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IDENTITY AND EMPOWERMENT:
AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY MANIFESTO

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important components of an education is learning to examine ideas from a number of perspectives and to consider how the events in every individual’s life impacts his or her world view. I am drawn to the way that literature allows us to experience different ways of thinking and living through the text and our imagination, and part of the reason I am so passionate about educating students of the value of literature is because of the diverse experiences we are able to encounter through a text. Literature breaks down the walls of our every day lives and allows us to come into contact with people, cultures, and ways of thinking that we do not experience on a daily basis. It is interesting to note that the word “educate” comes from the Latin word *educare*, which means “to lead out”; perhaps we need to look at our education system as a way to encourage students to look at the world they live in and create their own definitions of and theories about the way the world works. Literature gives us the opportunity to live and see through the lives of others, which itself is an invaluable gift; it is so easy to go through life not questioning our own view or our reactions to things because we tend to surround ourselves with people who think like we do. The English classroom gives us the chance to leave the comfort zone of our own thoughts and see things the way people who are both similar to and different from us do. As educators, we must remember that learning is an active verb, and therefore it is our responsibility to ensure that every student has a variety of opportunities to engage with the world in which we live, and therefore grow into successful people.
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Chapter 1

Why English?

I would like to begin by saying that I don’t want to teach English because I love to read books or because I love to write in my spare time; while both of these things are true, I could choose any job or profession in the world and still have time to do both of these things on the side. The English classroom is often viewed as one in which students read somewhat outdated literature written mostly by dead white men, listen to a teacher lecture on the themes and literary devices, and then write a 3-5 page paper in which they are expected to write something that re-phrases or explores what their teacher has encouraged them to think. I remember being in these kinds of classrooms in high school, and while I could see that my teachers were passionate about literature and poetry, the memories I have of these classrooms are not exactly exciting. I used to look forward to the end of the school year mostly so that I could lose myself in books during the summer time.

So, then why did I choose to become an English teacher? When I began my education at Penn State University in the fall of 2005, I had planned on becoming a teacher, but after much self-exploration I decided that teaching might not be for me. After trying my hand at a few different disciplines, I eventually found myself in the Women’s Studies department. What I loved most about the Women’s Studies classroom was the sense of community that developed in every class, no matter how many students or the topic of the class. I was also drawn to the way the personal experiences of my peers became the learning material for whatever topic we discussed: our professors would provide us with a few articles to read on a certain topic, and aside from a few lectures that introduced a topic and how it relates to Women’s Studies, the majority of our classes were spent sitting in a circle sharing our ideas and experiences. While our professor helped to guide us through each discussion by posing questions and commenting from time to
time, the classroom truly belonged to us, the students. Every person brought something to the table, every student’s voice was important, and what we learned was based largely on our own experiences and the experiences of others. I felt as though a whole new world had opened to me, and I grew as much as a student as I did as an individual in those classrooms.

In June 2007, the summer after my sophomore year, I had the opportunity to travel to Tanzania in East Africa with a group of 23 Women’s Studies students and faculty. In addition to doing a number of service-learning related projects with local women’s groups, I spent two weeks teaching English and Social Studies to first, fourth, and fifth year students at Meru Peak School and living at the local orphanage with a number of my students. I was inspired by the way my students truly valued their education; for them, an education was a way out of poverty and a way for them to grow into successful, independent people. My students came to school because they actually wanted to be there; in some cases, the opportunity to go to school actually kept these students alive because it kept them out of trouble and off of the streets. The school was a place that literally nourished their bodies and their minds. I remember one day specifically where I was working with a group of about seven fifth-year students: I was teaching them about colonialism in Tanzania, and I was so conflicted as a white American woman teaching my African students about what white people did to their country in the past. We broke away from the lesson a bit and talked about how they felt having me as a teacher, how I did not agree with what colonialism did to their country, and what they thought about colonialism. I realized at that moment that teaching was what I needed to do with my life.

When I got back from Tanzania, I changed my major back to Secondary Education, and I chose to continue with the English and Communications option. Based on my experiences in Women’s Studies classrooms, Tanzania, and the English and Education courses I have taken over the past four years, I believe that education should be based on conversation. At the heart of it, education is based on sharing knowledge; in my experience, I have found the conversations that
arise when a peer finds something they can relate to or that challenges their own ideas to be more beneficial and engaging than the solitary voice of a textbook, a PowerPoint, or a teacher. I have learned more by talking to the people around me, listening to their ideas and sharing mine, than I have learned by reading or experiencing things as an individual. Conversation and dialogue in the English classroom allow students to call upon the ideas presented in a text and formulate their own, discuss and debate these ideas with their peers, and then perhaps revise the way they think about a topic and make the ideas their own.

I also believe that it is easier to tune out a person who is talking at you than it is to tune out someone who is excited to learn what you think about something they have on their mind. While some might argue that the classroom is a place where the teacher is meant to share her knowledge with students through lecture and to assess student knowledge based on their ability to recite the ideas discussed in class in a formulaic essay, I believe that the role of the teacher is actually quite different. I believe that a successful education is rooted in an exchange of information and ideas, not transmission from the teacher. I also believe that learning and “knowledge” are not finite concepts: to suggest to students that adults possess all the knowledge a person needs would do them a great disservice. In order to encourage my students to learn about the world around them, I must also model an eagerness to keep learning and a willingness to listen to and discuss the ideas of others.

As a teacher and soon-to-be college graduate, I have spent the last four years learning how to think about, discuss, and debate ideas, whereas my students, for the most part, have not. How would my standing in front of a group of about twenty-five students preaching the conclusions I have drawn from a text that I have read at least a few times encourage the students to grow in their thinking? Well, I don’t think it would, and I wouldn’t grow much either; if the classroom is a place for conversation, then I, as the teacher, should be as open to the ideas of my students as I expect them to be to their peers’ ideas. This transmission of knowledge would
simply teach them to absorb information that they are given and, in turn, generate a class of consumers, not thinkers. Feminism is rooted in challenging and questioning what we are told is right or wrong; it is about seeking out the “absolutes” in our culture or the things that are the way they are just because they are, and asking the questions: Who said this is so? Why did they say this? And what does this mean to me?

Another major theme of feminist thought is the idea of re-claiming. To re-claim something means to take the thing, whether it is an idea, a term, or our own lives, and embrace it; often the things that we re-claim are things that were used against us in the past. An example of re-claiming in literature would be Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which is a feminist revision of the story of *Jane Eyre*’s character who is often referred to as the “crazy woman in the attic”, Bertha. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the story of Caribbean-born Antoinette Mason and how she becomes Bertha in Mr. Rochester’s attic in England. When students share, listen to, and discuss what they think, feel, and know with their peers, they all become involved in the creation of knowledge. I believe that students learn more in this scenario because conversation give students the opportunity to re-claim the ideas, themes, and misconceptions that arise in a text and make them their own. Additionally, the ideas come from a variety of sources, each of which can nourish their minds in a different way. Conversation in the classroom creates a space where students engage and develop a sense of ownership because the classroom belongs to their community, and they will get back exactly what they put into it.

The English classroom is a natural environment for these discussions to take place. The English classroom is the ultimate example of a space where all different sorts of ideas- social, scientific, historical, etc.- can be discussed, and yet still be classified as a legitimate part of the classroom. Students have the opportunity not only to discuss a variety of literature, drama, poetry, and other mass media, but also ideas that impact their daily lives: identity, social class, racism and other “-isms”, family structures, who they are and who they want to be, and the list goes on.
What I love about the English classroom is that it is so versatile and open-ended, no matter how strict or lenient the curriculum, and if the classroom is handled well, students always have the opportunity to create their own meaning. I believe that our responsibility as English teachers is not necessarily to teach literature, but rather to teach students how to think about a variety of ideas in a variety of different ways.

The modern English classroom has the opportunity to go above and beyond the traditions of New Criticism, which focused on the fixed meanings that texts kept within themselves and had students unlock these fixed meanings, and instead gives students the opportunity to create meaning in texts based on their own life experiences, their community backgrounds, and the ideas they have encountered on their own, and collaborate with their peers to generate deeper questions about the texts and their own lives. As someone who attended a high school where New Criticism and transmission pedagogy in the English classroom still reigned, I recognize the importance of encouraging students to create their own meanings from texts and practicing differentiated instruction to invite all students into the classroom learning community.

Literary and media texts of all kinds—books, poetry, film, cartoons, television shows, comic strips—also give readers the opportunity to enter new worlds and expose them to ideas that they otherwise would not have encountered; therefore, students also have the opportunity to discuss a broad range of perspectives in the classroom and examine the similarities and differences between their lives and the world of the text.

I discussed some of my education philosophy with a veteran educator about half-way through my student teaching, and I was surprised to hear her tell me that I should have been a Social Studies teacher because of some of my teaching methods and ideas. As an English teacher, I think it is incredibly valuable to not only be able to read literature well, write well, and teach well, but I think it is also of great importance to be well-rounded in my understanding of the world; do we not expect our students to be well-rounded thinkers as well? I am drawn to the way
that literature allows us to experience different ways of thinking and living through the text and our imagination, and part of the reason I am so passionate about educating students of the value of literature is because of the diverse experiences we are able to encounter through a text. A dear friend of mine shared with me the following quotation from a speech given by The George Washington University English Department Chair Jeffrey Cohen at her undergraduate graduation ceremony:

**Literature enables us not to live a circumscribed life. Nothing can constrain our desires, especially when they are propelled by love. So I would ask you in the years ahead to inhabit a world as wide as possible, and to remember those who do not possess such freedoms, and to endeavor to open worlds with them. (2009)**

Literature breaks down the walls of our every day lives and allows us to come into contact with people, cultures, and ways of thinking that we do not experience on a daily basis. Literature enables us to consider the true meaning of friendship and loneliness, as in Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*; the meaning of heroism and the cost of war, as in Hemingway’s “In Another Country”; the horrors of hatred and racism, and perhaps the goodness in people in *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*; and the effects of sexual assault and its relevance in Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak*. Through literature, the invisible barriers that separate cultures, ethnicities, geographic locations, genders, and religions are broken down, and we are invited to understand people who are, at the heart of everything, humans like us. One of the most important components of an education is learning to examine ideas from a number of perspectives and to consider how the events in every individual’s life impacts his world view; I believe that literature and the English classroom gives us the opportunity to do so.
Chapter 2

What Defines an Education?

Throughout my time at Penn State, one major question has remained constant in my inquiry into teaching: what defines an education? In a culture that is obsessed with standardized test scores and uniformity, it is hard to distinguish between the importance of what is learned inside the official classroom and the importance of what students learn outside of the classroom through interacting with their peers in their daily personal lives. I think oftentimes academic performance and rigid academic standards outshine what students learn from their daily experiences.

For example, one of the brightest and most switched-on students in my pre-service teaching had a fourteen-month-old son with two serious genetic disorders that required her to make frequent trips from Altoona, PA, to Pittsburgh for her son’s various doctor appointments and surgeries. She was frequently absent taking care of her son, and although she often handed in assignments late, the journal entries and in-class assignments she completed were passionate, reflective, and indicated to me that she was doing what she could as best she could. According to traditional academic standards, this student was not as “educated” as other students; however, my mentor teacher allowed this student to focus her senior project on her son and write a research paper on his genetic disorders, while the majority of the lessons I gave this student the opportunity to write about her experiences and how they relate to the text. The work this student produced for these assignments was, for lack of a better term, dynamite. I would argue that if this student were given more opportunities to connect her personal experiences to what went on in the classroom throughout her education, she would be empowered to succeed and do more great things with her life on top of being a teenage mother supporting a very sick child.
To help me better answer my own question, I decided to do some basic research on the word “educate”. The Oxford English Dictionary cites the most current definition of “educate” as:

4. To train, discipline (a person, a class of persons, a particular mental or physical faculty or organ), so as to develop some special aptitude, taste, or disposition. 

Const. to, also inf.

b. To train (animals).

I find the use of the second half of the definition to be particularly provocative because it suggests that to educate means to train or discipline a person or a group of people to fulfill a very limited criteria. While I do believe that students do need to become disciplined workers and thinkers, and that we do need to, in a sense, train students to be able to think, I disagree with the idea of education as a way to train or discipline students into thinking a certain way or working and expressing themselves in a certain way. I also find the fact that part b of this definition refers to training animals to be humorous, and it begs the question: is the purpose of education to train students to spit out five-paragraph essays on topics such as what F. Scott Fitzgerald has to say about the “American Dream” in The Great Gatsby, or do we want students to think critically about whether or not the “American Dream” is achievable in our world based on the main ideas of The Great Gatsby? I would argue that the latter is more beneficial and more practical in the long run.

Furthermore, as an English teacher, I would love for all of my students to fall in love with literature and reading, but I know that is not realistic or really possible. When I was a freshman, I wanted to become a teacher to transfer my love for reading; now, however, I know that I want my students to at least become better readers and writers and to be able to think critically about the world around them. Transforming them into avid, passionate readers would be an added bonus. Rather than “training” or “disciplining” my students to act, think, or perform a certain way, I think education should give students the
tools to question our society, their place in it, and the institutions that exist and the
conventions that we practice, including our very own education system, and decide for
themselves whether they agree or disagree with any or all of it.

It is interesting to note that the word “educate” comes from the Latin word *educare*,
which means “to lead out”; perhaps we need to look at our education system as a way to
courage students to look at the world they live in and create their own definitions of and
theories about the way the world works. One of the most popular questions among students, and
perhaps people in general, is, “Why am I here?” Great question. The typical response to this
question at the high school I attended in an affluent Philadelphia suburb would have been, “to
prepare students for the real world”; in my experience, however, I think the underlying goal was
actually to prepare the vast majority of us to pursue higher education. I do not think this is a bad
thing because it fit into the context of the goals of many of my peers and their families, and my
high school education did provide me with the support and resources to achieve these goals- but
what about the students in my community and in others who did not want to pursue higher
education? Once these students graduated high school, the high-stakes tests and large emphasis
placed on academic achievement by way of high grades did not do much to prepare them for the
paths they were about to take. Also, while my high school did prepare many of us for college, I
would argue that once many of us actually went off to college, we discovered how very sheltered
our lives had been; while I don’t think high schools should shock students or use scare tactics to
expose them to the lives of people different from them, I do think students need to leave high
school having encountered ideas that take them out of their comfort zone. I considered this idea in
greater detail during my pre-service teaching: the majority of my “basic” Senior students were
planning to enter the workforce or the military, or continue their education at a trade school, so
my challenge became convincing them of why English was important and how it would benefit
them once they joined the workforce. Likewise, as I am writing my thesis, I am working with
Academic (middle track) eleventh grade students at a suburban Pittsburgh high school, and I am teaching a six-week short story unit that I have created; my challenge is to help these students find a purpose for reading these stories and understanding literary devices that involves more than just helping them to do well on the PSSA tests they will take this April.

If the purpose of education is to shape a society and to prepare successful members of society, I think that the English classroom, whether it is filled with “Basic”, “Academic”, or “Honors” students, and whether students come from affluent or low-income communities, is the place to examine the ideas and traditions of our culture and other cultures. My student teaching mentor has this quote posted at the front of her classroom: “Literature is the memory of humanity.”-Isaac Bashevis Singer. Literary texts of all kinds- books, newspaper and magazine articles, television shows, etc.- contain a snapshot of a particular period in time that portray a certain aspect of our culture, or other cultures. The traditional English classroom might suggest that educated students leave school having memorized a myriad of facts, literary movements, themes in certain works of literature, and vocabulary words; however, I believe that students should graduate high school having learned something more practical and generally applicable to their immediate lives in addition to the technical and factual components of English. English teacher extraordinaire Jim Burke, author of The English Teacher’s Companion, notes that “good teaching engages the heart and the head, instilling in students both the abilities and the information they need to succeed in school and beyond” (2007). As we lead students out into the world, we must recognize the humanity of our students and the role that their education will play in shaping who they become. We must nourish their minds and their selves in order to encourage them to become confident and successful people.

While I believe that it is important for students to read and understand texts that have helped to define and will eventually define our culture, I ultimately believe that education, and English education in particular, needs to focus more on educating students to understand and be
themselves and how they relate to our society; I do not think we as a society can create successful people if our system seeks only to turn out identical product after product. Students spend an enormous amount of time in school, and once they leave school and go off into the "real world", I think perhaps the most important key to success is having a strong sense of self. Burke notes that, “if their knowledge, past experience, and individual interests have a place in the classroom, students will feel they, too, can find a place within such a class and will engage with the questions the class asks” (2007). So often I feel that students sacrifice themselves for the sake of memorization and quantitative, rather than qualitative, achievement, or they allow themselves to disappear from view because they do not have a place where they feel they belong. I would argue that this is a major problem with our society. We celebrate uniformity rather than the different talents, skills, and ideas each of us has to offer, and this desire for uniformity destroys the sense of community I think many of us seek. By encouraging students to take ownership of the classroom and giving them the opportunity to explore and express their selves, we are helping them to learn not only about the texts we discuss, but how to create community as well; we can help to create a safe space where our students can grow into confident and tolerant people. If students are given the opportunity understand their selves and who they are, then I think a world of opportunities are opened to them.

Clearly, students need to leave the classroom with the ability to read, to write, to communicate, and to be able to think critically about the texts they encounter and how the ideas of those texts apply to their lives. There are a number of different literacies that students need to develop during their education, but what type of literacy could possibly be more important than literacy of the self, and how do we teach it?

As I have mentioned already, how you teach is just as important as, if not more important than what you’re teaching. Educators are easily divided into two basic camps: those who believe in Transmission pedagogy, and those who believe in Constructivist or Constructionist pedagogies
(the two are different, but for the purposes of this discussion, I will put them in the same camp for now). According to transmission pedagogy, “knowledge is thought to be a stable entity that can be transmitted like a baseball, thrown from one person to another, arriving in the same condition in which it began” (2007). Alternatively, constructivist and constructionist pedagogies each give students the opportunity to become involved in the learning process because “learners draw on a variety of sources for the knowledge they create” (2007). I have thought a great deal about feminism and its relationship to both pedagogies, and I think if I were to assign genders to the different pedagogies, transmission pedagogy is a more traditionally masculine approach to teaching in that it is aggressive, authoritative, and very paternal in the sense that the teacher gets the final word on what is “right” and what is “wrong”. Constructivist pedagogy, on the other hand, nurtures learners, is open to interpretations and ideas, and is more maternal or feminine in the sense that the point of constructivist teaching is not to prove that the teacher is right or wrong, but rather to help students gain the knowledge that they need to succeed in this world. I don’t want to assign genders to methods of teaching because, after all, gender is nothing but a physical representation, but for all intents of purposes, I think it helps me to understand these two pedagogies in this sense.

In terms of teaching philosophies, I believe that constructivist/feminist pedagogy is the more effective pedagogy. For example, you would not teach a child to swim using transmission pedagogy, right? “Ok, jump in the water, kick your legs, keep your head above water, and I’ll see you at the other end of the pool!” That probably would not work the majority of the time. Why would you treat high school students any differently? You’ve got to get in the water with the kids, show them how it’s done, and help them to eventually do it on their own. The most important thing I have learned is this: It’s not about what I know- it’s what they know.
Chapter 3

Social Justice and Feminism in the Classroom

I believe that feminist pedagogy and social justice teaching go hand-in-hand. The interesting thing about “feminist pedagogy” is that there really is no one set definition for what is included in feminist pedagogy. Virginia Tech Professor of English Bernice L. Hausman, however, notes that:

Teachers who use feminist pedagogy believe in establishing a collaborative learning environment where student ideas count as contributions to knowledge; they also believe that students must learn to be responsible for their own learning…The professor's job, in this context, is to suggest to students when interpretations are not grounded in defensible interpretations of facts or texts. A feminist classroom will, however, focus attention on the interested, or political, nature of all interpretations. (“Hausman Homepage”)

At its most basic, this is what a feminist classroom looks like: the teacher or facilitator acknowledges that the classroom is a place for students to explore ideas, and that her or his role is to monitor and mediate these discussions and interject when necessary; the focus of the classroom tends to be on the sociological or political aspect of the topic. Perhaps one of the most key components of any feminist classroom is the idea of consciousness-raising, which means that the goal is to make others aware of injustices that might exist in any aspect of society, whether it be sexism, racism, or other potential problems; bell hooks mentions “communication and dialogue” as central themes, and that an important policy is to “honor everyone’s voice” (2003). A pro-feminist classroom creates an environment where all voices hold equal weight and where different ideas are debated, discussed, and respected; it is also one that seeks to discuss and eradicate inequalities and injustices in the immediate community and the world as a whole. In
terms of English education, to create a pro-feminist classroom we must actively examine classroom politics and what is taught in the classroom, how it is being taught, and why.

