

In Search of a Hero, in Search of Self, Susan Arpajian Jolley

Jolley presents a research project where students determine if their “hero” is truly a hero. Several model texts are listed, including *Beowulf*. “Literary Guide: *Beowulf*” provides an overview of the poem, details on its language and poetics, and an exploration of the translation of the work. In addition, there are two ReadWriteThink lesson plans that provide ideas for using *Beowulf* in the classroom.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/beowulf/>

Viva la Revolución: Transforming Teaching and Assessing Student Writing through Collaborative Inquiry, Molly Fanning and Brigid Schmidt
Fanning and Schmidt grapple with assessing writing. One assessment approach is detailed in “Peer Review: Narrative.” Instead of asking untrained students to give feedback to a peer’s draft during response groups, teach them the PQP technique. PQP—Praise–Question–Polish—requires group members (usually two to five per group) to take a turn reading their drafts aloud as the other students follow along with copies. This oral reading helps the writer to hear the piece in another voice and to identify possible changes independently. The responders then react to the piece by writing comments on the PQP form.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=122

Developing Critical Consciousness: Resisting Literature in a Chicano Literature Class, Curtis Acosta

Acosta reminds us of the importance of a student’s identity and its role in the classroom. “Assessing Cultural Relevance: Exploring Personal Connections to a Text” invites students to evaluate a nonfiction or realistic fiction text for its cultural relevance to themselves personally and as a group. Students search for additional, relevant texts; each chooses one; and students write reviews of the texts that they chose. This lesson is an especially powerful choice for English language learners.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=1003

What Classroom Technology Has Taught Me about Curriculum, Teaching, and Infinite Possibilities, Laura Christine Rochette

Rochette details the importance of teaching students how to evaluate critically all of the multimedia they encounter, including artwork. Francis Cugat’s 1925 cover art for *The Great Gatsby* and *The View of Toledo* by El Greco, mentioned in the final pages of the novel, are the focus of prereading and postreading activities in “Judging a Book by Its Cover: The Art and Imagery of *The Great Gatsby*.” Students tap visual literacy skills as they analyze the artwork commissioned for the novel’s cover. Based on their analysis, students make predictions about the plot and imagery of the novel. After completing their reading, students revisit the visual imagery and artwork, then conclude their study by designing their own cover for the novel.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=967

Transforming English with Graphic Novels: Moving toward Our “Optimus Prime,” James Bucky Carter

Carter details the use of graphic novels and comics in the classroom. An interesting idea is to have students truly look at the content of those texts. In “Comic Makeovers: Examining Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Media,” students explore representations of race, class, ethnicity, and gender by analyzing comics over a two-week period and then re-envisioning 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. These skills can also be applied to graphic novels and other texts.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=207

Perspective-Taking as Transformative Practice in Teaching Multicultural Literature to White Students, Amanda Haertling Thein, Richard Beach, and Daryl Parks

Thein, Beach, and Parks suggest ways to get students to open up and talk about their thoughts on multicultural literature. “Exploring Language and Identity: Amy Tan’s ‘Mother Tongue’ and Beyond” offers a similar strategy. By examining the relationship between language and identity in Tan’s essay, students increase their awareness of language in their family, home, peer, and work communities. Students explore fiction and nonfiction texts and write literacy narratives, which can lead to many more discussions in and out of the classroom.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=910

Vygotsky and the Social Dynamics of Classrooms, Peter Smagorinsky

Smagorinsky details the importance of discussion in the classroom and how crucial it is for students to understand their audience during those discussions. “Finding Common Ground: Using Logical, Audience-Specific Arguments” presents a hypothetical situation to students. They then generate arguments from opposing points of view, discover areas of commonality through the use of Venn diagrams, and construct logical, audience-specific arguments to persuade their opponents. Students also have an opportunity to role-play with classmates to refine their arguments. This activity further reinforces the idea of knowing your audience in discussions. http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=938

Dripping with Literacy, a Jazz-Fueled Road Trip, a Place to Breathe, Don Zancanella

This article invited teachers to ask themselves, “What should high school English be?” We know that students are becoming more and more literate in a variety of texts. Invite them to share with you their literacies. “Defining Literacy in a Digital World” asks students to identify the many texts that they read and compose—including books and magazines, television shows, movies, audio broadcasts, hypertexts, and animations. By creating an inventory of personal texts, students begin to consciously recognize the many literacy demands in contemporary society. With this start, they create a working definition of literacy that they refine and explore further as the term continues.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=915

The Grapes of Wrath Restored: Creating Web Sites to Assess Student Learning, Jeff House

House shares a way that he took a canonical text, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and made it more engaging for students. “Designing Museum Exhibits for *The Grapes of Wrath: A Multigenre Project*” presents another project for this text. As students read *The Grapes of Wrath*, many important issues from the Depression era surface. This lesson asks students to focus on one issue as it applies to the novel. Working alone or with a partner, students create artifacts in a variety of genres for a museum exhibit that will demonstrate important facts about the research topic and its significance to viewers.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=892