

Through the Eyes of a Child: A Multi-genre Study of Children of War

by Nicole Schubert

Introduction

As a middle school teacher I am well acquainted with the idea that there are at least three sides to every story. This basic idea has become the inspiration for my entire unit. Students understand that when I ask them for the “truth” behind a minor infraction committed in my classroom I will not rest until I hear the story from the perspective of all parties involved. This basic example is one that I frequently use when asking the students to probe deeper for the truth behind what we study in class. As an eighth grade Language Arts teacher I am responsible for teaching my students how to become better at comprehending and analyzing what they read. Historically, my students have a difficult time taking a critic’s stance when evaluating non-fiction. By combining photo essays and testimonies of children who experienced war firsthand, students will be expected to evaluate, assess and draw conclusions about what it is they see and hear. In this unit, students will evaluate child soldiers in three ways: the child the hero, the child the survivor, and the child the victim.

By the end of the Third Quarter, I will begin a review of the four genres of literature we studied throughout the year: Non-fiction, Fiction, Poetry, Drama. The unit fits perfectly in the Fourth Quarter curriculum because this is usually when I teach the play *The Diary of Anne Frank* and show the film *Life is Beautiful*. Both works are told from the perspective of a child and allow the audience to imagine what life was like for children during the Holocaust. *The Diary of Anne Frank* provides the reader with the story of hiding and ends with the eight members of the annex being arrested by the Gestapo. This unit will provide an insight to the perspective of the Nazi Youth, another face of children in World War II. *Life is Beautiful* captures the innocence of a child who was brought to a concentration camp. Since the above-mentioned works are already part of my curriculum, I have decided to include them in this unit on child soldiers. Throughout this unit students will view pictures and read stories about child soldiers in Germany during World War I, Nazi Youth during World War II, American soldiers in Vietnam, and child soldiers in Sierra Leone during the most recent civil war. We will also examine Amerasians, children of U.S. soldiers left behind in Vietnam after the U.S. troops were pulled, who suffered the consequences of U.S involvement in South Vietnam.

The overarching goal for this unit is for students to be able to analyze non-fiction, fiction, poetry and drama by studying perspective, specifically that of children in war. I also want my students to become more aware of the world they live in. Children their age

around the world have been and are currently used as child soldiers to fight the edicts of the adults surrounding them. This unit will focus on the perspective of children in war. I want my students to draw conclusions about what a child's role should be in war. *What category do child soldiers fall into - the victims or the perpetrators?* Before the unit I will ask my students that question. At the end of the unit, after reading excerpts from memoirs, interviews, short stories, and poems I will ask my students the same questions.

My goal is that they will develop their own perspectives on the role of a child soldier after hearing the voices of so many who lived the experience firsthand. When studying non-fiction, students will read firsthand accounts, memoirs, and interviews with child soldiers from various wars, as well as analyze photographs and other graphic aids – examining the perspective of children at various stages in a war. The fiction component of the unit will focus on point-of-view, internal and external conflicts as well as character analysis, paying particular to the actions and motivations of characters. The elements of drama are so similar to those of fiction, so I will conduct a review of the Story Map: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution, while focusing on the differences in form between a fictional story and a play. The poetry selections will allow for a review of figurative language, form, and a further study of speaker and voice. Students will be able to use the background information they learned from the memoirs, testimonials and interviews to assist them in their analysis of poems about a specific war. Journal topics for all four genres are as follows: *What is perspective? How does the perspective of an adult differ from that of a child in the same situation? How can two people in similar situations have different perspectives? Why does one's perspective change? How does one's perspective affect their actions or reactions?* We will focus on the different reasons children become soldiers: voluntarily (practical or socio-economic motivation), join by force (if family is killed), or drafted (by the military or rebels). Examples children who became soldiers for one of the abovementioned reason will be read in this unit.

