

Children's Literature
Literacy Lessons for the Middle Grades

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Overview

My Curriculum Unit will be taught at the sixth grade level. However, it may be taught in sixth through eighth grade as it has all of the components of Literacy Plus. This Unit will place an emphasis on historical fiction, connect core collection themes with an extended text, reinforce the study of literary elements, and expand skills for analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of literature. The focus of this Unit is on the history of literacy in the United States, with an emphasis on African-American literacy, and the conditions of the former slaves in the South after the Civil War during Reconstruction. In the South, before and during the Civil War, only white people were permitted to read and write. It was illegal to teach slaves to read and write. People who broke the law were punished or hanged. After the Civil War, during Reconstruction, blacks were then allowed publicly to read and write. The denial of literacy to the blacks kept them subservient to white men. When they were finally given the tools to educate themselves, they were able to succeed in the society that thought of them only as slaves.

The unit will focus on the book, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly, by Joyce Hansen, one of the books in the "Dear America" series. The novel is historical fiction and is set in the South during Reconstruction. It is based on diaries, journals, oral histories, and narratives of people who lived through those times. The main character, Patsy, is a freed slave who learns to read and write by tending to the children in the "house" while they are being tutored. She plays the dunce for the children as they play school. Patsy becomes a heroine to the freed slaves because of her ability to read and write. Even though the owner of Davis plantation promises them a school, a teacher never comes. Many teachers from the North who come to teach the freed slaves are threatened, injured, or killed. Patsy teaches them the alphabet and how to read.

Rationale

Children who lived in the early colonies of the United States were taught to read and write. They were given “horn books” to use as a learning aid. These books were really one page of information placed on small wooden pallets. The alphabet and usually the Lord’s Prayer were printed on the pallet. They were covered with a thin piece of animal horn. This is how they received the name “horn books.” Children were becoming educated but they spent most of their time working with their parents. Since survival was important for the early colonists and later the pioneers, children were expected to work to help their families. There was an emphasis, however, that children needed to be educated so that the future of the country would be secure and get better with each generation. Society is dependent on the education of its children so that it may grow.

Before the War of 1812, education went hand in hand with religion. When people learned to read and write it was usually with passages from the Bible or the Lord’s Prayer. Sectarian schools were largely private and did not rely on funding from government. After the War of 1812, leaders such as Horace Mann, James C. Carter, and Henry Barnard brought about a free public school system for the masses that was subsidized by the state. According to History of Education in America, by John D. Pulliam and James Van Pattern, “The rise of nationalism and Jacksonian Democracy, the Industrial Revolution, and the forces of westward expansion, immigration, and population growth provided impetus to the concept of universal education. There was a rebirth in the growth of the elementary or common schools.”

Horace Mann was instrumental in bringing literacy to all people rich and poor alike. Lawrence A. Cremin states in his book, The Republic and the School: Horace Mann On the Education of Free Men:

April 20, 1837, Mann left his law practice and accepted the post of the newly founded Secretary of Education" During his years as Secretary of Education Mann published twelve annual reports on aspects of his work and programs, and the integral relationship between education, freedom, and Republican government. He wanted a school that would be available and equal for all, part of the birth-right of every American child, to be for rich and poor alike(6).

Horace Mann felt that a common school would be the "great equalizer." Poverty would most assuredly disappear as a broadened popular intelligence tapped new treasures of natural and material wealth. He felt that through education crime would decline sharply as would a host of moral vices like violence and fraud. In sum, there was no end to the social good which might be derived from a common school (8).

In the Southern colonies, many of the English institutions were established by English gentlemen who came to the area because of economic factors. They were not disgruntled with

the English conditions and so they copied them in the new land. Southern gentry remained loyal to the Anglican Church. However, religion did not become a central force in their lives as it had in New England. Since the Church and the State favored the upper class, social equality did not develop in the South. People were supposed to accept their station in life. The state's opinion of education was that each family should provide education for its own children. Children of the wealthy had tutors to teach them. Poor white children did not learn to read and write. The slaves were never to be taught to read or write. Any person found teaching them, or any slave caught reading or writing, would be punished or hanged.

