

# Looking Through Others' Eyes- Literature and the Double Self in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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*O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us/ To see oursels as others see us! -- Robert Burns*

## **Overview:**

In a curriculum unit designed as an elective in a 12<sup>th</sup> grade literature course, students will be asked to take an inquiry-based approach to discuss and analyze the growth of disillusionment and disorganization in American society. The effects of World War One changed the structures of society by loosening family ties and making way for the emergence of individualism. It is this idea of the individual that connects to another important idea of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the double-consciousness.

The most important instance of this double-consciousness idea comes from W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*. In the section, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" Du Bois presents this important concept of the double-consciousness as, "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness (9). Of course Du Bois speaks of the trials facing blacks in America in the post-Civil War era. However, I believe this idea connects not only to black individuals dealing with the hypocrisy of a sometimes subversively racist country, but also to the same individuals created from the disillusionment and disorganization of society as a whole.

The unit will consist of one quarter during the semester of my senior elective class. The focus of the unit will ask students to do close readings of specific characters in 20<sup>th</sup> century American short stories and novels in order to use the lens of looking through another person's eyes. Students will then explicate the process of working with the literature to go beyond and make the same connections in their own lives – namely, analyzing how other people see them. Because looking at characters through different lenses requires a lot of questions and discussion, the unit will be centralized on the Socratic Seminar. This way, students will be able to ask questions that not only discuss character motivations, but get to the core ideas of our designated theme – the double consciousness of the individual in 20<sup>th</sup> century America. Through guiding questions,

students will look at the ways in which the rise in individualism pushed out the family/communal values of the previous century and how the individual in America began to be shaped. The unit will be fueled by essential questions and will ask students to critically analyze and discuss thematic concepts in the literature.

This unit will mainly benefit the one semester I teach a 12<sup>th</sup> grade elective class. Being both seniors and in an elective class allows for more breathing room from the Core Curriculum. However, the lessons and literature will all follow Pennsylvania State Standards of reading and writing.

### **Rationale:**

The topic that Du Bois brings up of having to look at oneself through another's eyes is especially important to discuss with my students. They are all young adults almost ready to face the realities of life beyond high school, but at the same time they are in the transition period from teenager to young adult. In addition, the vast majority of my students are African American and many of them come from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds. Because of all these reasons, the rest of society chooses to look at them through very specifically predisposed eyes. My students have the ability to look at themselves through the eyes of others, and this curriculum unit will hopefully explicate this process by looking at the same idea in literature. This is important because of something brought up in Du Bois' "Of the Coming of John." After John comes home, an educated man, his sister asks, "does it make every one – unhappy when they study and learn lots of things?" (171). My students, as they apply for colleges, trade schools, or jobs, have to understand that how other people see them affects how they see themselves.

### **Personal Connection**

Not having a car allows me to take public transportation to and from school with my students. As the neighborhood changes when we wind our way to our school near East Falls in the morning, and as we head into Center City in the afternoon, where many of them have at least one transfer and sometimes more than an hour commute to get from their neighborhood to our vocational school, I see my students as SEPTA patrons along with people of many different backgrounds: business people who have cars in the shop, grandmothers, college students, and so on. Over the years, I have seen these people and how they look at my students, or choose not to look at them at all. I know that my students know how some (of course not all) people look at them, dressed in their navy blue Dickie uniforms, often reading Metro articles or listening to MP3 players. I see how my students are doubly judged, not just for the color of their skin, but also their age – as teenagers they face the stigma that follows this time of young adulthood.

One of my seniors, a great student, polite and always quiet and respectful, recently told me a story about how his friend's car (another student of mine) broke down in a quiet suburban neighborhood on the way to school one morning. He met his friend in the neighborhood and since his vocational shop (and specialty) is auto mechanics, he came to

help get his friend to school – because they didn't plan on missing one of the last days of their last semester in high school. Apparently the police were called because there were “two young black men” working on a car in the middle of the neighborhood. When the police came, my student told me, she was very kind and waited with them while another friend went to Pep Boys for a car part. My student who came to help his friend said, “It must have looked so funny, us sitting there chillin' with this white female cop.”

I know my students realize how much this happens, this looking at themselves through the eyes of others, and the purpose of this curriculum unit is to explicate this process by looking at that same concept in literature.

The idea seems quite apt when looking back at the conversation about happiness and knowledge in Du Bois' “Of the Coming of John.” John's affirmative answer to his sister's query connects to the *Great Gatsby* and Daisy Buchanan's outrageous goal to make her child a “beautiful little fool” (21). In the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, no teacher or parent wants their child to be a beautiful little fool – at the very least for the selfish reason of not wanting ignorant people running the country as the previous generation ages.

