

How Does Media Affect Our Identity?

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Overview

The main focus of our seminar was African-American short stories. The seminar focused on these authors and titles because often they are not used within the state-mandated curriculum. Also, the seminar focused on what makes us “us”. In other words, how do biases that others have impact us? We looked at history as well, and analyzed how certain events impact our lives. We took a chronological look at African-American short stories and ended with some current mini-web series. While we looked at many different aspects of the text and multimedia, I tried to think of a common thread that would interest my students. This thread was “how do these works impact my students’ identity?” Further, how did history, along with past and present stereotypes affect my students’ identities - the ones they form themselves and the ones that are shown to them on a daily basis.

While taking this seminar, I moved from a high school to a middle school, and the changes have been drastic in terms of emotions, maturity, and thoughtfulness. The use of reading *Recitatif*, by Toni Morrison, enables students to analyze and reflect on their own biases in an age-appropriate manner.

Rationale

This unit is designed for an 8th grade Reading class, which does guided reading groups, but is adaptable for any middle school reading class. The short story *Recitatif* serves as an exemplary tool for teaching ambiguity and bias. *Recitatif*, written by Toni Morrison, is a story in which she goes to great lengths to make sure that there is no certainty of which character is black and which is white.

The focus of this unit is three-fold. First, it is to teach bias. It is essential for students to understand that everyone has biases, and to identify how they impact them on a daily basis. Furthermore, they need to understand that texts they read often include bias, and they must learn to identify and then analyze these statements. Secondly, students will use this text to learn the

skill of indirect characterization. This skill is key, because my students lack the ability to make inferences, for which the ability to indirectly characterize students is essential. Lastly, students will evaluate the short story and write an opinion piece on whether or not the two characters are actually black or white. They will then have to identify the traits that stereotypically identify characters as black or white, and they will write an ambiguous story about themselves and a friend afterward.

Since this unit will be used during a reading class, the objectives for most of the unit will be to teach universal skills, but there will be objectives that are specific to the actual short story. The activities and assignments in this unit are designed to teach students reading skills, but to also push students to make big text-to-self and text-world connections, and give them an opportunity to publish their opinions.

Objectives

By the end of the unit students will be able to:

Analyze self-biases and stereotypes

Relate ideas of ambiguous identity from the text to their own lives

Create an understanding of present day media and its biased nature

Identify dialogue between characters

Characterize characters, by using the STEAL method

Compare the two characters, based on good and evil

Evaluate *Recitatif*, by collecting evidence to prove the main character is either Black or White

Evaluate and analyze how biases affect their identity to themselves and others

Strategies

Before During After Reading Strategies

Before, during, and after reading strategies (BDA) are useful to monitor student comprehension and useful to give constant feedback when students are learning about bias and when students start reading *Recitatif*. Before strategies include KWL (What I know, What I Want to Know, and What I Learned) charts, carousel activity about stereotypes they know of white, black, Asian, and Latino people. They will then complete an anticipation guide and make a prediction about *Recitatif*, before they start reading the story. During strategies include comprehension questions, two-column notes, making predictions and inferences, and collecting indirect characterization textual evidence. Finally, the after strategies range from post-reading assessments, identity reflection journals, and creating an evaluation of characters, where they will decide if the characters in the story are black or white.

Lesson Plan Format

The lessons provided in this curriculum follow the lesson plan mandated by Young Scholar Charter Network. The Reading classes are set up in ninety minute blocks, and are broken up into the following sections: Do Now/ Homework Check, Vocabulary, Direct Instruction, Guided Practice, and then there is a Guided Reading and blended Independent Reading, and then a Closing and Exit Ticket. This format allows me to be teaching THREE different texts to a total of four groups (one text will be read in two groups). This format provides students the responsibility to do work by themselves, time to work in very small groups with the teacher, and allows the teacher to differentiate work. The vocabulary in each day can vary, because some of it is tied to what we are reading as a whole group and other vocabulary is just simply SAT prep words. Lessons can build onto one another by using a Do Now to review, or the independent practice may reemphasis an objective taught on the previous day.

Collaborative Learning –

The entire model of the reading block promotes and requires collaborative learning. Students will be in groups for the entire year. They will be grouped based on their reading levels, so they will be able to read books that are on their level. This group will go to guided reading for one portion of the class and the rest of the class, they will be working closely with their peers.

This model allows for students to interact on a peer on peer level and to encourage students to start communicating ideas to one another. Also, it promotes students to use scholar language when having discussions or debates. This works well for both low level and high-level readers. For low-level readers, they will spend more time with me to model how to read and to model how to think about reading. Whereas, the high level readers will meet with me for a shorter period of time and will be pushed to answer much higher level thinking questions. In an ideal situation, higher level students will be reading their guided reading book, but encouraged to read the lower level book, in case that group of students needed help. This would allow them to become leaders in the classroom.

