

**Reflecting and Writing for Environmental Change:
Changing Adolescent Attitudes on the Environment with Literature**

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Man's attitude toward nature is today critically important simply because we have now acquired a fateful power to alter and destroy nature. But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself... [We are] challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves.

-Rachel Carson, National Resources
Defense Council, (NRDC)
The Story of Silent Spring

INTRODUCTION

Many people do not appreciate the natural environment in which they live. Often, nature and its inhabitants are taken for granted, especially in urban settings. With the busy shuffle of everyday life, how often do we take time to point things out, such as the woodpecker that comes through our neighborhood around the same time every year? Do we notice that lilies are growing wild in the vacant lot down the street? What kind of tree is that growing in Mrs. Phillip's yard? Why are there more butterflies around Mrs. Toliver's house? More often than not we overlook the simple treasures right in front of us. How many children today actually go to "grandma's house" and help work in her garden?

I remember going to my grandparents' house and helping my grandmother plant flowers or pull weeds out of the flower beds or from in between the neatly planted rows of vegetables. I remember the strawberries growing along the fence. I watched intently as she would cut fresh roses to bring in and put on the dining room table. The memory of my grandparent's house brought feelings of springtime, lazy days of summer, and happiness. I also remember curling up on the oversized patio chairs in the "sunroom" with a good book when it was too hot to venture out doors. This room had windows down the entire west and north sides. The west side looked out on to part of the backyard and over into a large park. The north side was where the vegetables and fruits were growing. Flowers were all around. As I think back, those childhood experiences color so much of my perception today. It almost gives a magical feeling, something surreal, to things and feelings that stories are made of.

My grandfather used to go fishing every chance he could. Sometimes he would take my brothers with him on the boat. When they would return, I couldn't wait to see what they caught and to hear their fish tales. I longed to go on the boat with them. I never got a

chance, but as I got older, I learned to fish, and now I go every chance I get! I've learned more about wind direction, tidal movement, and patterns of game fish. For example, I have learned about the annual flounder "run" that occurs when the inshore waters of the bay begin to cool and the flounder migrate to the warmer waters of the Gulf of Mexico. All of these hobbies and interests stem from childhood experiences.

I have not grown or cut any fresh roses for many years now, but the memory of doing so has stayed with me in ways I've never imagined. Those childhood experiences have affected things that I do today. I love everything about the great outdoors! I find beauty and interest in flowers, trees, clouds, and stars. I especially love the ocean and any water related activities. I try to make the most of every opportunity I receive to get outside and experience something new. Not only do I enjoy it, but I obtain knowledge of things that I may have never come across in a classroom. If I had been exposed to even more activities as a child, I probably would have chosen a career that was geared toward working with plant or marine life.

I want my students to have a variety of experiences or at least exposure to different activities to broaden their frame of reference. Many of my students do not receive opportunities to experience a variety of settings and activities. They live and operate in a closed environment. Offering opportunities for them to participate and view things from a different perspective may open doors for future learning. Whether there are field trips to the coast or to the museums or not, students can still expand their experiences through literature and their daily contacts. I want them to understand the power of the written word. Through books the world is at your fingertips. If you can't get to Egypt to see the Great Pyramids, you can certainly research, read, and learn about them until you do make it there!

This unit is structured to vary experiences in and out of the classroom. The intention is to cultivate an inner desire to learn and experience more about nature and how it affects our communities and lives. Students will recognize the importance of transferring information. More precisely, studying nature in the language arts classroom can reinforce that English Language Arts skills are needed and used across the curriculum as well as experiencing science-related subject matter outside of science class. Students will be able to "experience" nature, discuss it, reflect on it, research it, and write about it. Students will build an awareness of nature and study the effects it has on our society, literature and art.

The premise for this theme is that if we stop and "smell the roses," we might be more inclined to take care of them. By incorporating this respect and appreciation for nature with language arts skills, we can achieve many positive results. We can get students interested in various aspects of writing, offer opportunities for interdisciplinary units, get students involved in their community, and foster stewardship of our environment.

