



Strange Fruit: An Exploration of Imagery and Socio-politics of Post-Katrina New Orleans

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Introduction

What do you do when you fall far from help?

There is a delicate balance between beauty and heartache that lies within cities that border major river ways; each carries the burden and anticipation that one day they could be extraordinarily impacted by massive flooding. Through this unit, students will examine the disastrous governmental response created when the levees were breached during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans on August 30, 2005. Additionally, we will briefly discuss the failure of the drainage systems throughout Richmond, Virginia; which resulted in the flooding and near destruction of the Shockoe Bottom area of the city on August 30, 2004 after Tropical Storm Gaston, allowing the students to recount their own experiences and the experiences of their families in the wake of post-Gaston. Further, we will investigate the idea of civic disengagement and the implications that race and socio-economics have on public policy decisions. In examining these disparities, I will pose the questions: What makes one a citizen and what happens when the government fails them? Why does the government fail them? What role should the government play in the wake of natural disasters? How do political dynamics affect public policy decisions?

Socially conscious literature such as, *Zeitoun*, *Voices from the Storm*, and *A.D: After the Deluge*, sensitizes and motivates the reader to become actively engaged in the public policy process. Paired with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the reader will explore the inhumanity, humiliation, abandonment and the indignities that were inflicted upon the stranded residents of New Orleans post-Katrina by various governmental agencies and media outlets. Staged in New Orleans by the Classical Theatre of Harlem, *Godot* used the agonizing wait for help after Katrina as central metaphor¹. Each text is significant in recounting the harrowing effects of the public policy decisions made by the Bush-era crisis management in the wake of Katrina and provides a voice for those who are often marginalized by the lingering effects of poverty, race, and class. It is my goal that these texts, coupled with the song "Strange Fruit," will ignite action in the learner that will compel them to become informed citizen-learners.

As defined by the Project Citizen program, "public policy is an agreed-upon way that our government, at whatever level, fulfills its responsibilities, such as protecting the rights of individuals and promoting the

welfare of all the people" ² . The degrees to which its citizens participate in the civic affairs of the community are vital to the stability of a democratic society. We will discuss the differences between political and humanitarian responses and the students will reflect on how the lack of emergency preparedness impacted the each city's most vulnerable citizens. We will investigate the idea that humanitarian crisis's that are exacerbated by public policy are unnatural and that due to the mismanagement of federal, state and local governmental agencies, thousands of residents of New Orleans were displaced, traumatized, or lost their lives after the levees broke. Many believe that "at its core, this was a Southern racial narrative being performed a national and global audience" ³ . Additionally, the students will participate in a comparative analysis of the response of local and state officials in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, Louisiana and post-Tropical Storm Gaston Richmond, Virginia and the effects on the human inhabitation in the aftermath of each unnatural disaster. Through imagery, film, and discourse, the students will examine the factors that attributed to the unnatural disaster that occurred post-Katrina.

Next, the students will examine the idea of intangible heritage and will explore the cultural places, practices, and performances that permeate New Orleans. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Intangible Heritage is defined as living heritage ⁴ . To receive UNESCO Intangible Heritage designation a community or event must be traditional, contemporary, and living at the same time, inclusive, representative, and community-based. "It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts" ⁵ . This designation is based on nominations by member nations and is an effort to preserve cultural practice and sites and to increase tourism in these areas. Some examples of Intangible Heritage sites include the ritual dramatic art of Ta'z'ye of Iran, the Mediterranean diet of Spain, Italy, Greece, and Morocco, and the Peking Opera of China. Currently, there are no Intangible Heritage sites in North America. Therefore, we will recreate the definition of intangible heritage to include traditions and practices rooted in both New Orleans and Richmond. This discussion will include the Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans, and we will draw upon our own experiences to include sites and traditions unique to Richmond.

