction unit that correlates films about social issues with nonfiction texts. I will present social pressures and problems that are common to families in four nations. The nonfiction texts will inform students as well as provide an opportunity for explicit reading instruction. I will then use fictional films to bring the non-fiction to life. My approach to this unit will allow my students to create a system for approaching and appreciating other cultures. Students will learn that culture is explicitly expressed by

things like food, language and clothing and implicitly expressed through communication style, beliefs, attitudes, values and perceptions.

I chose to focus on issues related to family because my students will readily identify with the basic family structure and the issues common to it. Through a better understanding of a family in a foreign nation, students will become familiar with a social issue. The complexity of approaching social issues in an alien culture is made less daunting to students when they approach it from the familiar ground of the family. Utilizing the theme of issues related to the family will allow students to make comparisons to the structures and functions with which they are familiar. Focusing on South Africa, Ireland, Afghanistan and China will provide a sampling of highly different cultures and issues related to the family that are particular to each.

From its inception, film has captivated audiences and continues to be a significant part of our cultural life. Modern youth are highly visually oriented and respond to the use of technology with far greater receptiveness than any prior generation.² Using the power of cinema to promote awareness of social issues will help to develop a global social consciousness in my students. Students will reinforce reading strategies as well as begin to develop an understanding of film and the power it has to create a global social consciousness.

Students will become more skilled at reading non-fiction and raise their appreciation for the world in which they live and operate. By reading a variety of nonfiction resources in conjunction with viewing films from different countries, students will be engaged and develop deeper understandings of the issues. I will explicitly teach close reading skills and strategies using a wide range of nonfiction texts. Nonfiction is the broadest literary genre including memoirs, diaries, biographies, travelogues, news articles, speeches, and informational texts. Each of the texts used in the unit was selected to serve as a representative sample of the types of nonfiction literature adults should be familiar with and which will inform them as concerned global citizens in the future. Using these texts to explore strategies like determining the author's purpose, visualizing, making connections, and responding to the text will create active and informed readers. I will explicitly teach reading and comprehension strategies to increase student reading ability. Reading instruction about something that actually matters in the "real world" will provide students with incentive to succeed. Once they succeed at reading, the intrinsic rewards of being a good reader will enrich their perspective for the rest of their lives.

Rationale

This unit is designed for 10th grade Language Arts classes in the Duval County Public School system in Jacksonville, Florida. As an ESOL learning center in a working class neighborhood, Englewood High School is an important institution that integrates, celebrates, and discusses the cultural diversity that our student population represents. Despite the fact that at our high school represents over 48 nations, many of our economically deprived students lack any experience with cultures outside of America. In fact, some of my students have never left the city limits. These are the students whose ethnocentric worldview will be challenged and changed by this unit.

Social Consciousness

"Am I my brother's keeper?" After participating in this unit, my students will be better custodians of issues of public concern and they will foster their awareness of different cultures. My students will come to the

understanding that they are indeed responsible for their brother, if (at a minimum) that means having an awareness of and understanding our global society. Promoting understanding through knowledge will lead to empathy.

By introducing my students to global social issues that hinder the liberty of the people involved, I will engender an appreciation for the human beings who suffer as a result of these issues. I want my students to see each nation as a distinct entity in their mind and to appreciate the culture from which each individual derives. Looking at apartheid in South Africa is a superb introduction to the subject because it has so many similarities to the racial injustices perpetrated upon African Americans. Transitioning to Ireland maintains continuity with South Africa in that the Travellers are an oppressed group. Students must also scaffold their prior understanding of racism to include bias that does not relate solely to skin color. Afghanistan allows the issue of women's rights to come to the fore for classroom discussion. Lastly, the People's Republic of China's law enforcing only one child per couple expands the horizons of social issues to include human rights violations.

It is valid and pertinent to mention at this time that there is a very real concern that this unit could lead to exoticism or a negative bias about some cultures. If the material is not approached in a sensitive manner, students could arrive at the conclusion that these other places are "backwards" and actually reinforce their perceptions of American elitism in the global community. Employing a deft and sensitive hand will ensure that inappropriate or negative stereotypes are not perpetuated. It is both necessary and desirable that students listen to music, view art, explore the history, and otherwise establish positive connections with these nations. It is vital that students value these cultures and their place in the global village instead of perpetuating the "ugly American" stereotype through ignorance.