The student population that I teach is generally inner-city youth. Many students are considered “at-risk.” The majority of my students are in single parent homes. A large number of students live in apartments and do not have yards or access to outdoor activities other than the activities at school such as marching band, track, football, and baseball. Many of them do not get to travel or vacation and experience different surroundings. Activities such as camping, hiking, fishing, or even belonging to groups such as girl/boy scouts are not activities that many get or choose to participate. Outdoor activities are not a priority. Exercises in this unit will take them outside and ideally peak lifelong interests.

Most students stated that they did not know one type of tree, flower, cloud, or bird from the other and hadn’t considered it. Basic observation and identification will be used easily as a spring board for writing activities that include higher level thinking skills. Students will use writing as a tool for learning. They will use writing to formulate questions, refine topics, and clarify ideas. They will also use writing to discover, organize, and support what is known and what needs to be learned about a topic (Project CLEAR Curriculum).

As an English teacher, I see the students getting restless, looking out of the window instead of paying attention, wanting to be outside. I want them to stay focused and work on their ELA skills. Why can’t we do both? The fact is that we can! By using different media and settings I hope to keep the students interested and motivated. For example, some classes will be held in the courtyard where we have an existing habitat which will be great for interdisciplinary lessons and for the guided practice for the basic identification lesson. Our school habitat is approximately four years old. Mr. Anthony Church along with his students created the Yates Nature Center. Teachers from several school districts, biologists from across Texas, and a director from the National Parks and Wild Life Federation based in Austin are just a few who have visited our school habitat. Mr. Church gave several reasons for embarking on the journey to build a habitat at Yates High School. He compared the physical appearance of many inner city schools to penal institutions and noted that this could have an effect on behavior. He stated that landscaping would enhance the immediate surrounding. Brightly colored flowers that attract bees, butterflies and other creatures of nature would encourage the idea that great minds are molded here with love and appreciation for nature, life, and beauty. (Church)

Other assignments will require some observation and collection that students can do on their own. Of course, there will be the research assignments that lead us to the library and the Internet. Classroom assignments and discussions will spark the need for research. Students will be required to hold informed discussions on topics they arrive at through the circle of classroom assignments, discussions, and research. More information may raise more questions, which leads to more research and inferences can be made and researched again for evidence.

UNIT BACKGROUND

As stated earlier, this unit will develop student's writing skills, higher level thinking skills, and raise their awareness and appreciation of the environment. The unit will include studies of Rachel Carson, writer, scientist, and ecologist; Robert Frost, famous American poet, known for depicting nature and use of colloquial American English, and a short story by Joan Aiken included in the students' literature book. The short story will be used to get students started and to get them thinking about what the world would be like without sunlight. Identification lessons will take the students outside to the school habitat and hopefully further into the community. The observation and identification lesson will include a hands-on activity using foreign currency. This activity will get the students accustomed to observing, noting differences, categorizing, etc. Afterwards, a few pictures of birds will be shown, along with an overview of how field guides are set up, in order to get students started. This lesson will be explained later in more detail. Next, reading about Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring* should stir a sense of seriousness and reality of caring for our environment. Also, students will study the use of allusions, alliteration and other literary techniques in Carson's writing. Students will see how disciplines are interrelated. Research, discussions, and solutions/projects should spring from this part of the unit. Studying Robert Frost and his poems along with other authors of the students' choosing will tie the unit back to literature and the arts. Rachel Carson's work truly embodies ecology and literature. It is scientific in nature as well as a great work of literature.

The unit will begin with a short story by Joan Aiken, "Searching for Summer." This story begins some unspecified time in the future "after the bombs." There is constant cloud coverage which keeps the skies gray and the land barren. Older people refer to times when the sky was blue and the grass was green. A young newlywed couple sets off in search of the sun on their honeymoon. When their scooter breaks down, they meet Mr. Noakes who says that if he finds a place where the sun is shining, he will develop it and make a fortune. They find the sun at a nearby cottage of a lovely old woman and her blind son who are oblivious that there is an issue with the sun at all. At their cottage the sun shines brilliantly, the flowers and vegetables grow in abundance, and the stars are magnificent at night. When the couple returns for their scooter, Mr. Noakes wants to know where they've been. He can see the glow on their skin from the sun. They decide not to tell him, and, consequently, can not return to the cottage for their belongings or to say goodbye to the woman and her son (Aiken 30-37). The couple made a decision to preserve the peacefulness and beauty of the cottage rather than have it destroyed for personal gain. The couple also made sacrifices. They sacrificed their belongings for the greater good, and they sacrificed their time in the sun to leave the cottage intact.

