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Notes on Teaching Multicultural Literature

Multicultural Literature

In the broadest sense, “multicultural literature” can refer to works that deal with issues of race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and nationality. This workshop features literature by and about North American authors of color.

Pedagogy

Throughout the eight-part workshop, teachers draw on a range of pedagogical approaches and strategies. While these frequently overlap, workshops are organized in pairs, highlighting the featured approach.

Workshops 1 and 2: Engagement and Dialogue

In these workshops, students reflect on and share their personal responses to the literature. Teachers facilitate questions and conversations, challenging students to build on their initial reactions to develop a more complete understanding of the works, their social contexts, and the author’s craft.

Workshops 3 and 4: Research and Discovery

These workshops highlight an inquiry-based approach to teaching. Students take the lead in determining the projects they will take on, how and what they will investigate, and how they will present what they’ve learned.

Workshops 5 and 6: Historical and Cultural Context

These workshops emphasize exploration of historical and cultural context as a way to promote deeper understanding of the literature. They feature activities with strong interdisciplinary connections.

Workshops 7 and 8: Social Justice and Action

In these workshops, teachers use the literature to prompt students to examine issues of social justice. Related activities help students recognize the power of their voices and their roles as active citizens who can effect change.

Standards

Each workshop 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).

Visiting Authors and Community Members

Many of the programs 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 can also check with local bookstores, public libraries, and universities to find out about readings by visiting authors. Another option to consider is sharing a writer’s travel costs with a nearby school. As an alternative, teachers might bring videos of author interviews—from this series or other sources—into the classroom.

Notes on Teaching Multicultural Literature, cont'd.

The Expanding Canon: Teaching Multicultural Literature in High School

The Expanding Canon: Teaching Multicultural Literature in High School is a workshop that highlights literature and teaching strategies that may be of interest to middle grade teachers. Although mature themes or challenging vocabulary may make some of the featured works inappropriate for students in grades five through eight, a number of them are suitable for skilled readers. Many of the pedagogical strategies can be effective with younger students as well. For more information, please go to www.learner.org or call 1-800-LEARNER.

Workshop Reading List

Works on the following list are required readings, except where noted; for some workshop sessions, you will select from among the readings as indicated below.

Works marked with an * are sources for materials available online in the Readings (www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml); go to "Support Materials").

Workshop 1

Read at least three of the following texts:

Alvarez, Julia. "I Want To Be Miss América." In *Something To Declare*. New York: Plume, 1999. ISBN 0452280672

*Jen, Gish. "What Means Switch." *Atlantic Monthly* 265, no. 5 (May 1990): 76. ISSN 10727825. Also in *Growing Up Ethnic in America*, ed. Maria Mazziotti Gillan and Jennifer Gillan, 175–196. New York: Penguin, 1999. ISBN 0140280634

*Luu, Khoi Truong. "Family Ties: Exposing the Lighter Side of the Vietnamese American Experience." In *Once Upon a Dream...: The Vietnamese–American Experience*, ed. De Tran, Andrew Lam, and Hai Dai Nguyen, 93–100. Kansas City, Mo.: Andrews McMeel, 1995. ISBN 0836205847

McBride, James. *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*. New York: Riverhead, 1996. ISBN 1573225789

Namioka, Lensey. "The All-American Slurp." In *Visions: Nineteen Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults*, ed. Donald Gallo, 32–40. New York: Delacorte, 1987. ISBN 0812467299

*Nye, Naomi Shihab. "Half-and-Half." In *Fuel*. Rochester, N.Y.: BOA Editions, 1998. ISBN 1880238632

Workshop 2

*Grimes, Nikki. *Bronx Masquerade*. New York: Dial, 2002. ISBN 0803725698

*Ortiz Cofer, Judith. *An Island Like You*. New York: Puffin, 1995. ISBN 014038068X

Workshop 3

Sterling, Shirley. *My Name Is Seepetza*. Toronto, Ont.: Groundwood Books/Douglas and McIntyre, 1992. ISBN 0888991657

*Tohe, Laura. *No Parole Today*. Albuquerque: West End Press, 1999. ISBN 0931122937

Workshop 4

Read one of the following novels:

Danticat, Edwidge. *Behind the Mountains*. New York: Orchard, 2002. ISBN 043937300X

Muñoz Ryan, Pam. *Esperanza Rising*. New York: Scholastic, 2000. ISBN 043912042X

Myers, Walter Dean. *At Her Majesty's Request: An African Princess in Victorian England*. New York: Scholastic, 1999. ISBN 0590486691

Na, An. *A Step From Heaven*. Asheville, N.C.: Front Street Books, 2001. ISBN 1886910588

Yep, Laurence. *Dragon's Gate*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993. ISBN 0064404897

and:

*Lyon, George Ella. "Where I'm From." In *Where I'm From*. Spring, Tex.: Absey and Company, 1999. ISBN 1888842121

Workshop Reading List, cont'd.