Objectives

As previously addressed, this unit will do more than teach academic skills. I seek to promote diversity awareness and tolerance while simultaneously fostering freedom of expression and compassion. Art, especially film, has the ability to achieve these goals. A cultural exchange occurs on a global level when film transforms the boundaries and limitations of a single person's perspective. Students will further their understanding and appreciation of the issues by viewing carefully selected foreign films. The film will bring the text alive and provide the students with a strong visual representation of the issue or event. Students will then be able to more readily create connections as well as gain a better understanding of different cultures.

Students will learn strategies to read decode and understand nonfiction texts on a regular basis. I will encourage them to develop a working vocabulary of filmmaking techniques and appreciate the lessons that films can teach us. I want my students to learn that reading nonfiction can be enjoyable and informative. There will be a focus on teaching students to become skilled at analyzing the literary elements and applying reading strategies in this genre. The literary elements are the constant situation that students must familiarize themselves with whereas the approach I employ for each nation will be the variable in seeking to ensure that they comprehend and can effectively utilize the elements in both literature and film.

By the end of this unit each student will develop a global social consciousness and recognize that problem solving is essential to the creative process. Students will learn to appreciate the role that art has in expanding

their horizons. I hope they will demonstrate an open-minded approach to diversity and different cultures.

Standards

This unit will demonstrate a number of the standards utilized within Duval County Public Schools. These standards are devised as a method to achieve gains in student learning by providing a set of expectations of what students should know and be able to do at various grade levels. All of the activities, films and readings will improve the learning of all students in a systematic manner. The use of standards ensures that both the content and instruction focus on differentiated instruction that does not ignore the lowest performing students.

As students progress through this intensive unit, they will read and comprehend a variety of texts, participate in group meetings, engage in critical discourse, respond orally and in writing both individually and in groups. These activities will develop student's active reading, critical thinking, listening and writing skills. There will be a distinct focus on the writing process. Clearly, this unit is an integrated curriculum that seeks to utilize a holistic approach to learning. Reading, evaluating and discussing nonfiction texts and viewing and analyzing films will enhance students' multicultural awareness.

Pedagogical Strategies

The unit will focus on four cultures: South African, Irish, Afghani and Chinese. Each culture will be taught from a cross curricular approach to learning. Interdisciplinary lessons reach a greater range of students and allow them to demonstrate mastery of some aspect of each lesson. Some lessons will include active projects that will engage kinesthetic learners. Other lessons will focus on listening activities for auditory, visual and existential learners. The development of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills will receive special attention. There will be several cooperative group assignments to encourage the concept of teamwork. The final demonstration of learning will require the student to teach a brief lesson about an American social concern using the skills they have developed throughout the unit.

The process for creating global social consciousness begins by introducing students to an issue related to the family unit, and then examining nonfiction and film that pertain to the same issue. I want students to view a film and learn to ask themselves questions like: What do I learn about this culture from this film? What techniques did the filmmaker use and how effective were they? What aspects of the film were important or interesting? How do I evaluate the director's choices? In order to analyze film the method employed for our purposes will involve looking at the film in six steps with several questions inherent in each category.³ These six steps encompass landscape, language and people, situations, values, traditions and narration.

First, landscape is an especially significant aspect in foreign films and suggested questions include: Why is it shown this way? What does it mean to people? What do things look like in other places? Is this a realistic depiction of this place? As we progress through our film, we will note the vast differences between the barren urban landscape of South Africa and the chaotic city in China. Students will question if Ireland really looks that lush and rural or if the idyllic scenery is demonstrative of a bias on the part of the filmmaker. Higher-level students may note the political and ideological significance of landscape in Ireland, a sort of nationalistic representation of Irish identity that celebrates pastoral beauty at the expense of urban malaise.

The second avenue to approach understanding a film is the language and people of film. Students should note how the people interact with the landscape and ask themselves what do the people look like? What kinds of people are shown? Is there one or more languages demonstrated here? There are multiple languages represented in each of the films and students will become more aware of the culture of different peoples as they recognize the different languages they speak. Students will note that Chinese people have a different appearance from most Americans, including dress and body posture; there are also differences among various Chinese visible in certain films. This can lead to a discussion of class in China.