#### Background to Thematic Connection

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rise of the individual and the destruction of the nuclear family were fueled not only by wars and the changing economy, but by the exodus from rural areas into cities. As America began to really shape itself as a nation many people, especially minorities and immigrants, found themselves not at home in the “American” world nor their own cultural world. Cultures did not merge, but were instead accommodated and even though an abundance of progress occurred throughout the century, for certain groups, that dream of progress was not even close to being reality.

In the same place that Du Bois speaks of the double-consciousness, he introduces the metaphor of the veil. Here, the veil represents the boundaries between what African Americans have and what is not attainable to them because of their race, but is what they can still see in front of them. With the veil, each side can somewhat see the other, but there is no connection of movement. This relates to the problems in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when African Americans were having more opportunities to be educated, but were still shunned from the academic and social worlds of their white counterparts. This idea directly connects to Du Bois' other point of the double consciousness.

Double consciousness is especially important when people learn to see themselves. It is the true meaning of understanding your place in the world. The daunting idea of understanding one's place in the world became even more difficult in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – ironically during the rise of the individual. 1890 was designated as the “closing of the frontier.” At this time our mythology of the West and the endless availability for space was at an end. Prior to this point the romantic notion of finding space in the unknown was what fueled the imaginations and dreams of Americans. By 1920 more than half of Americans lived in cities. This rapid shift in an already small

history of the country was quite jarring to many aspects of American life. The world of yesterday was dying, but there was a certain sense of immobility because the future was unknown. With wars, immigration, and the movements into the city, the nuclear family fell apart and the rise of the individual took its place. Individualism inevitably breeds isolation, and with it, loneliness.

Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Winesburg, Ohio* demonstrate perfect examples of that loneliness. In the pre-depression era a sense of loneliness seemed to pervade many people. Anderson pointedly uses the term “grotesque” in his account of life during that time period. What is grotesque is when a person lets one idea get in the way of all ideas, as is the case with Jay Gatsby. This can be seen as a metaphor for society in general and America’s obsession with progress. From the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, throughout the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century America was invaded with a sense of the urgency of progress. It can be argued, especially using Jay Gatsby as an example, that when this occurs everything gets warped in pursuit of various truths. But this obsession is impossible to deal with because happiness exists only temporarily and it always gives way to a sense of loss.

Perhaps because of this the literature of the time became interested in the emotional underside of our ordinary experiences. All of a sudden people in America, down the street, next store, in the library are worth attention. To look at someone through someone else’s eyes leads you to look at yourself that way and the reflection of the process exorcize a metacognitive discourse that can be both painful and enlightening. Everyone’s concealed emotional baggage comes out when people realize their own emotional baggage and to what extent it is on display. Instead of looking out we can look in to do that and thus see more. If this does not happen, then people end up being trapped inside themselves and that self-stifling is deadly.

Conversely, it can be argued that the human condition is that one cannot really know anyone. There are limits to language that show how language can only go so far and it is the written word that is better for helping to flesh out the mystery of what exists inside the human mind. There is something to the unconscious that we cannot articulate or control, including our behavior, gestures, and speech. Our deep motives can be frightening to think about and even more frightening to see in other people.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century writers were heavily experimenting with point of view. In this, there is selectivity, just like when one cannot know what is going on in someone else’s brain. The fragmentation of *The Great Gatsby* articulates how people were falling apart, as society was falling apart with them. As the narrator, Nick Carraway represents how in a single window everyone looks out at everyone else. The rise of modernism allowed the rejection of the denial of 19<sup>th</sup> century certainty. Conspicuous consumption permeated Americans of the likes of the Buchanan’s and Gatsby’s party. Fitzgerald expresses this through the description of Gatsby’s parties. Our narrator explains, “Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York – every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves” (43). The image of the fruit symbolizes the same way Gatsby’s guests arrive and

leave his party. They come to the party full, fresh, and ripe and leave sucked dry and worthless. The description of how this occurs continues to explain that, “There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour, if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler’s thumb” (44). This representation of industry intensifies how much progress had the means to beat people down simply from over-stimulation. Those who had the means to waste resources did just that. Through the progress of the Industrial revolution there was an excess for the haves (obviously this was a small, though significant percentage). The Tom Buchanan idea of entitlement and Jordan Baker’s carelessness openly mocks the American dream that progress was America’s impression of itself.

The irony of these situations comes into play when one looks at the dual nature of city life – that there is isolation and loneliness in the same place that there is crowding and chaos. That urban isolation becomes part of the reason for the destruction of the nuclear family and the desperation of American idealism.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was fraught with a feeling of exile and displacement. African Americans dealt with the isolation of the veil, immigrants struggled on creating roots in a completely foreign land, and women strived for rights in a society that up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been pushing them down. All of these Americans could feel, as Du Bois describes, their “two-ness” as the past combined with the newness of America.

