



“My Story”

Using Students’ Stories and Experiences to Model and Develop Key Literacy Skills

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:

English Language Arts with interdisciplinary lessons in history, music, visual arts and dance; can be adapted to fit grades 9-12 with focus on upper-level courses

Keywords: Interdisciplinary (cross-curricular), alternative assessments, performance-based tasks, diverse learning experiences for diverse learners, differentiation, personalized-education, critical-thinking skill development,

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: Students’ lives and students’ experiences inspire optimal student learning and student buy-in. They also serve to provide students with a voice and in my 14 years of teaching I have found that even the quietest voice wants to be heard. The “My Story” unit is a great way to involve students in the art and exploration that is found in the many great stories of literature, music, dance, and other visual arts. It is also essential that we model and build 21st century skills such as effective oral and written communication, collaboration, organization and innovation. In this manner, we are truly preparing 21st century learners. Texts of many different genres and texts that tell a variety of stories, offer multiple perspectives on issues. These diverse learning experiences help our diverse group of learners thrive in the English Language Arts classroom, in classrooms of other disciplines, in the arena of higher education and in the workplace.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in 2015 to **approximately 120** students in **English Language Arts American Literature, Grade 11 Honors and Advanced Placement grade levels.***

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**“My Story” –
Using Students’ Stories and Experiences to Model and Develop Key Literacy Skills**

Ebone` M. Lockett

Introduction and Rationale

From Day One we, as facilitators of learning, need to build a collaborative community spirit between and among ourselves, our students, our students’ families, our colleagues and our ‘larger’ community members. To this end, we must know who our students and larger community members are and what they value. Getting to know one another, appreciating one another’s strengths, empathizing with one another’s areas of weakness, providing assistance to one another and often times enduring our fellow community members’ differences, allow us to positively impact our classroom community. Thus, this unit utilizes students’ lives and experiences as a springboard to the course. What I know about my students at West Mecklenburg High School is that many come with more than their fair share of extraneous variables that stand as barriers to their education. West Mecklenburg High is a Title 1 school that hosts a student body of over 2,000.

Approximately 63 % of those students are African-American, 10% Caucasian, 6% Asian, 5% multi-racial, 16% Hispanic and 9% are ESL and/or ELL students. Just about 78% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch. As research attests, the socioeconomic status and home environment plays a key role in a student’s education.¹

Unfortunately, I cannot alter those extraneous variables. What I can affect is each child’s experience in my class and within the larger school community. This can only happen by genuinely getting to know each student, engaging each student and making him/her an integral part of our classroom. This unit serves as that much-needed window into my students’ lives outside of my class and outside of the school. It also serves as a way to bring the student’s lives and experiences into learning and consequently achieve higher, more substantial growth and mastery of literacy skills.

Background and Literacy Issues

Despite the fact that I currently teach Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) level English courses, majority of the students scheduled for these courses are not, according to upper-level readiness indicators and past standardized scores, appropriately placed. The school has an open enrollment policy and leaders in the school advocate students “stretching” themselves by taking upper-level courses. Thus, I am always challenged with finding innovative ways to engage students and provide rigorous material with scaffolds that I can gradually minimize as students’ key literacy skills improve. Additionally, although ESL and ELL students make up a small percentage of the student body, they are more widely represented in upper-level courses such as those that I

facilitate. Unfortunately, English Language Arts is often a course where ESL and ELL students struggle due to variances between the English language and the structure of their Native tongues. Many of the ESL and ELL students are first-generation immigrants whose parents do not speak English. This further compounds the barrier as there exists little opportunity for parents to assist the students' with the concepts that present problems in ELA. Nevertheless, research-based strategies should be utilized to provide additional support to ESL and ELL students. One such strategy is vocabulary development. A major challenge that majority of students face, despite cultural heritage, is understanding and ownership of the sophisticated vocabulary and critical-thinking skills necessary to decode complex texts, such as they are required to analyze in AP and NC State end-of-course tests, as well as on the SAT and ACT. As you will note in Lesson eight, vocabulary should be taught in context. Additionally, an activity such as visual vocabulary allows struggling students to create effective ways to develop key vocabulary necessary to critical understanding of text. This unit challenges students to develop complex thinking skills necessary to critically analyze sophisticated stories as told by sophisticated texts. It also allows them to using a subject matter that is comfortable for them and interesting to them – their lives and their stories.

West Mecklenburg High School is a Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) school and my classroom houses one of several laptops carts with Google Chromebooks for every student in every one of my classes. Therefore, it is a necessary part of my curriculum to make sure that this resource is appropriately and effectively utilized. As a school whose mission aims to prepare students for 21st-century college and career demands, it is also a part of my responsibility to engage students in utilizing the tools of the 21st-century. Despite most students being extremely savvy in technology for social media and other teen-focused activities such as gaming, they lack sophistication in academic uses of technology, such as creating bars and charts. Initially, students will explore several methods of storytelling: visual art, rap/song, poetry, narrative, play, essay and the fine art of dance. Students will ultimately choose their preferred method (typically related to their strongest skill) to tell their stories. It is important to allow alternative assessments because alternative assessments provide choice which reflects differentiation and personalized education.ⁱⁱ

It is my experience that the water-downed curriculum that too many students in my school have come to accept as the highest peak of expectations of them, and thus for themselves, is inadequate. We fragment learning curriculums and departments when we need to embrace how naturally the laws of science lend themselves to poetic verse and artistic expressions. We neglect to weave in that the very laws of logic employed in mathematical theorems are the same laws of logic, applied in rhetoric and debate. We need a holistic curriculum that encourages interdisciplinary lessons and motivates students. Thus, the documented unit includes interdisciplinary lessons and texts promulgated to capture the students' interest and motivate them. The unit is designed to be used as "bookends" wherein, it is taught as the first and last units of the course's curriculum. The initial components of the unit will introduce the expectations of the unit

and focus on the art of storytelling that exists in all texts (including scientific reports, news reports and other informational text) while maintaining a focus on student's lives and experiences. Echoes of this unit will be interwoven with other units as we will continuously reference author's perspective and credibility, audience, purpose, message, context and stylistic devices employed as they relate to final end-of-course presentations. After several lessons of evaluating models and various modes of text, the culminating component of the unit will require students to create, explicate and present their experiences and their stories in an original composition of visual art, rap, song, poem, essay, skit or dance routine.

