

## **Multicultural Writers Overcoming Obstacles: Literature as Healing Balm**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Life is full of worries, miseries, troubles, problems, wounds and disease, all of which are obstacles to be overcome. Of course we have the bright and happy side of life, too. But for the majority of us, life is not a bed of roses. The success of life lies in changing the bed of thorns to a bed of roses. To borrow Lincoln's words, "We can complain that the rose bush has thorns—or rejoice that the thorn bush has roses." My job as a teacher begins here. I need to teach my students to disregard the thorns in life and celebrate the available roses. To do this noble teaching I need a tool. The tool that I have chosen is four short stories.

I would like to write about the type of students that I have and the kind of life they lead. Understanding the students' background and their individual needs will really help us to do our teaching effectively. We have 96% Hispanic students in our school. Most of them come from lower-middle class families and have had a hard life. Though my 8<sup>th</sup> graders are only 13 or 14, the problems that they face are immense, and that reflects inside the classroom. Instead of finding a solution to their problems, they brood more about their troubles and become even more depressed. Some students tend to be very disruptive in the class to get the attention of others. Instead of solving their problems, they get involved in more problems by their disruptive nature. They take refuge in drugs, alcohol and other illegal and inappropriate activities. When we approach such youngsters with sympathy, we find that their tender hearts are wounded for so many reasons.

I happen to see many students who are victims of broken or unhappy marriages, students who are on the lower steps of the economic ladder, who do not have anybody to guide them in their academic pursuits, who suffer from gang pressures, and who are in possession of drugs. Most of them do not have a kind soul to listen to them. Their parents are very busy trying to earn enough to feed and clothe their big families. Therefore, as a teacher, it is my duty to help my students achieve inner peace. More than teaching them reading and writing, I need to guide them to develop a good personality. I believe that one's personality is developed by good thinking, reading and discussion. So, I try to provide such an atmosphere inside my classroom. At this stage I want to introduce good literature to them. Good literature could be a friend that guides them, a balm that heals them and a light that leads them out of a dark future. Also, good literature in the long run would make them introspective and help them to develop wonderful personalities.

## OVERVIEW OF THE UNIT

This seminar has given me an idea as to what type of literature I could use in my classroom. As I am teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, I have chosen short stories as a means to approach my students. I have seen them showing interest in reading the short stories in our McDougal Littell reader more than any other form of literature. Also, they like reading and analyzing short stories and understanding the literary techniques and devices, all of which will help them increase their score in their board exams. The stories that I have chosen for this unit are “A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor, “Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin, “The Management of Grief” by Bharati Mukherjee and “Barn Burning” by William Faulkner. These short stories will help my students to see life from a different angle, to solve problems that they face, to understand the value of life, and to appreciate cultural diversity. The short stories I have chosen are short, easy to read, and can be discussed within a few class periods. Also, the conflicts in the characters are more or less the conflicts my students face in their own lives.

The title of the unit is *Multicultural Writers Overcoming Obstacles: Literature as Healing Balm*. I have chosen four short stories by four different writers who belong to four different backgrounds. I wanted to show my students that though we all vary in color, race, language and appearance, we all, as human beings, have the same feelings and emotions. As they are living in a country that appreciates cultural diversity, it becomes important for them to know about different cultures and appreciate the ideas, beliefs and values from other cultures. Also, after teaching in an American school for a year, I understand that most of my students are very ignorant of what is happening outside their country. Elsewhere in the world students show a great interest in the lives of other people and other cultures. But this interest is lacking in the group that I teach. So it becomes my duty to create an interest in them to learn more about other cultures.

Journal writing is the best form of writing that a teacher could use in the classroom. Through journal entries, students will express their reaction to the stories: what they felt, what they liked, or what they disliked. These journal entries will be a springboard for the creative and the critical writing assignments. In all four short stories I have chosen, there is suffering and self-healing. There is no external agency to heal them. The remedy lies in *them*. When the characters realize their healing power, they get cured of their problems easily. Therefore, I have chosen short stories from different cultural backgrounds to show how people in different parts of the world overcome obstacles.

I am planning to teach the unit for four weeks, discussing one story per week. I will begin by having them write an essay about an obstacle they faced recently and how they crossed it. This will bring them closer to the unit topic, and then I will slowly introduce them to the short stories. We will read “A Good Man is Hard to Find” in the first week. I will read the story aloud to the class and then follow up with whole class discussions. The next week, we will read “Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin. This time I will let one student read it aloud, while the others listen, and then we will have a discussion. The

third week we will read “The Management of Grief” by Bharati Mukherjee. This time students will be arranged into groups of three, and they will read the story as a group. Then they will come back for class discussion. In the last week, we will be reading “Barn Burning.” This time it will be a silent, individual reading by the class, and then they will come back for group discussion.