### *Literature*

While the Core Curriculum standards will be strictly followed, this unit is designed to allow an elective class to have access to a variety of texts in order to use class time to discuss and question what encompasses the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The literature chosen for this unit will consist of one novel – *The Great Gatsby*, two short stories – *Thank You, M’am* and *To Da-duh, in Memoriam* and selections from *Winesburg, Ohio* and perhaps most importantly, *The Souls of Black Folk*. It will be Du Bois’ work and Fitzgerald’s novel that serve as the core of the lessons, with the other selections serving as supplements and additional discussion topics.

Because Du Bois’ work serves as the inspiration for the curriculum unit’s essential question and thematic objectives, students will be introduced to excerpts from this work first. As *The Souls of Black Folk* is made up of biographical accounts, fiction, autobiographical excerpts, historical background, sociology and even musicology, it is a perfect way to introduce the students to the unit. By focusing on small pieces within the text, students will not have the opportunity to feel daunted by something as intimidating as a novel to begin a unit.

The specific selections from Du Bois will include “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” where Du Bois connects the African culture of the “second-sight” with the African American’s sense of “measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt

and pity (9). This connects to the tragedy of being able to see through the veil, but being oppressed by not being able to do anything about it – namely having all the capacity without the ability to use any resources.

Students will also read “Of the Coming of John,” where the struggle of being black and educated tragically manifests itself in the life of a young man destined to live in a world where his knowledge strains against the confines of America keeping African Americans “subordinate” (172).

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* will make up the bulk of the unit. It is here that the disillusionment of the American Dream entwines with the idea of looking at oneself through another’s eyes. As the tragic hero, Gatsby’s flaw is his excruciatingly painful obsession with a goal that does not come from him, but from what he thinks Daisy wants from him. Gatsby’s unattainable quest is for what lies beyond the dock and at the green light: money, power, status, and most importantly Daisy. Gatsby says with sternness, “I’m going to fix everything just the way it was before...She’ll see” (117). He thinks he knows what Daisy wants from him and he destroys himself trying to be what she wants. The tragedy was that what Gatsby thought was real never existed and he was chasing something that had never been there at all. In representing the sullied American Dream it can be argued that Gatsby naively reaches for something that he thinks is attainable through tangible means. Like most Americans during the time period, Gatsby focused on something that seemed attainable through hard work and being a “self-made” man. His murder and the destruction of everything he tried to create since childhood is a commentary on the futility of that dream.

In Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio*, students will focus more on the isolation of individuals and the grotesqueness of doing what Gatsby did, that is, letting one idea get in the way of all ideas. Students will read “Paper Pills” in the collection and analyze how Doctor Reefy’s story violates the rules for short stories while discussing the similarities to Gatsby’s obsession with ideas. In Doctor Reefy’s case it is explained that the thoughts of the doctor “formed a truth that arose gigantic in his mind. The truth clouded the world. It became terrible and then faded away and the little thoughts began again” (37). This materializes in the paper balls that line his pockets and turn him into the grotesque that Anderson exposes in individuals throughout the entire book. A close reading of this will allow students to experiment with looking at people through different eyes. By depicting the realities of every day life, Anderson magnified the rejection of Romanticism for Naturalism.

One of the short stories the students will read comes from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade anthology, but the senior class will have more of an opportunity to do a close reading of the texts. Students will read Langston Hughes’s *Thank You, M’am* because it compliments their own experiences with the adult figures in their lives. When the elderly woman catches the young thief and brings him back to her home to wash up and eat the boy learns a lesson of observation. The narration explains, “The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse...But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room, away from the purse, where he thought she could easily see him

out of the corner of her eye if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman *not* to trust him” (90). The boy’s naivety in misreading the elderly woman’s actions is similar to the way that students in the classroom react to older people. At a younger age it is more difficult to analyze and read a person’s character and react accordingly. When one has the opportunity to look through someone else’s eyes, as the elderly woman demonstrated for the young boy in *Thank You, M’am*, then the dehumanization of coming into contact with strangers in unpleasant manners lessens itself and allows people to exercise more humanity and compassion.

Also being extracted from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade anthology is Paule Marshall’s *To Da-duh, in Memoriam*. This story serves as a nice juxtaposition to the other short story, because unlike *Thank You, M’am*, it deals with relatives who are strangers to one another. The grandmother and granddaughter relationship in the story is an interesting commentary at not seeing yourself through someone else’s eyes, but seeing yourself in someone else. The self-awareness that comes along with this seems to be enlightening to the grandmother, but especially the granddaughter who reflects on meeting her grandmother years after her death. The two women come from completely different worlds, both geographically and socially because one has experienced progress while the other carries with her a history of her past. The one-up-manship of their relationship betrays a deeper connection to not those outside factors, but the resilience and strength within each of them. Recognizing this is somewhat off-putting to the grandmother and the narrator notices, upon meeting her grandmother that she, “peered hard at me, and then quickly drew back. I thought I saw her hand start up as though to shield her eyes. It was almost as if she saw not only me, a thin truculent child who it was said took after no one but myself, but something in me which for some reason she found disturbing, even threatening” (529). The ability to see oneself in someone else is different from seeing oneself through someone else’s eyes, but this short story includes the struggles with change, industrialization, and a person’s ability to deal with the past.

