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Unit of Study: Discrimination

Prejudice does not stem from within. Moreover, it is learned over time. It depends on the people we grow up with and much exposure we have with other people that are different than us. It is important to educate students at an early age about all groups of people. It does not necessarily have to be a history book. Children want to find things that they can relate to. The teen years are a very fragile time and it is important to show them literature that can make them feel like they are not alone. Back in middle school I can remember all the racial slurs being thrown around as if they meant nothing. Students would use them to curse at their friends or they would use them to bully other people. Although we learned about racial terms in our history classes, I would have liked it if our teachers would have given us actual literature that addresses these important topics. Personal stories can captivate an audience more than a history book. Reading through a first person perspective makes it easier to empathize with the main character even if they are dealing with drastically different experiences. As an aspiring English teacher, I wish to teach the novel *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas to my high school students so that I may prevent these racial jokes from going too far. I believe this book will help students develop empathy and students are more willing to read it since it was made into a movie.

*The Hate You Give* is about an African American girl named Starr Carter. The story starts off with her having fun at a party and seeing old friends again after transferring to a more privileged school. Her and her old childhood friend, Khalil, drive away from the party when all of a sudden a police car pulls them over. Her world turns upside down when her childhood friend gets shot unarmed by police right in front of her eyes. Although Khalil was a part of a gang, his life still matters. There was no way the police could have known Khalil was part of a gang and discriminated against him because he is black. Starr has to find her voice to spread awareness of this police brutality as well as find justice for Khalil. Hopefully, this book will help students find their own voices as well.

*The Hate You Give* follows characteristic 7 of the exeter qualities. It “deals with emotions that are important to young adults” (LfTYA 26). Starr is confused by her emotions towards white people because of what happened to Khalil. The people in her life also have very strong opinions on the matter. However, she soon realizes that she can speak her emotions out loud in a peaceful manner.

**Launching Unit:** To launch this unit I will show students the song Don’t Shoot by The Game. This song addresses the shooting of Michael Brown in 2014. It is sung by multiple different rappers, each of them giving their own opinion about the case. After they hear this song, we will have a discussion about how they feel about the song. I will ask them what they think the song is talking about and how it is still relevant to this day. Then I will ask them why they think so many rappers are singing this song and why some of the lyrics contradict each other. I will then shift the discussion to how the song speaks to them personally. I will ask students about times that they have experienced discrimination. They will all have to write their answers down on a sheet of paper and turn them in. We will then watch the movie *Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese for a few days and discuss how race plays an important role in the movie. Everyday students will have to write in their journal about their life as homework just as the teacher in the movie made her students do the same.

**Main Text:** After the movie we would move on the the main text, *The Hate You Give.* I believe the best way to keep students in focus is to do popcorn reading. I will give one participation point to each person that reads so that everyone in the class will have the motivation to speak up. After every few chapters we will spend the last few minutes of class discussing what we have just read. Some questions that I will ask will be: Why did Starr hide the fact that she knew Khalil? Do you think Khalil was entirely innocent? How does this book mirror today’s society? By the time we finish the book I will split the class in half set up a debate. One side will be those justifying the death of Khalil and the other side will be against the death of Khalil. I will give them half of the class period to come up with points for their sides and the other half of the class period will be the actual debate.

**Expanding the Unit:** The next book that the class we will read is *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne. I will have students get into groups of 6 and we will have group literary discussions once a week. I will have them read a chapter every night as their homework. By the end of the semester they will have had to read the entire book. Each group member will have different roles in the group. The teacher I was watching for my field experience did this with her class. The Circle Director will keep the group on track during discussions and collects the work weekly. The Discussion Director chooses 3-4 thought provoking discussion questions each week and takes notes on what the group has talked about. The Summarizer writes a summary for each chapter and discusses with the group to analyze the sections. The Passage Picker selects important quotes and passages for each chapter. The Bridge Builder connects what happens in the book to what is currently happening in our world, to themselves, and to *The Hate You Give*. The Imaginer creates a visual representation that symbolize or reflect the assigned reading. I will go around and make sure everyone is discussing in their groups. I will end the unit with a fun movie, *Crazy Rich Asians,* to take a break from heavy topics. I will let them guess why I have shown them this particular movie. I want to show them the importance of having representation in the media. This movie is the perfect because Asians are rarely shown in any movie and when we do see them in movies, they are usually stereotyped as a kung fu fighter or as the nerd. This movie shows Asians that are vastly different from each other. Then I will make them write a final essay about why it is important to not judge people by stereotypes.