During the four weeks of teaching this unit, the students will be writing journal entries, writing creative and critical writing assignments, role playing and completing various forms of artistic expressions and bulletin board projects.

## **THE LITERATURE TO BE STUDIED**

### **“A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor**

Before starting this story, I will take my students to the library and ask them to write a research report about the author’s life and her works. When the report is done, we will discuss Flannery O’Connor’s life. O’Connor faced a lot of problems in life. Mary Flannery O’Connor was born in 1925. Her father was Edward F. and her mother was Regina C. O’Connor. When she was 16 she lost her dad who died due to a disease called Lupus. At the age of 26 Mary was also afflicted by the same disease Lupus. But despite that, she wrote two novels and 32 short stories. She died at a very early age of 39.

By talking about her background with the students, I will emphasize how the writer was able to overcome all the obstacles she faced in her life. She lost her father when she most needed him. She was afflicted by a disease, but that didn’t prevent her from enjoying her career. She found healing through her writing. She did not escape from reality: she faced it. Though her life was short, she made it more meaningful through her great works. From what I observed in my students’ lives, those who suffer think that they are the only ones who face problems. But, when I introduce my students to the background of people like O’Connor, they will be able to put their suffering in perspective.

Next, I will read the story aloud to the class and then discuss it with my students. The story begins with the typical nuclear family being challenged by the grandmother who doesn’t want to take the vacation to Florida. She has read about a crazed killer named the Misfit. He is on the run, heading for Florida. Unfortunately, she is ignored by every member of the family except for the little girl, June Star, who very easily understands her grandmother’s nature. The grandmother is constantly trying to direct the trip and directs them into a deserted road, where they have an accident, when her cat jumps out of the basket. At that time they are surrounded by some men who had some evil intentions. The grandmother’s gabby nature leads to the doom of the family. She identifies that one of the men in the group is the Misfit, and she says it aloud. The Misfit has to kill all of them because she identifies him. So he takes them one by one to the nearby grove and shoots them. First he takes her son and kills him. Next, he takes the daughter-in-law and the kids

and shoots them. Finally, he kills the grandmother while she is trying to safeguard herself by calling him her son.

On the superficial level, this looks like a normal story with a great deal of violence. But Flannery O'Connor brings in the theme of the dysfunctional family and the role of Christianity. In the beginning, we see that the parents pay very little attention to the grandmother, and when they do, they are often very rude. The children are also very rude, and they lack discipline. When the grandma talks about the secret panel, the kids want to go there. When Bailey did not want to take them, they act pretty bad and finally Bailey has to yield. This decision of Bailey leads to the destruction of the whole family. The children seem to have inherited this attitude from the grandma. The grandma herself lacks discipline. When the children want to go to Florida, she diverts everybody by proposing a trip to Tennessee. When Bailey did not want her to bring her pet cat, she secretly brings him in the car and thus becomes responsible for the accident. When she sees the Misfit, she identifies him and says that aloud, thus bringing ruin to all their lives. When she talks with the Misfit she poses like a pious woman. But in actuality she is not. She keeps on praising the Misfit as a good man of noble birth. She urges him to pray for salvation. But she does all this with the hope that the Misfit would spare her life. From the beginning we see that the grandmother is selfish, gabby, lacking discipline and has a lot of other negative traits.

“A Good Man is Hard to Find” is about contemporary society that is drastically changing for the worse. I have chosen this story to discuss the deteriorating family values, respect for elders, and faith in God, which is lacking in youngsters today. Most of the youngsters commit crimes without being aware that they are committing a crime. This is because of the change in the moral values and lack of proper role models. By using this story, I am going to discuss the deteriorating moral values and stress the importance of faith in God. If someone had taught the Misfit all of these, he wouldn't have been a Misfit. He would have been a respected citizen. Also I have a few students who are really very gabby and they fail to understand that their gabby nature is unbearable for people around them, most of the time. I will use this story to highlight the importance of speaking less and speaking the right things at the right time. Also most of my students lack respect to elders and they lack discipline. This story will help me to discuss how one can ruin his life and also the life of people around him if he is not self disciplined. I will also stress the power of prayer and prayer as a healer. There is a wonderful moral in the story: appearance is deceptive. I will stress this idea by emphasizing the two characters, the grandmother and the Misfit.

