Guadalupe Rodriguez

Professor Warner

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Unit of Study: Identity and Home

**Rationale:**

Everybody has their own definition of home. For some it is their physical house or apartment they live in, for others it is more broad such as their neighborhood or their town. For some, “home” is even a person they feel comfortable with. Many students have multiple homes due to separated parents, some students just have one home, and there are also a few that have yet to find a place they can call home. The notion of “home” is defined very differently by everybody and it certainly looks different for all. Regardless of how each person defines their “home”, it is crucial to understand how homes play a big role in defining who we are and our identities. Students are at a pivotal age where it is crucial for them to explore their identities and figure out where they feel comfortable at. Not just is it crucial for students to explore their own identities, but it is also beneficial for them to learn about other students’ identities in hopes of cultivating empathy and understanding.

In order to introduce students to the concept of how homes shape identities, they will first watch Participant’s video “What does home mean to you? 0-100” . After watching that video they will participate in an in class discussion where we talk about trends in the video. Afterwards students will then similarly define what home means to them by using a brainstorm bubble chart. This short activity introduction will lead into them analyzing Gloria Anzaldua’s “To Live in the Borderlands Means You”. There will be group and class discussions about how the speaker’s positionality affects her identity.

The video and poem introduction are crucial in setting the foundation for the central text. I chose *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston as the primary text and *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros as the companion text. Hurston’s novel follows Janie Crawford as she moves from home to home trying to figure out where she fits in and who she is. I chose *Their Eyes Were Watching God* because I remember having read it in high school and getting into neverending discussions with my classmates about the novel. At only 162 pages it is a manageable read to get through, and it is packed with so much emotion and relatability.

I also purposely chose *The House on Mango Street* because this novel contains relatively short vignettes that could each be read on their own, but for my unit’s purpose the whole book will be read. This book follows Esperanza’s experience with growing up in Chicago and figuring out who she is as she starts entering young adulthood. This book uses many literary devices that could extend the unit and ultimately ease the students into seeing how literary devices look in texts and how they are used. One of the main activities for this novel will be the students’ analysis and recreation of “My Name”. In this activity they will write what their name looks like, how it feels, and what it means which will help students explore more about themselves and their names’ significance. This activity will also allow me to learn more about the students and it will also help students get to know one another.

The unit of study will take 6 weeks to complete considering there are two novels we will be reading and I want to make sure each novel is given sufficient time to analyze without feeling rushed. I want the students to produce work that is of great quality rather than of great quantity which is also why this unit has a handful of core assignments and a few companion activities.

**INTO the unit: Week One**

1. Introduce Participant’s “What does home mean to you? 0-100” video in which 100 people quickly define what home means to them

* Students will discuss with one another common responses and or trends they noticed in the video
* Then their pair share discussions will lead into a class discussion where we figure out what were the top three most common answers
* After watching the video and participating, students will use a bubble map to define what home means to them either literally and or figuratively

1. Give a lecture on what “home” means and how important it is in building who we are while also learning about the social injustices of the housing crisis

* Students will watch CBS News video “Housing discrimination causes generational wealth gap between White and Black Americans”
* They will discuss what they watched and take notes of interesting points that stood out to them which they will keep in mind when reading both assigned novels

**THROUGH the unit: Weeks 2-5**

1. As a class, we will read at least 5 pages together of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* at the beginning of every class. They will read the rest on their own as part of their homework.

* Students will respond to daily journal prompts regarding the text we have read in class.
* Some of the prompts will be more personal than others, therefore students will not have to share their responses every single day.
* Example prompts:

1. What is Janie seeking as she looks out into the horizon? Is she possibly seeking adventure? Love?
2. Compare Logan’s treatment of Janie to Joe’s treatment of Janie. Do these men actually love her?

2) Students will start a novel map in which they will chart Janie’s different homes. They will keep this chart as we continue reading the novel.

* They will use a blank sheet of paper on which they could use different art mediums to document Janie’s journey from city to city.
* Examples: They could make a comic strip, they could use magazine cutouts, or they could simply draw the homes.

3) Students will complete a character chart handout in which they document Janie’s physical traits and inner traits.

* They will have to cite quotes from the novel to support the traits they are including on their chart.

4) Students will write an analytical essay on *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in which they will have to closely analyze how Janie’s different home environments change her identity. They will be able to use both the novel map and the character handout they completed as references.

**Companion novel *The House on Mango Street* :**

1. Students will mostly read this novel on their own, but there are a few vignettes we will closely analyze in class.
2. After students have reached “My Name”, there will be an in class discussion about this vignette. Students will recreate this vignette by doing research about their names and they will have to ask their parents/guardians about how they were named.
3. This vignette writing assignment will also be accompanied by a short narrative essay they must write. They will be asked to write about their homes and identity in this essay.

**Beyond the Unit:**

1. Students will be assigned book club groups. Each group will be reading a different book, but all books are connected to the theme of home and identity.

* As a group they will submit two 10 minute audio recordings in which they talk about their assigned book as if though they were in a book club. These audio recordings will be completed in class, so that they do not have trouble meeting up outside of class.
* They have complete creative freedom about what topics they want to talk about in their audio recordings, but just in case they need extra support I will be providing all groups with different inquiry questions.
* After they have completed their reading and their audio recordings, as a group they will create a mini presentation in which they rate the book, give a short synopsis, and explain how the theme of identity or home appear in the book.

Book Club options:

* *Enrique’s Journey* by Sonia Nazario

This novel documents the real life story of a young boy, Enrique, as he struggles to find his mom in America after she left him and his siblings when they were toddlers.

* *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang

This graphic novel tells the story of a young boy that moves to a new school where he is the only Chinese student. He must figure out how to deal with being in his new home while simultaneously missing his old home.

* *Kindred* by Octavia Butler

Dana’s life is completely turned upside down when she randomly is teleported to the past. She goes from being in her California home in the 1970’s to being in a Southern plantation in the 1860’s.

* *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez

Four sisters are forced to leave their home in the Dominican Republic to move to New York City. Their transition of homes causes each of them to undergo many changes.

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