Rationale

My goal as an educator is to help my students understand and appreciate the world around them. Too often students are lacking knowledge about current events, both at home and abroad. In order to develop their own perspective of the world it is important for them to hear the perspectives of children their ages whose childhood was stolen by war. Although many of my students have not been directly affected by war, they do understand the importance of preserving the innocence of a child. The first page of *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier of the Sierra Leone army, best summarizes my motivation for writing this unit. At the age of eighteen Beah is sitting in a high school classroom in New York City, far away from the war-torn country he fled the very same year. He does not reveal much about his life in Sierra Leone to his peers, but when one asked why he left, he replied, “Because there is a war.”¹ Another peer replied

and asked if he witnessed the chaos of guns and shooting. When Beah replies yes, his peer says, “Cool.”² This epitomizes the naïveté of so many teenagers in the U.S. - that war is cool, that guns and violence are cool. They see the violence on video games, in movies and on television shows; in a way they become desensitized to the realities of war. War is so far removed from so many of them they cannot begin to fully understand the realities of war.

I know students will look at pictures I present to them and ask the question, *Why would that kid want to be a soldier?* Therefore, I want to explore with my students the reasons why so many young boys became child soldiers. The reasons range from fascination, patriotism, and nationalism to fear, coercion, and kidnapping. In some instances, Germany boys as young as fourteen years old cheated the system and enlisted to fight in World War I in order to fight for their country’s honor; they saw the glory of war and wanted to be part of it. Young German boys during World War II did not have much of a choice about joining the Hitler Youth, and in turn became a crutch for the Nazi party in the final months of the war. Some children in Sierra Leone ran from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) who would kidnap children and force them to fight their rebel cause. In order to escape the RUF’s branding, children would run away from their villages. As their families were massacred in village raids, some boys were caught by the army and were forced to join and fight off the RUF. Their sacrifice was not voluntary; war found them wherever they went. While the unit will not focus a lot on child soldiers in Vietnam (U.S. boys near the age of eighteen), we will examine the effects of war on the Amerasian children who were left behind in South Vietnam after the U.S. withdrew its forces. Discrimination and suffering plagued children who were products of U.S. soldiers and their story continued for many more years.

A veteran interviewed for *Boy Soldiers of the Great War* stated, “A bullet...is no respecter of age.”³ This perfectly sums up my motivation for teaching this unit. As I read this statement I immediately thought of Ishmael Beah, a child who was forced to become a soldier by the army in Sierra Leone. He witnessed children as young as seven shot to death while on the front line. This quote also highlights the difficult question, *When is a child soldier accountable for his actions?* There are three sides to every story: the child, the soldier and the victim. The question remains, *How do we distinguish between the three?* After studying the child as the hero, the survivor, and the victim, students will be able to draw their own conclusions on the issue of accountability.

Objectives/Background

Since eighth grade is a “Gateway” year students must pass the End of Grade Reading Test in order to be promoted to high school. This test includes three of the four genres of literature studied in this unit. Since this unit will serve as a review of the four genres, the focus of this unit is mostly non-fiction because a majority of the passages on the test are

non-fiction. As stated above, this unit will serve as an end of year review of all four genres studied in class throughout the year. Some specific objectives I will focus on are: author's purpose, taking a critic's stance, perspective, internal and external conflicts, plot structure, figurative language, and theme. This unit is designed to be taught during the course of nine weeks. Since my school is a magnet arts school, it operates on an A-day, B-day schedule, so unlike traditional middle schools, I see my Language Arts students every-other day. Therefore, while spread across nine weeks, I am essentially teaching the unit to each class in four and a half weeks. This is important to keep in mind when selecting the assigned readings. Because of time constraints I will not read many of the texts discussed in the unit in their entirety, but rather select appropriate excerpts that highlight the information I feel most important for my students to experience.