After the discussion is over, the students will be asked to write a journal entry about the important characters in the story, like the grandmother, the Misfit, the grandmother's son and his wife. Students will compare these characters with somebody they know in real life. This activity will help the students as they try to connect literature to their real life. We would complete this story in approximately one week.

## **“Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin**

James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues” begins with the arrest of Sonny in a raid for peddling and using heroine. Sonny’s brother, a respectable math teacher gets to know the arrest of his brother in the paper, on his way to work. He was shell-shocked after reading the news. Baldwin portrays the brother’s feelings in the following lines.

It was not to be believed and I kept telling myself that, as I walked from the subway station to the high school. And at the same time I couldn’t doubt it. I was scared, scared for Sonny. He became real to me again. A great block of ice got settled in my belly and kept melting there slowly all day long, while I taught my classes algebra. It was a special kind of ice. It kept melting, sending trickles of ice water all up and down my veins, but it never got less . . . (Baldwin 1)

The brother did not make any attempt to contact Sonny. He did not try to defend him nor did he try to find out the cause for Sonny’s addiction to heroine. He did not do anything to help his brother in distress. In fact, he failed to do his duty as a brother. But at one point of his life when he lost his daughter Gracie, he realizes that his own brother is the only one who could understand and participate in his grief. He writes a letter to Sonny and he gets a reply. From then on he makes to attempt to understand Sonny and to help him. Sonny had a lot of anger and pain in him and that is why he sought drugs. When drugs could not reduce his pain he begins to search for other healing process. He succeeds and finds music as a healer. The deeper he gets involved in the music the lesser he feels his pain.

His brother does not approve of his involvement in music. But one day he happened to go to the jazz club with Sonny. This visit made him view his brother in a different perspective. He was surprised to see Sonny’s influence with his other music friends. They adore him and respect him. They are ardent fans to his music. They welcomed Sonny’s brother and showed him a lot of respect. At this stage his brother understood that all the respect that he received is because he was Sonny’s brother. He also understood Sonny has a world of his own.

It turned out that everyone at the bar knew Sonny, or almost everyone; some were musicians, working there, or nearby, or not working, some were simply hangers-on, and some were there to hear Sonny play. I was introduced to all of them and they were all very polite to me. Yet it was clear that, for them, I was only Sonny’s brother. Here, I was in Sonny’s world. Or rather: his kingdom. Here, it was not even a question that his veins bore royal blood. (Baldwin 23)

Sonny’s friend Creole was helping him to get involved deeper and deeper in his music. He wanted Sonny “to leave the shore line and strike out for the deep water”

(Baldwin 24). Finally, Sonny soars high and enchants everybody with his music. Everybody was spellbound.

They all gathered around Sonny and Sonny played. Every now and again one of them seemed to say, amen. Sonny's fingers filled the air with life, his life. But that life contained so many others. And Sonny went all the way back . . . [and] began to make it his. It was very beautiful because it wasn't hurried and it was no longer a lament (Baldwin 26).

At this stage, his brother understands Sonny and feels glad that Sonny is able to heal himself through his music. He not only heals himself but he was also a healer to many wounded souls.

Most of my students are like Sonny in many ways. They all have real talents, knowledge and intelligence. But they do not have anybody to recognize or appreciate their talents. The reason for this is often that the parents are very poor and they have to toil all day. They cannot take time for their kids, even if they would like to devote time. Most of my students' parents are not educated, and so they do not have the capacity to understand their kids' needs. So the kids might feel left out or feel insecure. Some kids try drugs or get addicted to drinking or smoking. Therefore, after reading the story we will have a brainstorming and writing session as to why Sonny used drugs, how he came out of it, how he healed himself, and what are the other positive ways of healing one's wounds. By these thought-provoking questions, students would know how to react positively when they face a problem. Also, they will learn that taking refuge in drugs and alcohol is only temporarily escaping from problems and not a final solution to their problems. By reading this story "Sonny's Blues" they might tend to be like Sonny's brother. Though they may not have anybody to support them, they might support their siblings. Through this wonderful piece of literature, they might learn to heal somebody's wounds. I would stress the fact that by diverting ourselves to something we are interested in, we will be able to forget our problems and feel relaxed. I would also stress that reading good literature is one such method of working through one's problems. Good books can also be good healers.