Students will discuss and reflect on what it would be like if there were no trees, flowers, or birds; if the sky was constantly gray; if the grass was brown; and if there were few if any flowers with vibrant colors. They will also reflect on how this would effect seasons and daily life in general. Throughout this unit students will keep a journal/

response log. There are guidelines of how the journal/response log should be used. Also, within the context of this story the plot will be analyzed. Dynamic vs. static characters and characters' motives are feature components that will be discussed. Students will analyze the mood and figurative language and discuss their effect on the plot. Also, students will be asked to compare and contrast elements from the story to elements in today's society that we struggle with in trying to keep our environment safe and intact. Students will continuously be asked to provide evidence from the various texts we will be reading to support their thoughts, predictions and conclusions.

After the introduction story, *Searching for Summer*, the students will participate in an observation and identification lesson. Using currency from different countries, students will be asked a series of questions to help them create a set of criteria to distinguish characteristics of the currency. After determining the characteristics, students can begin to differentiate between the origins of the currency. They can discuss the different characteristics: size, shape, type of paper, number of colors, pictures of heads of state or emblems, serial numbers, etc., that helped them differentiate between currencies. After the discussion, students will get into groups of four or five. Each group will be given a field guide such as trees, birds, flowers, insects, weather (for clouds), seashells. Each group will be responsible for a "mini-presentation" to the class. The presentation will include a general overview, characteristics used to identify, descriptions of each characteristic, habitat most likely found, and samples. The samples will be real where possible: leaves, seashells, insects, flowers. If not, pictures will suffice: cloud formations, birds, fish, etc. A student-made brochure or mini-guide will be included. Finally, any comments, observations, findings or tips for identification will be given. In this lesson, students will be responsible for creating a plan of action, assigning duties, researching topic and citing sources using MLA format, analyzing, compare and contrasting, and presenting information gathered. Students will have access to cameras (digital or disposable) and schoolyard habitat. Again, students will be asked to reflect findings and feelings in their response log/journal.

Next, students will be introduced to Rachel Carson author of *Silent Spring*. I will provide a brief introduction on Rachel Carson giving basic facts needed for research. Students will be required to conduct research on Ms. Carson and draw conclusions stating why she is relevant to this unit. A discussion will follow.

Overview of Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*

Rachel Carson was a writer, a scientist, and ecologist. Her mother planted the seed of her life-long love of nature and its inhabitants. Carson's father owned a large tract of land in Springdale, Pennsylvania that she explored with her mother and siblings. Although Carson's mother kept her home from school, she developed a love for books cultivated by her mother. Because of her love for books and her mother's tutoring Rachel never fell behind in her schoolwork. From an early age Carson aspired to be a writer. Carson initially majored in English, but switched to zoology with encouragement from her

biology professor. With these two majors she was able to combine her two passions: writing and nature. Carson graduated from college in 1929, studied marine biology, and received her MA in zoology in 1932. During the summer before graduate school Carson completed a summer fellowship at the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, where she saw the ocean for the first time. This would greatly impact her career. She taught at John Hopkins University and the University of Maryland until her father died suddenly during the Depression. Taking on more responsibility, Carson sought employment that was more lucrative. She began with part time employment as a writer for the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries and later acquired a full time position. She wrote for the Bureau's radio broadcasts. Her first piece was an assignment about the sea. Her supervisor rejected it for the broadcast, but encouraged her to send it to the *Atlantic Monthly* for publication. Carson did and in 1937, *Atlantic Monthly* published her essay "Undersea." Carson was approached shortly thereafter by the senior editor of Simon and Schuster about writing a book on the subject, thus *Under the Sea Wind* was created and published in 1941 (Waddell 4). She worked as a scientist and editor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S. Bureau of Fisheries) for fifteen years and became Editor-in-Chief in 1936. Carson wrote pamphlets on conservation and natural resources and edited scientific articles, but in her free time turned her research into literature. In 1952 she published *The Sea Around Us*, which was followed by *The Edge of the Sea* in 1955. These books constituted a biography of the ocean and made Carson famous as a naturalist and science writer for the public. Carson resigned from government service in 1952 to devote herself to writing (Lear). Carson wrote other articles and another book all teaching people about nature. Lear wrote, "Embedded within all of Carson's writing was the view that human beings were but one part of nature distinguished primarily by their powers to alter it, in some cases irreversibly."

