

Engaging Urban Learners in Reading *The Scarlet Letter*, Sandra Whitaker

In "Become a Character: Adjectives, Character Traits, and Perspective" students "become" one of the major characters in *The Scarlet Letter* and describe themselves and other characters, using Internet reference tools to compile lists of accurate, powerful adjectives. In class discussion, students support their lists with details from the novel. This activity can easily be adapted for other texts.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=168

Behind Education: How Can You "Be the Book" Behind Bars? Dave Iasevoli

Iasevoli is faced with the difficult task of motivating his incarcerated students. One way he accomplishes this is by inviting the students to become the characters in the text they are reading. "Audio Broadcasts and Podcasts: Oral Storytelling and Dramatization" exposes students to Orson Welles's broadcast of H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* in October 1938. After exploring Welles's broadcast, students create criteria for effective audio dramatizations and then compose their dramatization of a scene from a recent reading.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=901

Seeing English in the City: Using Photography to Understand Students' Literacy Relationships, Kristien Marquez-Zenkov and James A. Harmon

Marquez-Zenkov and Harmon detail how students revealed their attitudes toward literacy in photographs and words. To take this idea a step further, invite students to use those photographs to write a news story. "The Feature Story—Fifteen Minutes (and 500 Words) of Fame!" combines interviewing techniques and journalistic writing as it challenges students to write feature stories about their classmates. After students take pictures of their subjects, they can write an article about them, while learning more about a genre of writing.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=987

Urban Education: Moving Past the Myth of Structure, Nancy G. Patterson and Renee Speed

Speed provides a moving reflection on the education she received growing up. She credits her success early in her school career to caring teachers. Invite students to celebrate their teachers by using "A Significant Influence: Describing an Important Teacher in Your Life." Students write a tribute to such a teacher and then publish their work in a class collection. Because college application essays often ask students to write about a significant influence, the lesson's extensions include resources for writing more-traditional, formal papers.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=824

Culturally Responsive Teaching: The Harlem Renaissance in an Urban English Class, Andrea J. Stairs

The Harlem Renaissance was a vibrant time that was characterized by innovations in art, literature, music, poetry, and dance. "A Harlem Renaissance Retrospective: Connecting Art, Music, Dance, and Poetry" invites students to conduct Internet research, work with interactive online tools, and create a museum exhibit that highlights the work of selected artists, musicians, and poets of the Harlem Renaissance. The culturally relevant teaching in this lesson emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and interdisciplinary connections.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=252

Illuminating Chaucer through Poetry, Manuscript Illuminations, and a Critical Rap Album, Tom Liam Lynch

Lynch used students' prior knowledge of popular music to help them make connections to Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. "Examining Transcendentalism through Popular Culture" invites students to work with excerpts from the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, comics, and songs from different musical genres to examine the characteristics of transcendentalism. In their exploration, students use multiple genres to interpret social commentaries, make connections among works they've studied in class, and develop their views on individualism, nature, and passive resistance.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=320

The Bard in the Bathroom: Literary Analysis, Filmmaking, and Shakespeare, Joe Bucolo

Bucolo creates an environment in which students want to discuss what they are reading and what they think about the text. In "Exploring Literature through Letter-Writing Groups," students are asked to discuss literature through a series of letter exchanges. It can be used as a one-time assignment in conjunction with any work of literature, or it can be used throughout the year with the students discussing and making connections among a number of literary works.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=397

The Art of Imitation, J. Scott Shields

Using a time-tested strategy in the teaching of writing, Shields invites students to write in the style similar to a studied author. "Literary Parodies: Exploring a Writer's Style through Imitation" asks students to analyze the features of a poet's work and then create poems based on the original model. By exploring sample poems and their parodies, students focus on the language and style of the original writer, all in the process of playing with poetry. http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=839

Check It Out! Using Checklists to Support Student Learning, Kathleen Dudden Rowlands

Rowlands details numerous ways that checklists can enhance teaching and learning. One example she provides is using a checklist in a British Romantic poetry unit. "Put That on the List: Collaboratively Writing a Catalog Poem" also uses a checklist to help the students with the activity. Using the structure of the list, students combine creative expression with poetic techniques and language exploration to write group poems about what matters in their lives. The checklist helps students include all of the requirements and manage their group work. http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=894

Engendering Gender Equity: Using Literature to Teach and Learn Democracy, Jeraldine R. Kraver

Kraver uses the Literature Response Model to have students respond to literature and look at the representation of gender. "Comic Makeovers: Examining Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Media" invites students to explore representations of race, class, ethnicity, and gender by analyzing comics over a two-week period and then reenvisioning them with a "comic character makeover." This activity leads to greater awareness of the stereotypes in the media and urges students to form more realistic visions as they perform their makeovers. http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=207

ReadWriteThink (<http://www.readwritethink.org>) is a nonprofit Thinkfinity Web site maintained by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA), with support from the Verizon Foundation. They provide to classroom teachers free lesson plans, interactive student materials, and Web resources linked to ELA standards.