

Media Explorations
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Overview

This unit, Media Explorations, is research-based with an infusion of media related topics. The unit is rich standards based curriculum and includes evaluative tools such as rubrics. The research is centered on the civil rights movement that took place in the 1960's. Students will research one aspect of the movement and write a creative research paper from the perspective of someone who lived through and actively participated in the civil rights movement. This unit will be taught to both ninth and eleventh grade high school students. These students attend David B. Oliver High School. Oliver is an inner-city school within the Pittsburgh Public School District. The school houses a large poverty stricken population.

Rationale

Teaching to the standards is not always easy. In fact it can pose time constraint issues for the instructor. However, in my opinion there is no better way to maintain student achievement and growth than by implementing standards based curriculum. The amount of time, research, and effort put forth by the teacher is well worth the end result, the students' ownership of the materials. Standards based education is about the students taking ownership of their education. It's about the students recognizing the goal and designing a means of achieving the goal. It's about students growing, succeeding, and moving forward. In the Pittsburgh Public School system our students are doing this. They are taking ownership of their education and they are experiencing academic success and growth. Behind these students are great teachers, veteran and new, who are motivating students, K-12, to meet and exceed the educational standards set before them.

In order to promote standards based curriculum in my classroom I have devised a research project that provides various opportunities for students to both meet and exceed the standards set forth in the English Language Arts Portfolio: reading, writing and speaking, listening, and viewing. This research project is multifaceted and written from the perspective of a person who lived through the researched events. The addition of perspective promotes a greater sense of ownership in that the students cannot simply obtain facts from the encyclopedia, Internet, books, etc. and plagiarize someone else's work as their own.

Objectives

The primary objective of this unit is that each student will write and present a creative research project. As a class we will focus on all three exhibited areas of the English Language Arts

Portfolio: reading; writing; and speaking, listening, and viewing. All portfolio cover sheets are standards-based and generated by Pittsburgh Public Schools. All projects will meet and/or exceed specific portfolio standards. Each project will be presented on a day that will be open to other teachers, administrators, and the students' family members.

The reading exhibit will focus on four portfolio entries: Reading Accomplishment in Literature; Reading Accomplishment in Informational Materials; Reading Accomplishment in Public Documents; and Quantity, Range, and Depth in Reading. All reading exhibit cover sheets are in the appendix.

The writing exhibit will focus on three portfolio entries: A Narrative Account; A Report of Information; and A Persuasive Essay. All writing exhibit cover sheets are in the appendix.

The speaking, listening, and viewing exhibit will focus on two portfolio entries: Information and Viewing Option. All speaking, listening, and viewing cover sheets are in the appendix.

Throughout this unit students will participate in writing workshops that are rich in student/teacher conferences, student/student conferences, and peer editing. The purpose of these conferences and editing practices is to aid the students in successfully completing the writing process. Creating, organizing, and completing the research project will afford all students the opportunity to practice all tasks housed within the writing process: prewriting, drafting, composing, revising, proofreading, and publishing.

While reading various research-based literatures the students will practice implementing reading strategies. These strategies will promote deep, critical reading. It will enable students to read between the lines and will promote understanding of the written word.

Strategies

Preparing and presenting the creative research project is the main strategy of this unit. However, imbedded within are multiple tasks that are directly related to the main goal. Before the students begin writing they must participate in active research. They must understand how to conduct research and how to turn their research into a journal written from the perspective of a person who lived through and participated in the researched events.