The following items are basic questions that I believe are key to creating a pro-feminist classroom.

**How Are Student Desks Arranged?**

This might seem very basic and inconsequential, but the structure of the classroom itself communicates a great deal of information about power in the classroom and plays a large role in how students interact. A pro-feminist classroom is one that promotes dialogue and seeks to distribute power evenly among all members of the class, including the teacher; to have the desks all lined up in straight rows does not do much to promote conversation, and if the desks are all facing the chalkboard, it suggests that the most important information comes from what is written, not from the students. My pre-service mentor teacher had her desks lined up in six straight rows, similar to this arrangement:

![Figure 3-1: Student Desk Arrangement](image)

I noticed when I taught that the students who sat in the row that was not in pairs essentially disappeared from my view, and they instantly had the opportunity to disengage; it created a sense of separation from the group. This arrangement also made it very difficult to
navigate through the classroom; I often had my students re-arrange the desks when I taught so that the students were in a better position to complete assignments.

My student teaching mentor’s desks are lined up in a similar arrangement, but instead of desks, we have two-person tables lined up in four rows and four tables per row. The tables are especially useful for partner work and are easily moved to better facilitate group work, and my mentor has arranged them in a way that makes moving around between students very easy. Unfortunately, our desks take up the majority of our classroom as they are so we do not have many options aside from the rows to arrange our desks.

Two options for desk arrangements that I prefer are horseshoes and circles, although these arrangements seem to work best in a larger classroom so that the teacher is still able to navigate with ease. I think horseshoes work best when the class is collaborating as a whole and they need to be able to see a visual aid, such as a chalkboard, overhead, or projector screen; this also works when students present a something, such as a skit or a project. Additionally, Burke notes that the horseshoe works well because “it keeps kids from being able to disappear in the back rows”, “students can quickly organize themselves into groups”, it allows the teacher to move easily through the classroom, and it helps everyone feel included in the discussion (2007). Circles are most conducive to whole-group discussions because each student can see everyone in the circle, no one has the opportunity to hide in the back or on the side, and it creates a general feeling of community; the only problem with a circle might be that it obstructs some students’ view of a visual aid, and there might simply not be enough space in a classroom to have a circle all the time. Either way, a circular or semi-circular seating arrangement helps to promote discussion and creates an easily navigable classroom.
Where Does the Teacher Stand During Class?

I look at teaching as facilitating, rather than instructing, so I believe that it is important for the teacher to communicate that she is a part of the class. Standing all the time while students are sitting creates an instant power imbalance, and I think that it is important not to abuse this power by always standing and never literally getting down on the students’ level and sitting with them. There are times when it is important for the teacher to stand at the front of the class- to introduce a lesson, give directions, or provide any kind of general information- but a teacher should not spend the majority of the time standing in front of the class. The majority of the Women’s Studies courses I have taken were arranged in circles or horseshoes, and the professor always took a seat within the circle; the simple act of sitting down with your students so that you are all literally on the same level communicates that you are all intellectually on the same level and visually suggests a balance of power.

During group work, a teacher should be circling the class and monitoring student progress, and helping students as needed. When it is appropriate, such as during whole group discussions, the teacher should sit at a desk in the circle to communicate that she is part of the group and that everyone’s thoughts are as valid and as important as hers.

What Texts is the Class Reading?

When I first thought about what texts I might want to use for a sample unit plan, I realized that I was only thinking of texts by written by men. As a feminist and a former Women’s Studies major, I was moderately horrified at myself. I do not mean to say that texts written by men are not important- Sherman Alexie, Elie Wiesel, and Shakespeare immediately come to mind- but I think feminist pedagogy emphasizes perspectives in the classroom, and a diversity of
perspectives: perspectives of the texts, the authors, the teacher, the students, the community, the time period, etc. I think that it is as important to introduce students to texts written from the perspectives of women as it is to teach texts written by men, as well as to introduce texts written by latino/a, African-American, Asian-American, Native-American authors. Burke points out:

The guiding principle should be balance: between poetry and narrative prose, drama and fiction; between canonical authors and contemporary authors; between male and female authors; and, of course, between white writers and those of other cultural and racial perspectives. What one wants is a conversation, even a heated argument between the books one reads. (2007)

The challenge is to not present non-traditional texts as literature of “the other”. I remember a classmate of mine discussing the way her high school presented texts in the following way: “This is an African-American text.” “This is an example of Asian-American literature.” “This is an example of a woman writer”. I feel that this is an ineffective way to introduce texts written by writers who were not white because it lumps the text into one single category and limits the way in which teachers and students alike might approach the text. Not every book written by a white man captures the experience of all white men; we must be careful not to portray non-canonical texts as representative of all people who identify with a particular race or culture. We should instead choose a text because of the ideas on race, class, gender, etc. that the story presents, not because it might represent the way a culture thinks. Nonetheless, just as every student should have a voice in the classroom, so should the variety of perspectives and experiences in American or World cultures.

While the students I am working with during my student teaching are reading a number of wonderful novels and short stories, of the ten novels and short stories my students have read this year, eight of them were written by white men. What I find most interesting about the curriculum I am currently teaching, however, is that of the three short stories we are reading
about women, only two of them are actually written by women. The stories are: “A Pair of Silk Stockings” by Kate Chopin; “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner; and “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” by Katherine Anne Porter. What are we communicating to our students if eighty percent of the curriculum that we have taught includes texts written by white men, and if the stories we read about women are texts written by men? Shouldn’t our students learn about the roles of women in the few stories we do read from a woman’s perspective?

**Who Does the Majority of the Talking?**

This relates back to the idea of bell hooks and consciousness-raising in the classroom: no student should ever feel invisible or ostracized in his or her own classroom. Some students will be more outgoing and willing to share and participate than others, but it is the teachers’ job to monitor that every student has the opportunity to speak and that the class respects one another and each other’s right to speak. As I said earlier, education is rooted in conversation, and every student has something valuable to contribute to the class. That being said, it is also of the utmost importance for the teacher to monitor herself and how she reacts to the class. I discuss this in-depth in the section titled “Teaching Tolerance?”, but the teacher must ensure that her own biases be left outside of the classroom, and she must look at every comment or question as an opportunity for discussion. I make a point to hear from each student in my classroom at least once each class period when it is appropriate because it not only allows me to monitor how well my students understand a topic, but it also says to that student that they cannot be passive in my classroom and that I want them to be a part of our class.
Are the Students Learning?

This seems like a silly question, I know. Of course students are learning! They’re in school! All kidding aside, the teacher must remember that learning is an active verb. One of the most valuable things I learned during my pre-service experiences was in my LLED 412 class: my professor reminded us that at the end of the day, it doesn’t matter what we know- it’s what our students know. For example, as an English teacher, I obviously know a lot about literature and literary theories, and I have probably read the texts I use in class a number of times. It is easy to forget that students have not, and, therefore, you must take the focus off of you and your ideas and put it on the students and their newly-forming ideas.

Because learning is an active verb, it is important to incorporate active lessons into our classrooms. Jeffrey Wilhelm encourages teachers to use drama activities, such as Revolving Role Dramas in which students take on character roles and act out particular scenes or Snapshot Dramas in which students create a freeze-frame of a particular scene and the class might guess the scene they are portraying, and art activities, such as illustrating non-picture books or creating collages “that represent their response to a particular piece of literature” (1997). Activities such as these give students to demonstrate their understanding of a text or idea in a creative way. Teachers might incorporate technology into the classroom in the form of podcasts, iMovies, blogs, and class wikis; for my LLED 480: Media Literacy course, I created a lesson plan on media bias in which students produced a composite newscast story based on four news network stories on Sarah Palin, who was running for Vice President at the time, using iMovie (see Appendix C). A successful and engaging classroom incorporates a variety of activities that challenge students and also give them the opportunity to have fun in the classroom.
To Whom Does the Class Belong?

This relates to the idea of whether or not students are learning. Burke mentions that “the classroom of the modern era is more than just a classroom; it is a lab, a workshop, a community, a studio, a home.” (2007) As I have mentioned, students spend a huge amount of time in school, and students are required to attend school for their benefit, not the teacher’s; it only follows that they should feel a sense of ownership in their classroom and that their classroom community should empower them to do great things. The teacher should give students the opportunity to express their selves through work in the classroom, establish that they “have permission to think differently [and] to take risks with their thinking” (2007), give them freedom of movement when it is appropriate, and acknowledge the students as young people with important life experiences rather than as young kids who know nothing about the world. The classroom is a place where community should be built through almost constant social and intellectual interactions, where students should feel that their minds are nourished, and where students actually want to be. Perhaps the most empowering thing for students would be to refer to the classroom as “our” classroom, rather than “my” classroom; this simple choice of language helps students to recognize that a classroom community exists and that the teacher is there for them.

Social Justice teaching and Feminist pedagogy require that students’ voices be heard in the classroom, and that both the teacher and the text are there to facilitate the learning process. Rather than learning primarily about a specific text, I believe that feminist pedagogy and social justice teaching involve students primarily learning about their selves and their relationship with the world, and then about the text. Students and the teacher should work together to co-create knowledge, and the beauty of this is that each student will learn something different, each student will (hopefully!) learn something new, and every class will be different.
Chapter 4

Exceptional Students

The one thing that I have come away with every group of students I have taught has been a re-affirmation of this conviction: every student, regardless of their designated ability level, is valuable and exceptional in their own way. I was introduced to Jim Burke’s online forum, The English Companion Ning, very early on in my student teaching, and I found it to be incredibly helpful. I posted a question about teaching short stories in general and mentioned that I am currently working with Academic-level eleventh graders. An English teacher responded to my post with some advice, and then asked me what the term “Academic” designates. I responded:

“In my district, ‘Academic’ students are ‘average’, college-bound students. I have many students who have opted not to take an AP English course this year, and I also have several students with IEPs in other subject areas.”

The English teacher responded that he was alarmed at the way my students were labeled in school, and asked me if they were told that they were labeled this way. I replied:

“I should note that when I said that my students are "average", I used the quotation marks with the intent of light-hearted sarcasm; I like to think that all students are exceptional and valuable in their own way, and I would not consider myself a fan of labels.”

I have mixed feelings about the ways in which students are tracked and what each track means in each school district. On the one hand, I believe that it is essential for students to learn in a supportive and nurturing environment that takes into account their needs as individual learners and in which they are most likely to succeed. It is generally accepted that students who are tracked at the lowest levels in a school learn differently from AP or advanced students, and, generally, it is quite easy for students in both of these tracks to spend an entire four years in a
high school without having class with one another or even exchanging a word. While this situation is less frustrating for the high-achieving student who feels that the class is moving too slow, or the student who needs to work at a slower place because they feel lost working through material as fast as the class does, I cannot help but wonder if there is some way to accommodate all learners in one classroom.

I can think of some situations where these students would be able to benefit from working in more diverse learner groups, and I am instantly reminded of the proverb, “Each one teach one.” During my student teaching, I had my “Academic” students engage in a fair amount of cooperative learning quite often not only because it allowed the more social students to socialize as they worked, but because it also allowed students the opportunity to teach each other. I generally planned which groups my students would work in ahead of time to ensure that the groups were balanced both behaviorally and academically. That way, a student with an IEP in English would have the opportunity to work with one of the students who was more adept at analyzing and drawing conclusions from literature, and so that student who learned at a faster pace was able to reinforce their own learning. Perhaps if students who are placed in certain classes because of tracking were integrated with a variety of learning types and levels from the start, student learning across the board would be enhanced.
Chapter 5

Teaching Tolerance

Tolerance: “The action or practice of tolerating; toleration; the disposition to be patient with or indulgent to the opinions or practices of others; freedom from bigotry or undue severity in judging the conduct of others; forbearance; catholicity of spirit.” (OED)

When I first started to think about my classroom goals, the first idea that came to mind was that I wanted students to learn about, understand, and grow to respect people whose lives were different from their own; I wanted them to learn to hold the voice of “the other” as highly as they hold their own. One way that I wanted to do this was to develop a lesson plan based on Night, Maus I & II, or Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl and examine not only racism, classism, and religiously-based discrimination, but also the way the written word gives a person the opportunity to document their views and preserve them. While I have not yet written this unit plan, I have collected a number of ideas that will help me to write such a lesson plan in the future.

I read a number of articles from NCTE’s Teaching for a Tolerant World, which I found to be an incredibly useful collection of essays and articles on how to teach tolerance in the high school English classroom. The only problem I had with this collection at first, however, was the use of the word “tolerance”. I don't like the word tolerance very much; to me, it implies putting up with someone or something without understanding them or it simply because you have to. Why would I want to teach my students to put up with something, when I could teach them understanding or acceptance and transform them into forward-thinking, progressive individuals?

During my pre-service teaching in a Basic-level English 12 classroom at an essentially rural high school in central Pennsylvania, and I was fortunate to have the opportunity to examine what teaching respect or tolerance and combating racism looks like in practice. I had one student
in particular with whom I struggled every day; this student was a self-proclaimed Hitler-loving Nazi supporter. Honestly, the first few times this student made racist comments during my lessons, I did not believe what I was hearing, and I did not know how to react; I remember one lesson in particular where he made one comment that was so offensive and out of the context of the classroom that I just stared at him. His comments infuriated and irritated me to the point that my entire lesson would be derailed. I taught one lesson where I realized afterward that I was completely out of line, and while I had good intentions with the way I handled that student, my actions backfired. During an activity where my students were working in small groups to write a script that parodied a novel they had read in class as another TV show or movie, and which they were to share at the end of the period, the student took the opportunity to create a fairly racist and somewhat offensive narrative. Early on, I talked with this student and asked him to think about how his words might make other people feel when he shares his script. When it came time for each student to share, I tried to arrange the order so that (hopefully!) time would run out before this student could share, and my teacher could handle it the next day. He volunteered to read second, so I had to let him read.

I realized that the more I resisted letting this student share his narrative in my class, let alone speak, the more insistent he became on sharing his narrative, and the more offensive his narrative became. I tried to avoid having him share his narrative, which I realize now was totally out of line, because I didn’t want his views to hold any weight in my classroom; however, by trying to silence him, I gave him and his words that much more power. I realized afterward that even though I disagreed with his views, if I had just let him go and had let the other students speak up if they had an issue with his words, the other students and this student would have learned a much more powerful lesson. By letting him speak, I would have helped him to see that his hateful words do not hold any weight and that they do not have any power to influence or intimidate the other students in the class. I would have also given the rest of the class the chance
to react to this student, and perhaps created a space in which we could discuss why these kinds of things are not ok. In trying to be a more feminist/anti-racist teacher, I inadvertently silenced not only my neo-Nazi student, but my entire class as well. So, I think in this situation, the more “feminist teacher” thing to do would have been to let my students sort out this issue, rather than try and prevent it myself.

I also realized that I can't teach people to think a certain way, nor is it my job to do so. I believe this would be counter-intuitive to the goals of teaching tolerance, and in terms of teaching the Holocaust, that would make me nearly as guilty as the Nazis who basically coerced an entire nation of people into hating a certain part of their population. That would not be right. People come from all different backgrounds and mindsets with different ways of understanding the world. I can't force students to change their world-view just because I say so.

What I can do, however, is help my students understand the suffering of many by the hands of a few. What I can do is help my students to look at the world from the perspective of people with a different point of view and whose experiences differ greatly from their own. As Ellen Scarry is quoted in *Teaching for a Tolerant World*:

> The human capacity to injure other people has always been much greater than its ability to imagine other people. Or perhaps we should say, the human capacity to injure other people is very great precisely because our capacity to imagine other people is very small. (1999)

> Literature gives us the opportunity to live and see through the lives of others, which itself is an invaluable gift; it is so easy to go through life not questioning our own view or our reactions to things because we tend to surround ourselves with people who think like we do. I think the English classroom gives us the chance to leave the comfort zone of our own thoughts and see
things the way people who are both similar to and different from us do. I think that a major component of English education is giving students the opportunity to put themselves in situations that they would not normally find themselves in and encouraging them to look at the world from alternative points of view so that they may grow to better understand who they are and their relationship to the world. We must teach our students to imagine their selves in the position of others. Perhaps this will at the very least teach them tolerance, if not understanding and accepting others.

I want my students to change their worlds, and I want to be a supportive figure that will listen to them when they need someone to talk to, and who will create an environment where they feel safe and comfortable talking about and figuring out the various issues they face in their own lives. A major theme of the things that I’ve encountered across the board throughout my college education is the difference between theory and practice, and perhaps more specifically, how our well-intended actions can actually have the negative effect that is exactly what we don’t want to happen.
Chapter 6

Romanticism, Heroism, and Feminism: A Unit on Short Stories

My major assignment during my student teaching practicum at Baldwin High School was to create and implement a 6.5 week long short story unit, which emphasized PSSA reading strategies, a number of literary elements, and reading comprehension. Because Baldwin High School purchased new textbooks for the 2009-2010 school year, I also learned that my mentor had never taught two of the nine short stories, so I would be creating the materials for these short stories from scratch. I would also have a number of new resources to use with the other short stories during the unit that were not available before. The nine short stories for this unit include: “The Devil and Tom Walker” by Washington Irving; “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allen Poe; “The Minister’s Black Veil” by Nathaniel Hawthorne; “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce; “A Mystery of Heroism” by Stephen Crane; “In Another Country” by Ernest Hemingway; “A Pair of Silk Stockings” by Kate Chopin; “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner; and “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” by Katherine Anne Porter.

In addition to this being the first complete unit I have ever created and actually implemented, what I found to be most challenging during this unit was incorporating aspects of social justice into my lesson plans. While I found it to be relatively easy to encourage my students to connect to the text through journal entries and the double-sided reading journal assignment, I found it difficult at first to help my students see how ideas such as greed, secret sin, heroism and foolery, and the roles that women play in our society are relevant to their lives. The most recently published text we read during this unit was “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”, by Katherine Anne Porter, which was published in 1930, and I was surprised to learn that the texts I thought
my students would be most excited to read, the stories about war, were actually the most arduous and painstaking.

My first foray into the practice of social justice teaching was through Washington Irving’s “The Devil and Tom Walker”, which is essentially about a man who sacrifices his soul to the Devil in exchange for profit. I wanted to make the text, which was published in 1824, more relevant and (hopefully) more interesting for my students. I decided to use a New York Times overview article on Bernie Madoff, the New York investor who began a Ponzi scheme in 1980 and stole $65 million from famous investors such as Elie Wiesel and Steven Spielberg. My students read the brief article in class, and then we discussed such questions as: “Did Madoff get the punishment he deserved? Did Tom Walker or Bernie Madoff realize what they were doing was wrong, or do you think they were blinded by circumstance? What makes a person do such a thing?” My students came away with a deeper understanding of the effect greed can have on individuals and on the world. My goal was to encourage my students to draw conclusions about the role greed plays in people’s lives and in our society, and to have them consider whether greed is learned through societal and cultural values or whether it is simply part of human nature.

