



Homeland to Hometown: Restorative Awareness in Writing About Nature

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Introduction

There is a common thread that links these scenes and memories — the spectacle of life and all its varied manifestations as it has appeared, evolved, and sometimes died out. Underlying the beauty of the spectacle there is meaning and significance. It is the elusiveness of that meaning that haunts us, that sends us repeatedly into the natural world where the key to the riddle is hidden. – Rachel Carson, “Tides”¹

As an English Language Development (ELD) Lead Teacher at Monroe Demonstration Academy, I teach in a middle school with about 700 students located in an impoverished, semi-rural area on the north side of Tulsa. Approximately 30% of our students require English Language Development, and within the ELD student population 92.1% are eligible for free and reduced lunch and need a strong foundation of support. My classes have students with various English proficiency levels, ranging from newcomers to those born here that speak another language at home. As a result, our diverse and multilingual learners must confront emotional distractions, varying literacy levels, and different learning styles and motivations. It becomes essential to create safe learning environments that foster both academic and emotional growth.

Over time, I have discovered that my students make significant progress when they work towards personal learning objectives, taking small but consistent steps toward their goals. It becomes essential for me to differentiate and scaffold my instruction to cater to students’ individual needs. Above all, my overarching goal as a teacher is to foster a genuine passion for learning among my students. This unit has been carefully crafted to cater to a wide range of English Language Learners and extend beyond the immigrant student population; the lessons hold universal applications that can benefit students across various content areas. I have strived to create a cross-curricular learning experience that addresses self-identity challenges commonly faced by students in 6th to 8th grade. Through this approach I aim to empower my students to embrace their individual stories, encouraging them to appreciate the beauty of their own identities and the rich diversity of the world that surrounds them.

Rationale

Within my student population, teaching allows me to witness the challenges related to immigrant identity confusion. I want to help facilitate a transformative journey for my students by increasing awareness, through familial interviewing, reading student immigrant exemplars, sit-spot journaling in nature, reading poetry and prose about nature, and writing a self-authoring reflective story. The unit can be easily adapted and utilized by various content area teachers and spans over a 4-5-week period.

In my class students can be metaphorically likened to "Tides," washed up upon a new shore in a foreign land.² They bid farewell to extended family, familiar cuisines, and the sights and sounds of their homeland. My students' family history of immigrating to the United States constitutes an integral part of their identities. Letting go of their native world is a significant challenge. I have observed them struggling with fitting in with the school community. Teens are forming self-identity and many kids do not want to stand out. In our middle school system, ELD students often are awkwardly feeling like they are the "low man on the totem pole," since they are struggling to communicate and find their place among their peers. I have witnessed them expressing shame by making disparaging, degrading, or racially slurred remarks about their identity and other ELD students. Adapting to a new language, culture and way of life can become a formidable task.³

The immigrant experience often propels these teen students to mature rapidly, leaving behind their innocence as they strive to assimilate into American culture and navigate the diverse environment at Monroe. In this process, they may inadvertently suppress crucial aspects of their native identity. This unit aims to facilitate healing and self-awareness by slowing down in nature. The culminating project will involve each student crafting and narrating a personal journey and recording their stories for private enjoyment or sharing them with others. To celebrate the completion of the unit, we will organize a field trip to Oxley Nature Center, where students can explore wooded trails and connect with their fellow ELD classmates.

The focus on self-awareness, healing, and understanding one's identity is invaluable for all students in their educational journey. As we embrace the beauty of natural spaces, students will have an opportunity to slow down, fostering a deeper sense of belonging, awareness, and wonder of elements in nature that they enjoy.

Content Objectives: Why Read, Write, and Journal About Nature?

The primary purpose of this unit is to explore the concept of "Writing About Nature" and its broader significance in people's lives. While this idea may initially seem obscure, the touchpoints within this curriculum will shed light on the broader questions surrounding what "Nature" means to individuals and how it influences the way we perceive ourselves within our common home, Earth.

Throughout this curriculum unit nature will act as the backdrop for our exploration. We will delve into essential questions that deeply impact how young immigrant citizens perceive the importance of their voices in our common world. By pondering questions like "What kind of nation do you envision?" and "How do we collectively shape the future of our shared home?", students will reflect on their identities, sense of belonging, and connection to the land.

