

Perspectives on War through Children's Literature

Lysa Archer Craig

“Children’s talent to endure stems from their ignorance of alternatives.”
Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, 1969 (1)

Introduction

My students arrive each August fresh faced and ready to learn after two months of camp, swimming lessons, and summer relaxation. Much of their entertainment involves fulfilling their addiction to the drug of the 21st century, video gaming. For these students, summer slipped away unnoticed, as they squandered countless hours of relaxation mindlessly absorbed in games of mortal combat. Their thirst for blood and gore on the Xbox screen translates into false impressions of war. True, war is full of blood and gore, but their one-dimensional video game experiences cannot convey the multiple facets of war. Additionally, I know through my years of experience as a middle school teacher that my students are self absorbed. It is all about them. Very few read the daily newspaper or watch the evening news. Their news consists of the daily gossip in the school hallway. Middle school is a time of great angst and conflict for the students themselves. Puberty overtakes their bodies and peer pressure is rampant. The complacent, outcast student, who was sheltered by the sheer proximity to teachers in elementary school, is now ripe for bullying in the large halls of a middle school. The outgoing, confident student often finds himself the center of attention egged on by peer pressure to do the unspeakable with very little thought placed on the consequences of his actions. A by-product of this self centered stage in their lives, and uninformed ignorance of the world around them, is a one-dimensional view of life that leaves the average middle school student with a skewed understanding of war, conflict, and terror in the world today. By exposing my students to war and conflict in literature, my hope is that they will begin to see the “big picture”. Life is not just about them, and there is more to war than fun and games on the video screen. Ultimately the lesson is that war is not heroic, but often a necessary evil where there are no winners.

I am drawn to this topic for several reasons: I have a great love for historical literature, especially as it relates to human nature in conflict and war; secondly, I feel it is necessary to teach the theme of conflict in the context of a great book. My teaching experience has enabled me to conclude that students are apt to comprehend deeply when they are able to make a connection with the lives of students in the past to those of today. Lastly, I think

it is imperative as a teacher in the 21st century, where conflict is rampant in the world, to equip my students with the necessary background knowledge and skills of wars in the past in order to solve conflicts in their future. This unit is a step in that direction.

Background Information

I teach sixth grade Language Arts in a predominantly white, upper middle class 6th-8th grade middle school. The school is part of a large urban school district in the Piedmont region of North Carolina; however my school is located in the outskirts of the county in a wealthier, suburban area. Nevertheless, there are minorities in the school including Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians. My schedule is composed of three eighty minute blocks that include an Exceptional Children's (EC) inclusion class comprised of eighteen students with needs ranging from Attention Deficit Disorder to autism, and two Honors' classes with students that primarily scored above the 95th percentile on the North Carolina End of Grade tests. My EC class is small, and is co-taught with an EC certified teacher. My other two blocks have thirty and thirty two students respectively.

This unit is intended for the middle grades' adolescent. Ideally, it would work best with students who are good readers and exhibit above average intelligence, but I feel that it can easily be modified to work with students with disabilities as well by altering the book suggestions and/or modifying assignment descriptions. Having taught for twenty-six years, as I was a fourth and fifth grade elementary teacher prior to my move to middle school, I feel these plans could accommodate that level of student too. I plan to teach this unit to my Honors' students as well as my Exceptional Learning class.

In order to teach the entire unit, one must be prepared to incorporate the lessons over the time span of one academic year. However, if time is of the essence, each part of the overall unit is designed so that it could be taught in isolation. In other words, reading and learning about World War I is not a prerequisite to World War II. Nevertheless, my vision is to allow my students time to truly comprehend the reasoning behind each conflict in this unit, to verbally and graphically demonstrate the consequences and effects of each conflict, and express an understanding of the horrors of each of the conflicts. I intend for my students to come to the conclusion that war is not heroic or fair. Furthermore, I have planned this unit to parallel the 6th grade Social Studies curriculum in my state in order to provide more opportunities for deeper meaning. Consequently, I plan to parallel a yearlong study of three major wars and conflicts of the 20th century with the angst and conflicts middle school students face in life. My school's current textbooks don't allow for this unit. The Language Arts curriculum centers on an anthology of short stories, and the Social Studies textbook concentrates on historical data. By utilizing children's literature to teach this unit, I am able to incorporate the historical background of each conflict with a human interest story making it engaging and believable.