Throughout the unit, students will not just "read" text but students will "experience" text via field trips, author studies, and other authentic and hands-on learning experiences as components of cross-curricular units. By the end of the first element of this unit, students will have a cursory understanding of components and modes of text. Nevertheless, more work will be done in the units that follow, to deepen that understanding and allow students to practice and ultimately demonstrate mastery of literacy skills taught/enhanced within this unit. At the very end of the course, students will conduct a final demonstration of what they have learned about reading, viewing, experiencing, analyzing and evaluating text by applying that learning to the final publication of their original compositions. This will be done via a collaborative end of course "Black Box Theatre". This is the culminating component of the unit that is administered at the back end of the course. Student compositions will also be judged for inclusion in a multicultural play, "The Children of Children Keep Coming" and "The Children of Children Continue Coming" to be presented to the larger community at a local theatre. The process itself mirrors the writing process as it travels from brainstorming to drafting, to editing, to audience/reader-response, to revising and finally to publication. It also fulfills the expectations of college-course syllabi. Therefore, the unit is designed to start the course and end the course in a culminating authentic assessment and application of skills. In between these two bookends, rests the course. The units in between will focus on digging into, dissecting and decoding various visual, written and auditory texts and expounding on what makes each work of art a "worthy" text to explore; thereby employing a higher-order thinking skill- evaluation.

This unit is designed to span 4 weeks on the front end and 2-3 days on the back end.

Content Objectives

The high school students (9-12) will

- o View and analyze various forms of written, auditory and visual text from different periods throughout history.
- o Analyze excerpts from narratives, essays, letters, songs and visuals.
- o Analyze poetry and participate in an author's study of the various poetry

- o Analyze and perform an Epic Griotsong and participate in an author's reading and author's study of the text
- o Analyze and discuss recurring themes across a variety of text and provide textual evidence to support discussions and analysis.
- o Create original biographical texts in four of the following formats: Visual, Poem, Rap/Song, Essay, dance routine, Skit or Scene and narrative; and further develop ONE of the formats for final production.

Social Essential Questions

- o Who am I (Nature versus Nurture)?
- o How do I tell my story? How do I want my story told?
- o What do I value?
- o How are my values influenced by others/societal norms?
- o Through what lens do I see the world?
- o How do others experience the world (how does it feel to walk in someone else's shoes)?
- o How do I establish and maintain effective functional relationships with myself and others?

Literature Essential Questions:

- o What is text? *Text is anything that can be read, viewed, heard or tangibly experienced.*
- o What are the common components of text?
- o How does history and other rhetorical context impact text?
- o What are the key distinguishing features of various texts?
- o How is the author's claim advanced by the information of the text?
- o How does the author persuade his/her audience to accept his/her message?
- o How do an author's stylistic choices impact the text?
- o What important symbols are portrayed and why?
- o How does the author make the readers connect to the characters?
- o What is the author's intended message? How is that message conveyed?
- o How do I analyze visual text?
- o How do artists express their messages in their photos or paintings?
- o What rhetorical context (including time period) does the artwork convey?
- o How do I use effective literary devices to convey my story?

Remember that the first three weeks is a mini-sample. Deeper exploration of these foundational skills will continue to be emphasized throughout the remaining units to strengthen and inform students' final products.

Teaching Strategies

- o Strategic grouping
- o 21st century skill development
- o Socratic Seminar
- o Visual Vocabulary Development
- o Differentiation
- o Peer Evaluation
- o Menu option for assignments
- o Authentic Alternative Assessments
- o Multiple modality presentations/practice
- o Creating mnemonics
- o Pacing
- o Think-pair-share
- o Whole Class Q & A Discussion
- o Peer-Revision
- o Interdisciplinary Scaffolding
- o Writer’s Workshop
- o Modeling
- o Employ students as teachers
- o Creating critical-thinking questions (teacher-modeled, student-created)
- o Visualizing Vocab
- o Blended Learning
- o “flipped” classroom
- o PowerPoint presentations
- o Flipped Instruction
- o Philosophical Chairs
- o Exit tickets
- o Targeted Practice at Home (Homework)
- o Self-Evaluation
- o Station Exercises
- o Interactive Activities
- o Text-dependent questioning (increase rigor)
- o Graphic Organizer
- o Technology
- o Activate Prior Knowledge

The content objectives are measured in multiple ways via: question and answer open-forum discussions, online quizzes, text-driven pre and post assessments, open-ended oral and written responses, group presentations, Socratic discussion responses and individual end-assessment choice creation and presentation. The teaching strategies, activities, and assessments selected, represent the variety that is critical to this unit and critical to enhancement of students’ literacy skills. It is essential for instructors to understand multiple data points and utilize those data points to effectively inform instruction.ⁱⁱⁱ By providing a guided tour of analyzing and evaluating texts at the onset of the course, we provide students with models of effective analysis and evaluation of text. The rhetorical triangle (*Lesson 2*) is a graphic organizer representing the five critical components of a text: author, purpose, audience, message and context. It is a necessary foundation to construct when reading and writing as it reminds the reader of the essential elements of the text that must be analyzed and evaluated; additionally, the rhetorical triangle provides a mnemonic for students to recall and retain those components. Mnemonics are helpful resources for students.^{iv}

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: (1 class period) Day Two or Day Three together

Focus Standards

In this lesson students will examine the key questions of:

- o What makes a “good” or noteworthy work of art?
- o What are characteristics and examples of various noteworthy texts?