Through our readings, students will be afforded the opportunity to discuss the significance of New Orleans to our nation's landscape. Students will discuss why New Orleans matters to the fabric of our nation and we will explore its contributions to the performing and visual arts, culinary arts, religion, and to American literature by focusing on areas where historical, cultural and behavioral vortices still exist. In Seminar we defined cultural and behavioral vortices as physical energy, the pull of social necessity that brings people (or audiences) together with certain behavioral characteristics, self-expression, and self-invention. In essence, it is a collective social version of behavior and cultural identity. To reinforce this idea, students will identify cultural and behavioral vortices that exist in their own communities. In addition, they will participate in a pen pal exchange with students who live in New Orleans as they study the importance of civic engagement and public policy by using cognitive terminology such as analyzes, predicts, classifies, reflects, and synthesizes. The unit is designed for an eleventh grade English class, but could easily be modified to be taught in US History or Government classes as well. Differentiated instruction will provide avenues for the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learner. The unit follows the state and district standards and guidelines for Language Arts.

Rationale

"New Orleans is the spring from which so many thousands have drawn their wealth, but it is also a bitter cup of suffering, misery, and despair" ⁶ . I began my love affair with the mystique of New Orleans as a junior in high school when I visited the city for the first time as a student. I became enthralled with the rich heritage, eclectic artwork, music, and the uniqueness of the city; this led me to further study the diversity and racial tensions that have plagued the region since the 18th century and this love turned to heartache as I watched the debilitating effects that the breaching of the levees caused on my beloved city. Many residents felt that the levees were blown up at the Lower 9th Ward; sentiments that stem from previous demolitions to the levees by the government to spare the French Quarter in an effort to preserve the economic integrity of the business district of the city. In contrast, the vast majority of the Lower 9th ward was black and nearly 36% of them lived beneath the poverty level, twice the state average. The complicated racial and socio-economic factors echoed through the governmental response to breaching of the levees ⁷ .

At the conclusion of the Intensive Session, several members of my Seminar group visited New Orleans to conduct field research for our units. During that trip I toured Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana and had the opportunity to interview Ms. Sylvia Arceneaux-Ellison, Project Manager at the school. She shared with me her personal account of having to evacuate during Katrina and shared the accounts of many of her students and their families. During the interview she stated that many families who had been unable to evacuate took refuge in the school and set up temporary living quarters in the classrooms on the second floor until they were forced to take refuge on the roof of the school. No one vandalized the school during the wait and days later, the Coast Guard rescued those stranded by Katrina from the roof top. Today, the school has partnerships with several mental health agencies to service family members and students. It has partnered with the state to provide a medical van in the parking lot for families. It serves as a community meeting place, polling place, and it houses the public library in the front of the school building. After Katrina, the city had no plans to rebuild a school in the Lower 9, and instead assumed the families would not return to their homes, or what was left for them. The King "family" petitioned and picketed governmental and local agencies and began the clean up effort themselves. Ultimately, they reopened as a charter school under the direction of the principal Dr. Doris Hicks, who now serves as the CEO/Principal for the school. When they opened, they began with 470 students and had a waiting list of 300 others despite having lost 27 students or family members in the storm.

Dr. King School has been visited by Tom Joyner, President Bush, Spike Lee, Anderson Cooper, Marc Morial, and most recently President Obama. When President Obama toured, he met with the entire school body and shook the hands of just about all of the children. This left an indelible mark on all of the staff and children and truly touched the lives of all involved. The school was decorated throughout with paintings of Obama and Dr. King, in an effort to give the students something to aspire to. They have many innovative and exciting programs at King School and offer both Gifted and Special Education programs in an inclusive and resource model, where students are provided additional services in the general education classroom and in a specially designed classroom. The students also participate in healing arts through the performing and visual arts and through gardening. They have many mentorship opportunities for the kids to get involved in and re-opened with 98% of their pre-Katrina staff in 2007. It is my hope that my students will have the opportunity to become pen pals with students from Dr. King School to open up a dialogue about resiliency between students in each community and to have them develop a deeper understanding of the struggles and successes of students

similar to themselves.