### **Objectives:**

The goal of this curriculum unit is to have students enhance and develop their metacognitive skills, through analyzing the thought processes that go along with Socratic Seminars. By becoming comfortable participating in these discussions, students should be able to become prepared for a post-secondary environment where open dialogue and thoughtful analysis of major themes and ideas are approached on a daily basis. By the end of the unit, students will be able to analyze their own critical thinking, engage in a dialogue with their peers, and explicate texts based on themes and motifs.

This unit will address the strengths and weaknesses of the following: reading, writing, speaking, and listening – all Pennsylvania State Standards. Since students will be asked to question and participate in Seminars, they will be able to practice their speaking and listening skills. The close readings of the novel and short stories will refine their reading skills and the writing assignments will ask them to provide concise explanations behind their observations. In this way, the idea of looking through others’ eyes can be viewed through different lenses and can then be reshaped and criticized. Throughout all this I

continue to think about the goals and expectations I have for my students while they are in the classroom – most importantly to encourage their critical thinking skills. The unit will develop the students’ academic skills by encouraging them to become comfortable looking through different lenses while at the same time expanding their academic knowledge of multiple literary devices and thematic concepts.

### **Strategies:**

By senior year, I feel it is important for students to begin the shift from their comfortable classroom environment as high school students and begin preparing for the atmosphere of a college classroom. One of the ways I have found this to be best accomplished is by implementing the Socratic Seminar. In this way, students can be eased into having active voices in whole classroom discussions. Because students are often reasonably averse to jumping right into Socratic Seminar, it will be necessary to introduce them to the process, scaffold their learning, and finally practice with them the outcomes of a successful seminar environment.

Because I want to use the Socratic Seminar as my primary mode of instruction, I want to start out by introducing an essential question and teaching my students to become active participants in discussing and creating questions. My first step will be to introduce the essential question as the theme of the unit – this will be taken from Du Bois. What does one learn from looking at oneself through the eyes of others? It is then necessary for me to present lessons on how the Socratic Seminar works and how to create the four types of questions: opening questions, open-ended questions, close-ended questions, and core questions. Before delving into the literature itself, I will give my students examples of these types of questions and ask them to create their own on a less overwhelming, and therefore less threatening, topic. After students have had practice creating and answering their own questions, I will move on to a fishbowl activity where the majority of the class can observe their classmates in an experimental Socratic discussion. I have found that it is difficult for students to follow the rules of Socratic Seminar because they have not been used to learning in an environment where hands are not raised and students learn from one another and not simply the teacher. I feel that this is an important lesson for even my students who do not plan on going to college to learn because it encourages respect and awareness.

At the outset of the Socratic Seminar, I will hand out an Introduction to Socratic Seminar. The definitions, rules, and expectations are all included for the teacher’s benefit to pass on to the students. It is important to make students feel like agents in their own education and by giving students the information on the *hows* and *whys* of how college classroom discussions usually function this can be done. When students can see the rationale behind the work that is required, they are able to enhance their metacognitive skills. In this way, more information leads to the more informed voice. When students feel that they have a stake in their own learning and are treated more as equals to the theories of Socrates, they will be better able to take seriously the guidelines and procedures of the seminar – the practice that leads them to express their voices. Showing students that they have these skills creates a positive learning environment because of the

adult responsibilities it signifies. Also, it seems that every time students are provided upfront with the information to how they will be graded, they invariably do better than when rules and expectations and rubrics are unclear.

Because Socratic Seminars do not occur magically, it is necessary to teach the four types of discussion questions. Creating these types of questions is essential to the process of the Socratic Seminar. The types of questions are as follows: Opening questions – these questions serve to allow students to express their opinions on broad topics. Closed-ended questions – There is only one answer, a “right there” question that students can find directly in the text. Open-ended questions – Some of the most interesting, these questions focus on students using proof from their texts to express their own opinions regarding the material being presented. In this way, students explicate the texts while responding to questions getting at the deeper meaning of the seminar topic. Core questions – the most difficult and most culturally important, these questions deal with the theme, here, specifically the double-self and the perspective of looking at others.