Drawing inspiration from Henry David Thoreau's timeless work, *Walden*, we will highlight the transformative power of immersing oneself in nature and write about the experience through a lens of migration. Thoreau's observations have spurred numerous studies on the positive effects of nature writing. Throughout the unit, students will engage with various literary works, embark on nature journaling, conduct interviews, and synthesize the information into a narrative essay. These activities will provide valuable insights into their sense of belonging, connection with nature, and the impact of this relationship on their personal growth and identity. Through reducing stress, slowing down, and appreciating the wonders of nature, students will come to recognize its pivotal role in shaping their perceptions.

Belonging and Connectedness

At the core of the unit's focus lies the importance of belonging and connecting to the land. Incorporating works by Native American poets will offer students insights into themes such as familial bonds and humanity's deep-rooted connection to the earth. By relating these concepts to their own experiences and perspectives, students will assimilate various dimensions of sensory, communicative, and cognitive awareness. Nature journaling and the sit-spot practice will serve as powerful tools to facilitate appreciation for the environment and our interconnectedness with nature. We will be drawing insights from Jon Young's book *What The Robin Knows*. Young's work will unveil the importance of the human-nature relationship and its profound impact on our inner world.⁴

Drawing from a study by J.M. Zelenski, R.L. Dopko, and C. A. Capaldi, titled "Cooperation Is in Our Nature: Nature Exposure May Promote Cooperative and Prosocial Behavior," in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, it was found that participants who engaged in nature writing experienced increased feelings of connection to nature. Additionally, to gain a broader perspective on nature, students will analyze selected poems and writings by diverse authors, enabling them to explore the intricate relationship between humans and nature and how this connection influences their writing.⁵

Ultimately, this journey will empower students to find their voices in connection with their roots, supported in a safe classroom environment where they can process their thoughts with their peers. By gaining a deeper connection to nature, they will also develop a stronger sense of self and a broader perspective on their place in the world and foster a sense of stewardship for the environment.

Focus and Self-Awareness

Sit-spot practice encourages mindfulness and can improve students' ability to concentrate and sustain attention, as it requires you to be fully present and attentive to your environment. By honing a student's present awareness and intertwining it with past connections to sights and sounds they remember from their homeland, students can gradually piece together their personal stories. We initiate this process by practicing the habit of focusing on natural objects during our sit-spot activity. Research conducted by M. G. Berman, J. Jonides, and S. Kaplan, in "The Cognitive Benefits of Interacting with Nature," demonstrated that exposure to nature positively impacts cognitive functioning. Combining nature experiences and writing about them may further enhance cognitive benefits, including improved attention and focus. Through this process, students can begin to make sense of their journey and find meaning by delving into sensory experience that links them to the past while also illuminating present awareness. Journaling in their sit-spot, their focus and awareness can serve as a conduit to restore vital aspects of their sense of self in relation to the natural world.⁶

Slowing Down and Stress Reduction

Studies, such as the one conducted by Ulrich, Simons, Losito, Fiorito, Miles, and Zelson titled “Stress Recovery during Exposure to Natural and Urban Environments.” in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, have established the positive impact of nature experiences on stress reduction and including feelings of relaxation and tranquility. By engaging their senses, students can cultivate essential skills such as observing natural patterns and auditory awareness. Students will sit quietly and focus on the sounds they hear in their sit-spot. They can record the different sounds they identify, such as bird songs, rustling leaves, or wind and how these sounds contribute to the overall experience of being in nature.⁷

Accessing Memories and Promoting Healing

Research by Pennebaker and Beall found in “Confronting a Traumatic Event: Toward an Understanding of Inhibition and Disease” in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, showed that expressive writing, including writing about nature experiences, can lead to improved well-being and emotional health. The process of narrative repair involves writing personal stories, empowering students to transform their fears hidden in migration into renewed identity. Calming down in the natural world can be a conduit to opening awareness into their inner world as they practice focusing on aspects about human to nature relationship.⁸

Students will be shaping their personal or familial stories building from their memories discovered in sit-spot journaling, as well as interviews and annotations highlighted within our readings. Additionally, as they reflect and create, students will be encouraged to incorporate vivid sensory images into their own writing, such as smells, tastes, sounds, physical feelings, or sights, to enrich their memories of past experiences.