Background Information

The federal government is charged with responding to the nation's disasters — both natural and man-made—at the request of state and local officials. In the case of a natural or man-made disaster, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) organizes emergency services, provides medical supplies, coordinates food and water relief efforts, search and rescue operations and transportation assistance with the help of 28 federal partners, the Red Cross and local emergency management crews ⁸. In the case of Katrina, Mayor Nagin ordered a complete evacuation from the city just days before the Hurricane hit. This did not give many residents in St. Bernard's parish and the Lower 9th Ward enough time to prepare to flee. Also, over 100,000 people in New Orleans didn't have cars and they relied on public transportation. An evacuate plan was not in place for these persons and this perspective is beautifully illuminated in both "When the Levees Broke" and in *A.D.: After the Deluge*. In addition, the lagging responses by state and federal officials only exacerbated the suffering of the Katrina survivors as they waited for help to arrive. The city's neediest residents were in essence abandoned by governmental agencies on both sides of the political landscape.

According to Michael Eric Dyson in *Come Hell or High Water*, the Lower 9th Ward grew from cypress swamps to a series of plantations where poor blacks and poor European immigrants settled in search of affordable housing. In 1965, Hurricane Betsy created a storm surge that killed 81 people and left flood waters that covered over 80% of the Ward. Until Katrina, this had been the worst natural disaster in American history. Further, the average income for residents in the Ward in 2005 was \$10,000 a year, nearly 40% less than those earned by whites in Louisiana. The poverty level in New Orleans was nearly 25%, and 69% of the cities black children were living in poverty. These economic factors made evacuation nearly impossible for those living in impoverished conditions. Those living in concentrated areas of poverty could not have evacuated without assistance from the federal, state, and local governmental agencies whose mission is to respond to the nation's disasters.

On August 30, 2004, I experienced the devastating affects of Tropical Storm Gaston as it flooded Richmond, Virginia. Many areas throughout the Richmond metropolitan area were completely flooded, as the cities drainage system could not handle the 12 inches of rain that fell within hours. The entire downtown area, much like New Orleans, sits alongside a river and floodwall. However, it was not the James River that caused the flooding; it was the ineffective drainage system that lay beneath the city's cobble stoned streets. Afterward, a state of emergency was declared in Virginia, five people lost their lives, and \$12.5 million dollars worth of damage had been done ⁹. In each instance, it was the failures of the man-made protections that failed us. In New Orleans, the levees gave and in Richmond, the drainage system failed. The human costs and economic costs were devastating and neither city has fully recovered.

Demographics

I am an Exceptional Education Strategic Reading and modified English teacher. Within the confines of my classroom, I have students who have experienced a variety of behavioral and academic challenges and who have varying cognitive abilities that have contributed to their being defined as being at risk. Our school is currently entering its second year in the turnaround process as mandated by No Child Left Behind, and as we enter this phase, we are working to create a more rigorous, relevant, and collaborative instructional environment between general and exceptional education content area teachers. Next year, we will be offering more collaborative core classes to provide a more rigorous academic experience for all of our students. This unit will be taught in both my modified English classes and collaborative English classes, with modifications being made based on the needs of my students.

Physically, there are many borders that exist within our school community. Many of our students align themselves with certain neighborhoods and despite the fact that each neighborhood nearly touches, they rarely cross these manmade borders. Their identities are so intrinsically woven into the fabric of their housing communities that it is often difficult to get them to see beyond these invisible borders. There are five major Section-8 housing units which feed into our school, with approximately 80% of our students residing in one of the public housing units and the remaining students live in homes surrounding the community or they have applied to attend through our districts open enrollment policy. The demographic population of our school is roughly 98% African-American, 1% Hispanic and 1% Caucasian; with almost 33% receiving exceptional education services. The lack of diversity within our school gives my students a very limited world in terms of socio-economic and racial diversity. I believe that this lack of exposure to other cultures and socio-economic settings, many of my students have become desensitized to the human conditions of others. Through this unit, they will explore their own resiliency and their power to change the world through active engagement in the public policy process.

