

Literary Voices of the Excluded

Using Literature to Facilitate Empathy Training

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Overview

Middle School is a powerful time to focus the attention of children on issues of exclusion and discrimination. Children in this age group are very concerned with fairness and of what is right and what is wrong. The students I teach often express shock and outrage when they learn about discrimination in a global or historic context, such as stories of the civil rights movement and stories of the Holocaust. However, they often fail to relate their global concerns to their own situations. In fact, students in this age group can be especially vicious to their own peers who are not members of a dominant clique or who are different because of race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, or physical or mental disability.

This curriculum attempts to balance literacy goals with intervention strategies for reducing prejudice. Three major literacy goals are addressed in this curriculum; helping students make sense of complex text, writing in response to literature, and writing creatively in response to complex issues. In an attempt at prejudice reduction, this curriculum seeks to create safe situations in classrooms where students can discuss exclusion, racism, and prejudice. Literature will provide the stimulus for these discussions. The second goal relating to prejudice reduction is using literature to facilitate empathy training. Poetry, fiction, and memoir will be used to develop empathy for excluded individuals in our society.

I currently teach gifted seventh and eighth graders, and I had my own students in mind when writing this curriculum. However, because most of the literature I suggest is quite sophisticated, I know that the plans and ideas presented here are appropriate for high school students. In the later pages of this document, I will present a plan for 15 class periods. However, I actually believe that the elements of this curriculum can be very effectively used as "parts" of other units. For instance, I will most likely insert them into mini courses I currently teach on poetry, fiction, and memoir. A teacher of senior English in my seminar suggested that the poem "Brain on Ice," by Michael Warr, would be an excellent companion piece to a poem in the 12th grade literature anthology she uses. I encourage teachers to examine the ideas and literature presented here and decide exactly how they can best be used with the students they teach.

This curriculum first introduces middle school aged children to the history, psychology and sociology of prejudice and discrimination. This information is presented in an academic manner,

allowing students to step back from these complex and controversial issues and to analyze them intellectually. Next, the literary genres of poetry, memoir, and fiction are used to cultivate empathy for excluded individuals and groups in our society. Finally, students are challenged to write both analytically and creatively. They will write formal response papers to the literature they read. They will also do their own creative writing that focuses on their experiences with or observations of exclusion and discrimination.

One of the goals of this curriculum unit will be to encourage middle school students to relate the degrading words, slurs, and put-downs they hear in their daily school lives to prejudice and racism on a global and historical level. I do not mean to equate name calling in the seventh grade to the tremendous damage caused by institutionalized racism in this country. However, I think that students are capable of seeing the connections between the two.

Rationale

Can Classroom Activities Help to Lessen Prejudice and Discrimination?

Sociologists, educators and social psychologists have spent a good deal of energy in the past 30 years studying programs designed to reduce prejudice in students. A review of these studies indicates that it is indeed possible to reduce discriminatory behavior in students and that some programs and techniques may work better than others. I will discuss several studies here and describe how they support my curriculum. The research I will review here includes two articles from the 1999 issue of *Journal of Social Issues* titled "Exploring and Evaluating School-Based Interventions to Reduce Prejudice" and "The Use of Multicultural Curricula and Materials to Counter Racism in Children". These two articles include extensive reviews and summaries of research conducted in the last thirty years. A second extremely useful source summarized here is *Improving Intergroup Relations Among Youth: Summary of a Research Workshop*. The results of sixteen research projects funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York in the late 90's are presented in this text. A companion text to this Carnegie Corporation report is a speech given in November, 2000 by David A Hamburg, the president emeritus of the Carnegie Corporation, titled "Diminishing Prejudice and Hatred in Child and Adolescent Development."

In their article "Exploring and Evaluating School-Based Interventions to Reduce Prejudice," in the Winter, 1999 issue of *Journal of Social Issues*, Frances E. Aboud and Virginia Fenwick review three studies, two of which lend credence to the belief that prejudice can be lowered as the result of activities in the classroom. The first study evaluated an 11 week classroom program designed to encourage, through teacher-led discussion, the processing of internal attributes of people rather than their race. In the second study, high-prejudice white students were paired with a low-prejudiced friend to discuss their racial evaluations. The third study explored ways that students orally respond when they overhear a peer's demeaning racial remark.

The first program was created because studies show that the cognitive ability to pay attention to individual differences rather than race differences develops during preadolescence. The 11 week program was developed to encourage this natural cognitive stage in fifth graders. The program

consisted of 11 one period activities that focused on the theme that internal qualities of individuals are more important than the external features of race. High-prejudice students showed a significant decrease in prejudice after the program. This study directly affirms the usefulness of the classroom ideas I am presenting. Many of the poems, memoirs, and short fiction I will ask students to read and discuss encourage the reader to focus on internal qualities of individuals instead of race.

White children between the ages of 8 and 11 years were the focus of the second study. In this study, high prejudiced and low prejudiced friends were paired for tape recorded discussions with no adults present. The pairs were given cards with statements that varied in their prejudicial attitudes. Analyses of student discussions revealed that the low prejudiced peers cited specific examples of whites, known to the partners, who displayed negative attributes, and blacks who displayed positive attributes. The research showed that this type of peer discussion did lead to a reduction of prejudice in the high-prejudiced peers. The unit I am presenting here provides many opportunities for peer discussion. However, it will be up to the teacher to steer the discussions in a direction where low prejudiced students can positively influence their high prejudiced peers.

Rebecca S. Bigler's article, "The Use of Multicultural Curricula and Materials to Counter Racism in Children," is the least encouraging piece of research presented here. Dr. Bigler reviewed scores of published and unpublished research that documented the use of multicultural literature in classrooms as a mechanism to reduce prejudice and racism among students. She found that "many of the interventions commonly cited as successful represent statistically significant effects that do not translate into practically or educationally meaningful outcomes". She then goes on to argue that many of these attempts have been only marginally successful because they are based on a learning model that assumes that mechanisms such as reinforcement, conditioning, and observational learning are the same across all ages, and ignore Piaget's delineation of cognitive processes. These programs also fail to take into consideration individual differences among children's responses to intervention efforts and the emotional/motivational factors that prohibit some children from being receptive to the intervention message.

However, Bigler does not completely dismiss the possibility that intervention strategies that include multicultural literature can help in reducing prejudice. In her conclusion, she suggests that "racial attitude interventions will have to be very broad in scope, addressing racial knowledge, beliefs, and behavior in numerous domains in order to combat racism effectively." She also states that highly effective programs may need to address such issues as stereotyping and intergroup bias explicitly. My plan to present historical, psychological and sociological reasons for humans to exclude others will do this. Although Bigler cites no studies that review empathy training, she does state that combinations of strategies based on several different theoretical foundations are needed.