World War I - Non-fiction and Poetry

World War I is the first war where children actively fought. *Why did so many English children want to fight?* There are several reasons behind their enthusiasm. Children wanted to demonstrate heroism, or public pride for their country; the glory of war was romanticized in propaganda which depicted children in uniform; family tradition also drove children to follow in the footsteps of their fathers and grandfathers; it was an outlet for them - boy scouts began as a paramilitary organization for young boys. These factors contributed to the onslaught of boys under the age of eighteen, the legal age for enlisting in the army. The child soldiers of World War I were unique because they were exposed to death as coffins were often laid out in homes, illness and contagious disease were rampant, and they were encouraged to participate in death rituals. Therefore, they were very naïve to the realities of war. In contrast, the youth of today are overexposed to images of war, violence and death in video games, movies and television shows, but are not as accustomed to seeing death surround them in ways children did in the early twentieth century did.⁴ It is important to point out that children who are fighting in a war do not have separate rules, magical powers, or the ability to press "stop" on a video game controller. War does not discriminate

Boy Soldiers of the Great War is a great secondary source which describes the motivations, experiences and reflections of child soldiers. The book contains stories collected from interviews and has great excerpts I can use with my students. "Anecdotes about boys enlisting under age are commonplace."⁵ All men interviewed were under age when they enlisted and served in World War I. ⁶I will use excerpts that highlight all of the motivating factors for enlisting underage mentioned above. One way to link the past to the present is to ask students, *Why do young boys in the U.S. enlist for the army today? Are the motivations similar?*

I will use two poems by Wilfred Owen that contrast his perspective as a soldier at two very different times in his life. The two poems described below perfectly demonstrate

two opposite perspectives, written by the same person, at two different times. These poems serve as a great example of how a person's experiences affect their perspective on a situation. It is important to point this out to the students so they can have a better understanding of tone and voice in a poem. When Owen wrote "How Glorious" he was excited to be part of the glory of war, an adventure many young German boys yearned for as well. His zeal for fighting is truly palpable throughout the poem. However, Owen's perspective gravely changes after he is exposed to the ills of war and watches his comrade die right before his eyes, "In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,/He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning."⁷ This poem is full of imagery and paints a very realistic image of war - highlighting pain, fatigue, and the agony of death. I usually teach this poem because it is a great vehicle for teaching tone and figurative language. For the purpose of this unit it is a great example of how someone's perspective can change so drastically once he has been face-to-face with war, debunking the myth that, as Owen states in Latin, it is sweet and proper to die for one's country. The last line of this poem is so important because it will serve as a discussion throughout the unit. *Why do children think war is so glorious? How does war change a soldier?*

World War II/Holocaust - Non-fiction, Fiction and Drama

I will use *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and excerpts of *Drowning* by Gerhard Durlacher to provide the perspective of children persecuted by the Nazis during World War II. As mentioned above, *Life is Beautiful* will also be shown to demonstrate how one father tried to preserve his son's innocence and childhood in order to save his life. For this part of the unit I am going to have students read both works in order to compare Durlacher's experience to Anne Frank's. Both children faced discrimination and had to leave their life of ease for one of confinement and eventual imprisonment in a concentration camp. Excerpts of *A Child of Hitler* by Alfons Heck will be used to provide a contrasting perspective of a child who was an active member of the Hitler Youth, at a time when children his age were facing certain death at the hands of the Nazis. Heck's testimony will provide students with the ills of propaganda and the effects it had on so many German children. For Heck and so many others, life as a young German boy drastically changed when Hitler came to power. Instead of finding a niche for himself in a youth organization, he was brainwashed into devoting his life to the Nazi Youth in the name of Hitler. Heck is a perfect example of how easily teenage boys were manipulated into joining the ranks of the Nazis. *Was Heck responsible for his actions while a member of the Nazi Youth? Should he be held accountable for his participation in the Nazi Youth?*

Sierra Leone Civil War - Non-fiction

I will use excerpts of *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* to provide my students with the perspective of a boy who was trying to flee from the RUF only to be