It is essential to “hook” students by using what they know and love. For many, music is the thing which they know and love. For others, especially my ESL and ELL students, drawing and other forms of visual art is the thing that they know and most enjoy. By tapping into students’ strengths, we are allowing them to let down their guard a bit and enjoy English Language Arts for all the joy that it offers.

Warm-up

After initial introductions, learning style inventories, and data collection sheets, we are ready to deepen and cultivate a sense of community in the classroom through deep, purposeful and meaningful conversations about self and about various texts. All students are instructed to stand in a tight circle in the middle of the room.

Teacher-Facilitation

Students will respond to a 4-CORNERS prompt that requires them to choose different “ice-breaking” actions that are ultimately related to the end-of-course assessments. Each student is instructed to choose the corner for his/her favorite activity (that thing which he/she is most talented at). Rapping/singing /writing and/or performing poetry (**CORNER 1**), drawing (**CORNER 2**), writing and/or performing skits or plays (**CORNER 3**), dancing (**CORNER 4**).

Collaborative Groupwork

While in their chosen corner, students will collaborate to answer the following essential question tailored to their group. What makes a good rap? song? poem? drawing? dance? play/skit? Students are instructed to list characteristics of “good” works of art, three of their favorite artists and five of their favorite works of art for said genre. Again, providing menu options for assignments demonstrates differentiation.

Closure

Each group will share out and the class will discuss initial ideas of what makes a good work of art. Students will then be provided with, and discuss, the requirements of their end-of unit/course assessment so that we begin with the end in mind.

Targeted Practice / Homework

1. Interview parents, caregivers, family members and friends and construct a timeline of your life from birth to the present moment. Include as many details and “stories” about

yourself as you can garner and/or remember. 2. In the Cornell-Notes section of your notebook, Create Cornell-style notes from the teacher-created PowerPoint (uploaded and accessed via classroom.google.com class-site) on the components of text as outlined by the rhetorical triangle.

Lesson 2: (two class periods)

Focus Standards

In this lesson students will examine the key questions of:

- o What is text?
- o What are the critical components (rhetorical components) of text?
- o How do I effectively evaluate text?
- o What is the structure of narrative text? How is “plot” structured in narrative text?

To activate student’s interest, provide motivation and give students a framework for discussion, students will have completed two activities for homework – the timeline and the Cornell Notes on components of a text. This not only allows the student early success with homework practice, but it also allows them to interact with their family members and involve them in their education. In the matter of Cornell-note-taking at home rather in class, the classroom is partially “flipped” to allow for more “hands-on” learning during our class time together. Our school is a designated “bring your own technology” (BYOT) school and, surprisingly enough, our students all possess or have access to technology outside of school. This works well in a “partially-flipped” classroom. Additionally, each student has access to a personal laptop in my class. Having students take notes at home also allow students to navigate and absorb the presented material, at their own pace. Later in the lesson, students will use the Cornell notes (under the guidance of the teacher) to examine the text.

Warm-up

As students arrive in class they are provided with the following warm-up writing prompt...*Describe a moment in your life when you experienced humiliation because of something someone said or did to you. Explain the scenario and your reaction (physically and emotionally) to the experience.* The warm-up provides students with insight into the author’s experience of humiliation by “standing in his shoes”, prior to reading about his humiliation. It is especially important to provide students with opportunities to activate prior knowledge and equally important to provide struggling students with graphic organizers as they serve as scaffolds to their learning. The rhetorical triangle is a worthwhile graphic organizer for students to remember the key components of a text. The text, although not an extremely rigorous text, easily allow readers to analyze the five components at work.

Teacher-Facilitation

Discuss warm-up responses via whole group discussion and Question and Answer (Q & A). After teacher and students discuss responses to the warm-up, the teacher leads a class discussion about, and note-taking on “credibility of sources” using teacher-created PowerPoint. This is a necessary precursor in order to encourage responsible research practices. As technology advances, it is important to discuss types of sources as well as credibility of source information.

Independent Practice

Students are then assigned a mini- “WebQuest” activity requiring them to utilize “credible” sources to gather information about the author, Dick Gregory, and predict (based on the title of the text) how the author’s life and perspective might influence the text. Nota Bene, this text was selected because of its thematic connection to a majority of the students’ lives and the fact that it is accessible to almost all readers. It also serves as a model for a short narrative.

Closure (Day One)

Teacher and students discuss the author’s perspective, credibility and possible influence on the text.

Targeted Practice / Homework

Students are instructed to view the structure of a narrative using teacher-provided plot structure guide, read and annotate the text, “Not Poor, Just Broke” by Dick Gregory^v and chart the bell curve structure of the narrative (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution).

Warm-up

Students will respond to critical thinking “trivia” questions about the “structure” and techniques used by the author to convey his story.