The next time I felt it was appropriate to incorporate elements of social justice into my teaching was when I taught “In Another Country” by Ernest Hemingway. For this short story, I focused on the costs of war. I first had students respond to the prompt: “Some costs of war can be counted. WWI claimed the lives of about 9 million soldiers and 13 million civilians. What about the millions who survived the trauma of the bloodiest and most destructive war in history? In small groups, generate a list of the various costs of war; these costs can be fiscal, physical, emotional, or mental. Then, decide which of these costs is the most significant. Why?” We discussed these costs as a class, and then I went over key facts about World War I, including the origins of conflict, American involvement in the war, and how the war lead to the generation of people who came of age during the war to be called “The Lost Generation”. The next day, when
students had read the story, we discussed what the war cost the various characters in the story, and we determined that the war not only impeded each character’s ability to live a normal life, but it also cost them their identity, their honor, and their plans for the future. I then had students work in groups of three to create a dialogue between the narrator, the Major, and the Private with a disfigured face, which mimicked Hemingway’s style and which discussed what the war had cost each character. Had I been allotted more time to cover the story, I would have liked to have students either interview local veterans to help them develop a deeper understanding of the cost of war and to help them realize that these costs are real and not fiction.

I chose to incorporate ideas of social justice most explicitly during the last two weeks of my unit, when my students read three short stories about women; I chose to focus specifically on the roles that memory plays in women’s lives. The first story my students read was “A Pair of Silk Stockings” by Kate Chopin. In introduced the story with a webquest on Kate Chopin and Domesticity in the late 19th century. Students explore three pre-determined websites on these topics and responded to questions such as, “What was one of the most significant cultural changes at the end of the 19th century?” (There was a transformation in the perception and representation of gender roles.), and “By the turn of the 19th century, what kinds of literature were women like Chopin creating?” (They defied traditional gender roles). After students read the story, we discussed whether or not Mrs. Sommers was a good mother for choosing to spend her money on herself, rather than saving it for her children. The question about whether or not Mrs. Sommers was a good mother provoked very heated debates in each of my four classes, and the debates allowed my students the opportunity to distinguish between “good” mothers and “bad” mothers, and they loosely compared Mrs. Sommers’ behaviors to their memories of their mothers. I also defined “re-claiming” for my students: to re-claim something means, “to rescue from an undesirable state.” In this case, we decided that Mrs. Sommers was re-claiming her femininity and her identity by buying the luxurious items that she had enjoyed in her youth, but which she
could no longer afford because she had married someone less wealthy than her family. My students were initially very vocal about their negative feelings for the story, but after our discussion and in-class activities, many students shared with me that they actually enjoyed reading the story.

The next story we read was “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner. To introduce this story, I had my students respond to the prompt: “What lengths are you willing to go to live on your own terms? What one thing do you want more than anything in this world? What would you sacrifice for something that you really want? Are you willing to sacrifice everything you want to get the one thing you want most?” After students read the story they participated in a jigsaw discussion, which dealt with the major themes in the story. The Baldwin curriculum required me to cover literary criticism with the story as well, so I chose articles that focused on the images of dominance, subordination, and Emily’s appearance in general, as well as they way Faulkner uses time and the significance of Tobe’s character. Each of the three articles my students read argued that Emily chose to act the way she did in order to claim her identity and take control of her own life, and they helped my students to think about issues that reveal the more human side of Emily and to move beyond the disgust they felt when they realized that Emily was sleeping with Homer Barron’s corpse. To bring closure to our discussion of “A Rose for Emily”, I played the song “Window” by Fiona Apple, which is about a woman who knows that she did the right thing by breaking a window that distorted her view of the world. My students began to realize that Emily was reacting to Homer’s threat of leaving her in the only way that she knew how, and we discussed the ways that extreme loneliness causes people to react.

The final story that my students read was “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” by Katherine Anne Porter. My students found the style of this story to be quite difficult to understand, so I first sought to clarify the details of the story with my students; our discussion of the plot, however, quickly turned into a somber yet engaging discussion about mothers, and more
specifically the things mothers sacrifice for their children and the strength that is required to be a mother. We also discussed how their relationships with their parents have changed since they were young children. My students asked questions such as, “Why was Hapsy Granny’s favorite child? If Hapsy was her favorite, why didn’t she do anything to help save her?”, “Why wouldn’t Granny want her children to see her letters to George and John?”, and “How did Granny recover from George leaving her?”. For a Friday afternoon right before Thanksgiving, my students were incredibly engaged in the discussion. I told them to go home and tell their mothers and fathers that they love them very much. After we made a chronological list of the major events in Granny’s life, my students worked on an Open Mind Activity (see Figure 2-2), in which they drew a visual representation of Granny’s thoughts before her death to highlight the concept of stream of consciousness.

Figure 6-1: Open Mind Drawings

While I would like to incorporate issues of social justice and conversations about identity and empowerment into every lesson I teach, I have learned that some components of a traditional
curriculum do not necessarily lend themselves well to a discussion of social justice. I am now able to recognize that in some cases high school students lack the basic reading skills that are necessary to deeply analyze the plot, so that they are unable to recognize the issues of empowerment or identity that are discussed in a text. That being said, as educators we do have the opportunity to empower our students by validating their voice in the classroom, recognizing that each student is part of a larger community of learners who work together to create meaning, and by merely teaching them the skills they need to become better analysts of complex situations that they face every day or that they will face at some point in the future. Teaching social justice is not merely reading about, discussing, and working with social justice situations in the classroom; in a more abstract sense, it is about empowering our students by giving them the tools they need to become successful contributors in society.
Chapter 7

Speak: A Unit on Identity and Empowerment

In Fall 2008, I wrote a unit based on the unit by Ronnie Ficco (2005) for the novel Speak by Laurie Halse Andersen, which many schools include as part of their 9th grade curriculum; my unit in its entirety is found in Appendix B. For this unit, I have chosen to balance weighty topics, such as sexual assault and the power of cliques, with empowering activities that give students the opportunity to express themselves and explore who they are and who they want to become. I believe that this unit is important not only because it encourages students to become aware of sexual assault, but also because I feel that our culture portrays sexual assault as something that young women and young men do not have to worry about until they go off to college or they leave high school. Speak makes students aware that sexual assault does not only happen in dark alleys or once young people have left their comfort zones; rather the novel points out that sexual assault can and does happen in many communities. Speak is important because it creates a forum for students to discuss sexual assault, they way victims are perceived by their communities, and how to prevent and deal with sexual assault. I recognize that some students and parents may be uncomfortable discussing these topics, so I have chosen to focus on the empowering aspects of the novel.

The major theme I have chosen to focus on in this unit is the idea of “defying gravity”. At the beginning of the unit, I ask students to brainstorm what it means to defy gravity, and then I show them a video clip of a performance of the song “Defying Gravity” from the musical Wicked; the song is about a woman who chooses to defy society’s expectations of her in order to do what she believes is right. I focus on the idea of defying gravity, or avoiding the downward pull of society’s expectations in favor of staying true to one’s self, throughout the unit by
incorporating activities such as analyzing and discussing Maya Angelou’s poem “Still I Rise”; writing found poems that explore the main character Melinda’s mindset; writing about community issues students feel passionate about; discussing the symbolism of trees throughout the novel; and creating a tree that represents a struggle or event that students have overcome or are in the process of overcoming, just as Melinda creates a tree in the novel.
Chapter 8

“Literature Enables Us Not to Lead a Circumscribed Life”

As I come to the end the writing process for my thesis, many of my dearest friends have graduated from college and are in the process of moving on to, or trying to figure out what will be, their next big adventure. While I do wish that I had been able to walk with them in May 2009, I feel fortunate to have had the extra time to write this manifesto having finished my formal classes and while I am actually, as the Baldwin-Whitehall School District Superintendent described the teaching profession, “building airplanes in the air”. This additional time has given me the opportunity to think about what it means to learn, and what it means to be educated. Something I have realized during this process is that the most important things I have learned have grown out of conversation and community: talking with the friends I have made in class, working with groups of people whose goals are both very similar and very different to mine, seeking advice from my professors and my parents, and simply being present.

I think now that to be educated is not to have all the answers; rather, it is acknowledging that you do not have the answers to everything and that you seek the answers to your questions in others. I also think that in order to better understand ourselves in relation to the rest of the world, we must examine others’ lives and experiences. Much of this manifesto has grown out of the experiences I have had over the past four years, and most importantly, what I have learned from the relationships I have built, both professional and personal. As I embark on my next adventure—my first year of teaching—my goal as a teacher is to help students see that knowledge is not finite, that there is always more than one way to approach a situation, and that a little confidence and a lot of respect for others will help you get to where you want to be.
Appendix A

Romanticism, Heroism, and Feminism: A Short Story Unit in Three Parts

Unit Proposal

I will be teaching this unit in four Academic English 11 classes; my challenge will be adapting my teaching style and activities depending on the class period, as each of my classes have very distinct personalities. Additionally, because my students are considered the middle-level group of students in the school, I have a broad range of students including a number with Imps at one end of the spectrum, and a number of students who have opted not to take AP Literature and Composition because they have chosen to take AP math or science courses. While the challenge of this unit will be to accommodate a wide variety of learners in classes that include 28-32 students, I also believe that these challenges will help me to learn and understand the best techniques to help all of my students see the value of discussing short stories.

This purpose of teaching this unit is two-fold: to teach the technical elements of short stories, and to explore three over-arching themes in the short stories. The technical component of this unit will focus largely on identifying appropriate reading strategies for understanding the stories, as well as recognizing and analyzing literary elements in the stories, a skill that will appear on the PSSA tests my students will take this spring. Students will be exploring the over-arching themes of the dark side of humanity, the difference between heroism and foolery, and the role that memories play in women’s lives, through a double-sided reading journal assignment, which they will complete throughout the unit, and through various journal entries and discussion. My intent is for students to master the content knowledge necessary to do well on the PSSAs, as well as to develop critical thinking and questioning skills that will help them to not only create meaning from these short stories, but in their own lives as well.
I expect this unit to take about 6.5 weeks to teach, including days to review the material taught throughout the unit, and three tests spaced throughout the unit. This translates into about 32 lesson plans. I must also take into consideration that uncontrollable events, such as fire drills or in-school assemblies, may impact certain days throughout the unit, so I have budgeted for two cushion days at the end of the unit.

The unit will be broken down into three two-week mini-units: The Dark Side of Humanity; Heroism vs. Foolery; and Women and their Memories. Each mini-unit will include a review day and a mini-unit test. There are specific literary devices that I am required by the Baldwin curriculum to cover for each short story, as well as concepts that I believe students need to understand in each short story. In addition to reading check quizzes and mini-unit exams, students will reflect on these short stories in their double-sided journals, which they will turn in as a reflective portfolio at the end of the unit.

**Rationale**

This unit is essential to the 11th grade curriculum because it prepares students to identify and analyze literary elements, and it will encourage students to think critically about the themes of short stories and how they relate to our world today. First, students need to know how to identify and analyze literary elements because it enhances their ability to derive meaning from the stories. Additionally, short stories and literary elements are a large component of the PSSA tests, which students will take in April. While I do not believe that teachers should necessarily “teach to the test”, I cannot deny that student performance on PSSA testing impacts the funding that the school district receives, as well as how a school district is rated and respected at the state-wide level. Additionally, while the skills tested by the PSSAs are not necessarily always applicable in and translatable into the “real world”, some of the skills tested on the PSSAs are skills that
students need to know once they go on to higher education; therefore, I believe is my responsibility to prepare my students to do well on these tests.

Throughout the unit, students will fill out a graphic organizer in which they will identify literary elements and define them, provide examples, and cite the short stories in which they appear. This will help students to grasp the definitions of these terms and identify how they are used. Students will also complete numerous literary element-specific activities, in which they will identify the element, further analyze how the element enhances the story and how it is used, and generally become more familiar with the elements. Examples of such activities include a setting visualization activity for “The Devil and Tom Walker”, in which students will draw a map of Tom Walker’s world; a brochure of The House of Usher, in which students will explore the ways atmosphere and mood are used in Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher”; and an activity in which students will re-write a portion of “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” from another perspective, in order to emphasize point of view.

In addition to preparing students for the inevitable PSSA tests, I believe that students need to learn to identify and think critically about the over-arching themes in the short stories we will read because they are applicable to their daily lives. I will balance the technical and methodical components of this unit with many discussions of theme in the stories, as well as a number of opportunities for students to reflect on what they are learning and their thoughts on the ideas generated by the text. Students will complete a double-sided journal portfolio throughout the unit in which they will choose three quotations per short story to analyze and to help them monitor their own understanding of the short story; this portfolio will be checked each day a story is due, and students will turn the portfolio in with a final reflective journal entry at the end of the unit. Students will also compose journal entries that relate to each short story in class as part of an introduction to each short story, and they will have a number of opportunities to explore and discuss the various themes.
Pennsylvania State Standards Addressed

1.1.11 Learning to Read Independently
   A. Locate various texts, media and traditional resources for assigned and independent projects before reading.
   D. Identify, describe, evaluate and synthesize the essential ideas in text. Assess those reading strategies that were most effective in learning from a variety of texts.
   E. Establish a reading vocabulary by identifying and correctly using new words acquired through the study of their relationships to other words. Use a dictionary or related reference.
   F. Understand the meaning of and apply key vocabulary across the various subject areas.
   G. Demonstrate after reading understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text, including public documents.
      • Make, and support with evidence, assertions about texts.
      • Compare and contrast texts using themes, settings, characters and ideas.
      • Make extensions to related ideas, topics or information.
   H. Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading.
      • Read a variety of genres and types of text.
      • Demonstrate comprehension.

1.2.11 Reading Critically in All Content Areas
   B. Use and understand a variety of media and evaluate the quality of material produced.
      • Select appropriate electronic media for research and evaluate the quality of the information received.
      • Explain how the techniques used in electronic media modify traditional forms of discourse for different purposes.

1.3.11 Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature
   A. Read and understand works of literature.
   B. Analyze the relationships, uses and effectiveness of literary elements used by one or more authors in similar genres including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone and style.
   C. Analyze the effectiveness, in terms of literary quality, of the author’s use of literary devices.
      • Figurative language (e.g., personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, satire).
      • Literary structures (e.g., foreshadowing, flashbacks, progressive and digressive time).
   F. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.

1.4.11 Types of Writing
   A. Write short stories, poems and plays.
      • Include literary elements (Standard 1.3.11.B.).
      • Use literary devices. (Standard 1.3.11.C.).
   D. Maintain a written record of activities, course work, experience, honors and interests.

1.5.11 Quality of Writing
   A. Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
      • Identify topic, task and audience.
      • Establish and maintain a single point of view.
B. Write using well-developed content appropriate for the topic.
   • Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
   • Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.

F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
   • Spell all words correctly.
   • Use capital letters correctly.
   • Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
   • Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
   • Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

G. Present and/or defend written work for publication when appropriate.

1.6.11 Speaking and Listening
   A. Listen to others
   D. Contribute to discussions.
   • Ask relevant, clarifying questions.
   • Respond with relevant information or opinions to questions asked.
   • Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
   • Facilitate total group participation.
   • Introduce relevant, facilitating information, ideas and opinions to enrich the discussion.

Specific Learning Outcomes

In order to meet the specified standards, students will need to develop a basic understanding of two major concepts. First, students must be able to decipher the basic plot and identify the main characters of each story. If they are unable to do this, their basic understanding of each story will be impaired. Second, students must develop an understanding of the definition of a short story and be able to apply the various reading strategies discussed at the beginning of the unit. If students are unable to apply the reading strategies effectively, they may have a difficult time reading, analyzing, and interpreting the stories.

By the end of this unit, students will be able to analyze and reflect upon significant quotations and concepts they have encountered in each short story, as well as the ideas they have explored in each two-week mini unit they will complete throughout the six-week unit. The first mini-unit focuses on Romanticism and Gothic Romanticism, and by the end of the first mini-unit,
students will have explored the ideas of sacrifice, terror, and the masks we all wear. The second mini-unit focuses on the difference between heroism and foolery; at the end of this section of the unit, students will have composed their definition of a hero and maintained a record of their criteria for heroes and fools. The final mini-unit focuses on the relationship between women and their memories; students will explore and analyze the role that memory plays in the lives of women while discussing ideas such as self-indulgence, re-claiming ideas and customs, rejection, and self-possession.

In addition to the enduring understandings discussed previously, students will develop a set of knowledge, facts, and skills, that will not only help them as they continue to read and explore literature, but which, if applied correctly, will also help them to do well on the PSSA tests they will take in April. Students will be able to identify and analyze the effect of twelve elements of short stories, including: setting, atmosphere, mood, symbolism, point of view, flashback, irony, imagery, characterization, theme, style, and foreshadowing. Students will also be able to identify key facts about the time period and the author’s life that correspond with each short story, and they will define and practice using vocabulary in conjunction with each short story. Throughout the unit, students will also practice analyzing, reflecting upon, and critiquing the short stories via their double-sided journal assignment.

Throughout the unit, students will practice using skills, synthesizing ideas, and applying key concepts in accordance with the Pennsylvania State Standards. According to the school and community report of Baldwin-Whitehall School District that I completed, my students are expected to achieve high scores on the PSSA Reading and Writing tests this spring. Students will practice reading independently and meet the standards related to independent reading during this unit by working with vocabulary, reading on their own and applying reading strategies discussed in class, making assertions about texts, and by reading a variety of short stories. Students will also encounter electronic media at least once during this unit in the form of digital photography and art, which they will view and analyze during structured, in-class activities. Different types of
writing and student writing skills will also be emphasized throughout this unit through a variety of assignments, including in-class free-writes, double-sided reading journals, and PSSA writing practice. Students will also participate in a number of whole-group discussions and small-group activities, during which they will be required to practice their speaking and listening skills.

**Content**

In order to teach this unit, the teacher must have a wide variety of technical literary knowledge, as well as a strong background in each of the short stories we read. The nine short stories students will read during this unit include the following: “The Devil and Tom Walker”, “The Fall of the House of Usher”, “The Minister’s Black Veil”, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”, “A Mystery of Heroism”, “In Another Country”, “A Pair of Silk Stockings”, “A Rose for Emily”, and “The Jilting of Granny Weatherill”. The teacher must have detailed knowledge of the author, background of the time period in which the story was written, and the major themes of the story. It is also essential for the teacher to possess a deeper understanding of the enduring concepts and ideas from this unit.

The teacher must also possess technical knowledge of the literary elements and literary devices that students will be asked to focus on during the unit. While students have previously encountered these literary terms in other courses, the teacher must have a great deal of in depth knowledge about the function of each literary element and how it is used to enhance the overarching theme of each story in order to encourage students to develop a deeper understanding of the function of these elements.

Because students will be focusing on three over-arching themes over the course of this six-week unit, the teacher must also be knowledgeable of the finer details of each theme. The teacher must know a great detail about the definitions of Romanticism and Gothic Romanticism, the technical and connotative definitions of heroism, and the historical roles of women and how
they compare to the roles of women today. In-depth knowledge of each of these themes is essential so as to ensure that students are able to extract as much meaning as possible from the unit.

Students will also be studying vocabulary during the unit; therefore, the teacher must have thorough knowledge of the vocabulary included in the texts. This knowledge includes the part of speech, the definition, and how to effectively incorporate the vocabulary into her and her students’ working vocabulary.

**Assessment Plan**

The pre-assessment for this unit is a simple questionnaire that focuses on what students already know about short stories, and what they like about short stories. The questions include: What was the last short story you read; Why do we read short stories; What makes a great short story great; What defines a “short story”; and what genre would you read if you could choose? This pre-assessment encourages students to think about what they already know about short stories.

Throughout the unit, students will participate in whole-group discussions, present the work they complete in small groups (including a “The Minister’s Black Veil” Jigsaw Activity), and complete various assignments that will allow me to assess students’ understanding of the material. After every short story, students will complete a reading check quiz, which not only motivates them to read, but which also allows me to infer which students are reading and which students are struggling with the stories. Students will also complete a double-sided journal assignment throughout the unit that will allow me to assess how well students are monitoring their own reading and applying the reading strategies in class.

At the completion of each mini-unit during the larger six-week unit, students will take a mini-unit test, which includes approximately 20-25 multiple-choice questions depending on the
length of each story in the mini-unit, approximately 10 vocabulary questions, and a brief in-class essay that deals with one of the elements of a short story. There will be one mini-unit test for each of the following mini-units: Romanticism, Heroism and Foolery, and Women and Memory.

Students will also complete various small-scale summative assessments, including a drawing activity students will complete to convey the setting of “The Devil and Tom Walker” and a brochure assignment for “The Fall of the House of Usher”, will be graded based on evidence of understanding and how well they convey the details of the text.