Jigsaws take information, split it up in three to five groups and require the students in each group to become experts on their bit of knowledge and teach it back to the class. Students who are watching each presentation take notes, or complete a worksheet. By the end of all the presentations, they will have all the pieces of the topic. They will be able to then get a clear picture of the puzzle. Jigsaws work well in a variety of settings.

Lastly, grouping or *information chunking* activity has students going to a number of stations to acquire their information. The exercise can have students look at various objects that teach the same objective, or they can be used to do mini-revisit stations. The exercise is generally summarized by writing a prompt or completing a worksheet.

Notes and Information Organization

This unit has many different aspects, thus there is a lot of information. In order to ensure students are constantly engaged, students will record, connect and organize what they have

learned in a variety of ways. Graphic organizers are an exceedingly popular method for students to visually lay out what they have learned. Also, it breaks down a bigger concept to steps, so students can feel successful. Also, the two-column note format, sometimes called Cornell notes, is an easy way for students to take out key parts of the text and add their notes next to it. This allows the students to interact with the text. Throughout the course of this unit students will use these notes to assist their learning and to reactivate their knowledge as they explore each topic more in depth through participation in the extension activities. All sets of the two-column notes will be kept in their notebooks, creating a reference library, which they can review periodically.

Guided Reading Journals

In addition to graphic organizers and two-column notes, the students will also keep a journal. Part of the class routine is a teacher letter, which is based on the independent book students are reading. In smaller journals, students write entries about the book they are reading. In addition, students will have a spiral notebook just for their guided reading journals. The journal entries will be based on the skill that they are learning for that day. Journal entries allow me to differentiate work, by requiring higher readers to write more, and lessen the writing load for lower readers.

Classroom Activities/ Lesson Plans

Lesson Plan 1: Evaluation

Objectives (Students will be able to:)

SWBAT identify bias, by evaluating art and text

SWBAT identify the connection between opinion and bias, by comparing and contrasting the two

Do Now:

Look at the picture on the board. What are THREE things you observe? What do you like or don't like about it and why? Should be FOUR sentences long!

Direct Instruction (There will be two mini-lessons today):

There will be Cloze Notes to define evaluate.

Teacher will review the Do Now, then teacher will read out the definition of evaluate. Teacher will then pull up another piece of artwork and go through the steps creating an evaluation. Then teacher will go over how to evaluate a piece of text.

Guided Practice:

Students will work on packet that has artwork and book covers, which they will evaluate (See Appendix Figure1)

Independent Practice

Students will work on the third piece of artwork and third book cover problem by themselves.

Direct Instruction #2:

Students will take cloze notes about bias. They will learn about critical language and see how there are positive and negative words. (Appendix Figure 2)

Guided Practice:

Students will work on a work sheet together

Independent Practice:

Last page of the packet they will do by themselves

Closing:

Define bias.

Define critical language.

How are biases and evaluation connected?

What statement can you make about their relationship?

Exit Slip:

1. Create two biased statements and one unbiased statement
2. How are evaluation and bias connected?
3. How you rate your behavior? Why?

Assessment

Student in- class questions and responses, collected worksheet, and exit ticket

Lesson Plan 2: Bias

Objectives

SWBAT define stereotype and create a connection between stereotype and bias

SWBAT: analyze self-biases and stereotypes, by participating in a carousal activity

SWBAT watch news and identify bias between stations

SWBAT identify what media bias is positive or negative towards African-Americans in general, African-American teens (maybe even gender specific), and teenagers

Do Now:

What is your definition of prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination? Give an example of each

Direct Instruction -

1. Write down the notes for stereotypes and bias
2. Show them slides of people and go through assumptions I may make
3. Go over how it is not bad to have stereotypes or make assumptions, because that's human nature. Then warn them not to stick with their stereotypes or voice them right away, because many people are different from what they seem

Guided Practice

After going over the direct instruction, the instructions will be given out, on how to participate in the carousal activity on stereotypes.

1. Sit with group quietly.
2. Pick a person to be your scribe.
3. Identify what sheet you work on first.
4. Go stand by your sheet.
5. WRITE!
6. Listen for the switch and then switch!

Independent Practice

Journal- Students will journal about how many stereotypes they heard before and then how many they have used or thought before. Then have them also write if they encountered anyone who had stereotypes about them, and push them to describe how it made them feel.

