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English 112B

30 April 2013

Unit of Study: Adventure & Epic Poem

Rationale:

Classic literature is something that has a bad name in both high schools and middle schools. These works of literature have come to be synonymous with stale, boring, and unrelatable eras, who aren't able to give us any insight into current life. This is something that I have come to realize, is very incorrect. I have fallen in love with many classical literature, which is why I am hoping to use Beowulf as a centerpiece, so that I can give students a chance to love it too.

One of the reasons that I would love to help students work through Beowulf is that I believe that the action and adventure portion of it will appeal to young adults, and give them an appetite for literature. According to _____ a good adventure story has a likeable protagonist with who young readers identify with. Although it is hard to claim that Beowulf is someone that readers identify with, I do believe that they identify with his yearning for adventure and the yearning that he has to become a great man. This genre is one that has always been a favorite among teens, as evident in the movies they choose, the books they choose, and the conversations that they enthusiastically engage in. Heroes have become a large revenue source for the movie industry, with films like The Dark Knight Rises grossing over a billion dollars worldwide (statisticbrain.com). The hero aspect of these films is what appeals to the younger generation, as well as the

action of it all. I believe that when Beowulf is taught correctly, it can have just as much of an appeal on the teens that read it, thus opening them up to the appreciation of classic literature, and hopefully allowing them to begin exploring other classic works.

I do believe though, that while the movie Beowulf is a wonderful story of adventure and heroism, it needs to be paired with a more relatable story, which is why the second half of my centerpiece will be Gary Paulsen's Hatchet. With this story, I will be able to give the students a work that they are more able to relate to, but one that is still filled with adventure, so that it can relate back to Beowulf. By pairing these two works, I will hopefully be getting to the more reserved students to relate their love of adventure from Hatchet to Beowulf.

Launching the Unit:

To launch the unit, I will show a clip from the movie Beowulf that was directed by Robert Zemeckis. This is a way to engage the students before delving into the poem. I chose one of the beginning scenes, because it portrays Beowulf as he arrives to fight the monster, and gives us a good overall sense of the hero aspect of Beowulf. Since teens respond well to visual stimulus, I wanted to use a clip from the beginning of the movie, so that they will have a starting point from which to start with.

Centerpiece Works:

Beowulf:

1. Before reading this work, the teacher must give some background as to when this work was written, and give some historical context so that the students are aware of the era in which this poem was created and when it was transcribed. The teacher must also explain the language that the original

verse is in and how it was translated, so there will be vocabulary work as you read along.

2. This work will be read aloud in the classroom, so that the teacher can help the students along. Every couple of pages should be paraphrased by the teacher, to make sure that the students understand what they are reading. The reading should be divided into three portions so that the students can have small portions to digest. Dividing it by battle will highlight the action and adventure aspect of the poem.

3. At the end of each portion, the students will be divided into three groups to discuss topics that will be on a handout given to them by the teacher. After the discussion, each group will share with the class what they discuss.

Once we have finished the reading of the poem, which shouldn't take just about two weeks in class, the students will be assigned one or both of the following

1. The student must write a one page obituary on Beowulf. This obituary should be written in the same form as Beowulf. This must be written as if it would have been included in the next day's "newspaper", after Beowulf's death. It does not have to be positive, but it must react to Beowulf.
2. The class will be divided into three groups once again. Each group will be assigned one third of the book containing a battle scene, and they have to present us with a dramatic reenactment of the portion of the book. This can be filmed to view in class, or they can act out the scenes in class. The three groups will present in sequential order to produce the reenactment of

Beowulf in class. This activity/assignment can solidify the comprehension of this classical text, and will give them a chance to give it life.

Hatchet

This book is a book that is more easily comprehended by young adults, so this will be read as homework, about two chapters per night.

1. There should be two to three quizzes throughout the reading, so that the teacher can make sure that the students are keeping up with the reading.
2. Some class activities include:
 - a. Writing journal entries from the eyes of Brian Robeson, the main character. The students will have the freedom to choose the timing of these journal entries, but they must be well thought out, and they must fit in the story.
 - b. The students can also convert some scenes, especially ones with action sequences into a poem or illustration.
 - c. The students can keep a journal/notebook of their reaction to the story. There should be a one to two pages in length, and there should be one for each night that they read, so one entry per two chapters. Ickes and Scrianko's guide shares some good ideas to what students might write in their journal entry.