Benefits of Narrative Writing

By creating a cohesive personal or family story that integrates the past, present, and future while honoring emotions, beliefs, and values, students can open the path to self-awareness. This process of remembering, writing, and discussing emerging feelings can foster resilience and cognitive growth.

The unit uses a slow-release model, moving students through interviewing family members, sit-spot journaling, writing a completed essay, and then making an audio recording allowing them to build metacognition. They will embark on a journey through the writing process, allowing them to expand their perspectives, comprehension, and connection by practicing various skills. These skills include gathering different perspectives within interviewing and student reading exemplars, connecting to ideas through sit-spot journaling, and refining abilities to recall, edit, and write in creating their migration narrative.

Through exploring ideas of diverse writers, writing styles, and themes, students will attain a broader perspective, enabling them to grasp the intricate relationship between other writers and nature. By relating these literary readings, we aim to establish meaningful connections between the authors’ writing and the students’ personal memories.

Looking at Atchley and Straye’s research found in the work, “Creativity in the Wild: Improving Reasoning through Immersion in Natural Settings,” they theorized that spending time in nature and writing about natural experiences can enhance creativity and problem-solving abilities. Participants who engaged in a nature-writing exercise demonstrated higher levels of creativity compared to those who did not. Moreover, poetic works empower students to find their distinctive voice.⁹

Teaching Strategies

Nested Language Development Supports

The nested language supports in this unit include scaffolds like, structured nature journaling, familial interviews, and targeting readings to build language comprehension skills to use in their final writing project. For instance, students can listen to older students' immigrant stories and gain insights into their own essay writing. Additionally, ELD students will gain essential listening and reporting skills conducting a family interview. The interview process will help them build a framework of memories and connection to their native land and scaffold a similar story line for their personal use. Nature readings will expose scholars to different perspectives, writing styles and methods to create their own literary work of art.

In Tulsa Public Schools, there is a strong focus on meeting the rigorous expectations and goals set by WIDA State Standards for English Language Learners. The unit front-loads students with relevant background and examples to better understand complete ideas. My strategies will include encompassing many of these standards, using selected readings, interviewing, sit-spot journaling, and using core language found in "juicy sentences" within the readings.

Exemplar Works

Through the exploration of example student "Moving Stories," my goal is to forge significant connections between individuals' memories and the profound effects of their respective journeys. By delving into these texts, we seek to unravel the intricate tapestry of experiences that shape each student's unique identity. The stories and insights shared in these readings act as a mirror, reflecting on common but diverse threads that bind us together, yet make us distinctly who we are. Within the richness found within student exemplar readings the unit aims to foster empathy, understanding and appreciation for the interplay between personal memories and the transformative power of life's journeys.¹⁰

Journaling

One of this unit's scaffolding strategies is to use nature journaling in pre-writing to support students in producing a culminating project, a narrative essay. By engaging in nature journaling and reflection, students will develop a deeper connection with the natural world and awareness of similar experiences.

By adopting this approach, students can acquire valuable insights and perceptions through journaling in a focused manner. The use of sentence stem prompts will help them complete their nature journals. The method proves effective on multiple levels as it helps students enhance their focus, heighten awareness of their emotions, and establish connections between their current experiences and memories. By journaling with the guidance of directed daily nature-focused sentence stems, they gradually expand awareness of universal commonalities in the natural world. Reflectively, they will contemplate the significance of their personal migration story, nature in their homeland and how it relates to their hometown. Additionally, they become conscious of their home "identity," fostering insightful reflections about how they belong to both worlds now.

Familial Interviews

Incorporating interviews in the curriculum enables students to safely gather information and deepen their self-

awareness. By documenting and structuring another person’s respective journey through purposeful listening and awareness, students learn aspects in the art of storytelling. Encouraging students to act as reporters and pursue their own curiosity makes the process engaging, leading to valuable insights into their own history and cultivating respect for the challenges and resilience associated with migration. Through familial interviews, students humanize their experiences and gain a firsthand understanding of the human cost involved in migration. Dr Anna Bryson from the University of Oxford emphasizes the significance of such interviews in connecting with the voices and stories of interviewees¹¹

Selected Readings Highlighting Key Contextual Sentences

This curriculum unit employs a diverse selection of poems and prose to resonate cross-culturally with English Language Development students. Differentiated reading strategies are used to enhance literacy skills and foster connections with the students. The unit emphasizes logical connections by exploring patterns in nature described by authors, encouraging students to internalize a common experience. Key contextual elements from readings are discussed as a group, allowing for multiple perspectives and ideas to emerge from their conversations.