captured by the army and forced to participate in the types of gruesome acts he was running away from. This is a story of courage and new beginnings and I think it will dispel any preconceived notions my students may have had during previous discussions about the accountability of a child soldier. I believe this book to be the most powerful because Beah becomes that which he was fleeing- a child soldier who is forced to join and kill the “enemy” in the same manner his own family was killed. This book examines the hero, survivor, and victim. Students will be able to trace how Beah’s perspective changes throughout his experience. He begins as a frightened boy fleeing from the RUF and witnessing the massacre of his entire family, and then transforms into a soldier who is coerced into killing, maiming, and terrorizing the “enemy.” So, the discussion will naturally lead to the following questions: *When does a child soldier become responsible for his actions? What should the consequences be for a child who was forced to kill? What rehabilitation services are offered to child soldiers? Who is to blame for their behavior?* Students need to understand that child soldiers in Sierra Leone are not joining voluntarily, and contrast greatly to the boy soldiers of WWI who joined to be heroic. Child soldiers of Sierra Leone are a victim when they are forced to join, and remain a victim even after they are “rehabilitated” into their community. The lasting effects of being a child soldier often make the boys outcasts of their neighborhood or viewed as a threat because of the atrocities they committed when they were being forced to kill.

Vietnam - Fiction and Non-fiction

I am going to begin this part of the unit by reading a short story in the language arts textbook, “Stop the Sun” by Gary Paulsen. This story is about a boy, Terry, whose father was a soldier in Vietnam. Terry notices that his father acts strangely at times and wants to know more about his time as a soldier in Vietnam. Terry’s father suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and his son has a hard time understanding the flashbacks and strange behavior his father exhibits at home and in public - behaviors that often embarrass him. After Terry’s father opens up and tells his son details about Vietnam and the reason for his flashbacks and nightmares Terry begins to have a deeper understanding and appreciation for his father. Since most of my students do not have a lot of historical background on the Vietnam War, this story will serve as an introduction to the war, and it also has a great timeline that I can use as a non-fiction supplement.

During this segment of the unit, I want students to examine the life of a soldier on both sides of the battle. Students will research the requirements for U.S. soldier enlistment as well as the draft enacted during the Vietnam War. In the United States the war is referred to as the “Vietnam War,” whereas the Vietnamese refer to it as the “American War.” The U.S. wanted to stop the spread of Communism and invaded Vietnam with the intent of toppling Ho Chi Min’s Communist regime. This was a difficult war for the U. S. troops because they could not see their enemy. The Vietcong used their knowledge of the landscape and recruited many child soldiers, with little coercion, to aid

in their battle. While the U.S. was taking on an important task in the wake of the Cold War, the Vietnamese were waging a war of independence against yet another country trying to occupy their land. Students can compare and contrast the role of the U.S. versus Vietcong soldier. *What hardships were faced during battle? Why were they recruited? Were they responsible for their actions?*

After reading this story, students will be able to analyze how a soldier's participation in the war does not end when they return home. I will then have students read excerpts from *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood*. This book is written from the perspective of a child who was the product of a U.S. soldier and a Vietnamese mother. He illustrates how the unification of North and South Vietnam under Communist rule created a life of discrimination, suffering and pain for him and his family. It allows students to see what happened to a country after U.S. troops withdrew after an unsuccessful mission. They can draw parallels between the post traumatic stress endured by the U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War, the inglorious war, and the post traumatic stress suffered by the South Vietnamese.

Strategies

Photo Essay

I have a great collection of photographs of child soldiers to share with my students. When selecting photographs it is wise to find pictures that convey emotion, demonstrate perversity (what is wrong with the picture?), demonstrate wonder (because it seems wrong, or to ask what is this about?), and that it represents a concept rather than an illustration. Students will be broken into groups of four or five. Each group will receive the same set of ten photographs (blown up to 8x10). Each photograph will capture a child soldier from World War I, World War II (Nazi and Allied soldiers), Vietnam (U.S. soldiers and Vietnam children), and Sierra Leone's civil war.

Students will be given five minutes to arrange the photographs into three categories which they have to decide upon themselves. I do not want to give much guidance on how to organize pictures because I want students to first make their own connections to the photographs. Once the five minutes is up, each group will explain their three categories and their reason for using that strategy. Next, each group will have five more minutes to organize the pictures into two categories. Each group will present their decisions to the class again. Finally, each group will have to create some sort of visual representation of the theme of the pictures by organizing them into an object. They will be given another five minutes and will present the object they created in class.

