



Cultural Study: Understanding a Novel Through Understanding of the Culture of the Times

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
English grades 11 and 12

Keywords: Vietnam, Reliability, Analytical Reading

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

Synopsis: This curriculum will provide students with an understanding of the Vietnam War, the American Home Front at the time and the lives and traditions of those living in Vietnam today. This curriculum can be used in cross-curricular partnership with Social Studies. Students will learn about the turbulent time of the 1960-1970s and how it affected our nation as well as the world. It will prepare them to understand why reading novels is important for not only being able to pass a test, but also to understand the cultural significance that led to the world they inhabit today. It will let them look into what is behind a novel, the significance of the time period in which a novel takes place and prepare them for reading further novels and delving into not only the time they took place, but also the significant cultural aspects of the setting of the novel. This unit is designed to help students realize that if they are having difficulty understanding what an author is trying to say, that just putting aside the novel will never teach them anything, but through a little research, they can begin to open the time period and culture of the novel, thus grasping deeper meaning and understanding.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to **27 or more** students in English III and IV.*

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Rational

Teaching high school English for twenty years it has always been my goal to encourage my students to become readers. There was a time when I was a reluctant reader; then I was lucky enough to have a teacher who inspired me to read. He told me that reading was not all about reading just for school, but about getting out of the four walls I was contained within and going places I may never be able to physically go.

I have also been blessed with a teacher of history for a parent. I found when I would read something and struggle to understand the meaning, or the reason for it being written, or connect with the characters, my mother would make me look up the history connected with whatever it was I was reading. This always helped me gather the understanding that I was lacking. Since much of what we ask our students to read is based in the past, surrounded by cultures that are so far gone from the students today, these students struggle to find understanding and meaning, thus they often learn to dislike reading.

Linking literature to its cultural surroundings, gives us further understanding. It also allows for cross-curricular collaboration between the English and Social Studies departments.

Even Science Fiction and Fantasy are linked to the problems that faced the society of the times they were written in. A background of the climate and culture of those times helps us gain understanding. This can be seen in H.G. Wells novels that are based around the difficulties that sprang up in politics and the complicated culture of the Victorian Era in Britain.

Our cultures define us, and one of the most lasting links to any culture is the literature that is produced and shared. We should examine the culture of a people, a time or a place to help us examine what they left behind.

School/Student Demographics

I teach eleventh and twelfth grade English at Turning Point Academy. Turning Point Academy is the only alternative school in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District in Charlotte, North Carolina.

My classes consist of three blocks of mixed eleventh and twelfth grade students. Being at an alternative school, my classroom numbers fluctuate from day to day with students transitioning out and transitioning in to the classes. Many of my students are reading just at or below grade level. There are also some who read significantly below grade level. There are several students with 504 or Individualized Education Plans who have state and federally mandated accommodations. All documents can be differentiated to fit with needs of students and mixed level groups can be established, with the highest level

readers mixed with on grade level and below grade level learners, giving the higher level learners the opportunities for extension work, by being a leader and taking an interest in their classmates learning.

My classes are comprised of mostly African American males, with many being over 18. They are sent to us from all the high schools in the district.

Unit Goals

The goals of this unit are to reinforce the common core standards for the junior and senior year of high school, so that students go out into the world with a knowledge of how to understand what they are being asked to read, whether it for employment right after graduation or in their college courses.

The students will also learn useful research skills to gain further understanding and can explore worlds and cultures that they might not ever have experience in their everyday life. I would like students to also gain a love of reading, to pick up a novel, not just for English class, and enjoy it, even if it is outside their realm of understanding when they begin.

Most students I have the pleasure of working with seem to think that the internet is for keeping up with social media, fantasy football and sound cloud. They do not realize that there is so much more for them to learn, especially when they gain the knowledge of how to critically analyze a website, or an article on line to ensure that it is relevant and reliable.

Content Research

Through the seminar and my own research, I have learned that much of what I was already doing did not have to be thrown out. I could up our game on the common core standards and raise the assessment scores at the end of the semester without teaching to the test. In our seminar, there was a lively discussion on the merits of standardized testing and how to fit in the strategies that do more than prepare a student to pass said standardized tests.

Our Seminar, Literacy and Literacies in the 21st Century. As a group, we debated as to what the definition of literacy was. Can it be more than just the knowledge of how to read and write? In an ever-expanding global world that has become interdependent, and connected at a glance, shouldn't our up and coming generations have an awareness of the world and the cultures that they may have to interact with? Can we use our knowledge to

help break stereotypes and maybe help heal the world through understanding and not just live in our own little slice of the world without any impact?