It is in this area that various reading strategies and all elements of the writing process must be understood and practiced. The reading strategies will be fully outlined and detailed in the Classroom Activities section; however these strategies will include all concepts as provided to the Pittsburgh Public School teachers by the Board of Education's Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Department. The premise of the reading strategies is as follows:

Before Reading: skim the text, tap into prior knowledge, make predictions, set a purpose

During Reading: check for meaning, read fluently, use fix ups

After Reading: summarize, evaluate/reflect

Listed below is the writing process as provided to all Pittsburgh Public School teachers by the Board of Education's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Department:

Prewriting: generate ideas, sort through data, cluster or classify ideas

Drafting: make a rough outline, generalize from detail, support conclusions, emphasize cause and effect

Composing: write a first draft, leave space for rewriting, chose specific, concrete words and images, vary sentence length and type, use transition words and phrases

Revising: analyze logic and coherence, make changes and additions, support weak paragraphs, clarify, confer with a partner

Proofreading: edit, read each sentence aloud, replace nonspecific terms, capitalize, punctuate, check for spelling errors

Publishing: read work aloud, exchange papers, accept criticism, enter your writing in contests, post your work, make a decorative copy and display it, mail a copy or taped reading, take pride in your work

Classroom Activities

Week One:

Introduction to the unit: View the film The 60's, executive producer Lynda Obst and director Mark Piznarski

Writing Portfolio Entry: Narrative Account

View The 60's film

Pick character to follow throughout the film.

Write a narrative account detailing the chosen character's experiences and involvement in various movements.

In order to effectively introduce the dynamic happenings of the 1960's era, I find it necessary to provide a story/video that encompasses all-important events of the decade. The 1999 film The 60's enables the viewer to relive the era through the eyes of four very different main characters. Each character follows an avenue that provides an opportunity for the filmmakers to insert actual footage of the time. For example, Michael is an avid civil rights activist. In the film he attends sit-ins that actually occurred. When Michael is in attendance the film goes to black and white footage of the actual event. It is startling to recognize the atrocities that many of the civil rights activists endured in order to help secure equal rights for all people.

Aside from Michael we meet his brother Brian, who joins the Marines and fights in Vietnam. We meet their younger sister, Katie, who becomes pregnant at the age of sixteen, runs away to have her baby, and becomes involved in a hippie commune style of living. Also, we meet Emmett, who is the son of Reverend Taylor. Rev. Taylor and his wife are staunch followers of Dr. Martin Luther King. Emmett is tired of practicing peaceful activism when it comes to his rights as a young black man. He becomes involved in the Black Panthers then, in an attempt to make amends with his dead father, he finds his way back to a peaceful path of activism.

As students view the film they must participate in two distinct forms of note taking. First, each student must choose one of the four characters that he/she wishes to follow throughout the film. The students are responsible for charting the character's growth throughout the 60's. Each student is aware that he/she must know his/her character so well that he/she could predict his/her character's actions in any given situation. The second form of note taking is related to the events that all four characters are experiencing. When an event takes place in the film the name, place, and year of the event is printed at the bottom of the screen. Each student is responsible for recognizing the event and describing it in his/her notes so well that a person who is unaware of the event will gain a full understanding of what occurred by reading the student's notes.

Although the activity at hand throughout the film is simply note taking, I present it as a crucial task to my students. Their ability to understand the happenings of the time are directly related to their ability to recognize what was happening and how it affected the progress of our country as a whole. The note taking provides an opportunity for the students to recognize the event, review what occurred, and reflect on the experiences of all involved.

Upon completion of the film and the note taking, students are expected to complete a narrative account of their character. The narrative account must meet and/or exceed all standards as set forth by the Pittsburgh Public School District (see appendix A).

Students will participate in student/teacher conferencing when the rough draft of the narrative account is complete. The conference will focus on how the ability of each student to meet and/or exceed the narrative account's standards. Students will then work to complete the final draft of the work.

The student teacher conference sheet is as follows:

Name_____

Date of Conference_____

Topic_____

How does the writer specifically engage the reader?

Does the writer clearly establish elements of plot, conflict, and setting clearly for the reader?
Explain using specific examples from the writing.

Are the character(s) well developed? Explain the complexity of the character(s) using specific examples from the narrative account.

Is there a strong connection between the events that occur and the conclusions drawn from these events? Explain using a specific example from the writing.

Is the narrative arranged in an organized, chronological manner?

Did the writer include sensory details so that the reader is able to close his/her eyes and see, hear, smell, taste, touch the events as the character(s) does? Explain using a specific example from the narrative.

Are details not needed for the story eliminated?