In January of 1958, a friend of Carson's, Olga Huckins wrote a letter to the editor of the *Boston Herald* and sent a copy to Rachel. Huckins had a private bird sanctuary and against her wishes the Commonwealth of Massachusetts saturated her property with DDT in an aerial spraying designed to control mosquitoes. Many birds suffered horrible deaths. Huckins asked Carson who in Washington might be able to help. When Carson couldn't find anyone to write an expose on the subject, she took to the task herself. At first it was going to be a magazine article, but the magazines were unresponsive and she decided that the subject was too expansive for an article. Carson proposed a book on indiscriminate use of pesticides with Houghton Mifflin and a series of chapters in the *New Yorker*. There was a lawsuit brought by Robert Cushman Murphy, a famous curator of birds at the American Museum of natural History and others, which sought to prevent the state and federal government from aerial spraying on Long Island to eradicate the gypsy moth. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court. They did not hear the case based on a technicality. Even though the suit failed it provided Carson with an enormous amount of scientific data. That data along with her literary reputation and her years of experience working as the editor of the Fish and Wildlife Service equipped Carson with all she needed for her book (Waddell 6).

Silent Spring describes how DDT entered the food chain and accumulated in the fatty tissues of animals, including human beings, and caused cancer and genetic damage. She wrote that a single application on a crop killed insects for weeks and months. Not only did it kill the targeted insects, but many more. DDT remained toxic in the environment even after it was diluted by rainwater. Carson also concluded that the world's food supply had been contaminated and that birds and animals had been irrevocably harmed by DDT and other pesticides (NRDC).

Carson enjoyed writing about the strengths of natural systems. *Under the Sea Wind*, *The Sea Around Us* and *The Edge of the Sea* were tributes to the interconnectedness of nature and all living things. "Although she rarely used the term, Carson held an ecological view of nature, describing the precise yet poetic language the complex web of life that linked mollusks to sea-birds to the fish swimming in the ocean's deepest and most inaccessible reaches" (NRDC).

In writing about the use of pesticides, especially DDT and its adverse effects on living things, including human beings, Carson came under attack by chemical companies and others and was accused of falsely alarming the public. Still, her love of nature and living things kept her going. Even though her integrity and sanity were questioned by those in favor of using these synthetic chemicals without regulation, she continued to write. Rachel continued writing through all of the attacks, battling her own illnesses and the death of her mother in 1958. Ms. Carson was already an acclaimed writer and scientist; therefore, when the chemical companies and others attacked her, it did not affect the public's opinion. In 1962, *Silent Spring* was published and earlier that year the *New Yorker* serialized 10 chapters of the book over three issues. The public had an overwhelmingly positive response to the book. Prior to *Silent Spring*, people did not understand the level of toxicity of pesticides and their effect on the environment including the effect on human beings (Waddell 7).

People began writing Ms. Carson, *The New Yorker*, their congressmen, local newspaper and more. The public response to *Silent Spring*—the fear of what unchecked use of chemicals were doing to the environment and specifically the effects on human beings—was phenomenal.

President Kennedy ordered the President's Science Advisory Committee to examine the claims that were made in *Silent Spring*. The committee's report upheld the book's findings. DDT was eventually banned. Ms. Carson's writings helped change how we view our role in and our responsibility to nature (Lear). The public outcry and the findings of the committee led to the birth of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on December 2, 1970:

Although their role will probably always be less celebrated than wars, marches, riots or stormy political campaigns, it is books that have at times most powerfully influenced social change in American life. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*

galvanized radical sentiment in the early days of the America Revolution; *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe roused Northern antipathy to slavery in the decade leading up to the Civil War; and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which in 1962 exposed the hazards of the pesticides DDT, eloquently questioned humanity's faith in technological progress and helped set the stage for the environmental movement. (NRDC)