The third category is situations, commonly called plot in literary terms. How do the people come together? What situations is the filmmaker showing? Students will create a plot diagram for each of the films to develop a basic understanding of the story elements. The plot diagram will specify exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. A thorough understanding of the plot will enable students to progress to an opinion about the social statement each film is making.

The final three categories are more abstract and students will require more assistance and prompting to arrive at valuable conclusions. The first of these is values, which can be stated or inferred. This category poses the question: What do people care about versus do we care about it. From possessions to concepts like family honor, and the importance of education, each film affords an opportunity to compare student value systems with those of characters in the films. Students may find it particularly difficult to empathize with cultures whose values are dramatically different from their own. It is essential to point out the basic human similarities in these circumstances to encourage multiculturalism as opposed to prejudice. Definitions of sacred and secular differ greatly among different cultures, but each is worthy of our respect.

The next category is "traditions" and we ask ourselves questions like: What is the history or religion of these people? How do they tell stories? What brings this film to be structured the way it is? How does this film or these people relate to other cultures? The way in which different cultures tell their tales is distinct and may vary from the standard Western tradition. Focus on point of view, narrative devices, and plot structure will help explore the question of storytelling. Higher-level students will likely engage in discourse about the confluence of history and religion in Afghanistan, and how culture is expressed through traditions.

Finally, students should look to narration to determine how stories are delivered and what tone is used. Students will differentiate between if the stories told in a fragmented or a linear manner. Then they can approach the question of the purpose of the protagonist and how they identify with him. Once we look to issues of details that support the theme and the symbols or images that define them, we can begin to explore tone. Tone is universally difficult for all of my students to comprehend in text. The use of film is a unique opportunity to delve into the difference between mood and tone. The vagaries of tone in different scenes will also help students identify and understand the term so that they will be better able to apply it to literature in the future.

Examining landscape, people, situations, values, traditions and narration is a procedure that allows students to break down their subconscious understandings and assumptions about a film. It provides them a systematic methodology that can apply to any film they encounter. The tools of film narrative will allow students to have a conversation about how the film elicits an emotional response in the audience, how accurately it represents the land and people and whether the film influences cultural change.

This unit may be the first exposure to foreign film that students will experience, which requires them to read subtitles and completely immerse themselves in a foreign cinema. The way in which other cultures tell their stories varies significantly from the American model. Hollywood tends to produce movies that focus on a

single narrative, threaded through a weave of subplots, and utilize editing to manipulate time. Foreign cinema can be vastly different and express the cultural traditions of the society through their film. This may be the first introduction students have to foreign film and it is important to explain differences from Hollywood stylistic conventions. I will "acknowledge the role that film plays in defining and transmitting a particular culture and in shaping encounters between cultures."⁴ In this manner, students will gain appreciation and patience for foreign films and the wealth of information and entertainment they possess.

Just as I will not prepare explicit lectures about film analysis, only procedures that enable students to create their own understandings, there will not be any direct lectures about the history of an issue or region given to the students. The process involves a discovery learning approach where students create their own insights based upon the films and the nonfiction readings. I will provide brief mini-lessons about a particular history when necessary, but the aim of this unit is for students to draw their own understandings and conclusions based upon the readings and the films. The unit empowers the students to understand the world and cultures and find commonality and beauty in the human spirit in our pluralistic society.

In order to unite the various countries and cultures we will be exploring, there will be three large displays in the room that will remain throughout the nine-week unit. These displays will connect the film studies with the nonfiction literature and create continuity in our process. The first display will provide statistics about each country. A statistics board based upon UNICEF information that will expand to include America and all four nations will tie lessons together. These statistics will include facts about income, literacy and family life, providing a basis for comparison between diverse countries. Creating this chart will help students with their reference and research skills as well as draw attention to disparities between certain basic indicators. One startling example is that life expectancy in China is 72 years of age, 78 in Ireland and only 47 in South Africa and 46 in Afghanistan.⁵

The second will be a multicultural identification chart providing an opportunity to emphasize distinctions in each culture. The multicultural identification chart will be a useful summary tool as we complete each segment of the unit. The left axis of the chart will list six categories, while the four nations are listed across the top of the chart. The six areas relate to issues of family (who is in the family, who is in control of the family and what rights do family member have); communication (how do people greet one another, what posture or gestures are significant and which languages are used); religion (what is sacred vs. what is secular, what religious authority is recognized and what is their influence); traditions (what forms of art are valued, does dress have symbolic significance); education (what is the purpose of education and are there different expectation of different groups) and discipline (who does the discipline and in what way, are there different expectations based upon gender or age and who has authority over whom).⁶

There will also be a world map featuring neon cutouts of each country and city from the unit. Manipulating the neon cutouts will allow students to develop a familiarity with world geography and comparative size. These three displays will form the matrix for comparison and contrast as we progress to ideas that are more complex. Each display will remain in a prominent position in the classroom and expand to include more data as we explore each nation.