By taking small, scaffolded steps, including creating a lesson on the components and examples of the four kinds of seminar questions, students will be able to move on to their own Socratic Seminar. Teachers rarely have control over the class size and often class size determines what can and cannot be accomplished in the course of a unit. Taking a potentially large class size into account, the first Socratic Seminar will take the form of a fishbowl (more conducive to initial discussion when there is a large class size) and what I have called a “freeze-frame,” where students participating in the discussion must stop mid-discussion in order for the “fish-watchers” to analyze and clarify what they have witnessed. The questions created for this freeze-frame/fishbowl activity will come from the questions designated on the syllabus and allow for all students (fish as well as “fish watchers”) to take part. As part of getting in conversation with the text, as well as including students who were not in the discussion, the “fish-watchers” will create their own double-entry journals of what they see (the mechanics of the seminar) as well as what they hear (the information their peers discuss regarding the topic of the day).

Once the class is aware of the expectations and practices of the Socratic Seminar, I will begin the actual unit of the novel and short stories. Homework assignments will mainly consist of reading biographical information on the authors of the given section. Students can even do their own research on these authors using internet resources. Students should come to class prepared to be active members in the discussion of the questions and themes addressed in each piece of literature. So each student will have the opportunity to practice each roll in the Socratic Seminar, I will have a sign up sheet to ensure that each student creates all types of questions at least three times throughout the five subject seminar.

Aside from the Socratic Seminar discussions, students will be asked to analyze each author’s use of stylistic and literary devices. Students will do this by creating constructed responses, a staple of Core Curriculum writing. In these constructed responses, students will be asked to respond to questions and formulate their answers in a prescribed manner. Students will also be asked to keep a journal of daily observations of watching people

watch them. In this way, they will be able to analyze what they project to the world and how the world responds.

In addition, students will form five groups to do a historical background research topic. This could be modified to let students choose to work alone on a given topic, or could be made as an interactive activity with multiple research roles. The five topics could be reshaped for any teacher's interests, but I plan on focusing on general ideas which center on each piece of literature. For *The Souls of Black Folk*, the group will be asked to research the different arguments of Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. For *The Great Gatsby*, students will be asked to research and present information on The Jazz Age of Fitzgerald's time. With *Winesburg, Ohio*, students will be asked to do research on the effect the Industrial Revolution had on cities and rural areas. For *Thank You, M'am* students will present their findings on Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance. The historical focus of *To Da-duh, in Memoriam* will deal with technological advancements in America and the juxtaposition of countries under the thumb of Imperialism. These presentations ask students to do cursory research on the topic in order to provide a foundation and allow them to teach each other, because the students will mainly be focusing on the thematic concepts in the literature.

### **Classroom Activities:**

Students will need an introduction to Du Bois and the thematic concept of the double self. This can be accomplished in a short lecture and the utilization of the internet in the classroom. In my classroom, the Smart Board will provide an additional resource to scaffold ways in which students can do their own research on the historical backgrounds of each story. From the beginning, the students will be asked to look at Du Bois' quote:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness (9).

Students will be asked to initially describe in writing what this means to them. By making it personal, students will hopefully be able to see that Du Bois' commentary on the problems facing African Americans face people from different ages, races, and backgrounds.

Once the class is aware of the expectations and practices of the Socratic Seminar, I will begin the actual units of the novel and short stories. They are divided into five subsections of the essential question, each with its own theme and questions. While we will be looking at all of the literature as a class, I will assign a group project at the beginning of the year by creating literature circles. The students will be divided into five groups and give them each one time period on which to focus. It will then be the responsibility of the group to research relevant historical events of the time period they are assigned and prepare a lesson to present to the class at the end of the unit. Students

will be given this assignment at the beginning of the unit and presentations will be given on the last day of that week's topic. Time to work inside or outside of class is at the teacher's discretion, depending on the resources available to students within the school building.

Because I want my students to really connect with this idea of looking at themselves through others' eyes, I will assign a daily journal assignment where students will be asked to write down casual observations they have of people observing them. I want to raise their awareness of self while in public places and note how strangers as well as people they know interact with them. At a simple level, the purpose of this assignment will be to raise awareness of how and why they are judged on a daily basis, as well as the judgments they make on others.

For the most part, I want to take time to focus on each of the five sections, with the novel obviously taking up more time. The homework assignments will consist of the independent historical research project, but will also include nightly readings and the constructed responses already mentioned. Students should come to class prepared to be active members in the discussion of the questions and themes addressed in each piece of literature. While I will primarily lead the class through the Introduction section, I will that during the short stories the students will be able to take control to present the information and begin the Socratic discussion. So each student will have the opportunity to practice each roll in the Socratic Seminar, I will have a sign up sheet to ensure that each student creates all types of questions at least twice through the five sections of seminar.

## Lesson Plans

### Lesson 1 – First Day of Unit

Topic: Introduction to the Double-Consciousness

Content: Questions – What did Du Bois mean by the veil? Who is in possession of this second-sight? What are the ramifications of measuring your soul by someone else? How can a person ever merge the two selves into a better self? What is that better self?

