

Exploring Alienation in Literature and Photography

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INTRODUCTION

I will never forget the first time my father allowed me to handle his camera. He still has the same camera, a Nikon FM2. Heavy and awkward was how it felt in my little hands at first. My dad showed me how to hold it, his hands covering mine. It was one of the first times I really bonded with my dad. I was very young, and I was fascinated with all of the bells and whistles. This was a completely manual camera. He sat me down and explained, more than once, f-stops, depth of field, shutter speed, and other terms that took me years to remember. I began to understand why it took so long for my dad to take a picture. He began teaching me the various aspects of photography. Needless to say, I was hooked.

What started out as a chance to hang out with my dad, turned into a genuine interest as I got older. The first camera I ever owned was a 110 camera, a basic point and shoot. I took it with me everywhere. I had the need to record every moment that I experienced. When the pictures were developed, the feeling that I had had when taking the photos was missing from the developed images. I was heartbroken. I didn't understand what I had done wrong. On the verge of giving up, my dad explained to me that there was a lot more involved than just pointing and shooting. I needed to think about my image, pay attention to the light, and decide where I wanted my subject to be in the frame. I tried again, and again, and again. Still I was frustrated with the results. My dad realized I wasn't giving up and that I was serious. He took me to a camera store and bought me first camera, one that I still have and use today, a Minolta Maxxum 2xi. This was a real camera. It had the abilities to switch from automatic, to semi-manual, to completely manual, which allowed me to master individual functions with the camera matching my controls.

My pictures were much improved, but I still felt something was missing. I began to research on my own for different lenses and their capabilities, the use of filters, and eventually properly using a flash. The first time I was proud of photos I had taken were from a family road trip the summer before I entered 11th grade. I became obsessed with nature and landscape photography, specifically mountains. I loved how rugged and endless they could appear. I ended up buying two more lenses for my camera and my parents purchased a professional flash. When I looked at the developed pictures, I was reminded of different feelings and ideas that I had learned to identify in stories and novels I had read in school. That was when I truly understood and appreciated those terms.

When I was a kid, my father taught me how to use a camera and take pictures. Many years later, my father became a different type of teacher for me, my English teacher in high school. I was shocked the day he began pulling out famous photographs and showing us how they connected to the examples of literature we were studying at the time. My father had given me a new passion: literature. I had always loved reading, but now I knew how to look beyond the surface, and like taking pictures, I was hooked.

As a child, my parents could always find me curled up in a random place with my nose in a book. I even won an award in fifth grade because of my incessant reading. Every morning while attending my elementary school, the principal would make an announcement about why it was

important to read. Her infamous slogan, “Read! Read! Read!” could be found littering the hallways. She decided to award me with most outstanding girl in the fifth grade because she always saw me reading. At the time I was most fond of Nancy Drew mysteries. My interests eventually grew to Stephen King novels, the Sweet Valley High series, and other young adult novels. My taste matured in high school due to the Vanguard teachers at Jones High School. I was fortunate to have teachers who supplied me with the classics but also contemporary authors. In college, after I finally decided to be an English major, I began to realize I enjoyed contemporary American authors the most, which helped me determine what field I would enter into after college.

Now I too am a teacher, although I’m an American literature teacher, whereas my father was a British literature teacher. I have never forgotten the visual images he would show us to help us truly understand what we were reading.

UNIT BACKGROUND

The main purpose of writing this unit to help my students find their own verbal-visual connection with the literature we read in class. Specifically the unit will focus on the theme of alienation in modern poetry. My personal belief, sprung from experiences with my own students, is that students can’t fully understand and appreciate a term like Alienation just because a teacher gives them a definition and a poem that expresses the idea. Kids today grew up with MTV, Nintendo Playstations, and personal computers. They are primarily visual learners. My intention is to teach the theme of alienation using photographs that portray this idea. Of course I would have to teach the student how to analyze a photograph, but would it really be that different from analyzing a movie? Time and time again, my students had enjoyed a story more after seeing the movie version. Some would argue that this would take away the creativity of an imagination, but I argue students can’t imagine terms like alienation unless they fully understand the term. So this unit will teach alienation in poetry and photography with the final result having the student create their own poem and photo that expresses the theme.