In the book, *Improving Intergroup Relations Among Youth: Summary of a Research Workshop*, the results of sixteen research projects funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York in the late 90's are presented. Reading the summaries of these projects is extremely encouraging. Almost all of the researchers cite evidence that relationships among children and adolescents of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds can be improved through structured

programs in schools. More importantly, at least two of the studies support the idea that students need opportunities to discuss race, exclusion, and ethnicity in a safe environment. A project titled "A Tale of Two Towns: Intergroup Relations in Culturally Diverse Classrooms and Communities," found that as children move into the intermediate grades their participation in voluntary intergroup relations declines. One of the policy implications of this project was that teachers and students need to learn to talk about ethnicity, difference, race, racial inequity, and racism. This type of dialogue is what my curriculum promotes.

Another project titled, "Improving Interethnic Relations Among Youth: A School Based Project Involving Teachers, Parents, and Children", studied middle school students from six racial and ethnic groups in a small Northeastern city for two years. The program provided opportunities to discuss the impact of race and racism and to explore one's own sense of ethnicity and that of others. These researchers recommended that "opportunities to discuss race, ethnicity, and oppression in a safe environment should be available to all people, especially in schools."

The importance of teachers is the focal point of a third project sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation. This project studied 1,119 12 year olds from 5 ethnic groups in three urban and one rural community to examine teens' beliefs about justice and opportunity in America. The researchers said, "Our data points to the pivotal role of teachers in promoting a civic ethic. Choices about intervention or nonintervention in acts of intolerance send a message about the ethical and civil society and about justice in that society." They also reported a desire among these young people to promote intergroup understanding and to serve the public or common good. The findings of this project encourage teachers to be involved in promoting empathy and understanding.

My premise that adolescents are capable of relating issues of social justice in society to their own peer culture was supported by a fourth study in the Carnegie Corporation's report. The policy implications put forth by these researchers stated that, "eighth graders are most meaningfully engaged in issues of social justice within their own peer society," suggesting the importance of teaching strategies that encourage connecting Facing History and Ourselves (the curriculum used in this study) themes to critical incidents in the students' peer culture that many students are aware of and concerned about.

These four studies directly support the usefulness of my curriculum. These studies advocate providing opportunities for students to discuss race, exclusion, and ethnicity in a safe environment; the importance of teachers in promoting tolerance and acceptance; and the importance of relating themes of exclusion in the students' peer culture to more global issues of exclusion and prejudice.

David A. Hamburg, President Emeritus of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, in a speech to the Harvard School of Public Health in November, 2000, discussed six categories of programs and accompanying research that the Carnegie Foundation has funded in its attempt to lessen prejudice in our schools. These include programs that foster prosocial behavior at an early age, cooperative learning strategies, conflict management and peer mediation, exposure to media such as Sesame Street, and empathy training, which is the category that my curriculum addresses.

Empathy training, as explained by Hamburg, is the newest of the fields but promises to be a useful component of diminishing prejudice and ethnocentrism in the classroom.

Research on Empathy and Empathy Training

The study of empathy and the development of empathy training in school situations started with the work of Dr. Norma Feshback in the late 1960's. It has, however, been gaining momentum in recent years. Although I had never heard of the term "empathy training," before I started the research for this unit, I was delighted to find that the terminology is regularly used in research studies and reports. Two articles were especially helpful in understanding the work that has gone on in this field; "Under the Umbrella - Empathy: The Basis for the Golden Rule," by Kathy Beland, from the Character Education Partnership and "Developing Empathy in Children and Youth," by Kathleen Cotton from the School Improvement Research Series.

Kathleen Cotton read, reviewed, and summarized the research presented in 57 articles in her work for the School Improvement Research Series. This exhaustive work builds a significant case for any school activities, exercises, or procedures that support the development of empathy among school children.

For educators and others who aren't convinced that we have time in our schools for character education, Cotton points to several articles that include the ability to empathize in lists of what attributes successful learners share. A researcher named B.F. Jones lists four characteristics of a capable, successful learner. (Jones 1990). They are: 1) knowledge, including critical and creative faculties; 2) motivation to learn and confidence about themselves as learners; 3) tools and strategies for acquiring, evaluating, and applying knowledge; and 4) insight into the motives, feelings, and behavior of others and the ability to communicate this understanding – in a word, empathy. She cites significant studies that show an impressive correlation between students' training and skills in empathetic understanding and their academic performance. Researchers (e.g., Bonner and Aspy 1984) have identified significant correlations between students' scores on measures of empathetic understanding and their grade point averages. Program evaluation results have shown that schools where students are involved in programs designed to increase empathy and create "caring communities" have higher scores than comparison schools on measures of higher-order reading comprehension (Kohn 1991). Review or research related to empathy training/instruction indicates that this instruction enhances both critical thinking skills and creative thinking (Gallo 1989).

Among the empathy training techniques that Cotton says are successful in school situations are several that occur in my curriculum plan. They include practice in imagining and perceiving another's perspective, focusing on similarities between oneself and others, exposure to emotionally arousing stimuli, positive trait attribution, and modeling empathetic behavior.

When students read literature written by marginalized individuals, they will, in essence, be imagining and perceiving another's perspective. The first criteria I used in choosing poetry and short narratives for this unit was whether the writer's perspective and point of view was clear.

Cotton states several times in this article that there is a very close connection between responding empathically to another person and perceiving that person as similar to oneself. All of the research encourages activities that focus on similarities between oneself and others. The ramification of this finding for my unit is that in the reader response questions and discussion questions, particular attention should be paid to questions that specifically ask students to connect the experiences talked about in the literature to experiences they have had.

The use of exposure to emotionally arousing stimuli as a successful strategy for empathy training had never occurred to me. However, Cotton cites three studies showing that when individuals are exposed to portrayals of misfortune, deprivation, or distress on the part of other, empathetic feelings and responses are increased. Encouragement by trainers or experimenters to think about others and their needs also stimulates these feelings and responses. Several of the literary works that I have chosen for this curriculum produce highly emotional responses.

Including positive trait attribution in empathy training refers to the practice of emphasizing to children that the reason they exhibit prosocial behavior is that it is their nature to do so. In other words, as students make oral or written statements of an empathetic nature, the teacher needs to reinforce these statements to help the student see himself or herself as the kind of person who is responsible and caring. Researchers have found that reinforcing to children that they have a certain positive trait within them increases those children's performance of behavior congruent with that trait.

Finally, Cotton emphasizes the need for teachers to model empathetic behavior. When teachers model desired values, children are more likely to adopt these than when they are merely exhorted to behave in a certain way. If, in class discussions about selected literature, students are not coming up with statements of an empathetic nature, the teacher should feel free to model the statements she is looking for.