### **"The Management of Grief" by Bharati Mukherjee**

The next short story that I plan to discuss in the third week with my students is Bharati Mukherjee's short story, "The Management of Grief." I will split the class into small groups of three members each. Each group will read the story and the author's background on the first day and get ready for a whole group discussion in the next period. This story is about the effects of the 1985 Air India bombing on Toronto's East Indian community and specifically on the central character Mrs. Shaila Bhave, who loses her husband and two sons in the terrorist act. The narrator appears to be coping well with the tragedy and she is asked by a government social worker, Judith Templeton, to help as an intermediary or, in official Ontario Ministry of Citizenship terms, a "Cultural

Interpreter.” Shaila however is the “dislocated mourner” who must manage her own grief and that of others.

In this story we see four people who are greatly affected by the tragedy and how they find their own way of healing. Kusum, one of the victims, finds healing in returning back to India and spending the rest of her life in an ashram. She finds solace in spirituality. She is a typical representative of Indian women. Most of the Indian women adopt this method. When they go through terrible suffering they tend to turn their attention to spirituality. They do not want to fight back and straighten out their problems. Instead, they renounce things and tend to live the life of an ascetic. This has something to do with culture. In India a spiritual woman is respected, whereas, a powerful woman is regarded as a bully. Kusum’s daughter, Pam, finds healing in a different way. Pam migrates to California seeking riches and leisure. She ends up with a job in a department store, “giving make-up hints to Indian and Oriental girls,” presumably on how to pass as Westerner, as she tries to do (Mukherjee 711). Another character, Dr. Ranganathan, heals himself in a different way. In the beginning he tries to live with the memories of his beloved wife in the same house where they lived together. This is a typical Indian way of healing. But her memories haunted him, and so he tried to heal himself in a different way. Therefore, he moved all the way to Texas to start a new life once again.

But the narrator Shaila Bhave undergoes healing in a different way. She does not return to India to live on an ashram as her friend Kusum does. She does not hide from the past as her friend Dr. Ranganathan. She does not attempt to be absorbed into Western culture like Pam. Rather; Shaila comes to terms with her grief, accepting her position as hybrid. Her ghosts fade, but she will not forget them. Nor will she try to deny them.

This story is particularly appropriate for my study because of the very issues of cultural translations discussed here. Shaila, the story’s protagonist, acts as a ‘Cultural translator’ between various members of Toronto’s Indian community and the government of Ontario. I expect my students to act as translators between the cultures of the story and their own cultural background. I have mentioned earlier that most of my students are Mexican Americans, but they like to project themselves as Americans. They hesitate to talk about their culture. They are not proud of their country; instead they feel inferior to call themselves as Mexicans. Maybe they are uncomfortable to expose themselves as citizens of an economically disadvantaged country. I strongly believe that we should be proud of our cultural heritage. Also, I find that many of my students are suffering from unexpected tragedies that have changed the entire course of their lives. Thousands of students must have lost their loved ones during the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack. Also, the recent Columbia tragedy really touched my heart. It is a great blessing to be proud children of such ambitious and adventurous parents, but to lose them forever is an inconsolable tragedy. I hope to use the stories to talk to my students about how to cope with such tragedies. I will discuss the four victims in the story and how they managed their grief. I will ask my students probing questions: Who was able to manage their grief well? Why? I will also ask them if they were to face similar tragedies, would they run

away, hide themselves from reality, or accept reality and face it. It is easier said than done. But even if one of my students benefits from such probing, then my effort is a success.

At this stage I will ask my students to take up an interview with one or two persons in their community who were affected by such tragedies and present a report about their progress. They need to find out how they were affected and how they have healed themselves. This activity of interviewing somebody from their real life will give them first-hand experience of coping with tragedies.

Most of my students have many such tragedies in their lives. I recall a girl whose father was sent to jail for some reason. I also came to know that he did that for the sake of the family. He earned money to help his family by doing something illegal. That must have affected the girl very much, for she became very disruptive in class. I feel that she was looking for healing in her disruptive behavior. If such students get to read this short story they would understand that they could heal their wounds in other more socially acceptable ways. They need not resort to disruptive ways, which bring more trouble. The disruptive student was eventually sent to Character Education Program (CEP). But I have a feeling that this story will help many more like her in my class.

### **“Barn Burning” by William Faulkner**

During the fourth week we will take up the story “Barn Burning” by William Faulkner. As a prereading activity, students will watch the movie “Barn Burning” and also read about the author and his background. In the following class period, they would do a silent reading of the story and then assemble for a group discussion. The content of the story is as follows.