My school is unique in that it is entirely magnet specializing in the health sciences. Students have to apply and meet specific guidelines to get in and must maintain those guidelines to remain. The result is a very well-disciplined and intelligent body of students. My challenge is that they are well-developed and mostly interested in math, science, and health science, not English. Their load of classes and schoolwork is very demanding. By the time the freshman class makes it to their second year, approximately ten to twenty percent have been unable to keep up with the demands and have left either by their choice or the school’s. This occurs every year. By the time they reach me, the students who are left are the ones who will most likely make it to their senior year. These are the strongest students who are willing to put in all their time and effort in order to be successful. These students want to learn and be challenged. Of course, a program as demanding as this one has its problems. Mainly, by the time they reach me, my juniors are on the verge of burning out. Their focus is on graduation and doing what is necessary to get there. Most are still willing to go the extra mile with their work, but there are some who are just trying to get by. I want to reach both types of students, but my primary interest is in the latter.

These students have an extremely tough course load, and during their junior year, they have the chance to go out to local hospitals that our school works with and go on rotations. On these rotations, the students get the chance to go to local hospitals and work side by side with doctors. They will learn first hand what a day in the life is like for a doctor. They help with obtaining medical histories from the patient, taking blood pressure, and even drawing blood. Obviously, the students who attend this school must be very serious about their studies. Because of the emphasis on the health sciences, English usually gets pushed on the back burner for these students. It is a necessary evil that they must face in order to graduate. There are a lot of students

who really like English and who are very good in their studies. These students will usually take AP English. I teach the magnet students. The majority of these students are doing what is needed because it is a required class, but if they had the choice they would not take my class.

Because of this attitude, it makes it extremely difficult to motivate these students. I'm interested in hearing their ideas about a piece of literature, and in order to get them to share their ideas, I have to find works that interest them and activities that are a lot of fun to do in class and outside of class. I have designed my class to be relaxing and fun while still trying to cover all the required works and objectives. I do this by lecturing only when needed, relying primarily on discussion and group work, and providing the students with activities that are hands on and fun. The activities in this unit all try to meet these guidelines. I hope that this unit will help them become more interested in American literature and to stop seeing it as a necessary evil.

Alienation

Choosing a theme to focus on for this unit was extremely difficult, but I knew I wanted one to which all students could relate. Alienation had always been a favorite for me ever since I first read Flannery O'Connor's short story, "A Good Man is Hard to Find." I first read it my senior year of high school in my AP English class. I remember being immediately sucked in by the character of the grandmother and her relationship with the other family members. She reminded me of my own grandmother, so I was intrigued because I could really connect with the characters and the story. As the plot unfolded I was disgusted by the actions of the character, yet equally captivated. It was the strongest reaction to piece of writing I had ever experienced at that point. I did not know that one of the reasons I was able to connect so easily was due to the theme of alienation. I sensed the separation between the characters, the loneliness that they felt. As a teenager, I could definitely sympathize. This connection was so strong, that, eleven years later, I have never forgotten the story, the characters, and the feeling I had when reading it for the first time. I even teach the story in my American literature class. It is always a favorite of the students, mainly because of the violence at the end and how unexpected it is. This story was what led me to the theme of alienation for this unit.

To teach alienation a proper definition must be established. I believe there are varying degrees of alienation that range from "emotional isolation or dissociation" to a more extreme "state of estrangement between the self and the objective world or between different parts of the personality" ("Alienation," *Dictionary.com*). The definition, according to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, can also suggest replacing attachment with something or someone with hostility or indifference. All of these definitions range from emotional to physical relationships. A person can be alienated from another person, society, or even the world. These varying extremities should be explored with the student through poetry as well as photography.

I chose the theme of alienation because I felt that all students, regardless of their background, can relate. Everyone has felt isolated at one time in his or her life. My students come from various socio-economic backgrounds that have created challenges for them. These challenges have sometimes made them feel isolated from the world. Most of my students would not fit in with a school like Bellaire or Lamar because they are socially handicapped, some more than others. Most students here are concerned with academics and their ranking. They are very focused and driven, which is wonderful from a teacher's point of view, but they are lacking in traditional high school social experiences. So when placed in these types of experiences, i.e. parties, they have a harder time fitting in. There are a few among these students who are extremely gifted; so much so that they are unable to socially bond with other students in class. These students usually suffer from various social disorders. They are able to survive at DeBaKey because the students tend to be more tolerable and understanding of these conditions, whereas at

more traditional schools this would not be the case. For all of these students, whether they realize it or not, the idea of alienation is not that far out of their reach.