Classroom Activities

South Africa

African culture is foreign to American teenagers and the history of apartheid is unfamiliar to our students. Apartheid, which literally means apartness in Afrikaans, was a legal system of classification into racial groups that was a legacy of British colonialism, but legally existed from 1948-1991. In practice, the system of apartheid limited the political influence and access to services such as health care and education for anyone classified as Black, Indian or Colored. Another prominent feature of apartheid was the forced resettlement to distant "homelands," which further reduced the legal rights of non-whites. The lasting legacy of apartheid in South Africa, similar to segregation in America, is a system of inequalities.⁷

As an introductory activity, students will explain segregation and the Civil Rights movement in the United States. They will write a definition, in their own words, for both racism and prejudice. After students bring their background knowledge to the table, we will read a brief history of South Africa and apartheid. Students will draw connections between the systems of segregation in America and South Africa. Nelson Mandela's Nobel Peace Prize address from December of 1993 will further enhance student understanding. Students will immediately notice the references to Martin Luther King Jr. and be able to understand the similarities in the references to segregation in America. One line of the speech states: "At the southern tip of the continent of Africa, a rich reward is in the making, an invaluable gift is in the preparation, for those who suffered in the name of all humanity when they sacrificed everything - for liberty, peace, human dignity and human fulfillment."⁸ With this line, we will begin the process of creating a thematic connection between each nation that has to do with acceptance and respect for difference and the promotion of social consciousness above personal prejudices.

The documentary film series *Real Stories From a Free South Africa* provides an interesting counterpoint to the non-fiction texts because one volume, *Nabantwa Bam'* (2005) focuses on a family in post-apartheid Soweto. This short film introduces students to a modern family who appears to have a lifestyle similar to their own. What is fascinating in this documentary is the contrast between the older brother, Nhlanhla, who grew up during apartheid and due to an injury and lack of education has an aimless existence, whereas his younger brother clearly benefited from the end of apartheid. The younger brother, Miles, has a five-year plan with definitive goals and a career at Microsoft. Students will find enough familiar elements that they will readily draw connections between this African culture and our own. While watching the film, students will complete a sensory detail chart that asks them to identify tactile, gustatory, olfactory, auditory and visual details they note in the film. Later, students will each select one example of each sense and explain how it expands their understanding of life in South Africa. For example, a student may note that the two brothers enjoy a meal of chicken wings and their gustatory sense was engaged by the meal. Students will likely be surprised at how the familiar food seemed incongruous in a foreign country.

Reading Mark Matabane's *Kaffir Boy*, set in Johannesburg, South Africa, will provide a look at life during apartheid. I will explicitly teach and utilize active reading strategies to help students gain a deeper understanding of the text. Students will predict, connect, question, and visualize the text as if they were watching a movie in their head. They will evaluate and make judgments about what they read, review the main idea of passages and consider the author's purpose and respond by forming an opinion about the work. Students will illustrate the literature by creating cartoons, which will force them to read for detail. Special attention will be drawn to the mention of a whites-only golf courses and the mother's determination for her

son to receive an education to raise himself above the abased conditions of his birth. Students will discuss the biography and understand his themes of the importance of education and the power of knowledge, the common ties that bond all human beings and the amazing ability of the human spirit to overcome any obstacle.

As a culminating activity for South Africa, students will create a found poem. I will distribute previously prepared sentence strips with quotes from all of the texts to groups of students. The students may elect to use all or some of the sentence strips as well as their own words to write a free verse poem about emotions of conflict. Their rubric will require some elements such as a title, use of a symbol, and figurative language.