Slaves who were personal servants to their owners took on the neatness and appearance of their owners. These slaves became literate because of their generous masters. They would need to read to assist in getting newspapers or books for their masters. Many of them learned to read and write when they were tending to children who were playing school. Slaves with managerial positions on plantations needed math and reading to make the plantation run smoothly.

Phillis Wheatley, a slave who was captured in Africa and then brought to America, was taught to read by Mrs. Wheatly, her owner. She became a great writer of poetry and had her poems published. Many of her poems addressed the immorality of slavery. The following poem by Phillis Wheatley was found on the website, "An Outline of American Literature by Kathryn VanSpanckeren"

Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Savior, too
Once I redemption neither sought or knew
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic dye."
Remember, Christians, negroes, black as Cain,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

Frederick Douglass was born a slave in America. When he was sent to live in the household of Hugh Auld, Auld's wife taught him the alphabet. However, Mr. Auld told her to stop because it would make him an unfit slave. She stopped teaching him but his thirst for literacy remained. He taught himself to read and write and rose in stature as an abolitionist and writer. His leadership during the time of Reconstruction helped the freedmen to make sense of freedom and realize their dreams.

In 1863, President Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation. This Proclamation would solidify the dreams of freedom held by people who were kept as slaves. It was not until the Civil War ended, however, that they could see their dreams take shape. Many freedmen didn't know what to do with this new found freedom. Some plantation owners didn't even tell them they were free. When the freedmen found out that they were free, they, at first, didn't know what to do. Many were told that if they stayed at the plantation that they would be given land. But, this was never realized. Many owners thought that the freedmen should stay and work for pitiful amounts of money. But, they said that they would never be free if they

continued to work in the shadow of the house on the plantation. Freedmen who were under eighteen years of age were kept in servitude to the owners. The owners said that they were apprentices and they could not leave. These people were treated exactly the same way that they had been treated before freedom came to the slaves.

Owners thought that freed people were ungrateful when they left, as if by keeping them slaves, they were doing great things for them. The owners did not think of these former slaves as human. Some were amazed that the freedmen were looking for family members on other plantations. It seemed as if they were finally considering them to be human.

After the Civil War, the South was left both physically and economically disabled. Reconstruction of the South was hampered by the animosity of both sides during the War. The South was at the mercy of a government dominated by northern interests. Carpetbaggers, with their own self-interest, were con men who took advantage of the South's condition. Former slaves found that freedom did not improve their living conditions.

A Freedmen's Bureau was established to look after the former slaves and their needs. According to Joyce Hansen in Bury Me Not in a Land of Slaves:

Bureau agents negotiated labor contracts between former slaves and former masters, making certain that the freedmen received fair wages, and settled disputes between planters and laborers. When necessary, the bureau interceded in civil court cases to ensure that blacks received equal justice. The bureau resettled people on farms and plantations where laborers were needed and placed people temporarily on abandoned land (49-50).

Some Bureau agents worked tirelessly for the freedmen. But others had stereotypical views of the freedmen. They forced freedmen to sign contracts that were unfair. They enforced curfews and demanded that the freedmen carry papers on them to attest to their freedom. However, despite its weaknesses it did help freedmen from slipping back into slavery. It helped to build schools and also helped poor white people survive.

The animosity of white people towards the freedmen greatly hampered the efforts of the freedmen to succeed. They were still held as subservient by the "black codes." These codes were rules by which the former slaves were to conduct themselves. Literacy was allowed for blacks but there were no provisions for black schools. Hatred for blacks and people opposed to educating the blacks made it even more problematic for blacks who wanted to become literate. There were, however, black people who could read and write. Many of them learned to read and write by listening to the lessons of the plantation owner's children.

Many authors, such as Joyce Hansen, have read and collected slave narratives. These narratives that were either dictated to other people or written by the freed slaves themselves are first hand accounts of the cruelty and the debasement that the slaves lived with every day. They give accounts of slaves who learned to read and write and then helped the other slaves to read the

newspaper and to read and write themselves. The novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly, by Joyce Hansen, was based on these slave diaries.

In her book, Her Stories, Ms. Hansen includes stories of former slaves who lived during Reconstruction. According to Ms. Hansen, “The true stories of these women are representative of hundreds that were collected. Beginning in the 1920’s and 1930’s, biographical sketches of black women were carefully recorded under various state and federal government programs established to preserve the documentary history and lore of Americans.” My students will read these stories as a prelude to reading the novel.