The poetry that I would use in this unit would cover Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath, Wallace Stevens, Langston Hughes, and William Carlos Williams. I would also use poetry from Carl Sandburg and Walt Whitman to show examples of anti-alienation. This would set a very good balance of the definition. All of these poems would support the range of alienation from indifference, to isolation, to estrangement, to finally hostility. Also the poems can reflect the idea of alienation from one's self. The more poems they read with the different ranges of the theme, the better they will understand the idea of alienation. This is necessary for the final project of the unit where each student would write an original poem with the theme of alienation and the either find an image or create one that would represent their poem. Throughout the unit they will have chances to write their own poetry and receive feedback from the teacher letting them know if they are mastering the theme of alienation. They will also have a chance to discover photographs that they believe represent alienation in the major works I would teach in class, for example Robert Frost's "Mending Wall." This poem is a good example of a person isolating themselves from other people and/or society. The challenge for the students is to find or create an image that would go beyond the obvious, such as a picture of a wall. The image should reflect the boundaries people place between themselves and the outside world either to barricade themselves in or keep others out. Robert Frank, the photographer I will be primarily referring to, has a series of photos that best relate to this theme, and including even the Robert Frost poem.

There are two photos from his series of photographs entitled *The Americans* that I wish to discuss in this unit. This first photo is an image of people on a bus and can be found at the following website: <http://shs.westport.k12.ct.us/jwb/Collab/CivRts/RFbus.htm>. The second photo is of a man leaning against a wall and can be found at the following website: <http://shs.westport.k12.ct.us/jwb/Collab/CivRts/RFman.htm>. These images not only support the theme of alienation, but also give the students ideas on how to better portray the images found within the Frost poem.

By giving my students an assignment that draws on their own experiences, they will connect with their work more and hopefully take more of an initiative to not just complete the assignment, but go over and beyond. It has always been my belief that students who connect with their work will more quickly master the subject material. If it is about them, they will surely be interested. It is also clear to me that my students are predominately visual learners. They have grown up with video games, movies, MTV, and many others. These are their influences. If I want my students to truly grasp what I am teaching, then I need to do more than just read a poem and lecture or discuss the hidden meaning. I have to show them. Photography will be a bridge between the written words and their video games and movies. The quality of the image must reflect the poem to allow this to work.

The biggest, and most annoying, question that my students seem to ask me year after year is, "Why are we reading this?" They want to know why they should care, and I can't blame them. If I'm only teaching Robert Frost because my district tells me to or because it is in the textbook, I'm cheating the students. They will see right through me and I will have lost. Personally, I only teach works that I care about, so when a student asks me the inevitable question, I have an answer. This won't be enough for them though. By having them write their own poetry and take their own pictures, they are investing something very personal. It's an assignment that requires thought. Sure a student can throw something together at the last minute; we all have those "slackers"! But most of the time I sense they are embarrassed by what they have or have not done. By giving the assignment in several formats throughout the unit, those "slacker" students have another chance.

DeBakey is a school that trains students to enter the medical field. Alienation does have its place in medicine. It can refer to “a splitting apart of the faculties of the mind.” This could be related to poems that have the theme of extreme alienation where someone is estranged from themselves, multiple personalities and such. By bringing a medical viewpoint, I can further help the students to connect to the assignment. This is just another source to help with the understanding of the concept. Most of my students do continue their educational careers in medicine, but usually they center on dentistry, nursing, or becoming doctors or surgeons. There are a few who are interested in psychiatry, but this unit can do more than just relate to medicine itself. It can also help create sensitivity within themselves when dealing with future patients. People who suffer from extreme illness, deformities, or handicaps often feel alienated from society. By making them aware of this, they can be sensitive when dealing with these people.

Finally, the students are academically challenged with this unit. They must be able to read a poem, analyze it, and eventually be able to understand what they have read. This can be done through demonstration, discussion, and working with their peers. For example, the final five lines from Robert Frost’s poem “Mending Wall”:

He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father’s saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well,
He says again, “Good fences make good neighbors.” (41-45)

Looking at these lines, the reader can understand the speaker is talking about a person who has isolated himself from others. He learned this from a saying that his father taught him. The saying implies that walls protect and are necessary for good relationships. The idea of isolating oneself behind a wall implies isolation and alienation. The speaker needs boundaries to relate well with others. Everyone has boundaries of some kind, physical and mental. We build these walls for all reasons, sometimes merely for privacy, but usually for protection because past experiences have taught us to be cautious with others. No one wants to be hurt or taken advantage; most people do not even realize they have walls.