Ireland

The issue of the Travellers in Ireland is one that will require students to extend their understanding of discrimination. Previously we discussed the concept of racial discrimination in South Africa, which should have been an easy transition for students to extrapolate from America's legacy from slavery. In Ireland, students will be required to expand their understanding to include the discrimination of a group that is racially indistinguishable from the majority. Originally termed "tinkers" due to their metalworking ability, this nomadic group speaks a distinct language that could date back to the thirteenth century and takes pride in their distinct and rich culture.⁹ The issues of ethnicity, race, and nationality will become key terms in our discussion and understanding of this group.

The maligning and marginalization of the Travellers is a particularly difficult matter because they do not wish to assimilate, despite their gross statistical misfortunes. Inadequate medical care, short life expectancy, inadequate education, limited access to political representation, and poor living conditions are insufficient motivation for the Travellers to abandon their traditional way of life.¹⁰ The ostracism they suffer is preferable to assimilation with the mainstream culture of a sedentary lifestyle.

Into the West (1993) will provide a highly accessible film for the students to look at minority issues in Dublin. Students will be able to connect with issues such as an alcoholic father in a single parent household. The family issues of project-like housing in Dublin and an alcoholic father will allow my students to identify with the film as the engaging fantasy carries them away. Students will produce an essay that focuses on the themes and dichotomies inherent in this film. A gifted student might choose to write about the use of symbolism and metaphor in the film or more complex thematic concepts. A challenged student may choose a simpler approach such as something already discussed in class.

I will focus on literary elements using the film *Into the West*. Once the students have viewed the film, a lesson will prove how many literary elements the students already know and understand. Students will readily identify protagonist and antagonist, mood, tone, setting, plot diagram, foreshadowing, and humor. I will provide a worksheet with each literary term and definition along with spaces for students to identify the terms as they apply to the film. With prompting, students will realize that the literary terms are not foreign and difficult concepts but ones they already inherently understand. The use of film makes the process more appealing and makes connections for some students who may have had difficulty identifying some literary elements in text. This reinforcement will precede a lesson that forces the students to stretch their understandings by explaining some film techniques and demonstrating how a filmmaker creates different effects. Students will become more savvy consumers of foreign cinema in the future once they are aware of how to look for elements that are indicative of the landscape, people, situations, values and traditions of a specific culture.

We will also read several texts about Ireland as a class. One text, an article in *History Ireland* will illustrate the historical marginalization and ostracism suffered by the Travellers, who were derogatively termed "tinkers".¹¹ The article looks in depth at the many theories as to the origins of the Irish Travellers. A look at data from the Department of Health and Children in Ireland serves to demonstrate the statistical anomalies between mainstream Irish citizens and Travellers.¹² Students will notice the disparity in income, education, infant mortality and life expectancy. Lastly, students will read a propaganda piece by a website that promotes Travellers rights that cites injustices in an attempt to raise public awareness about the group.¹³ Students will create two-column notes to track the argument in the left column and note the strategy and its effectiveness in the right column.

The culminating project for Ireland will require students to become a storyteller. After a brief mini-lesson about the craft of oral storytelling, students will use a rubric to create a tale of their own. They must seize upon a portion of the texts of film we view to create a five-minute tale. Students will individually select the material and construct their tale. Some stories may focus on the legends and history of Ireland, while others may be contemporary expressions of the social exclusion Travellers experience.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has a long and rich history of cultural traditions that are foreign to Western nations. It is essential to convey respect for the rich cultural traditions of Afghanistan to the students who may find the unfamiliar daunting or incomprehensible.¹⁴ One aspect of this difference is the role of women. Although the 1964 constitution theoretically gave women broad civil rights, in practice tribal law (also referred to as regional customary laws) determined women's rights. The cultural history of Afghanistan's tribes usually equated family honor with female virtue, making female relatives a responsibility for men at best, and their property at worst.¹⁵ After the Soviet invasion and occupation from 1979-1989 followed by Civil War, the 1994 arrival of the Taliban was initially heralded as positive change as they restored peace. After about a year, the Taliban altered the traditional practices that demanded women's subservience to male relatives into a series of repressive laws that hampered a woman's rights. Women were no longer able to work in a public place, receive medical care unless from a female physician, receive an education or leave their home unless accompanied by a male relative.