Workshop 5

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*. New York: Delacorte, 1995. ISBN 0385321759

Workshop 6

Hansen, Joyce and Gary McGowan. *Breaking Ground, Breaking Silence: The Story of New York's African Burial Ground*. New York: Henry Holt, 1998. ISBN 0805050124

*Hughes, Langston. *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes: The Poems: 1921–1940, Volume 1*. Ed. Arnold Rampersad. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001. ISBN 0826213391

Workshop 7

Read:

Ada, Alma Flor. *My Name Is María Isabel*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1993. ISBN 068980217X

and at least one of the following:

Muñoz Ryan, Pam. *Esperanza Rising*. New York: Scholastic, 2000. ISBN 043912042X

Yee, Paul. *Tales From Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World*. Toronto, Ont.: Greenwood Books/Douglas and McIntyre, 1989. ISBN 0888990987

Workshop 8

Bruchac, Joseph. *The Heart of a Chief*. New York: Puffin, 1998. ISBN 014131236X

Jiménez, Francisco. *The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. ISBN 0826317979

Credits

Video Production Credits

Senior Producer

Suzanne Rose

Producers

Naomi Edelson

Arash Hoda

Program Producer

Michelle Chen

Lead Content Advisors

Dale Allender

Beverly Ann Chin

Project Officers, Annenberg/CPB

Deborah Batiste

Peter M. Neal

Camera

Greg Barna

Additional Camera

Arash Hoda

Michael Pruitt-Bruun

Editors

Geoffrey Richman

Mark Sutton

Kerry Soloway

Mary Ann Toman

Logo and Graphic Design

B.T. Whitehill

Music Composed by

Julian Harris

Project Manager

Rehka Menon

Sound Engineers

Mark Cochi

John Duvall

Gilles Morin

Michael Pruitt-Bruun

Conrad Slater

Andreas Wagner

Daniel Desloge

Matt Monroe

Rich Pooler

Fred Runner

J. Byron Smith

Christopher Ward

Assistant Editors

Georgina Aymerich

Damian Baskette

Stacey Douglass

Production Assistant

Sapna Mehta

Production Interns

Nadia Bautista

Shamim Mayanja

Pooja Makhijani

Yon Sugiharto

Project Advisory Board

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Pat Mora

Tonya Perry

Maisha Tulivu Fisher

Paula J. Hale

Nicolás Kanellos

Amanda Lifschultz

Michael Pavel

Cheryl Wilson

Special Thanks

Bill Bigelow

Jill Cowan

Chambliss Keith

Katharine Samway

Drew Ward

Bank Street School for Children, New York, N.Y.

Café Mestizo, Chicago, Ill.

El Museo del Barrio, New York, N.Y.

The Harbor School, Dorchester, Mass.

Hood Canal School District, Shelton, Wash.

Irma Ruiz School, Chicago, Ill.

Kunhardt Productions, Inc.

Manhattan Country School, New York, N.Y.

Melrose Elementary School, Oakland, Calif.

NYU Institute of African-American Affairs and African Studies Program

Oyate

The Parish of Trinity Church-St. Paul's Chapel

Paterson Free Public Library, Paterson, N.J.

Riverhead Books

Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, Calif.

Santiago High School, Corona, Calif.

The Skokomish Tribal Nation

St. Louis Public Library, St. Louis, Mo.

Teachers College, Columbia University

University of Alabama at Birmingham

U.S. General Services Administration

Washington Middle School, Vista, Calif.

Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley, Mass.

Wydown Middle School, Clayton, Mo.

Executive Producer

Jill Peters

Director of Children's and Educational Programming

Sandra Sheppard

Credits, cont'd.

Web Site Production Credits

Editorial Director/Lead Content Advisor
Beverly Ann Chin

Lead Content Advisor
Dale Allender

Interactive and Broadband Unit
Director of Interactive and Broadband
Anthony Chapman

Producer
Brian Brunius

Associate Producer
Elizabeth Goodman

HTML Implementation
Brian Santalone

Art Director
Sabina Daley

Designer
Wilson Gu

Director of Technology
Brian Lee

Lead Web Developer
Ben Chappel

Project Director
Jill Peters

Project Manager
Suzanne Rose

Content Producer
Michelle Chen

Writers
Beverly Ann Chin
Mary Drayne
Katherine Schulten
Naomi Edelson
Arash Hoda

Researcher/Writer
Sapna Mehta

Consultant
Ashanti Chimurenga

Researcher
Margaret Restivo

Copy Editors
Leslie Kriesel
Jesse Gale

Logo Design
B.T. Whitehill