Demonstrating this analysis to the students will help them learn the steps to break down the poem and understand what the speaker is trying to say. The next strategy to help the students learn the concept of alienation would be to bring in photos that also reflect this theme. The two Robert Frank photos both show a subject or subjects who are isolated. The first is rather remarkable because the window frames create smaller pictures within the larger one. Looking at the smaller pictures individually, we notice that each of the small pictures shows a feeling of isolation. As a group, the same feeling is continued because of the separation of whites in the front and blacks in the back of the bus.

By asking the students what feeling the subjects could be experiencing, I could get a long list, but all would relate to alienation. For example, the woman in the front of the bus seems to be looking out the window with a sense of condescension, disdain, and disgust. She seems to feel above everyone else, which sets her apart and isolates her from everyone. The two children in the next window each have very different expressions. The older child grabs the viewer’s attention immediately for several reasons. First he is looking directly into the camera. But what is most startling is how such a young child is capable of expressing such arrogance. He too has placed himself apart and is looking down at the world. The black man in the next window seems to have a look of despair. Worn out from work or life, his is the face of alienation. He is completely alone. The last window has a black woman distracted and looking at something in the distance. She has mentally isolated herself by looking off to something the reader cannot see. Emotionally, all subjects have isolated themselves. However, the window frames create literal and physical

walls that directly connect to the Robert Frost poem. Each of these individuals does not seem to be trying to break out of their isolation; the window frames are metaphors for their own personal walls.

The second photo has a man sitting against a wall. The fact he is leaning against a wall literally ties in the image of the Robert Frost poem. In the poem neighbors are coming together to mend a section of the wall that has broken. Something they do each year. The narrator of the poem is questioning their annual act. Why do they do this? Is it necessary? The neighbor simply replies with the saying learned from his father. The neighbor needs the wall in order to be a good neighbor or person. In order to have relationships with people, the neighbor must have boundaries to feel safe and protected. The cement poles surrounding the man further isolate him from the photographer as well as the rest of the world. They almost seem to be protecting him. The expression on his face is pleasant. He does not seem to feel threatened. He knows he is safe because he has the protection of his walls.

Once the photos have been presented to the students, I would ask them a series of questions that would get them thinking not only from the subject's point of view, but the photographer's as well. For the second photograph I would ask the students who could represent the narrator of the Frost poem. Is it Robert Frank the photographer or the viewer of the photograph? What other feelings are conveyed by the subject? What feelings is the photograph trying to portray? Have the students look at the other objects in the photo, the light, the shadows, where the subject is in the frame, etc. All of these questions will help them analyze the photo and then eventually connect it to the poem.

Once the students can break down the poems and photos on their own, I would present another poem. On their own they would find or create images that represent the themes in the poem. This assignment would be a proper tool of assessment. The students have to show they understand both the poem and the photo. I could even reverse this by showing an image and having the students find a poem that relates to the photo. Either way they have to explain their findings. They could do this orally or in an essay.

The idea behind this unit and the lessons within would be to offer various perspectives of understanding a literary concept. Tackling a problem from all sides instead of just one enables the student to fully master the concept. Alienation is a broad subject that has many layers. This unit would attempt to focus on each layer through a variety of poetry and photography that supports the theme.

ROBERT FRANK, *THE AMERICANS*

Why did I choose Robert Frank for this unit? When I first saw his series of photographs entitled *The Americans*, I was amazed at how he captured people in a single moment of their daily life. Some of the emotions portrayed range from curiosity, indifference, surprise, and even anger. On the surface, America in the 1950s was supposed to be neat, happy, white, and perfect. Robert Frank, a Swiss, was able to explore America below this pre-packaged surface and show the true nature of Americans at that time. The poor and the rich, blacks and whites, shown in their natural environments, were linked together with a common idea – no one was truly happy and living the ideal “American dream.” Instead there is a sense of separation and loneliness that is expressed from each subject of each picture Frank took. Without even realizing it, the subjects have been connected because of the shared feelings through Frank's photographs.