Rationale

In the article, “World War II as Seen through Children’s Literature,” Betsy Hearne (1980) states that it is extremely important that children experience the human cost to war through literature. Each classroom discussion should include not just the names and events but the reality of separation, death, and destruction that disfigures the true face of war. (2) I couldn’t agree more.

New research has found exposure to violent video games can desensitize individuals to real-life violence. (3) In fact, the current video system rating guide, the content of the systems, and the marketing of those systems, are contributing factors in the powerful desensitization of children to real-life war and violence.

With eighty-nine percent of video games containing some type of violence, and half including serious violent actions, (4) it is no wonder that exposure to these games increases aggressive behaviors and decreases helpful behaviors. Nicholas Carnagey, an Iowa State psychology instructor and research assistant, states that individuals who play violent video games habituate or “get used to” all the violence and eventually become physiologically numb to it. (5)

Each year in an effort to get to know my students I administer surveys, learning inventories, and questionnaires. One question on my beginning of the year survey asks students to list their favorite pastime activities or hobbies. Overwhelmingly their responses include video gaming. Further questioning results in an addiction to the games, Mortal Combat being a favorite. It is apparent to me after talking with my students that they view war as a fun, exciting adventure and have no true concept of the horrors and devastation war can bring.

If I polled the class, I’m sure most would agree that war is not good, that there are aspects that aren’t pretty. Since 9/11, many might cite terrorism as a concern, albeit a minor one. However, geographically war has not transpired in my students’ backyards. Because of this and that most of their exposure to war occurs on TV or the video screen, my students think war is fun, a game to master. This is especially true of boys. Garatti and Rudnitski in a 2007 study (6) found that more boys tend to be pro-war than girls.

But why teach with literature? According to Penny Strube in *Getting the Most from Literature Books* (7) literature allows students to engage in conversations with each other. Often these conversations are full of meaning and insight. Ralph Peterson and Maryann Eeds state in *Grand Conversations* (8) that literature is built on four beliefs: Story is a way to explore and enrich life, interpretation comes from readers actively engaged in the reading process of making meaning by what they bring to and take from the text, children

have the innate ability of being meaning makers, and dialogue provides the best means of understanding and explaining literature.

Because each child brings their own meaning to the text through their individual experiences and prior knowledge, reading quality literature and then discussing that literature is a wonderful way to actively engage students in their own learning. Students are able to bring their own interpretations to the table, listen to their peers, and make informed decisions about war. And that is one of the goals of this unit, helping my students comprehend the devastation of war through appropriate literature and follow up discussions and activities.

Objectives

The purpose for my students, beyond the obvious mastery of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, is to expose my students to the different perspectives of war, through and with the eyes of children. I feel it is time to set the record straight and give them other perspectives of war. I want them to intimately know the man-child in the trenches, the victim in the death camp, the youth of Hitler's army, and the freedom fighter in modern Iraq and Afghanistan. My fundamental objective is to sort out their misconceptions about war and to enlighten my students to the fact that war is not what they perceive it to be. I want to teach my students that war is not heroic or fair, and that innocent people suffer and die. Ultimately, I want them to come to the conclusion that children are victims in and of war. I anticipate doing so by changing their perceptions of war from that of a fun-filled video game of mortal combat to the reality that childhood innocence is lost and children are victimized. This unit is intended to do that through a series of year long Language Arts lessons centered around children's literature emphasizing author's purpose, tone, point of view, voice and critical thinking skills. The Language Arts objectives fulfill the requirements for the Standard Course of Study, or state objectives, for North Carolina English/Language Arts as well as my school district's pacing and alignment guide. The theme of the literature unit correlates with many North Carolina objectives for sixth grade Social Studies as well.