Teacher-Facilitation (Day Two)

After the teacher and students discuss student responses to the warm-ups via whole class discussion, the instructor facilitates guided practice in ‘close’ reading and examination of the text using the rhetorical triangle to identify and analyze the (5) textual components. Many students will initially struggle with decoding the author’s message, especially since it is not directly stated, but must be inferred. Meaningful whole group discussion and probing questions will aid the progress of this skill.

Independent Practice (Day Two)

Students will “close” read and create a rhetorical triangle analyzing, “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid.^{vi} The text provides details about the author that help establish her credibility and her influence on the text.

Closure (Day Two)

Students will submit their textual analysis along with responses to the (5) critical thinking questions about the components of these two texts as a closure activity to assess their individual understanding of how the components work together to impact the texts and how the structure impacts the texts.

Targeted Practice / Homework

For homework practice, students must review their notes which are housed in their ELA interactive portfolio-daybook. It is an expectation that students spend at least 20 minutes per night reviewing Cornell notes. Occasionally, they are allowed to utilize their notes on assignments and/or quizzes and tests. Additionally students are asked to choose one incident/experience from their time-lines (previous night’s homework) to expound on and construct a short “narrative” about.

Lesson 3 (2 class periods):

Focus Standards

In this lesson students will examine the key questions of:

- o How do I discern credible sources?
- o Is the author credible?
- o How is history (historical context) reflected in the text?
- o How do the components of a text work together to create the audience’s experience of the text?

Warm-Up

As students enter the room, they are instructed by the Warm-Up on the board to retrieve their laptops and log onto Kahoot.it with the provided code. In kahoot.it teachers are able to create personalized quizzes, administer them on the spot and gain immediate data regarding student proficiency. This is also a method of incorporating 21-st century skills into teaching and learning. On this day, I will use my teacher-created quiz review of credibility of sources and the five components of a text.

Teacher-Facilitation

This type of warm-up review engages the kinesthetic learner as well as the visual and auditory learner because students have to read along as the questions are displayed to them on the Promethean Interactive Whiteboard. They then can use their technology to respond to the question, with immediate feedback to them and me, about their answer choice. It also brings a little ‘fun’ and ‘hands-on’ learning into the classroom.

Collaborative Groupwork

Repetition and practice are key strategies in effective evaluation of text^{vii} ; therefore, after the warm-up and warm-up review, students will work in strategically selected collaborative groups to close read, annotate, and analyze an excerpt from “Casa: a partial remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood” by Judith Ortiz Cofer as found in the Bedford Reader.^{viii} Students will research the author, analyze her influence on the text and record it in their rhetorical triangle. Students will then focus their analysis of the text on the political, economic, religious, social, intellectual, and area contextual influences (PERSIA) evident in the text. The PERSIA acronym serves as a useful reminder to the students of the rhetorical context component of the text. It is also a necessary component for students to fully comprehend and practice because literature is an outgrowth out of its time period and as we start to navigate through the story of American literature, we will closely analyze the history of the nation. Each group is assigned an area (6 areas = 6 groups) and will record and report textual examples of influences on the text, in that area. For example, the political influence of the dictator is prevalent throughout the text. Students in the political group will provide textual evidence to explicate the political influence on the text.

Closure

Each group will share their textual findings and contribute to a class PERSIA chart via whole group discussion.

Exit Ticket

Students will then use the text to complete the remaining (3) components of the rhetorical triangle (purpose, audience and message) as an exit ticket.

Targeted Practice / Homework (Day One):

For targeted home practice, students will create Cornell Notes on Stylistic Devices used in various texts from teacher-created PowerPoint and review all prior Cornell notes.

Targeted Practice / Homework (Day Two):

Students will complete an activity sheet practicing identification of various sentence types. Students typically need repeated, targeted practice with sentence types as it continually poses a problem in their own writing.

Lesson 4: (2 class periods)

Focus Standard: RI.6

The American story is one that begins with exploration and culture. Unfortunately slavery, the decimation of the Natives who first occupied this land and the injustice against the “witches” of Salem are all a dark part of that story. Consequently, American Literature starts with the culture of the Native Americans and those are some of the first stories told; thus, the origin of American Literature.

Warm-Up

Upon arrival to class students will be asked to first use prior knowledge and then, credible sources to respond to the following warm-up in their notebooks. *Record your responses to the five questions about Native American people, culture and customs.* In this manner, student’s prior knowledge of Native American history will be activated and, through discussion of the responses and credible research, students will obtain new knowledge and/or correct misinformation. This research and discussion is an indispensable component of understanding historical context of early American Literature.

Teacher-Facilitation:

After discussion of student responses to the warm up, students and teachers will discuss notes on stylistic devices used in literature as a precursor to: reading, dissecting and analyzing an excerpt from the memoir, the *Way to Rainy Mountain*, by N. Scott Momaday.^{ix} The instructor will model charting diction, syntax and figures of speech that make the text noteworthy and also charting the components of the text, using the first five pages of the text and teacher-created stylistic analysis chart (see Appendix 3). In the teacher-facilitated discussion and analysis workshop, previous text can also serve as powerful examples. For instance, “*Girl*” by Jamaica Kincaid is a powerful example of syntax as the entire essay is written as a single paragraph without a single period.

Collaborative Pairing (Day Two):

Students will continue reading and analyzing the text in collaborative pairs charting noteworthy examples of diction, syntax and figures of Speech that contribute to the tone and message of the text. Student responses will be argued via whole-class discussion and added to a “class” analysis chart that should be posted in the class for future reference.