Many of the minor assignments for the unit are graded based on how well students follow directions and meet the objectives I have established for the unit. Please note that at this time I am only including rubrics for assignments students will complete during the Romanticism mini-unit.

The rubrics for the major assignments are as follows:

*Double-Sided Journals* (Formal Assessment)

Journals. (8 points per story + 3 points for organization= 75 points total)

You have included three quotes from each short story we have read. Each response is five sentences in length.

Your responses show evidence of thought and insight; they do not summarize the quotation. Your journals are formatted correctly, and they are neat and legible. Your journals will also be graded on the quality of the content.

Reflective Response (10 points total)

Your response is at least one neatly hand-written page or two typed double-spaced pages. Your response describes what you have learned during this unit. Your response describes which of the short stories we read was your favorite and why. Your response describes the theme that you identified most with in the stories and why.

Total: __________/85

“The Devil and Tom Walker” Setting Activity (Informal Assessment)

The student includes details from the text in his or her drawing. ____/5

The student refers back to the text in their 7-sentence paragraph. ____/5

Total: _____/10

“The House of Usher” Sales Brochure (Formal Assessment)

Your brochure must include:

- Appropriate adjectives associated with real estate advertisements ___/3
- History of the house and previous owners ___/3
- Interior and exterior features of the home and its property ___/5
• A disclaimer alerting prospective buyers of problems, both physical and supernatural ___/3
• A visual representation of the house ___/5

Your will also be evaluated on:
• Your ability to connect to the story’s plot, character, setting, and themes ___/5
• Spelling, grammar, and punctuation ___/3
• Neatness and creativity (must be typed) ___/3

Total: __________/30

“The Minister’s Black Veil” Jigsaw Activity (Informal Assessment)
You will be evaluated on:
- Your participation and contributions to your question group.
- Your participation and contributions to your home group.
- The quality and meaningfulness of your contributions.
- Your ability to stay on task.

The administration at Baldwin High School has determined that students’ grades will be composed of 90% formal assessments and 10% informal assessments. Students will be formally assessed a total of 10 times during this unit. The major formal assessments include the three mini-unit tests, which will occur at the end of each of the three mini-units; the eight Reading Check quizzes students take each day that a new short story is due; and the Double-Sided Journal Reading Assignment, which students will complete throughout the unit. Other informal formal assessments include the “The House of Usher” Sales Brochure, a PSSA writing practice activity, a “Found Poem” activity to help students review for the Heroism and Foolery Mini-Unit Test, a literary criticism activity for “A Rose for Emily”, and a point-of-view re-write for “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”.

Students will also be informally assessed in a number of ways, including class participation, journal entries, showing that they have completed a homework assignment, their “The Devil and Tom Walker” setting activity, and the “The Minister’s Black Veil” Jigsaw Activity. Students are assessed informally daily during this unit; their minor in-class and homework assignments also contribute to their informal grade.
Daily Lesson Plans

Day 1

Performance Standards (Objectives):

(1) Students will access and discuss their prior knowledge of short stories.

(2) Students will define the major components of a short story.

(3) Students will identify the elements of a short story.

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:

• What are the characteristics of a short story?

• What experiences have you had with short stories?

• What literary elements enhance short stories and help us to create meaning?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:


• “Double-Sided Journals” Assignment Worksheet

• “Elements of a Short Story” Graphic Organizer

• “What Do You Think…?” Short Story Pre-assessment worksheet

Lesson Activities:

- Anticipatory set: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! Today we’re going to begin our short stories unit. Over the next few weeks, we’ll be reading quite a few short stories, but right now, I’m interested to know what you all already know about short stories, and what short stories you have read and enjoyed in the past. I will then pass out the “What Do You Think…?” Short story Pre-assessment worksheet and ask students to complete it. When students have completed the Pre-Assessment, we will discuss their responses as a class. (10 minutes)
Next, I will ask student volunteers to read important quotations from the short stories that we will be reading. I will explain the importance of quotations, and the general purpose of the assignment. Then I will introduce the more major assignment: Double-Sided Journals. I will pass out the assignment sheet, show examples, and go over the rubric. The double-sided journal will be checked on the day that a short story is due. At the end of the unit, students will turn in their double-sided journal as a packet. (15 minutes)

- Next we will discuss what makes a short story a short story and generate a class definition a short story. We will also discuss Poe’s Unity of Effect, if time permits (15 minutes).

- I will take the remaining time in class to introduce the elements of a short story assignment. I will pass out the “Elements of a Short Story” Graphic Organizer, which students will complete throughout the unit and turn in for a grade. Students will do this not only to enhance their ability to read literature and read it well, but also because the PSSAs emphasize literary elements quite a bit in their reading sections. Remind them that they must bring their textbook to class every day. (5 minutes)

Days 2 and 3

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- Students will identify and define reading strategies.

- Students will analyze the effectiveness of various reading strategies.

- Students will practice self-monitoring as they read.

- Students will begin to apply reading strategies.

Instructional Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What reading strategies are useful before you read, while you are reading, and after you have read a story?

- What purposes do these reading strategies serve?

- Why should we use these reading strategies?

- How do I effectively incorporate these strategies into my own reading?
Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:


- “Before, During, and After” Reading Worksheet
- “More Reading Strategies” Worksheet
- “3Read” Reading Worksheet

Lesson Activities:

Anticipatory Set: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! On Friday we defined “short stories” and discussed the major assignment you will complete throughout the unit. Are there any questions? What is a short story? (3 minutes)

-I will then ask students, “How many of you can read?” and “How many of you think you can read well?” I will explain why we are discussing these reading strategies and stress their importance. After I have explained why reading strategies are important, Students will work in pairs to brainstorm Before, During, and After strategies that they use and why they are helpful. I will check that they have their books covered at this time. Students will share their ideas as we go over each step as a class. Once this step is complete, I will pass out the “B-D-A” graphic organizer and transition to going over reading strategies in detail (5 minutes).

-Next, I will begin discussing reading strategies that we use before we begin reading. Ask students, “Based on the strategies that you all shared a few moments ago and other strategies you might have come up with on your own, which strategies might we use before we begin reading?” I will make a list of “before” strategies that students suggest on the board, and transition back to my PowerPoint and discuss the additional “Before” strategies that I have identified. After we
have discussed strategies to use “Before” we read, I will transition to discussing strategies to use “During” reading. Ask students, “Based on the strategies that you all shared a few moments ago and other strategies you might have come up with on your own, which strategies might we use while we are reading?” I will make a list of “during” strategies that students suggest on the board, and transition back to my PowerPoint and discuss the additional “During” strategies that I have identified. Finally, I will transition to discussing strategies to use “After” reading. Ask students, “Based on the strategies that you all shared earlier and other strategies you might have come up with on your own, which strategies might we use after you have read a story?” I will make a list of “after” strategies that students suggest on the board, and transition back to my PowerPoint and discuss the additional “After” strategies that I have identified. (20 minutes)

- Students will have the remaining class period to work on their outlines on Romanticism, due tomorrow, or they may begin reading/outlining Washington Irving and working on Vocabulary.

HW: Romanticism outlines due tomorrow; Vocabulary and reading on Irving due.

Transition: Have a great afternoon everyone. On Tuesday we will begin to apply these reading strategies.

Anticipatory Set: Good morning ladies and gentlemen! Could you all please pass in your outlines that were due today?

-I will begin class by reviewing the reading strategies we discussed on Monday. I will then pass out the “Before, During, and After” chart of additional reading strategies and discuss it briefly. Ask students to open textbooks to “The Devil and Tom Walker” on page 310. Go over the “before” strategies discussed on Friday together as a class. (15 minutes)

- Once we have applied the “before” strategies to “The Devil and Tom Walker”, I will pass out the “Reading Check” worksheet. As a class, we will apply it to the first few paragraphs of “The Devil and Tom Walker”. Students will read up to “…the foliage of which formed a contrast to the dark pines and hemlocks of the swamp” in the second paragraph on p. 315 for this
activity. Students will follow the directions as they are posted on the PowerPoint. Once all students are finished, we will re-convene as a class and discuss how they found this strategy. (25 minutes)

-For the remainder of the class period (10 minutes), students will begin reading “The Devil and Tom Walker”. I will check that they are beginning to apply the reading strategies while they read.

Transition: Continue reading “The Devil and Tom Walker”. It is due on Thursday. Your vocabulary definitions and sentences are due tomorrow.

Day 4

Performance Standards (Objectives):
- Students will define “Romanticism”.
- Students will identify the qualities of the Romantic hero.
- Students will identify key details in Washington Irving’s life.
- Students will reflect on the major themes of the story.
- Students will identify key concepts in the story.

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:
- What aspects of American culture influence the development of Romanticism? How do the details of Irving’s life influence his short stories?
- How do you define success? Will you sacrifice anything, including your friends, family, or your own life, to achieve your definition of success?
- Is Tom’s bargain with the Devil worth it? Could Tom have broken his agreement with the Devil if he had really wanted to? What were Tom’s motives in becoming a churchgoer?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:
- “The Devil and Tom Walker” PowerPoint.
- “Vocabulary Practice” worksheet

Lesson Activities:
Anticipatory set: Good morning! Yesterday in class we started reading “Devil” while filling out our reading strategies organizer. Would you all please take these out? Could someone remind me of some reading strategies I could use as I am reading “Devil”? (5 minutes)

Next, I will have students complete a journal activity in which they will write for five minutes on the question: “What is your definition of success? What are you willing to sacrifice for success? Are you willing to put yourself or your family members in danger to get what you want?” After about five minutes, I will have students begin to discuss some of their ideas. (10 minutes)

Next I will transition to discussing the background on Romanticism, The Romantic Hero, and Washington Irving. “I know we started reading Devil yesterday, and that you have already read a bit about Romanticism, but today we are going to go into some background on the time period in which Devil was written, when it takes place, and some of the major ideas in the text. Even though some of you got quite far into the story, I highly recommend that you re-read what you have already read tonight.” I will use the information on my “Devil” Powerpoint. Then I will discuss the key concepts in “Devil”. “In Devil, you will follow the story of...you guessed it! Tom Walker. As we’ve already seen in the first few paragraphs, Tom Walker loves money and he loves possessions. How much does he love possessions, you ask? Can anyone give me an example of what we read yesterday that might indicate how much Tom Walker loves his money?” (I’m looking for an example that has to do with how miserly Tom and his Wife are.) (10 minutes)

I will follow up the discussion on Washington Irving and Romanticism by identifying the key concepts in the story. We will have a pre-reading discussion, where I will touch on the following points: (10 minutes).

- Based on what you have read so far, what do you think the rest of the story will be about?
- Let’s look at the artwork included throughout the short story. What tone does artwork suggest about the story?
- Something we will be discussing tomorrow is the setting of the story; what do you already know about the setting? How do you feel based on what you already know? What does it suggest about the story?

I will end class with a vocabulary activity based on the vocabulary students defined for homework last night. (10 minutes)

Don’t forget! “The Devil and Tom Walker” is due tomorrow.
Days 5 and 6

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- Students will demonstrate that they have read the text through a reading check quiz.
- Students will reflect on, analyze, and discuss major themes in the story.
- Students will analyze the use of satire in the novel.
- Students will define “setting”.

Instructional Time: Approximately 75 minutes

Essential Questions:

- Was Tom’s bargain with the Devil worth it? Could Tom have broken his agreement with the Devil if he had really wanted to? What were Tom’s motives in becoming a churchgoer?
- What elements of early 19th century society does Irving satirize? How and why does he satirize these characters?
- How do we define setting? Describe the setting in “Devil”; how does the setting help to better convey the author’s message? Would the author’s message change if the setting changed?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:

- “Devil” Satire identification worksheet

Lesson Activities:
Anticipatory Set: “Good morning! For homework last night, you all finished reading Devil. Can anyone guess what that means?” I will pass out the “Devil” reading quiz and check double-sided journals during the quiz (10 minutes).

Next, I will ask students if they can define satire, and then I will give them a definition of satire. I will divide students into small groups (3-4 students) and they will complete the satire worksheet from the resource manager. We will then discuss their responses as a class. (20 minutes)

Transition: Great job today everyone! Tomorrow we will continue with our discussion of “Devil”; prepare to be creative!

Anticipatory Set: Good morning! Yesterday we discussed satire in Devil. Can anyone give me an example of something that Washington Irving satirizes in the text? (2 minutes)

I will begin class with a discussion of some of the main ideas in the text. (15 minutes):

- Did Tom achieve his definition of success?
- Do you think Tom’s definition of success changed by the end of the story? How did it change and why?
- Was Tom’s bargain with the Devil worth it?
- Could Tom have broken his agreement with the Devil if he had really wanted to?
- What were Tom’s motives in becoming a churchgoer?

Introduce the literary element “Setting”. Students should copy the definition of setting into their “Literary Elements” Graphic Organizers. Students will take the next few moments to find a sentence that describes the setting in the story. We will then go over examples of setting as a class. (10 minutes)

Next the students will complete a drawing activity to help them visualize the setting in “Devil”: “We’re going to get creative today. You all are going to work individually to draw your own representation of the setting in the Devil and Tom Walker. You can choose to do this in one of two ways: you can either draw one part of the setting, for example: Tom’s house, the swamp,
or Tom’s workplace. Or you can draw all three. Remember: this is not art class. I will not grade you on your artistic ability; however, I will grade you informally on your effort and how well you incorporate the details from the story into your drawings. I will collect these at the beginning of class on Day 7 for an informal grade.” (20 minutes)

Transition: Define the vocabulary words from “Usher” and write a unique sentence for each.

**Days 7-12**

Students will read “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe and complete a variety of activities that focus on atmosphere, symbolism, and mood. After students have analyzed the story, they will also create a real estate brochure for The House of Usher.

**Day 13**

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- Students will identify key details in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s life.
- Students will reflect on the major themes of the story.
- Students will identify key concepts in the story.

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What aspects of American culture influence Nathaniel Hawthorne’s stories? How do the details of Hawthorne’s life influence his short stories?
- How does someone become a stranger? How much does a person have to change in order for them to feel like a stranger? Does someone necessarily have to do something to you directly in order to change your relationship?
- Why does Mr. Hooper choose to wear his veil? Does the veil achieve the desired affect? Why is the subtitle of the story “A Parable”?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:
Lesson Activities:

Anticipatory set: Good morning! Today we will move on from “The Fall of the House of Usher” and begin discussing Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Minister’s Black Veil”. Please take the next few minutes to respond to the following journal prompt: “How does a friend become a stranger? Recall a time when someone close to you changed in a way that made her or him seem like a different person. Describe the change, and explain why it made you see the person so differently.” Once I have checked all of the students’ drafts and they have completed their journal entries, we will discuss their responses. (12 minutes total)

-Next I will transition to our discussion of Puritan values, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and parables using the “MBV” PowerPoint. I will present and elaborate on the following details of Hawthorne’s life:

• Hawthorne was born in Salem, Mass. His great-great-grandfather was the only judge at the Salem with trials who refused to apologize for his role. [I will explain that Hawthorne sought to dissociate himself from this great-great-grandfather.]
• Hawthorne used his work to explore the Puritan belief that people are basically sinful.
• Hawthorne is known for his use of symbolism; he often chose symbols whose meanings are ambiguous, forcing readers to think deeply about his characters and their conflicts.
• Other great works include: The Scarlet Letter, The House of Seven Gables, and The Crucible.

Then I will discuss the following Puritan values:
Puritan society was very strict, and life revolved around the Church.

Puritans valued privacy; however, Puritans also often judged the “unholy” actions of their neighbors and peers very harshly.

Puritans held the belief that people are basically sinful

Then I will define “parable”, and I will remind students to keep in mind that the subtitle of “MBV” is “A Parable”. As read, they should identify the parable in the story and think about the message Hawthorne is trying to send. (10 minutes)

- Then, we will engage in “Before” reading activities as a class. Students will answer the following questions:

  • What does the title of the story suggest? What do you think the story will be about?
  • Knowing what you already know about Hawthorne, Puritan Values, and parables, what themes might we encounter in this story?
  • Look at the pictures in the story. What do they suggest?
  • Establish a purpose for reading this story as a class: What do you want to know?

(10 minutes)

- I will end class by discussing students’ double sided journals in general; more specifically, I will emphasize why such websites as Spark Notes and their counterparts will not give them enough information to do a sufficient job on their double-sided journals. I will then pass back students’ double-sided journals while they work on a vocabulary activity based on the vocabulary they defined for homework Tuesday night. (10 minutes)

- If time permits, we will begin reading “MBV” aloud as a class.

**Day 14**

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- Students will work in small groups to interpret the symbolism of Mr. Hooper’s veil.
Students will work in small groups to identify and interpret Hawthorne’s parable.

Students will discuss their analysis as a class and support their conclusions with details from the text.

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What does Mr. Hooper’s veil symbolize? How does the congregation’s interpretation of the symbol differ from the reader’s interpretation? What details in the text support your analysis?

- Why does Mr. Hooper choose to wear his veil? Does the veil achieve the desired affect? Why is the subtitle of the story “A Parable”? What might have been Hawthorne’s intent in writing this parable?

- How does someone become a stranger? How much does a person have to change in order for them to feel like a stranger? Does someone necessarily have to do something to you directly in order to change your relationship?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:


- “The Minister’s Black Veil” reading quiz

- “The Minister’s Black Veil” Jigsaw Activity

Lesson Activities:

Anticipatory set: Good morning! I hope you all enjoyed reading “MBV” last night. You all know what we will be doing first today. Please take out your double-sided journals and a pen or pencil because we are going to take a reading check quiz. (10 minutes)
Next, I will discuss the idea of masks in “MBV”. I will show them the clip from the October 18, 2009 episode of Desperate Housewives (3:00-3:45), and we will discuss the idea of masks in people’s lives. We will discuss questions such as: Does everyone wear a mask? What kinds of masks do people wear? Why do people act one way, and then act differently privately? (5 minutes)

Once all students have completed their quiz, we will begin our jigsaw activity. I will divide students into 6 groups of 4-5. Each group will be given a question that they will answer with their groups. The group must work together to respond to the question and find examples in the text to support their response. Students will be assessed on their participation in this activity. Students will be given 20 minutes at the maximum to respond to the questions (30 minutes)

Transition: Don’t forget! “Usher” Brochures are due on Friday. Begin reviewing the short stories we have read, as well as the definitions of literary elements. The Short Story Exam I am on Friday.

Day 15

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- Students will review definitions of literary elements from the short stories we have discussed.
- Students will review key concepts in the short stories we have discussed.
- Students will work in teams to compete in a Romanticism Jeopardy Review.

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What literary elements have we discussed over the past three weeks? How are these elements used in the short stories? What are examples of these literary elements in use?
- Which details from each short story are essential to understanding the text?

Type of Assessment: Formative
Instructional Materials Used:


Lesson Activities:

Anticipatory set: Good morning! Today we are going to begin reviewing for your first short story exam, which happens when? (Tomorrow). And what three short stories have we read over the last three weeks? (2 minutes)

- I will begin the lesson by reviewing the reading strategies we discussed at the beginning of the unit, the background information we have discussed on the three authors and the time periods, and the key concepts of the stories. (8 minutes)

- Next, I will divide the students into six groups based on which question they worked on for the jigsaw activity on Day 14. Each group will choose one group member at a time to compete on behalf of the team. The winning team will get to choose the category (“Vocabulary”, “The Devil and Tom Walker”, “The Fall of the House of Usher”, and “The Minister’s Black Veil”), and then whichever team representative raises their hand first to answer the question has the opportunity to answer. If they get it right, the team receives a point; if they get it wrong, the other teams have the opportunity to answer. The questions for this activity are based on the questions from Monday’s exam. (30 minutes)

- At the end of class, students will have the opportunity to ask any other questions they have about the exam.

Day 16
Short Story Exam I

Days 17-24

Students will read “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce, “A Mystery of Heroism” by Stephen Crane, and “In Another Country” by Ernest Hemingway.

Day 25

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- Students will identify general concepts about the lives of women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Students will identify key details in Kate Chopin’s life.
- Students will reflect on the major themes of the story.
- Students will identify key concepts in the story.