Overview of Robert Frost

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco, California. His father, William Frost, was a journalist, local politician, a gambler and an alcoholic. He died when Frost was eleven years old. Frost's mother, previously a school teacher, moved the family to Lawrence, Massachusetts, where her late husband's parents were. Frost did not want to move in with them, but the family had no choice. It had a moral and practical purpose. It was William Frost's dying wish that his family move back to New England to be with his relatives and also he had left them penniless. Frost's grandparents resented his mother. They were in denial of their son's addictions and blamed Isabelle, his wife, for their son's death. They were cold to her and gave no encouragement or affection to young Robert. Frost, his mother and sister lived below poverty level for some time. His mother had returned to teaching to help support her family. Frost attended school but found himself among children who rarely continued school past the sixth grade. During his first two years of high school Frost began writing poetry. The isolated activity suited Frost and helped ease the loneliness. During Frost's senior year he met Elinor White who shared his love of poetry and his intelligence. Frost attended Dartmouth College briefly, then went on to hold various jobs including working in a textile mill. Frost also taught Latin at his mother's school (De Fusco 13-15).

One of Frost's first poems published was "My Butterfly," in 1894, by the *New York Independent*. It begins...

Thine emulous fond flowers are dead, too,
And the daft sun-assaulter, he
That frightened thee so oft, is fled or dead:
Save only me
(Nor is it sad to thee!)-
Save only me
Thine is none left to mourn thee in the fields.

The gray grass is scarce dappled with snow;
Its two banks have not shut upon the river;
But it is long ago---
It seems forever---
Since first I saw thee glance,
With all thy dazzling other ones,

In airy dalliance,
Precipitate in love,
Tossed, tangled, whirled, and whirled above,
Like a limp rose-wreath in a fairy dance. (Frost 28-29)

From Frost's early verse, his attachment to nature was prevalent. Frost poems are multi-layered. There is a surface meaning and there is a deeper meaning masked by symbolism and imagery.

Frost married former schoolmate Elinor White in 1895 at the age of twenty-one. Frost returned to school, this time he attended Harvard. He had hoped to study under William James, the famous psychologist and brother of Henry James, the novelist, but he was on sabbatical. Disappointed with the program and keeping a hectic schedule studying and commuting to Lawrence to help his mother teach at her school, Frost dropped out again. Frost suffered the death of his first son Elliot who was three years old. Six months later his mother died. After the deaths, Frost felt they needed to move. The family moved to Derry, New Hampshire. He again worked various jobs including farming and teaching. Frost and his wife lost another child named Elinor in infancy. Realizing how precious life is, Frost tried to make life wonderful for his surviving children. He would let them stay up late on warm summer evenings to look at the stars. He taught his children to identify plants, insects, and flowers. He taught them to identify stars and constellations and to identify an animal by its call. He made them aware of the cycle of life, death, and rebirth in nature. Due to the deaths in their family, Frost and his wife suffered from depression. Frost also wanted to make a living on poetry alone. In 1912, Frost sold his farm and moved his family to England where he published his first collection of poems, *A Boy's Will*. Elinor was thrilled to go. She had always wanted to live in England. Frost loved exploring the British countryside and seeing new flora. Foremost, he made friends with the leading British poets of that time. Ezra Pound loved Frost's first book of poems and wrote letters to American publishers about "this fine young poet." It worked! In 1914, *North of Boston* was published in America, which displayed some of Frost's most famous poems such as "The Wood Pile" and "Mending Wall." Due to the war, Frost and his family returned to America. Frost taught at many of the New England colleges and co-founded the Bread Loaf School. In 1916, he published his third collection of verse, *Mountain Interval*. This collection contained "The Road Not Taken" and "Birches." In 1924, Frost received his first Pulitzer Prize for *New Hampshire*. This volume contained "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," and "Fire and Ice" (DeFusco 16-20).

"Fire and Ice"
Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate

To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice. (Frost 220)

Frost's poems depicted a deep appreciation of nature. His works appealed to all types of people. It reflected his life; his intellectual and blue-collar experiences. Nature and the rural surroundings of farm life were mainstays in Frost's work. Nature was used to portray deeper meanings and truths that were easily understood.

In 1934, Frost's daughter Marjorie, who had always been ill, died shortly after childbirth. Later in 1938, Frost, Elinor, and their son Carol were vacationing in Florida when Elinor suffered a massive heart attack and died. Frost was devastated. He tried to throw himself into his work, but his recovery was slow. In 1940, his son Carol committed suicide. He had always suffered from depression. He struggled to become an acclaimed poet of his own accord, but lacked the talent and patience of his father. He was resentful of his father's success despite Frost's generous support of his children. Frost again emerged slowly from personal darkness during the 1940s. In 1943, *A Witness Tree* won a Pulitzer and made Frost the first four-time winner in America (DeFusco 20-22).