The Song and Title

The song "Strange Fruit" correlates with the imagery depicted in the photographic essays, films, and texts that we will be using throughout this unit. In opening my unit using the version sung by Billie Holiday, students will discuss the emotion conveyed and how it relates to the images of the Katrina survivors taken during the crisis. Students will further analyze the songs lyrics and they will discuss them as they relate to *Waiting for Godot* and the relationship between the plays characters Pozzo and Lucky, who are connected by a rope throughout the play. In *Godot*, Pozzo appears as a wealthy slave driver who inflicts many indignities on his slave Lucky. *Godot* paired with "Strange Fruit" explores the depths of humanity and the sentiment conveyed in the song, directly correlates to the emotions felt by the victims of the post-Katrina disaster; feelings of abandonment and despair. In *Godot*, the characters are waiting for an unknown hero, just as the Katrina survivors were and the dominate images of a tree and a rope create the settings for both the play and song. We will further explore the implications of this imagery during our classroom discussions. The video can be found through Google or on Youtube and the lyrics are located in Appendix A.

The Play

Waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot is a play about hope that takes place on an empty road next to a barren tree. There are two aimless men, Vladimir and Estragon, loitering and passing the time in discussion, and they are soon joined by two others, Pozzo and Lucky. The first act of the play lasts through one evening and the second act lasts through a second evening and is almost identical to the first. Whenever the subject of leaving their spot arises, we learn that Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for the elusive Godot and need to stay at this particular spot on the road.

Throughout *Godot* there is a sense of timelessness and the characters are "Waiting for Godot", but they don't seem to know why they are waiting or what Godot will bring them. In fact, they don't even know who Godot is. We will discuss the poetic effect of the pairing of Godot and "Strange Fruit" and will place emphasis on the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo presents himself as a brutal and degrading slave driver who is bound to his inferior slave, Lucky, by a rope. He can not see Lucky's humanity or the terrible affliction of dehumanization that underlies lynching and hurls many indignities at Lucky throughout Act I. Meanwhile, Lucky is attached to Pozzo by a rope that he wears around his neck. These characters are interdependent and they are bound together by a rope. In Act II, however Pozzo appears to be blinded and his greatness is gone, and Lucky, even though he has become mute, must care for him.

The nearly barren tree reminds them of a hanging tree and by implication a crucifixion cross. The tree dominates the stage background just as Godot dominates the lives; free choice and every expression of the four main characters. The play "Waiting for Godot" has been performed in New Orleans in the Lower 9th Ward and is reminiscent of the survivors waiting for rescue from emergency rescue teams and the government. We will discuss the imagery and importance humanitarianism, the rope and the tree in the assigned texts and song as they relate to the stalled governmental response in post-Katrina New Orleans. Directed by Paul Chan, "the performances, by the Classical Theater of Harlem, took place outdoors in parts of the city particularly hard hit by Hurricane Katrina and slow to recover. In the Gentilly section, a gutted, storm-ruined house was used as a set. In the Lower Ninth Ward, where one of the largest black neighborhoods in a mostly black city was all but erased by roof-high water surging through a levee, the intersection of two once-busy streets was the stage" ¹⁰ .

The Texts

A.D.: New Orleans after the Deluge

A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge by Jeff Neufeld is a graphic novel which details the accounts of survival of five characters who lived in New Orleans in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina swept across the Gulf Coast. Neufeld focuses on Denise, Leo, Abbas, Kwame and Brobson, whose only connection is the city that they call home. He introduces the hardships and realities that each character faces as they struggle to determine the economic and social feasibility of evacuation. For example, Leo points out that many residents get paid on the first and may not have credit cards or the financial means to evacuate the city days before payday.

By introducing the reader to the characters a week before the storm, Neufeld allows the reader to develop a familiarity with each character; which allows the reader to empathize with them. It also gives the reader the opportunity to examine the economic and social circumstances that many residents in the wake of a mandatory evacuation order. The novels deals with the questions: How do you leave a business you've spent your entire life building? How do you leave your cat behind? What will happen to a comic book collection that you've amassed your entire life? How do you leave your congregation behind? Do we rebuild after New Orleans has betrayed us? Will I ever go home? These honest conversations give the reader a more personal account of the survival stories of those impacted by Katrina.