Instructional Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What aspects of American culture influenced the Chopin to write in the style of Realism? How do the details of Chopin’s life influence her short stories?
- How do memories affect our lives, and more specifically, the lives of women?

Each of the stories we read about women contrasts the woman’s present life with her memories of her past; how do these memories effect each woman’s present?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:

Lesson Activities:

- Today we will begin the next section of our short story unit, which will focus on short stories about women, and the roles that memory plays in the lives of these women. What do you all know about the roles of women in the late 1800s and early 1900s? I will then go over the following general details using a PowerPoint:
• Before WWI, the primary role of women was to be a wife. Most women did not work unless they were poor, and most women’s lives revolved around the domestic and social spheres.

• Social status depended on whether or not a woman was married, how old she was when she married, and the social standing of her husband. Society expected women to “marry well”.

• Divorce was not acceptable until the late 1900s.

• The late 1800’s marked the beginning of many gains for women’s rights. Many women writers, including Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Edith Wharton, and Kate Chopin, began publishing works on the secret lives of women.

• After years of struggle and campaigning, Women gained the right to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920.

(7 minutes)

-Next, students will work individually to complete the Kate Chopin web quest, which focuses on Kate Chopin and women in late 19th century culture. I expect this to take approximately 20 minutes total. Students will visit the following websites and answer the following questions:

  • **www.katechopin.org**
    - When and where was Kate Chopin born?
    - Read a bit about Kate Chopin’s married life. Whom did she marry? What significant event led Chopin to return to St. Louis?
    - What is Kate Chopin’s most famous novel or short story? Why is it so famous?

  • **Google the following: “Domesticity in Turn of the Century Literature” and click on the link from xroads.virginia.edu**
Most readers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were women. What options as a writer did Chopin give these women?

What was one of the most significant cultural changes at the end of the 19th century?

What expectations did society have of women in the 19th century?

By the turn of the 19th century, what kinds of literature were women like Chopin creating?

Next, Google the following: “A Woman Far Ahead of Her Time” by Anne Bail Howard, and click on the www.vcu.edu link.

How does the Chopin woman differ from the women of sentimental fiction?

When Chopin writes about the private needs of women, what type of woman does she choose to write about the most?

What happened to The Awakening after it was published, according to the article?

When students have finished the web quest, they will put away their computers, and we will go over the answers as a class. (40 minutes)

Day 26

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- Students will identify and discuss major themes in “A Pair of Silk Stockings”
- Students will identify examples of imagery in the text and analyze their significance.
- Students will work in small groups to apply their knowledge of imagery to a description they will write in their small groups.

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:
Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:

- “A Pair of Silk Stockings” Reading Quiz
- “The Five Senses” Graphic Organizer

Lesson Activities:

-I will begin the next part of the lesson by collecting students’ double-sided journals and administering a reading-check quiz. When students finish the quiz, they will complete the $100 Windfall Worksheet. (10 minutes)

-First, I will go over the $100 Windfall worksheet with students. Then I will ask students to summarize the plot. I will then discuss the ways in which the description of Mrs. Sommers parallels Eve in the Garden of Eden and how that indicates she will give in to temptation, as well as how the text emphasizes human response to temptation, particularly in the way she feels the silk stockings in her hands: “But she went on feeling the soft, sheeny luxurious things—with both hands now, holding them up to see them glisten, and to feel them glide serpent-like through her fingers.” Then, students will complete the Imagery worksheet from “A Pair of Silk Stockings” Then I will ask: “Should Mrs. Sommers have given in to temptation? Was it ok for her to give in to temptation at this point in time?”

Day 27

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- What are the expected roles of 19th century women? How does Kate Chopin react to and challenge these roles? How do Kate Chopin’s characters react to these roles?
- What would you do if you discovered you were in a large possession of money? Would you save it, would you spend it, or would you do both? Is it acceptable to indulge yourself? When is it acceptable to indulge?
• Students will complete the “$500 Windfall” activity from Thursday.
• Students will define “Southern Gothic”.
• Students will reflect on the lengths they are willing to go to live on their own terms.
• Students will practice using vocabulary from “A Rose for Emily”

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:

• What lengths are you willing to go to live on your own terms? What one thing do you want more than anything in this world? (Love? Friendship? Money? Fame?)
  What would you sacrifice for something that you really want? Are you willing to sacrifice everything to get the one thing that you want most?
• Did Emily have any other options, or does she act the only way she knows how in the story?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Lesson Activities:
  - I will begin class by asking students to take out their Imagery worksheets that they completed at the end of class yesterday. We will go over these worksheets, and I will re-define Imagery and make sure that students copy these definitions into their graphic organizers. I will wrap up our discussion on imagery by reminding students that imagery is used in many examples of literature, and I will emphasize the importance of imagery in helping us to understand a character’s experience in a story. The imagery also helps to enhance the idea of re-claiming. To “re-claim” something means, “to rescue from an undesirable state.” In this case, Mrs. Sommers is re-claiming her femininity by buying into the material things that were expected of women at the time. (10 minutes)
  - Next, I will transition to our discussion on “A Rose for Emily”. “Now we are going to start discussing William Faulkner’s ‘A Rose for Emily’. Like ‘Stockings’, Emily is about a
woman who decides that she is going to get what she wants, but the way in which she does it is quite different from Mrs. Sommers”. Students will have the next five minutes to respond to the following prompt: “What lengths are you willing to go to live on your own terms? What one thing do you want more than anything in this world? (Love? Friendship? Money? Fame?) What would you sacrifice for something that you really want? Are you willing to sacrifice everything to get the one thing that you want most?” When students have finished their journals, we will share them as a class. (10 minutes)

-Next, I will go over background on Southern Gothic and William Faulkner using the “Emily” powerpoint. I will go over the following information:

Southern Gothic

• Southern Gothic stories transferred the Gothic fascination with old European castles, with their secret passages, dark halls, and trapdoors, to the crumbling estates of the pre-Civil War South.
• Characters are often mysterious, their stories macabre and tinged with insanity.
• Southern Gothics also lament for a genteel way of life that, rather than dying gracefully away, lives on in stories of twisted horror and warped dreams.

William Faulkner

• Faulkner is considered one of the literary giants of the 20th century.
• Although some critics raved about him, many others agreed with the New York Times that his South was “too often vicious, depraved, decadent, corrupt.”
• Many of his stories and novels take place in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, which is based on his own county in Mississippi.
• Faulkner’s work grew in popularity after the end of the Second World War.

Some key ideas about “A Rose for Emily”
• “A Rose for Emily” takes place in the post-Civil War South. Many Southerners tried to hold onto the tradition of Southern nobility, even after the social structure was altered by the Civil War. Pay attention to the setting!
• Keep in mind the role that marriage plays in how a women was perceived by society.
• Pay attention to details, the change in the description of Emily’s image, and the mood of the story.

(10 minutes)
- Next, students will complete the “A Rose for Emily” vocabulary worksheet, and we will go over it as a class. (10 minutes)
- For the last five minutes, we will begin reading the text.

**Days 28, 29, and 30**

Students will read the following three articles individually, and then work in groups to identify the literary elements discussed, examples of the literary elements discussed, and the main arguments in each article:


**Day 31**

Performance Standards (Objectives):

• Students will discuss two examples of criticism in small groups and share their discussions with the class.
• Students will participate in a brief whole-group discussion of the role that memory plays in Emily’s life.
Students will define stream of consciousness and identify key reading strategies in “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”.

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What lengths are you willing to go to live on your own terms? What one thing do you want more than anything in this world? (Love? Friendship? Money? Fame?)
  
  What would you sacrifice for something that you really want? Are you willing to sacrifice everything to get the one thing that you want most?

- Did Emily have any other options, or does she act the only way she knows how in the story?

- What makes a memory linger?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:


Lesson Activities:

Anticipatory set: Good morning ladies and gentleman! For the first few moments of class today, you are going to be working in pairs. Students will discuss the following literary elements in “A Rose for Emily” with their partner, and they will write down an example of the element:

- What themes does “A Rose for Emily” discuss?

- What symbol do you think is most significant in the story?

- What image do you think is the most vivid in the story?

- What detail of the setting do you think is most important?

Students will share the items that they have written down with the class. (10 minutes)

- Next, students will meet with the other students in their section who read the same article as they did. They will have 10 minutes to identify the following in the article:
• What is the main argument, or what major questions are discussed in the article?
• What literary elements does the article focus on?
• How do the discussions in the article contribute to your understanding of the story?
• What was the most significant aspect of the article?

(10 minutes)

-After 10 minutes, students will pair up with a student in the class who had the other article. They will share with each other the main argument, the literary elements, how the argument in the article contributes to our understanding, and the most significant point in the article. (10 minutes)

-I will wrap up the discussion on “A Rose for Emily” by asking students what role they feel that memories played in Emily’s life and in the choices she made. (5 minutes)

-I will then transition to the introduction of “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”. I will define the word “jilt”, and we will make a class list of the different ways that people deal with rejection. Then, I will have students sit quietly for two minutes while I pretend to do something else. After two minutes, I will have them make a list of all of the different things that they thought about. I will define “Stream of Consciousness”: “Stream of Consciousness presents the flow of a character’s seemingly unconnected thoughts, responses and sensations.” I will also give them a verbal example of stream of consciousness. Finally, I will present the reading strategies students should pay attention to as they read:

• Remember that you are reading Granny Weatherall’s thoughts- the depictions of people and events you find may not be completely reliable.
• Look for quotation marks to determine when Granny is actually speaking.
• Keep track of the twists and turns of Granny’s thoughts to understand what she is reacting to.

If there is any remaining time in the class period, students will begin reading. (10 minutes)
Day 32

Performance Standards (Objectives):

- Students will complete a reading check quiz on “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”.
- Students will identify and discuss the key details of the story.
- Students will complete an open-mind activity.

Instructional Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What makes a memory linger? Why do some memories fade away, while others stick with us?
- How do we deal with rejection?

Type of Assessment: Formative

Instructional Materials Used:


Lesson Activities:

- I will begin class with a reading-check quiz. (7 minutes)
- When all students have finished the quiz, we will discuss the plot of the story and identify the key events in Granny Weatherall’s life. Then I will ask students the following questions:

  - What is Granny’s reaction to Doctor Harry’s presence?
  - What annoys Granny about her daughter Cornelia?
  - Why is Granny concerned about the box of letters in the attic?
  - Of what time in her life is Granny most proud, and why?
  - What incident in Granny’s life troubles her deeply?
• How does Granny respond when she realizes she is dying? Why do you think she responds this way? (10 minutes)

- Then, I will play the song “Vengeance is Sleeping”, by Nek Case, which is about missing someone years and years after a relationship has ended, and students will receive a copy of the lyrics. I will ask students: Who was George? Who was John? What happened to both of these men, and how did their relationships with Granny change? How has Granny’s perception of her self changed as a result of these men? Why is Granny still so affected by her memories of these men? (8 minutes)

- Then I will re-define stream of consciousness and introduce the Open Mind activity. Students will have the rest of the class period to complete the activity. What they do not finish is for homework, but I anticipate that they will complete most of this activity in class, provided that they use their time wisely. (20 minutes)

Worksheets

“The Devil and Tom Walker”: Bernie Madoff Article

www.nytimes.com

Overview
On Wall Street, his name was legendary. Now it is infamous.

With money Bernard L. Madoff had earned as a lifeguard on the beaches of Long Island, he built a trading powerhouse that had prospered for more than four decades. At age 70, he had become an influential spokesman for the traders who are the hidden gears of the marketplace.

But on Dec. 11, 2008, Mr. Madoff was arrested at his Manhattan home by federal agents and charged in what could be the largest fraud in Wall Street history, a Ponzi scheme whose cost over 20 years was initially put at $50 billion and later at $65 billion.

On March 12, 2009, Mr. Madoff pleaded guilty to all the federal charges filed against him -- 11 felony counts, including securities fraud, money laundering and perjury. And on June 29, he was sentenced by a federal judge to the maximum prison term: 150 years. In pronouncing the sentence, Judge Denny Chin called the crimes “extraordinarily evil” and turned aside Mr. Madoff’s protestations of regret earlier in the hearing.
“I’m responsible for a great deal of suffering and pain, I understand that,” the disgraced financier told the court. “I live in a tormented state now, knowing all of the pain and suffering that I’ve created. I’ve left a legacy of shame, as some of my victims have pointed out, to my family and my grandchildren.”

Addressing his victims seated in the courtroom, he said: “I will turn and face you. I’m sorry. I know that doesn’t help you.”

In addition to the charges, the government sought at least $170 billion in forfeited assets from Mr. Madoff, a remarkable figure that apparently counts all the money that moved through Madoff bank accounts during the years of the fraud as the proceeds of illegal activities.

Mr. Madoff's lawyers have filed a letter with the court disputing that outsize figure, saying it represents all the money ever deposited in Madoff bank accounts over the years without distinguishing either legitimate business operations or the billions that were paid out to investors as part of the Ponzi scheme.

On July 14, Mr. Madoff began serving his 150-year sentence at the Butner Federal Correctional Complex, a medium-security facility about 45 minutes northwest of Raleigh, N.C.

**A Path of Financial Destruction**

Mr. Madoff left a zigzagged path of financial destruction across the world, from HSBC bank to BNP Paribas, to industry leaders and celebrities in the United States, from Elie Wiesel, the Hollywood director Steven Spielberg and the publisher Mortimer B. Zuckerman. The Wilpon family, the owners of the Mets, were investors, as had been the family real estate business of former New York governor Eliot Spitzer.

R. Thierry Magon de la Villehuchet a prominent hedge fund manager who apparently had lost $1.4 billion with Mr. Madoff, was found dead in his office on Madison Avenue on Dec. 22. The evidence pointed to suicide, the police said.

Mr. Madoff founded Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities in 1960 and liked to tell interviewers about earning his initial stake by working as a lifeguard at city beaches and installing underground sprinkler systems. By the early 1980s, his firm was one of the largest independent trading operations in the securities industry. The company had around $300 million in assets in 2000 at the height of the Internet bubble and ranked among the top trading and securities firms in the nation. According to the most recent federal filings, Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities operated more than two dozen funds overseeing $17 billion.

These funds had been widely marketed to wealthy investors, hedge funds and other institutional customers for more than a decade, although an S.E.C. filing in the case said the firm reported having 11 to 23 clients at the beginning of 2008.

**A Promise of High Returns**

Prosecutors said that Mr. Madoff - whose investors prized his steady single-digit annual returns - actually had promised select clients extraordinarily high returns, as much as 46 percent, to lure them in. One of Mr. Madoff's more prominent investors, the Fairfield Sentry fund, reported having $7.3 billion in assets in October 2008 and claimed to have paid more than 11 percent interest each year through its 15-year track record. Angry victims began to charge that funds like Fairfield, which had built profitable businesses through providing access to Mr. Madoff's investment vehicle, had failed to perform proper due diligence.
To sustain his fraud, prosecutors said, Mr. Madoff assembled an ill-trained and inexperienced clerical staff, directed them to "generate false and fraudulent documents," told lies and supplied false records to regulators, and shuffled hundreds of millions of dollars from bank to bank to create the illusion of active trading. The government said Mr. Madoff ordered multimillion-dollar bank transfers in part "to give the appearance that he was conducting securities transactions in Europe on behalf of the investors, when, in fact, he was not."

"The Minister’s Black Veil" Jigsaw Directions

Today you will participate in a jigsaw activity, which requires you to work in two different small groups throughout the class period.

1. You will be placed in a pre-determined “home” group. Each home group in our class will be assigned a color, and each person within your home group will be assigned one of the six questions we will discuss today. Please take note of what color designates your home group.

2. Once you are assigned your question, Ms. Gillen will direct you to move and meet with the members of other groups who have been assigned the same question as you. This is your question group. You will discuss your specific question within your group for a certain amount of time. Be sure to consult the text as you and your group discuss and decide on your answer. Take notes! You will be sharing this with your home group soon.

3. Next, Ms. Gillen will direct you to meet with your home groups again. You will share with your home group what your question group decided on for your specific question. As you share what your question group has concluded, your home group mates will ask you questions about and briefly discuss your specific question. Likewise, when another group member is sharing their response, you are expected to actively question and discuss the information they share with you.

4. Finally, we will reconvene as a class and discuss some of the ideas you encountered in both your question groups and your home groups.

Ms. Gillen will be monitoring each group throughout the class period. You will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Your participation and contributions to your question group.
- Your participation and contributions to your home group.
- The quality and meaningfulness of your contributions.
- Your ability to stay on task.

Jigsaw Questions

1. How does Mr. Hooper’s congregation react to his veil? What does the veil symbolize to them? Provide examples from the text.

2. Given what we know about Mr. Hooper’s reason for wearing his veil, does the veil achieve his desired effect? Provide at least three examples from the text.
3. Look at Mr. Hooper’s discussion with Elizabeth on page 469. How well does the narrator strike a balance in showing both Mr. Hooper’s feebleness and his determination? Provide examples from the text.

4. Nathaniel Hawthorne has identified this story as a parable. Identify the elements of the story that make it a parable. What might be the moral message Hawthorne is trying to communicate through the story? Provide three examples from the text.

5. The minister is an ambiguous character: he can be seen as an innocent victim of others’ fears or as a man driven to isolate himself, convinced of his own moral superiority. Identify at least two details that support each perspective. Which interpretation do you find more compelling? Use details from the text to support your answer.

6. There are two possible reasons that Mr. Hooper has chosen to wear his veil: the veil symbolizes his awareness of the secret sins of his congregation, or it symbolizes his own secret sins. Which do you believe is the case? Use details from the text to support your answer.

“In Another Country” Dialogue Activity

**Directions:** On pages 972-973, the narrator of “In Another Country” describes the relationships he develops with other men at the hospital, although there is not much dialogue in the story. In your assigned groups of three, you will create a dialogue between three of the characters listed below. You are to imagine that the three characters you choose are having a conversation about one of the major themes in the story, the cost of war, and how the theme specifically relates to their life.

- The Narrator
- The Major with the wounded hand
- The Doctor
- The Private who lost his nose during the war
- One of the three Milanese soldiers

**You will be graded on the following criteria:**

__/2 Your dialogue effectively and thoroughly discusses the costs of war.
__/3 Your dialogue incorporates details from the text to discuss the theme.
__/2 Your dialogue mimics the tone of the story.
__/3 Each character in your dialogue contributes something of substance at least three times, and the dialogue contains a total of at least 10 exchanges.

Each person in your group will receive the same grade. The dialogues will be collected at the end of this class period.

Total: ______/10 formal points
“A Rose for Emily” Jigsaw Questions

1. What role does the town play in Emily’s life? How do the townspeople view Emily? Do they like her or not? Do they feel bad for her or not? Use details from the text.

2. Did anyone in your group predict that Emily would kill Homer Barron? What events occurred earlier in the story that indicated that this might happen?

3. What was Emily’s relationship with her Father like? How did her relationship with her father impact Emily’s decisions in the story?

4. In paragraphs 1 and 2, the author speaks of buildings and structures, describing Miss Emily as a fallen monument. Where else do related images occur? If Miss Emily is a fallen monument, what is she a monument to?

5. In the beginning, Miss Emily receives a deputation from the Board of Aldermen. We already know her attitude toward taxes before this. If this anecdote does not advance the plot or offer a clue to the eventual story of Emily and her lover, what function does it serve in the story?

6. What is the conflict in this story? If Miss Emily is the protagonist (the main character for whom we are supposed to feel the most sympathy), who is the antagonist (a character or force that acts against the protagonist, denying his or her desires)?

“The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” Open Mind Activity

Directions: It is often said that right before we die, our entire lives pass before our eyes. In “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”, we read Granny’s final thoughts and reflections on the most significant events in her life. For this activity, you will create a visual representation of the Granny’s memories.

Consider the painting on p. 991 in the text when deciding how to construct your drawing. Are Granny’s thoughts compartmentalized or organized into specific groups? Or do Granny’s thoughts overlap and intertwine? Consider these questions when creating your Open Mind drawing.

Your Open Mind drawing must:
• Include at least three of the significant events in Granny’s life.
• Use only details from the text
• Be neat.