“Barn Burning” is about a young boy named Sarty, who is the son of sharecroppers in the old south, and his feelings and emotions concerning his father. In it Faulkner tells about the Snopes family. Ab Snopes is a poor sharecropper and one time horse thief who take out his frustrations against the post civil war aristocracy by burning barns. His son Sarty detests his father’s destructiveness. Ultimately, Sarty has to make a choice between family loyalty and fundamental morality.

Sarty’s family are itinerant farmers, but they move around even more often than is typical because of his father’s habit of burning something down every time he gets angry. Sarty realizes that there is something deeply psychologically wrong with his father, but he underestimates his father’s danger. When they arrive at the beautiful plantation of Major de Spain, therefore, Sarty feels the de Spains are safe:

People whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity are behind his touch, he’s no more to them than a buzzing wasp: capable of stinging for a little moment but that’s all; the spell of this peace and dignity rendering

even the barns and stable and cribs which belong to it impervious to the puny flames he might contrive (Faulkner).

Sarty does not know that his father can just as easily bring down a big plantation as a cow barn.

I think a major plot in this story is the coming of age of this young boy. As the story begins, he is at his father's trial for having a Negro burn another man's barn down. The boy sympathetically defends his father saying, "Why should not a man who had not only seen the waste and extravagance of war, but who had in his blood an inherent voracious prodigality with material not his own, have burned everything in sight?" (Faulkner). This comment tries to imply that Abner is not acting out of his own rage but acting out from the effects of being in war. When confronting his son as to whether he would testify against his father Snopes remarks, "You got to learn to stick to your own blood or you aren't going to have any blood to stick to you," (Faulkner) Seeing that his son is young and dependent on him, Snopes tries to convince his son that his actions should never be questioned by anyone in the family.

Finding new work and trouble with Mr. De Spain, the young boy hopes that his father will not retaliate because of the fine placed on him for ruining De Spain's rug. The boy says, "Maybe this is the end of it. Maybe even that twenty bushels that seems hard to have to pay for just a rug will be cheap price for him to stop forever and always from being what he used to be" (Faulkner). The young boy is the only one in the story who disapproves of his father's behavior. His mother and Aunt are too afraid of him to react. For this reason, when the boy tries to talk his father out of burning De Spain's barn, Abner threatens his wife to restrain the young boy. With help from his Aunt, the boy escapes and runs away. Interestingly, the young boy decides to warn De Spain of his father's intents. Much of the boy's praise or respect for his father comes from Abner's experiences in war. In one of his last thoughts he says, "Father. My father, He was brave. He was! He was in the war" (Faulkner). The boy condones his father's actions claiming that they are not of his will but have been part of his father since the war. By choosing to run away from his family, the young boy gives up his family, his blood, and now must start his new life and find his identity, or at least something to eat the next day.

At the story's beginning, when Sarty is ready to testify to his father's innocence, he plans to support his father because a son's job is to stick to his father. At the story's end, he warns Major de Spain that his father is about to burn down his beautiful plantation, even though he knows that this will bring his family down once and for all. Sarty knows that his betrayal of his father means he will never be able to go home again. This is heavy knowledge for a boy—but Sarty is able to do it because he now sees that he is not his father, and the route he wants to travel in the world is nothing like his father's path.

"The nature of the relationship between father and son in William Faulkner's 'Barn Burning' is displayed in the first paragraph of the story. In general, a father-son

relationship would be built on genuine respect, love, loyalty, and admiration. These building blocks are absent in Abner and Sarty Snopes' relationship. Sarty's loyalty to his father comes from a long-time fear of the consequences of not obeying his father's commands" (*Abner and Sarty Snopes*).

I selected this story to be read in the class because during the teen years many of the students experience the same type of conflict. They want to be somebody, want to learn something that interests them, but their parents expect something else from them. Fearing their parents, they choose something to please their parents. There comes the generation gap or lack of understanding. This story will help them to identify themselves with the protagonist and also help them to find solutions for their own problems. Also most of my students do not have proper role models at home. They have fathers who are involved in gangs, commit crimes, and go to jail. I have a student in my class who writes negative comments about his father whenever he writes a self-expressive essay or a journal. I could identify this student with the boy Sarty in the story. When he cannot say what he feels about his father directly to him, he finds healing in expressing it in his writings. Like the boy in the story he too is scared to talk about this matter to his father. Maybe when he grows up, he will find courage to question or challenge his father.