When looking at many different guidelines for instruction, such as scope and sequences and generalized curriculums, we often leave little room for true or in depth instruction. Teachers tend to cater to short stories or parts of novels, but it seems that there is little time for the reading of full novels except for in the AP courses. We have forgotten to enlighten our students to ensure we cover all of the standards for both reading literature and reading informational texts.

Bernard Schweizer, a professor of English at Long Island University, wrote a paper entitled “Cultural Literacy: Is It Time to Revisit the Debate?” In it he remembers teaching a freshman writing class at Duke University and in his class, very few recognized the words of some important and valuable writers. The stance he took was that several theorists looked at cultural literacy as “a narrow set of privileged, specifically western, masculine, White values masquerading as universal truths.”ⁱ

Schweizer was astonished at the amount of information his students could not recognize from figures such as Ghandi, Hemmingway, Thoreau, as well as Cervantes, Orwell and the Bible. Too often we have given students short cuts to get them to read anything and have giving up on the true meaning of what I believe it means to be literate. The novel is a dying form of entertainment with all the electronics at hand, and today’s generation are being allowed to move fast and easy. If we can teach them the elements students need to master the common core standards with stories that are relevant to them, then we are leaving out a large part of their cultural education, even if it seems as if that culture is dead white males. Students need to be exposed to all literature, but starting with literature that will engage the audience and make them comfortable with their reading abilities must come first. Then a push of the classics can begin.

I work with a largely African American male population and I had to agree when Schweizer claims, “the issue of cultural literacy is socio-economically coded.”ⁱⁱ This observation is one of the reasons for opting to write a curriculum that shows a way to look at literature as more than the collected works of dead white males, but as a broadening of horizons, of looking at the world not just through the pages of a novel, but as a part of a greater learning experience.

Now the object is how do we go about all of this while still being able to help our students achieve mastery of the standards set for them?

The other part of this is the literacy part, and how do we get students to read at grade level and comprehend what they have read? Not only do they need to be able to comprehend on a literal level, but they need to be able to make inferences and connections to the things they already know for a deeper understanding.

One of the things that I am beginning to understand from the readings we have done in seminar is that more discussion needs to take place around what is being read. I have broken my classes, thankfully small enough to do so, into groups of 3-4 that rotate through three stations. One of the stations is a reading station where students are encouraged to share the reading, asking questions as they go, while sharing the knowledge that they have gained doing their research.

Each group is made up of mixed ability levels and each student in the group is assigned a different topic to research so that they can share their gained knowledge as they read and come across elements in the chapters that pertain to their own research topic.

One element that I have always included in my classroom when I do a novel study is the idea of the Socratic Seminar. Before I begin, I always lay down ground rules. I also research topics from the novel that I can use to make connections to the world at the time of our reading. My Socratic Seminars take place on Fridays when we have a shortened schedule.

For every Socratic Seminar, I create the guiding questions and sit in as moderator of the discussion. After one of the seminar readings, I realized that it might be better to let the students create the guiding questions and to appoint a student to be moderator, so I can listen to what they say and not to interfere unless the discussion gets too off topic or out of control. The reading of Chapter 18 from *Literacy Instruction for Today's Classroom* struck me not only for its thoughts on letting the students take control of all aspects of the Socratic Seminar, but the classroom in the "Case in Point" had been studying the background of the 1920's to coincide with their reading of *The Great Gatsby*. It was what I am trying to get students to do to further their understanding.

After doing much preparation on how to conduct a Socratic Seminar the teacher prompted her students, "I told the students to make sure they had completed the reading of the first three chapters of *Gatsby* and to write down five questions about the chapters. The questions could be something that they wanted to spend time discussing because it was interesting or important to the novel, personal connections they found between the novel and their own lives, or just general questions they wanted to have clarified by their classmates."ⁱⁱⁱ

I rather like the idea of taking all the work off myself, straining to think what the students might want to discuss about a novel, and giving it over to the students themselves. The teacher in the case study even appointed a class discussion leader, so that a student was responsible for beginning the Seminar and keeping the flow of ideas and discussion moving. It also gives the students autonomy that they rarely are able to gain in a classroom, especially in a school where there are very strict guidelines, uniforms and regulations that the students must follow every day.