Strategies, Activities, and Lessons

This unit is long, and there will be many more lessons than what you read here. I have selected lessons that represent the different phases of the study. In order to teach this unit, one must be prepared to incorporate the lessons over the time span of one academic year. However, the unit is also designed so that one can choose to teach one portion if that best meets your needs.

Although not inherently necessary, a good working knowledge of the various wars this unit entails would be recommended. Students need to be taught the history, basic causes, and structures of each of the wars in this unit. This can be achieved through power point presentations, photographic essays, and classroom discussions. However, it is important to remember that middle school students need to understand why things happen, so it is imperative to touch upon the reasons that one became a child soldier or Holocaust victim, how did it happen, when did it happen, and could it happen to them. Moreover, the overwhelming question in each phase of this unit is, “What are the effects on children of war?” And, “What have we learned from these effects?”

I am continually reading, researching, and experimenting with additional ideas, so I may modify many of these activities in future years, but for those who are interested in some of my other activities and lessons, I will be glad to provide a more specific list. (9)

The following is a sample of the class lessons that I plan to use.

The lessons for this unit will be divided into four parts. For each part, students will be required to read and analyze a piece(s) of literature, predominantly a novel. However in several instances music and poetry will enhance the lesson as well. (10) This unit will expose my students to a variety of texts that will present them with multiple features of three very distinct wars: World War I, two parts of World War II; the Third Reich and the Holocaust, and the present day wars of Iraq and/or Afghanistan.

The unit begins with a visual essay of war. I was fortunate to attend a nine week seminar entitled, *Innocence Lost: Children in War and Conflict* conducted by an outstanding professor of history at our local university. I was able to revisit the concepts and details I learned in high school and college about wars of the 20th century as well as garnering additional information about those wars as well as the modern wars of the 21st century. Although you are at a disadvantage in this regard, it is imperative to have a working knowledge of the basic causes and effects of each conflict in this unit in order to provide the students with essential background information on the novels’ settings. I want the students to be intrigued with war from various points of view, so they will analyze pictures from the three wars in this unit, and they will be required to arrange them utilizing criteria decided upon in their groups. I will make the most of the World Wide Web to obtain photographic selections appropriate for middle school students. (11) In small groups, students will be led through a discovery lesson as they categorize the pictures. For example, one group may decide to compartmentalize the pictures into groups categorized as victims, perpetrators, and soldiers. Another group may sort the pictures by assigning them to a particular war or conflict. In the initial phase of the project, I do not assign the criteria myself, but prefer to observe what the students know and how they assign criteria to the photographic exhibit. After the group session, students reconvene to report to the class as a whole their criteria and rationale for sorting the

pictures as they did. Following this discussion, I allow groups to revisit their choices and revise their categories, if they so choose.

Another anticipatory assignment I choose to use in this unit involves the students being led through a brainstorming session. In collaborative groups students will complete a literature web that requires them to list all the words they associate with “WAR.” A literature web is a model designed to guide interpretation of a literature selection by encouraging the reader to connect personal response with particular elements of the text. Categories will include, but are not limited to, key words, feelings, ideas, images and symbols, consequences of, and structure about war. Past responses have included a plethora of examples when brainstorming types of wars, including but not limited to, civil, world, sibling and divorce. Under the category weapons, my students responded with anything from guns, tanks, and artillery to hurtful words and actions. The consequences category included death, injury, and a need for larger cemeteries. The rationale for beginning the unit with the brainstorming activity allows the teacher to quickly acknowledge the students’ prior knowledge of war. An immediate writing response activity would follow in order for students to ponder the relationship between and among the words on the graphic organizer.

In order to make learning meaningful and comply with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, introductory lessons will be taught on author’s purpose, author’s tone, point of view writing, and characters’ voice. By introducing these Language Arts objectives through short mini lessons using the state textbook and supplementary worksheets, students will have a knowledge base for later use when these objectives are revisited in the various novels. The objectives will spiral throughout the yearlong study and will be reassessed continually. You will find through your work with your students that authors’ purpose varies greatly from novel to novel depending on the point of view for each war. Moreover, the strands of Language Arts will be interwoven throughout the year as students work to improve their reading, written language skills, listening, and speaking throughout the novel studies. Socratic seminars, cooperative literature circles, and extensive culminating projects will be expected of each student and /or group.