Expanding of these two center piece works:

1. Short Story- A short story that can encompass a more demure adventure, but still powerful, is the short story *A Pair of Tickets* by Amy Tan.

"A Pair of Tickets" is a short story written by Amy Tan. It tells of the journey of a Chinese-American woman who returns to China after the premature death of her mother...Raised in San Francisco, June May's perspective on China is based largely on what she has seen and read. Accordingly, when she arrives in her mother's hometown, she is stunned by the ways in which her beliefs about China do not comport with the reality of being there...The key moment of the story occurs when June May meets her twin sisters...While June May has always seen her mother as a stereotypical, overbearing Chinese mom, what she learns about her mother while in China changes that view permanently." (reference.com)

This short story is a way in which they can identify with a more real adventure, and one many students, especially here in California, can relate to, since many come from recently migrated parents or grandparents. This story should be read in class, and a discussion should ensue on the story. The discussion should include the students reaction to the story, and hopefully some students can share how they relate to it.

- b. Another way to expand on the unit is to have the students break into groups of three. They will choose an adventure book from the list included in the powerpoint, and they will each write a book report, and as a group present the book to the rest of the class. A poster must include an author biography, short summary, and an analysis on the book.

Some books that I will highlight and describe are followed here:

- i. The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis: In The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy come into a fantasy world controlled by the White Witch. Narnia, under this wicked witch, is a land where it is always winter, but Christmas never comes. All who have been under the power of the White Witch and those who are hiding from her are awaiting Aslan. (Warner, Adolescents... 257)
- ii. Holes by Louis Sachar: Stanley Yelnats has just arrived at Camp Green Lake, Texas, which is not really a camp and which has no lake. It is actually the site of a juvenile detention center run by a corrupt warden who should be imprisoned. Stanley is innocent, but he has to go through all the experiences of the “camp” before his innocence is proved and before the long-standing curse on the Yelnats is overcome. Warner, Adolescents... 151)
- iii. The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle by Avi: A Young girl is forced to overcome circumstances before they overcome her. Charlotte is raised in an upper-class family with a strong father. Even though she is warned not to board the brig *Seahawk*, bound for Liverpool, England, to Providence, Rhode Island, her father has told her to take the ship, and so she goes on board, the only female on a ship commanded by evil and cruel Captain Jagers. (Nilson *LFTYA*)
- iv. Brian’s Winter by Gary Paulsen: Paulsen answered letters from readers about Hatchet by writing this book, in which Brian is not rescued and has to face a bleak winter. (Nilson, *LFTYA*)

v. City of Beasts by Isabel Allende: The first in a three-part series for young adults (Kingdom of the Golden Dragon and Forest of the Pygmies follow), City of the Beasts features high adventure and magical realism. When his mother becomes ill, fifteen-year-old Alexander Cold is sent away to join his fearless and tough-minded grandmother, a magazine reporter for International Geographic, on an expedition to the dangerous, remote world of the Amazon. Their mission, along with the others on their team—including a celebrated anthropologist; a local guide and his young daughter, Nadia; and a doctor—is to document the legendary Yeti of the Amazon known as the Beast.

(isabelallende.com)

Unit Wrap Up:

Once we have made our way through Beowulf, Hatchet, “A Pair of Tickets”, and their personally selected books, we will have an in class discussion on adventure as a genre. The students will discuss how these books are all connected and they will also be asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each book.

As a wrap-up activity, the students will be asked to write a short story that has an adventure as the driving plot. It must be at least three pages long, and it can be fiction or non-fiction.