Voices from the Storm

To date, Hurricane Katrina is the worst natural disaster to occur in American history, nearly destroying a major city and killing thousands of its citizens. The residents of traditionally impoverished and minority communities suffered unconscionable losses and endured unimaginable conditions, due to the negligence of a governmental agencies on all levels. This disaster has left the victims of Hurricane Katrina displaced and struggling to secure jobs, homes, schools, and a sense of place after relocating all across the nation. *Voices from the Storm* allows the survivors to recount their tales of loss and survival.

Waiting for Godot in New Orleans: A Field Guide

Waiting for Godot in New Orleans: A Field Guide, publishes the photographs, writings, testimonials, research guides, newspaper clippings, and related documents gathered during the making of the production of *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*, an interpretation of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The production included the free outdoor performances in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans and Harlem; theater workshops, educational seminars, conversations, and dinners; a Shadow Fund; and a short film.

Zeitoun

Set in New Orleans, Louisiana, the reader is introduced to the Zeitoun family who are Muslim-Americans are living the American Dream as entrepreneurs, owning a small home repair business. In late August, 2005, as Hurricane Katrina approached the city, Kathy Zeitoun and her four children evacuate New Orleans for Baton Rouge. Her husband, Abdulrahman Zeitoun stays behind to watch over their home, ongoing job sites and rental properties, in large part due to the possibility of damage and insurance issues with their rental properties. Once the levees are breached, their neighborhood is flooded and Zeitoun begins to explore the city in a canoe which he finds among the debris floating around the city. Feeling that he has been called from GOD to assist in the search and rescue, he begins to distribute basic supplies, carries neighbors to higher ground in his canoe, and feeds a group of abandoned dogs. His finds this work rewarding and believes it to be ordained by GOD, so he ignores his families pleas to evacuate the city.

In early September, Zeitoun and three friends were arrested on suspicion of being terrorists at one of Zeitoun's rental houses by a mixed group of U.S. military officials and local policemen. Although the men were not immediately charged with any crimes, they were detained in a with hundreds of other uncharged American citizens in a Greyhound bus station for three days before being transferred to Elayn Hunt Correctional Center in nearby St. Gabriel, Louisiana. Zeitoun was held at Hunt for several weeks without having stood trial. He was later released without being convicted or tried for any crimes and none of the men were ever given an apology or compensated for their ordeal.

Imagery

In seminar, we discussed the idea that there are two maps, a pop-up map that you carry in your imagination, for a place and a traditional "flat" paper map which lays out the geography of a place. Intangible heritage lives inside of the maps of our imagination and is vividly marked by events, conversations, and places. In other words, home is a place and home is within, and it is a place that we occupy within ourselves and with others. Students will examine images in film, photographic essays, and in the graphic novel A.D. They will also explore the Lower 9th Ward area of New Orleans by using Google Maps and through their pen pal exchange with a student from the area. We will discuss the images that are represented in the frames in A.D. and how they relate one to another as they are juxtaposed. Further exploring how the media images seen in National Geographic, Newsweek, BBC reports, and Spike Lee's "*When the Levees Broke*", focusing on how the emotions that they arise in the viewer. How can we examine the idea of deep time as we analyze these images? How can we explore the two maps of New Orleans, flat and that of desire? How we can we create our own "pop-up map"?

Objectives

In my classroom, I am mandated by the Virginia Standards of Learning to teach my students to read and critique a variety of dramatic selections and to read and analyze relationships among American literature, history, and culture. As such, the objective here is to have my students examine the driving forces between public policy decisions and socio-economic and racial factors by examining literature, dramatic selections, and pastoral images.

We will discuss the idea of citizenship and governmental responsibility and the importance of ensuring that each voice is heard. I plan to teach this unit over the course of nine-weeks with the intent of having students become more involved in and aware of the public policy process. I firmly believe that disengaged citizens are often marginalized. Therefore, I find that it is essential that they can connect to the material studied and not as a silent observer but as an advocate for change. Although this unit focuses largely on New Orleans and the aftermath of Katrina, I decided to also include Tropical Storm Gaston and the havoc that it wreaked on our hometown, Richmond, Virginia in 2004 to make the unit more personal for my students and to draw upon their prior knowledge and experiences about floods and natural disasters.