A famous 1985 *National Geographic* cover image depicts an anonymous Afghan woman whose piercing gaze intrigued the world. The students will view the cover and write a reflective piece about their interpretation of the portrait. I plan to explore the article from 2002, which interviews the mystery woman, Sharbat Gula, and introduces students to the life of a Pashtun woman. Students will complete a worksheet that asks them to explain terms like burka, chador and Islam as well as to identify Afghanistan on an unlabeled map. Some excerpts relating to women from *The Wake of War*, a travel diary from 2005, will enhance this exploration. An excerpt relating to the burka demonstrates the horror and beauty they represent to a Western observer. "It might almost be a pleasing garment if the anonymity it imposes were not inhuman. Under all those vertical pleats, the shape of the body is no longer apparent, of course; but they also serve to elongate the already unreal silhouettes, which become almost phantasmagorical."¹⁶

A screening of the film *Osama*, (2003) is a dramatic exploration of the untenable situation many women found themselves in due to tribal custom and the rise of the Taliban in Kabul. The film will allow students to examine Afghani culture and the roles of women. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban exacerbated the tribal customs that limit women's lives to such an extent that basic survival was impossible for many women. In a class discussion about the film all comments will be accepted, however the discussion should lead to comparisons between

human rights violations and prejudice against blacks in South Africa, tinkers in Ireland and women in Afghanistan. A great lead-in to this discussion is to freeze frame the epigraph at the beginning of the film attributed to Nelson Mandela "I can forgive, but I cannot forget."¹⁷

As a final activity for Afghanistan, students will gather in small groups to utilize the readings and film, as well as outside research, in order to prepare for a debate. Each group will prepare to both defend and criticize tribal culture. Using index cards with specific examples of both the pros and con's students will engage in team debates. The goal is not that students argue more persuasively for one side or the other, but that students understand that there is value and beauty in the traditions of tribal custom in Afghanistan.

China

Thus far, we have transitioned from apartheid in South Africa, to the discrimination against Travellers in Ireland, to the oppression of women in Afghanistan. We will now depart from the realm of personal, institutional and governmental oppression of a single group to a law in China that limits the number of children a couple may have. This topic readily leads students to expand their social awareness to what many perceive to be an infringement of human rights. Entire countries have engaged in policies that marginalized the personal freedom of a single group, now we will examine a nation enforcing a law that infringes upon the reproductive rights of the entire populace.

The focus on China is predominately about the one-child policy. The People's Republic of China's unofficial policy mandating that each couple only have one child has significantly manipulated family life in Chinese cities since 1979. This policy, though applied inconsistently, led to abortions, female infant abandonment and other socially undesirable side effects. This policy became law when it went into effect on Sept. 2, 2002, declaring that it was a criminal act to have more than one child, and provided legal incentives to reward couples with only one child. The law is seen as necessary to control the burgeoning population in China and features articles that make sex selective abortion illegal, provide free family planning services to couples, make family planning the responsibility of both partners and prohibit the abandonment and devaluation of female infants.

Before presenting any material, students will meet in small groups to answer the following prompt: If America adopted a law that stated urban dwellers could only have one child per married couple, what pros and cons would you predict and what possible reactions might potential parents have? Students will read a translation of the actual Law on Population and Family Planning as well as a denunciation by Arthur Dewey, the U.S. assistant secretary of State for the bureau of population, refugees and migration, about how the policy is coercive. A discussion of the remarks will likely draw parallels to the conditions in the other nations of the unit, especially if one considers a line such as, "respect for the inherent worth and human dignity of the girl child, from conception through adulthood, is an essential element of a just society."¹⁸ This could lead to an interesting class discussion about the nature of a "just society" and how one honors cultures and traditions while still maintaining liberty and justice in the face of modern concerns like population control.

Students will view a PBS documentary, *Precious Children*, which will provide a glimpse into the reality of modern life in the People's Republic of China and how the one-child policy affects economics and culture in Beijing. One important lesson I hope my students draw from this video and the prior lessons in the unit concerns potential and harmful bias based upon race, disability, gender or social class.

After reading several documents pertaining to the Law on Population and Family Planning, students will revisit their initial small groups to determine how their list compares with the reactions and problems evident in

China. Students will become aware of the potential for human rights violations inherent in the law and the side effects, such as orphans. Students will utilize the writing process to draft a letter to the Chinese embassy in Washington stating their opinion of the policy.