As I contemplated what I wanted the student project to be, I thought a lot about a visual representation of the content that the students were researching. Pictures often tell us more about something than words can, and with pictures, I have found that most students do not ask what they should be seeing, or thinking as they look. Asking if they are correct, seems to be a theme in my classroom that I am trying rather hard to reverse. Many of the students I serve have been disappointed in the past, often being told what they thought was wrong. I go by the theory that if you can back up what you say with textual evidence, then you are correct. I spend much of my time asking my students what they think when they ask me a question about a reading.

The first week of school, we usually don't get into content. This year, as I was contemplating the visual piece of the project, I showed a series of photos of Vietnam that my sister had taken when she was there a year ago on a motorcycle trip. I did this before I introduced the novel and the project. The photos played as a slide show and I asked the students to sit quietly and look at the photos. They had approximately fifteen minutes to look before I asked them to write what they observed. The different things I heard from them surprised me and not once was I asked, "What am I supposed to be seeing?"

Case in Point 20, from Chapter 20 of *Literacy Instruction for Today's Classroom*, was all about "Paying Attention to Images." It dealt with the idea of Visual Thinking Strategies. I had never heard that term, but it was something I had done often in my classroom, especially while I was teaching Global Studies and American History alongside of the English classes I taught. I never knew there was a structure to this idea of using visuals to open minds and encourage student thinking from a visual perspective.

One thing that I do when I sit in a group with my students, is ask questions in the middle of the reading. They find it annoying because they just want to get to the end of the reading, do whatever task I have set for them and be done with it for the day. They have not learned to question, or reflect on what they have read. They don't understand why they need to stop and make the connections to the text that is in front of them. Sometimes I feel as if they haven't been taught to think for themselves, just to parrot back what they feel the teacher wants to hear.

Schools have changed the way things are done. There is no longer rote learning happening, but now it is more student-centered and differentiated so that everyone, of every ability, can get something out of it. We have done one disservice, we forgot to teach them how to think for themselves. Somehow, even though we are no longer learning by the skill and drill method, we haven't taught our students how not to be prepared for the skill and drill. They are still waiting for us to tell them what to think. Education has made the shift, but forgot to tell the students that began school before the shift that it was occurring. We expect more from them, without giving them the skills to give us more.

Many of the readings we have done for seminar have been about guiding students through their thinking. Two readings that we completed for the same evening were about the idea of teaching students' strategies to think on their own. Teaching students to think about texts more deeply, in a manner that allows them freedom, but keeps them focused on their text in question. Both *In the Age of Analytic Reading* by Colleen Pennell and *Reading From Different Interpretive Stances: In Search of a Critical Perspective* by Christine Leland, Anne Ociepka and Kate Kuonen deal with different ways of getting to students to think critically about what they have been given to read, and to make connections to the text for deeper understanding.

In *Reading From Different Interpretive Stances*, the authors looked at teaching students to look at a text from multiple perspectives at one time. The perspectives are referred to as Interpretive Stances and include metaphorical, philosophical, aesthetic, analytical, intertextual and critical. Each stance has its own set of guidelines for the responses made to get students thinking.

This reading has me reevaluating my curriculum for the second semester, so that the students will have and understand the different stances and begin to work with them before we move into reading the novel. Getting students to think about the novel from an aesthetic stance, which is described as "response to the emotional experience of the reading,"^{iv} has become a priority. I use questioning to lead them to thinking about the soldiers in the jungles of Vietnam and to think about the lives that the soldiers have left behind, as well as how they react to the different situations and why.

Through the questioning, students look at the novel from an analytical standpoint. The analytical interpretative response, is a way in which the students "respond(s) to how the text works and why the author wrote it in a particular way."^v This works particularly well with a novel like *The Things They Carried*. The author goes back and forth between his past and his present, writing from the perspective as a narrator, but also a soldier there in the foxholes, humping through the jungle with his unit. Some chapters even foreshadow what is to come with tidbits of the stories, enticing the reader to continue, even if the foreshadowing spells doom.

To get students to discuss in groups as they read, there are discussion prompts in the cover of their folders. The prompts consist of sentence stems to encourage thinking and to help reach deep and use inferencing to understand what the author is saying. In *The Age of Analytical Reading: Understanding Readers' Engagement with Text*, Colleen Pennell shows photos of the posters that are used to help guide discussion. The discussion stems are very similar to the ones that I have created for my students. I choose not to put them on the wall on a large poster. My students are older than the ones she was describing and I wanted my students to learn the ideas behind the stems, but not necessarily use them as a crutch when they discuss. The stems are more a suggestion than a series of steps to get discussion going and to keep in on track.