Another focus of the unit is on extracting “juicy sentences” from complex texts. These rich and descriptive sentences not only improve vocabulary and comprehension but also provide valuable context clues for better understanding the text, as found in research by M. J. Schleppegrell and documented in “The Language of Schooling: A Functional Linguistics Perspective.”¹² I will use the example, in Wordsworth’s “A Night-Piece”: “Followed by multitudes of stars, that small, and bright, and sharp along the gloomy vault drive as she drives. How fast they wheel away! Yet vanish not.”¹³ In this poem students will have exposure to well-crafted and engaging sentences which can encourage them to practice speaking and writing with more descriptive language.

Vocabulary acquisition has been shown to be crucial for language development and academic success, as studied by W. E. Nagy and R. C. Anderson in “How Many Words Are There in Printed School English?” Moreover, this unit’s context-based learning approach enhances reading comprehension and language understanding, building on ideas presented in Nagy and Anderson’s research.¹⁴

By analyzing “juicy sentences,” ELD students can gain insights into English syntax. Engaging with such sentences can boost language fluency, making the language learning process more enjoyable and effective, as studied by S. Krashen in “Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.”¹⁵

In our Native American unit readings, there is a context-rich example in Tapahonso’s poem, “This Is How They Were Placed for Us,” which will help students expand language describing the time of day. The poem states: “She wears mornings of white shell, she wears midday light of turquoise. She wears evenings abalone, the light of the moon. She wears nights of jet black.” This poetic excerpt gives the reader a sense of wonder about how beautiful the landscape appears over time and the depth of meaning it holds for its people.¹⁶

Cultural relevance is also incorporated into the unit by selecting or adapting contextually pertinent references that resonate with ELD students. This practice fosters a sense of belonging and engagement. The use of socially relevant content aligns with the principles of culturally responsive teaching as studied by R. C. Gardner researched in “Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation.”¹⁷

In conclusion, the integration of nested language supports in the curriculum offers various advantages for ELD students, including vocabulary enrichment, improved comprehension, increased language fluency, higher motivation, cultural relevance, and improved confidence. Through this approach, students can develop a deeper appreciation for literature and language while cultivating essential skills for their academic and personal growth.

Narrative Writing

Narrative writing not only helps students process traumatic experiences, but it also enhances their English language development skills. Students will develop the art of crafting a story about themselves with a plot and setting, taking readers on a journey filled with conflict, resolution, and emotional engagement. We will use imagination, structure, and literary devices to create a captivating narrative that explores themes, entertains, and leaves a lasting impact on the reader.

Anya Kamenetz’s research paper states, “Experiments going back to the 1980s have shown that ‘therapeutic’ or ‘expressive’ writing can reduce depression, increase productivity, and even cut down on visits to the doctor.” “The act of writing is more powerful than people think,” Jordan Peterson says. “Most people grapple at some time or another with free-floating anxiety that saps energy and increases stress. Through written reflection, you may realize that a certain unpleasant feeling ties back to, say, a difficult interaction with your mother. That type of insight, research has shown, can help locate, ground, and resolve the emotion and the associated stress.”¹⁸

In conclusion, by having students reflect on important moments in their past, identify key personal motivations, and then proceed to edit, read, and record a personal narrative, they will have an opportunity to build English language development skills. This, in turn, can significantly improve personal awareness and insights.

Pedagogical Theory

The teaching philosophy in this unit is characterized by a balanced and diverse approach. It incorporates proven methods, various readings, group activities, student-led discussions, and inquiry, as well as firsthand learning opportunities. The unit spans 4 to 5 weeks and can be easily adapted and utilized by different educators. The aim is to promote critical thinking and create a safe and positive learning experience for students, addressing identity development issues in an age-appropriate and holistic manner. Overall, this unit strives to empower ELD students through engaging and impactful learning experiences, incorporating nature, language, and cultural relevance to foster their growth and confidence in their language abilities.