Working Definitions of Terms

It seems safe to assume that within any middle school class there will be a wide range of meanings associated with terms that are used when discussing ethnicity, race, prejudice, and racism. It will be important to find working definitions of these words before the literature is presented. I will present here some possible definitions, but making meaning of these words can be something that the class works on together. This could be a good opportunity for students to read a variety of definitions and excerpts from texts and to synthesize their own definitions.

Before the word stereotype was used to describe a human behavior, it simply referred to a metal plate that is used to make duplicate pages of the same type. Then, in 1922, Walter Lippman borrowed the term to describe what he considered to be a biased perception. Students can best understand the word as a way that humans tend to group others and overgeneralize group characteristics. The act of stereotyping in and of itself is not necessarily a negative or harmful act, but can lead to prejudice.

When stereotypes lead an individual to biased behavior, the term prejudice can be used. Gordon Allport, who is one of the original researchers on the topic of prejudice, gave this definition in 1954. He is still frequently quoted in current writing about the subject. "Ethnic prejudice is an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group...The net effect of prejudice, thus defined, is to place the object of prejudice at some disadvantage not merited by his own misconduct." It is important to note that in this definition the prejudiced beliefs are not only incorrect, but that the generalizations are inflexible. The definition used in the book *Prejudice and Racism*, by James M. Jones, may be a bit more accessible for middle school students. "Prejudice is a positive or negative attitude, judgement, or behavior generalized to a particular person that is based on attitude or beliefs held about the group to which the person belongs."

Racism refers to prejudicial attitudes that are based on the racial background of the individual or group. Webster's Unabridged Dictionary says that racism is characterized by "discrimination, segregation, persecution, and domination based on a ...doctrine or feeling of racial...superiority." For a more exhaustive discussion of racism, the interested reader should consult Jones' text, *Prejudice and Racism*. Jones provides a chart of 17 different, widely accepted definitions of racism and terms that relate to racism such as xenophobia and structural racism.

Discrimination occurs when there is preference for one person over another if that preference is made because of a judgment about the group to which the person belongs or is thought to belong. Discrimination is the behavioral manifestation of prejudice.

Empathy, defined as a shared emotional response between observer and stimulus person, may be expressed simply as "putting myself in the shoes of another person." The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines empathy as "understanding so intimate that the feelings, thoughts and motives of one are readily comprehended by another." A pioneering and often quoted researcher on empathy in children, Dr. Norma Feshback, defines three components of empathy. They include the ability to: determine the emotional state of another person, take the perspective and role of another person, and respond emotionally to another person. (Feshback, 1984)

Why Do Humans Need to Stereotype?

An Evolutionary and Historical Perspective

The needs of humans to stereotype others and to belong to in-groups and therefore practice exclusionary behavior, can be traced back to man's early roots. The earliest ancestors of humans lived in small groups whose internal structure was based upon intense attachments between individuals. These relationships were crucial for survival and reproduction. The relationships

were reinforced by participation in group rituals that held emotional significance. Aggressive behavior between in-groups and out-groups has been practiced by human societies for thousands of years. This behavior has been easily learned, practiced in play, encouraged by custom, and rewarded by society. Students will be eager to brainstorm instances of in-group and out-group scenarios throughout the history of the world, involving groups based on religion, race, language, region, tribe, nation, and various political entities.

If prejudice and exclusionary behavior is "natural" for humans, why then should we regard it as negative behavior? This question will spark heated dialogue among students. James Jones, in *Prejudice and Racism*, gives a well reasoned argument for humans to rise above their evolutionary needs for behavior based on prejudice. He states, "Prejudice breeds bias, discrimination, detachment, and possibly fear. It involves, at its core, not understanding someone, thinking someone is something he or she is not, and reacting to those thoughts and feelings in ways that increase antagonism and conflict." (Jones, 1997)

A Psychological Perspective

Psychologists have examined prejudice and exclusionary behavior in a variety of ways. Looking at prejudice as a cognitive process and examining the propensity for prejudiced in different personality types are two types of analysis that could enable students to "step back" and look at prejudice through an objective or academic point of view.

Individuals with authoritarian personalities seem to have a greater tendency towards having prejudicial attitudes and behavior. Authoritarian personalities usually have many of the following traits: hostility toward out-groups, emphasis on obedience, discipline, and respect for authority, and rigid thought beliefs. Psychologists feel that individuals with authoritarian personalities have experienced harsh discipline in their development and have internalized or repressed their anger. They then project this hostility onto others who are different.

Psychologists who want to emphasize the cognitive process view of prejudice have done research over the last 30 years that leads them to believe that prejudice may be "unintentional and even unconscious". This point of view holds that prejudice is rooted in society and individuals who grow up in that society are susceptible to thinking and behaving in prejudiced ways.

Social Construction of Race and Power Relations

Sociologists and Social Psychologists have done much research over the years in an attempt to analyze the human need to form in-groups and out-groups. In-group can be defined as those fellow members of a group to which a given person belongs physically or psychologically. Out-group refers to social units of which a person feels he or she is not physically or psychologically a part. (Jones, p. 206)

There are three different and widely accepted models of social theory that attempt to explain the human need to identify in-groups and out-groups; social competition, social categorization, and social identity theory (SIT). Muzafer Sherif was the first researcher to deal with the social competition theory. His early research involved boys at a summer camp who were assigned to groups that were then involved in various competitions. This research shows that "we like people in our group more than we like people outside our groups and that this tendency increases when we are in competition with other groups. Biases in liking are further reinforced by biases in perception. We actually see the behavior and performance of our in-group as different (and, more positive) compared to the behavior of other groups' members. Eventually, these difference in group membership, energized by group competition, escalate into dramatic, and emotion-laden conflict." (Jones, p, 208) The only way groups can come together is if they are working toward a common goal.

The social categorization theory was first posed by Henri Tajfel. Tajfel's research shows that even in the absence of competition people will still behave in a competitive self-interested way as long as they are allowed or encouraged to categorize themselves and others into groups. Some of Tajfel's early research showed that people who were grouped solely on their preference of one artist (Paul Klee) over another artist (Wassily Kandinsky) formed strong in-group and out-group attachments that carried over into other situations.

Social identity is that part of an individual's self-concept that is based upon the value and emotional significance of belonging to a social group. Social identity is a way to feel good about oneself in a social world. In order to feel the best, we should accord the most positive attributes to the group to which we belong. (Jones, p. 214)

The work of these sociologists and psychologists has enabled us to understand why humans act in prejudiced and discriminatory ways. This understanding is an important step in changing our behavior. If students are given the information to understand and analyze their own behavior and the behavior of others, they can be empowered to individually change their actions and possible to become part of larger societal movements to promote change.