The purpose of this strategy is to see what conclusions students draw about child soldiers before they are given any background information, and infusing visual aids for those who need visual stimulation to enhance their understanding. Once they are presented with the history behind each picture they will without a doubt lose some sense of wonderment, but will they be able to move past judgments already made about these children? Once they have completed all three activities, I will then explain the facts surrounding each photograph. Students will then be asked to write a reaction to one of the photographs. *What was your initial reaction to this picture? Why? How did you categorize it? What does the picture tell you? What emotions do you see? What role does this picture play? What message does this picture give? Who is telling the story in this picture – the subject or the photographer? How did your reaction change once you learned the facts about the picture?* This activity will get your students thinking on a deeper level. Teachers usually begin class by triggering prior knowledge, but in this activity it is more effective to allow students to think about the pictures themselves by drawing initial conclusions based solely on their interpretations because it becomes more meaningful to them. They will be able to track exactly how and why they drew those conclusions.

Silent Conversation

This activity allows students to voice their opinion without interruption. The purpose of this activity is for students to be able to express their beliefs and read their peers responses in a calm, quiet atmosphere. This allows students more time to think about their response as well as react honestly, which some have difficulty with when asked to participate candidly in class discussions. It also allows every student to respond as opposed to the few students in class who usually dominate class discussions.

Students will be broken into four groups. Each group will have poster board with one question on it. *1. When does a soldier lose his/her innocence? 2. When should child soldiers be held accountable? 3. What age is appropriate to become a soldier? Why? 4. Why do children become soldiers?* There will be four stations with one question on poster board at each station. Students will have five minutes to write their response to the question on the poster board and two minutes to read the responses of their peers. When I tell them time is up they will move to the next station, repeating this four times. The entire activity must be completed in silence. Once each group has visited all four stations I will collect the poster board and post it on the board in the front of the room. I will read some answers out loud and ask students for any additional comments on the topic. I will also ask them what reactions they had when reading their classmates responses. Historically this activity has worked very well. I even ask students why they thought I used this type of activity to discuss these specific questions and they usually respond with the correct answers - to give them time to reflect and give a very honest answer, and

because these are really difficult questions to answer and this activity allows each student to voice their opinion without being intimidated to respond.

I will keep these posters up in the classroom. At the end of the unit I will ask students to re-read their responses and in their journals write a new response to the questions. I am interested to see if and how their responses vary after probing deeply into the lives of child soldiers throughout the unit.

Graphic Organizer

Students will create a Venn Diagram when comparing the two poems by Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est,” and “How Glorious.” Graphic organizers are an important focus in the eighth grade curriculum because they allow students to gather information from various sources and organize details in a visual way. I chose the Venn Diagram as one strategy because I will use it at various times throughout the unit. Student will compare the speaker of the two poems mentioned above by focusing on *diction*, *tone*, and *perspective*. I want students to make comparisons about the two poems because each poem paints a very different perspective on war. After students finish the Venn Diagram and we have discussed their answers, I will ask students, *Why one poet could have written two poems with such different views on war?* “How Glorious” was written before Owen fought in World War I, and “Dulce et Decorum Est” was written after he fought, and before he returned for what would be his last and fatal participation in the war. Students can then highlight the answers in their Venn Diagram that demonstrate the change in Owen’s perspective once he has seen the realities of war.

Classroom Activities

Tiered Activity

A tiered activity allows for differentiation in the classroom. All students will be working on the same objective, but the means of mastering the objective will vary, depending on the learning level of the students. My school groups Language Arts students into two categories: Honors and Standard. The Standard level classes have more mixed-ability students than the Honors classes because in order to qualify for an Honors class, a student must score a Level IV on the End of Grade test (the highest level). Standard classes are comprised of students who score a Level I, II, or III, in turn making tiered activities necessary in Standard level classes.