Did the writer include a range of strategies such as dialogue, tension or suspense, naming, pacing, and narrative action? Point to the specifics of each within the narrative.

Explain how the writer made this piece come alive for the reader.

Week Two:

Focus: Research

Reading Portfolio Entry: Reading Accomplishment in Informational Materials, Reading Accomplishment in Public Documents and Quantity, Range, and Depth in Reading.

Writing Portfolio Entry: A Report of Information

Speaking Portfolio Entry: Information

During week two all students will participate in researching a specific area of the 1960's. The researched topics will be directly linked to the film viewed during week one. For instance, if a student followed the character Michael through the film, then the student may wish to research an aspect of the civil rights movement.

Also, during this week the students are responsible for meeting and/or exceeding five different portfolio entries: reading accomplishment in informational materials; reading accomplishment in public documents; quantity, range and depth in reading; a report of information; and speaking-information (see appendix A for all cover sheets). All portfolio pieces are related to the gathering of information. Students must read information, gather examples of public documents from the

1960's, write informative reports and present all information to the class on the last day of the week.

Students will spend four of the five days in the library computer lab. In that area they will have access to the computers, the Internet and all available literature related to the topic.

On the fifth day the students will present their individual research findings to the class. All students will evaluate their peers based on the speaking/informative standards set before them. Student evaluation sheets are as follows:

Name _____

Person Evaluating _____

Date of Evaluation _____

Topic _____

Part I Delivery

List specific examples evidencing that the speaker maintained the following:

Appropriate eye contact-

Appropriate posture-

Expressive use of language and gestures-

Adjusted speech to interact with audience-

Effective use of speech devices such as pace, volume, stress, enunciation, and pronunciation-

Audible speech patterns-

Enthusiastic delivery-

Part II Content

List specific examples evidencing that the speaker presented the following:

Topic was interesting and appropriate for the audience-

A clear purpose was illustrated in the introduction-

Extensive research was demonstrated-

Used an attention-getting introduction-

Content is in logical order-

Supporting details are connective-

Conclusion is effective-

Defined unfamiliar terminology-

Few mechanical and/or usage errors-

Used effective visual aids-

Comments:

Affording students the opportunity to evaluate their peers allows them to focus more clearly on the expectations set before them. The evaluations give them a better understanding of what is expected and how to achieve the goal.

Week Three:

Focus: Meeting people who participated in the 60's.

Reading Portfolio Entry: Reading Accomplishment in Literature

Writing Portfolio Entry: Persuasive Essay

Students will participate in a panel discussion with parents, community members, teachers and administrators in order to gain various perspectives on life in the 1960's. The purpose of holding an event such as this is to afford the students the opportunity to discuss researched topics with people who lived through them. First hand knowledge and real stories of what it was like in Pittsburgh will bring this unit to life for the students.

Days one and two of week three will focus on preparing for the panel. Students will be required to continue analyzing and synthesizing various aspects of the 60's as they pertain to Pittsburgh. Students will then work in small groups to create questions for the panelists. Each group will focus on one specific aspect of the 1960's. Part of the small group work preparation will include a focus on the Eyes On The Prize PBS Video. Each group will view and discuss specific portions of the documentary that pertains to the civil rights movement. The group will work at creating questions for the panel that include panel participants recollections of the events viewed in the documentary. All questions will relate to the researched material and will demonstrate critical thinking skills on the part of the students. Small groups and the teacher will review the questions. This review is designed to ensure that the questions prompt open-ended discussion. The panel discussion will take place on day three.

During days four and five we will continue on our journey into the realm of perspective by allowing the students to read the short story "Ambush" by Tim O'Brien. This story illustrates the physical and emotional ambush of a soldier in Vietnam. Upon completing the story, students will practice taking on the persona of the characters from the film. Each student will write a persuasive paper that illustrates the following prompt:

Persuade the reader to believe that you experienced both physical and emotional ambush in the 1960's. Remember to write in the persona of your character. Your writing must come alive for the reader; therefore, include all sensory details (see, hear, smell, taste, touch). Follow the attached rubric to secure your ability to meet and/or exceed the standard.

