

**“From Rebel to Redneck and Everyone in Between  
How the Rise of the New South Affects Southern Characterization in Literature”**

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“In the South, the breeze blows softer...neighbors are friendlier, nosier, and more talkative. (By contrast with the Yankee, the Southerner never uses one word when ten or twenty will do)...This is a different place. Our way of thinking is different, as are our ways of seeing, laughing, singing, eating, meeting, and parting. Our walk is different, as the old song goes our talk and our names. Nothing about us is quite the same as in the country to the north and west. What we carry in our memories is different too, and that may explain everything else. “

--Charles Kuralt in “Southerners: Portraits of a People”

**Introduction**

“What we carry in our memories is different too, and that may explain everything else” is the cornerstone of this unit on southern characterization. Recently I attended my 35<sup>th</sup> high school graduation reunion. For months I had looked forward to reconnecting with dear friends, laughing as we rehashed high school pranks, and reminiscing about the great times we all shared, when the hardest part of our lives was rewriting an English essay or solving a math equation. The reunion was fun, and my expectations were met, but while leisurely driving back to the place I call home today, a realization occurred to me; high school years are for memory making. I am certain those formative years molded me into the woman I have become today, but that town, that school, those friends are not who I am, nor who I want to be now. I don’t belong there anymore. Those years are in the past, extraordinary life experiences I encountered along the way and will carry with me always in the deep hidden compartments of my psyche. But are those memories more than fleeting life experiences? I think yes. As I drove that day, my musings brought to mind another place that has ALWAYS fashioned my life, the south. I am a born and bred southerner, and everything I have done or will do in life is wrapped around the fact that I am a southerner. My southern upbringing has patterned the way my home is decorated, the way my children were raised, my so-called manners and charm, and even the way I acknowledge my elders. As I continued my trip, my mind drifted to the fascinating southern characters I have been privileged to know or “meet” in books and movies, and

as I wondered aloud, it occurred to me that memories shape us all, no matter whom we are or where we're from. But, in the south it is different, almost surreal. That southern heritage that at times moves me to tears, and at other times makes me cringe, is primarily born from one big event: The Civil War. As I drove past industrial parks, railroad crossings, abandoned farms on old dirt roads, Confederate flags hanging on ramshackle porches, and cookie cutter homes in new developments, I thought about the different stories each one of these places could tell if only they could talk, and I felt the need to investigate and speak for them. This unit is their story.

Toward that end, "From Rebel to Redneck and Everything in Between" is a two week interdisciplinary unit focused on the rise of the New South. It is intended to teach middle school students how to analyze character traits, not only through a character's words, thoughts, and actions, but through the history of their southern heritage as well.

I am drawn to this topic for several reasons: I have a great love for historical fiction, especially as it relates to the south; secondly, I feel it is imperative to teach characterization through the context of a great novel. My teaching experiences have enabled me to conclude that my students are far more likely to comprehend and analyze subject matter deeply when they are able to make a connection with the lives of people in the past to those of today. Lastly, I believe it is imperative to equip my students with the necessary background knowledge and history of past events in order to understand what drives people to react and behave as they do today. This unit is a step in that direction.

### **Background Information**

I teach sixth grade Language Arts in a predominantly white, upper middle class 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> 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 is a twenty-five percent ethnicity in the school comprised of 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 twenty seven students with needs ranging from Attention Deficit Disorder to Autism, one Standard Plus class that includes students with passing End-of-Grade test scores, but low motivation, and one Honors class with students that primarily scored above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on the North Carolina End-of-Grade tests. My EC class is co-taught with an EC certified teacher. My other two blocks have twenty six and twenty four students respectively.

This unit is intended for the middle school 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 the assignment descriptions. Having taught for twenty seven 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 devote two weeks to the study of character analysis. However, if time is of the essence, each of my highlighted lessons or strategies is designed so that it could be taught in isolation. In other words, reading and learning about the "characters" of the textile mill era is not a prerequisite to analyzing the character of the Klansman. Nevertheless, my vision is to allow my students time to truly analyze the history behind each character of this unit, to verbally and graphically demonstrate their knowledge of what molded these characters into the people they were, as well as the behaviors that motivate the ancestors left behind today. Furthermore, I have planned this unit to parallel our school's character education curriculum. Bullying is rampant in middle school, as students grapple with the angst of puberty and the conflicts that ensue while finding their identity. By delving into the composition of the southern character, I hope to help my students shed light on the root causes of their behaviors, the origins of derogatory nicknames they so often mutter, and in doing so, give them the critical thinking skills necessary to rise above bullying behavior.