This unit is a comprehensive review of four literary genres and must prepare students for the End of Grade test in May. Therefore, throughout the unit I will create summative

assessments after studying one particular genre. For example, when examining the two poems by Wilfred Owen we will undoubtedly have class discussions on the perspective of the speaker and why and how it changes over time. However, I also need to create multiple-choice questions that will assess the student's reading comprehension skills in order to best prepare them for the upcoming standardized test. Based off of the goals and objectives listed in the Appendix below, I will create questions using the stems of those objectives. One particular question I will ask is: "In Dulce Et Decorum Est" what is the effect of onomatopoeia in the poem?" The answer choices will be: (a) to help the reader visualize the battle (b) to help the reader imagine the sound of someone choking (c) to create fear in the reader (d) to highlight the fatigue felt by the soldiers. The onomatopoeia can be found in the line, "He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning."⁸ The eighth grade Language Arts curriculum requires students to not only identify figurative language, but understand its effect on a poem. In this question, students should select answer choice (b) to help the reader imagine the sound of someone choking, since onomatopoeia is a sound device. This question would be placed in a group of higher-ability learners. In a group of average-level learners I would ask students, "Highlight the example of onomatopoeia in the poem and identify which of the five senses it appeals to." For the lower-ability group, I would ask them to identify the example of onomatopoeia in the poem. Beginning with the lower-level group, I will ask each group to read the question they were given and the answer they chose. Next, I will ask the group to justify why their answer is correct. In doing so, the other groups can make notes on their poem. The tiered activity gives students confidence in their work because the questions are created with their ability level in mind and also allows the lower and average ability groups to think on a higher level. All students are mastering the same objective, but at a pace and level which is appropriate to each group.

Museum Pamphlets

This activity will be completed towards the end of the unit and will be done class time (in the media center). Students will be assigned one war: WWI, WWII, Vietnam, or Sierra Leone's civil war. I will assign each student the war which they will research because they will have freedom to choose their project topic in the Diary Entries/Collage project discussed below. The purpose of this activity is to assess their understanding of text organizers, a component of non-fiction, as well as to assess their understanding of historical facts learned throughout the unit.

Students will have to create a tri-fold pamphlet about child soldiers from one of the above-mentioned wars that is intended to be placed in the lobby of a museum on child soldiers. The imagined museum is going to take visitors on a journey through the eyes of child soldiers and the pamphlets will act as guides through different exhibitions in the museum. This project will work in conjunction with the Diary Entries/Collages mentioned below, as the museum will be lined with diary entries and collages of the child

soldiers (my classroom will become a make-shift museum by the time this unit is complete). Students must include the following information on their pamphlets: the front panel needs to contain a photograph of the child and the country for which he is fighting; the first inside panel must contain facts about the country (it's government, political/military leaders, reasons for the war); the second inside panel must contain quotes, or testimony from the child soldier (what did he experience, why did he join the army, how did this affect him); the remaining two inside panels should contain information about the museum (it's purpose, and five multiple-choice questions about this exhibit for visitors to complete while on tour); the back panel should contain author information (for grading purposes). This project will be worth 60 points (10 points per panel) and will be printed in the media center. Students will be graded on accuracy of facts and creativity. The pamphlets will be displayed alongside diary entries throughout the classroom to create the museum.

Diary Entries/Collage

This will be a culminating activity for the unit, and will be done independently at home. The project will be assigned three weeks before the end of the unit so they have ample time to complete it. Students must select one of the wars studied throughout the unit: WWI, WWII, Vietnam, or Sierra Leone's civil war. This project will assess the student's ability to take on the perspective of another person through writing. They will have to synthesize the information learned throughout this unit and create something new.

They must write ten one-page (typed, double-spaced) diary entries from the point of view of a fictional child soldier, one they create based on the facts gleaned from this unit. The "persona" they create must be an authentic representation of a child soldier from its designated war zone. Therefore, the historical data surrounding the diary entries as well as the perspective of the child must accurately portray that of the different children we studied throughout the unit. The entries must range in time. For example, the first three entries should demonstrate the child's viewpoints of war before he becomes a soldier – or his reasons for joining. The following three entries must contain information about their time as a child soldier – what they witnessed, carried out and their feelings about each. Finally, the final four entries should contain information about the effects of being a child soldier had on their life – did they ever cease being a child soldier? If so, what has become of their family, their life? Students who choose to have their "persona" die as a result of being a child soldier may write the final entries posthumously. They will be graded on the accuracy of the details they create in their diary entries as well as in the fulfillment of the required length. Students will read three of their entries aloud in class presentations – one from each segment stated above.