In all, the articles read for my topic and the articles from the seminar, reflect my students are already doing what many of educators suggest are best practices. I never knew the everyday elements in my classroom all had formal names. Education hasn't changed in twenty years; it has just given a voice, a name, to what teachers with good instincts already knew. Academic articles can be used to smooth over a situation where the administration wants proof for what many of us are already doing in the English Language Arts classroom, and elsewhere.

Strategies

I have my students for only one semester and in that time, they must complete senior products or write the junior research paper that the district requires before the semester ends. I chose the novel/cultural study to begin at the start of the semester with the research and the visual for the required project as a preparation for the district required elements of the junior paper and the senior product.

The skills that students will be working on are the power standards based in the North Carolina Final Exam for both English III and English IV. In reading the novel we will be focusing on making inferences, analyzing characters and theme as well as how the author chooses to develop the story and the meaning of words and phrases he uses to unwind his story in a series of vignettes.

Students will also be engaged in research and writing, as well as being able to write text dependent questions based on a purely visual text.

Students keep a folder in the classroom with a binder ring that holds the index cards with their vocabulary. They choose their own vocabulary from all that they read, finding definitions, synonyms and antonyms. The first thing that they are required to do with the word, is give their definition based on the context clues.

To ensure that students get the most out of their reading they will use several different types of strategies to get them to think, analyze, understand, and make connections with the research that they are conducting. The strategies that I will use to facilitate instruction include but are not limited to:

- Close reading- multiple readings breaking down the text, questioning, making connections and identifying vocabulary

- Double Entry Diary- quotations from the target text that students react to or interpret

- Stop the Process -breaking a large chunk of text into smaller bits and having students react to already prepared prompts, or to choose prompts given

Creating Text Dependent Questions- gives students the chance to ask the questions they may want to know the answer to, or already know, but want to see if others see the text as they do

Socratic Seminar- an activity where students have a chance to discuss as a group, make connections and share their understanding with others

SOAPStone- a graphic organizer for Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject and Tone

Semantic Maps- general graphic organizers

Concept Definition Maps- a diagram that suggests relationships between concepts.

Frayer Models- a model for vocabulary that challenges the use of what the word is and what it is not

Concept Cubes- cubes that can be made as tactile vocabulary, with synonyms, antonyms, rhyme, sentences and definitions

Materials students will need to be successful in this unit:

- Copies of the novel *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien for both the 11th and 12th grade classes for in class reading.
- Computers in class or internet access at home
- Access to iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, Prezi, or another interactive program or poster board, paper, scissors, glue and other poster making materials.
- Images of Vietnam
- Articles: One about being in Vietnam by a veteran and one about the war in Iraq and/or Afghanistan with a three-column sheet or a Venn diagram for comparison

Instructional Implementation

This unit is meant to last between three and four weeks depending on the speed at which the students read and can research and create a project to present to the class.

The project planned has five major topics for the students to research: French colonialism in Vietnam, American involvement in the Vietnam War, American home front during the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong, and the rise of communism in Southeast Asia. These topics

are all relevant to the novel and the cultural aspects of a time in American History that these students can't even comprehend, let alone the cultural aspects of a world that barely exists in their time.

The most important component of the project is the visual representation of what the students learned in their research. They will present their visual with a series of guiding questions to their classmates. The objective is for the students to learn something about the subject without being overwhelmed with more facts they will let go of the moment the bell rings. Using a visual representation focuses them to think for themselves about what the images are saying.

It seemed difficult for many of my students to grasp the concept at first, so I built my own short movie on Windows Movie Maker. I showed it to them, letting it play through twice before they were asked a series of questions. I created my own version of the project as a model. Mine was not about Vietnam, or the war, but about myself as a visual representation of me and my life, so that they could get to know me better. Any subject would work, so long as students have a model to gain understanding.

There is also the written component of the project, which is rather simple. Students are asked to write about what they learned and how they think they represented it in visual format. They also write the guiding questions for the other students. The final element is a reflection on how the research and creating of the project helped them better understand the novel.

Day One and Two are taken with introducing the topic of the novel and gaining understanding of what the students know or don't know about the Vietnam War. The warm up: to watch the slide show of current Vietnam. Students will make general comments about what they think and what they see. Many vivid still and moving images of current Vietnam can be found on the internet.

For the reading section of the day the students are given several accounts of soldiers in a war. The first is an article by a Vietnam soldier and the second is an article by a soldier who served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. The students read using close reading strategies and on the second day are given a choice of which graphic organizer to use to compare the two readings.