Objectives

This curriculum balances literacy goals with intervention strategies for reducing prejudice. Content standards from four areas are addressed in this unit. Of the ten Pittsburgh Public Schools standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening, this curriculum addresses eight. These include using effective research and information management skills, reading complex texts, responding orally and in writing to ideas, writing for a variety of purposes, analyzing forms of communication, exchanging information orally, listening to and understanding complex oral messages, and composing and making oral presentations. This curriculum also addresses two standards from the Arts and Humanities list; describing the meanings found in literature and evaluating and responding critically to literature. Five standards from the Citizenship list are addressed. These are in the areas of demonstrating and understanding of major cultures, groups, and individuals in the USA; examining problems faced by citizens; demonstrating skills of

communicating and negotiating; demonstrating the ability to work effectively with others; and demonstrating an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice. From the Science and Technology standards, this unit supports basic computer literacy and the ability to access the global information infrastructure. Appendix I has a complete list of the content standards addressed in this unit.

Other objectives for this unit fall into the category of prejudice reduction. This course is meant to introduce students to the writing of those in the United States who have had, because of their position as racial, ethnic, gender, religious, handicap, or socio-economic "Other", to struggle to have their voices heard and respected. This curriculum seeks to create safe situations in classrooms where students can discuss exclusion, racism, and prejudice. Literature will provide the stimulus for these discussions. Another goal in this category is using literature to facilitate empathy training. Poetry, fiction, and memoir will be used to develop empathy for excluded individuals in our society.

Strategies

Using Literature to Promote Discussion and to Develop Empathy

Empathy, defined as a shared emotional response between observer and stimulus person, may be expressed as "putting myself in the shoes of another person." The "other persons" in this curriculum will be represented by literary voices. In a study commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation, participants in empathy training showed more pro-social behavior, less aggression, and more positive self-concept than children in the control group. The study also found that more favorable attitudes toward out-group members can result when teachers explicitly encourage students to awaken their empathic responses.

Where To Find Appropriate Poetry

I found three anthologies that had wonderful selections of poetry especially useful for this unit. *Stone On Stone: Poetry By Women of Diverse Heritages*, edited by Zoe Anglesey; *Letters To America: Contemporary American Poetry on Race*, edited by Jim Daniels; and *Unsettling American: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry*, edited by Maria Mazziotti Gillian and Jennifer Gillian. I don't recommend presenting the entire volumes to middle school aged students, because many selections in the anthologies are not appropriate for this age group. In Appendix 1 I have listed poems from each anthology that I feel are useful to the goals of this curriculum. In addition, many of the poems can be found on various websites. If I have managed to locate the poem, I have listed the website.

Presenting Poetry to Middle School Students

The methods I traditionally use to bring poetry to my students can be used for this curriculum, with a few modifications. Many of the poems I suggest for use are quite sophisticated and somewhat difficult to interpret. However, I have found that when presented with techniques to

"get into" a poem, my seventh and eighth grade students are quite capable of making meaning and responding to complex text. I will discuss here three methods that make poems accessible. All of these approaches should lead to a whole class discussion of the poetry, where the teacher can guide the discussion toward statements of empathy.

The first method is a simple approach that can be done with an entire class. First, I encourage at least three oral readings of the poem. This can be done in a variety of ways; either with student volunteers reading the poem in its entirety, or by dividing the poem into stanzas or lines, and "reading around". After the final reading, students are asked to identify three things in the poem. First, they must place a * by the line or phrase that has the most meaning for them. Second, they must underline the line or phrase that is the most important to them in the poem. The third response is placing a ? next to a line or phrase they don't understand. After students spend a few minutes privately responding to the poem, the class discussion can begin in several ways. Often I ask students what they want to start with, the *'s or the ?'s. Or, I may simply say that everyone is to first share his or her *ed phrase or line. Whatever approach, this method usually assures that all students have been able to "grab onto" something in the poem. The discussion usually blossoms.

A second method involves dividing the class into small groups of 3 or 4 students. Each group is presented with a poem and a "criteria sheet" for how the poem must be presented to the class. The criteria list includes such items as: presents poem in clear and creative manner, discusses overall meaning of the poem, supports interpretations with textual evidence, clarifies who is "speaking" in the poem, and identifies poetic techniques such as figurative language and images. Groups are given 15 to 30 minutes to prepare and are presented with the challenge of introducing (presenting) and interpreting the poem for the class. Again, after the group presentation, the entire class should participate in a discussion.

Finally, when I want students to spend a longer amount of time exploring a poem individually, I use a reader response guide. Students read the poem independently and give written responses to the following questions: What do you notice about the poem? What words, lines, images stand out? What do you like, immediately? What don't you like? What was puzzling? What was surprising? What does the poem make you feel? What does the poem make you think of? What does the image allow you to imagine or fantasize? What assumptions have you made about the poet, about who's speaking, and about what's happening? What questions do you have for the poem? After students have made personal responses to the poem, the entire class discusses the poem, using the same questions as starting points. After the class discussions, students should return to their original responses and write further on the questions: Why did you find yourself paying attention to these elements? What made you react that way? What sense might this make now? Why did you respond that way? What (in the poem or in what you brought to it) evoked these thoughts?

As stated previously, all three of these techniques need to culminate in a full class discussion. The teacher facilitator must use care in turning the discussion first to deal with the speaker and then to encourage empathy.

Presenting Fiction and Memoir to Middle School Students

As with poetry, I use a reader response method of presenting Fiction and Memoir to my students. The short pieces recommended here can be read orally in class or they can be read individually by students. I feel that when students first make personal connections to a literary work they are then able to dig deeper and analyze and understand the work in depth. Also, for the purposes of Empathy Training that this curriculum promotes, it is important for students to connect personally to the individuals and their experiences that are presented in the literature.

The reader response questions that I use for prose are similar to the ones used for poetry and can be found in the appendix of this curriculum. Some of the questions that differ from those presented in the earlier poetry section are related to characters and setting. How do you feel about the characters and their behaviors? Did you empathize with any of the characters? What stood out the most: setting, characters, author's style, etc.? What comparisons did you make to your own life or to the observations you make of others?

Two very good fictional stories that would work for this part of the unit are "Out of Place," by Joyce Carol Oates and "The Bracelet," by Yoshiko Uchida. The Oates story deals with a handicapped teenagers and Uchida's story tells about a young girl and her family who must go to a Japanese internment camp during the second world war.

For memoir I would recommend "Not Poor, Just Broke," by Dick Gregory and the prologue to *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison.