## **Rationale**

Each year in an effort to get to know my students I administer surveys, learning inventories, and questionnaires. I like to include a section on various objectives I plan to teach throughout the year. One question on my survey asks students to describe a favorite character they have read about in a novel or short story. Inevitably their responses include Harry Potter or Edward of vampire fame. Their description of these characters goes no further than good, bad, mean, or nice. Without further pretests I cannot be certain if their responses are an attempt to quickly fill in my survey or a true lack of knowledge, but it is apparent to me after talking with my students that their concept of what entails a character's personality is very limited. Furthermore, my students enter 6<sup>th</sup> grade from a range of feeder schools. Many of these schools are "Schools of Excellence" with top

notch faculty, however the faculties are limited in what they teach by time restraints and the scope, sequence, and objectives required by our state. Therefore, my 6<sup>th</sup> graders step into the door each autumn with little or no experience in character analysis. It is true they can distinguish an antagonist from a protagonist, but their character traits tend to be one-dimensional. My responsibility as a middle school teacher is to enhance their understanding of characterization by leading them to examine the deeper qualities and motives that frame the characters they study.

As mentioned, the majority of my students come from affluent homes. If asked about the history of the Civil Rights movement, they would more than likely respond with a one-dimensional remark about Martin Luther King, Jr. or Rosa Parks giving up her seat on the bus. This trifling knowledge is due in part to a small attempt by teachers to educate students during Black History month in February. Most falsely believe that if the Emancipation Proclamation didn't end slavery and the mistreatment of blacks, then the Civil War most certainly did. This limited knowledge extends to my African American students as well. I know this because my African American students are proud of their heritage and the struggles of their ancestors, but when questioned about those struggles; they rarely have any idea what it means. All of my students have limited knowledge of an era referred to as the New South. Without an understanding of the history of the relationships and struggles between blacks and whites in the past 100 years, it is impossible to fully comprehend the conflicts and resentments the races continue to harbor today. And, why should they? Elementary history books often skip Reconstruction and jump immediately to World War I. Local newspapers, from time to time, will print editorials suggesting that whites offer reparation to blacks for the atrocities of slavery, and the common response from my students is, "We didn't cause slavery. Why should we pay, and why are people still angry?" I am not proposing compensation, but in order for the characterization lessons and subsequent novel study to be meaningful, it is imperative that the teacher have a working knowledge of how the African American was treated and perceived post Civil War and what they have endured. I feel it is essential to develop an understanding of the complexities of the relationships between blacks and whites in the sixty years following the Civil War in order to provide a foundation for a more meaningful understanding of the characters in the novel, *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*.

My school's current textbooks don't allow for this unit. The Language Arts curriculum centers on an anthology of short stories, and although many of the stories are interesting, each short story tends to focus on one central objective. Excellent teachers know that one cannot thoroughly encompass an objective using one short story on one

given day, as stories mean little in isolation from their context. By utilizing children's literature to teach this unit, I am able to incorporate the historical background of each character with a human interest story making it engaging and believable.

But why teach with literature? According to Penny Strube in *Getting the Most from Literature Books*, 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* 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 the characters. And that is one of the goals of this unit, improving reading comprehension by requiring my students to analyze southern characters in literature and evaluate how the history of the new south has played a part in shaping that character's motivations.

I was fortunate to attend a semester long seminar entitled The Rise of the New South, 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 the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century South as well as garnering additional information. Although you are at a disadvantage for not attending the seminar, it is imperative to have a working knowledge of this time period in American history in order to provide students with essential background information needed for the character studies. I have provided links at the end of this unit where you can access information on this time period if needed.

During the antebellum period, white southerners viewed slavery as a positive good, a blessing for whites who could do greater things and a benefit for the allegedly inferior blacks. Northerners on the other hand increasingly viewed slavery as a barbaric relic of the past, unbecoming a modern democratic nation. After the Civil War, the Republican – dominated federal government took steps, during Reconstruction, to force the South to live up to the ideals of “all men are created equal” enshrined in the Declaration of

Independence. In January 1865 Congress passed the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Constitution and formally freed the slaves. In June 1866, congress passed the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, designed to grant citizenship to the recently-freed slaves and protect their civil liberties through “due process” and “equal protection” of the laws. Finally black men were granted the right to vote with the passing of the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment. While these landmark additions to the Constitution promised much to the African Americans, southern resistance and shifting northern politics weakened their enforcement, and the amendments were largely ignored for almost 100 years.