Strategies

Many of my students are struggling readers who have difficulty decoding words, lack phonemic awareness, and who have limited vocabularies. By incorporating literacy skills, visual representations, and auditory examples of the devastation caused by the breaching of the levees into each lesson, my students will have a more firm understand the racial and socio-economic impact of public policy decisions. Among the strategies that I will use in my unit are:

Blogs

The teacher-created online journal or blog and will be used to facilitate discussion about the materials presented. Students and parents may also post questions that they have about the topic presented. Pictures from unit activities will also be posted to illicit parental feedback and participation.

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers will be used to make comparisons to the events that took place in both Richmond and New Orleans. I will also use Venn diagrams and Double Bubble Maps to make comparisons about various items in the texts.

Cooperative Reading Groups

Students of mixed reading abilities are grouped together in my classroom for CRG. Within these groups, students take on different roles:

- Discussion Director - This person designs and discusses questions about the reading.
- Passage Master - This person shares the main idea or topic of each passage with the team and helps summarize the reading.
- Connector - This person makes connections between the reading and real life (student's real life or anything the connector knows about).
- Word Wizard - This person defines or discusses interesting or confusing words found in the texts.

Students must work together on the reading assignment presented; however they have their own personal reading goals that they must also fulfill.

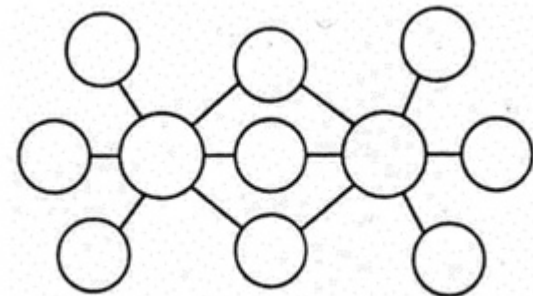
K-W-L Charts

I will use a K-W-L chart to assess student's knowledge about the events that surrounded both Katrina and Gaston. Students will identify what they already know, what they would like to know, and what they have learned at the conclusion of this unit.

K	W	L
What we KNOW	What we WANT to know	What we have LEARNED

Double Bubble Map

A double bubble map is a graphic organizer that will be used to facilitate a comparative analysis of New Orleans and Richmond. The city names will be listed in the larger center circles and characteristics are listed in the smaller circles. Circles that are connected to both of the larger center circles identify the commonalities of each.



Differentiation

Instruction will be differentiated based on the learning styles and cognitive abilities of each student. Assignments will be modified according to the student's accommodations and modifications as outlined in their IEPs or 504 plans.

Interviewing

This could be considered more of a skill than a strategy, but interviewing will certainly be a necessary part of at least one of the activities I am planning for the unit. Students will interview family members about their recollection of Tropical Storm Gaston and the impact that it played on their lives when it hit Richmond in 2004. Students will create their own interview questions for a homework assignment.

Classroom Activities

During week one, the students will create their own story boards about their memories of Gaston and they will interview family or community members to gather eye witness accounts regarding Gaston. Further, they will discuss the idea of citizenship and will brainstorm adjectives to describe the responsibilities and privileges of a citizen. They will also use a Double Bubble Map to compare the two cities. This will serve as a pre-teaching strategy. Students will also be paired with a student from New Orleans and will begin their pen pal exchange.

During weeks two and three, students would be introduced to Billie Holiday's song, *Strange Fruit*. Students will listen to the emotion conveyed in the song and will discuss the implications of the lyrics as they relate to public policy decisions facing America's neediest citizens. They will read in cooperative learning groups, *Waiting for Godot*, and will present and explain rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. They will also identify the theme, setting, and they will explore the relationship that exists between the main characters. They will also discuss the importance of the tree to both *Strange Fruit* and *Godot* and will be asked to visualize that they are stranded in the ninth ward on a roof top after the levees broke and they are waiting to be rescued by an unknown person. Through using a Venn diagram, they will also explore the relationship among Pozzo and Lucky and will compare and contrast this relationship to the relationship among the residents of the Lower 9th Ward to the Federal Government.