For World War I, students will be assigned to read and study one of three novels; *Khaki Wings* by Milton Dank, *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque, and *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo.

Khaki Wings is a novel about an English school boy who decides to enlist with the Royal Air Corp when war erupts in France. At first the protagonist is excited to enlist, but he soon grows to discover that there is nothing fun about war after all.

All Quiet on the Western Front is similar in theme. The main character, Paul, and his friends enlist in World War I after a teacher encourages them to join. They soon learn that life in the trenches is not as expected. The book touches on the hopelessness of war and

includes great passages explaining how the families left behind are unaware of what really transpires on the war's front.

Johnny Got his Gun is a two sided story, and perhaps one of the most graphic. Johnny, the protagonist of this story, is brutally injured allowing the reader a very dramatic look at what war really entails. This book definitely fulfills my overall objective as it describes war as horrific. Because the protagonist is so terribly injured, this book is one I would ask parent permission before beginning a whole class study.

World War I, the Glorious War, was a traditional war fought primarily for territorial reasons, the novels chosen focus on the battlefields and the soldiers who fought there. An emphasis will be placed on this war as justified with soldiers initially happy to go to war and how easy it is to manipulate the adolescents and young adults in order to get them to disregard their own principles, especially, "Thou Shalt Not Kill." For this phase of the unit, I will begin with a poem by Wilfred Owen entitled, *Dulce et Decorum Est*. the poem, one of the best known from World War I, describes war as "cool." Unfortunately, Owen wrote this poem before he actually enlisted and discovered the horrors of war, as he lost his life four days before the war ended. The PBS documentary, *Killing Fields, the First World War*, is an excellent follow up to this poem. I plan to include seminar discussions on the reasons children so easily enlisted in this war. Children of World War I thought of war as a form of play, they saw it as romantic, and a tradition passed down from father to son. Moreover, they saw it as an escape from a dreary life to a life of adventure. In the course of cooperative group discussions, students will be required to parallel their own life situations with life situations of the youth of World War I. This can be completed through a variety of graphic organizers. (12)

Each unit of war will focus on a "Big Question," or theme, as well as activities pertinent to the crux of the novels. Because World War I, the Great War, was one of heroes and heroics, the big question will be, "Is it possible to have a heroic war?" The students will challenge each others' thinking in Socratic Seminars and Literature Circles as they determine what characteristics comprise a hero.

The Socratic Seminar for this World War I unit can be centered on any book or article. All you have to do, as the educator, is figure out what larger theme or question you want the students to discuss. In this lesson the question would of course be, "Is it possible to have a heroic war?" Students would be expected to read the novels and create their own questions, but they need guidelines. First of all, in my experience, students have never heard of a Socratic Seminar, and even those who have heard of one are not sure what to do. You must teach them. The Socratic Seminar is a structured, student-centered discussion format. The protocol maximizes student participation, requires students to read, think and listen critically, and facilitates the clear and convincing

development and articulation of ideas. The seminar places the burdens, responsibilities, and rewards of intellectual inquiry squarely on the shoulders of the students. (13)

I try to give students at least some class time to prepare. It isn't always necessary, but it calms some of their concerns if they can run questions by me before the seminar. It also gives those who are having a hard time with the task a chance to see what other students are doing to prepare. You may need to do some modeling with middle school students.

The best thing about Socratic Seminars is that they enable the teacher to assess a student's understanding of the book, while at the same time ensuring that the student does all the work him/herself. It is hard to fake this assignment without having read the book. Students have to mark passages so they can defend their statements. Their audience is their toughest one — their peers — and their peers will call them on it if they realize they haven't read the material.