Writing in Response to Literature

At the seventh and eighth grade level it is important to introduce students to some strategies for writing a formal response paper. Much of their experience in the high school English classes they will soon be taking will be on writing formal analytic papers. Middle school students can write papers that include a combination of personal response and rigorous analysis.

I encourage students to use the responses they have made on the Double Entry Reading Journal (see appendix) to find a focus for their papers. This gives them the freedom to write about either techniques employed by the writer or to write about their personal connections to the piece. In either case, students are challenged to quote from the literary work itself to illustrate any assertions made.

For the purposes of this unit, students will have a choice of writing a paper in response to a single literary work that has been discussed or to writing a paper that connects two or more of the selections. In the appendix of this document there is a handout that can be used if students choose to write a paper in response to a single literary piece.

If students choose to connect two or more pieces they may need help in choosing a theme. Possible themes are related to the general themes of this unit such as comparing experiences of racism and prejudice and analyzing feelings of empathy.

Writing Creatively in Response to Complex Issues

Although it is important for my students to write critically about literature, what they really love to do is to write creatively, both in poetry and in prose. I will present here two exercises that can produce meaningful work relating to the themes discussed in this unit. Both exercises can result in poems or in short pieces of prose. The first involves thinking metaphorically about abstract words and the second will encourage students to participate in a guided imagery experience.

Writing Metaphorically About An Abstract Noun

To encourage students to examine some of the abstract words that relate to the themes in this unit, I will present a variation on a popular exercise that promotes metaphorical thought. Ask each student to choose one of the abstract nouns that relates to this unit; racism, prejudice, stereotype, exclusion, empathy, discrimination, ethnicity, hate, or kindness. Instruct the students to write their chosen word on a piece of paper.

Next, students should turn the paper over. During this step of the exercise, students will be listing attributes of a concrete object. I usually have a box full of miscellaneous items that are small enough that they can be held in a student's hand, such as a pair of scissors, a pair of sunglasses, white out, a paperclip, a bottle of rubber cement, etc. Students can also use items from their pockets or their purses. Each student is to pick one item and list attributes of that item. Encourage students to help each other in naming categories of attributes such as materials made of, purpose, shapes, colors, textures, or scientific properties like opaqueness. Students should try to fill one side of the paper with attributes.

The third step of this exercise is perhaps the most difficult. The students must now think about their chosen abstract noun in terms of the attributes of the concrete object. I tell them to look at each attribute and think about how it could be related to the abstract noun, knowing, of course, that it won't be possible to make a connection with each attribute. For instance, if a student is writing about prejudice and his concrete object is a one hole paper punch, he might think about what can "punch" holes in prejudice. His statement might be, "Understanding can punch holes in prejudice." I tell the students that the purpose here is to think of new and original ways to think about and talk about the abstract noun. They should be attempting to define the abstract noun in a unique manner.

After students have exhausted all possibilities in this step, and often they need a good deal of help from their peers and from the teacher, they need to examine the statements they have written and decide if they would like to write a short poem or turn the statements into a short essay. Students may decide to use just one original statement and expand on it, or they may choose to incorporate many of the statements into their piece.

Using Guided Imagery to Help Students Write About a Personal Experience

This exercise will enable students to write about their own experiences or situations they have observed. Challenge students to think about times they have felt excluded from a dominant group. Direct them to try to list at least five of these experiences. Next challenge them to think

about situations where they have observed others being excluded. These situations should be "real life" situations, not what they have viewed on TV or in the movies. Again, direct them to list at least five situations. Next, students should look at the lists and each student should choose one situation to write about.

After each student has selected an experience or situation to focus on, explain to the class that they will be participating in a guided imagery exercise to help them remember details of the experience. At this point I usually lower the light in the classroom and close the door. I then tell the students that all talking must now end. I encourage them to get relaxed in their seats and to put down all writing utensils. I tell them they may close their eyes if they wish or simply stare into space. If you wish, you can give some directives that will help students relax, such as listen to their breathing or tighten then loosen muscles.

Next I explain that I will be giving some directives that will help them recreate the experience in their minds. I stress that they are to do no writing, but simply try to re-experience the situation as it originally happened. These are some of the statements that can help the students. Some texts encourage the teacher to change her tone of voice at this time and to speak very slowly. Let your mind slowly go back in time to the experience you wish to remember. Let time slow down. Where are you standing? Who else is there with you? What are you wearing? Slowly turn to you left and what do you see there? Now slowly turn to your right and what do you see? Turn all the way around. What is behind you? Try to use all of your senses to recreate this experience. What physical sensations do you feel? Is the wind touching your cheek? It is hot or cold? Are you sitting on something that has a texture? What are your hands touching? What smells are in this place? What sounds do you hear? Can you hear back ground sounds that aren't voices?

Now let the situation progress very slowly. What are people saying? What are people doing? Slowly recreate the experience. What are you thinking? What are you feeling?

After you have given the children time to re-experience their chosen scene, tell them that when they feel ready they may pick up their pen or pencil and they may begin to write, but there will be NO TALKING. I usually leave the lights on low to maintain the quiet and reflective mood. Instruct the students to write down anything and everything that they can remember. They are not to worry about writing incomplete sentences or about writing in any organized fashion at this time. This is still a pre writing activity and the purpose is to fill the page or pages with images, thoughts and feelings.

This guided imagery exercise usually takes an entire class period. It has worked well for me to allow the students to put their notes away for one day and then take them out the following day and write a first draft of the experience. I suppose they could do it for homework. After this draft is complete, I put the students through several revision exercises before a final draft is completed.

Classroom Activities

As stated earlier, this curriculum can be used as a "unit", and will cover seventeen one hour classes. I do feel, however, that many of the activities and strategies can be incorporated into any literature class. In this section I will discuss how a seventeen period unit might be organized.

On day one the activities are designed to help the class come up with working definitions of terms that will be used in the remainder of the unit. The definitions needed are stereotype, prejudice, racism, bigotry, marginalized, tolerance, empathy, and discrimination. Students will first write in their journals individually, defining each term. These definitions can be compared to the classes' working definitions at the end of the class period. The class can then be divided into groups. Group size and number of groups will depend on the class size. Each group will be given one word to research. At least five definitions must be located for the assigned word. Students will be encouraged to use a variety of texts such as Jones's text, *Prejudice and Racism*, internet resources, Encarta, and traditional dictionaries. Each group will be challenged to discuss and analyze the definitions found and synthesize the information into a single definition. Each group will then present their synthesized definition to the class and more discussion can occur before a "class working definition" is decided upon.

The second and third days of this unit will focus on examining the historical, psychological, and sociological perspectives of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. Basic information to assist the teacher in this area was given in the rationale section of this document.

