



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2008 Volume II: Storytelling: Fictional Narratives, Imaginary People, and the Reader's Real Life

Short Stories: Finding Ourselves in the Fiction

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.02.06
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This four-to-five-week unit explores how decisions that fictional characters make about interacting with other characters are driven by their identities: their cultures (and sometimes subcultures), their personal ethics, their capacities for empathy, sometimes their fears and anxieties, their sense of justice, and their race and race consciousness. These interactions result in outcomes, some promising, some disquieting, and some unresolved. Some of the protagonists learn from their decisions, interactions, and outcomes, and some don't. Of course, the question is, "What does the reader learn from tracking these decisions, actions, and outcomes?"

Students will use two graphic organizers to answer the Language Arts CAPT questions, "How does the main character change from the beginning of the story to the end and, equally important, *why*?" Once they have recorded their observations about the protagonist's character "At first," "But then," and "Finally," they will record evidence from the story to support their observations.

Examining fictional characters in four very short stories, students ultimately will see themselves reflected back, as they identify and challenge their own personal ethics, and their own capacities for empathy, their own cultures and in some cases subcultures, their own fears and anxieties, and their own racial consciousness, through decisions they make about how they interact with others, and the outcomes of these interactions. Following their exploration of each of the four stories, and reflecting on their own identities, they will craft fiction or nonfiction stories, and complete the two graphic organizers for each piece they write.

(Recommended for English, grades 9-12)

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