Frost had a special relationship with President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy had admired Frost's work from a child. Frost liked the young democrat from Massachusetts because he was "literate" and valued poetry as much as the sciences. Frost was asked to recite some of his poetry at the Presidential inauguration. It was the first time an artist had been recognized at this type of political event. Frost had prepared a poem, but with his failing eyesight and the cold bitter wind he could not read it. Instead, he recited "The Gift Outright" from memory. "The Gift Outright" was about a debt owed to America and to the earth (DeFusco 22-23).

Frost continued writing even though his health was failing. He received numerous awards over the course of his life time. His life was not without hardship, hard work, or tragedy; all of which was reflected in his work. He loved nature and all that it offered. His life as a rural farmer was also depicted in his verse. He painted pictures with words that are far clearer than many painted with brushes. Frost portrayed the power of the written word. He demonstrated how verse can mend fences or put up walls.

In 1962, Nikita Krushchev, a former leader of the Soviet Union, hosted Frost in Russia. At a dinner in Moscow, Frost recited "Mending Wall." Western Europe and America knew that Frost was reprimanding the erection of the Berlin Wall (DeFusco 23). Frost used his poetry to state his feelings on an important issue and did so effectively and appropriately. The power of the written word is amazing.

Robert Frost died on January 29, 1963. He was almost 89 years old. The nation was in shock. Condolences poured in from around the world. Schoolchildren wrote letters and poets publicly acknowledged their debt to Frost (DeFusco 24). Over one hundred years

later Frost and his works are celebrated. The relevance and usefulness that his poetry brings is timeless.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

As stated earlier, this unit will be taught in a tenth grade Pre AP English class. This unit will develop student's writing skills, higher level thinking skills, and raise awareness and appreciation of the environment. Three of the lesson plans are included.

The following TAKS objectives will be covered:

TAKS Objective 1

EngII.6 B ...rely on context to determine meanings of words and phrases such as figurative language, idioms, multiple meaning words, and technical vocabulary

EngII.8 The student reads extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources, including world literature.

EngII.8 B ... read in varied sources such as diaries, journals, textbooks, maps, newspapers, letters, speeches, memoranda, electronic texts, and other media

TAKS Objective 2 The student will demonstrate an understanding of the effects of literary elements and techniques in culturally diverse written texts.

EngII.10 The student expresses and supports responses to various types of texts

EngII.10 B use elements of text to defend his/her own responses and interpretation

EngII.11 The student analyzes literary elements for their contributions to meaning in literary texts

EngII.11 A compare and contrast varying aspects of text such as themes, conflicts and allusions

EngII.11 B analyze relevance of setting and time frame to text's meaning

EngII.11 C describe and analyze the development of plot and identify conflicts and how they are addressed and resolved

EngII.11 E connect literature to historical contexts, current events, and his/her own experience

EngII.11 F understand literary forms and terms ...

TAKS Objective 3 The student will demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate culturally diverse written texts and visual representations.

EngII.7 The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies.

EngII.7 E analyze text structures such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, and chronological ordering for how they influence understanding

EngII.12 The student reads critically to evaluate texts and the authority of sources.

EngII.12 A. analyze the characteristics of clearly written texts, including the patterns of organization, syntax, and word choice

EngII.12 B. evaluate the credibility of information sources, including how the writer's motivation may affect that credibility

Engli.12 C recognize logical, deceptive, and/or faulty modes of persuasion in texts

TAKS Objective 4 The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose. (Project CLEAR)

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1: “Searching for Summer” by Joan Aiken

Objectives

- Students will make predictions.
- Students will diagram the plot of the story using evidence from the text to support their findings.
- Students will compare and contrast using evidence from the story and their personal knowledge to support their conclusions.

Procedure

Before reading the story students will be asked to imagine what the world would be like without sunlight. Students will brainstorm a list of ideas and write them on the board. Next, they will be asked to generate a list of consequences that would arise from their list. Ask students to make predictions at this time. First let them make general predictions; then ask them to predict some possible themes that may arise from what they think the story is about.