Students will also create a collage that represents the "persona" he/she created. The collage can be no smaller than computer paper and must contain images, words, or

illustrations that illustrate the conflicts faced by the child soldier he/she created. It will be graded on creativity as well as how accurately it represents the information written in the diary entries. This culminating activity will be worth 140 points (100 for the diary entries, and 40 for the collage).

Notes

¹Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone* (Farrar: Sara Crichton Books, 2007), 4

²Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone* 4

³Richard van Emden, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2005), 7

⁴Richard van Emden, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War* 17

⁵Ibid., 7

⁶Ibid., 7

⁷Wilfred Owen “Dulce et Decorum Est”

⁸Wilfred Owen “Dulce Et Decorum Est”

Resources

Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone*. Farrar: Sara Crichton Books, 2007. This book is a great source for students. Since some parts are very graphic and some language may be inappropriate to read aloud in class, I suggest selecting several excerpts to read aloud, rather than reading the entire book aloud in class. However, I would highly encourage my students to read the whole book on their own time, or for further research.

The Diary of Anne Frank. This play is found in the textbook used at my school, but can be easily accessed on the internet. Students enjoy reading the play because they become involved in reading the dialogue. I often have students perform, or “act out” an important scene of their choice.

Durlacher, Gerhard. *Drowning: Growing up in Nazi Germany*. New York: Serpent't Tail, 1993. This book can be read in its entirety because it is not too long, a little over 100 pages. The perspective of Durlacher can be compared to Nguyen's in *The Unwanted*; both boys came from an affluent family, only to be destroyed by militant governments. The story is told from the perspective of a child, yet includes the voice of an unsatisfied adult. I suggest pairing this with *The Unwanted* to contrast the perspective of the two boys.

Heck, Alfons. *A Child of Hitler*. Frederick: Renaissance House, 1985. This book is great for middle or high school students. It provides great insight into why so many young boys and girls became faithful participants of the Hitler Youth organizations. Since the book is rather lengthy, I will read excerpts to the class,

Joel, Billy. "Goodnight Saigon" The lyrics can be found on www.lyrics.com. They offer a perspective of American soldiers who go to war and feel ill-prepared after only a brief stint at Parris Island. I will pair this with "Stop the Sun," a short story by Gary Paulson. The lyrics demonstrate the possibility for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to envelop a soldier who witnesses the harsh realities of war.

Nguyen, Kien. *The Unwanted*. Boston: Black Bay Books, 2001. This book is suggested for high school students, but I will use excerpts from the beginning of the book when Nguyen describes his life before the American troops leave Vietnam and his accounts later in the book where he describes the major problems plaguing him and his family. This book can lead to many discussions on the theme of identity, as Nguyen is discriminated because he is Amerasian.

Public Schools of North Carolina. *North Carolina Standard Course of Study, Language Arts Grade Eight 2004*.

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/languagearts/scos/2004/25grade8> (October 12, 2009) This website lists the Standard Course of Study for eighth grade Language Arts curriculum.

Owen, Wilfred. "Dulce et Decorum Est" This poem is easily accessible on the internet. It is written from the perspective of a soldier who is fighting in WWI, one who is watching his fellow comrade slowly die from a gas attack. This poem will be read after "How Glorious," (see below) which is also written by Wilfred Owen. Throughout the poem the speaker tries to dispel the glory of war by vividly describing the gruesome realities. It is a great tool for teaching figurative language and imagery.

Owen, Wilfred. "How Glorious" This poem is easily accessible on the internet. It is written from the perspective of a soldier who is excited to participate in WWI and revels in the glory of war.