In the research rotation, the students are given random topics and asked to find three to five sources to be used for analysis the following day. In the vocabulary rotation, the students are introduced to words from the novel. The ones they know they are asked to give their own definitions. Definitions, synonyms and antonyms can be found at <http://www.thesaurus.com> and <http://dictionary.com> until they have ten.

Day Three a mini lesson before rotations focuses on finding and recognizing reliable sources. There are several reputable websites to find the information for this topic. One was tech-ease* where there are five rules that the students can use to make judgements.

The students continue with vocabulary in rotation A. In rotation B, they choose the topic for their project. They use the guidelines established and to find several websites that may be useful for their research. They evaluate the sites based on the criteria and create a page to list the sites and their evaluations, highlighting the ones they feel are reliable.

In station C, the reading station, students read the first chapter of the novel with a character chart. There are many characters introduced in the first chapter and a chart helps keep the characters straight. It is also a place to make notes about the characters as we meet them again and learn more.

Day Four in the reading station is used to complete the first chapter and answer the questions that will give a baseline of whether the students find a theme, understand the structure and the reasons the author used repetition of ideas.

Day Five in the reading rotation is to read two short chapters “Love” and “Spin” and analyze why the author uses short foreshadowing flashbacks as he reminisces about his days in Vietnam. There are guiding questions to get the discussion going and the students are to turn in one cohesive thought on why the author did what he did with the structure. In rotation A vocabulary is interspersed with the use of Edgenuity.com and the tutorials that they have for ACT and SAT practice. Students begin their research, finding a minimum of four reputable sources and they have to justify why they are considered reputable.

Day Six is much the same in the research rotation with students beginning to gather their information and will continue as such as they complete the research, begin the visual aspect of the project, and complete the writing. To be included in the writing are questions that will accompany the visual. The reflection will be a separate entity at the end of the project to be included when everything is turned in.

The reading section focuses on “Enemies” and “Friends” and theme. The mini lesson is steps to finding theme. My students struggle with theme, and I often get one word topics so with the help of youtube.com, I found a great strategy for the students to use. “The Only Way to Teach Theme” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H6GCe7hmmA>) gives a simple strategy to follow. A children’s book is used to go through the steps together and one of the rotations is skipped for the day. Students concentrate on research and reading. With a step-by-step sheet to follow, that includes a question based on the author’s purpose for writing two such short chapters, the students find one word topics and then work them into a cohesive theme for the two chapters together.

Days Seven and Eight lead to an interesting chapter “How to Tell a True War Story.” We skip a few of the short chapters that do not need to be read to move the story forward, but can be added back in if so chosen. I bend to the demands of the students and if I have their attention, as I do with the graphic chapters, I sometimes need to leave the simple chapters out. Not that I would recommend this in others novels, but because of the vignette structure it allows some to be left out without changing how we look at the novel.

This chapter was broken up using a Stop the Process reading strategy. If the students have never used a process like this putting in the prompts for the first time can help. The response stems that I use focus on structure, making inferences and point of view. This is for day seven. For day eight the use of an outside war story, in the form of a short story, or a person who has served in combat makes connections outside the novel. Students are set up a series of questions to answer based on the what the author had to say about telling if a war story was true or not, and then make decisions and debate the situation. Day Eight has stations suspended, so after hearing or reading a second war story and making choices, the students choose sides and begin to build an argument that will persuade the opposing side to see their point of view. This is where inferences come into play and being able to understand what an author is not saying when they write.

Day Nine is the chapter “Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong,” in a full class read. This can be read individually, in small groups, or as a group read with shared reading or the use of an audio version of the novel. It is available on Audible.com and youtube.com. The students use a Double Entry Diary with four quotes chosen for them to react to and then they choose two others independently to react to. The post read discussion opens with one question, “Is this one of the true War Stories?” Students look at the author’s purpose for adding this chapter and debate with others who voiced an opposing opinion reminding them that they are to back up what they say with evidence from the text.

Days Ten and Eleven go back to rotations, with research and work on the project in rotation B. The focus of rotation A is ACT/SAT practice. The third rotation, or in my classroom rotation C, is the reading rotation that focuses on the three short chapters “Stockings,” “Church,” and “The Man I Killed.” These chapters afford the opportunity to look at the development of our narrator as a character and the author’s use of repetitive language in the chapter “The Man I Killed.” Instead of the students answering questions, they will create text dependent questions that will be used by other groups as the basis of discussion.