Goals: Teacher will introduce the idea of an inquiry-based curriculum as well as to the overarching questions of the course. Students will read from Du Bois.

Objectives: Students will be introduced to the thematic concept of the double self and Du Bois' reasoning for identifying this problem. Students will also be asked to begin to think of this in relationship to their own lives.

Materials: Smart Board, information on the Du Bois' lecture notes, excerpt from *The Souls of Black Folk*: "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," student journals

Procedures:

Introduction-

Students will be introduced to Du Bois and the quote on double consciousness. They will be asked to respond in their journals to respond to the quote as it relates to their own lives.

Development-

Teacher will give mini-lecture on the background of Du Bois, explaining to students the issues and reasoning behind “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” and the time period as well as location and prominent figures. Students will take notes.

Practice-

Students will do a close reading of “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” in order to comment on some of the questions Du Bois brings up in the essay.

Assessment-

Students will complete their first journal entry and participate in class discussion – as a precursor to the Socratic Seminar

Closure-

Students will read the section “Of the Coming of John” and prepare to participate in the Socratic Seminar discussion of the tragedy of knowing too much, which leads itself into lessons for *The Great Gatsby*.

Lesson 2 – *The Great Gatsby*

Topic: The Unattainable Dream

Content: Questions – What happens when someone judges their self worth on the needs of another person? How does the experiment of selective point of view effect what we learn about the characters? How does the futility of trying to relive the past destroy the character of Jay Gatsby? In what ways does the disintegration of society manifest itself in the novel?

Goals: Teacher will lead the first Socratic Seminar discussion on excerpts from *The Great Gatsby*.

Objectives: Students will be able to discuss through a brief Socratic Seminar the questions that are at the core of this week’s topic. At this point students will have already

read some of the chapters for homework. Students will be assessed by their performance on their group project.

Materials: *The Great Gatsby* text, Socratic Seminar questions, Group Project, group project materials as created by the specific group presenting.

Procedures:

Introduction –

Students will participate in an abbreviated Socratic Seminar discussion in order to allow time for the presenters of this section to give their group presentation.

Development –

At this time, students should feel comfortable implementing the rules and procedures they have learned regarding their responses to the four types of discussion questions. Practice: The week's group will present their short statement on the above subject from a historical angle. They will then give a dramatic reading of the poem from the selection, and present the artistic interpretation of another work from the selection, and present the song they chose from the time period. Students will teach the class their rationale behind their artistic choices. Students will have had some time in class to work together on this subject and will have had to utilize outside resources on their own time in order to prepare.

Checking for Understanding –

While the teacher will be evaluating the group's work, the students in the audience will be asked to write a commentary offering constructive criticism, responses, and further questions that will be given to the group members for them to reflect on for homework by writing a written response to their feedback.

Closure –

Students will finish *The Great Gatsby* and participate in subsequent class discussions.

Lesson 3 – The Grotesque – Obsession with an Unrealistic Truth

Topic: Windows into Other Lives

Content: Questions – How is “Paper Pills” both realistic and symbolic? What does the violation of the rules for the short story do to the reader's interpretation? What is grotesque? How does the insistence of realism function in the story? What happens when a person lets one idea get in the way of all ideas?

Goals: Students will participate in a fishbowl Socratic Seminar Discussion on the chapter “Paper Pills” in Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio*.

Objectives: Students will use their four types of creative questions to facilitate their own Socratic Seminar without the aid of the teacher. In this lesson, the teacher will have the opportunity to step back and let students fully engage in the topic and its discussion as run by their own questions and subsequent discussions.

Materials: *Winesburg, Ohio* “Paper Pills” excerpt, fishbowl double-entry journals student questions

Procedures:

Introduction –

Students who have prepared to participate as “fish” in the Socratic Seminar (between 8-10 students) will center themselves in the middle of the classroom with their four types of discussion questions. A volunteer or assigned person will open with an opening question. The rest of the class, seated around the fishbowl, will prepare their double-entry journal for observing the proceedings.

Development-

The modeling of this activity will have been done in previous lessons and students will be able to display their knowledge of the rules and procedures of the seminar by beginning without direction from the teacher.

Practice –

The students (without raising hands) will participate in their discussion of the short story, while students viewing the activity will monitor what is heard and seen.

Checking for Understanding-

The teacher will sit/stand in a place the least obtrusive to the discussion in the middle circle to ensure that students are directing their questions and responses not to the teacher, but to their fellow classmates. The teacher will, however, monitor the instances of the types of questions the students have been asked to pose.

Closure-

At least fifteen minutes before the end of class, a facilitator from the group will wrap up the discussion with a closing question in order to bring closure to the discussion. In the last few minutes of class, students who viewed the Seminar will have the opportunity to comment on what they witnessed in their peers’ discussion.

