



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2007 Volume I: American Voices: Listening to Fiction, Poetry, and Prose

Bottled Up: Unlocking the Voice of the Struggling Reader

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.01.06
by Dina Secchiaroli

Many teachers find voice a hard concept to teach and an even harder one for students to master. Add a struggling reader into the mix, and it may seem as if voice is too complex a concept and skill to teach. What exactly do we mean by voice? How do we teach it? How do we know when students have found it?

Written for lower-level readers in high school, but applicable to higher levels, the unit consists of four parts: finding the voices we hear as we read, finding the author's voice, finding our voice in the classroom, and finding our voice as writers/creators. Part one focuses on teaching students to interact with texts to comprehend what is happening. Part two centers on teaching students to analyze a text for the author's voice. Part three speaks to teaching students how to have an authentic discussion in class: expressing their prerecorded thoughts clearly and articulately, actively listening, and responding in a way that encourages further thinking, while respecting and appreciating divergent thinking - having the difficult conversations and making our voices heard even when the rest of our peers disagree with our perspective. Part four challenges students to stop "playing school" so they see themselves as real writers doing the things real writers do. Students create a non-print text (documentary, power point, etc.) to voice their perspective on an issue.

(Recommended for English Language Arts, grades 9-11.)

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