Direct Instruction

Have students come back from their journal writing and look up. Then go over the definition of media. Then review what bias means. Then explain how stereotypes are based on bias. Finally, preview that bias exists in the media and especially in news reports. Show a clip from the Daily Show and explain how it pokes fun at the Republicans. Finally, warn them that political satires are not the only news media that has bias.

Guided Practice

Show two to three clips of news being reported. Have students write down the words they hear and write if the critical language is positive or negative. Then have students compare news clips between race, gender, and even age.

Independent Practice

Journal- Write down their reflections about the news media clips.

Closing

Ask students where they can find bias. Discuss stereotypes and discuss how stereotypes are created (especially based on the news media clips)

Exit ticket

1. In your opinion, how are stereotypes created? How do they continue?
2. Do you think the news makes an impact on how people think about other people?
3. How you rate your behavior? Why?

Assessment: Worksheet and Exit Slip

Lesson Plan 3: Recitatif

Objectives

SWBAT define the term ambiguity

SWBAT preview *Recitatif* by making predictions about the title

SWBAT generate questions after reading to themselves

Do Now:

Look at the picture and tell me what you think is happening and why. I chose the Mona Lisa, because there has been so many articles about what Mona Lisa is actually doing.

Direct Instruction -

1. Define the term ambiguity
2. Go over the before reading strategies, such as the KWL chart, and making predictions

Guided Practice

This will be short and sweet. They will read statements and choose which statement is ambiguous and for what reason.

Guided Reading/ Independent Practice

Chunk A: Independent Reading + journal

Chunk B: KWL chart

Prediction journals based on the title

Three questions students have after reading the first paragraph

Chunk C: Students meet with teacher and do guided reading and finish the first three pages of the story. Students will start to make a STEAL graphic organizer about each character

Journal- Students will journal about how many stereotypes they heard before and then how many they have used or thought before. Then have them also write if they encountered anyone who had stereotypes about them, and push them to describe how it made them feel.

Closing

Review ambiguity and the key points at the beginning of *Recitatif*

Exit Slip

1. Predictions next section
2. Rate behavior

Appendix

Figure 1- Packet for Evaluating Art and Text

Name:

Homework:

Date:

Evaluating Art and Text

Notes: **Evaluating Art and Text**

Evaluate=Judge something based on your connections

When you evaluate something, there is NO wrong answer. You just need to explain your answer!

Steps for Success:

1. Look at the Art/ Read the text
2. Observe in art/ choose words in text
3. Decide if you like it or don't like it
4. Complete a +/- chart (EXPLANATION)
5. Create a summary statement

Section #1: Evaluating Art



Step #1: Look at the picture to the left

Step #2: Make Observations

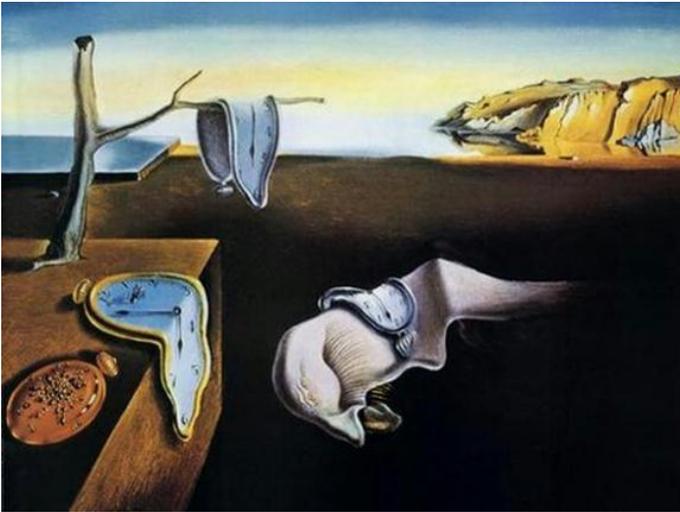
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step #3: Do you like it? Circle One: **YES** No

Three Reasons:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Evaluation Statement (Start with, I like or I didn't like... Then explain why.) Should be FOUR sentences or longer!