## Lesson 4 – Bridging the Age Gap – Looking through the Eyes of a Different Generation

Topic: Connecting Experiences through Time

Content: Questions – What does the title say about the relationship between the two characters in the story? What is learned by noticing what the characters do and do not say to each other? How are people able to learn from different generations by observing them and seeing people through another generation’s eyes?

Goals: Students will participate in a fishbowl Socratic Seminar Discussion on the short story *Thank You, M’am*.

Objectives: Students will use their four types of creative questions to facilitate their own Socratic Seminar without the aid of the teacher. In this lesson, the teacher will have the opportunity to step back and let students fully engage in the topic and its discussion as run by their own questions and subsequent discussions. Students will also be asked to write a constructed response analyzing the author’s use of dialect and diction.

Materials: 9th grade anthology, selection of *Thank You, M’am*, fishbowl double-entry journals, student questions, constructed responses

Procedures:

Introduction –

Students who have prepared to participate as “fish” in the Socratic Seminar (between 8-10 students) will center themselves in the middle of the classroom with their four types of discussion questions. A volunteer or assigned person will open with an opening question. The rest of the class, seated around the fishbowl, will prepare their double-entry journal for observing the proceedings.

Development-

The modeling of this activity will have been done in previous lessons and students will be able to display their knowledge of the rules and procedures of the seminar by beginning without direction from the teacher.

Practice –

The students (without raising hands) will participate in their discussion of the short story, while students viewing the activity will monitor what is heard and seen.

Checking for Understanding-

Students will be asked to relate this in a journal entry to a moment in their life when they came into direct contact with one of their elders and learned something from them.

### Closure-

At least fifteen minutes before the end of class, a facilitator from the group will wrap up the discussion with a closing question in order to bring closure to the discussion. In the last few minutes of class, students who viewed the Seminar will have the opportunity to comment on what they witnessed in their peers' discussion.

### Lesson 5 – Bridging the Age Gap – Looking through the Eyes of a Different Generation

Topic: Connecting Experiences through Time

Content: Questions – How does the writer's use of diction heighten the disconnection the grandmother and granddaughter feel for each other? What is it about unfamiliar situations that are frightening to people? How does fear bring people together? What is frightening about seeing yourself in a family member's characteristics?

Goals: Students will participate in a fishbowl Socratic Seminar Discussion on the short story *To Da-duh, in Memoriam*.

Objectives: Students will use their four types of creative questions to facilitate their own Socratic Seminar without the aid of the teacher. In this lesson, the teacher will have the opportunity to step back and let students fully engage in the topic and its discussion as run by their own questions and subsequent discussions. Students will also be asked to write a constructed response analyzing the author's use of dialect and diction.

Materials: 9th grade anthology, selection of *To Da-duh, in Memoriam*, fishbowl double-entry journals, student questions, constructed responses

Procedures:

Introduction –

Students who have prepared to participate as “fish” in the Socratic Seminar (between 8-10 students) will center themselves in the middle of the classroom with their four types of discussion questions. A volunteer or assigned person will open with an opening question. The rest of the class, seated around the fishbowl, will prepare their double-entry journal for observing the proceedings.

Development-

The modeling of this activity will have been done in previous lessons and students will be able to display their knowledge of the rules and procedures of the seminar by beginning without direction from the teacher.

### Practice –

The students (without raising hands) will participate in their discussion of the short story, while students viewing the activity will monitor what is heard and seen.

### Checking for Understanding-

The teacher will see that students follow the method for writing constructed responses, using the TAG it a 3 method of responding to and explicating texts.

### Closure-

At least fifteen minutes before the end of class, a facilitator from the group will wrap up the discussion with a closing question in order to bring closure to the discussion. In the last few minutes of class, students who viewed the Seminar will have the opportunity to comment on what they witnessed in their peers' discussion.

### *Differentiated Instruction*

These lesson plans provide the framework for the general purpose of the unit. The lesson plans indicate a strong student-centered classroom. While this is not ideal for all classroom environments, it can be modified to fit a specific classroom's needs, strengths, and differentiated instruction. Small classes can forego the fishbowl entirely, while many classes that contain at least thirty students can benefit from the opportunity of rotation in and out of fishbowls. Because it is imperative that all students remain active in the discussion even if they are not a part of it, the double-entry journal allows students to use metacognitive skills that will ideally help them when they participate in their own discussions. Teachers can also use their own discretion to scaffold as much or as little as possible in the discussions by first creating the four types of questions for students to discuss and giving guided topics for the students to use while participating in the Socratic Seminar. The most important goal is for all students to gain knowledge of themselves and readers and writers.