This information will be given to the students in a questioning/lecture form. For instance, to present a historical perspective, students can be asked to brainstorm a list of incidences in world and US history where groups and individuals have been victims of prejudice and racism. The teacher should direct the brainstorming to go back as far as early man.

In an attempt to help students understand that the cognitive act of stereotyping may be a natural phenomenon for the human brain, students will be given an exercise that asks them to list stereotypes they might have that they aren't aware of. For instance, they will be asked what they think of people who drive Cadillacs, students who have pierced body parts, athletes, etc. Students can be encouraged to analyze why they have a certain stereotype; did it originate in their own experience, or did it come from accepted beliefs of family or peer group

Days four, five, and six will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of poetry. A list in the appendix of this document gives many suggestions for possible poems. In the strategies section three methods are suggested for presenting poetry to students. A combination of individual response through journal writing and class discussion should be used.

Days seven, eight, nine, and ten will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of short fiction and memoir. Again, strategies for this section were presented in an earlier section of this document.

Writing a formal response paper will be the focus of days eleven to fifteen. Strategies for encouraging middle schoolers to tackle this type of writing are presented in the section "Writing in Response to Literature". In addition, a handout and a rubric are included in the appendix.

The final two days of the until will be devoted to writing original poetry, short essays, or memoirs as explained in the section "Writing Creatively in Response to Complex Issues".

Annotated Bibliography

About, Frances E. and Fenwick Virginia. "Exploring and Evaluating School-Based Interventions to Reduce Prejudice," *Journal of Social Issues*, Winter, 1999.

Three fairly recent studies are examined in this article that look at ways of talking about race and racial evaluation in order to reduce rather than raise prejudice.

Available on line at <http://www.findarticles.com>

Anglesey, Zoe, ed. *Stone On Stone: Poetry By Women of Diverse Heritages*. Seattle, Washington: Open Hand Publishing, 1994. ISBN: 0-940880-48-2

Anglesey's collection of poetry has many selections that could encourage students to empathize with the poets.

Beland, Kathy. "Under the Umbrella – Empathy, The Basis for the Golden Rule," *Character Education Project Newsletter*, Fall, 2000. www.character.org/action/newslet.cgi?fall

This is a short (2 pages) article presenting the concept of using empathy training in schools.

Bigler, Rebecca. "The Use of Multicultural Curricula and Materials to Counter Racism in Children," *Journal of Social Issues*, Winter, 1999.

This exhaustive study comes to the conclusion that the simple inclusion of multicultural materials in classrooms "have been largely ineffective in altering children's racial attitudes".

Available online at <http://www.findarticles.com>

Bonner, T.D., and Aspy, D.N. "A Study of the Relationship Between Student Empathy and GPA." *Humanistic Education and Development* 22/4, 1984: 149-154.

Reports on a study comparing the scores of secondary students on measure of empathy with their grade point averages. A significant and positive relationship was found.

Cotton, Kathleen. "Developing Empathy in Children and Youth," *School Improvement Research Series*, 1994. www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/7/cu13.html

Fifty seven resources are examined and summarized in this very useful article.

Daniels, Jim, ed. *Letters To America: Contemporary American Poetry on Race*. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1995. ISBN: 0-8143-2542-4.

Compiled and edited by a Carnegie Mellon professor, this collection should be in the library of every teacher interested in race.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. Vintage Books, March 1995. ISBN: 0679732764.

The prologue from this book can be used to present memoir to the students.

Feschback, Norma D. "Empathy, Empathy Training, and the Regulation of Aggression in Elementary School Children," in R.W. Kaplan, V. J. Konecni & R. W. Novack (Eds.), *Aggression in Youth and Children*. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publications, 1984.

Norma Feshback was one of the first researchers to examine empathy training in the classroom and this is an important work for that reason.

Gallo, D. "Educating for Empathy, Reason and Imagination." *The Journal of Creative Behavior* 23/2. 1989: 98-115

Gallo argues that, although empathy is sometimes thought to be an emotional response that is unrelated or possibly detrimental to reasoning, empathy in fact fosters both creative and critical thinking, and thus developing it should be adopted as an important educational goal.

Gillian, Maria Mazziotti and Gillian, Jennifer, ed. *Unsettling American: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994. ISBN: 0-14-023778-X

I found this collection to be the most useful in finding specific poems to use with my students. In one of the appendices I have listed the poems that I felt could encourage empathy.

Gregory, Dick. *nigger: An Autobiography*. Pocket Books, 1995. ISBN: 0671735608

The short piece "Not Poor; Just Broke," which can be used to present memoir to the students, is in this book.

Hamburg, David A. *Diminishing Prejudice and Hatred in Child and Adolescent Development*, The Julius Richmond Award Lecture, Harvard School of Public Health, November 1, 2000.

Jones, B.F. "The New Definition of Learning: The First Step to School Reform." *Restructuring To Promote Learning in America's Schools. A Guidebook*. Elmhurst, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990.

Jones, James M. *Prejudice and Racism*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997. ISBN: 0-07-033117-0

This text was used as the basis of our seminar, "Diversity and Resistance". It is quite comprehensive and can be used by students and teachers alike.

Kohn, A. "Caring Kids: The Role of the Schools." *Phi Delta Kappan* 72/7. 1991: 496-506.

Kohn draws upon psychological and classroom research to support the contention that pro-social traits are as basic to human nature as are selfish or antisocial traits, and that pro-social classroom management and learning activities are beneficial to individuals and to society.

Levy, Sheri R. "Reducing Prejudice: Lessons From Social-Cognitive Factors Underlying Perceiver Differences in Prejudice," *Journal of Social Issues*, Winter, 1999.

Forum on Adolescence, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. *Improving Intergroup Relations Among Youth: Summary of a Research Workshop*. National Academy of Sciences, 1999. ISBN: 0-309-06792-8

As I stated in the text, this summary of 16 projects funded by the Carnegie Corporation was very encouraging and allows the reading to believe that school based initiatives can reduce prejudice and racism. The entire book was available online at http://books.nap.edu/html/intergroup_youth

Oates, Joyce Carol. "Out of Place." This story can be found in the collection, *The Seduction and Other Stories*. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1975.

Told from the point of view of a physically handicapped teenager, this fiction story can be used to cultivate empathy.

Sherif, M. *In Common Predicament: Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966.

Tajfel, H. *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. London: Academic Press, 1969.

Uchida, Yoshiko, "The Bracelet", from *The Scribner Anthology for Young People*. Charles Scribner, 1976.

This fictional story about a young Japanese girl and her family going to an internment camp during the second world war can be helpful in stimulating empathy.