Paulsen, Gary. "Stop the Sun." This short story is found in the textbook used at my school, but is easily accessible on the internet. It is about a boy who confronts his father about strange behavior he exhibits at home and in public. After a long-awaited talk with his father, he understands that his father's behavior is a result of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), something he has been plagued with since he fought in the Vietnam War. This story provides a good example of how PTSD

van Emden, Richard. *Boy Soldiers of the Great War*. London: Headline Book Publishing, 2005. This book contains a lot of great first-hand accounts on World War I. Since this book is quite lengthy, I suggest selecting excerpts for students to read in lieu of assigning the entire book.

Appendix

North Carolina Standard Course of Study

The goals and objectives listed below are all met throughout this unit. While the unit itself is a supplement to the curriculum, it adheres to all state standards.

Goal 1 The learner will use language to express individual perspectives through analysis of personal, social, cultural, and historical issues. **1.01** Narrate a personal account which:

- creates a coherent, organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context.
- establishes a point of view and sharpens focus.
- uses remembered feelings.
- selects details that best illuminate the topic.
- connects events to self/society.

1.02 Analyze expressive materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by:

- monitoring comprehension for understanding of what is read, heard and/or viewed.
- reviewing the characteristics of expressive works.
- determining the importance of literary effects on the reader/viewer/listener.
- making connections between works, self and related topics
- drawing inferences.
- generating a learning log or journal.
- maintaining an annotated list of works that are read or viewed, including personal reactions.

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- taking an active role in and/or leading formal/informal book/media talks.

1.03 Interact in group activities and/or seminars in which the student:

- shares personal reactions to questions raised.
- gives reasons and cites examples from text in support of expressed opinions.
- clarifies, illustrates, or expands on a response when asked to do so, and asks classmates for similar expansion.

1.04 Reflect on learning experiences by:

- evaluating how personal perspectives are influenced by society, cultural differences, and historical issues.
- appraising changes in self throughout the learning process.
- evaluating personal circumstances and background that shape interaction

Competency Goal 2 The learner will use and evaluate information from a variety of resources. **2.01** Analyze and evaluate informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by:

- monitoring comprehension for understanding of what is read, heard and/or viewed.
- recognizing the characteristics of informational materials.
- summarizing information.
- determining the importance and accuracy of information.
- making connections to related topics/information.
- drawing inferences and/or conclusions.
- generating questions.
- extending ideas.

2.02 Use multiple sources of print and non-print information to explore and create research products in both written and presentational forms by:

- determining purpose, audience, and context.
- understanding the focus.
- recognizing and/or choosing a relevant topic.
- Recognizing and/or selecting presentational format (e.g., video, essay, interactive technology) appropriate to audience.
- evaluating information for extraneous detail, inconsistencies, relevant facts, and organization.
- researching and organizing information to achieve purpose.
- using notes and/or memory aids to structure information.
- supporting ideas with examples, definitions, analogies, and direct references to primary and secondary sources.
- noting and/or citing sources used.
- recognizing the use of and/or employing graphics such as charts, diagrams, and graphs to enhance the communication of information.

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:

- using effective reading strategies to match type of text.
- reading self-selected literature and other materials of interest to the individual.
- reading literature and other materials selected by the teacher.
- assuming a leadership role in student-teacher reading conferences.
- leading small group discussions.
- taking an active role in whole class seminars.
- analyzing the effects of elements such as plot, theme, characterization, style, mood, and tone.
- discussing the effects of such literary devices as figurative language, dialogue, flashback, allusion, irony, and symbolism.
- analyzing and evaluating themes and central ideas in literature and other texts in relation to personal and societal issues.
- extending understanding by creating products for different purposes, different audiences, and within various contexts.
- analyzing and evaluating the relationships between and among characters, ideas, concepts, and/or experiences.

5.02 Study the characteristics of literary genres (fiction, nonfiction, drama, and poetry) through:

- reading a variety of literature and other text (e.g., young adult novels, short stories, biographies, plays, free verse, narrative poems).
- evaluating what impact genre-specific characteristics have on the meaning of the text.
- evaluating how the author's choice and use of a genre shapes the meaning of the literary work.
- evaluating what impact literary elements have on the meaning of the text.

