



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2010 Volume II: The Art of Reading People: Character, Expression, Interpretation

Reading Characters, Reading Ourselves: Reflecting with Monster's Steve Harmon

Guide for Curriculum Unit 10.02.05
by Sean T. Griffin

Focusing on Walter Dean Myers' novel *Monster* and several poems that will accompany the novel, this unit will attempt to help students uncover things about themselves as they make discoveries about Myers' protagonist, Steve Harmon. Students will see the parallels between life and literature as we move between the characters of *Monster* and the students' lives.

Students' comfort with sharing and writing will increase as we explore several types of writing in the unit. Journal writing will provide an important writing connection to the novel and to students' own experiences. Students will also explore poetry writing, memoir, letter, and essay writing. Students will become more comfortable with class discussions and sharing as we move through the unit, emphasizing the importance of respecting each other's ideas. Finally, the understanding and analysis that students put into literary characters can be applied to their own lives and displayed in an artistic format. Through a series of writing exercises, students will apply the lessons learned through literature to their own lives and ultimately express their understanding through artwork as they create three dimensional self-portraits that reveal more than a simple surface depiction of themselves.

(Recommended for English Language Arts, grades 8 and 9)

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