Persuasive Persona Rubric

Level of standard achievement	5=A Exceeded the standard	4=B Achieved the standard	3=C Little evidence of standard achievement	2=D Below the standard	1=E Did not do the assignment
Content	Exceptional attention to details and persuasion	Much attention to details and persuasion	Some attention to details and persuasion	No attention to details or persuasion	Did not do the assignment
Style	Written from the persona of the character- the character's voice is actively persuading the reader	Written from the persona of the character- the character's voice is actively persuading the reader	Persona alters from author to character- the author and the character are both active voices of persuasion	Character is referred to- author is the active voice of persuasion	Did not do the assignment
Organization	Highly organized with exceptional attention to persuasive techniques	Organized with attention to persuasive techniques	Somewhat organized with weak persuasive techniques	Not organized no attention to persuasive techniques	Did not do the assignment
Grammar	No errors	Few errors	Several	Numerous	Did not do

			errors	errors	the assignment
Usage	Exceptional use of vocabulary and sentence structure	Good use of vocabulary and sentence structure	Minimal use of vocabulary and sentence structure	No attention to vocabulary or sentence structure	Did not do the assignment

It has been my experience that rubric-specific assignments provide clear expectations for students. Clear expectations afford the students the opportunity to take ownership of the assignment. Once ownership is achieved, the students become involved in the learning process. They understand what it is that they must accomplish in order to meet and/or exceed the standards set before them. Clear expectations present the standards in a way that successfully challenges the students' abilities to meet and/or exceed standard achievement.

Week Four:

Focus: Writing Workshop-Creative Research Paper.

Writing Portfolio Entry: Narrative Account, Report of Information

Week four will allow students to participate in a writing workshop. The workshop will be research based. All students will spend days one, two, and three in the library actively researching a specific area of the civil rights movement. The researched topic must be related to the character followed throughout the film: i.e. if the student followed Katie throughout the film then the student must research the hippie movement of the 1960's.

Days four and five will be devoted to creating a journal of the character. The journal must detail the character's experiences during the 1960's. All experiences must be factual and include the character's emotions. The purpose of having the students create a personal journal of the character that is research based is to create an assignment free of plagiarism. This assignment also promotes standards-driven work on the part of the student. The creative research paper and rubric are as follows:

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1960's Creative Research Paper

Name:

Date:

Due Date:

For this assignment you are to tell the story of the 1960's character you chose. You are to use the factual information from your research to journal the character's personal life story during the 1960's.

Remember, a journal is, *"a personal record of occurrences, experiences, and reflections kept on a regular basis; a diary. It is an official record of daily proceedings,"* (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition, 1996).

In your journal you must include ten entries, photos, and artifacts. You may include other memorabilia that will give the reader a complete understanding of your character.

Your journal must be in the form of a diary. Use an old notebook, or create a diary with ribbon, construction paper, and lined paper. Decorate the front cover so that it represents who your character is. Decorate the pages of the journal in a way that allows the character's personality to shine through.

This assignment is fact based with much room for creativity. Use your creativity to paint a complete picture of the facts!

Follow the attached rubric to secure your ability to meet and/or exceed the standards.

Creative Research Rubric

Level of standard achievement	5=A Exceeded the standard	4=B Achieved the standard	3=C Little to no evidence of standard achievement	2=D Below the standard	1=E Did not do the assignment
Content	Exceptional attention to accurate detail and the character's emotions	Much attention to accurate detail and the character's emotions	Little attention to accurate detail and the character's emotions	No attention to accurate detail or the characters emotions	Did not do the assignment
Style	Written from the perspective of the character- the character is the active	Written from the perspective of the character- the character is the active	Perspective alters between the character as the active voice and the author as	Character is referred to instead of being the active voice	Did not do the assignment

	voice	voice	the active voice		
Organization	Highly organized- photos, artifacts, etc. are placed in appropriate places	Organized- attention to the placement of photos, artifacts, etc.	Organized- little attention to the placement of photos, artifacts, etc.	Not organized- no photos, artifacts, etc.	Did not do the assignment
Grammar	No errors	Few errors	Several errors	Numerous errors	Did not do the assignment
Usage	Exceptional use of vocabulary and sentence structure	Good use of vocabulary and sentence structure	Minimal use of vocabulary and sentence structure	No attention to vocabulary or sentence structure	Did not do the assignment