Tips for conducting a successful Socratic Seminar:

- If you're like me, it will be hard for you as the teacher to remain quiet while the students talk, but it's essential.
- Allow students to use hands if they can't restrain themselves.
- Supply post-its if students can't mark in their books.
- Make sure students are aware of expectations — that each of them must contribute both as a speaker and a listener.
- Put chairs in a circle. (14)

Finally, I plan to extend their critical thinking skills by requiring them to submit a written essay on heroism, a great way to incorporate writing instruction and practice. Using Joseph Campbell's list of the "Characteristics of a Hero", from his book, *The Power of Myth*, (15) students will choose from one of the following topics and compose a clarification paper using the knowledge they have gained about the children of World War I.

1. A hero gives his or her life to something bigger than him/herself, to some higher end.
2. A hero performs a courageous act, either physical or spiritual.
3. A hero is usually someone from whom something has been taken or who feels there's something lacking in the normal experience available, or permitted, to members of his society.
4. A hero embarks on a series of adventures to recover what is lost or to discover some life-giving information.

5. The hero usually moves out of the known, conventional safety of his own life to undertake the journey.
6. The hero undergoes trials and tests to see if he has the courage, the knowledge and the capacity to survive.
7. A hero has to achieve something.
8. A hero's journey usually consists of a departure, a fulfillment, and a return.

North Carolina curriculum requires that I teach a unit on propaganda. To bridge the gap between World War I and II, I plan to insert several quick mini lessons on this subject. There are abundant examples of propaganda postcards available on the Google search engine (16) that corresponds to World War I. By allowing the students to sort each postcard with a purposeful heading, propaganda techniques move from simply a classroom objective to real world application.

The second part of the unit focuses on World War II, primarily children of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. The lesson of the Third Reich is manipulation, how easy it was for children to be manipulated by not only Hitler, but the peer pressure of others who callously disregarded their own principles as it pertained to “thou shalt not kill.” Children of the Holocaust were vulnerable to discrimination at its worst. As I transition from one part of my unit to the next, I want my students to begin to form opinions, based on knowledge of each conflict and what lesson they can learn about the roles of children in war.

Therefore, For World War II, a racial war, students will choose to read either *Hostage to War: A True Story* by Tatjana Wassiljewa, *Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps* by Andrea Warren, or *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen. Each story is told from the point of view of a different victim of the war, and each story is leveled at differing reading abilities. With teacher input, of course, students will be able to choose the book that best meets their needs and interests.

In this part of the unit, students will experience war through the eyes of the victims of the Holocaust and the civilian soldiers who worked for or against Hitler's cause.

Hostage to War: A True Story is a memoir about a young Russian who is sent to Germany to complete forced labor. This book allows students to peek into the horrors that war imposed upon civilians from a unique viewpoint. *Hostage* is a higher reading level novel. Because of a series of translations when first published, the reading is awkward at times, but it is well worth the effort for your better readers.

Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps is the true story of a Polish Jew who survived the Auschwitz concentration camp. It is a novel of survival as well as a story of what one can learn about forgiveness and compassion.

The Devil's Arithmetic begins at a Jewish Seder meal for the protagonist, Hannah. Tired of her family traditions and old-fashioned ways, Hannah travels back in time to the Holocaust where she experiences the horrors of a concentration camp.

I plan to demonstrate that war is not “cool” during the World War II segment of the unit as the students delve into racism of that period. Students will be taught interviewing techniques, as I have arranged for a student’s grandmother, a victim of the Holocaust, to be a guest speaker during this unit. Students will be able to practice their speaking and listening skills as they interview. The “Big Question” I want the students to answer in this unit, “Is there such a thing as a clean war?” will guide this portion of the unit. Ultimately I want the students to conclude that after the carnage of a major conflict, no war is wrapped up neat and tidy with everything back in its place.

When the novels are completed, I plan for my students to compare/contrast children of World War I with children of World War II. Questions for the students to ponder include:

- Were children of both wars victims?
- If so, who were the ultimate victims? Holocaust children? Hitler’s youth? The child soldier of World War I?
- Who had it worst?