Works Cited

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Unit of Study:
Epic Poetry & Adventure

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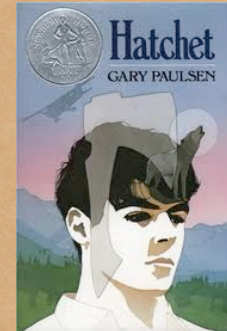
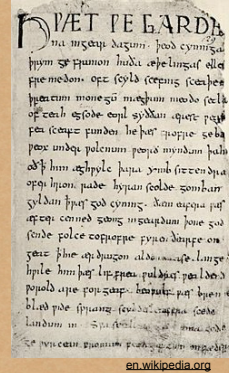
English 112B

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Centerpiece Works

Beowulf



Hatchet

by Gary Paulsen

Beowulf

The story of a man named Beowulf, is an example of an epic poem which takes the reader through three major adventures, in which Beowulf defeats the monster, Grendel, then defeats Grendel's mother. After these two adventures, Beowulf becomes King, and then goes on to his last adventure, to defeat a dragon.

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Brief Summary:

Brian Robeson is traveling on an airplane to visit his father in the Canadian wilderness, when the pilot dies, causing the plane to crash. Brian survives the crash with only his clothes and the hatchet that his mother gave him. This book chronicles in detail Brian's mistakes, setbacks, and triumphs as he survives 54 days in the wilderness.

(Warner, Adolescents 230-231)

Themes:

- * Human versus Nature
- * Initiation into Manhood

Launch the Unit with Beowulf

Beowulf

- ◆ To launch this unit, I will give historical context to this epic poem. I will also go over vocabulary that is necessary to understand this work.
- ◆ Then, we will read it in class, with each student having a turn to read. It will be separated into three sections, according to battles.
- ◆ Every two to three pages, we will stop to make sure of the students' comprehension.
- ◆ At the end of each battle, the students will be getting in groups to discuss questions that will be on a handout.

Beowulf

- ◆ At the end of the reading, the students will be assigned one or both of the following:
 - ◆ They must each write an obituary that would appear in the "newspaper", the day following Beowulf's death.
 - ◆ Divided into three groups, they will be assigned one third of the book, which includes a battle, and they must either create a video to watch in class where they act out the scene OR they must act it out in class. These will be presented in order to solidify their comprehension.

Hatchet

- ◆ This book, because of the ease in reading, will be read at home, about two chapters at a time.
- ◆ There will be a quiz for each portion of reading that the students are assigned.
- ◆ Class Activities include:
 - ◆ Writing 2 journal entries from the eyes of Brian Robeson, student is able to choose the timing of the entry (before, during, or after the books timeline)
 - ◆ Converting one of the action sequences in the book into a poem or illustration
 - ◆ Keeping a reaction journal to their reading.

Extending the Unit

- ◆ After Beowulf and Hatchet, "A Pair of Tickets" by Amy Tan will be read in class. This represents a personal adventure, and is easily related to the lives of the students.

Book Report Groups

After going through Beowulf and Hatchet, the students will be put in groups of 3. They will choose a book from the following list, and will then put together a book report, where they present the history of the book, a brief summary, and a portion of analysis.

- ~ A Girl Named Disaster by Nancy Farmer
- ~ The Book of Blood and Shadow by Robin Wasserman
- ~ The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis
- ~ Tamar: A Novel of Espionage, Passion, & Betrayal by Mal Peet
- ~ The White Darkness by Geraldine McCaughrean
- ~ Airborn by Kenneth Oppel
- ~ The Kit Rider by Geraldine McCaughrean
- ~ The Smugglers by Iain Lawrence
- ~ Holes by Louis Sachar

- ~ The Wreckers by Iain Lawrence
- ~ The True Confession of Charlotte Doyle by Avi
- ~ Dogsong by Gary Paulsen
- ~ Brian's Winter by Gary Paulsen
- ~ Under the Jolly Roger by L.A. Meyer
- ~ The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer
- ~ City of Beasts by Isabel Allende
- ~ The God of Dreams by Jose Maria Merino
- ~ City of Light, City of Dark by Avi

Unit wrap-up

For one class session at the end of the unit, there will be a discussion on the different books, their similarities, and their strengths and weaknesses.

- ~ Wrap up assignment: The students need to write a three page adventure short story. It must include the characteristics that were discussed in class, and can be fiction or non-fiction.