As the federal will to protect black civil liberties waned, white violence against African Americans increased. Unlike during slave days, African Americans no longer had, according to most whites, any intrinsic worth; black life, in other words, became cheap. According to the Library of Congress, approximately 1600 African Americans were lynched between the years 1881 and 1900. Supreme Court decisions during the 1870s and 1880s gradually weakened the power of the Reconstruction amendments and laws. Finally, with its Plessy vs. Ferguson decision in 1896, the US Supreme Court gave its approval to the “separate but equal” doctrine. In the industrializing South, “New South” reformers viewed racial discrimination and disfranchisement as progressive reforms. The era of Jim Crow had formally arrived.

In later years according to Thomas Hanchett in *Sorting out the New South City*, whites created “directed opportunities” for African Americans by building black only neighborhoods in order to direct them to homes away from white neighborhoods. Additionally white neighborhood home prices increased and covenants were established forbidding African Americans to own homes in the white neighborhoods. African American neighborhoods were not afforded the same level of services as white only neighborhoods because of white control in city government. The subtle signs of discrimination and the blatant Jim Crow laws encouraged black resentment toward whites that in many instances continues in the South today. My students are not cognizant of these facts, and I intend to teach mini history lessons before attempting the novel study and subsequent character analyses.

## **Objectives**

The purpose for my students, beyond the obvious mastery of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, is to teach students that there is much more to a literature character’s personality than the observable personality traits. This unit will allow them to reflect upon the rich, varied history of the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century South while analyzing

character. The overriding question of this unit becomes, “How has the rise of the New South shaped the personality of the southerner in the past and today?” This unit intends to expose students to a variety of texts (fiction and nonfiction) and an array of southern personalities that will not only pique their interest, but provide rationale behind those character traits. I intend to integrate their character studies with history lessons of life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century South. In essence, this unit will teach students characterization through an analysis of late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century South with an emphasis on the changing character of the southerner today.

### **Strategies, Activities, and Lessons**

I am continually reading and researching 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. I have selected lessons that represent the different characters in the study. In order to teach the unit, one should be prepared to devote two weeks of instruction to intense character study, and an additional three weeks to a novel study based on the classic southern story, *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*, although reading the novel is not a crucial component to mastery of the objectives. However participation in the novel study would afford teachers the opportunity to evaluate their students’ knowledge of characterization by applying them in context.

I plan to begin the unit by using photography to inspire critical thinking and writing. Under the pretense that every picture tells a story, I will present my students with an array of photographs depicting life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century South. According to the website teachers.net, if one chooses to Google, “photography and writing,” over 23,000,000 entries will appear. Using the suggestions from this article, the sky is the limit with possibilities using photography. Because my students are sixth graders, I plan to begin with the KWL model in order to assess background knowledge. I intend to label my chart, “People of the South: 1865-1925.” My recommended question is, “Who were the people of this time period, and what was happening in history that makes them significant today?”

#### **KWL Chart**

The K stands for What you Know, W stands for What you Want to Know and L stands for what you learned. This graphic organizer is used to organize the information students already know in conjunction with what they learn along the way.

What you KNOW

What you WANT to learn

What you LEARNED

Following the picture essay activity, I intend to teach mini lessons on late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century South, giving a little background knowledge each day to the students about the various “characters” that emerged at this time. There are a variety of ways to present this information. In order to keep students involved and on task, I intend to present the information through lectures, video clips from the internet, including but not limited to Discovery Education, and present them with articles to read and questions to ponder before participation in a Socratic seminar. From there, I plan to present my students with short passages from a variety of great southern literature where the students can apply the content learned in the mini lessons to their examinations of the characters in the text. Literature that I plan to employ includes passages from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Watsons go to Birmingham-1963*, *Clover* and *Gone with the Wind*.

As I coach them through the process of character analysis, they will not only relate the words, thoughts, and actions of the characters in the passage, but their understanding of this historical time period as well. Following the two week study, students would have acquired ample knowledge of the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century South and enough practice in character analysis that they could proceed into a novel study of *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry* for an application of their skills.

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 novel. The objectives will spiral throughout the three week novel study and will be reassessed continually. You will find through your work with your students that authors’ purpose varies greatly from chapter to chapter depending on the point of view of each character. Moreover, the strands of Language Arts will be interwoven throughout the lessons as students work to improve their reading, written language skills, listening, and speaking throughout the novel study. Socratic seminars, cooperative literature circles, and extensive culminating projects will be expected of each student and/or group.



A Socratic seminar can be centered on any book or article. All one has 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, “What motivates the characters to act as they do?” Students would be expected to read the novel 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.

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.