As students begin to digest the information found in their novel studies and activities, the culminating project for this part of the unit will be a recorded documentary that students will write, direct, and produce. I plan to divide the students into five distinct groups as they will take on the personas of Axis and Allied soldiers, Hitler Youth, Jewish refugees and prisoners, and various others affected by this war. Using the knowledge garnered from the novel studies and additional resources (17) students will work cooperatively to create interview questions for their group’s persona. Students will be required to work through the writing process as they write, revise, edit, and produce final products to be employed while conducting their mock interviews in the media style of a PBS television special.

Lastly, students will study the modern day asymmetrical wars occurring in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Africa. They will gain knowledge of the child soldier and the suicide bombers of our present day wars through in-depth novel studies of *Kiss the Dust* by Elizabeth Laird, *Mud City* by Deborah Ellis, and *The Other Side of Truth* by Beverly Naidoo.

Kiss the Dust is well-told, fast moving story of a Kurdish family who lived within the shadows of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. The thirteen year old protagonist must leave her wealthy life behind as the political situation in her mountainous land becomes unbearable. This story tells of her family, now political refugees in the United Kingdom, and what they left behind.

Mud City embodies the themes of survival and strength in the worst of circumstances. It paints a vivid picture of life for many children trapped in refugee camps. The fourteen year old victim of this story flees from her Afghan refugee camp only to discover escape is not an easy choice, and is dangerous itself.

The Other Side of Truth tells the story of the Solaja family in Nigeria. The father, a journalist who writes of injustices in the local newspaper, puts his family in harms' way. The book is a gripping tale of the children's escape to London and their difficulties along the way. This book allows the students who read it to glimpse into the former lives of refugee children.

Under the theme of contemporary wars, the concluding part of the unit's "Big Questions" becomes, "What is the motivation?" "How has war changed over the past 100 years?" and "Is war really necessary?" A veteran of the Iraqi War on terror will be a guest speaker during this part of the unit and will be able to help the students clarify these questions and ground the students in the realities of war. The final project will require students to create a book of perspective poetry. Poems will be written using the points of view of the child soldier, suicide bomber, religious fanatic, and various personalities of the modern day war.

This project will begin with instruction falling under the heading of author's style which would include mini lessons on point of view, author's purpose and perspective, subject and theme, diction and voice, figurative language, mood and tone, irony, bias, and propaganda techniques, all goals of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

This culminating activity is an excellent way to incorporate several Language Arts strands into one unit. By teaching the elements of writing as well as the characteristics of poetry for this unit on modern war, students will have been exposed to a wide variety of learning objectives while dissecting the perspectives of war as well. Additionally, students will be required to publish their poetry and share it with guests at a poetry reading. Again, this satisfies objectives for North Carolina Language Arts.

To culminate the year long unit on 20th century war and its effect on children, I plan for my students to conduct a panel discussion for their families and other sixth grade students on the authentic faces of war. Students will be expected to return to the original question this unit began with, "Is war the fun, exciting adventure video games portray it to be?" Students should reveal through their discussion how their misconceptions have

altered and what moral lessons they have ascertained. The discussion will include their perceptions of war before the unit began and how their perceptions of war have changed.

Citations

1. Angelou, Maya. 1969. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. New York: Random House
2. Hearne, Betsy. *U.S. Children's Books on WWII – An Overview and Representative Bibliography*. Bookbird 3
3. <http://psychcentral.com/news/2006/07/28/video-games-desensitize-to-real-violence>
4. www.oseda.missouri.edu/step/vol19/no1/step0309.shtml
5. jacbro13.com/...video/7b4_027_ISU%20psychologists%20produce%20first%20Study.pdf
6. Garatti, Marinella and Rose Rudnitski. 2007. *Adolescents' Views on War and Peace in the Early Phases of the Iraq Conflict*. San Diego: Libra Publishing.
7. Strube, Penny. 1996. *Getting the Most from Literature Groups*. New York: Scholastic
8. Peterson, Ralph, and Maryann Eeds. 2007. *Grand Conversations Literature Groups in Action*. New York: Scholastic.
9. LysaCraig, email>>>lysa.craig@cms.k12.nc.us
10. www.mercki.com/poetry
www.americanpoetsproject.ioa.org/volume/1931082332
www.classiclit.about.com/od/worldwarii/tp/aatp_wwII.htm
www.6thcorpsmusic.us
www.amazon.com/G-I-Jukebox

