

Seedfolks: Stories that Make a Difference

Summary

This lesson plan is designed for a Language Arts short story unit, and introduces students to various elements of narrative/writing, including: plot, point of view, first-person narrative, conflict and resolution. Students will also use a variety of comprehension and critical reading skills. Using the book Seedfolks as the primary learning tool will also engage issues of diversity, acceptance, and community involvement.

Time Frame

8 class periods of 70 minutes each

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Character, Social & Civic Responsibility, Systems Thinking

Materials

Days 1-6

Poster paper/Markers or Whiteboard/Markers

- Seedfolks

Days 7-8

Computers for each student

Student versions of story

Background for Teachers

Teachers should be familiar with Paul Fleischman's Seedfolks. (A guide to teaching the book is attached). Teachers should have a basic understanding of the various minority groups living in Utah. Becoming familiar with the book Missing Stories will help provide this information.

Student Prior Knowledge

none needed.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will learn how to use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.

Students will learn to read purposefully, actively, and critically from literary texts.

Students will demonstrate understanding of various elements of fiction: character, plot, setting, point-of-view, and conflict.

Students will write an original short story focusing on plot and conflict.

Students will learn to write descriptively (showing not telling).

Students will learn to write from multiple points of view.

Instructional Procedures

Preparation Note

Scheduled two days (the last two days of the lesson) in the school's computer lab for student use. They will use this time to enter, edit, and format their stories. Be sure to follow the district and school guidelines in formatting the stories on a shared drive.

Daily Classroom Preparation

Each day display the character posters produced from the preview day of class.

As discussion is conducted about the story each class period, write the comments/answers about each character on a whiteboard/chalkboard.

When each class period is finished, erase the answers in preparation for the next class, keeping notes on the answers for each class.

At the end of the day, compile the most common answers and write them on the poster paper.

Display the posters, so that students may refer to them daily as future chapters are read.

Day One

Provide the following overview of Seedfolks and Paul Fleischman to the students.

Paul Fleischman is a Californian who likes to read while he enjoys his morning cup of coffee and a bagel. Frustrated when he couldn't find a copy of the local newspaper, he picked up a free new age newspaper and was "instantly rewarded." There he found an article about a psychotherapist who used gardening as therapy. She mentioned that doctors in ancient Egypt prescribed walking through a garden as a cure for the insane. "That's the line that set the hook deep," he stated in an interview. From there, he began to develop memories, ideas, and newspaper stories. Interviewing others who have experienced therapeutic gardening, he began to develop the various characters for his new book, Seedfolks. It is set in the present where the story is told from the points of view of 13 different multicultural characters. The setting is a patchwork of plots in the community garden. Several characters are developed from his association with people and their experiences, while others are completely fictional. "For me, the ancient Egyptians were right. A stroll through a community garden leaves me happy and hopeful, cheered by the sight of what we can accomplish together." (Paul Fleischman, www.harperchildrens.com).

After reading this introduction to the class, begin reading the first chapter in Seedfolks. The procedure for the remaining 12 chapters should be the same.

Reading activity

Read Kim's story to the class or as a class. Upon completion, ask the [questions](#) associated with Kim's chapter. Each question should produce a class discussion. Write the students responses on the board under the heading "Kim."

Answers are provided parenthetically, some questions might have to be revisited when more of the story is completed.

Read Ana's story to or with the class. Upon completion, ask the [questions](#) associated with Ana's chapter. Write responses on the board under the column for Anna.

Story Closure for Day One

Discuss with students Fleischman's writing style. How we learn about characters through their own chapters as well as through the chapters about others?

Day Two

Reading Activity

As a class read Wendell's story. Discuss [questions](#) for Wendell. Write the responses on the board under the column for Wendell.

Read Gonzalez's story and discuss the [questions](#).

Read Leona's story with the class. Write the responses to the [questions](#) on the board.

After the students read Leona's chapter, read to the class the preface of the section on African-American's in Missing Stories (by Ronald Coleman, pg. 65) to give students a better understanding of the history of African-Americans in Utah.

Have students break up into cooperative learning groups and assign each group a story. The stories used in this lesson are: Frances Leggroan Fleming, Mrs. Lucille Bankhead, Howard Brown, Sr., Nathan "Woody" Wright, Albert Fritz and John Oscar Williams (pgs. 70-120).

Students should read their stories in a "round-robin" method. Each group is responsible for answering

several questions about their story and to share this information with the class.

What was their approximate age?

What brought them to Utah?

What was their occupation/livelihood?

Briefly retell their life story to the class in first-person.

Describe the prejudices/or how they dealt with prejudices.

What did you find admirable about this person?

If you could interview this person what would you want to ask them?

What comparisons would you make between this person and Leona?

After each group has read their stories, answered the questions and presented their findings to the class, assign a journal writing assignment using Pastor Frances A. Davis' quote on page 73.

"we have a notion in our community that unless you know where you come from and where you are going, you'll never get anywhere. That's an old adage, but you need to know where you come from. You need that bridge to cross over. If you don't know where it is, you're going to be in trouble."

Students should spend time writing in their journal about the meaning of this statement. Have several students share their writing with the class. This should lead to a class discussion of this passage.

Day Two Closure

Remind students of the discussion of Fleischman's writing style.

How effective is it?

How are we learning about the characters?

Day Three

Reading Activity

As a class, read Sam's story and write the responses to the [question](#) for Sam on the board.

After reading Sam's chapter, assign the students to read from Missing Stories the story of Joel Shapiro (pg.153). Discuss as a class Mr. Shapiro's experiences and how they related to other stories of Jewish American citizens. Many students have previously studied Night and The Diary of Anne Frank.