Classroom Activities

The classroom activities in this unit are sequenced over the course of four weeks, each focusing on specific aspects of language development—such as exemplars, journaling, interviews and reading the works of various writers.

Family Interviews and Narrative Writing Exemplars

Week One of the unit begins with an emphasis on narrative writing exemplars and participating in an interview with family members. To start this process, each student will receive a graphic organizer with interview questions designed to collect an immigration story from a relative. To structure the familial interview, the students will use the Folklife website as a resource, considering the types of questions, the timeline, flexibility during the interview, and obtaining permission to use the story in their narrative project.¹⁹ The students will arrange a meeting time with the family member, planning for an hour-long visit. During the interview, students will inquire about traditions, key demographic information, community experiences, and the various places their relatives have lived. Based on the gathered interview information, students will have the option to create a story based on their interview or their self-authoring narrative.

In the first week, students will also explore narratives written by immigrant students featured in the book *Making Americans* by Jessica Landers. By engaging themselves in these personal stories, the students will have a chance to connect with families like their own, enabling them to gain valuable insight into their own lives. Each student will have the chance to read or listen to selected stories from *Making Americans*.²⁰

After reading these narratives, my students will engage in reflective exercises using a conversation and thinking guide prepared by Re-Imagining Migration, a non-profit education organization. This guide will help them explore and express their thoughts, feelings, and connections to the stories they have encountered. They will be encouraged to write about their life and how it resonates with the example stories they have listened to. The aim is to enable a deeper understanding of their past and help them draw parallels between their own experience and those shared by the students in these essays.

By the end of week one, students will have connected with the emotions and struggles of their contemporaries through storytelling examples. They will have explored how these stories relate to their own lives, creating a meaningful connection to their past experiences. This exercise will foster empathy and encourage a sense of belonging that they are not alone.²¹

Sit-Spot Journaling

In the second week of this unit, the focus shifts to becoming better observers of nature through a sit-spot activity. Each student will select a specific spot in nature where they can sit quietly and observe their surroundings while becoming aware of their internal and external sensations. During their sit-spot time, students will be encouraged to focus on the sounds they hear in their surroundings, such as bird songs and rustling leaves. They will be provided with a nature journal in which they can describe the sights and sounds, reflecting on how they contribute to the overall experience of being in nature. Additionally, students will be prompted to make sketches and visual representations of the plants, animals, and other natural elements that catch their attention. This activity serves to enhance their artistic skills while deepening their connection with the natural world.

After spending time in their sit-spot, students will reflect on their experiences and write about their thoughts and emotions in their journal. They will explore how being in nature makes them feel, any insights or discoveries they have made, and any personal connections they have developed with the natural world. As students immerse themselves in the process, they will consciously and subconsciously begin to process their own journey across space and time through the connective lens of nature, fostering an invitation to heal their fractured identity.

To facilitate this journaling process if supplies are scarce, students will create a nature journal using simple materials such as spare paper and a stapler. A printable journal template will be provided, incorporating guided questions to help draw on memories of childhood or their natural surroundings of their homeland. The journal will feature daily questions presented in poetry form, encapsulating different nature focused themes.

My students will use these scaffolded prompts to form ideas for their final narrative essay. By engaging in this nature journaling practice, students will develop a stronger connection with nature and gain insights into their own journey contributing to their understanding of their identity from their native land to their life in Oklahoma.

Reading and Analyzing Nature Writers

Our reading goal is to engage students in literary works that focus on one's experience in nature, guiding them toward a comprehensive understanding of a variety of styles and themes present in these writings. Every morning, we will engage in reflection on our unit readings, identifying key elements that will serve as building blocks for developing our narrative story. We will explore what writers are looking for in nature, what they specifically observe, and what techniques they use to gain their insights. We will focus on nature as it is connected to universal symbolisms. We will compare these authors' points of view and perspectives. The readings are paired together over each week to highlight key themes and skills.

The first section of readings will draw attention to the transformative aspects of nature using rich imagery, symbolism, and the power of childhood memories, all found in poetry. During this week we will be pulling excerpts from writers like Wordsworth, Yeats, Dickinson, and Atwood and the relationship between each poem's "speaker" and nature. We will be considering the connection the poems create between non-human-animal lives and humans. Through this analysis, we will develop skills in connecting common themes, tone, and mood, as well as exploring symbolism, which will illustrate distinct perspectives and foster a deeper appreciation of the diverse ways writers celebrate the wonder of the natural world.