11. www.World-war-pictures.com
www.teacheroz.com/WWIIpropaganda.htm
12. <http://freeology.com/graphicorgs/>
13. www.cccoe.net
14. www.huffenglish.com
15. Campbell, Joseph. 1988. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Doubleday.
16. www.google.com
17. www.lib.washington.edu/subject/History/tm/war.html
www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk
www.42explore2.com/worldwar2

Additional Resources for Teachers

Boynton, Alice, and Wiley Blevins. 2003. *Teaching Students to Read Nonfiction*.

New York: Scholastic.

Great book to supplement lessons on nonfiction, especially as it relates to end-of-course testing.

Clemmons, Joan, and Lois Laase. 1995. *Language Arts Mini-Lessons*. New York: Scholastic.

This is a great book full of short lessons on note taking, lead sentences, and combining literature with grammar instruction.

Hildum, Kristin. 1996. *Write to Publish*. California: Creative Teaching Press.

Good examples to use when teaching the writing process.

McCarthy, Tara. 1996. *Teaching Genre*. New York: Scholastic.

This book teaches the characteristics of genres with model lessons.

Sunflower, Cherlyn. 1993. *75 Creative Ways to Publish Students' Writing*. New York: Scholastic.

This book is a must read if you are in need of some creative ways for your students to demonstrate learning.

Strube, Penny. 1996. *Getting the Most from Literature Groups*. New York: Scholastic.

This book gives step by step instructions for using literature circles in the classroom.

Van Emden, Richard. 2005. *Boy Soldiers of the Great War*. London: Headline Publishing Group.

This is a collection of essays from soldiers of World War I. It is a good resource if you want to demonstrate how war affects people differently, as each chapter tells a distinctive story.

De Wijze, Louis. 1995. *Only My Life, A Survivor's Story*. Amsterdam: St. Martin's Press.

This book accounts the life of someone who survived the Nazi death camps. It gives a great perspective on what it took to be a survivor.

Durlacher, Gerhard. 1987. *Drowning: Growing up in the Third Reich*. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff.

This is a moving account of an Auschwitz survivor from his home in the Netherlands to death camps to liberation.

Heck, Alfons. 1985. *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika*. Colorado: Renaissance House.

This book allows students a peek inside the life of a German boy growing up under the Nazi regime. It takes the reader inside the life of a member of Hitler's Youth.

Beah, Ishmael. 2007. *A Long Way Gone, Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

This is a great accompaniment to the study of the modern day wars of Africa and the parallel studies of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ilibagiza, Immaculee, and Steve Erwin. 2006. *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*. California: Hays House, Incorporated.

This is the story of one woman who was not only able to survive the Holocaust in Africa, but who learned to thrive in America.

Reading Resources for Students

Dank, Milton. 1984. *Khaki Wings*. New York: Dell Publishing Company.

Good book to read to show that war was not as children perceived. The protagonist is excited to enlist, but soon discovers that war is not fun.

Remarque, Erich Maria. 1987. *All Quiet on the Western Front*. New York: Ballantine Books.

This book touches on the life of the child soldier in the trenches. This is a good book to illustrate that the home front was ignorant of the atrocities of war.

Trumbo, Dalton. 1984. *Johnny Got His Gun*. New York: Bantam.

This is a very brutal book that demonstrates the horrors of war injuries. The protagonist is badly injured and maimed. Caution should be used when assigning this book.

Wassiljewa, Tatjana. 1999. *Hostage to War: A True Story*. New York: Scholastic.

This takes a look at forced labor camps during World War II. This gives a good view of life for civilians during the war.

Warren, Andrea. 2001. *Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps*. New York: Scholastic.

A novel of survival in the Nazi death camps.

Yolen, Andrea. 1990. *The Devil's Arithmetic*. United Kingdom: Puffin.

