

Marmar Mirways

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English 112B

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Unit of Study: Perspective Change

Centerpiece and Rationale:

Young adults usually view the world and other people only in one perspective: their own. Books about loss and survival offer students with the opportunity to experience societies that drastically differ from the ones they are used to and boosts empathy in teen readers. By providing young adults with a diverse genre of novels, students can explore types of books that they are not used to reading. Often during high school, young adults are frequently uninterested in the books that are being discussed in class.

For example, as a young adult in high-school, there were many instances where, while reading poems by Shakespeare I started to dread reading poems. My English teacher lacked enthusiasm and so it leads me to express no excitement over the writings she would assign to the class. Once the class got to reading Mark Twain's novel, *Huckleberry Finn*, I fell in love with the way Twain portrays slavery in the eyes of a kid, Huck Finn, and illustrates the notion of a changed mindset through his journey with a slave named Jim. Twain's novel made me see things from a different perspective and helped me understand that I am not going to be the same person as I am today. Novels that relate to a character's journey like *Huckleberry Finn* are simple to read but also expresses various messages. The novel itself is short with only three hundred and

sixty-six pages. It is the simplicity that lets young adult readers comprehend the story, and only then can they truly enjoy the novel.

Reading novels with this particular theme is especially important for students in high school because novels that deal with shifting one's perspective encourages readers to have an open mind about things and not judge others so rapidly. In her book *AITSEFM*, Dr. Mary Warner writes that "[teens] need to understand the wise saying, 'Do not judge a person until you have walked a mile in his moccasins'" (169). Warner goes on to further explain that point-of-view novels help students learn about other cultures "and about the realities that exist" outside of their own world (195). These statements are true when it comes to young adults in high school, so it is important to read novels that make students view things from different perspectives and encourage the growth of empathy. Opening up the picaresque unit with the novel *Huckleberry Finn* is a great way for students to get acquainted with reading novels in the picaresque genre. *Huckleberry Finn* is a short novel that is easy to read for high school students, so it wouldn't be a hard read for students. Having a shorter novel as the focal point of this unit also gives students more time to reread the novel, so they can comprehend the story better. The novel shows the theme that society's morality is often inverted, hypocritical, and self-serving. Natural morality has been turned upside down so that what is inherently a moral evil, such as owning another human being as a slave, is turned by society into an acceptable norm. This theme helps incorporate the idea that one should not follow societal rules so blindly.

Introducing the Unit: movie -*Freedom Writers* (movie):

I will be introducing my unit of study with a movie titled, *Freedom Writers*, directed by Richard LaGravenese. The movie follows the story of a devoted teacher, Erin Gruwell, who

teaches at a racially divided school in Los Angeles. The students that Miss. Gruwell teaches are considered “incapable of learning.” Instead of giving up on the poorly behaved students, Miss. Gruwell encourages her students to take an advantage of their education and to start thinking about their future. She assigns novels for the students to read usually, novels that relate to their lives, and she also urges them all to keep journals entries. Within these journals, students are encouraged to write anything about themselves. Watching this movie will help encourage them to strive for the best in life and easily helps them to see two different viewpoints: one being the teacher’s viewpoint and the other being the poorly behaved students. The students in the movie all have different battles they are facing either due to their ethnicity or their family. As many issues are revealed in this movie, the students can get a glimpse of what it feels like to be in a variety of people’s shoes.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HU_BueZZNd8

In Class Activity:

After the movie is over, I will assign the student’s a quick write where they are to write whatever comes to mind after finishing the movie. The focus of the quick write would be this question: “How has this movie changed the way you view others around you?” or “Has this movie encouraged you in some way or form?” By asking them these questions I can get a sense if the movie has impacted the children or not.

Just like in the movie, I will have the students also keep a journal where they are to write about the troubles of their past, present, and future. By doing this exercise the students can write out what they are feeling and be heard at the same time. The journals will be kept in the classroom and be turned in everyday at the end of class. The journal entries are somewhat like

the SSW, but instead of having set topics for them to write about they are free to write whatever they want as long as it is about how they are feeling. Through these journal entries, I myself can also be in my student's shoes.

Book Pairings:

A book that I would pair *Huckleberry Finn* with would be the novel that we had read in the class titled, *We Were Here*. *We Were Here* is about three juvenile kids who escape the group home they were sentenced to. Mong, Miguel, and Rondell aim to run away to Mexico and on their journey where they start building a connection with each other. The idea of keeping a journal about your life is also portrayed in this novel as well. All of these three characters are the same ages as the student, so it will be easy for the students to connect with them. *Huckleberry Finn* and *We Were Here* are both stories about a character's journey as well as developing friendships with people that you would have never thought you would associate with. The writing within the book is presented in such a way that you can mentally hear how the character is supposed to sound so it becomes easy for young adults to read the story.

Another novel that can be intertwined if there is more time is *All the Bright Places*. This novel is a love story about a girl named Violet Markey who learns to live from a boy named Theodore Finch who aims to die. Theodore Finch helps Violet to want to live and in the end, Theodore decides to commit suicide. This novel will give young adult students an insight into how suicidal students think and what they deal with on a daily basis. This novel also includes a writing outlet where the characters are able to express how they feel. Violet has a website where she can express her feelings titled "Germ." Theodore Finch expresses his ideas and feelings

through post-it notes that he sticks on his bedroom wall. Suicide is certainly a serious issue, and young adults are capable of reading books that face this issue. At some point in their life, young adults will probably encounter such situations or feelings. *All the Bright Places* is a great way for parents/teachers and their teen kids to discuss such issues.

Class Activity: (In Class Discussion)

Questions to discuss for *We Were Here*:

- 1.) Do the characters change as a result of events in the story? If so, how?
- 2.) Why do you think Mong decides to commit suicide? Find supporting evidence in the book.
- 3.) What is the symbolism behind Mong's necklace and why does he give it to Miguel? Find supporting evidence in the book.
- 4.) What kind of bond do Miguel and Rondell have? What event makes them bond more?

Song About Judging Others:

Bob Marley- Judge Not

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viLaxu-uYlk>

Works Cited

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