Excerpts from the comedy, *The Great Wall* (1986) should provide my students with an understanding of the culture through the eyes of the teenage American son whose father moves the family back to China. Students will also view the entire film *Cala, My Dog!*, (2003) a political satire masquerading as a simple tale of a man whose dog is impounded because it is not licensed.¹⁹ Students will explore the depressing existence of the protagonist who must rescue his dog if he is to rescue his basic human dignity. Higher-level students will draw the conclusion that the pleasure he receives from his pet is a substitute for the fact that he has only one child. Students will use their newfound skills to analyze the depiction of China, specifically Beijing, in the film by following the steps outlined in the pedagogy section. Students will answer questions such as why and how the director chose to depict the landscape or what can we determine about the culture of these people based upon the film.

In order to clarify their thoughts and feelings about the law as juxtaposed against the concerns about overpopulation that led to it, students will create a collage that expresses their thoughts and feelings. Students will group themselves with like-minded individuals who share similar opinions on the issue. The collage will include images, words and any medium the students select to express their ideas.

Culminating Activity

As a final demonstration of understanding, the students will each examine America through new eyes. Students will be asked to imagine that they are a teen from another nation who has recently moved to America. Students will create a specific persona that includes age, gender, a nickname, family, hobbies and culture. They will keep a journal for one week expressing the thoughts and reactions of that persona. Students are encouraged to write, draw and collage their daily journal as if it were a scrapbook. In the course of their exposure to food, music, advertisements, television and school, what social issue would they think represented a concern in America. What sources led them to think this was a concern in America? Students will create a one-page advertisement suitable for publication that informs and persuades the reader to take a stance on the issue. Students will present the advertisement to the class along with the rationale, sources and journaling that led the student to select that particular social issue. This advertisement is discussed in further detail in the Lesson Plan.

Sample Lesson Plans

Into the West Literary Elements

Rationale: Students need to learn and understand the literary elements common to all texts.

Standards: E-5a Student responds to literature. This is a precursor to the response, a procedure that requires students use an evaluative process to critique an author's work. This assignment

reviews and strengthens student understanding of the literary elements that are essential precursors to analysis, interpretation or critique.

Workshop Materials: Reader's Choice Textbook, Literary Elements Worksheet, *Into the*

West

Opening Meeting: Mini-lesson on literary elements.

- A) Connection: Literary elements are used in all genres and are essential building blocks for good readers.
- B) Concept/Skill/Strategy/Topic to be taught: Literary elements
- C) Guided Practice: Use the worksheet and the textbook to create definitions for the most common and essential literary elements. For most students this should be review, but for some this may be an opportunity to present information in a manner that allows them to gain a previously missing skill.
- D) Link: All texts, including film use literary elements to develop a story.

What is my role?: To review the literary elements and ensure students will have a tool

that describes the role of each literary element; To encourage success and positive recognition of literary elements in a visual medium that will appeal to students; To instruct students on the role of literary elements in the film; To model the process of identification and lead a discussion of the effects of the use of literary devices.

What is my student's role? The student will use the worksheet with definitions to identify

as many literary elements as possible in the segments of the film I show them. Students will participate in the class discussion of elements identified in the clips as well as those they recall from their initial viewing of the film. Students will use appropriate turn taking behavior and act in a respectful manner to one another while contributing to the small group assignment at the end of class.

Closing: Students will work in small groups to discuss and report their findings on the following prompts.

- A) Evaluate the stance of the filmmaker in his presentation of the subject.
- B) Explain the use of tone in the film.
- C) Explain the effect of point of view in the film.
- D) Identify different themes in the film.
- E) Identify which characters were one-dimensional and which were fully developed.
- F) Create a 250-word summary of the plot.

Osama Filmmaker Effects

Rationale: Some students will respond more readily to "reading" a film than a text if

they have previously had little success as good readers. The same essential skills help to create understanding and encourage readers to see a movie in their minds as they read.

Standards: E-5a Student responds to literature.

Workshop Materials: Filmmaker Effects Worksheet, Osama

Opening Meeting: Mini-lesson on film.

- A) Connection: Cinema has the unique ability to combine auditory and visual stimuli.
- B) Concept/Skill/Strategy/Topic to be taught: Strategies of filmmaking
- C) Guided Practice: Lead the class in completing a worksheet on specific scenes in the movie and identifying how the filmmaker achieved different effect by using different techniques.
- D) Link: Each of the films in this unit can be discussed and analyzed using this method.