In the second section of readings, we will delve into Native American literature, which aims to open our awareness to Native American connection to the natural world. We will be exploring the writings of M. Scott Momaday and Luci Tapahonso. We will examine relationships and the connection to the land, exploring their significance to Native Americans. For instance, a selection of prose from Momaday's book, *Way to Rainy Mountain* beautifully states, "The stories that I am speaking of are about the Kiowas who lived in the southern Plains; about the Yellowstone River and the Black Hills and the Bad Lands; about the country of the Crows and the country of the Cheyennes and the country of the Arapahos and the country of the Apaches. All of these places, which are so intimately associated with the identity of the Kiowas, are to be found at the rim of the world.".²²

The last section of readings will have students reflect on their personal relationship with nature and their expanding awareness of environmental stewardship. We will be reviewing selections for the following books: *The Earth Knows My Name* by Patricia Klindienst,²³ paired with readings from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard²⁴ and quotations from *The Sense of Wonder* by Rachel Carson.²⁵

During Week Four of the curriculum, the focus is on crafting a compelling narrative essay titled "A Moving Story." To do so, students will draw inspiration from various sources, including journal entries, exemplars, and techniques from studied writers. They will be guided through the writing process using a framework that emphasizes the thoughtful exploration of personal experiences while safeguarding the emotional well-being of each student. A crucial aspect of this unit is the choice given to students, allowing them to decide whether

they want to write about their own story or the experiences of someone they interviewed. The teacher and school staff will be highly sensitive and aware of the potential emotional impact, and they will be prepared with social emotional resources to provide support and counseling services to any student dealing with trauma or difficult emotions.²⁶

Readings

The readings will encourage students to recognize common themes, perspectives and styles used by writers that describe nature experiences. The combination of William Wordsworth, Emily Dickinson, Ralph Waldo Emerson's, W.B. Yeats, contrasted against Momaday and Luci Tapahonso reveals a captivating exploration of nature. We will also touch on prose creations by Rachel Carson and Patricia Klindienst. All these writers underscore a deep appreciation for nature's beauty and its relevance in our lives. They remind the reader of the intricate relationship between humanity and the environment, urging us to cherish and protect the natural world; we gain a renewed understanding of the enduring importance of nature.

Poetry Selections

Each poem brings its unique perspective and poetic style to depict the beauty and significance of the natural world. Emily Dickinson's "Experiment to Me" exhibits her meticulous and keen observations of nature, capturing the intricacies and wonders of even the tiniest creatures. Through her poetic lens, she invites us to marvel at the mysteries of the natural world and recognize the profound details that often go unnoticed. She starts out in the poem, "Experiment to me is everyone I meet if it contains a Kernal?" Through the speaker's openness to learning and curiosity about others, she invites us to gain new knowledge and insight in every person we may meet.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in "The Mountain and the Squirrel," employs the imagery of the mountain and the squirrel engaging in a playful dispute to impart a moral lesson. The poem encourages us to embrace simplicity and contentment, reminding us that nature has much to teach about living harmoniously and finding joy in life's simple pleasures. In this poem the mountain and the squirrel had a quarrel, and the former called the latter, "You prig." Emerson goes on to write, "You are doubtless very big." A young reader can imagine these two characters in playful banter.

In Yeats' "To a Squirrel at Kyla-Na-No," this poem expresses his admiration for the carefree existence of a squirrel. Yeats declares, "Come play with me; Why should you run Through the shaking tree as though I would a gun to strike you dead? When all I would do Is to scratch your head and let you go." His verse suggests a longing for freedom and simplicity, drawing parallels between the squirrel's life and the desires of the human spirit. He emphasizes the profound connection between humans and the natural world.

In Margaret Atwood's "Vultures," students will have the opportunity to explore the rich metaphors and multiple voices present in the poem, prompting them to reflect on their own place within nature and their responsibilities towards it. Atwood uses brilliant imagery in the poem. For example, here is a verse: "Then they are hyenas, raucous around the kill, flapping their black umbrellas, the feathered, red-eyed widows whose pot bodies violate mourning, the snigger at funerals, the burp at the wake." Students will be asked the meaning of the broader question Atwood is posing to all of us about our responsibility to the natural world in

the last line of the poem: “Well, heart, out of all this carnage, could you do better?”