Independent Practice (Day Two):

Students will then create and submit an independent detailed, text-supported response to the following question about the text to close out the lesson. *Critical Interpretation:* Teacher and scholar Kenneth M. Roemer has argued that in “*The Way to Rainy Mountain*, N. Scott Momaday links the survival of his people to their ability to remember, preserve and pass on stories.” Do you agree that a culture’s survival rests on this ability? Explain, using evidence from this selection to support your opinion.

Targeted Practice / Homework (Day One):

Create a Rhetorical Analysis Chart for the “Casa” text previously read. Be sure to cite specific examples of Diction, Syntax and Figures of Speech as used by the author.

Targeted Practice / Homework (Day Two):

Students will read and self-evaluate their original narratives for varied sentence types, and other stylistic elements as outlined and modeled in texts analyzed. Students will then edit and revise based on their self-evaluations.

Lesson 5 (2 days): Poetry

Focus Standards: R4:R5

In this lesson students will examine the key questions of:

- o What are the characteristics of various forms of poetry?
- o Why does the author choose to structure his/her poem a certain way?
- o What are similarities and differences between traditional and organic poetry?
- o What stylistic choices does the author make? Why?
- o How is history (historical context) reflected in the text?
- o How do words and visuals work together to tell a story?

The same stylistic notes and analysis chart that students created and used analyze other texts will be used to analyze poetry with the addition of forms, devices and elements unique to poetry such as rhyme scheme, meter and stanza arrangement. Note that Advanced Placement students should be required to master more complex elements as they will be required to know more complex elements on the AP exam. Nevertheless, the graphic organizer provided in Appendix 3 outlines various devices and elements for various types of texts.

Warm-Up

Upon arrival to class students will see and hear the video to hip-hop artist, *Common's "Blue Sky"* ^x and respond to critical thinking questions that require students to evaluate the video based on personal interest, visual aesthetics, and similarities to poetry.

Teacher-Facilitation

The teacher will facilitate a discussion of how Hip-Hop (also known as Rap) is poetry set to music. The teacher will also facilitate how words and visuals work together using a PowerPoint presentation of materials informed by Dr. Connolly's, Charlotte Teachers Institute (CTI) Visual Storytelling class discussions. The activities and discussions from the CTI strand conveyed how visual contextual clues such as shape, line, color, scale, space, texture and perspective direct readers toward the message of the text. An example of this is the connotative association of color. For example, visual texts often use the connotative past experiences of prior visual images and associations with the color black to symbolize evil. Students will explore how color—such as this problematic representation of blackness—may be used in visual texts or reflect the illustrator's perspectives. To reinforce the connection, these elements should be explored as they exist in the warm-up text – "*Blue Sky*".

Collaborative Groupwork (Day One):

Students will then be provided with a copy of the lyrics and the group members will outline the components of the text using the rhetorical triangle, research information about the author "Common" using credible sources, and chart examples of poetic elements of diction, syntax and figures of Speech that contribute to the tone and message of the text as outlined by the stylistic analysis chart (Appendix 3).

Independent Practice (Day One):

Students will then respond to a classroom blog, created on our classroom site evaluating Common as a hip-hop artist and his work as artistry. The implementation of this 21st century task – the blog- demonstrates 21st century learning.

Targeted Practice / Homework (Day One):

Choose a school appropriate musical artist, learn about the artist, analyze the video, song and song lyrics then upload video, lyrics and analysis onto classroom.google.com. Be sure to use the graphic organizers provided to you to perform an in-depth critical analysis of the text.

Independent Practice (Day Two)

Students will complete a reading quiz, analyzing and evaluating “To My Dear and Loving Husband” by Anne Bradstreet.^{xi} Students will then participate in an in-class experience with locally-based, nationally-known slam poet “Terry Creech” who was a participant of the original Brave New Voices (HBO) special and is the creator of locally based BreatheInk, youth poetry slam club. In this manner the curriculum can involve community members who have specific talents and skills in the arts.

Targeted Practice / Homework (Day Two)

Students will analyze key excerpts from the Epic Griotsong written by Russell Goings “The Children of Children Keep Coming” (with images by Romaré Bearden)^{xii}, using the rhetorical triangle and stylistic analysis charts.

Lesson 6 (1 day): Poetry Visualization

Focus Standards: R1:R5

In this lesson students will examine the key questions of:

- o What stylistic choices does the author make? Why?
- o How do words and visuals work together to tell a story?

In preparation for the interdisciplinary lesson with visual art students and instructor, students will analyze Legal Alien by Pat Mora^{xiii} juxtaposed with Frida Kahlo’s image “Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States”^{xiv} to better understand how words and visuals work together to tell a story and how a common theme is expressed in multiple forms of art. Students will write a detailed analysis of how the theme is fashioned in both texts.

Targeted Practice / Homework (Day Two):

Using the teacher-created and teacher-provided model “*when the wagon appeared*”, students will create a poem using words, images, and creative figures of speech from their personal narratives. A great number of students are apprehensive about poetry because they see it as impossible to draft and difficult to understand. Providing a narrative as a method to construct poetry has proven a useful tool to assist struggling students.

Lesson 7 (2 days): Poetry and Visual Interdisciplinary Lessons

Focus Standards: R2:R4

Warm-Up

Each student from the English class will be paired with a student from the art class. While blindfolded, the students will take turns describing the taste, touch smell and sounds of various edible art (peach rings, lemonheads, fruit, etc) in as descriptive a manner as possible. A choice of four-five items per group should be used. The student, who is not blindfolded, must jot down the descriptors. After all items have been tasted, each pair of students will describe each tasted item without naming it (i.e only using descriptions but not names) while the remaining students match the item with its description.