Step #1: Look at the picture to the left

Step #2: Make Observations

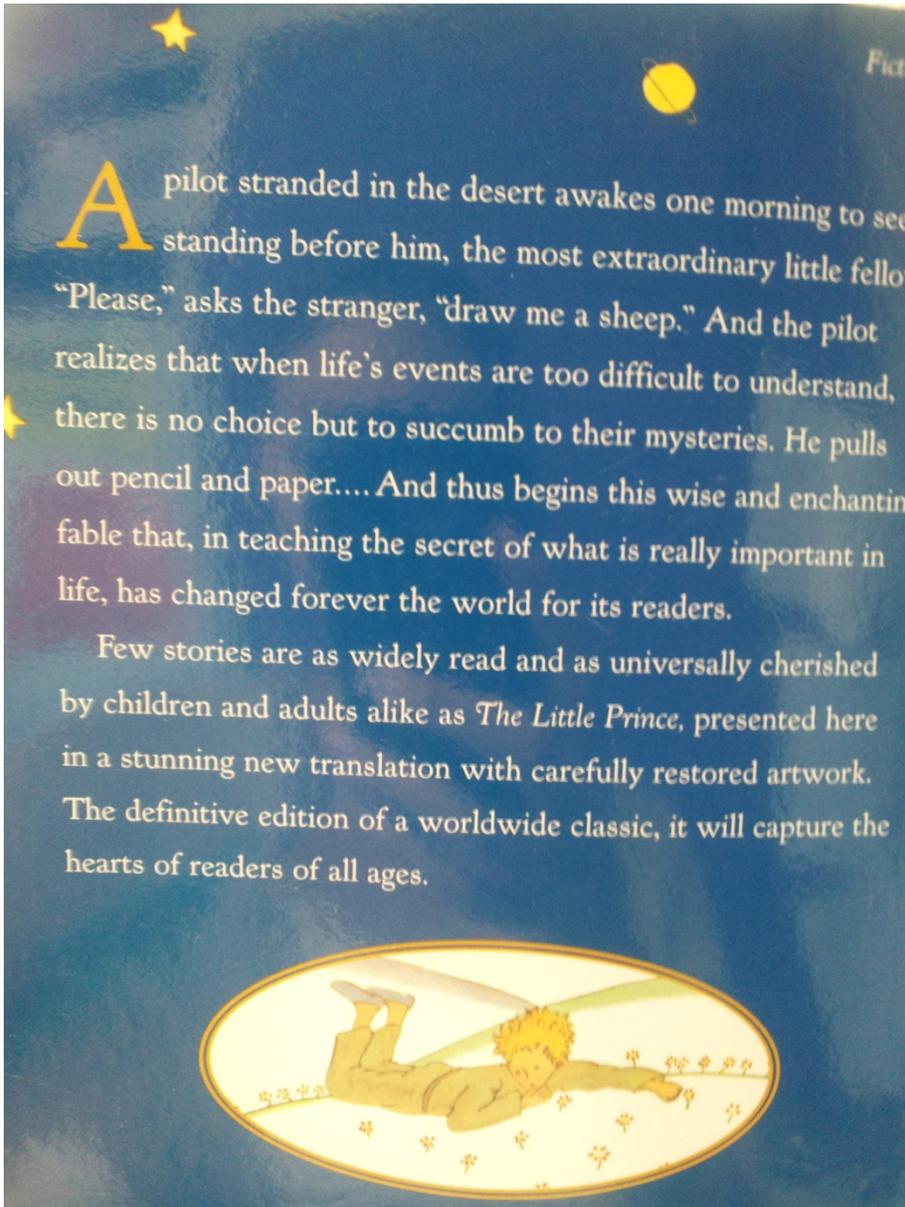
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step #3: Do you like it? Circle One: **YES** **No** Three Reasons:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Evaluation Statement (Start with, I like or I didn't like... Then explain why.) Should be FOUR sentences or longer!

Section #2: Evaluating Books



Step #1: Read the back cover for The Little Prince

Step #2: Write down 5 words or phrases below

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step #3: Would you read this book?

Circle One: Yes No

Evaluation Statement (Start with, I would read or would not read this book...Then explain why.)
Should be FOUR sentences or longer!

Section #2: Evaluating Books

"The best book of the year, [*Moneyball*] already feels like the most influential book on sports ever written. If you're a baseball fan, *Moneyball* is a must." -PEOPLE

Moneyball is a quest for the secret of success in baseball. In a narrative full of fabulous characters and brilliant excursions into the unexpected, Michael Lewis follows the low-budget Oakland A's, visionary general manager Billy Beane, and the strange brotherhood of amateur baseball theorists. They are all in search of new baseball knowledge—insights that will give the little guy who is willing to discard old wisdom the edge over big money.

"What does it take to turn a subject like baseball statistics into a true-life thriller not even a baseball-loathing bibliophile could put down? Answer: saturation reporting, conceptual thinking of a high order, a rich sense of humor, and talent to burn. In short, Michael Lewis.