After discussing the story the students will draw some sketches related to the story. I have students who are interested in drawing and painting. So the activity for this story would be drawings related to the story and the theme would be barn burning. I would put up their works on the bulletin board. As this is the last activity related to my unit I have proposed a very light activity, but they will enjoy doing this.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson Plan 1: "A Good Man Is Hard To Find"**

**Objectives:** ELAR 8.1 a and b.  
The students use a variety of word recognition strategies.  
The students read with fluency and understanding in the text's at appropriate difficulty level.  
ELAW 8.2 a and h.  
Students write for personal expressions and reflections.  
Interprets and evaluates written texts and connect to his or her own experiences, ideas and values.  
Identifies conflicts and how they are addressed and resolved.

#### ***Class Activity:***

The first activity in teaching this unit will be doing research about the author and her works in the library. Students will read about the author's background and her works and they will write a research report. When they come back to class we will have a whole

class discussion about their findings regarding the author's background and her works. This background knowledge will prepare them for the story they will be reading.

In the next class period they will write an essay about the following topic. "An obstacle I faced recently and how I crossed it" This would be a pre-reading activity. When the students can write about an obstacle in their life and how they crossed it, they will definitely be able to identify the obstacles faced by the characters in the short stories they will be reading. While students pre-write they should be aware of the following things:

- The beginning introduces the experiences. It makes the reader want to know more about what happened.
- The middle part gives details about what happened first, second, third and so on. It tells who, what, when, where, why and how.
- The ending tells why the experience was important in your life.

While writing this essay, students should bear in mind that narratives are chronologically organized. Here is a list of linking words that show time. Students should use at least a few of these linking words in their essay at the appropriate places.

about	during	yesterday	until	finally
after	first	meanwhile	next	then
at	second	today	soon	as soon as
before	third	tomorrow	later	when

In the following class period the students will listen to the short story when the teacher reads it aloud to the class. There will be discussions about word meanings, characterization, student's opinion about the story etc. Students will point out the difficult words, try to find out the meaning using context clues, and also will try making different sentences using those difficult words. Finally students will write a journal about one important character in the story that impressed them. Exactly in one weeks time students will complete reading the story.

***Assessment:***

Students will be assessed for the five-paragraph essay "An obstacle I faced and how I crossed it." The following assessment rubric will be used in class.

**STIMULATING IDEAS**

The narrative...

- focuses on a specific experience or event.
- contains specific details and dialogue.
- makes readers want to know what happens next

#### LOGICAL ORGANIZATION

- includes a clear beginning that pulls readers into narrative.
- presents ideas chronologically.

#### ENGAGING VOICE.

- shows that the writer is truly interested in the subject.

#### ORIGINAL WORD CHOICE.

- contains specific verbs.

#### EFFECTIVE SENTENCE STYLE.

- flows smoothly from one idea to the next.

#### CORRECT, ACCURATE COPY

- follows the basic rules of writing
- uses the form suggested by the teacher.

### **Lesson Plan 2: “Sonny’s Blues”**

**Objectives:** ELAR 8.3 a, b and d.

The students expand vocabulary using a variety of methods and strategies.

The students use structural analysis to identify words and determine their meanings.

The student distinguishes between connotative and denotative meaning.

ELAW 8.5 a and b.

Students generate ideas and plans for writing.

Uses and expands ideas and information from a sources other than personal experiences.

Analyses the purpose for which the text is written.

Analyses relevance of setting and time frame to the text’s meaning.

Uses elements of the texts to defend their own responses and interpretations.

Generates ideas and plans for writing by using prewriting strategies.

Employs literary devices to enhance style and voice.

#### **Class Activity:**

During the second week we would read “Sonny’s Blues” in class. This time I would ask a student to read the story aloud. As and when the story is read we will have whole class discussion. After completing the story I would brain storm them with the following questions and they would write out the answers.

- Why did Sonny become addicted to drugs?
- How did he come out of it?
- How did he heal himself?
- What are the other positive ways of healing?
- What would you do if you were in Sonny’s position?

After students write their answers they would take turns and read aloud their writing to the class. This story gives the teacher the opportunity to talk about drugs and its harmful effects. We will have discussion in class regarding the negative effects of using drugs. Students will be made to write posters and slogans that send messages of preventing the use of drugs. Finally students will be asked to write a research report on the negative impacts of using drugs.

A report shares information about a particular topic. Like all other types of writing, a report has a beginning, middle and an ending.

The beginning gets readers' attention, names the topic and states the focus.

The middle part includes the main ideas and details that support the focus.

The ending sums up what the writer learned.

The following are a list of link words and phrases that are often used as linking words in reports.

again	and	for instance	as well as
also	besides	next	along with
another	for example	finally	in addition

Students will be assessed for the research report. The following rubric will help the students to understand the traits found in effective report writing. Also the students will use it as a final checklist for their completed writing. The following assessment rubric will be used in class.