Teacher-Facilitation

After discussion of student responses to the warm up, students and teachers will discuss imagery and representation as it relates to the upcoming task.

Collaborative Paring (Day One)

Each pair will then evaluate the ELA student's narrative and parallel poem and discuss various images and representations that should be expressed, colors that should be used, dimensions, etc. of the visual creation and why? The art student will create a paired visual. Creativity should be encouraged.

Collaborative Pairing (Day Two)

Partners will create a final end-product (poem and paired visual) based on the student's original composition about his/her life.

Targeted Practice / Homework (Day Two)

To frontload the vocabulary critical to understanding the *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*^{xv}, students will create visual vocabulary slides for the select words by creating a personalized definition of the word and including a visual that serves as a reminder of what the word means in the context of how it is used in the text. This is an extremely useful strategy for students who struggle with the English language as well as visual learners.

Lesson 8 (1 day)

Focus Standards: R2:R9

Conduct a class reading of Olaudah Equiano with emphasis on how the author uses descriptive details to bring the experience of slavery to life. Additionally, students will

evaluate an image of slavery that narrates a similar story.^{xvi} Students will independently write a detailed analysis of how both authors treat the subject matter.

Lessons 9 and 10: (3 days) Argumentation

Focus Standards: SL1:W1:W10

Students will read and analyze competing argumentative texts, *Black English is a Language* by James Baldwin^{xvii} versus Bill Cosby “Ebonics Be a Complex Issue”^{xviii} and outline the components of an argument using the Argumentation Analysis Chart (appendix 4). Students will then choose a side on the issue, research credible evidence to support their claim and construct an effective argument with a visual accompaniment that advances their argument. After constructing their argument, students will participate in a writer’s workshop that includes grammar and word work, self and peer-editing, and revise for final publication. Provide options for grammar and word work using strategies and activities offered in Anderson’s resourceful text.^{xix}

Lesson 11: Play: Drama: “The Children of Children Keep Coming” and “The Crucible”

Focus Standards: R3: R7: R9:

Provide students with essential key drama terms and structure via PowerPoint and key points about dance as a social activity that also tells a story.^{xx} It is important to frontload terms and key points so that students have a reference for analysis and evaluation. Students will then analyze and evaluate “Youtube” locally-produced dramatization of *The Children of Children Keep Coming*^{xxi} (with emphasis on the dance movements that mimic the story) and compare it to excerpts from the script of *The Children of Children Keep Coming*. This text will be used again in the extension activity (the school’s Black History month play). Students will then read an American foundational play – *The Crucible*- and analyze the historical impact of the text, the stylistic devices, character interactions and the application of drama techniques.

As this course is also American Literature, weave the American story into the discussion and analysis of text emphasizing the story-telling skills as much as the story. Over the unit, continue to tie-back into student stories and connections to other stories that we have explored. Additionally it is important to reiterate that good writing emulates good reading; thus, students need to emulate successful literary/artistic techniques.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

R1: Students are continuously required to cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text by providing examples from the text to outline rhetorical triangle components, create stylistic analysis charts and provide written responses to short-constructed responses as well as more detailed written responses.

R3: Students analyze the impact of an author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama by completing graphic organizers, participating in oral discussions and critically evaluating *The Crucible* and contributing to school play.

R4: Students repeatedly determine the meaning of words, phrases and images, including how words and images (visuals) work together to tell the stories of the lives of the authors, including the students as authors by charting the diction and figures of speech of several texts.

R5: Students analyze the structure of various texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text, relate to each other and the whole by creating text-supported responses to critical thinking questions about text structure.

R7: Students analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama or poem including live productions of a play and/or performances of poetry and dance by viewing and analyzing the YouTube production of explored text, *The Children of Children Keep Coming*, participating in a live production of said play, reading and viewing *The Crucible* and reading and viewing "Blue Sky" by Common and other self-selected videos and song lyrics.

R9: Demonstrate knowledge of 18th, 19th and early 20th century foundational works of American literature by reading and analyzing several foundational American texts (Bradstreet, Equiano, *The Crucible*, etc.).

R10: Students gain independent reading, comprehending and analyzing complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently through targeted class assignments, homework practice and independent practice activities.

W1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W10: Students routinely create and compose written compositions and other forms of text: visual-drawing, musical, movement (interpretive dance) composition that represent (parallel) the written composition.

SL1: Students routinely prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively via collaborative group work, peer-edits, Socratic seminars and whole-class discussions.

SL4: Students present information appropriate to purpose, audience and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Appendix 2

END OF UNIT – “Alternative Assessment”

...I am _____ and this is “My STORY”...

If you are an actor and/or playwright: Create a skit/play/monologue about YOU: your life, hopes, dreams, aspirations, ethnicity, language, favorite foods, familial relationships, neighborhood, culture, heritage etc...

Include key components/structure of drama...

If you are a visual artist: Create a Visual/Collage about YOU... your life, hopes, dreams, aspirations, ethnicity, language, favorite foods, familial relationships, neighborhood, culture, heritage etc.

Include key components/structure of visual text...

If you are a rapper, singer, or have any musical talent: Create a Rap or Song about YOU... your life, hopes, dreams, aspirations, ethnicity, language, favorite foods, familial relationships, neighborhood, culture, heritage etc.

Include key components/structure and devices used in raps/poems/songs...

If you write and/or perform Poetry: Create a poem about YOU...your life, hopes, dreams, aspirations, ethnicity, language, favorite foods, familial relationships, neighborhood, culture, heritage etc.