His photos were met with anger when first published. Americans did not want to admit that Frank was showing the reality of their situation. They were comfortable with the surface and wanted to remain there. Frank forced them to look at their own and decide if they wanted to continue living a lie. The idea that it took a foreign perspective to shake people out of their

reveries was strange and uncomfortable for people to understand and reconcile with. Not all opposed him however. Jack Kerouac, known for his offbeat writing, offered to write the introduction to Frank's book after Frank showed Kerouac his photos at a party. Kerouac realized that all Frank had done was show the truth. A truth he felt no one should be ashamed about. He remarks in his introduction, "the faces don't editorialize or criticize or say anything but 'This is the way we are in real life and if you don't like it I don't know anything about it 'cause I'm living my own life my way...'" The faces of the subjects in each picture express loneliness, not shame. These are real people in real places living their real lives. They are not apologizing for their poverty, skin color, or wealth.

Frank took these photos as he traveled by car around almost the entire country. He was able to literally sneak around and take the photos. Most of the subjects were not even aware of what was happening. This enables the photos to truly show people in an honest light, which enables the viewer to relate and connect to the photograph.

People see beautiful photographs of mountains, flowers, and people all the time, but not all can truly connect with those types of photos. Frank's purpose was not to simply entertain, but to capture the essence of an everyday person. The viewer of his photos has most likely felt sad, lonely, isolated, and angry, so they will be able to personally relate to the subject within the photo because the subject is expressing the same feelings.

The ease in which the viewer can relate to the photographs suggests that the viewer does not have to be knowledgeable in how to study art. My students certainly are not. For them, most art is confusing, strange, and impossible to understand and analyze. However, these photographs by Robert Frank are approachable for them. They can understand immediately what the subject of the photograph is, and with some discussion and prompting, will learn very easily to examine the deeper meaning within the photo. The fact that most of my students are familiar with the idea of isolation will help them to relate even more.

This collection of photographs is an excellent way for students to truly visualize what life was like in America during the 1950s. What they have read about in history books, short stories and poems will now be clearly visible. The concepts will be easier to grasp and eventually master. Another benefit of this unit is the potential for cross-curriculum activities. English, history and art departments can easily work together to help the students achieve complete understanding of the presented objectives. This unit does not have to be used just for the theme of alienation. Students can find visual images to represent other themes all around them. Once they know what to look for there will be no stopping them.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson One

The introduction to the theme of alienation must begin with a definition. Definitions can be found in any dictionary or text book, but the more definitions the better. The goal of this lesson is for the students to understand the concept of alienation. By using more than one source for the definition, the students will have different ways to understand the term. To determine if the students truly understand the meaning, they will write their own definition of the word and list at least three examples from movies that support their definition. Because the original definition contains multiple degrees of alienation, the students must be able to recognize the differences. Their own definitions and examples must reflect these varying degrees. They will share their results with the entire class and be evaluated by their classmates.

Materials

- Textbook
- Dictionary and/or thesaurus

Objectives

The first objective of this lesson is for the students to master the concept of alienation. Through discussion and examples given by the teacher, the students will be able to understand the different degrees of alienation. The next objective is for the students to be able to identify and recognize the theme of alienation in movies with which they are familiar. This will help them clearly visualize the concept and relate.

Activity One

The teacher will introduce to the class the standard definition of alienation from one source. Some students may understand immediately, but most will not. Next, the teacher will bring in at least two other definitions of the term. Once the teacher has explained them, the students need to identify the similarities and differences. This is a guided discussion where the teacher's main purpose is to keep the students on the right track. One student should be appointed to write on the board the results of the class discussion. In the list of similarities and differences, the different forms of alienation should have been discovered. If not, have the students explain the difference between isolation, separation, and detachment. It should be clear that alienation can be physical as well as emotional. The students must understand this in order to identify the theme in movies.

Once the students have recognized the different forms of alienation, as a class they should begin to identify movies that contain the same theme. They should find different examples for each of the types of alienation. They must be able to prove their point; simply stating the name of a movie will not be enough. The teacher can help them by asking questions about the characters, plot, conflict and resolution. This should be done several times in order for the students to feel more comfortable with their understanding of the term.