Day Twelve is a check in with the researchers to see if they have everything they need for their projects. They are also given the rubric for what is expected from each part of the project so that as they complete it, they can do it to the best of their ability. The reading of chapters “Ambush” and “Style” are left to open discussion with reminder to use discussion stems, and create a group a summary of what they discussed centered on a

closing question of the day of how these two chapters contributed to the overall theme that they see building.

Day Thirteen brings in vocabulary in the form of students finding their own from the first half of the novel. They can create a game, crossword puzzle, etc. to show the words they have chosen. They can also draw the representations of words and complete Frayer models to add to the word wall.

In the reading rotation, the students are reading "Speaking of Courage" and using the SOAPStone organizer to gain understanding of the author's point of view.

Day Fourteen is broken into only two rotations, one research/project completion and the other is an assessment that focuses on the last few chapters read. The assessment focuses on common core standards, so that the ones that the students are struggling with can be retaught. This is where there is a rethinking of groupings, moving students around who need more intense practice with specific standards. Those who are proving to be mastering the standards can be grouped together and given more freedom in what they do to complete the rest of the chapters in the novel. Those that need re-looping can be grouped and focus reading strategies can be deployed.

Days Fifteen through Twenty, with new rotation groups the readings follow the end of the novel: "Notes," "In the Field," "Good Form" "Field Trip," "The Ghost Soldier," "New Life," and "The Lives of the Dead." The group that has established mastery of most or all the standards can work through the chapters using which ever strategies they want to use: picture notes, self -created double entry diaries, creating text dependent questions based on the standards or summaries based on group discussion. Each day the students should use a different strategy. With the groups that need focus on one or more of the standards, choose a standard to work on. One or two can be fused into the different strategies and the guided discussion question stems can be manipulated, asking students to use specific standards.

For the following days, depending on how many students are in each class, the students sign up to present. As each visual is presented the students in the audience should be given the questions to be answered. The presenter needs to keep talking to a minimum until everyone is done answering the questions. Then time, depending in how many people are scheduled to present each day, is put on a timer and discussion can begin.

The final day of the novel includes a final assessment. The assessment should be a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions based on the standards and the vocabulary. The students write their reflections on how their projects relate to the novel.

Appendix 1: Implementing North Carolina Common Core Teaching Standards

Reading Common Core Standards

We will be using RL 11-12.1 to cite textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. This will be used to understand the deeper meanings of the text and to support the themes, and theories that the students come to as they read through the vignettes in the novel.

We will also be using RL11-12.2 to determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. This is supported through the novel as each vignette has its own theme and together they form one or more overall themes. As the novel comes to completion, the students will recognize the themes and see how they came about through the interconnection of the individual vignettes.

We will be using RL11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices in meaning or language that is particularly fresh, engaging or beautiful. This is an important task through the unit. Students will be asked to be able to have a list of common vocabulary that will come from the novel, but to keep track of words and phrases that have some meaning to them as they have worked to understand the novel.

RL11-12.5 becomes very important in the reading of *The Things They Carried*. Since the author choose to use flashback, foreshadowing and re-looping pieces of stories though out, it is important that they analyze how an author's choice concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

RL11-12.6 Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is meant. The author often has a shifting point of view in this novel and it will take all the students' abilities to be able to find mastery of this standard. It is definitely the type of novel that will challenge the students and with the right strategies they will get to mastery.

Writing Common Core Standards:

We will use W11-12.4, Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to the task, purpose and audience. This is a major part of the project that the students will be completing. Not only does the written text have to be clear and coherent, but the visual text needs to be as well. Of course there is no way to get to standard W4 without W7, conducting short as well more sustained research projects to answer questions or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation and W8, Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources using advanced searches effectively. The three standards cannot stand alone in a research project.

Appendix 2: Unit Materials

Novel Walk:

- 1) What do you think the title *The Things They Carried* means?
- 2) How many Chapters/Vignettes are there and based on the title of each, which chapter do you think you will like the most? Why?
- 3) Read the first paragraph of the first chapter and tell what you think of First Lieutenant Jimmy Cross. What do you assume his character is like? Provide textual evidence.
- 4) Read the last paragraph in the book (p.245-246). What impressions are you left with? What kinds of things can you infer about the character who wrote those words? Provide textual evidence.

Double Entry Diary

“In The Field” and “Good Form” (pg. 162-180)

React to the Given Quotes and find two more Quote of your own.

