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Notes About Teaching Multicultural Literature

In this series, multicultural literature refers to works written by African American, Asian American, Native American, and Latino authors. In the broadest sense, multicultural literature also can refer to works that deal with issues of race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and nationality.

Pedagogy

Each text featured in this workshop is explored through a particular pedagogical approach and set of strategies. However, there is considerable overlap among the approaches. Any text can be explored through reader response, inquiry, cultural studies, and/or critical pedagogy. A reader's response can lead naturally into an inquiry, and cultural studies research may lead to political action.

Cultural Immersion

It's important to immerse students in authentic cultural experiences when exploring multicultural works of literature. In this workshop, teachers take their students on field trips to see Chinatown, museums, and murals. If these kinds of activities are not possible, there are many other ways to create culturally rich experiences. Teachers can inform students of cultural events taking place in their communities. They should invite community members who might serve as cultural guides into the classroom. Teachers and students can bring in artifacts, artwork, posters, music, and literature to transform the classroom environment. Films, videos (including excerpts from this workshop), television, and the Internet—including virtual tours of neighborhoods, museums, and art galleries—can provide students with exposure to a new culture.

Writers-in-Residence

Many of the programs in this workshop feature visiting authors, experts, and/or community members. Inviting guests into the classroom is important in any curriculum, but it is especially powerful when teaching multicultural literature. To facilitate this, teachers may want to check with department chairs, librarians, or curriculum coordinators to find out about local writers-in-residence. Teachers also may check with local bookstores, public libraries, or universities to find out about readings. Teachers may also want to contact authors or journalists through their publishers. An option to consider is sharing a writer's travel costs with a nearby school. Teachers also may bring video of author interviews—from this workshop or other sources—into the classroom.

Mature Themes

Most powerful literature deals with complex, mature themes such as sexuality, violence, and loss. Many schools have policies about teaching books dealing with these issues. Some schools have reading lists; some require teachers to alert parents to mature reading in the syllabus. It's important for teachers to find out what school policy is before assigning texts like some of those introduced in this workshop. It's also worthwhile to provide alternate selections for students who are not allowed to read mature books. In addition, teachers may want to schedule pre-reading discussions to ease students into the material. Finally, if someone in the school community objects to the material in class texts, the National Council of Teachers of English provides advocacy support for teachers facing censorship challenges.

Notes About Teaching Multicultural Literature, cont'd.

Resources

On the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/hslit, you will find a resources section for each session with information about the theory, teaching strategies, authors, and literary works. The following URLs provide additional information about multicultural literature that is relevant to all sessions.

American Book Awards

http://www.literature-awards.com/american_book_awards.htm

The American Book Awards, established by the Before Columbus Foundation, acknowledge the excellence and multicultural diversity of American writing. The awards recognize outstanding literary achievement by contemporary American authors, without restriction to race, sex, ethnic background, or genre.

Multicultural Perspectives

<http://www.nameorg.org/publications.html>

Multicultural Perspectives is a quarterly journal, published by the National Association for Multicultural Education, that includes literature and articles written by and for multicultural educators and activists worldwide. (Note: Of particular interest is Judith Y. Singer and Sally Smith's "The Potential of Multicultural Literature: Changing Understanding of Self and Others" in 5:2 (2003): 17-23. In it, the authors discuss the responses of racially different groups of students to the same piece of multicultural young adult literature.)

Multicultural Review

<http://www.mcreview.com>

<http://www.goldmang.com/multicultural/>

Multicultural Review is a quarterly journal dedicated to better understanding of ethnic, racial, and religious diversity.

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

multicultins@lists.ncte.org.

NCTE's multicultural listserv is a forum for teachers, educators, and scholars.

Standards

<http://www.ncte.org/standards/standards.shtml>

Each workshop session reflects the Standards for the English Language Arts as outlined by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA).

Workshop Reading List

Works marked with * are required texts for this workshop that do not appear within the Readings in this guide. Other works are the sources for excerpted materials in the Readings or are recommended for additional study.

Workshop Session 1

Mora, Pat. *My Own True Name: New and Selected Poems for Young Adults 1984-1999*.

Houston: Arte Público Press, 2000. ISBN 1558852921

* Welch, James. *The Death of Jim Loney*. New York: Penguin Books, 1987. ISBN 0140102914

Welch, James. *Riding the Earthboy 40*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1997. ISBN 0887482643

Workshop Session 2

Dove, Mourning. *Coyote Stories*, edited by Jay Miller. Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. ISBN 0803281692

Gilyard, Keith. *Poemographies*. Camden, New Jersey: Whirlwind Press, 2001. ISBN 092282715X

Workshop Session 3

* Anaya, Rudolfo. *Bless Me, Ultima*. New York: Warner Books, 1999. ISBN 0446675369

Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Vintage International, 1993. ISBN 067974472X

* _____ . "The Rockpile" and "Sonny's Blues," from *Going To Meet the Man*. New York: Vintage, 1995. ISBN 0-679-76179-9

Workshop Session 4

* Rivera, Tomás. *...y no se lo tragó la tierra (...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him)*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1995. English translation by Evangelina Vigil-Piñón. ISBN 155885083X

* Santiago, Esmeralda. *When I Was Puerto Rican*. New York: Vintage, 1994. ISBN 0679756760

Workshop Session 5

Courlander, Harold. "Hungry Spider and the Turtle," from *The Cow-Tail Switch and Other West African Stories*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991. ISBN 0805002987

Dunbar, Paul Laurence. "We Wear the Mask" from *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1993. ISBN 081391454X; ISBN 0813914388 (pbk.)