Appendix 1

Poems to use from *Unsettling America*

Harjo, Joy "The Woman Hanging From the 13th Floor", p. 29

www.hanksville.org/storytellers/joy

Clifton, Lucille, "Sam" p. 50

Wong, Nelli, "When I Was Growing Up," p. 55

Henderson-Holmes, Safiya, "Failure of an Invention," p. 60

Chrystos, "Today Was a Bad Day Like TB," p. 61

"I Walk in the History of My People," p. 303

Yamada, Misuye, "Cincinnati," p. 79

<http://voices.cla.umn.edu/> (Voices From the Gap)

Warr, Michael, "Brain On Ice," p. 85

www.warrzone.net/index_ie.htm

Barolini, Helen, "Having The Wrong Name For Mr. Wright" p. 149

Wagner, Maryfrances Consumano, "Miss Clements Second Grade," p. 199

Clements, Susan, "Susans," p. 231

Cervantes, Lorna Dee, "Poem For The Young White Man..." p. 248

Lifshin, Lyn, "After the Anti-Semitic Calls on a Local Talk Station," p. 254

Appendix 2

The following list was compiled by my seventh and eighth grade students when I asked them: "What story or novel have you read that deals effectively with individuals who are excluded from society? I am interested in literature dealing with racism, prejudice, bullying in schools and neighborhoods, exclusion because of physical or mental handicap, and even cliques. I am especially interested in literature that builds empathy in the reader."

Alexander, Sally, *On My Own*

Sally is blind and tried to fit into society while holding a job, going to graduate school, and keeping a home.

Anderson, Laurie, *Speak*.

The main character in this book is hated by all of her peers because she called the cops on a summer party.

Avi, *Nothing But the Truth*

A teacher is excluded because a student lied about her.

Bernall, Misty, *She Said Yes.*

This is the story of Cassie Bernall, who was murdered at Columbine High School because she said, yes when asked if she believed in God.

Curtis, Christopher Paul, *The Watsons Go To Birmingham*

Taking place in Birmingham at the time of the church bombing, this novel deals with racism and how a family deals with it.

Danzinger, Paula, *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit.*

A girl in middle school has trouble adjusting and feels like an outcast.

DeFoe, Daniel, *Moll Flanders.*

Moll Flanders was driven to a life of crime and poverty and finally was sent to America as a bondservant. She was excluded from the dominant society because she was perceived to be wicked.

Doctorow, E.L., *Ragtime*

This novel deals with racism in the United States and the exclusion of immigrant groups.

Flake, Sharon, *The Skin I'm In*

The main character in this book is an adolescent who is bullied and made fun of because of her color and her clothes. There is also a teacher who is excluded because of a skin disease.

Gaines, Ernest, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*

This is a fictional account of the life of a woman who lived after slavery, but had to deal with the ever present discrimination against blacks.

Hansberry, Lorraine, *A Raisin in the Sun*

In the early 50's an African American family must deal with racism when they buy a house in a primarily white neighborhood and are asked to move out since they are black.

Hansen, Joyce, *Yellow Bird and Me*

Yellow Bird is dyslexic, but he is very smart. When people find out, they make fun of him, all except for one girl.

Hesse, Karen, *Out of the Dust*

Myers, Walter Dean, *Scorpions*

Gangs and their exclusion from society are the focus of this novel.

Pascal, Francine, *Fearless #1*

Sai isn't afraid of anything. She befriends a boy in a wheelchair.

Philbrick, Rodman, *Freak, The Mighty*.

This book is about a kid who is unusually tall and becomes friends with a vertically challenged child.

Pullman, Philip. *The Golden Compass*.

In this fantasy novel a girl named Lyra and her daemon Pantalaimon search for their kidnapper friend. The other characters exclude Lyra because she is different.

Richter, Conrad, *The Light in the Forest*

This story is about a white boy who grew up as a Native American and then was forced to go live with his natural family who he despises. The story is about his struggle between his two loyal families.

Rolling, J.K., *The Harry Potter Series*

Smith, Betty, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

A family is "outcast" because they are poor.

Spinelli, Jerry. *Crash*

The main character and his best friend bully a "geeky" boy. The main character eventually becomes friends with him.

Uchida, Yoshi, *Jar of Dreams*

This book is about a Japanese family who is always called names because of their culture.

Appendix 3 Response to Poetry

READER RESPONSE TO POETRY

I. READ DOWN THE POEM A FEW TIMES AND JOT DOWN WHATEVER COME TO YOU: FIRST IMPRESSIONS, OBSERVATIONS, REACTIONS, FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, IDEAS, MEMORIES, ASSOCIATIONS, QUESTIONS.

1. What do you notice about the poem?
2. What words, lines, images stand out?
3. What do you like, immediately?
4. What don't you like?
5. What was puzzling?
6. What was surprising?
7. What does the poem make you feel?
8. What does the poem make you think of?
9. What does the image allow you to imagine or fantasize?
10. What assumptions have you made
 - about the poet?
 - about who's speaking?
 - about what's happening?

II. READ THROUGH THE POEM A FEW MORE TIMES AND READ WHAT YOU WROTE ORIGINALLY. MAKE MORE NOTES IN RESPONSE TO THESE QUESTIONS:

1/2. Why did you find yourself paying attention to these elements?

3/4. What made you react that way?

5. What sense might this make now?

6/7. Why did you respond that way?

8/9. What (in the poem or in what you brought to it) evoked these thoughts?

Appendix 4

RESPONSE TO READING JOURNAL: DEVELOPING A FOCUS

MEMOIRS AND FICTIONAL WORKS

DIRECTIONS: ANSWER THE QUESTIONS TO PART 1 FIRST, THEN ANSWER PART 2. THE QUESTIONS IN PART 2 REFER TO YOUR ANSWERS IN PART 1.

PART 2: SECOND THOUGHTS, INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS.

WHY did sections, sentences, and paragraphs stand out?

WHY did you like or dislike certain parts of the story? Be specific.

WHY did you react as you did to the character(s)?

What similarities or distinct differences did you find among the characters?

Why were certain elements puzzling or surprising?

Why did certain elements stand out?

What made you feel or think as you did about the story? (Something in the story; something from your experience or knowledge)

Why did you ask the questions you did?

What generalizations can you make about the piece?

What is the meaning of the piece to you?

PART 1: FIRST IMPRESSIONS, OBSERVATIONS, REACTIONS, FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, IDEAS, and QUESTIONS

What sentences, phrases, paragraphs, sections, stand out?

What did you like about the memoir/story?

What don't you like?

How do you feel about the characters and their behaviors?

What was surprising or unexpected about the piece?

What was puzzling about the piece?

How did the piece make you feel?

Did you empathize with any characters?

What did the story/memoir make you think of?

What stood out the most: setting, characters, author's style, etc.?

What assumptions have you made

- about the author's tone?
- about the author's purpose?