What is my role?: To show clips from the film that allow students to create an

understanding of how filmmaker's utilize the same techniques as writers to present a subject. To use the worksheet to discuss questions about setting, and culture. To moderate a class discussion about the film that should lead to broader understandings and comparisons.

What is my student's role? To complete the worksheet on filmmaker effects; To

participate in the class discussion about each of the scenes; To engage in thoughtful and considerate discourse about themes and attempt to make connections between the nations in the unit.

Closing: Students will come to understand how the filmmaker elements, similar to

literary elements, help to reflect the culture that shaped them.

Persuasive Advertisement Lesson Plan

Rationale: Students need to learn successful persuasive techniques so that they will be better able to recognize and utilize persuasive techniques.

Standards: E-2e Write a persuasive essay. This is a precursor to the essay, a project

designed to begin introducing the elements of a successful persuasive essay such as capturing the reader's attention, expressing a clear voice, addressing an appropriate audience and using a wide range of strategies.

Workshop Materials: Writer's Choice Textbook, Thesaurus, Varied Art Supplies,

Sample Advertisements

Opening Meeting: Mini-lesson on adjectives.

- A) Connection: The media very skillfully manipulate consumers with effective advertising. Students are encouraged to be aware of the methods and techniques that effectively catch the audience's attention. This project will help students identify the rhetoric often employed to sway public opinion on issues of social concern.
- B) Concept/Skill/Strategy/Topic to be taught: Persuasive advertising
- C) Guided Practice: Model some advertisements relating to tobacco, "green" products and child abuse to students to explain criteria for the project.
- D) Link: Individuals create advertisements for the current social issue in America that they have chosen.

What is my role?: To review adjectives and instruct students in persuasive language. To

model an example of a superb persuasive advertisement. For individuals who appear to have difficulty, making suggestions. Circulate around the room, providing individual assistance and ensuring students are demonstrating "on task" behavior.

What is my student's role? The student will bring ideas, artwork and rhetoric to the table

as they create their advertisements. Students will work cooperatively within a pod of four to assist one another with artwork, editing, language and other aspects of the project. Students will adhere to the rubric that requires the advertisement to appeal to a specific audience, present evidence, have a "catchy" slogan, end with a clear call to action and use precise words with appropriate connotations.

Closing: Students will judge the effectiveness of the presentations and vote, which one was most compelling, and discuss what elements made it a success.

Implementing District Standards

The following NCEE Performance Standards are utilized in Duval County in alignment with the Sunshine State Standards adopted by the state of Florida to identify the desired results in student learning and achievement.

E1c is a reading standard that asks students to read and comprehend informational text and produce written work that restates or summarizes the information and relates new information to prior knowledge and experience. Students will complete worksheets and other products that demonstrate their ability to summarize the information obtained through cultural mini-lessons and readings. In addition, I will periodically administer quizzes to ensure that students have developed enduring understandings of pertinent material.

The speaking, listening and viewing standard, E3b will be significantly utilized throughout the unit, as students will complete a number of activities in small groups. Students will be required to display appropriate turn-taking behaviors, give reasons in support of opinions expressed, and divide the labor to complete the group assignment.

The final demonstration of understanding requires students to select an area of social concern and prepare a presentation that meets the E3c standard for individual presentations. Each student will shape appropriate information based upon research to create a print advertisement that highlights an area of social concern. Each presentation will have a thesis and have several main points that develop their premise. The presentation will be important and engage the audience in a significant manner.

Students will also complete effective work on standard E5a by responding to the multitude of non-fiction texts. Sometimes they will be required to journal about the tone of an editorial piece or make thematic connections between background information and literary texts. I also expect them to demonstrate how non-fictional literary texts reflect the culture that shapes them.

Similarly, standard E6a demands that students develop the skills to effectively critique public documents.

Reading government texts and speeches will allow students to exercise this skill by determining if the strategies employed in the documents were effective such as the use of argument, anecdotes, emotionally laden words and imagery and citing of appropriate references or authorities.

Students will be required to write an editorial suitable for publication on the issue of China's one-child policy. This assignment will meet standard E6b in which the student produced a public document that uses arguments that are appropriate demonstrations of knowledge, values and use a range of strategies to appeal to readers.

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