Next, have students record any foreshadowing and characterization that help them form conclusions about the story. Keep chart or log book handy while reading.

Read “Searching for Summer.” Stop periodically and check for understanding, questions, or comments. After completing the story (before discussing anything) have students write a brief response to it. Let the writing be open. More specifically, do not narrow the topic. They may want to write how they feel about the ending or perhaps about the despicable character Mr. Noakes or comment on how they feel the story relates to current events. Allow at least 15 minutes for writing response. This should be kept in their response log/journal.

Following the response writing, have students discuss and/or diagram the plot. If this unit is early in the school year have them literally diagram the plot writing all parts of the exposition, describing the rising action, stating the climax, falling action, and including a full discussion of any conflicts.

Students will write a compare and contrast essay on current topics that relate to the theme of “Searching for Summer.”

Extending the Lesson

Students will research current environmental issues. (I am purposely leaving “environmental issues” broad with the intention of narrowing the topic down to their state, city, community. Also, in case the student finds a topic that really interests them, it will be in scope.)

Lesson Plan 2: Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*

On the day before this lesson ask if any student knows who Rachel Carson is. If not, inform them that she was a writer, a scientist, and an ecologist. Ask students to conduct research on Ms. Carson and be prepared to discuss (with evidence) something about her or her work. If students do not have access to computers at home, or in computer class, schedule a time in the library.

Objectives

- Students will create an ending to a story based on information given and researched.
- Students will problem solve and create a working plan of action.

Materials

Computer access with Internet

Copies of *Silent Spring* or access to an on-line library with e-books

Biographical information on Rachel Carson

Procedure

Students will be asked to share what they learned through their research about Rachel Carson. Students will then discuss Ms. Carson in relationship to “Searching for Summer” and how her work is relevant.

Have students get in groups and re-write the end of the story adding a character like Ms. Carson in the story. When all of the groups have completed their endings, have each group share their ending with the class.

Next, discuss Rachel Carson in detail. Students will read *Silent Spring* over the course of approximately two weeks. Students will write an essay in class summarizing the books main points. A class discussion on “unchecked” consumption will follow.

Finally, students will break into groups and pick a “micro-environment” and brainstorm issues that they feel should be addressed. (The “micro-environment” could be their immediate neighborhood, school, church grounds, city or whatever they decide.) They will be required to devise a plan to address at least one environment-related issue. The plan should be complete with sources of information, people or leaders that would need to be contacted, and letters to those people explaining the problem, outlining the solution, and a timeline.

Lesson Plan 3: Nature in Literature

Objectives

- Students will analyze and critically evaluate diverse pieces of literature.
- Students will compare and contrast rural life in New England in the early 1900s to present day life in the south and state how it affects them as an audience to the verse of Robert Frost.
- Students will use elements of text to defend their own responses and interpretations.

Materials

Biography of Robert Frost

Two of his works: “Nothing Gold Can Stay,” “Desert Places”

Procedure

Students will learn about the life of Robert Frost. In his life he suffered many hardships as a boy and tragedies as a man. His environment in rural New England is very different from the environment here in the south. Understanding his background and his original audience should help with some understanding of his poetry. Students could discuss similarities and differences in Frost’s life and theirs.

Students will read “Nothing Gold Can Stay.” Students will discuss imagery and Frost’s use of nature and seasons to depict the life cycle. Next students will read “Desert Places.” Students will discuss what meaning they find in the poem. Ask students to recall their list of problems they generated from “Searching for Summer.” Ask if there are any additions they would like to make. Students should conclude that without sunlight and the vast effect it has on nature, or the lack there of in “Searching for Summer,” the entire face of nature as we know it would be changed. As a result, literature as we know it would be different. Many poets, novelist, painters, and artist use nature as a reference or inspiration.

Students will be assigned to pick three poems by any author dealing with nature. They will be asked to bring a copy of each including author and source to share with the class. Students will pick one of the three poems and write a response in their response log/journal. This entry should include why they chose that particular poem and what it means to them.

Next, students will pick one of the three poems to analyze. Students will analyze their poem of choice stating what they found. Examples include finding a rhyme pattern and discussing why the poet may have chosen those words; use of imagery and symbolism in the poem and what it stands for; or they could discuss denotation and connotation. Each student is free to pick something of interest to them.

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