In addition to your drawing, you must write a paragraph (at least 7 sentences) to justify your drawing. Your paragraph must:
• Clearly state why you chose the events you included.
• Use details from the text to support your drawing.
• Be neat and coherent.

Remember! This is not art class. I will not be grading you on your artistic ability; rather, I will grade you on your ability to use details from the text.
This activity is worth 12 formal points, and it is due at the beginning of class on Monday.
Appendix B

Defying Gravity: A Unit on Identity and Empowerment

Goals, Projects and Rubrics

Students take responsibility for their homework.

Since reading is assigned for students to complete as homework, on three random days students will have a reading quiz at the beginning of the period. Reading quizzes will be summary quizzes (see Smagorinsky, 2002, p. 184) in which students will be asked to write a brief summary of the reading. Besides proving that they did the reading, these quizzes help bring it into students’ memory. Quizzes will be graded on a pass/fail basis, and at the end of the unit, these reading quiz grades will be averaged in with other short assignment grades. In addition to these pop quizzes, students’ reading will be assessed based on their reading journals and other brief in-class assignments, such as how they work in groups (see small group work goal below). The rubric for these pop quizzes, as well as the rubric students will receive when they get the first quiz, is below:

Reading Quiz (Title of reading goes here)

For the reading I assigned you as homework, I want you to write a brief summary of the story that proves to me that you read it. The following tips may help you generate a summary that provides ample evidence of your reading:
• Who were the characters/people in the reading?
• What did they do?
• What was/were the setting(s)? Describe some key characteristics of the setting.
• What else happened in the reading that may not have involved the characters?
• What are some key details in the beginning, middle, and end of the reading?

Rubric for Reading Quizzes
You will receive a grade of pass for your reading quiz if it proves to me that you did the reading by providing evidence of relevant details (characters, setting, plot) throughout the entire reading (beginning, middle, end). Some details may be sketchy or confused, but there is evidence that they were discovered through reading.

You will receive a grade of fail for your reading quiz if it is returned to me blank, it has material that is clearly made up (i.e. inventing a character that doesn’t exist), or it provides insufficient evidence that you did the entire reading.

- **Small Group Work**

Throughout the unit, students will have to break up into small groups of four and work together to explore a certain aspect of the novel. Sometimes the goal will be to share their writing, and other times they will work in small groups to define an idea in the novel, share their ideas for a project, or work together to create a short “found” poem. The rubric for small group work is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small Group Work: Roles and Responsibilities. Whenever we get into small groups of any kind, even pairs, there are certain behavioral expectations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Everyone must be allowed to participate and no one should dominate and squelch others’ participation. No excluding any member of a group for any length of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. You must be proactive and not need prompting to begin or to stay on task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. You must stay on topic – no discussions of outside matters, chitty chat, socializing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No interfering with other groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. You must be aware of and considerate of others and their feelings and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. For the purposes of this unit, and due to the potentially personal issues discussed throughout this unit, if a group member expresses a desire to not discuss a certain topic, group members must respect that group member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Be productive. Use the time well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rubric for small groups:**

For all your group work in this unit, I have observed that overall your group work fits the following descriptor:

- **A** = Consistently follows the above expectations.
- **B** = Very occasionally falls short on one or more of the criteria.
- **C** = One of the criteria characterizes your involvement in group activity.
- **D** = Most of your involvement is violating an expectation
- **F** = You were an antisocial presence or entirely unproductive

- **In-Class Writing and Self-Reflection**

Throughout this unit, students will complete a total of 8 in-class journal entries that ask students to reflect upon the readings, define an idea in the novel, or write letters from various
perspectives to explore character development in the novel. Students will also be asked to reflect upon the different conflicts and figures of authority that weigh upon and have influences upon the speaker (and adolescents in general); question the possible consequences upon the speaker of these influences; and explore and reflect upon these influences via multiple and varied genres through explorative writing. To gauge how well students’ journal entries fulfilled the requirements of in-class writing, they will compile a writing portfolio, due the last day of the unit.

The rubric is as follows:

**Writing Portfolio Assignment**

Throughout the unit you have had lots of experiences with writing and other art forms. In response to Speak, you have produced a variety of pieces of writing, art, and other forms of expression. Presumably, you have learned something about yourself, the literature, how to write, how to read, and other things.

Prepare a portfolio in which you reflect on two pieces that have resulted in your most valuable learning during this unit. We will call these things exhibits. The exhibits you present do not need to be your best work, and you will not need to worry about being graded on the quality of final drafts—we’ve already been through that with your smaller writing assignments. Rather, you will be graded on how carefully you reflect on what you learned from producing them. Often, we learn the most from our rough drafts, our frustrated efforts, and other experiences that do not yield our best products.

When you turn in your portfolio, you will also have prepared a one-page reflection piece (which we will work on in class!) in which you state your definition of defying gravity, reflect on what you have learned this unit, and how your journals relate to the idea of defying gravity. In addition to reflecting on two pieces and a reflection, you will be asked to turn in your journals from the entire unit. As I mention below, remember that your journals can be about anything you want, but they must relate to the prompt and the readings for that day (i.e. please don’t write about your dog or spaceships or who won this weekends’ football game if it does not relate to the
reading in some way!). Additionally, I am required to report any thoughts of or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors. That being said, enjoy writing in your journals! I am excited to read your thoughts on this novel and the issues related to this novel. Be creative!

**Please keep the following information in mind as you complete your in-class writing assignments:**

Your thoughts can originate from anywhere: from yourself, from the reading, from your classmates, or from anything we talk about in class. Your writing is an open-ended response to all our experiences throughout the unit, and it’s OK if you write about unanswered questions, mysteries, or things that blow your mind. The following tips will help you organize your journal. Please read the accompanying rubric! There’s no reason why everyone can’t earn an A for this assignment!

- Your journal doesn’t have to follow conventional, textbook English—neither usage (grammar) nor mechanics. I’m more concerned with getting an idea of the things you’re thinking about. Think about all the things Melinda is going through, think about the way the book looks at high school life, but please don’t think about how perfect your writing is! However, keep in mind that I must at least be able to understand it, and I must be able to read it. Be neat!

- Your response may consist of personal opinions, related issues, related experiences, and criticism of the reading, and it can be drawn from the reading and from class discussion.

- I will be collecting your journals at the end of the unit.

- I will be reading your journals, not merely skimming them. Keep in mind that I am required to report any thoughts of or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.

**Your portfolio should include:**

- A **title page** with name and date

- A **one-paragraph introduction to your portfolio** that briefly summarizes how your reflections mirror what you learned in this unit.

- The reflections, found poem, and letters you wrote in class. *You do not have to type these up before you turn them in.* Your portfolio may include additional exhibits from outside of class if you wish.

- **Select two pieces** from all of your reflections that you feel best illustrate what
this unit meant to you. **Write a one-paragraph summary for each of these selected pieces** that indicate why you chose these pieces.

- **A longer reflection paper (1 page minimum)** in which you state your definition of defying gravity, reflect on this unit, and how your journals relate to the idea of defying gravity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeliness</strong></td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in on time.</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in on time.</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in on time.</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in on time.</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in after due date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction to Portfolio</strong></td>
<td>Introduction summarizes what the student has learned about defying gravity in the unit.</td>
<td>Introduction summarizes what the student has learned about defying gravity in the unit.</td>
<td>Introduction makes some reference to defying gravity in this unit.</td>
<td>Introduction makes no reference to defying gravity in this unit.</td>
<td>The introduction does not exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title Page and Reflections</strong></td>
<td>The title page and all journal entries are included in submission.</td>
<td>The title page and all journal entries are included in submission.</td>
<td>The title page and most journal entries are included in submission.</td>
<td>The title page is included, but less than half of journal entries are included in submission.</td>
<td>The title page is missing but less than half of journal entries are included in submission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two Focus Pieces and Accompanying Paragraphs</strong></td>
<td>Time has clearly been put into choosing two appropriate pieces, and summaries draw appropriate conclusions as to why they were chosen.</td>
<td>Time has been put into choosing two appropriate pieces, and summaries draw appropriate conclusions as to why they were chosen.</td>
<td>The student has chosen two pieces and written two summary pieces, but has not necessarily made it clear why the pieces were chosen or how they demonstrate learning.</td>
<td>The student has either not chosen two pieces or has not written two summaries.</td>
<td>The student did not choose two pieces or write any summaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Portfolio Reflection Paper</strong></td>
<td>Paper is at least 1 page</td>
<td>Paper is at least 1 page</td>
<td>Paper is at least 1 page</td>
<td>The paper does not meet length</td>
<td>The paper does not meet</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• **Final Culminating Text: Art as Self-exploration, Self-identification, and Communication**

For the final culminating text, I wanted to give an option that is open-ended and fun for the students. For their final project, students will create a tree of their own, just as Melinda, the narrator of *Speak*, creates throughout the novel. Students will have to provide a rationale, in the form of a short essay, which explains the meaning and inspiration behind their tree, and they must relate it to a current issue (which must be recognizable and obvious to the viewer), and the reasoning behind how this current issue relates to the design of their tree must be clear. In the process, they will have accomplished our primary unit goal—“defying gravity”, or the value of self-expression. As I mentioned in my rationale, our society for the most part views certain events or conditions, such as rape, depression, abuse, etc., as things that should be kept hidden. This tree project allows students to explore their selves and their identity through an alternative medium—art—while emphasizing the idea that an opportunity to speak may come in the form of verbal communication, visual art, the written word, and other forms of expression. Additionally, this project encourages students to reflect upon and express their own feelings and emotions about
their teenage experience in a non-traditional, artistic means, and teaches them to express and relate the reasoning/ symbolisms behind the artistic project in a written format. The rubric is as follows:

**Multimedia Tree Art Project**

Throughout this unit, we will be talking about the idea of defying gravity. In nature, trees are the ultimate examples of defying gravity- they grow to be very tall, they withstand high winds and storms, and they maintain their balance despite their branches growing in every direction. In class, we talked about the significance of Melinda‟s tree assignment and what the tree itself and different parts of the tree might symbolize in terms of the journey the speaker has made in her life during the time span of the book. For this project, you will be creating your own tree.

Get creative with this project; this is an opportunity to express your self. Think about an experience you have had in your life, or something that you are going through right now, that has changed who you are as a person or how you look at the world around you. Create your own tree like the one Melinda made in the novel. I encourage you to think outside the box and use unconventional materials- paint, colored pencils, yarn, wood, old toys, magazine and newspaper clippings- whatever helps the viewer better understand you. Depending on where you are in your experience, your tree can be a sapling, just starting out, or a big, strong oak, or a tree in the dead of winter, or a tree just beginning to flower with the coming of spring.

You will also be required to “back up” what your tree means and what it symbolizes with a written paper of some sort. It can be an essay, a poem, a song, whatever form you can express yourself best with, as long as it clearly expresses how this piece of artwork relates back to your life. In this piece of writing, be sure to define what particular “journey in life” you are referring to, and why/how this tree symbolizes or defines that journey. (If you are confused, think about the speaker‟s journey as coming to terms with what happened to her by finally opening up and speaking about her assault and facing the boy who did it.) **Don‟t forget to read the rubric! There is no reason why not everyone should get an A on this project.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade:</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art Project</strong></td>
<td>Project follows directions; is a tree of some sort.</td>
<td>Project follows directions; is a tree of some sort.</td>
<td>Project follows directions; is a tree of some sort.</td>
<td>Project does not follow directions; is not clearly a tree of some sort.</td>
<td>Project does not follow directions; is not clearly a tree of some sort.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The tree is neat; time has clearly been put into the creation of the tree.</td>
<td>The tree is neat; time has been put into the creation of the tree.</td>
<td>The tree is neat; some time has been put into the creation of the tree.</td>
<td>There is evidence that little to some time has been put into this tree, but it is not neat.</td>
<td>There is little evidence that time has been put into this tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The tree clearly tells a story; the design is unique and innovative.</td>
<td>The tree clearly tells a story; the design of the tree corresponds with the intent of the story.</td>
<td>The tree clearly tells a story; the student made an effort in creating the tree.</td>
<td>Little to some effort was put into creating the tree; no evidence of story or direction.</td>
<td>The tree does not tell any story, no signs of effort were put into tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paper</strong></td>
<td>Life experience is very clearly mentioned in paper.</td>
<td>Life experience is clearly mentioned in paper.</td>
<td>Life experience is mentioned in paper.</td>
<td>Life experience is not clearly mentioned in paper.</td>
<td>Life experience is not mentioned in paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paper clearly identifies how the tree both symbolizes and relates to the experience.</td>
<td>Paper identifies how the tree both symbolizes and relates to the experience.</td>
<td>Paper only identifies one or the other of how the tree both symbolizes and relates to the experience.</td>
<td>Paper does not do a good job of identifying how the tree both symbolizes and relates to the experience.</td>
<td>Paper does not identify how the tree symbolizes or relates to the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The paper is clearly thought out and the reader can easily make the connection between how the tree relates back to the life journey.</td>
<td>The paper is clearly thought out and the reader can make the connection between how the tree relates back to the life journey.</td>
<td>The paper is thought out and the reader can distinguish a connection between how the tree relates back to the life journey.</td>
<td>The paper is not very thought out and the reader cannot distinguish a connection between how the tree relates back to the life journey.</td>
<td>The paper is rushed and does not make any connection back to a life journey.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Daily Lessons

Day 1 of Unit

Objectives: To introduce the unit; to introduce the novel *Speak*; to establish expectations for the unit; to introduce the theme of the unit; to encourage students to think about what it means to “defy gravity”; to encourage students to think about internal conflict over speaking out or remaining quiet; to introduce major topics in the novel; to encourage personal inquiry; to inform students of the serious nature of some topics in this novel; to establish expectations for large-group discussions; to get students thinking about their own high school experiences; to establish the classroom as a safe community space.

Rationale: This lesson is part of a larger unit that focuses on the idea of defying gravity through the novel *Speak*. The aim of this unit is to get students to think critically about their own high school experiences, the value of every individual’s voice, how our society reacts to events such as and similar to sexual assault, and their own coming of age experiences. This particular lesson will introduce the theme of defying gravity, introduce key themes in the novel, and establish a safe community space where discussion of the themes in the novel can take place. This lesson also sets a precedent for encouraging students to speak their thoughts throughout the unit as well as establishing the need for students to listen to their peers.

PA State Standards:

1.1.11 D. Identify, describe, evaluate, and synthesize the essential ideas in text.
1.1.11 G. Demonstrate after reading understanding interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text; make extensions to related ideas, topics, or information.
1.3.11 A. Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas.
1.4.11 D. Maintain a written record of activities, course work, experience, honors, and interests.
1.6.11 A. Listen to others
1.6.11 B. Listen to selections of literature (fiction or nonfiction)
1.6.12 E. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.

5 Minutes: First I will introduce the lesson by playing the clip of “Defying Gravity” from the musical Wicked. I will ask if any of the students have seen it, and I will briefly explain the context of the song and pass out a hard copy of the lyrics. I will emphasize the differences between Glinda and Elphaba and talk about why Elphaba is being persecuted: she is struggling to figure out if she should speak out against something that she knows is wrong or if she should just keep her mouth shut because its easier to not confront everyone in Oz.

5 minutes: Watch “Defying Gravity” clip from Wicked. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3g4ekwTd6Ig

5 minutes: Students will briefly discuss the video. I will ask the following questions:
Why doesn’t Glinda choose to go with Elphaba? What do you notice about Elphaba at the end? How has she changed just in the song?

I will allow students time to react to the video through discussion and then gradually transition into introducing Speak and how it relates to the idea of defying gravity. I will point out that this book talks about a lot of tough issues teens face, but I will remind students to keep the idea of defying gravity in the back of their mind as they read.

7 Minutes: Next, I will pass out hard copy of question set (Worksheet 1). Students will respond to the following prompt by following these directions:

Each of the following statements expresses an opinion. Rate each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Then, write one sentence on why you feel that way.

1. My goal during high school is to be popular.
2. Being diagnosed as “depressed” is just making excuses to feel sorry for yourself.
3. I “dropped” one of my best friends from elementary or middle school because he or she is not in my group of friends anymore.
4. If a person is raped, it’s his or her own fault.
5. If I saw someone without any friends sitting alone at lunch, I might not invite him or her to sit with me because I’d be afraid of what my friends would think.
6. I think that our mascot plays a really important role in our identity as students here at our school.
7. I often feel that the person I seem like on the outside and the person I am on the inside
are two very different people.
8. I just want people to think I’m “cool”.

Be aware that we will be getting in groups to discuss our feelings on these statements, but that you will be allowed to choose which subject(s) from the survey you wish to bring up in the group discussion; you are not required to talk about or share your thoughts on any personal subject that is uncomfortable for you to discuss in groups.

10 Minutes: I will initiate a large group discussion on the questionnaire and establish the expectations for this large group discussion:

• Be respectful of one another
• Stay on task
• Participate
• If someone expresses an interest in not talking about something, that is ok. Respect their request, no questions asked.
• Whatever information of a personal nature is shared in this room, stays in this room. I encourage students to talk about these issues in general outside of my class, but if a classmate shares anything personal, it is absolutely not allowed to discuss any details outside of the class.

I will start the discussion by focusing on questions 1 and 8. As the discussion progresses, students will guide the discussion, but I will steer the discussion so that it focuses on the themes of popularity and friendship and remains sensitive to other “heavy” topics in the discussion. Because of the sensitive nature of some of these questions, students do not necessarily have to share their opinions; however, a student will be assessed for whether or not they demonstrate active listening and engagement with the discussion.

3 minutes: Homework: Read up to p. 30, up to “The Opposite of Inspiration is…Expiration?”

Day 2
The first part of class will be devoted to explaining the writing portfolio project (Worksheet 2). At the end of the unit, students must submit a one-paragraph introduction to their writing journal, and a one- to two-page reflection paper on their journal. Journal Entry: In their reading journal, students will respond to the prompt, “What does it mean to defy gravity? What is your definition of the word “speak”? What are different ways we can “speak” about things we feel strongly about? Share responses in small groups. Next, we will have a large group discussion of definition of defying gravity, what it means to speak. If time permits, discuss “Ten lies they tell you in high school”:

10 Lies They Tell You in High School

1. We are here to help you.
2. You will have enough time to get to your class before the bell rings.
3. The dress code will be enforced.
4. No smoking is allowed on school grounds.
5. Our football team will win the championship this year.
6. We expect more from you here.
7. Guidance counselors are always available to listen.
8. Your schedule was created with your needs in mind.
9. Your locker combination is private.
10. These will be the years you look back on fondly.

Do students agree? **Homework:** Read up to p. 46 “The Nightmare”

**Day 3**

I will begin with Pop Summary Reading quiz #1: Summarize last night’s reading- 10 minutes. After the quiz is over, students will respond to the following prompt: “Obviously something terrible happened to Melinda. What do you think it could be? Why do you think this? Use specific examples from the text.” in their reading journals. Students will break into small groups to share their journals and brainstorm what might have happened to Melinda. Then we
will have a large group discussion on what they think might have happened, and why they think that. Homework: Read up to page 72 “Winter Break”.

Day 4

Objectives: To assess how well students are reading; to encourage students to visualize Melinda’s closet; to relate Melinda’s closet space to her personality and her mental state; to encourage students to relate *Speak* to outside texts; to examine poetry as a form of expression and communication; to relate outside texts to the theme of defying gravity; to begin to examine important symbols in the novel; to establish standards for large-group discussion.

Rationale: This lesson is part of a larger unit that focuses on the idea of defying gravity through the novel *Speak*. The aim of this unit is to get students to think critically about their own high school experiences, the value of every individual’s voice, how our society reacts to events such as and similar to sexual assault, and their own coming of age experiences. This particular lesson will examine Melinda’s closet space in the school as her safe space, and also establish the significance of major symbols in the novel by examining the importance of the Maya Angelou poster in the closet. This lesson will also encourage students to connect the text to other texts, and thus encourage them to examine their relationships to themes in the text.