**Suggested Readings and Summaries:**

Readings about discrimination:

*Prisoner of the Empire Series* by Graham Salisbury

“This series of books explores war in the Pacific Theater starting with the bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. Book 1, [*Under the Blood Red Sun*](https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/graham-salisbury/under-the-blood-red-sun/)*,* traces the experiences of a Japanese-American boy (Tomi) and his family in Hawaii during and after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. His father and grandfather are interred in American concentration camps and Tomi and his mother must endure painful discrimination. Book 2, [*House of the Red Fish*](https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/graham-salisbury/house-of-the-red-fish/)*,* continues Tomi’s story as he and his mother face increasing challenges as his former friends and neighbors see him as the enemy. Book 3 [*Eyes of the Emperor*](https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/graham-salisbury/eyes-of-the-emperor/) focuses on another Hawaiian of Japanese descent, Eddy, who is serving in the American armed forces. The Army uses Eddy and other Japanese-Americans in unthinkable ways. Nevertheless, Eddie endures as he wants to prove his loyalty to his country-America. Book 4[*Hunt for the Bamboo Rat*](https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/graham-salisbury/hunt-for-the-bamboo-rat/), chronicles the experiences of a Japanese-American recruit, Zenji, who is fluent in both Japanese and English. Once in the Army, Zenji is sent undercover to the Philippines to spy on the Japanese. When captured, Zenji is brutally tortured by the Japanese. He eventually escapes, but spends months in the brutal tropical jungle.” http://www.yawednesday.com/

*Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights* by Steve Sheinkin

“This work of nonfiction tells the fascinating story of a huge explosion that killed more than 300 sailors on the docks of the Navy base at Port Chicago, CA. After the explosion, more than 200 African American soldiers refused to go back to work on the docks until the unsafe and unfair conditions were rectified. Of those, fifty men were charged with mutiny. The brave men faced prison or even execution for their actions, but they believed that they had to take a stand against the prejudice, discrimination, and injustices facing black sailors who were risking their lives for their country.” http://www.yawednesday.com/

Readings about diversity:

*We Were Here* by Matt De La Pena

“The story of one boy and his journey to find himself.When it happened, Miguel was sent to Juvi. The judge gave him a year in a group home – said he had to write a journal so some counselor could try to figure out how he thinks. The judge had no idea that he actually did Miguel a favor. Ever since it happened, his mom can’t even look him in the face. Any home besides his would be a better place to live.

But Miguel didn’t bet on meeting Rondell or Mong or any of what happened after they broke out. He only thought about Mexico and and getting to the border where he could start over. Forget his mom. Forget his brother. Forget himself.

Life usually doesn’t work out how you think it will, though. And most of the time, running away is the quickest path right back to what you’re running from.

From the streets of Stockton to the beaches of Venice, all the way down to the Mexican border, We Were Here follows a journey of self-discovery by a boy who is trying to forgive himself in an unforgiving world.”

*After the First Death* by Robert Cormier

*“After the First Death* describes the terrorist hijacking of a summer camp bus full of children. The main characters include Kate, a high school student driving the bus, Miro, one of the terrorists, and Ben, the son of a general holding a senior position in "Inner Delta"; a government anti-terrorism organisation. The story is mostly written from the points-of-view of Kate, Miro, and Ben, switching back and forth, and brief sections are told from the point of view of some other characters.

Kate is driving the bus when it is hijacked by four terrorists, Miro, Artkin, Antibbe and Stroll. The terrorists force Kate to drive the bus to an old, worn-down railroad bridge, where a drawn-out siege begins, the terrorists threatening to kill children if any attempt is made to attack them. In return for the freeing of the hostages the hijackers demand the release of prisoners, payment of ten million dollars and the dismantling of "Inner Delta". The terrorists are working to "free" their homeland, which is never named specifically, but which can be assumed from their descriptions to be a Middle Eastern country.”

**Work Cited**

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