Week Five:

Focus: Complete Creative Research

Presentation: Creative Research Papers

Week five is devoted to students completing and presenting their creative research projects. As I stated before, the creative research paper is designed to prevent plagiarism and to allow the students an opportunity to make a personal connection to the research. It is during the presentation time period that the students' personal connections to and ownership of the creative research paper is recognized.

Days one and two will provide time for students to conference with the teacher and revise parts of the paper/journal. This time is also used to discuss what the class, as a whole, expects to learn from the presentations of their peers.

Days three, four, and five are presentation days. Each student will read his/her journal to the class. In order to set the stage for a successful reading, I will provide two essential pieces. Candles and 1960's background music. Candles and music are both found at poetry and book readings. I feel that the journal readings will benefit from the relaxed atmosphere that follow both elements.

As part of the presentation all students will evaluate their peers in the following areas: research, ability to create a research-based journal, and the public speaking performance. Also, each student will be videotaped as he/she presents his/her journal. The videotapes will be analyzed by the students as a means of evaluating his/her personal public speaking practices.

The following rubric will allow students to evaluate their peers ability to meet and/or exceed the creative research presentation standards:

Creative Research Presentation Rubric

Name:

Date:

Presenter:

Topic:

Evidence of score must be noted in appropriate score boxes.

Level of standard achievement	5=A exceeded the standard	4=B achieved the standard	3=C almost achieved the standard	2=D below the standard	1=E did not present
Content & Knowledge	Exceptional grasp of content – obvious knowledge of topic	Good grasp of content – obvious knowledge of topic	Grasp of content – some knowledge of topic	Little grasp of content – little knowledge of topic	Did not present
Style	Speaker presented in the persona of the character	Speaker presented in the persona of the character	Speaker presented in persona of character and self	Speaker presented as self	Did not present
Organization	Highly organized	Organized	Somewhat organized	Not organized	Did not present
Speech Patterns	Clear speech-	Clear speech-	Clear speech-	Unclear speech-	Did not present

	effective command of the language- no filler words	effective command of the language- no filler words	usual command of the language- some filler words (um, you know, like, etc).	no clear command of the language, many filler words (um, you know, like, etc.)	
Body Language	Appropriate to public speaking – no extreme movements	Appropriate to public speaking – no extreme movements	Somewhat appropriate to public speaking – some fidgeting	Not appropriate to public speaking – much fidgeting	Did not present

Comments:

After each presentation, the presenting student will remain in the presenter's chair and take part in a class discussion detailing the presentation. Students who evaluated the presenter will first praise the presenter for areas that were presented in an exceptional manner. The student presenter will then be afforded the opportunity to respond to the praise and articulate any additional comments about his/her performance and/or areas he/she feels need to be improved. At this point the evaluating students will turn to the rubric and share their scores with the presenter. The students must give specific examples of the presenter's performance when reasoning the score. It is here that accountable-talk on the part of the students will become apparent. The evaluators and the presenter will engage in standards-based conversation detailing their work. It is here that the ownership of the work is obvious. The students are taking control of their learning environment by becoming a part of the evaluation. The ultimate grade for the project will not be deemed as something given by the teacher. Rather, it will be viewed as something earned and understood. The grade becomes the ownership of the recipient who engaged in an evaluative conversation with his/her peers discussing what he/she did well, and what he/she needs to improve upon. The student's peers address specific examples of the presentation, which gives validity to his/her work.

An assignment-specific rubric coupled with a strong focus on standards-based student work has proven to be a success in my classroom. It has helped my students grow and take control of the educational environment. These tools provide clear expectations and an opportunity for the

students to fully grasp grades as an evaluative process. The students become a part of the process, not a separate entity.

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