### **Annotated Bibliography/Resources**

#### Works Cited

Anderson, Sherwood. Winesburg, Ohio. New York: Penguin, 1976.

A collection of glimpses into the lives of various people in the small, Midwest town of Winesburg, loosely narrated by one young town member who exposes the fragile lives of the quiet people who inhabit the town.

Du Bois, W.E.B. The Souls of Black Folk. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003.

A collection of essays ranging from autobiography to fiction and analyze the subject of being African American in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby. New York: Scribner, 1995.

The classic story of the fall of the American Dream, as well as the tragedy of one man's quest for that dream, as narrated by a friend and observer.

Hughes, Langston. "Thank You, M'am." Elements of Literature. Ed. Kristine E. Marshall and Laura Mongello. Holt, Rinehart and Winston: Austin, 2005. 87-90. Braziller, Inc., 1958.

Hughes' short story of a young man who runs into an elderly lady. This story is taken from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade literature anthology.

Marshall, Paule. "To Da-duh, in Memoriam." Elements of Literature. Ed. Kristine E. Marshall and Laura Mongello. Holt, Rinehart and Wilson: Austin, 2005. 527-537.

A closely autobiographical account of a young girl's journey to visit her dying grandmother in pre-independence Barbados.

School Reform Commission. *Core Curriculum Standards Alignment Resources Educational Resources*. Philadelphia: The School District of Philadelphia, 2004. The Academic Standards for Grade 11 Literacy as designated by state standards.

Online Resources

<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/wjhs/depts/socialst/ams/Skills/SocraticSeminar/socraticseminarIntro.html>

An important and applicable handout for both student and teacher to allow students a window into the pedagogy behind dialectical approach to discussion.

## **Appendices-Standards**

Student Syllabus/Reading List

Looking Through Others' Eyes-  
Literature and the Double Self in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Syllabus/Reading List

Questions – What did Du Bois mean by the veil? Who is in possession of this second-sight? What are the ramifications of measuring your soul by someone else? How can a person ever merge the two selves into a better self? What is that better self?

- *The Souls of Black Folk* – W.E.B. Du Bois
  - i. “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” pages 7-15
  - ii. “Of the Coming of John” pages 162-176

Questions - What happens when someone judges their self worth on the needs of another person? How does the experiment of selective point of view effect what we learn about the characters? How does the futility of trying to relive the past destroy the character of Jay Gatsby? In what ways does the disintegration of society manifest itself in the novel?

- *The Great Gatsby* – F. Scott Fitzgerald

Questions - How is “Paper Pills” both realistic and symbolic? What does the violation of the rules for the short story do to the reader’s interpretation? What is grotesque? How does the insistence of realism function in the story? What happens when a person lets one idea get in the way of all ideas?

- *Winesburg, Ohio* – Sherwood Anderson
  - i. “Paper Pills” pages 35-38

Questions - What does the title say about the relationship between the two characters in the story? What is learned by noticing what the characters do and do not say to each other? How are people able to learn from different generations by observing them and seeing people through another generation’s eyes?

- *Thank You, M’am* – Langston Hughes

Questions – How does the writer’s use of diction heighten the disconnection the grandmother and granddaughter feel for each other? What is it about unfamiliar situations that are frightening to people? How does fear bring people together? What is frightening about seeing yourself in a family member’s characteristics?

- *To Da-duh, in Memoriam* – Paule Marshall

## **Standards**

Despite the fact that this is an elective class within the English department, it is still necessary to utilize and incorporate the Core Curriculum in order for students to produce proficient work in accordance with the teacher’s rigorous instruction. The specific Pennsylvania State Standards for Literacy that will be implemented are the following:

1.1 Learning to Read Independently – D: Identify, describe, evaluate, and synthesize the essential ideas in text. Assess those reading strategies that were most effective in learning from a variety of texts.

1.1 Learning to Read Independently – G: Demonstrate, after reading, an understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction texts, including public documents.

1.1 Learning to Read Independently – H: Demonstrate fluency and comprehension reading.

1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature – A: Read and understand works of literature.

1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature – B: Analyze the relationships, uses and effectiveness of literary elements used by one or more authors in similar genres, including characterizations, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone, and style.

1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature – C: Analyze the effectiveness in terms of literary quality of the author's use of literary devices.

1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature – D: Analyze and evaluate in poetry, the appropriateness of diction and figurative language (e.g., irony, understatement, overstatement, paradox).

1.3 Reading, Analyzing, and Interpreting Literature – F: Read and respond to non-fiction and fiction including poetry and drama.

1.4 Types of Writing - B: Write complex informational pieces (e.g., research papers, analyses, evaluation, essays).

1.6 Speaking and Listening – A: Listen to others.

1.6 Speaking and Listening – D: Contribute to discussions.

1.6 Speaking and Listening – E: Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.