This book relates the life of an unhappy modern day Jewish girl who travels back in time where she learns to appreciate her ancestors.

Implementing District Standards

The strands, standards, and benchmarks are not intended to be an exhaustive listing.
English/Language Arts

Competency Goal 1: The learner will use language to express individual perspectives drawn from personal or related experiences.

1. Narrate an expressive account which:
 - Tells a story or establishes the significance of an event or events
 - Uses remembered feelings and specific details

2. Explore expressive materials that are read, heard, and /or viewed by:
 - Analyzing the characteristics of expressive works
 - Making connections between works, self and related topics
 - Comparing and contrasting information
 - Drawing inferences and conclusions
 - Determining the main idea and significance of events
 - Generating a learning log or journal
 - Creating an artistic interpretation that connects self to the work

Discussing print and non-print expressive works formally and informally

3. Interact appropriately in group settings by:

Listening attentively

Contributing relevant comments connecting personal experiences to content

Monitoring own understanding of the discussion and seeking clarification as needed

4. Reflect on learning experiences by:

Describing learning growth and changes in perspective

Identifying changes in self throughout the learning process

Competency Goal 2: The learner will explore and analyze information from a variety of sources.

2.01 Explore informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by:

Studying the characteristics of informational works

Restating and summarizing information

Determining the importance and accuracy of information

Generating questions

2.02 Use multiple sources of print and non-print information in designing and

Developing informational materials through:

Distinguishing between primary and secondary sources

Analyzing the effects of the presentation and/or the accuracy of information

Competency Goal 3: The learner will examine the foundations and the use of argument.

3.01 Explore argumentative works that are read, heard, and/or viewed by:

Determining the importance of author's word choice and focus

Summarizing the author's purpose and stance

Distinguishing between fact and opinion

3.02 Explore the problem solution process by:

Studying examples in literature and other texts that present problems coherently describe the solution clearly, sequence reasons to support the solution, and show awareness of audience

Preparing individual and/or group essays and presentations that focus on the diagnosis of a problem and possible solutions

3.03 Study arguments that evaluate through:

Preparing individual and/or group essays and presentations that use evaluative

techniques

Competency Goal 4: The learner will use critical thinking skills and create criteria to evaluate print and non-print materials.

4.01 Determine the purpose of the author or creator by:

Exploring any bias, apparent or hidden messages, emotional factors, and/or propaganda techniques

Identifying and exploring the underlying assumptions of the author/creator

4.02 Analyze the communication and develop and apply appropriate criteria to evaluate the quality of the communication by:

Drawing conclusions based on evidence, reasons, or relevant information

Considering the implications, consequences, or impact of those conditions

4.03 Recognize and develop the stance of a critic by:

Considering alternative points of view or reasons

Remaining fair-minded and open to other interpretations

Constructing a critical response/review of a work or topic

Competency Goal 5: The learner will respond to various literary genres using interpretive and evaluative processes.

5.01 Increase fluency, comprehension, and insight through a meaningful and comprehensive literacy program by:

Reading literature and other materials selected by the teacher

Discussing literature in teacher-student conferences and small group discussions

Taking an active role in whole class seminars

Discussing and analyzing the effects on texts of such literary devices as figurative language, dialogue, flashback, and sarcasm

Interpreting text by explaining elements such as plot, theme, point of view, characterization, mood, and style

Recognizing underlying messages in order to identify theme(s) within and across works

Extend understanding by creating products for different purposes, different audiences and within various contexts

5.02 Study the characteristics of literary genres through:

Reading a variety of literature and other text

Exploring how the author's choice and use of genre shapes the meaning of the literary work

Competency Goal 6: The learner will apply conventions of grammar and language usage

6.01 Demonstrate an understanding of conventional written and spoken language by:

Extending vocabulary knowledge by learning and using new words

Developing an awareness of language conventions and usage during oral presentations

6.02 Identify and edit errors in spoken and written English by:

Producing final drafts that demonstrate accurate spelling and the correct use of punctuation and capitalization

Developing an awareness of errors in everyday speech