Read to the class, the picture book, When Jessie Came Across the Sea, by Amy Hest and JP Lynch. Place on an overhead a picture of Mr. Shapiro (www.dev.uen.org/mcst/gallery.html) and have students "free write" questions they would ask him about his life. Each student should then share with the class one question they would ask.

Reading Activity

Read Virgil's story. Discuss the [questions](#) for Virgil and list the answer on the board under the column for Virgil.

Introduction of the Writing Assignment

As the students have learned about seven of the characters in Seedfolks, they have seen how one single person can begin changing an entire community. They have seen how people can come together for a common cause.

Ask the students if they have had any experience with gardening.

Ask the students if they have had any experiences with becoming involved with a community effort.

Discuss the way Fleischman has presented his story through these characters. What voice are they speaking through? (Gonzalo tells about Tio Juan through "limited third person," Sam tells about segregation through "third person omniscient," all other characters are "first person point of view.")

Tell students they are to become part of the garden. This could be as one of the un-named characters we have/will learn about, a fictional story about themselves, or a real experience they have had placed in the setting of the garden in Cleveland. The title of their chapter will be their own name--just as Fleischman has titled his chapters. Their story will be the 14th chapter to the book.

Students should begin thinking of how they can become "involved" in this community. Rough drafts of stories will be due on Day Five, when a peer edit will be conducted. Further directions on peer editing and a sample "chapter" will be given on Day Four.

Reading Activity

Continue reading with Sae Young's story. Discuss the [questions](#) and list the answers on the board in the column for Sae Young.

Day Four

Reading Activity

Read Curtis' story and answer the [questions](#) for Curtis. Record the student answers on the board under the column for Curtis.

Read Nora's story and discuss the [questions](#), placing the answers on the board in the column for Nora.

Writing Assignment

Discuss the rules for peer editing.

- Author reads the story aloud to partner/group

- Author asks for feedback

- Audience gives feedback in a positive way. They must give compliments as well as constructive criticism.

Day Four Closure

Remind students they should have the rough draft of their chapter for the following class period.

Day Five

Reading Activity

Before reading the chapter about Maricela, discuss the somewhat controversial nature of her chapter (teen pregnancy). Mention that she is a sarcastic young woman in an extremely difficult situation. She is very angry about her situation--not necessarily about the baby. Read the chapter and answer the [questions](#).

After reading Maricela's chapter arrange the desks in the classroom into a large circle and read as a class (each student reading one paragraph) of the story of Epiefanio Gonzales ([Missing Stories](#) pg. 445).

Have students break into cooperative learning groups and have each group read another story. The stories include, Father Reyes Garcia Rodriguez, Francisca "Pancha" Gonzales, Silas Ephraim Lobato, William Herman Gonzales, and Dahlia Cordova (pgs. 449-504). Each group should answer the following questions:

- What was their approximate age?

- What brought this person/their family to Utah?

- What were their educational achievements?

- What was their occupation/livelihood?

- How does religion effect their life?

- Describe the prejudices/or how they dealt with prejudice.

- How have they assimilated into Utah life?

- What questions do you have for this storyteller?

After each group has presented to the class the answers to the above questions, have a class discussion about the final two paragraphs of Dahlia Cordova's story on page 503-504 of *Missing Stories*.

Peer Editing Activity

- Divide students into groups of 2-3 for peer editing of rough draft of their [Seedfolks](#) chapter.

- Remind students of the purpose of a peer edit and how to be tactful in their comments.

- Monitor students preparation by giving 25 points for having something to work on and share. If they come to class unprepared but had an idea to share and if they work on their chapter in class,

give partial points (10-15).

Monitor students activity throughout the remainder of the class period.

Day Five Closure

Tell students that they will be given the entire class period to work on their stories on day seven. Tell them to make sure they are prepared with a copy of their story to share with others and to work on it in class.

Day Six

Introduction

This is the final day of reading Seedfolks. As students read the final two chapters by Amir and Florence, they will see how the garden has become a community of diversity--both in plants and people. Make sure that these points are brought out as the reading progresses.

Reading Activity

Read Amir's story and answer the [questions](#).

Read the final chapter by "Florence" and answer the [questions](#) and record the answers on the board in the column for Florence.

Writing Assignment

Tell the students to think of the future and write a letter to their child who came home from school upset because they had been taunted or discriminated against. What would you say to your child to combat this? How would you comfort your child? How do you explain prejudice or discrimination to your child? Have a class discussion about what the students wrote.

Concluding Discussion

How does the garden itself become a metaphor for what happens among its members?

What are some of the ways in which the characters work around language barriers to communicate?

List some of the problems that the gardeners encountered. How do they help each other deal with these obstacles?

Day Seven (may carry over into Day Eight)

Objective: As a culminating activity to reading Seedfolks, students will enter their "chapter" of the book into the computer for publication in their class' edition.

Remind students of the school's policy on use of computers. (Refer to the Acceptable use Agreement each student signed at the beginning of the year).

Students should enter their document in a standard format, used by all students in the class (12 point font, 1 inch margins, double spaced, Times New Roman font, etc--or other settings the teacher decides). This will allow for easier manipulation as the book is compiled.

Allow students sufficient time to enter their stories into the computers. Have them print a copy for final editing and corrections.

Day Eight

After their story has been edited by peers or teacher, have the students make the necessary corrections and revisions to their stories.

Have students save the final story to the shared folder for future retrieval by the teacher.

Seedfolks Final Discussion

When the student stories have been compiled into book form, pass them out to each student so that they have their own copy. Allow time for several students to share their stories. Discuss the emotions and changes that have taken place throughout the study of this book.

Extensions

Try to find guest speakers that can come to the class to share their personal experiences. Perhaps in the school there is someone who is African-American, Jewish, and/or Hispanic who could come to class and talk to the students and answer their questions.

Bibliography

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