#### STIMULATING IDEAS

The report...

- shares information about an interesting topic.
- effectively supports the focus, or main points, about the topic.
- keeps the reader's interest.

#### LOGICAL ORGANIZATION

- includes a clearly developed beginning, middle, and ending.
- presents supporting information's organized according to time or importance.

#### ENGAGING VOICE

- shows that the writer is truly interested in the subject.

#### ORIGINAL WORD CHOICE

- explains or defines any unfamiliar terms.
- includes specific nouns and verbs.

#### EFFECTIVE SENTENCE STYLE.

- flows smoothly from one idea to the next.

## CORRECT, ACCURATE COPY

- follows the basic rules of writing.
- uses the form suggested by the teacher.

### **Lesson Plan 3: “The Management of Grief”**

- Objectives:** ELAR 8.7 a, b and c.  
The students compare text events with his or her own and other readers’ experiences.  
The students determine distinctive and common characteristics of culture through wide reading.  
The students articulate and discuss themes and connection that cross cultures.  
ELAW 8.7 c and d.  
Students write to share knowledge of self, once own culture and the shared culture.  
Identifies challenges faced by published authors and strategies they use to compose various types of text.

#### ***Class Activity:***

Students read the story in a group. They look for cultural elements in the story when they read. They also share about their culture and the distinctive characteristics through their discussion. Next we will have a whole class discussion about the story. During this whole class discussion I will discuss some of the cultural aspects in the story. As I belong to the same cultural background, I can provide firsthand information regarding the family system, the Zamindari system, the status of women in the Hindu culture, man women relationship in the Hindu culture and also about the way widows are treated in India. Also I will take this teaching time as an opportunity to talk about Indian Spirituality, and the rich and varied heritage of India. Also students will interview another person in the class from a different cultural background and find out how he or she would react if faced with the similar tragedy they find in the book. As enrichment activity students will dramatize the story and will enact it in class. Each student will take up the role of a character from the story and will perform the play wearing typical Indian costumes. That will be an interesting activity for students to get to know about the dress habits and way of living of people belonging to another culture. Students will be assessed for this story in the form of an oral quiz.

### **Lesson Plan 4: “Barn Burning”**

- Objectives:** ELAR 8.5 d, f and h.  
The students summarize the text for a variety of purposes.  
The students draw inferences from a text.  
The students demonstrate skill in comprehension through his or her response to a variety of questioning strategies.

***Class Activity:***

Students read the story silently on their own. Then they join for a whole class discussion. Next they take up drawing or painting activity related to this story. As most of my students are kinesthetic learners they will enjoy this activity. The drawings and paintings of the students would be displayed on the bulletin board. The third activity would be a comparative study on “Barn Burning” and “Across Five Aprils” by Irene Hunt. “Across Five Aprils” is a prescribed novel for grade 8. Students would compare the character Jethro from this novel and the boy Sarty in “Barn Burning.” The stories have almost the same setting; Jethro’s character is set during civil war and Sarty’s character is set 30 years after the civil war. Both are about the coming of age of two boys. Both of them have heroic qualities at such a young age. Students would put down their comparisons in the form of a Venn diagram. Then they would develop their ideas into a three-paragraph essay. This would be the final activity for the unit. Students would be assessed on the three-paragraph essay based on the above-mentioned rubric.

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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A website that is helpful in understanding the Snopes’ relationship in Faulkner’s story.

Babel, Isaac. “Sonny’s Blues.” *You’ve Got to Read This: Contemporary American Writers Introduce Stories That Held Them in Awe*. Ron Hansen and Jim Shepard, eds. New York: HarperPerennial, 1994.

Bernardo, Karen. *Flannery O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find.”* Storybites. June 2003. <<http://www.storybites.com/oconnorgoodman.htm>>.

This is a brief article discussing how O’Connor’s apocalyptic fiction attempts to show her readers their limitless need for God’s mercy.

Bradford, M. E. “Family and Community in Faulkner’s ‘Barn Burning.’” *The Southern Review* v. 17, no. 2. April. 1981: 332-39.

Highlights Faulkner’s tremendous importance as an interpreter of history—and not just southern or American history. Locate the text’s place in Faulkner’s career, drawing parallels between the character’s concerns and the way those issues touched Faulkner as well. Explain how Faulkner explored and exploded stereotypes, of southerners, African Americans, and women.

Brown, William. 1996. *Literary Analysis: “A Good Man is Hard to Find.”* June 2003. <<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~daniel/amlit/reader/south/browngood.html>>.