Quote	Your Reaction
“Early in the morning [Lt. Jimmy Cross] had radioed in the MIA report, giving the name and circumstances, but he was determined to find the man, no matter what, even if it meant flying in slabs of concrete and damming up the river and draining the entire field. He would not lose a member of his command like this.” (pg.163)	

<p>“Whenever a man died it was always the same, a desire to get it over with quickly, no fuss or ceremony, and what they wanted now was to head for a ville and get under a roof and forget what had happened during the night.” (pg.166)</p> <p>“At one point, the boy remember he’d been showing Kiowa picture of his girlfriend. He remembered switching on his flashlight. A stupid thing to do, but he did it anyway, and he remembered Kiowa leaning in for a look at the picture- “Hey, she’s <i>cute</i>,” he’d said – and then the field exploded all around them.” (pg.170)</p>	
Quote	Response
<p>“Norman Bowker found Kiowa. He was under two feet of water. Nothing showed except the heel of his boot.” (pg. 173)</p>	

Double Entry Diary

React to the Given Quotes and find two other Quotes of your own and react. Your reactions need to be insightful and inferential, not just a simple “What happened?” or “That was interesting” Etc....

Keep in mind reactions to character (i.e.: Rat Kiley) and add info to your character sheets as well bring in information from other chapters

Quote	Your Reaction
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<p>“Among the men of Alpha Company, Rat [Kiley] had a reputation for exaggeration and overstatement, a compulsion to rev up facts, and for most of us it was normal to discount sixty or seventy percent of anything he had to say.” (pg.89)</p> <p>“At times she seemed to give off a kind of come-get-me energy, coy and flirtatious, but apparently it never bothered Mark Fossie. In fact he seemed to enjoy it, just grinning at her, because he was so much in love, and because it was the sort of show that a girl will sometimes put on for her boyfriend’s entertainment and education.” (pg. 95)</p> <p>“Rat smiled. ‘Ambush. All night long, man, Mary Anne’s out on fuckin’ <i>ambush</i>.’” (pg. 102)</p>	
<p>Quote</p>	<p>Your Reaction</p>
<p>“What happened to her, Rat said, was what happened to all of them. You come over clean and you get dirty and then afterward it’s never the same. A question of degree. Some make in intact, some don’t make it at all. For Mary Anne Bell, it seemed, Vietnam had the effect of a powerful drug: that mix of unnamed terror and unnamed</p>	

<p>pleasure that comes as the needle slips in and you know you're risking something. The endorphins start to flow, and the adrenaline, and you hold your breath and creep quietly through moonlit nightscapes; you become intimate with danger; you're in touch with the far side of yourself..." (pg.114)</p>	
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Stop-the-Process
How to Tell A True War Story

<p>Read pages 67-69</p> <p><i>What does the narrator mean "a true war story is never moral"?</i></p>	<p>Read pages 69-71</p> <p><i>I think the point the author is trying to make in this part is that...</i></p>
<p>Read pages 71-76</p> <p><i>What questions do you have about this section?</i></p>	<p>Read pages 76-78</p> <p><i>What was the meaning of this whole exchange between the narrator and Sanders?</i></p>
<p>Read pages 78-82</p> <p><i>Why does the narrator come back to Curt Lemon's story?</i></p>	<p>Read pages 82-85</p> <p><i>How would you tell if a war story you were told was true?</i></p>

Reading Questions for *The Things They Carried*

- 1) What is the Narrator's obsession with giving the weights of everything that the different soldiers carry? (RL6)
- 2) What do the things they carry say about the superstition of the soldiers? (RL4)
- 3) The Narrator establishes that Ted Lavender is dead. He even gives a detailed description of what he learned of the death. Why is the death of Ted Lavender so important to the Narrator and his fellow soldiers? What isn't our narrator telling us? (RL6)
- 4) "They carried all they could bear, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried." (pg7) What theme or themes does this statement provoke? Why? (Use textual evidence to back up your ideas) (RL2)
- 5) What is bug juice? (RL 4)

Questions for Love and Spin

- 1) What is a possible theme for the chapter Love? Why did you make that choice? (RL2)
- 2) What is up with Martha? What did Jimmy Cross learn about his love when they reunited in 1979? Why did the author make a point to show us the truth of Martha? (RL6)
- 3) The author uses foreshadowing and Flashback in the same chapter. Why did he do this? What kind of impact does it have on the novel as a whole? (RL5)
- 4) What does the author mean when he writes "some poor fucker ran out of ammo?" (RL6)
- 5) Why the little stories? What is the author's reasoning for choosing to use little pieces of stories in Spin? (RL5)

Notes

ⁱ Schweizer, Bernard. "Cultural Literacy: Is It Time to Revisit the Debate." *Thought and Action*. Fall 2009. 52. Web 30, May 2016.
<<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.davidson.edu/eric/docview/881457101/abstract/645B6B6B307D402BPQ/1?accountid=10427>

ⁱⁱ Schweizer, Bernard. "Cultural Literacy: Is It Time to Revisit the Debate." *Thought and Action*. Fall 2009. 54. Web 30, May 2016.