Native American Selections

In our exploration of Native American poetry, we will delve into the captivating works of two prominent Native American poets, N. Scott Momaday and Luci Tapahonso. Their poetic masterpieces beautifully weave together themes of nature, the spiritual realm, and humanity, providing profound insights into the intricate connections between Indigenous cultures and the Earth.

The poems we will examine include Momaday’s “The Way to Rainy Mountain” and selections from his book, *Earth Keeper*, as well as Tapahonso’s “This Is How They Were Placed for Us.” Through classroom discussions, we will explore the interconnectedness between these poetic elements, encouraging students to immerse themselves in diverse perspectives.

Momaday’s *Earth Keeper* celebrates the Earth as a sacred entity, a wellspring of wisdom. He eloquently describes the Native American past as an integral part of their present lives, leaving a haunting and indelible imprint on their memories and way of seeing the world. In Momaday’s *Earth Keeper*, the Earth is celebrated as a circle entity, a source of wisdom that holds significant importance. In our classroom discussions, we will delve into the significance of memory within the context of familial bonds and our profound connection to the Earth and understanding of our role as a steward of our common home.

“The Way to Rainy Mountain” takes us on a captivating journey into Momaday’s Kiowa heritage, tracing the path of his ancestors from ancient times to present. Through vivid imagery, Momaday depicts the profound bond between the Kiowa people, their ancestral land, and its spiritual significance. He will uncover the interconnectedness between his people and nature. The poet emphasizes that the Native American past informs and influences their present lives, lingering in their memories.

Environmental Awareness Selections

Wrapping up the unit, we will turn to Rachel Carson’s *Sense of Wonder*, as well as *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, by Annie Dillard, and Patricia Klindienst’s *The Earth Knows My Name*, which provide deep insights into the transcendence, wonder, and awe that nature can inspire within us. These final three writers will help students identify their own personal response to nature and address the larger questions that present itself within these readings: “What kind of natural world would our students like to see?” and “What can they do to safeguard their home?”

Appendix: Implementing District Standards

English Language Development (ELD) standards in Oklahoma are founded upon the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) framework. WIDA constitutes a consortium of states committed to supporting multilingual learners. This unit will use the WIDA standards to Narrate, Inform, Explain, and Argue using four language domains: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

Within the Listening domain, students will engage in practicing and processing spoken language across diverse contexts and for varied intentions. This unit aims to assist students in honing these ensuing crucial

skills: comprehending main concepts and supporting details in spoken texts, following multi-step directions and instructions, identifying key vocabulary and language structures in spoken discourse, and demonstrating active listening by asking clarifying questions.

In the Speaking domain, students will enhance their conversational aptitude, proficiency in presenting information, and the coherent articulation of ideas. Specifically, they will be enhancing skills needed to become more proficient in this domain, like engaging in conversations using appropriate social language and turn-taking, expressing ideas and opinions clearly and coherently, giving presentations or oral reports on their narrative work, and in-group discussions and collaborative activities. Students will share ideas about their own and others' lived experiences, connect stories with images, identify and raise questions about what might be unexplained, restate ideas, and create closure.

Within the domain of Reading, students will partake in comprehending and interpreting written text in different genres and formats. Students will be able to enhance the following skills: understanding the main idea and specific details in written texts, making predictions based on contextual clues and identifying and interpreting vocabulary words in context, recognizing different text structures (e.g., compare and contrast, cause and effect), and inferring the author's purpose and perspective. Students will develop the skills in the standard to argue like: generating questions about different perspectives, challenging opinions, evaluating their changes in thinking and refining their reasoning based on evidence.

Students will practice skills within the Writing domain by producing written text in narrative form using the following: composing coherent and well-structured paragraphs and essays, using appropriate grammar and syntax to convey meaning, employing descriptive language, organizing ideas logically, and editing written work for clarity and correctness. Students will also be informed and be able to define vocabulary, report on explicit and inferred characteristics and patterns, clarify and summarize relationships.

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