PA State Standards:

1.1.11 D. Identify, describe, evaluate, and synthesize the essential ideas in text
1.1.11 H. Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading
1.3.11 A Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas
1.3.11 D. Analyze and evaluate in poetry the appropriateness of diction and figurative language.
1.3.11 F. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.
1.5.11 G. Present and/or defend written work for publication when appropriate
1.6.11 A. Listen to others
1.6.11 B Listen to selections of literature (fiction and non-fiction). Relate them to previous knowledge.
1.6.12 E. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations

5 Minutes: Talk very briefly about the idea of people hiding things in the closet:
“everyone has skeletons in their closet”. What purpose does Melinda’s closet serve? Why does she choose to hide her things in the closet? What kinds of things is Melinda hiding? What is the significance of Melinda hiding such things in her closet? (It is a place for her to hide away and perhaps also to truly express herself. It becomes her “safe space” in the novel because it is hers.)

7 Minutes: Students will draw Melinda’s closet to indicate how well students are reading and visualizing the text. Higher-level readers will tend to draw more elaborate and detailed drawings, whereas students who are either not reading or who are not strong readers will tend to include less detail, and especially less imagined detail. Students must also write a brief written explanation of what they have included in their drawings.

5 Minutes: Students will share drawings of Melinda’s closet in small groups. After students are done sharing, collect drawings to analyze how well students are reading based on the details of the drawings.

10 minutes: Transition, and introduce Maya Angelou’s poem, “Still I Rise” (Worksheet 3). Point out the important fact that Melinda hangs a poster of Maya Angelou in her closet. Angelou was sexually abused when she was 7 years old, and after her attack she did not speak again until she was 13. Now she is a famous poet. Tell students to think about Melinda’s relationship to the meaning of this poem, how they feel it relates to the novel, and what the symbol of Maya Angelou in Melinda’s closet might mean to the rest of the novel. View video clip, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4FLuo2oyhI&feature=related, or just read it if pressed for time.

10 minutes: Students will participate in a large group discussion about how this poem relate to the idea of defying gravity. How do we think this poem might relate to Melinda? Based on this poem and what we know about Melinda’s closet, do you think Melinda knows this poem? What does the presence of the Maya Angelou poster and this poem make you think about the outcome of this novel? Students will be assessed for participation based on their engagement with the reading of the poem and how well they participate in the large group discussion.
2 minutes: Assign **Homework**: Read up to “Dark Art” p. 92. If time permits, students will read in class.

**Day 5**

**Objectives**: To examine closely key chapters in the novel; to encourage students to relate *Speak* to outside texts; to examine poetry as a form of expression and communication; to create art in small groups; to work in small groups; to relate outside texts to the theme of defying gravity; to begin to examine important symbols in the novel; to establish standards for large-group discussion.

**Rationale**: This lesson is part of a larger unit that focuses on the idea of defying gravity through the novel *Speak*. The aim of this unit is to get students to think critically about their own high school experiences, the value of every individual’s voice, how our society reacts to events such as and similar to sexual assault, and their own coming of age experiences. This particular lesson serves as a precursor to the multimedia tree project students will complete this unit because it encourages them to borrow elements from the text to create a new poem. This lesson also asks students to closely examine the text of the novel and create new meaning from the text.

**PA State Standards:**
1.1.11 D. Identify, describe, evaluate, and synthesize the essential ideas in text  
1.1.11 H. Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading  
1.2.11 C Produce work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of that genre.  
1.3.11 A Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas  
1.3.11 D. Analyze and evaluate in poetry the appropriateness of diction and figurative language.  
1.3.11 F. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama.  
1.4.11 A Write short stories, poems, or plays.  
1.5.11 G. Present and/or defend written work for publication when appropriate  
1.6.11 A. Listen to others  
1.6.12 E. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations

5 minutes: I will begin by passing out the handout for “Found Poems in *Speak*” (**Worksheet 4**). Students will have 20 minutes to create a “found” poem in small groups using words and phrases from the following chapters: “Burrow” (p.24), “The Opposite of Inspiration is…Expiration?”
(p.30), “Closet Space” (p. 50), “Wishbone” (p.60), “Peeled and Cored” (p. 65), “Winter Break” (p.70), “Coloring Outside the Lines “(p. 77), and “Dark Art” (p.91). I will emphasize that they only have to be a few lines long.

20 minutes: Students work individually on their found poems. These will be included as part of their writing portfolio.

10 minutes: Students will share their found poems with the rest of the class.

5 minutes: Briefly discuss the value of found poems- you can make meaning out of a group of seemingly un-related phrases, they help students to connect different parts of the text, they can create their own voice through the character’s voice.

**Homework:** Read up to p. 104, “Stunted”.

**Day 6**

I will begin class with a discussion about the symbolism of trees: “Why is Melinda having such a hard time creating her tree? What do trees stand for? How do we think Melinda’s progress with her tree reflects who she is? How do trees relate to Defying Gravity?” (They grow up!) I will introduce the “Defying Gravity” projects (Worksheet 5): students will create a multimedia portfolio of their tree. I will show them an example: my trunk is a poem, what makes the leaves? The branches? Have each student free write for the remainder of class about what kind of tree they might be, what components might make up their tree.

**Homework:** Read up to p. 116 “Miss”

**Day 7**

Journal Entry: In letter format, students will write about a community issue they feel passionate about. Students will break into small groups and share their free-writes with one another. These letters will be collected and published in a separate book, and be made available in the library or given to the principal. The remaining portion of class will be a brief discussion on what is happening in the book; I will remind them of defying gravity theme. If time permits, students will begin reading for homework. **Homework:** Read up to p. 137 “A Night to Remember”
Day 8

I will start class by playing “Defying Gravity” from Wicked. Students will participate in small group discussions on what happened in the book. Then students will respond to the following prompt: Free-write on events in the book and the small group discussions. The class will then be opened to large-group discussion. Students can ask questions or share their responses if they would like. Remind students of community resources should something like that happen to them, and that they can always come to the teacher. The remainder of the class period is for tree time.

Homework: Read up to p. 152 “My Life as a Spy”.

Day 9

I will facilitate a brief class-wide discussion on weekend’s reading, focusing on the Andy-Rachelle relationship. Students will write letters to Rachelle from Melinda’s perspective, and then share them in small groups. These letters will become part of the writing portfolio. The last ten minutes will be devoted to tree time. Homework: Read up through p. 162 “The Beast Prowls”.

Day 10

Students will participate in a jigsaw discussion activity for the entire class period. I will go over the directions for the activity, and then students will break into groups and spend eight minutes at each station. The topics for the jigsaw include: Trees, Friendships, Popularity, Spaces (Closets, Bedrooms, Personal Space)

I will end class by reminding students that Trees are due on Day 14 and portfolios are due on Day 15. Homework: Finish Speak (up to p. 170) and gather items for tree to bring to class.

Day 11

TREE DRAFTS DUE! Students will share what they have of their trees so far with their partner. Then students will respond to the end of Speak in their reading journals. They will respond to the questions: “How do you feel? What do you think about Melinda? How does the end of the book to the idea of defying gravity, and how does Melinda defy gravity?” This is the last portion of the reading/writing portfolio, so they should be sure to examine the idea of defying gravity, and
reflect on their experience with the novel as a whole. Students will share their responses in small groups. **Homework:** Trees are due on Day 14. Portfolios are due on Day 15. Work on both of these at home.

**Day 12**

Students will watch the clip of final scene from Speak film. Large group discussion: re-define Defying Gravity. How does Melinda defy gravity? Each group will write a new definition of “Defying Gravity”. Second half of class: Write 1-page reflection piece for portfolio. **Homework:** Trees are due in three days! Work on Trees and finish 1-page reflection.

**Day 13**

Writing day: Tree projects are due on Day 14 (tomorrow). In computer lab (or similar), students write about their trees for their writing portfolio. See rubric for requirements. **Homework:** Finish trees, which are due on Day 15. Finish portfolio tree reflection. Portfolios are due on Day 14.

**Day 14**

Tree day! Students bring in nearly completed trees, and I will provide any materials that might help them to finish their trees The whole class period will be devoted to tree time. During this time, students can also ask questions about their tree projects and their tree papers. **Homework:** Trees are due tomorrow. Complete anything that is not completed.

**Day 15**

Students turn in tree projects. The first thirty minutes of class is for tree presentations- each student briefly talks about their trees- they don’t have to go into any great detail, just give a one-minute synopsis of what their tree represents. Last ten minutes is a large-group discussion wrapping up the unit.
Worksheets

Worksheet 1

Each of the following statements expresses an opinion. Rate each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Then, write one sentence on why you feel that way.

1. My goal during high school is to be popular.
2. People who are “depressed” are just making excuses to feel sorry for their self.
3. I “dropped” one of my best friends from elementary or middle school because he or she is not in my group of friends anymore.
4. If a person is raped, it’s his or her own fault.
5. If I saw someone without any friends sitting alone at lunch, I would invite him or her to sit with me, despite what my friends might say.
6. I think that our mascot plays a really important role in our identity as students here at our school.
7. I often feel that the person I seem like on the outside and the person I am on the inside are two very different people.
8. I just want people to think I’m “cool”.

Be aware that we will be getting in groups to discuss our feelings on these statements, but that you will be allowed to choose which subject(s) from the survey you wish to bring up in the group discussion; you are not required to talk about or share your thoughts on any personal subject that is uncomfortable for you to discuss in groups.

Worksheet 2

Writing Portfolio Assignment

Throughout the unit you have had lots of experiences with writing and other art forms. In response to Speak, you have produced a variety of pieces of writing, art, and other forms of expression. Presumably, you have learned something about yourself, the literature, how to write, how to read, and other things.

Prepare a portfolio in which you reflect on two pieces that have resulted in your most valuable learning during this unit. We will call these things exhibits. The exhibits you present do not need to be your best work, and you will not need to worry about being graded on the quality
of final drafts—we’ve already been through that with your smaller writing assignments. Rather, you will be graded on how carefully you reflect on what you learned from producing them. Often, we learn the most from our rough drafts, our frustrated efforts, and other experiences that do not yield our best products.

When you turn in your portfolio, you will also have prepared a one-page reflection piece (which we will work on in class!) in which you state your definition of defying gravity, reflect on what you have learned this unit, and how your journals relate to the idea of defying gravity. In addition to reflecting on two pieces and a reflection, you will be asked to turn in your journals from the entire unit. As I mention below, remember that your journals can be about anything you want, but they must relate to the prompt and the readings for that day (i.e. please don’t write about your dog or spaceships or who won this weekends’ football game if it does not relate to the reading in some way!). Additionally, I am required to report any thoughts of or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors. That being said, enjoy writing in your journals! I am excited to read your thoughts on this novel and the issues related to this novel. Be creative!

Please keep the following information in mind as you complete your in-class writing assignments:

Your thoughts can originate from anywhere: from yourself, from the reading, from your classmates, or from anything we talk about in class. Your writing is an open-ended response to all our experiences throughout the unit, and it’s OK if you write about unanswered questions, mysteries, or things that blow your mind. The following tips will help you organize your journal. Please read the accompanying rubric! There is no reason why everyone can’t earn an A for this assignment!

- Your journal doesn’t have to follow conventional, textbook English—neither usage (grammar) nor mechanics. I’m more concerned with getting an idea of the things you’re thinking about. Think about all the things Melinda is going through, think about the way the book looks at high school life, but please don’t think about how perfect your writing is! However, keep in mind that I must at least be able to understand it, and I must be able to read it. Be neat!

- Your response may consist of personal opinions, related issues, related experiences, and criticism of the reading, and it can be drawn from the reading and from class discussion.

- I will be collecting your journals at the end of the unit.
• I will be reading your journals, not merely skimming them. Keep in mind that I am required to report any thoughts of or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.

Your portfolio should include:

• A title page with name and date

• A one-paragraph introduction to your portfolio that briefly summarizes how your reflections mirror what you learned in this unit.

• The reflections, found poem, and letters you wrote in class. You do not have to type these up before you turn them in. Your portfolio may include additional exhibits from outside of class if you wish.

• Select two pieces from all of your reflections that you feel best illustrate what this unit meant to you. Write a one-paragraph summary for each of these selected pieces that indicate why you chose these pieces.

• A longer reflection paper (1 page minimum) in which you state your definition of defying gravity, reflect on this unit, and how your journals relate to the idea of defying gravity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in on time.</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in on time.</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in on time.</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in on time.</td>
<td>Student turns portfolio in after due date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Portfolio</td>
<td>Introduction summarizes what the student has learned about defying gravity in the unit.</td>
<td>Introduction summarizes what the student has learned about defying gravity in the unit.</td>
<td>Introduction makes some reference to defying gravity in this unit.</td>
<td>Introduction makes no reference to defying gravity in this unit.</td>
<td>The introduction does not exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title Page and Reflections</td>
<td>The title page and all journal entries are included in submission.</td>
<td>The title page and all journal entries are included in submission.</td>
<td>The title page and most journal entries are included in submission.</td>
<td>The title page is included, but less than half of journal entries are included in submission.</td>
<td>The title page is missing but less than half of journal entries are included in submission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Focus Pieces and Accompanying Paragraphs</td>
<td>Time has clearly been put into choosing two appropriate pieces, and summaries draw appropriate conclusions as to why they were chosen.</td>
<td>Time has been put into choosing two appropriate pieces, and summaries draw appropriate conclusions as to why they were chosen.</td>
<td>The student has chosen two pieces and written two summary pieces, but has not necessarily made it clear why the pieces were chosen or how they demonstrate learning.</td>
<td>The student has either not chosen two pieces or has not written two summaries.</td>
<td>The student did not choose two pieces or write any summaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Reflection Paper</td>
<td>Paper is at least 1 page long, defines defying gravity, and shows evidence of careful thought about what they learned in this unit and how the journals relate to defying gravity.</td>
<td>Paper is at least 1 page long, defines defying gravity, and shows evidence thought about what they learned in this unit and how the journals relate to defying gravity.</td>
<td>Paper is at least 1 page long, but leaves out one of the following components: definition of defying gravity, evidence thought about what they learned in this unit and how the journals relate to defying gravity.</td>
<td>The paper does not meet length requirement, and leaves out one of the following components: definition of defying gravity, evidence thought about what they learned in this unit and how the journals relate to defying gravity.</td>
<td>The paper does not meet length requirements and shows little evidence of any effort put into the paper.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Worksheet 3
Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors
gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Maya Angelou
Worksheet 4

Found Poems in Speak

Yesterday in class, we read Maya Angelou’s poem Still I Rise. Poetry is defined as an artistic form of expression that uses symbols and metaphors to convey a certain message or meaning, and therefore, poetry is an important tool for conveying an idea or emotion.

Throughout this unit, we are examining various ways for us to find our own voices. As we are starting to see, Melinda begins to find her voice through her art. Likewise, she clearly finds some kind of meaning in the poster of the poet Maya Angelou.

Today, we are going to write short “found poems” based on the chapters listed below. A found poem is created by taking words and phrases from other sources and reframing them as poetry. Please refer to the example I have provided below to better understand what your poem should look like.

The chapters I would like you to use for your found poem are:

- Burrow (p.24)
- Closet Space (p. 50)
- Peeled and Cored (p. 65)
- Coloring Outside the Lines (p. 77)
- The Opposite of Inspiration is…Expiration? (p.30)
- Wishbone (p.60)
- Winter Break (p.70)
- Dark Art (p.91)

“Linoleum Graveyard” by Ms. Gillen

I glue the bones together.
   It started out bleak
   Like the remains of
   A holiday gone bad,
   A plastic honeymoon,
   A deserted island.
Six ruined linoleum blocks.
I can see it in my head:
   A strong old oak tree
   With a wide scarred trunk and
Thousands of leaves reaching to the sun.
   I can’t bring it to life.

(My phrases are from “Wishbone”, “Coloring Outside the Lines”, and “Dark Art.”)

HAVE FUN! ☺
WORKSHEET 5

Multimedia Tree Art Project

Throughout this unit, we have focused on the idea of defying gravity. In nature, trees are the ultimate examples of defying gravity- they grow to be very tall, they withstand high winds and storms, and they maintain their balance despite their branches growing in every direction. In class, we talked about the significance of Melinda’s tree assignment and what the tree itself and different parts of the tree might symbolize in terms of the journey the speaker has made in her life during the time span of the book. For this project, you will be creating your own tree.

Get creative with this project- this is an opportunity to express your self. Think about an experience you have had in your life, or something that you are going through right now, that has changed who you are as a person or how you look at the world around you. Create your own tree like the one Melinda made in the novel. I encourage you to think outside the box and use unconventional materials- paint, colored pencils, yarn, wood, old toys, magazine and newspaper clippings- whatever helps the viewer better understand you. Depending on where you are in your experience, your tree can be a sapling, just starting out, or a big, strong oak, or a tree in the dead of winter, or a tree just beginning to flower with the coming of spring.

You will also be required to “back up” what your tree means and what it symbolizes with a written paper of some sort. It can be an essay, a poem, a song, whatever form you can express yourself best with, as long as it clearly expresses how this piece of artwork relates back to your life. In this piece of writing, be sure to define what particular “journey in life” you are referring to, and why/how this tree symbolizes or defines that journey. (If you are confused, think about the speaker’s journey as coming to terms with what happened to her by finally opening up and speaking about her rape and facing the boy who did it.)
Rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Project</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project follows directions; is a tree of some sort</td>
<td>Project follows directions; is a tree of some sort</td>
<td>Project follows directions; is a tree of some sort</td>
<td>Project does not follow directions; is not clearly a tree of some sort</td>
<td>Project does not follow directions; is not clearly a tree of some sort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tree is neat; time has clearly been put into the creation of the tree.</td>
<td>The tree is neat; time has clearly been put into the creation of the tree.</td>
<td>The tree is neat; some time has been put into the creation of the tree.</td>
<td>There is little evidence that time has been put into this tree, but it is not neat.</td>
<td>There is little evidence that time has been put into this tree.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tree clearly tells a story; the design is unique and innovative.</td>
<td>The tree clearly tells a story; the design of the tree corresponds with the intent of the story.</td>
<td>The tree clearly tells a story; the student made an effort in creating the tree.</td>
<td>Little to some extent was put into creating the tree; no evidence of story or direction.</td>
<td>The tree does not tell any story, no signs of effort were put into tree.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Life experience is very clearly mentioned in paper.</td>
<td>Life experience is clearly mentioned in paper.</td>
<td>Life experience is not clearly mentioned in paper.</td>
<td>Life experience is not mentioned in paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper clearly identifies how the tree both symbolizes and relates to the experience.</td>
<td>Paper identifies how the tree both symbolizes and relates to the experience.</td>
<td>Paper only identifies one or the other of how the tree both symbolizes and relates to the experience.</td>
<td>Paper does not do a good job of identifying how the tree both symbolizes and relates to the experience.</td>
<td>Paper does not identify how the tree symbolizes or relates to the experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The paper is clearly thought out and the reader can easily make the connection between how the tree relates back to the life journey.</td>
<td>The paper is clearly thought out and the reader can make the connection between how the tree relates back to the life journey.</td>
<td>The paper is thought out and the reader can distinguish a connection between how the tree relates back to the life journey.</td>
<td>The paper is not very thought out and the reader cannot distinguish a connection between how the tree relates back to the life journey.</td>
<td>The paper is rushed and does not make any connection back to a life journey.</td>
<td></td>
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Appendix C

Lesson Plan: What’s the Story? Understanding Biased Perspectives

Context, Rationale, Standards and Materials

**Context:** This lesson is designed to introduce students to the concepts of bias, vantage point, and the trustworthiness of the narrator, and is ideal for introducing a unit on unreliable narrators and biased perspectives in novels such as Ken Keysey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*, or Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*. This lesson ideal for 9th or 10th grade English courses in a comprehensive high school with adequate access to media technology tools. The class must have access to computers with iMovie (or a comparable program), the Internet, and a large projection screen. If the school does not have access to a program like iMovie, then a video camera will suffice so long as the film from the video camera can be transferred onto a computer and be projected. The classroom should be set up so that desks are in groups of four or five, depending on the size of the class, and all students should be able to easily turn and view the projection screen.