Activity Two

Individually, the students need to begin to write their own definition for the term alienation. They should make clear the different types and uses of the term. Next they need to list at least three movies that they believe contain the theme of alienation. Each example should support different types of alienation. They need to write a few paragraphs identifying the theme in the example movie, and then analyzing how it is portrayed in the film. The more detail they provide, the better they have mastered the theme. They should not use examples listed in class unless they are going to tie in alienation in a different way than what was previously discussed.

Evaluation

Once completed, each student needs to share their definition and their examples with the class. The class as a whole will ask the presenting students questions about their definitions and examples. Most likely, some students will not agree with what their classmate has come up with. Each side should be allowed to prove their point with minimal interjection by the teacher. After everyone has presented, the teacher should point out how various the definition and examples were. The class should discuss why this is and what it means about the definition of alienation.

Lesson Two

Materials

Paper and Pen

Objectives

The primary objective of this lesson will be connecting with the theme of alienation on a personal level. By this point the students should feel very comfortable with their understanding of the theme. Now they need to know that it is not just a theme in literature and film, but an emotion that they have all felt to some degree. Students will identify a real life time where they felt alienated and write an essay describing the experience. Once the students can personally connect to the abstract theme of alienation, it will cement their understanding of the concept. The next objective will consist of the students working in groups to write a short fictional story that portrays the theme of alienation. By fictionalizing the theme in their own short story, it will help them identify it in other works they will be introduced to at a later date.

Activity One

For the first half of class, students should work individually to identify a time they themselves felt alienated, or some degree of alienation. At first some students will be embarrassed and not want to write about such a personal topic, but it is important that the teacher explain that these essays will not be shared with the other students, and they need only share enough of the experience to make it clear the student truly understands the concept of alienation. Other students may claim to never have felt alienated. The teacher should give general examples that are common among all teenagers. This should help trigger the student's memory.

Activity Two

For this activity, the students need to break up into groups of three or four. The teacher will explain that each group is going to write their own short story that contains the theme of alienation. The stories should be completely fictional and have a clear conflict the main character or characters need to overcome. There does not need to be a resolution. In groups, the students should first decide on a rough outline for their story. This will help them stay focused in their writing. Their own personal experiences will most likely inspire their plot and characters.

Evaluation

The teacher should personally evaluate the personal essays and provide feedback only on whether the concept of alienation was truly expressed in the student's personal experience. It is important to grade only on whether the student shows understanding of the concept, not the experience itself. For the second activity, students will share their short stories with the entire class. The class should analyze the stories being presented, identify the use of alienation, and then comment on whether or not the group was successful. If the class has a hard time identifying the theme of alienation in a group's short story, have them explain why and what should be done to clarify.

Lesson Three

Materials

- Magazines and newspapers that have a variety of styles of photographs
- Students' personal essays about alienation with teacher feedback from previous lesson
- Scissors
- Tape or paste
- Paper

Objectives

The primary objective for this lesson is to begin to make a visual connection with the concept of alienation and the personal experience of feeling alienated the students have written about. Each student will obtain an image that they feel best relates to their personal experience of being alienated. These pictures will come from magazines or newspapers; they should not use personal photographs. The students will then write an analysis of how the photo(s) relate to their personal essays. The images will be presented to the class, and as a class, they will identify how the photograph portrays alienation.

Activity One

Each student should be provided with a magazine that contains various styles of photographs. They should identify at least one photo that best visually represents their personal essay. Once the photo(s) has been identified, the student should cut it out from the magazine and tape or paste it to a piece of paper. Below the picture(s), each student should write a few paragraphs explaining why they feel this photo best represents their personal essay visually. The students will most likely need some guidance on what to look for in their photos. Have them identify images that suggest the feelings associated with alienation and that they felt in their personal essays. The teacher will need to have an example ready to share before the students begin. Once the students start, the teacher should monitor and provide feedback while the student is working.

Activity Two

For the second activity, each student should share the photo(s) they have found with the rest of the class. The class then needs to analyze the photo and come to a verbal conclusion as to how the photo portrays alienation. Each photo should be discussed. At this point, the teacher will have started the class off. The teacher should point out the subject's expression, the colors in the photo, the framing, shadows, angle, and anything else of interest that will lead to a conclusion and understanding. Once the teacher has demonstrated this and guided the students through a few photographs, the students should begin to take over and lead the discussion with the teacher intervening for guidance only.