<<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.davidson.edu/eric/docview/881457101/abstract/645B6B6B307D402BPQ/1?accountid=10427>

ⁱⁱⁱ Wood, Susan Nelson, Sharilyn C. Steadman and John S. Simmons. *Literacy Instruction for Today's Classroom: Implementing Strategies Based in 20 Scholars and Their Ideas*. 186. Norwood: Christopher-Gordon Publishers Inc.

^{iv} Leland, Christine, Anne Ociepka and Kate Kuonen. "Reading From Different Interpretive Stances: In Search of a Critical Perspective." 430. Charlotte Teachers Institute, Davidson College. Davidson College, Davidson. 15 Sept. 2016. Lecture.

^v Leland, Christine, Anne Ociepka and Kate Kuonen. "Reading From Different Interpretive Stances: In Search of a Critical Perspective." 430. Charlotte Teachers Institute, Davidson College. Davidson College, Davidson. 15 Sept. 2016. Lecture.

Annotated Bibliography for Students and Teachers

Dictionary.com

<http://www.dictionary.com>

I prefer my students to use this instead of just using google. I feel that it is a more comprehensive dictionary.

Leland, Christine, Anne Ociepka and Kate Kuonen. "Reading From Different Interpretive Stances: In Search of a Critical Perspective." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. February 2012

This source was the first time I had ever read about teaching students the different words to use as they looked at a piece of literature from different perspectives. That included metaphysical, philosophical, aesthetic, analytical, intertextual and critical. These are things we often think to ourselves, but we never really explain them to our students and this article was amazing in working out how to get students to think in those terms, thus think deeper.

"How Can My Students Know if a Web Source is Reliable?"

<http://etc.usf.edu/techease/win/internet/how-can-my-students-know-if-a-web-source-is-reliable/>

This is a source I found to enhance the lesson on reliability and to give the students a sort of check list to have in hard copy. It gives 8 points on telling if a source is reliable.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 1990.
This is the novel that the students will read about the Vietnam War. It is great for a class with a lot of absences because the students do not have to read all of the chapters to be able to follow what is going on in each chapter.

Robertson, Joanne Marie. "Revitalizing Language Arts Instruction Through Inquiry Projects." *Language and Literacy Spectrum*, v18 p52-66 2008. 15 pp. Web. 30 May 2016 <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=5&sid=041f9003-3231-4943-a150-e745950e37be%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4209&bdata=JkFlDGHUeXBIPWlwLGN1c3R1aWQmY3VzdGlkPXM4NDU1ODYxJnNpdGU9ZWVhc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=EJ1059646&db=eric>

Although I did not cite this source, I found it helped with planning the visual part of my students projects, so we shared parts of it in small group, so that they understood what I was wanting from them when they produced the visual.

Schweizer, Bernard. "Cultural Literacy: Is it Time to Revisit the Debate?" *Thought and Action*. Fall 2009. Pg. 51-56. Web. 30 May 2016. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.davidson.edu/eric/docview/88145710/1/abstract/645B6B6B307D402BPQ/1?accountid=10427>

This source was useful in my planning. It helped to understand the idea of cultural literacy and if it was important to what I was trying to help my students learn. Schweizer gave both sides of the argument and it helped to understand what Cultural Literacy was all about.

"The Only Way You Ever Have to Teach Theme." Web. 24 Sept. 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H6GCe7hmmA> This is one of those YouTube videos that I found very useful in helping my students to theme. It breaks it down and has the students work theme through using topics to expand into themes.

Thesaurus.com <http://www.thesaurus.com>

A companion that is just a tab away when at Dictionary.com. I always make my students give one synonym and one antonyms.

Wood, Susan Nelson, Sharilyn C. Steadman and John S. Simmons.
Literacy Instruction for Today's Classroom: Implementing Strategies based on 20 Scholars and Their Ideas. Norwood: Christopher-Gordon Publishers. 2010.

This book is 20 chapters of some of the best scholars in the educational field. The chapters that I used as a reference were Chapter 20, by Neil Postman and Chapter 14 by Mikhail Bakhtin. It was here that I learned about using images as a literacy and learning tool and where I found that there was more to using Socratic Seminars than I had been doing for years.