Discovering Ourselves in Literature and Life

Summary
Students will:
- Read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, themselves, the United States, and other cultures
- Read a wide range of literature in many genres to build an understanding of the human experience
- Apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts

Time Frame
5 class periods of 90 minutes each

Group Size
Individual

Materials
Software
   Word-processing image-manipulating, Web page creation
Hardware
   Video camcorder, digital camera, scanner
Books
The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros
The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan
The Island by Gary Paulsen
Dogsong by Gary Paulsen
Dicey's Song by Cynthia Voigt
Going Home by Nicholasa Mohr
And Still I Rise: Poems by Maya Angelou
The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost
Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind by Suzanne Fisher Staples
The Lost Garden by Laurence Yep
The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton (movie version also)
The Diary of Anne Frank by Anne Frank (dramatic and movie versions also)
Breaking Away (movie)
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven by Sherman Alexie (also movie version, Smoke Signals)
When the Legends Die by Hal Borland (movie version also)
Living Up the Street: Narrative Recollections by Gary Soto
Borderlands/LA Frontera: The New Mestiza by Gloria Anzaldua
Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood by Judith Ortiz Cofer
I'm Nobody by Emily Dickenson
Ceremony by Leslie Silko

Background for Teachers
Students read literature (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama) and view creations in other media to discover how print and non-print texts answer the thematic question: "Who am I?" Students analyze

print and non-print texts and compare the ways in which ideas are presented in different media. Students create their own multimedia portfolios and personal Web pages that reflect who they are.

<u>Instructional Procedures</u>

Students draw outlines of their bodies on paper or images of themselves in electronic format. On the insides of their outlines, students write words and phrases that describe their personal characteristics, emotions, ideas, values, beliefs, and goals--things that may not be readily apparent to other people. On the outside of their outlines, students write the words and phrases that reflect how they think other people see them (physical features, external behaviors, voice). In electronic journals, students reflect on questions such as:

Do you see any patterns in the words?

Does anything surprise you?

If you were to share your descriptions with someone else, with whom would you share them?

What do you think their descriptions might be and why?

What did you learn about yourself?

Students scan photos of themselves or take photos of themselves with a digital camera.

Students discuss the following questions:

How would you create a self-portrait?

If you were to capture yourself in either photography or fine art, what would you want to communicate to viewers?

Are these characteristics from the inside or the outside of your outline?

Introduce students to the self-portraits of painters, photographers, and filmmakers. Students collect additional examples from online resources. Students analyze how these people framed themselves, used camera angles and points of view, created context through background and other objects, and used color, design, and texture. Students describe in their electronic journals how these visual images answer the question: "Who am I?"

Students begin to create their own multimedia self-portraits using words, phrases, photos, and other visual images. This is the first stage of constructing their own individual Web page.

Students select the appropriate technological tools for assembling, synthesizing, and displaying multimedia materials, and they discuss the ethical implications of publishing on the Web.

Students read literary selections including memoirs, dramas, autobiographies, poetry, essays, and novels (see suggested writers in Tools and Resources). Students search the Internet to find related information about the authors and works and create an electronic bibliography.

Students analyze how different writers convey meaning through language, literary devices, and genre. In electronic versions of texts (when available), students use automated search tools to locate and analyze language and patterns.

Teams of students use presentation software to share how they think the characters or narrators in these works answered the thematic question: "Who am I?" Students discuss how gender and cultural perspectives influence how the individuals understand themselves. Students discuss how different writers convey meaning through language, literary devices, and genre.

In their journals, students record and respond to passages from literature that explore the theme: "Who am I?" Students share their responses in print or electronic formats (e.g., e-mail and online bulletin boards) and discuss the relative merits of using different communications media.

In collaborative groups, students select thematic passages from literature and create a film script (the visual and auditory images of what people would see and hear in a movie). Using electronic display tools, students share how sight and sound are combined to create an effect on an audience. Students discuss how different directors might use different techniques to

represent the text in film. Students examine how the gender and culture of the characters or narrators affects the answer to the question: "Who am I?"

Students view a film related to the theme: "Who am I?" They analyze how setting, dialogue, camera angle, music, lighting, and other film elements create mood and convey the theme. Students compare the film to their own film scripts and other print and nonprint texts.

To create their own Web pages, students gather multimedia resources from their portfolios, make connections among the components, and represent the relationships in hypertext. Components of Web pages include passages from literature, excerpts from film and fine art, personal writing and art, including self-portraits, and music and other recordings such as their own or others' oral readings. Students should keep in mind the audiences for their Web pages. In their electronic portfolios, students reflect in writing on what they have learned about themselves from this project and how the use of technology has affected the processes of learning and sharing.

Extensions

We have found that this unit has broad appeal for high school students who are often struggling with issues of who they are in relation to their peers, society, and the world. The literary selections in this lesson enable students to see how others have struggled with the same issues while the activities provide them with a structure for exploring their own thoughts and feelings. We have found that multicultural issues are a natural extension of this topic. Using the technology has provided interesting and creative ways for students to express themselves in forms that allow even the most introverted and shy to shine.

Assessment Plan

Students develop a rubric for evaluating individual Web pages.

Students assess the strengths and weaknesses of their own and others' Web pages.

In their portfolios, students reflect on both what they learned and their learning strategies.

In their presentations, students demonstrate their growth in spoken, written, and visual language and their understanding of the thematic question: "Who am I?"

Students share their decision-making processes in conferences with the teacher.

Students invite audience responses to their Web pages.

Bibliography

The Utah Education Network received permission from ISTE (The International Society for Technology in Education) to share this lesson.

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