**Rationale:** An important skill for all students to acquire when reading traditional and non-traditional text is the ability to understand the perspective of a speaker or narrator in a text, and to understand how the speaker’s perspective or vantage point impacts the way a story is portrayed. As 24-hour television news networks have developed and access to visual news media clips on the internet have grown in popularity, the media has grown to become more sensational and political bias has become more visible in the ways networks and broadcasters portray similar stories. Students need to learn how to critique media sources and to understand the various perspectives and vantage points, and therefore create their own meaning. The English classroom is appropriate for this lesson because a major component of reading traditional literary texts
involves interpreting and analyzing various devices used in the texts. This lesson will teach students to consider the source of information, the language, sound, and imagery used in the text, and the point the speaker is trying to make, and will also require them to combine what they learned in the four news clips and create their own news clip with their own perspective.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Define and identify bias
- Critically analyze both literary and media perspectives
- Understand the impact of framing and perspective in a novel and in the final news story production they will create.
- Work in groups to create a composite news story based on those they have already seen.
- Understand the various roles that are incorporated into a news broadcast.
- Work collaboratively using iMovie.
- Reflect upon how perspective determines how a story is portrayed, and how personal and cultural bias impact the way a story is portrayed.

NCTE/IRA Standards addressed:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build understanding of the texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the US and the world.
   - Students will view four news media broadcasts with vastly different perspectives on a subject, and will therefore gain a better understanding of how bias impacts the portrayal of a similar subject.

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
   - Students will write a script and create an iMovie broadcast of a composite news story based on four news media broadcasts, and will examine how their verbal and physical communication techniques work to convey a specific message.

6. Students apply knowledge of media techniques to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
   - Based on the four news media broadcasts, students will create a composite news story that seeks to present an objective story about a particular subject.

Grade Level Rationale: This lesson is appropriate for 9th or 10th grade students because it serves as an introduction to the influence of perspective and vantage point both in literature and
in the media, and also allows them to reflect upon how their own perspectives impact how they
tell a story or present an idea. This lesson also introduces students to critical media analysis,
which they most likely have not discussed previously in their classes. Finally, this lesson is
universally applicable because it encourages students to think about the influence of perspective
not only in the media, but in literature and in their personal lives as well.

Materials

- 5 dictionaries, 5 Thesauruses for “Defining Bias” activity
- “Worksheet A: Interpreting Media Stories from Different Vantage Points”, which
  has been adapted for the in-class video clip. This worksheet will guide students’ thinking
  when viewing the “Less Jobs, More Wars” video clip.
- “Worksheet B: Interpreting Media Stories from Different Vantage Points”, which
  has been adapted for the homework video clips. This worksheet will guide students’
  thinking when viewing the four news clips for homework.
- Sarah Palin Composite News Story Project Worksheet, which details the
  directions for the project students will complete over the next two days.
- “Less Jobs, More Wars” video clip available at:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lh-T2iGkLJY, and the “Less Jobs, More Wars”
  website, available at http://www.lessjobsmorewars.com
- Four news clips
  o PBS NOW: “Meet Sarah Palin”. Available at
    http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/434/video-webex.html
  o NBC Nightly News Clip: “NBC Sarah Palin Fact Check (9.17.2008)”. Available at
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MF0j8PTyj0M
  o Fox News Exclusive: “Sarah Palin: An American Woman, Part 1 of 5”. Available at
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pq4jBll0TY
  o NBC Saturday Night Live: “Couric/Palin Open”. Available at
    http://www.nbc.com/Saturday_Night_Live/video/clips/couric-palin-
    open/704042/
- Pens or Pencils for students to complete work sheet, take notes on vantage point,
  compose script for composite news story.
- Paper for students to write answers to work sheet, take notes on vantage point in
  the media, and to compose script for composite news story.

Technology Resources

- Computer
- Internet Connection
- Large projection screen at front of classroom
- Projector connected to computer source so that student composite news stories
  may be shown to the class
- iMovie software, or if iMovie is not available a similar computer-based film-
  editing software and a camera with which students can record their composite news
  stories.
Problems of Practice:
- Internet connection may fail
- Videos available online at start of lesson may be taken down or made no longer accessible - be sure to have back-up videos available
- Projector may break or not work so student composite news stories are not able to be shown
- iMovie software may not be available in certain schools
- Students may not have access to cameras or film-editing software - be prepared to offer students access to your iMovie program or film-editing program should they not be able to access any materials outside of class

Preparation

First, obtain news clips, make sure that they work, and view them. Post the videos to the course website, if available, or generate a worksheet with links. Reserve the school’s Media Technology lab for Day 3 of the lesson. Print off all worksheets. Making sure the video clips are still available is essential to the success of this lesson. If you are using the videos provided in this lesson, this step will take 10-15 minutes. Access to a media lab is also essential to this lesson.

This lesson is designed for three 50-minute class periods. Because some students may not be able to complete their composite broadcast news stories in the allotted class time, this lesson might work better if Days 1 and 2 take place on Thursday and Friday, and Day 3 takes place on a Monday so that students have the weekend to complete their work. Additional time may be needed for students to present their completed broadcast news stories at the end of the three days.

Throughout the course of this three-day lesson plan, students will explore the definition of bias, analyze four news media stories to understand bias in each, compose a composite news story script, and produce a composite news story broadcast using iMovie. This lesson aims to help students to better understand the concept of bias and to be better able to identify bias in the news media, as well as in other sources. Students will also have the opportunity to see how their own bias affects how they present information when they compose their composite news stories with their groups. The first day of the lesson serves as an introduction to the meaning of bias, and students will learn the definition of bias and take notes on a video that clearly demonstrates bias.
The second day, students will share what bias they identified in the Day 1 homework assignment, and will then work together to produce a composite news story script that will allow them to identify their own bias while they also work to create a less-biased news story. On Day 3, students will produce their composite news story using iMovie, and will then share it with the class.

**Lesson Activities**

**Day 1: What is Bias?**

On Day 1, students will produce a definition of bias, view a video clip that will help them to identify bias, and participate in a large group discussion on bias in the aforementioned news clip.

- First, divide students into 5 groups of 5. Give each group ten minutes to look up definitions and synonyms of the word “bias”. The students are to write down any definition or synonym that might relate in someway to the idea of bias in news media. Students should also write down examples of personal biases they might have based on these definitions.
  - Hardcopy materials: 5 dictionaries, 5 Thesauruses
  - Necessary materials: Enough pens, pencils and paper for each group to record the definitions and synonyms of bias.

- Second, distribute Worksheet A. Show students the example clip that illustrates bias twice: once so that students get the general message, and again so that they may pick up on the more subtle details. Allow students to complete Worksheet A. Show class website that is placed in advertisement. Discuss the purpose of the website and examine the home page. Hold a large-group discussion focusing on the message of the clip, the implications of the clip, how characters are used, and what images are important. Also discuss the bias indicated by the website.
  - Hardcopy materials: “Worksheet A: Interpreting Media Stories from Different Vantage Points”, which has been adapted for the in-class video clip.
  - Technology materials: “Less Jobs, More Wars” video clip and website link, computer, Internet connection, projector connected to computer, and projection screen.
  - Necessary Materials: Pens and pencils to answer questions on Worksheet A

- Third, assign homework. Distribute Worksheet B. Direct students to course website for Sarah Palin video URLs, or provide students with the URLs. Briefly describe the project they will begin tomorrow in class.
  - Hardcopy materials: “Worksheet B: Interpreting Media Stories from Different Vantage Points”, which has been adapted for the homework video clips.
  - Technology materials: Class website to post the links to the four Sarah Palin news clips, listed below:
Day 2: Identifying Bias in the Media and Script Production

On day 2, students will participate in small group discussions on Day 1 homework to share what biases they identified, and they will produce a composite news story script based on the four Sarah Palin news clips.

- First, divide students back same 5 groups as Day 1. Distribute Project Worksheet.
  - Harcopy materials: Sarah Palin Composite News Story Project Worksheet, which details the directions for the project students will complete over the next two days.
  - Necessary materials: pens and pencils for students to take notes on worksheets.
- Second, have students participate in small group discussions based on Day 1’s homework. Have them discuss their completed worksheets, what they noticed in the videos, and what they learned about bias.
  - Harcopy materials: Completed Worksheet B
- Third, introduce the project, and instruct students to assign roles as indicated on the project worksheet. Students will follow instructions on “Sarah Palin Composite News Story” project worksheet, and write out their complete script. If they do not complete the script in class, they must finish it for homework. Also, remind students that they must include images in their final iMovie project. Their homework will be to come to class prepared with images they want to insert in their iMovie.
  - Harcopy materials: Completed Worksheet B, Sarah Palin Composite News Story Project Worksheet
  - Necessary Materials: Pens, pencils, and paper for students to write out their scripts.
- Fourth, inform students that their script must be completed before class on Day 3, so if it is not yet complete they must complete it for homework. They must also find digital images to include in their presentation. Finally, inform them that the class will meet in the Media Technology lab, rather than in the classroom.
  - No in-class materials are needed for this portion, but students must have access to a computer and the Internet at home.

Day 3: Producing a Composite News Story using iMovie

On Day 3, students will produce their Composite News Story scripts using iMovie, and then share their clips with the class.
• First, students will break up into their groups record their scripts using iMovie. The clips should be approximately 2-4 minutes each.
  o Hardcopy materials: Completed Composite News Story scripts, Sarah Palin Composite News Story Project Worksheet
  o Technology materials: Access to the school computer lab, computers with Internet access, iMovie.
• Second, Students will edit their films and incorporate the additional digital media into their movies. When they are finished, they will upload their composite news stories to the course website.
  o Technology materials: computers with Internet access, iMovie
• Third, each group will present their composite news story and very briefly discuss what they learned about bias and how it impacted their final project.
  o Technology materials: computers with Internet access, iMovie, projector, a projection screen.

Conclusion

Overall, this lesson corresponds directly to NCTE standards 1, 4, and 6, because students examine numerous print- and non-print texts to better understand the presence of bias in American media, the implications of this bias, and how their own biases may impact the way they present themselves on a day-to-day basis. This lesson encourages students to approach one of the most omnipresent mediums in our culture- television media- with a more critical eye, and therefore encourages them to think not only about the way news stories are represented, but also about the way people present their ideas in general. From a social justice standpoint, this lesson requires students to examine how different major news stations represent the same political figure in different ways, and asks them to consider how political or personal spin can greatly impact how an individual receives information. For example, if a person only watches one news station, their perception of Sarah Palin will be controlled by and limited to the information they get from the single network. This lesson also raises students’ awareness of how positions of power in the media impact what information is communicated and how it is communicated. Ultimately, this lesson teaches students to consider the source in all aspects of communication, and particularly in the news media.

Troubleshooting tips:
The news clips used in this lesson are adaptable, and work best when the news stories are relevant. For example, one year from now, the portrayal of Sarah Palin in the media will certainly still be interesting, but only to those who followed her during the 2008 Presidential Election. I suggest updating the clips depending on what topics are popular at the time the lesson is being taught.

Rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composite News Story Script</strong></td>
<td>• Each group member’s role in creating the script is clearly labeled. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• The script is written in the format of a newscast and creates an original voice; i.e. sentences such as “according to Fox news…” are not acceptable. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• The script clearly incorporates at least two “facts” from each of the four news clips viewed for homework on Day 1. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• The script contains enough material to fulfill the requirement of a 2-4 minute news broadcast, and is clear and logically organized. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• The script presents a well-rounded portrayal of Sarah Palin; personal bias is essentially eliminated from the content of the script. (5 pts.)</td>
<td>____/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sarah Palin Composite News Story Broadcast on iMovie</strong></td>
<td>• The news story broadcast is between 2-4 minutes long. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• Each group member’s role in producing the broadcast is clearly labeled. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• The broadcast is delivered in an clear, organized, appropriate, and professional manner. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• The tone of voice of the broadcaster, the images chosen, and the overall message of the piece successfully attempts to eliminate bias. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• At least four digital photographs of Sarah Palin are included in the broadcast. (5 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• Students demonstrate an understanding of how different major news stations represent the same political figure in different ways, and that political or personal spin can greatly impact how an individual interprets information. Therefore, the broadcast presents a unique and well-rounded portrayal of Sarah Palin, while the tone and content of the broadcast essentially eliminate personal bias. (30 pts.)&lt;br&gt;• Students demonstrate skilled use of iMovie and features of iMovie to produce a visually appealing, well-crafted broadcast piece. (5 pts.)</td>
<td>____/60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Presentation of Sarah Palin Composite News Story Broadcast on iMovie**

- Group introduces news clip with a brief (no longer than 1 minute) discussion of what they learned about bias during this lesson. *(10 pts)*
- Group discusses challenges faced while producing their news clips. *(10 pts)*
- Group presents news clip in a professional and appropriate manner. *(5 pts)*

**Final Composite Broadcast Reflection**

- Students comment on the difficulty in remaining completely neutral and eliminating personal bias when communicating a news story. *(10 pts.)*
- Students examine how different major news stations represent the same political figure in different ways, and consider how political or personal spin can greatly impact how an individual receives information. *(10 pts.)*
- Students demonstrate an awareness of how positions of power in the media impact what information is communicated and how it is communicated. *(10 pts.)*

**Total**

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**Resources Referenced in this lesson plan:**

The following news clips were obtained using the public visual media-sharing website www.Youtube.com:

- NBC Nightly News Clip: “NBC Sarah Palin Fact Check (9.17.2008)”. Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MF0j8PTyj0M

The following news clip was found on the NBC network website www.nbc.com:


The following news clip was found at www.PBS.org:


The following text was referenced in generating this lesson plan:

Christen, M. T. and Sullivan, S. (Eds.) (2007). *Lesson Plans for creating media-rich*
Resources for Professional Development Related to the Content of this Plan:

The Pennsylvania State University’s Digital Commons website offers a tutorial library of various computer programs, including iMovie, that is accessible for the public.

www.digitalcommons.psu.edu/tutorials.

Example Media Project:

My Composite News Story iMovie is available on YouTube at

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p847oC9AgBM.

**Composite News Story Script**

**Writer (and co-writers):** Kate Gillen  
**Producer:** Kate Gillen  
**News Anchor:** Kate Gillen  
**Director:** Kate Gillen*

*Note: in the actual group project, an individual will have fulfilled each role.

**Newscast Script**

**Kate:** Good evening, and welcome to tonight’s edition of LLED nightly news. I’m Kate Gillen.

Tonight, we will be focusing on former Republican Presidential candidate John McCain’s running mate, and current Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin. Since her nomination for republican Vice presidential candidate, Sarah Palin has become one of the most recognizable, most talked-about, and perhaps the most scrutinized political figures in recent history. In tonight’s broadcast, we will take a comprehensive look at Sarah Palin (PICTURE) the governor, the vice presidential candidate, the mother and wife, and the person, and by the end of tonight’s broadcast, we hope to leave you all with a more well-rounded image of Sarah Palin.

Sarah Palin was born in Idaho, but grew up mostly in Wasilla, Alaska, about one hour north of Anchorage, as the third child in a family of four children. (Start Picture) In high school,
Palin was a member of Wasilla High School’s basketball team, where her basketball skills earned her the nickname “Sarah Barracuda”. Palin met husband Todd, whom she now refers to as “First Dude”, when they were both members of the men and women’s respective basketball teams at Wasilla High School. The pair eloped in 1988 in order to help relieve their parents of the cost of a wedding., one year after Sarah graduated from University of Idaho in 1987 with a degree in Journalism and a minor in Political Science, after attending three other universities. (Start hunting Picture) Palin is notorious for her participation in beauty pageants, is an avid hunter and outdoorswoman, and is known for her pride in being a hockey mom. (Start Family Picture.) Palin is the mother of five children, ranging in age from just a few months old to 17. (Start Picture with McCain) While Sarah Palin has a busy personal life, she shows no signs of slowing down, despite her loss with John McCain to Democrat and President-Elect Barack Obama. Let’s take a closer look at Palin’s political life.

Palin started her political career in her hometown of Wasilla, Alaska, where she served as mayor from 1996-2002. (Start Gov. PICTURE) Her political career took off in 2006, however, when she defeated the incumbent governor by running on a platform that vowed to clean up corruption in her own party. While Palin calls herself a believer in big oil, she has been remarkably tough on the industry, as she proposed a 2.5% increase in the oil profits tax rate, which ultimately benefits the people of Alaska, who receive a portion of the profits from big oil. Unfortunately, in the last few months, Palin has had to reckon with a barrage of fact-checks. For example, while Palin has mentioned in speeches that Alaska contributes 20% of the nation’s domestic supply of oil and natural gas, Alaska actually only contributes 3% of the nation’s supply. Likewise, Palin’s foreign policy experience is a popular topic when discussing McCain’s choice for Palin as a running mate. (Start Travel Picture) Palin stated that she had visited Iraq and Ireland; however, neither of these claims is true. Rather than travelling to Iraq, Palin spent time at a border crossing in Kuwait, and never actually went to Iraq, and Palin’s time spent in Ireland was actually spent in an Irish airport. Palin excused her lack of travel abroad, saying that not all
Vice Presidents had foreign experience prior to taking office. That claim is also, unfortunately untrue.

So, who is Sarah Palin? Is there a difference between Sarah Palin- Hockey Mom, and Sarah Palin- Political figure, and is this dichotomy simply the result of media portrayal? Unfortunately, Ms. Palin was unavailable for an interview with us this evening, but it would have been a pleasure and a privilege to meet with her tonight. Thank you for joining us, and have a great evening.

**Reflection on Bias in the Composite News Story**

I really enjoyed completing this project because it was fun and challenging to create a composite news story based on the four news clips we watched earlier this week. I must say, however, that I had a really hard time presenting this news story in a completely unbiased way. I certainly had my own pre-existing opinions of Sarah Palin, and it was really hard for me to keep those feelings from showing up in my broadcast. Perhaps that is the point of this lesson: that no matter how hard you try, you really can’t eliminate all of your own feelings about a certain topic. This makes me wonder whether or not it is truly possible for anyone to present anything in a completely objective way. I thought that the four clips were really interesting. PBS seemed to be the most neutral because they presented facts about Palin’s personal life and political life without accusing her of anything; however, I still got a sense from their piece that they were not necessarily fans of Palin. NBC’s broadcast to me was clearly anti-Palin, because the entire clip was about her false claims. At the other end of the spectrum, FOX’s broadcast was blatantly pro-Palin because they portrayed everything about Palin in a positive and almost miraculous light. The SNL clip was definitely my favorite because it was so funny, and they did a great job of satirizing Palin’s claims and behaviors. I now have a better understanding of how important it is to look at an issue from all possible angles. I think each of these news clips painted a dramatically different picture of Sarah Palin, and I can see how easily swayed someone might be in any of those directions if they only
listened to one broadcast. This experience has taught me the importance of trying to remain objective, and perhaps more importantly, the importance of considering the source of any information because it is so difficult to remain completely objective in any situation.
References


Christensen, L. (2000). *Reading, writing, and rising up: teaching about social justice and the power of the written word*. Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Ltd.


Katharine Gillen Vita

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**Education**


**Teaching Experience**

**Student Teacher, Baldwin High School.** Pittsburgh, PA. Academic English 11: American Literature. Fall 2009.

**Instructor and Resident Assistant, Summer Study Programs.** University Park, PA. Summer 2009.
- Developed and implemented curricula for one English as a Second Language course and two Study Skills courses.


**Volunteer Teacher, Meru Peak School.** Arusha, Tanzania. Summer 2007.
- Collaborated with English and Social Studies to teach the equivalent of Grade 1 English and middle-level English and Social Studies.

**Awards**

Outstanding Student Teacher Award Nominee for Fall 2009 Student Teaching Cohort. Nominated by Susan Fagnilli. Award will be announced in January 2010.

Travel grant for travel to Sweden. Penn State University Schreyer Honors College. March 2009.

Teaching and Technology Leadership Award. Penn State University College of Education. $1,000. June 2008

Travel grant for travel to Tanzania. Penn State University Schreyer Honors College. April 2007.

**Activities**


Officer, UNICEF’S Rescue Childhood at Penn State. 2006.