As students begin to digest the information obtained in their novel study and preliminary activities, the culminating project for this unit will be a recorded documentary that students will write, direct, and produce. I plan to allow students to choose and take on the personas of southern characters from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century early 20<sup>th</sup> century South. Using the knowledge garnered from the novel study and additional resources students will work cooperatively to create fictionalized life stories for their persona. Students will be required to work through the writing process as they write, revise, edit, and produce biographical sketches to be performed while mimicking in

character a “*This is Your Life*” television documentary. Channeling the format of the 1950s early 1960s television show, one student would act as emcee for the show as he/she surprises a guest/persona and proceeds to retell their life story in front of an audience. The persona is reacquainted with family and friends as they retell that person’s important life events. The emcee would consult the “history book” written by the students while recapping the biography of the chosen personality.

The anticipatory assignment I chose 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 “Reconstruction.” 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 structures of Reconstruction. Former lessons have garnered a plethora of responses when brainstorming key words, but a very limited response to the category images and symbols. Under the category feelings, my students responded with anything from relief that the war had ended to the contrasting images of a happy emancipated slave and an unhappy Confederate soldier. The consequences category included death, injury, and a need for larger cemeteries, yet never focused on the rebuilding of the South or the confusion faced by a newly freed slave. The rationale for beginning the unit with the brainstorming activity allows the teacher to quickly acknowledge the students’ prior knowledge of Reconstruction. An immediate writing response activity would follow in order for students to ponder the relationship between and among the words on the graphic organizer. This is an excellent lead in to further study.

The unit begins with a visual essay of photos before and after Civil War, ending with the Great Depression. I want the students to be intrigued with southern life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from various points of view, so they will analyze pictures from the different time periods 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. 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 slaves, landowners, soldiers, carpetbaggers, Klansmen, mill workers and demagogues. Another group may sort the pictures by assigning them to a particular period of time. 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. Following the class discussion, and with teacher guidance, students organize pictures on a timeline for this study. Next students are assigned to research real individuals whose lives correspond to an actual period on the timeline. For example one student may choose Huey Long, another an early 20<sup>th</sup> century mill worker, or someone affected by the convict lease program. Using an idea I garnered from the Education World website, students then combine their reading skills with technological knowhow. Students first research a person and create a paper timeline of their life. Using Microsoft Excel in the computer lab, students create timelines. My advanced students create double line graphs demonstrating the timeline of the individual they have researched as well as the important events that happened in history during that same time period. As Gail Watson, a computer technologist of John F. Pattie Elementary School in Dumfries, Virginia implied, a bonus of this lesson is that as students create timelines of individuals, they come alive through technology. I might add that it incorporates several core subjects and objectives as well.

Lesson two is another project I acquired from Education World. After the characterization unit and/or reading the novel, *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry*, students create grab bags to demonstrate knowledge of their characters. Students imagine they are characters in the novel and bring in items that are important to the characters as well as the New South time period of which they lived. Students choose three to five items that represent who that person is, what is important to that person, or something that person might wear. For example, if a student chose the character of a linthead, he or she might pull from the bag pieces of cotton, worn shoes, bandages, small sack of wages, or a picture of their mill house. Students would be given instructions and a rubric of what is expected for the oral presentation.

Bio Poems are a great way to assess knowledge of character as well as to create individualized poetry. Bio Poems are written based on a precise format, but they still allow for the student's individual creativity. On each line of the poem, students provide only the information requested for that line. Lines may be written with a single word or phrase. The objective is for students to demonstrate understanding of character.

Line 1 – First Name

Line 2 – Title given to the character

- Line 3 – Four words that describe the character
- Line 4 – Lover of (three items, objects, or ideas)
- Line 5 - Who believes (one idea or concept)
- Line 6 – Who wants (three things)
- Line 7 – Who uses (three things)
- Line 8 – Who gives (three things)
- Line 9 – Who says (a direct quote)
- Line 10 – Last name or synonymous descriptor

The following is an example bio-poem using the derogatory term for a late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century southern textile worker.

Linthead

Textile worker

Poor, proud, patient, self reliant

Lover of frugality, family, hard work

Who believes in God

Who wants respect, shorter hours, more pay

Who uses flying looms, cotton fiber, each minute of the day

Who gives respect to the boss, money to the church, kindness to the neighbors

Who says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”

Mill folk

Another teaching technique I have had great success with is the use of monologues; a long speech by one character to self, an imagined other character, or an audience. Monologues are entertaining and informative as they give voice to the speaker’s personality while providing the audience significant features of the speaker’s life.

