



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

Discovering the Voice Within: Encouraging Students to See Themselves as Writers

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.01.02
by Dana Buckmir

This unit explores the genres of poetry and memoir. Students will read and analyze a variety of famous authors such as Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Maya Angelou, Martin Espada, Julia Alvarez and Gary Soto. Students will participate in activities in which they share their writing with their peers and view student exemplars. Students will practice their writing in their journals, with multiple drafts in the effort ultimately to create their own original work. They will discover how voice lives throughout all forms of writing in various forms across cultures, time periods, gender, race, ethnicity and even the human body. Students will see how voice is significant and an important motivator for change, growth and authority. Voice can empower, punish, and honor the dead. Finding one's individual voice can work through emotions of grief, anger, uncertainty in the search for self which is typical of adolescents. Students can use writing to express their feelings and cope with tragedy in a positive outlet. I will teach this unit in a secondary English classroom with various modifications and strategies for English Language Learners. Students will use writing as a means for self-awareness as well as cultural awareness and understanding the community. As they emerge as readers, writers and thinkers, they will grow to understand their emotions and better understand the world outside of themselves.

(Recommended for English and ESL, grade 10.)

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