Include key components/structure and devices of poetry...

If you choreograph and perform Dance/Movement: Create a dance routine that tells your story...your life, hopes, dreams, aspirations, ethnicity, language, favorite foods, familial relationships, neighborhood, culture, heritage etc.

Include key components of dance/movement...

Appendix 3

Lady Lockett's: Rhetorical/Stylistic Analysis Chart

TONE and MOOD (author's interaction with the audience):

MESSAGE:

DICTION	SYNTAX (Structure or arrangement of words)	FIGURES OF SPEECH (Figurative Language)
WORD CHOICE (R.11-12.4)	And the use of punctuation	Meaning behind/beyond the words (Inference objective)
<p>An author's intentional and deliberate choice of words.</p> <p>Why did the author choose <i>this</i> specific word? How does the author expect the audience to react to <i>this</i> word, or <i>this</i> word? How does the sound of <i>this</i> word impact the text?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Connotation ➤ Denotation (used for meaning) ➤ Jargon ➤ Slang ➤ Symbolic coding of colors ➤ Gender coded ➤ Formal/Informal ➤ Sound Devices (some words are chosen and used because of their sound) 	<p>An author's structure/arrangement of text REVIEW SENTENCE TYPES CORNELL NOTES!!!</p> <p>What is the author suggesting by breaking the line here? Why does the author use this structure and arrangement of words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repetition ➤ Anaphora ➤ Epistrophe ➤ Parallelism ➤ Antithesis ➤ Antimetabole ➤ Chiasmus (inverted parallelism) ➤ Dash, Ellipsis, parenthesis (punctuation that adds effect) ➤ Rhyme Scheme or free verse ➤ Rhythm (meter) ➤ Stanza length ➤ Other patterns of arrangement <p>Older American Writers and Old American Poetry was all about structural patterns (formulaic poetry)</p>	<p>An author's hidden meaning (clues to the message)</p> <p>An author's "code" to understanding the meaning of the text. An unusual way of using words that has meaning beyond the words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Simile ➤ Metaphor (Extended Metaphor) ➤ Personification ➤ Allusion ➤ Hyperbole ➤ Litotes ➤ Irony ➤ Paradox ➤ Oxymoron ➤ Rhetorical Question

Appendix 4

Lady Lockett's: Argumentation Analysis Chart

CLAIM/ARGUMENT	REASON/S:
	EVIDENCE/ SUPPORTING DETAILS:
COUNTERCLAIM	REFUTATION/ REBUTTAL of COUNTERCLAIM:

List of Materials for Classroom Use

"10 Statistics on Slavery Today - The Borgen Project." *The Borgen Project RSS2*. Web. 24 Nov. 2014. The website focuses on researching, reporting and resolving today's social ills. In this unit, it is used to explore several topics linked to poverty such as slavery and hungry- problems that many of our students face on a daily basis. It also provides mechanisms for our students to engage in solutions to these problems.

Aufses, Robin Dissin, Renée H. Shea, Lawrence Scanlon, and Kate Aufses. *Conversations in American Literature: Language, Rhetoric, Culture*. S.I.: Bedford Bks St. Martin'S, 2014. Print. In addition to providing complex texts for students to strengthen their critical-thinking skills, this collection provides a variety of thematically arranged texts that depict key writing strategies and skills with an emphasis on language development.

Bridgford, Kim, and Russell L. Goings. *The Children of Children Keep Coming an Epic Griotsong*. New York: Gallery /Karen Hunter Pub., 2014. Print. Inspired by, and infusing the artwork of Romaré Bearden, the Children of Children chronicles pivotal, historical moments in American history and intertwines the story of African-Americans with ancient Greek tales and fictitious characters. The text is written in poetic form and is a great way to teach history and poetry simultaneously. At the end of the text, the author provides a useful index that provides further facts about the characters (real and imagined) in the Epic griotsong.

Jago, Carol, Renée H. Shea, Lawrence Scanlon, and Robin Dissin Aufses. *Literature & Composition: Reading, Writing, Thinking*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. Print. In addition to providing complex texts for students to strengthen their critical-thinking skills, this collection provides a variety of thematically arranged texts that depict key writing strategies and skills.

Margaret Giles Lee, Joyce M. Jarrett, Doreatha Drummond Mbalia (Pearson Education, Inc) *Heritage African-American Readings for Writings*. Prentice Hall Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2002. This resource provides culturally-relevant texts (of varying kinds) that serve as great mentor texts for students to "close" read, analyze, evaluate and mimic in their own writing. This is an extremely useful resource because the issues explored remain relevant to student's lives; especially low-income, minority children.

McDougal, Holt. Introduction. *Holt Mcdougal Literature Texas: Class Set American Literature 2010*. S.I.: Holt Mcdougal, 2010. Print. The Holt McDougal American Literature textbook, Common Core Edition is chronologically arranged and standards-focused. Each Unit provides a timeline that makes it easy to read about, analyze, explore and write about a variety of texts while understanding the historical influence on the text.

Messenger, Erica, John Gooch, and Dorothy U. Seyler. *Argument!* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2013. Print. Fashioned almost like a magazine itself, this resource provides an in-depth exploration of the components of an argument and all the facets of argumentation, including a plethora of teaching methods and relevant up-to-date informational text - visual and written.

Pavlik, Robert A., and Richard G. Ramsey. "New Lands." *Reading and Writing Sourcebook*. Wilmington, MA: Great Source Education Group, 2000. Print. In this book, educational consultant Pavlik has teamed up with Director of School Design and Development, Ramsey to provide a reading and writing compilation that strategically allows students to talk to the text as they read and grapple with multiple contemporary issues of our society. This is a consumable interactive reader that breaks down literacy skills while providing students an opportunity to practice them, right in the text.