The objective of a monologue is for students to identify a suitable character, examine that character’s traits and motives then transfer that knowledge to a fluent oral reading exercise. Although monologues allow students to demonstrate individual mastery of subject matter, they also permit classroom peers the opportunity to work together and provide feedback to one another as they rehearse effective fluent oral reading: pacing, volume, inflection, evidence of familiarity with difficult words, eye contact, and tone of voice. With this curriculum unit, monologues provide students another opportunity to demonstrate knowledge they have discovered about late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century southern personalities.

Various extension activities may include but are not limited to composing poems or songs celebrating or mourning character's lives and comparing and contrasting one character from this time period to self.

### **Additional Resources for Teachers**

Boynton, Alice, and Wiley Blevins. *Teaching Students to Read Nonfiction*. New York: Scholastic, 2003. Great book to supplement lessons on nonfiction, especially as it relates to end-of-course testing.

Brown, Bertram Wyatt. *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s*. University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Great book focusing on human nature. Brown attempts to explain racism following the Civil War through the shame of military defeat and religious beliefs.

Carlton, David L, and Peter A. Coclanis. *Confronting Southern Poverty in the Great Depression*. New York: Bedford 1<sup>st</sup>/St. Martin's, 1996. This book details Franklin Roosevelt's economic report on the south as he labels it the nation's number one economic problem. This is a good book if you are looking for data on the Great Depression.

Clemmons, Joan, and Lois Laase. *Language Arts Mini-Lessons*. New York: Scholastic, 1995. This is a great book full of short lessons on note taking, lead sentences, and combining literature with grammar instruction.

Dixon, Thomas. *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1905. Appropriate book if you want a good explanation of the root causes of racism in post Civil War south.

Hall, Jacqueline Dowd. *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Based on oral interviews and letters, this book fascinates as it recreates the mill village lives of the Carolina Piedmont and the problems they faced with poverty and management.

Hanchett, Thomas W. *Sorting Out the New South City*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Hildum, Kristin. *Write to Publish*. Cypress: Creative Teaching Press, 1996. Good examples to use when teaching the writing process

Kolchin, Peter. *A Sphinx on the American Land: The Nineteenth-Century South in Comparative Perspective*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003. This book examines the south using three comparisons: South vs. North, South vs. South, and South vs. other regions. It attempts to explain why the south is so interesting and intricate.

Manring, MM. *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998. This book is a cultural study of the familiar figure,

Aunt Jemima, who for 100 years has graced the boxes of over forty products. This book examines the reasons Aunt Jemima remains an advertising phenomenon even though she symbolizes the unbalanced relationships between the races.

Sunflower, Cherlyn. *75 Creative Ways to Publish Students' Writing*. New York: Scholastic, 1993. This book is a must read if you are in need of some creative ways for your students to demonstrate learning.

Strube, Penny. *Getting the Most from Literature Groups*. New York: Scholastic, 1996. This book gives step by step instructions for using literature circles in the classroom.

### **Reading Resources for Students**

Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. New York: Penguin Books USA, 1976. Good book to use as a novel study at the conclusion of the southern characterization unit. This book centers on a year in the life of a land-owning black family as they battle racism in the south and learn to prevail. Great book to read in order to demonstrate many characters of the New South era, including the KKK, town demagogue, redneck "white trash" and the segregation and inequality of services provided to whites and blacks in this time period.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Watsons go to Birmingham – 1963*. New York: Random House Children's Books, 1995.

This book is the light hearted narrative of Kenny Watson and his zany family. It tells the story of a 1960's era black family in Flint, Michigan. However it demonstrates how quickly life could change for the black family in America when they travel to visit relatives in Birmingham, Alabama during one of the darkest moments in American history. The Birmingham church bombings play a prominent role in the conclusion of this book.

Sanders, Dori. *Clover*. New York: Fawcett Books, 1990 This book tells the story of an extended black family in a rural setting. Clover, a ten year old girl must learn to live and accept life with her white step-mother after the unexpected death of her black father only hours after his wedding.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Lippincott & Co., 1960. This book centers on the Finch family in Maycomb, Alabama during the depression. The patriarch, Atticus Finch, teaches his children to love and embrace all people regardless of race or social status amid a backdrop of court proceedings for a black man accused of raping a white woman. The book gives rise to the southern redneck and KKK.

Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind*. New York: Macmillan, 1936. This book is a great example of historical fiction concentrating on the Civil War and Reconstruction through the eyes of the southern protagonist, Scarlett O'Hara, who vows to see the south

rise again. Although the author's biases are evident in the story, it does demonstrate race relations after emancipation.

## **Endnotes**