During weeks four and five, the teacher will review *Godot* and we will begin the lesson by reading *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge* and they will complete a comparative analysis of the texts and musical selection that we have discussed to date. Next, they will complete a pre-assessment using a K-W-L chart to determine what knowledge they possess about the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina. We will also begin to create a classroom timeline of the events surrounding Katrina and after completing the pre-assessment, the students will participate in a whole class discussion about the topic. The teacher objective for week one is to lead a review of setting, character development, internal conflict, climax, and theme. Students would be introduced to Spike Lee's "When the Levees Broke", a documentary about New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina. This video should be viewed over the course of four days, in 60 minute increments. Selected lessons from "Teaching the Levees" ¹¹ will be used to assess the students understanding of the film. During the first 15 minutes of each class period, a review activity will take place discussing the previous days viewing of the film, and during the final 15 minutes of each class period, students will complete exit slips regarding how they felt about the days viewing of the film. Students would be assessed on their participation in the daily discussions. Students will discuss how race and socioeconomic conditions potentially affected the response by the Bush administration in the response to the Katrina crisis. Students will also discuss the importance of oral tradition and its role in the film and will discuss the impact of personal testimonies on the viewer's ability to empathize with the characters in the film. Further, they will discuss Lee's assessment of the lack of urgency in the federal government's response to the Katrina disaster. Assessment questions are located in Appendix B.

During week six, the teacher objective is to present and explain narrative and expository text features to assist students in making predictions about text organization and content of a nonfiction stories. The learner objectives are to describe setting, character relationships, and the internal and external conflicts in a *Zeitoun*. Throughout the week, students will read *Zeitoun*, a non-fiction novel about a Muslim American family living in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Throughout the reading, students will be given comprehension questions to complete by chapter and will use various diagrams to compare/contrast the events in *Zeitoun* with those that they watched in "When the Levees Broke". Additionally, students will complete a story map

highlighting the main idea, key points, and summary for each chapter in the novel .They would discuss the relationship between Zeitoun and his wife Kathy and the external conflicts that surround them. Assessment will be taken from Appendix C.

The teacher objective for week eight is to review external and internal conflict as discussed in *Zeitoun*. The learner objective is to understand and describe external conflicts and to understand and describe the internal conflict that the characters experience in *Zeitoun* and *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*. Using the classroom blog, will journal and discuss the emotions that they may experience if this natural disaster was to occur in their own lives, and they will discuss how Beckett's *Godot* relates both *Zeitoun* and "When the Levees Broke." They will also discuss the role of FEMA and the responsibility of the government to take action in the event of a natural or man made disaster.

Week seven will serve as an assessment and review week. The teacher objective is to assess the students' understanding of the unit goals and to engage them in meaningful discourse about the material. The learner objective is to understand the interrelationship of setting, character development, plot, conflict, and themes shared throughout the unit and to identify the differences between political and humanitarian responses. Further, the student must produce a PowerPoint game, podcast, blog, brochure, song, or work of art demonstrating their understanding of the unit goals. Students will work on this assignment in class throughout the week. On day five, students will present their projects to the class in the form of a product, written and oral presentation.

During week eight, they will play Jeopardy on the SmartBoard to assess their understanding of the elements of nonfiction and of the play and they would complete Spider Webs and Venn diagrams comparing and contrasting the story elements of theme and conflict from *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*. and *Zeitoun*. Assignments would be differentiated based on the identified need for remediation and ability level. On the final day of week four, students will be given a project in which they will have to create a character an artistic impression of a scene or character from "When the Levees Broke", *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*., or *Zeitoun*. Students will be tasked with writing a one-page scene where they create a description of a character. This character can be a based upon real person or a character they have created. Their description should include both direct and indirect descriptions and the final product should be accompanied by a T-chart that outlines what they understand to be their examples of direct and indirect descriptions. Students should follow all of the steps of the writing process and they will be taken to the computer lab to complete this assignment.

Appendix A

Strange Fruit Lyrics

Southern trees bear strange fruit

Blood on the leaves and blood at the root

Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze

Strange fruit hanging from the popular trees

Pastoral scene of the gallant south

The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth

Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh

Then the sudden smell of burning flesh

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck

For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck

For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop

Here is a strange and bitter cry.