Evaluation

The teacher will grade the students' personal written explanation of how the photo connects to the students' personal essays. Provide feedback that will help the student further analyze the photo. For the group activity, the teacher should grade on participation of the class. Each student should be involved in the analysis in order to make sure everyone understands.

Lesson Four

Materials

- Copy of Robert Frost poem "Mending Wall"
- Magazines and newspapers.

Objectives

For this lesson the student will have to read and analyze the poem "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost. Once reading the poem as a class and individually, the students should begin breaking down the poem for understanding and then eventually to find examples of the theme of alienation. Once the students are comfortable with the meaning of the poem, in groups, students should find photographs from magazines and newspapers that represent the poem. They will have to present their finding to the entire class for a presentation grade.

Activity One

The poem should be first read out loud by either one student or broken down for several. The poem should be read out loud at least twice as a class. Once read, the teacher should lead the students in a guided discussion of what the poem means. Have the students identify images that stand out in their mind and ask them describe what they pictured in their mind while reading the poem. After a brief discussion, the students should read the poem again, this time silently to themselves. Have the student write down comments and questions as they read. When everyone has finished, the students should share their comments and questions. Further discussion should lead to the use of alienation in the poem. At this point the students should be familiar enough with the concept that they may identify examples clearly. Students need to understand the two different perspectives of each character in the poem, the neighbor and the narrator. Each perspective has their own opinion on the necessity of walls. The students should decide who they agree with and why.

Activity Two

In groups of three or four, students should find photographs from magazines and newspapers that best represents the Robert Frost poem. They should try to limit their findings to two or three images. These pictures can be photographs, illustrations, or digital images. What is important is that they do not simply find a picture of a wall. It must represent as closely as possible the full range of emotions expressed in the poem. They will present their findings to the class for a grade.

Evaluation

While discussing the poem, the teacher should be monitoring the understanding of the students. It is important to provide open-ended questions that require the student to come to his or her own conclusions, not to simply state what they think the teacher wants to hear. When the students have found their images and made their presentations, it is important to make sure the students have clearly understood the poem and the photographs they have chosen. Their presentation should be clear and concise. It should be obvious the students have put a lot of thought in to the images they have chosen.

Lesson Five

Materials

- A copy of *The Americans* by Robert Frank
- Personal digital or film cameras

Objectives

For this lesson, the students will study the series of photographs by Robert Frank. This will be easiest if the teacher has access to a projector and the scanned images from *The Americans*. If not, a copy of the book itself will suffice. The students will be asked to analyze the photos for meaning and to identify the use of alienation. The next objective consists of each student taking their own photograph that they feel best portrays alienation.

Activity One

The students should first look at all of the images silently, making note of their personal favorites. Once all images have been viewed, the class should discuss what the overall tone is of the photos. What do they have in common? How are they different? The teacher should remind the students how to break down and analyze each photograph by looking at the subject's expression, the shadows, the angle, and anything else that stands out. The students should share which pictures stood out for them and explain why. At first the teacher will have to guide them, but once the students get comfortable, they should take over the discussion. The students need to analyze how

the photographs represent alienation. Through discussion, they should identify separate photographs for the different degrees of alienation.

Activity Two

This activity will best be performed outside of class. The students should have at least a week to bring in the final product. Each student will take a photograph that they feel best portrays alienation. Most of the students will not be familiar with photography techniques, so for this activity the fine arts teacher should be brought in to help. The students need to decide what form of alienation they want to cover and begin getting ideas on what will be needed in the photograph in order for this to work. Once they have taken their photos, they should present them to the class with an explanation. The rest of the class should ask questions and make observations about the photographs.

Evaluation

The teacher should base the student's grade on comprehension of the theme of alienation in photographs, not the photograph itself. The student's presentation should make it clear if mastery of alienation has been accomplished. The teacher should also evaluate the other student's reactions to the photo presentations. The class should also evaluate the photograph being presented. Do they think it truly represents alienation? Why or why not?

CONCLUSION

In this curriculum unit, I have attempted to connect the literal them of alienation and all of its forms with a visual representation. It is necessary for the student to understand all perspectives of a concept to truly master their understanding. By looking at photographs, movies, poetry, and their own writing, the students can achieve a truly personal understanding of the subject. Our students live in a visual world, and it is extremely important to tap in to this world to better reach our students and help them master the knowledge they need to be successful in their future.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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