Brinkmeyer, Robert H, Jr. *The Art and Vision of Flannery O’Connor*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989.

The best writing and focus of this fine book on Flannery O'Connor is to be found in Chapters 3 and 4, which deal, respectively, with her stories and novels. In order to concentrate upon specifics, Brinkmeyer has wisely limited his commentary to four stories and two novels, an adequate sampling to manifest the salient narrative traits of O'Connor.

Carol Oates, Joyce. "The Management of Grief." *The Oxford Book of American Stories* Oxford University Press, 1992.

This is a story about the effects of the 1985 Air India bombing of Toronto's East Indian community and specifically about a lady who loses her husband and two sons in the terrorist act.

Carver, Raymond and Jenks, Tom. "A Good Man is Hard to Find." *American Short Story Master Pieces*. New York : Delacortore Press, 1987.

This short story is used as a tool to convert the unbelieving or unwilling to at least take a look at the old ways of Christian faith.

Carver, Raymond and Jenks, Tom. "Sonny's Blues." *American Short Story Master Pieces*. New York : Delacortore Press, 1987.

This story is about the past and present lives of two brothers who had different life choices.

Faulkner, William. "Barn Burning." RajuAbju, Inc. June 2003. <<http://www.rajuabju.com/literature/barnburning.htm>>.

This story is set 30 years after the end of civil war, most likely in the deep South. This story focuses on two members of the Snopes family.

Friedman, Melvin J. and Clark, Beverly Lyon. *Critical Essays on Flannery O'Connor*. Boston, MA: G.K. Hall & Co. 1985.

The writer speaks about Flannery O'Connor and three aspects of her writing that are usually brought up in relation to the author herself: her Catholicism, the fact that she was a Southern author writing about racial issues, and her exceptional style of narrative involving the subtle use of symbols and metaphors to bring readers to an understanding of many levels of action/reaction/interaction.

Fowler, Virginia C. "Faulkner's 'Barn Burning': Sarty's Conflict Reconsidered." *College*

*Language Association Journal* 24.4 (June 1981): 513-22.

Sarty's desire to break away from the oppressive conditions of his family life and his transformation in barn burning is discussed in detail in this journal.

Franklin, Phyllis. "Sarty Snopes and 'Barn Burning.'" *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal Of Southern Culture* 21 (1968): 189-93.

The writer discusses about the choice that Sarty has to make in the end between “right and wrong,” between “peace and dignity” represented by the de Spains with the squalor and misery of the Snopes family.

Galloway, Patrick. “The Dark Side of the Cross: Flannery O’ Connor’s Short Fiction.” June 2003. <<http://www.cyberpat.com/essays/flan.html>>  
This website provides information about Flannery O’ Connor and her life history.

Hancock, Geoff. “An Interview with Bharati Mukherjee.” *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 59 (May 1987).

Mukherjee’s ease with discovering her identity as a mainstream American, her skill with the dialogues and incidents familiar to the dominant society, her refusal to be marginalized, and her absolute mastery of English are all revealed through this lively interview.

Rustomji, Roshni, ed. “South Asian Women Writers, The Immigrant Experience.” *Journal of South Asian Literature*: (Winter-Spring 1986): 2

Mukherjee identifies herself very strongly as an American writer writing about twentieth-century Americans. Although most of her stories are about South Asian-Americans (South Asia in the contemporary geopolitical arena usually consists of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives Islands), she sees herself as being primarily influenced by, as well as being part of, the tradition of Euro-American writers. In a brief interview published in the November, 1993 issue of San Francisco Focus in which she discusses her novel

Skaggs, Merrill Maguire. “Story and Film in ‘Barn Burning’: The Difference a Camera Makes.” *Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South* 21.2 (Winter 1983): 5-15.

This journal is about the difference between what is said in the story and how it is filmed.

Vignisson, Runar. “Bharati Mukherjee: An Interview.” *SPAN: Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (SPAN)* 34-35 (1992-1993).

The complex journey of immigration and the hardships immigrants undergo are common themes in Bharati Mukherjee’s writings. The author, an immigrant herself, tries to show the darker side of immigration, especially for Hindu women, that is not often portrayed in other immigrant narratives.

Zender, Karl F. “Character and Symbol in ‘Barn Burning.’” *College Literature* 16.1 (Winter 1989): 48-59.

Traditionally, critics approach Faulkner from a biographical perspective, a geographic/historical perspective, or a psychological perspective. In this article the writer recognizes that Faulkner’s work parallels important spiritual issues.