Appendix B

Comprehension Questions for When the Levees Broke ¹²

Selected questions from the Teaching the Levees by the Columbia Teachers College curriculum unit will be used in conjunction with this film. These questions can be found by using any available Internet search engine.

Appendix C

Comprehension Questions for Zeitoun ¹³

1. The book opens with "Friday, August 26," an expository chapter that introduces us to Zeitoun's family life and his business life, the two very interconnected. What are some of the ways in which the descriptions here draw you in as a reader, and make these people and their situation real? Why is the timeline a good structural choice for this story?
2. Kathy has grown up as a Southern Baptist. Drawn to Islam through her childhood friend Yuko, she decides to convert. Why, when she comes to visit wearing her hijab, does her mother tell her, "Now you can take that thing off" (57)? Why does the prayer from the Qur'an quoted on page 51 have a strong effect on her? What does her reaction to the evangelical preacher who mocks Islam and says that Kathy's temptation to convert was the work of the devil (65-66), say about Kathy's character and intelligence?
3. Do Abdulrahman, Kathy and their children make up an unusual American family, or not? How would you describe the relationship between Zeitoun and Kathy, in marriage and in business? What effect does their religion have on the way others in the community see them?
4. Why has Eggers woven into the story accounts of Zeitoun's past in Syria, his upbringing, his brother Mohammed, the champion swimmer, his brother Ahmad, and their close bond? What effect does this framework of family have on your perception of Zeitoun's character, his ethics, his behavior?

5. The plight of the neighborhood's abandoned dogs comes to Zeitoun's attention as "a bewilderment, an anger in their cries that cut the night into shards" (93). The next day, he sets out in the canoe and tries to do what he can for animals and people trapped by the flood. How does Zeitoun feel about what he is doing? How does he think about these days after he has been imprisoned (262-64)?
6. Discuss what happens when Zeitoun and the others are forced to get into the boat and are taken into custody. Is it clear why they are being arrested? What assumptions are made about Zeitoun and the other three men (275-87)?
7. Part IV (203-90) tells the story of Zeitoun's imprisonment. Here we learn in great detail how Zeitoun is denied the right to call Kathy, how his injured foot is not attended to, how the other men are beaten, stripped, and starved, how he prays constantly, yet loses hope. What is the impact, as you read, of this narrative?
8. "*Zeitoun* is a more powerful indictment of America's dystopia in the Bush era than any number of well-written polemics" (Timothy Egan, *New York Times*, August 13, 2009). Would you agree with this statement? Can *Zeitoun* be read as a contribution to the history of hurricane Katrina and the failure of government to handle the disaster effectively?
9. Discuss Kathy's situation, and her actions once she learns where Zeitoun is. The aftermath is more difficult, and she still suffers from physical and psychological problems that seem to be the result of post-traumatic stress. What was the most traumatic part of her experience, and why (319)?
10. What is Zeitoun's feeling now about what happened? How does he move forward into the future, as expressed in the book's closing pages (322-25)?

Appendix D

Virginia Standards of Learning-Grade Eleven English

In complying with the Virginia Standards of Learning in implementing this unit, I have aligned my own goals for this unit with those of the state. They are as follows:

Oral Language

1. SOL 11.2 The student will analyze and evaluate informative and persuasive presentations.
 - a) Critique the accuracy, relevance, and organization of evidence.
 - b) Critique the clarity and effectiveness of delivery.

Reading Analysis

2. SOL 11.3 The student will read and analyze relationships among American literature, history, and culture.
 - a) Describe contributions of different cultures to the development of American literature.
 - b) Compare and contrast the development of American literature in its historical context.
 - c) Discuss American literature as it reflects traditional and contemporary themes, motifs, universal characters, and genres.

d) Describe how use of context and language structures conveys an author's intent and viewpoint in contemporary and historical essays, speeches, and critical reviews.

3. SOL 11.6 The student will read and critique a variety of dramatic selections.

a) Describe the dramatic conventions or devices used by playwrights to present ideas.

b) Compare and evaluate adaptations and interpretations of a script for stage, film, or television.

c) Explain the use of verbal, situational, and dramatic irony.

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