Harris, Joel Chandler (as retold by). *The Story of Brer Rabbit and the Wonderful Tar Baby*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990. ISBN 0887082505 (bk. & cass.) <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~UG97/remus/tar-baby.html>

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*. San Francisco: Harper, 1990. ISBN 0060916494

_____. *The Sanctified Church*. New York: Marlowe, [1998], © 1981. ISBN 1569247307 (pbk.)

* Limón, Graciela. *Erased Faces*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 2001. ISBN 1558853421

Marcos, Subcomandante. *The Story of Colors (La Historia de los Colores)*. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press; Bilingual edition, 2003. ISBN 0938317717

Reed, Ishmael. "Railroad Bill, A Conjure Man," from *From Totems to Hip-Hop: A Multicultural Anthology of Poetry Across the Americas, 1900-2002*. Reed, Ishmael (ed). Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002. ISBN 1560254580

Salaam, Yusef. "Brer Rabbit Escapes Again, or Brer Fox Bites Off More Than He Can Chew," from *Brotherman: The Odyssey of Black Men in America*. Boyd, Herb and Robert Allen (eds). New York: Ballantine Books, 1996. ISBN 0345383176

Workshop Reading List, cont'd.

Workshop Session 6

Leong, Russell. "Aerogrammes," from *The Country of Dreams and Dust*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994. ASIN: 0931122767

Momaday, N. Scott. *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press; Reprint edition, 2001. ISBN: 0826304362

Workshop Session 7

* Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Warner Books, 2000. ISBN 0446675504

Chung, Olivia. "Finding My Eye-dentity," from Nam, Vickie (ed). *Yell-Oh Girls!* New York: HarperCollins/Quill Press, 2001. ISBN 0060959444

Edut, Ophira. "Bubbe Got Back: Ethnic Identity and Body Image Through the Rearview Mirror." *Utne* magazine, November/December 2000. Available online from http://www.utne.com/pub/2000_102/features/1527-1.html. ISSN 8750-0256

Harris, Joel Chandler (as retold by). *The Story of Brer Rabbit and the Wonderful Tar Baby*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990. ISBN 0887082505 (bk. & cass.) <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~UG97/remus/tar-baby.html>

Jervis, Lisa. "My Jewish Nose," from Edut, Ophira (ed). *Adios Barbie: Young Women Write About Body Image and Identity*. New York: Avalon Publishing Group, 1998. ISBN 1580050166

Khalilah, Joseph. "Tar Baby," from Christensen, Linda (ed). *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2000. ISBN 0942961250

* McCunn, Ruthanne Lum. *Thousand Pieces of Gold: A Biographical Novel*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988. ISBN 0807083178 (pbk.)

Miller, Erika. "A Woman's Silent Journey," from Christensen, Linda (ed). *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2000. ISBN 0942961250

Workshop Session 8

Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Legends From Camp: Poems*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press; St. Paul, MN: Available through Consortium Book Sales & Distribution, 1992. ISBN 1566890047

_____. *Drawing the Line: Poems*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1997. ISBN 1566890608

Oyewole, Abiodun, et al. *The Last Poets*. NY: Douglas Recording Co. (available on Fuel 2000 Records), 1970. ISBN 030206122626

Production Credits

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Thirteen is also a pre-eminent source of Web-based educational content and workshops, providing courses that have reached thousands of teachers, teachers-in-training, administrators, and others involved in pre-K-12 instruction. These workshops are currently used by professors and students at Harvard University, Pace University, and Teachers College at Columbia University. Thirteen's award-winning Web site features online companion pieces to national series and original online content to complement Thirteen's educational initiatives. Projects include *New York: A Documentary Film*, *African American World*, *Cyberchase Online*, *Great Performances Online*, *Nature Online*, and *American Masters Online*.

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

The National Council of Teachers of English has been dedicated to building teacher knowledge and improving student achievement in English language arts since its founding in 1911. NCTE's member and affiliate networks serve more than 77,000 teachers and supervisors of English programs in elementary, middle, and secondary schools; faculty in college and university English departments; teacher educators; local and state agency English specialists; and institutions. NCTE provides a forum for the profession, an array of opportunities for teachers to continue their professional growth throughout their careers, and a framework for cooperation to deal with issues that affect the teaching of English.

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