Strategies for Successful Writing A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader and Handbook, Books a La Carte. Longman Pub Group, 2011. Print. In addition to offering rigorous texts and higher-order thinking tasks, this book also provides students with detailed student-samples and exploration of responsible research and how to synthesize results found in research.

Reading List for Students

"*The Children of Children Keep Coming*." YouTube. Accessed November 24, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuxjafgMWlw>. This staged reading is a great way for students to: analyze and evaluate the similarities and differences between written and visual text, analyze dramatic devices in action (including dance) and shape their original compositions.

"Common - Blue Sky (Official Video)." *YouTube*. YouTube. Web. 5 Oct. 2014. This video, and the associated song lyrics, supply students with a high-interest level entry into exploring how rap/hip-hop parallels poetry and how visual text explore common themes. It is a savvy way to engage the visual learner and tap into something that most students love – music.

Bibliography for Teachers

Anderson, Jeff. *Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse, 2005. Print. In as much as this book is about teaching grammar and mechanics in context, it is also about constructive thinking about mentor texts and writing workshops. In it one can find student samples and innovative methods to join the twin literacies: reading and writing.

Arnold, Peter J. (Peter James). "Somaesthetics, Education, and the Art of Dance." *The*

Journal of Aesthetic Education 39.1 (2005): 48-64. Web. This very intriguing essay discusses the value and importance of physical intelligence as expressed through dance and provides a paradigm for using dance to develop, sharpen and increase intellect and creativity. This is an extremely useful model for kinesthetic learners.

Grant, Michael M. "Learning, Beliefs, and Products: Students' Perspectives with Project-based Learning." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning* 5.2 (2011). Web. doi:10.7771/1541-5015.1254. University of South Carolina professor, Dr. Michael M. Grant's offers expertise in technology-enhanced learning and expert advice on project-based learning in this article. He presents research that supports a constructivist approach to teaching and learning that is student-centered. This article provides evidence that effective teaching and learning is a social activity.

Marzano, Robert J., Debra Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001. Print. This book is a must-have for all teachers. In this book, authors Marzano, Pickering and Pollock outline and demonstrate research-based strategies for increasing student achievement. The book contains practical pedagogical frameworks such as managing group size in addition to specific graphic organizers that can be reproduced and used with students. The book also provides research results and data that support the usefulness of the strategies and tools outlined.

Notes

ⁱ Marzano, Robert J., Debra Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001. Print.

ⁱⁱ Grant, Michael M. "Learning, Beliefs, and Products: Students' Perspectives with Project-based Learning." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning* 5.2 (2011). Web. doi:10.7771/1541-5015.1254.

ⁱⁱⁱ Marzano, Robert J., Debra Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001. Print.

^{iv} Marzano, Robert J., Debra Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001. Print.

^v Margaret Giles Lee, Joyce M. Jarrett, Doreatha Drummond Mbalia (Pearson Education, Inc) *Heritage African-American Readings for Writings*. Prentice Hall Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2002.

^{vi} Margaret Giles Lee, Joyce M. Jarrett, Doreatha Drummond Mbalia (Pearson Education, Inc) *Heritage African-American Readings for Writings*. Prentice Hall Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2002.

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- ^{vii} Marzano, Robert J., Debra Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001. Print.
- ^{viii} Jago, Carol, Renée H. Shea, Lawrence Scanlon, and Robin Dissin Aufses. *Literature & Composition: Reading, Writing, Thinking*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. Print.
- ^{ix} McDougal, Holt. Introduction. *Holt Mcdougal Literature Texas: Class Set American Literature 2010*. S.l.: Holt Mcdougal, 2010. Print.
- ^x "Common - Blue Sky (Official Video)." *YouTube*. YouTube. Web. 5 Oct. 2014.
- ^{xi} McDougal, Holt. Introduction. *Holt Mcdougal Literature Texas: Class Set American Literature 2010*. S.l.: Holt Mcdougal, 2010. Print.
- ^{xii} Bridgford, Kim, and Russell L. Goings. *The Children of Children Keep Coming an Epic Griotsong*. New York: Gallery /Karen Hunter Pub., 2014. Print.
- ^{xiii} Pavlik, Robert A., and Richard G. Ramsey. "New Lands." *Reading and Writing Sourcebook*. Wilmington, MA: Great Source Education Group, 2000. Print.
- ^{xiv} Jago, Carol, Renée H. Shea, Lawrence Scanlon, and Robin Dissin Aufses. *Literature & Composition: Reading, Writing, Thinking*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. Print.
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- ^{xvi} "10 Statistics on Slavery Today - The Borgen Project." *The Borgen Project RSS2*. Web. 24 Nov. 2014.
- ^{xvii} Margaret Giles Lee, Joyce M. Jarrett, Doreatha Drummond Mbalia (Pearson Education, Inc) *Heritage African-American Readings for Writings*. Prentice Hall Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2002.
- ^{xviii} Messenger, Erica, John Gooch, and Dorothy U. Seyler. *Argument!* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2013. Print.
- ^{xix} Anderson, Jeff. *Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop*. Portland, Me.: Stenhouse, 2005. Print.
- ^{xx} Arnold, Peter J. (Peter James). "Somaesthetics, Education, and the Art of Dance." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39.1 (2005): 48-64. Web.
- ^{xxi} "The Children of Children Keep Coming." YouTube. Accessed November 24, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuxjafgMWlw>.