Moneyball is his grandest tour de force yet." -TOM WOLFE

"Lewis has hit another one out of the park. . . . You need know absolutely nothing about baseball to appreciate the wit, snap, economy and incisiveness of [Lewis's] thoughts about it." -JANET MASLIN, *NEW YORK TIMES*

"*Moneyball* is the best business book Lewis has written. It may be the best business book anyone has written." -MARK GERSON, *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*



MICHAEL LEWIS is the author of the bestsellers *Liar's Poker* and *The New Thing* among other books. He lives in Berkeley, California, with his wife, Tabitha Soren, and their two daughters.

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Step #1: Read the back cover for Money Ball

Step #2: Write down 5 words or phrases below

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step # 3: Would you read it?

Circle One: Yes
No

List Three Reasons why:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Evaluation Statement (Start with, I would read or would not read this book...Then explain why.)
Should be FOUR sentences or longer. **WRITE ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER.**

Figure 2

Name:

Homeroom:

Date: **The Language of Bias ____/20**

BIASED _____ can be seen as a _____ or _____.

UNBIASED: Unbiased means that the _____ is a _____ or generally cannot _____ from _____ - to _____.

- **Example (BIASED statement):** Tufts is the best homeroom in 8th grade at YSD.
- **Example (NON-BIASED statement):** Tufts is one of three homerooms of the 8th grade at YSD.

CRITICAL LANGUAGE: Critical language are _____ that _____ or _____ charged. They may show the writer's _____.

Positive	Negative

Example: Stephen F. Austin is a *drunkard*. **Example:** History is the *best* class *ever*.

Guided Practice: Directions: CIRCLE the critical language in the following statements:

1. Native Americans are savages.
2. Ozarka bottled water tastes better than tap water.
3. Rock Band is a lot more fun to play than Guitar Hero.
4. The Lakers probably cheated when they played against the Rockets!
5. Angelica's glasses are cool.
6. Jacob insists that Macs are easier to use than PCs.

7. Cinnamon Toast Crunch is my favorite cereal because it has more sugar than Frosted Flakes.

Independent Practice: Read the passage below and answer the questions.

Background: Noah Smithwick was a Texas settler who was banned from Austin’s colony after being accused of helping with the murder of a government official.

Passage: “*The rude cabins, windowless and floorless, were absolutely devoid [empty] of comfort... there was no poultry, no dairy, no garden, no books, or papers, as nowadays... no schools, no churches – nothing to break the dull monotony [boredom] of their lives, save an occasional wrangle[fight] among the children and the dogs.*”

1. Which of following is NOT a critical piece of language in the passage above?
a) Rude b) Devoid c) Lives d) Dull monotony
e) Wrangle
2. What is the charge on the critical language?
a) Positive b) Negative c) Neutral d) Both A and B
e) Both B and C
3. Is Noah Smithwick biased toward Stephen Austin’s colony? Why or why not?

Create your own! Then circle whether it is a positive or negatively charged biased statement.

Statement:

Circle one: **Positively charged** **Negatively charged**

Create TWO UNBIASED statements:

Annotated Bibliography

Morrison, Toni. "Recitatif." 1983. Web. 08 Aug. 2012.
< linksprogram.gmu.edu/.../Morrison_recitatifessay.doc.pdf>

Recitatif is a short story about the relationship between two girls, and the experiences they have together. The twist of the story is that although we know that the one girl is black and one white, we don't know which is which.

"Discrimination on the menu." From Tolerance.org. 2010. Web. 12 Aug. 2012.
< <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/discrimination-menu-middle-grades>>

This site describes situations in which the media portrays minorities in a different light than they might those in the majority. Instead of using the resources in the text, I chose to use the following video clips instead:

Rapper Drake:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yP-dq8d1mvo> - *At Bar Mitzvah*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R74D6l4a_B4 - *Drake in HYFR (re-bar mitzvah)*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0xW_qqyn2Y - *Drake with Family*

Local Media:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vrfBOqiZeY> - *Anti-violence Rally News Clip*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZrRbDzznpQ> - *Teens attack elderly woman News Clip*

Teacher Resources

Fawcett, L. M., & Garton, A. F. (2005). The Effect Of Peer Collaboration On Children's Problem-Solving Ability. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75(2), 157-169.

McKay, Nellie Y. "Preface to the Volume." *Approaches to Teaching the Novels of Toni Morrison*. Ed. McKay and Kathryn Earle. New York: MLA, 1997. ix-xi.

Mubenga, P. T. (2006). Closing the Achievement Gap between African American Children and their Caucasian Counterparts Using Collaboration Learning Setting.

“Collaborative Learning Structures and Techniques” From Global Development Research Center. 2012. Web. 1 Sep. 2012.

<<http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/methods.html>>