What questions did the memoir/essay make you ask yourself (about life, people, prejudice, racism)?

What comparisons did you make

- to your own life?
- to your observations of other people in your life?
- to other writers?

Appendix 5

DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING A PAPER RESPONDING TO A LITERARY WORK

GENERAL GOAL: To write an in-depth paper that elaborates on one or more of your personal responses to the poem, memoir or fictional story you read.

CHOOSE A FOCUS FOR YOUR PAPER!!

Look over the responses you made to the column 1 Double Entry Reading Journal. Which of these responses really interests you? Which ones can you elaborate on?

Also spend some time looking at the questions in column #2. Most of the questions in column #2 ask you to think further about the answers in column #1.

DO NOT SIMPLY PUT YOUR ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS INTO PARAGRAPHS!! YOU SHOULD USE NO MORE THAN 3 OF YOUR RESPONSES. YOU COULD WRITE THE ENTIRE 2 PAGE PAPER ON ONLY 1 OF YOUR RESPONSES. YOUR JOB IS TO ELABORATE ON AND EXPLAIN YOUR INITIAL RESPONSES.

SOMEWHERE IN YOUR PAPER YOU MUST QUOTE FROM THE LITERARY PIECE. The quote you use must illustrate some point you are making. You must relate your thoughts to the quote.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING STARTED:

Try using a quote from the poem, memoir, or story itself.

- a phrase, line, or sentence you liked
- a phrase, line, or sentence that confused you at first, but now you understand
- a phrase, line, or sentence that summarizes the meaning or message
- a phrase, line or sentence that illustrates a point you intend to make in the paper

You might want to start with how the piece made you FEEL!

You can talk about how you personally related to the poem, memoir, or story; what it reminded you of in real life.

You can start with a theme statement about the piece.

Try starting with a question.

TECHNICAL CONCERNS

LENGTH – The rough draft of this paper must be AT LEAST 4 sides handwritten on lined paper, or 2 pages typed (double-spaced).

MENTIONING THE TITLE AND AUTHOR – In your first sentence or first paragraph, whenever you first mention the title of the piece, do not simply say "this poem" or "this memoir". Instead, name the title and the author. Remember, titles of short pieces are in "quotes." Titles of books are underlined.

DON'T USE THE SECOND PERSON YOU. Instead of using the second person "you," use either "I" or "the reader." When you get to high school many of your teachers will insist on "the reader."

Appendix 6

Rubric for Evaluating a Response Paper

5

___ Papers at this point go beyond the expectations of the response questions.

___ Shows invention or creativity

___ Presents insightful ideas

___ Uses sophisticated sentence structure & vocabulary

___ Writing shows virtual mastery of conventions

___ Has achieved a thorough understanding of the text

___ Presents multiple layers of deeper levels of understanding, synthesizing all elements into a coherent, discerning interpretation.

___ Understands and accommodates complexities, subtleties, ironies, and ambiguities in the text

___ Makes and asserts responsible assertions about the text. Supports interpretations with convincing textual and extra-textual evidence.

___ Makes and supports inference about content, events, characters, settings, theme, and style

___ May interpret the effect of figurative language, dialogue, description, symbolism, point of view

___ May show awareness of author's purpose and its relationship to the form of the text; may express esthetic appreciation of some aspect of the text

4

___ Responds directly to the response questions

___ Clearly establishes context and organizes ideas

___ Has clear, consistent coherence

___ Presents thoughtful ideas

___ Uses effective sentence patterns

___ Writing shows clear control of the conventions

___ Demonstrates a clear understanding of the text

___ May retell or paraphrase selectively for purposes of illustrating central ideas

___ Deals effectively with the complexities presented in the text

___ Makes a responsible interpretation using and supporting claims or assertions about the meaning of the text; interpretation includes well-formulated conclusion or views of the text supported by elaborated and convincing textual and extra-textual reasons and evidence

___ May make perceptive and well-developed connections across texts, with ideas and concepts, with other media

___ May evaluate the author's strategies for accomplishing purposes such as informing, persuading

3

- ___ Responds to the questions (prompts)
- ___ Establishes context and organizes ideas appropriate to topic and purpose
- ___ Ideas are elaborated effectively using some specific, concrete details
- ___ Uses appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure
- ___ Writing generally shows control of conventions
- ___ Grasps central ideas but may not cite information to demonstrate understanding
- ___ May retell or paraphrase without explicitly illustrating central ideas
- ___ Accounts for complexities presented by the text
- ___ Makes clear, but usually predictable claims or assertions about the text; supports assertions with relevant reasons and textual evidence.
- ___ May make appropriate connections across texts, with ideas and concepts, with other media
- ___ May comment on the author's strategies for accomplishing purposes or on author's craft

2

- ___ Ideas often are restatement of response questions with some elaboration, usually consisting of generalities
- ___ Establishes sufficient context and organization for reader to follow ideas
- ___ Generally shows coherence but may have some minor digressions
- ___ Vocabulary and sentence structure are generally pedestrian
- ___ Writing shows some control of basic conventions
- ___ Demonstrates a plausible, but sketchy understanding of the text
- ___ May cite details or retell parts without showing a grasp of central ideas
- ___ May address complexities in text by over-generalizing or oversimplifying, may exhibit confusion

___ Makes simplistic claims or assertions with some textual support

___ Support, which may take the form of paraphrasing or quoting, is loosely tied to views or conclusions

___ May connect the text associationally with prior knowledge but the connection is generally unelaborated.

Appendix 7

Content Standards Addressed

The Pittsburgh Board of Education has adopted Core Curriculum Frameworks to help the district meet the National Education Standards proposed by the Department of Education. Within these core areas are 62 content standards of academic knowledge and skill that students will have to demonstrate to earn a high school diploma in Pennsylvania. This unit addresses the following standards in the areas of Communications and Science and Technology:

Communications:

All students use effective research and information management skills, including

locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.

All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.

All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.

All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.

All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.

All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communication. (Oral discussions of fictional stories and of scientific information are an important component of this unit.)

All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.

All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe.

Arts and Humanities

All students describe the meanings they find in various works from the visual and performing arts and literature on the basis of aesthetic understanding of the art form.

All students evaluate and respond critically to works from the visual and performing arts and literature of various individuals and cultures, showing that they understand important features of the works.

Citizenship

All students demonstrate an understanding of major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of Pennsylvania, the United States and other nations, and describe the patterns of historical development.

All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation and world by incorporating concepts and methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.

All students demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating and cooperating with others.

All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.

All students demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing communities, the United States and other nations.

Science And Technology

9. All students demonstrate basic computer literacy, including word processing, software applications, and the ability to access the global infrastructure, using current technology.