Joyce Hansen is quoted in the website, “Joyce Hansen-Biography”, as saying, “I want my readers to sense the possibility of hope, to be aware of how the human spirit can rise to great heights-to see how some people manage to survive the madness and create a sane space where there is still beauty, love, peace, and even joy.” She has done extensive research and writing, both fiction and non-fiction on the Civil War and the Reconstruction era.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- *identify character traits.
- *identify setting.
- *identify plot.
- *identify historical fiction genre.
- *read poetry and respond to it by writing a Response to Poetry.
- *read biographies and write a Response to Informational Text.
- *read information on the Reconstruction after the Civil War.
- *write a Response to Information about the time of Reconstruction.
- *read a historical fiction picture book, Pink and Say.
- *read an informational picture book, Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters.
- *read slave narratives.
- *identify vocabulary for the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly.
- *read the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly.
- *compare the lives of the slave characters living in the “house” and in the quarters.
- *write a character diamante poem.
- *write a Compare and Contrast essay
- *create a story board.
- *write a Response to Narrative Text.
- *write a diary entry
- *write a newspaper article.

Strategies

My Communications class is divided into a ninety minute block of Reading and English. This block allows me the flexibility of intertwining both academics. A student portfolio is kept by each student. This portfolio has three sections: Reading, Writing, and Speaking. The Reading section contains an Analysis and Response to Informational Text, Analysis and

Response to Narrative Text, and an Analysis and Response to Poetry. The Writing section contains a Problem-Solution Essay, a Writing Instructions essay, a Descriptive essay, and a Reflective essay. My Curriculum Unit will include all pieces in the Reading Section and the Descriptive essay in the Writing Section.

Character analysis, plot, and setting will be taught beginning with the reading of a collection of short stories in the Elements of Literature textbook. As we work on character, we will use: critique, analysis, and synthesis. Critiquing will help the students to answer questions about the characters in the story. “Do they seem real to me? Are they like characters in other books that I’ve read? How are they like me and people I know? Analyzing will help the students identify the strategies the author uses to help them understand the characters. The method for this will be: The author tells us directly. The writer gives us the actual words of the character. The author reveals what a character is thinking or feeling. The writer tells us about the character’s actions. The writer tells about how other characters respond to the character. Synthesis will help the students use what they’ve learned to develop characters in their own stories.

The Analysis and Response to Informational Text will be written after reading material on the Reconstruction of the South after the Civil War. “Life in America in 1865” is included at the end of the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly. This information will be used to write the response. Also, biographies on Phyllis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass will be read in class. A response will also be written on their lives. The response will include a summary of their lives and their accomplishments. The Analysis and Response to Narrative Text will be written after reading the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly. The Analysis and Response to Poetry will be written after reading poetry by Phyllis Wheatley. The Descriptive essay will be written when we are working on character, plot, and setting.

Critiquing and analyzing will be used with the characters in the short stories and the novel. Graphic organizers will help students to create a character sketch, a character diamante, and a comparison of characters in the novel.

Synthesis will be used when the students create their own characters. When they write about their characters, they will follow the writing process. Pre-writing will be what the character looks like and its actions. Writing will include the thoughts and feelings of the character. Also, how an observer in the story reacts to the character. Revising will be by a peer. They will check to make sure that the writer has included everything in the Pre-writing and Writing steps. A mini-lesson on the writing of dialogue will be given so that students may include the character’s exact words. The students will then share their characters in small groups.

Setting helps a student analyze time and place details and explain the setting’s influence on the story’s plot. When I teach the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly, the setting of the South after the Civil War will be very important. We will research the time of Reconstruction before reading the novel.

Plot is the series of events that happen in a story. The opening lets us know who the characters are. The conflict is the problem the main character or characters are facing.

Complications arise as the character tries to resolve the problem. The climax is the most exciting part of the story. There's a resolution when the problem is solved and the story ends. I will teach plot with the short stories in the collection and the novel, as well.

I will begin pre-reading activities of the novel with a discussion of literary genres and relating the genres to the 25 book requirement. The elements of fiction: characters, setting, point of view, and plot will be discussed as I list the genres on the board. I will explain that in Historical fiction, these elements are tied to a specific time and place in the past and to events that actually happened. I will explain that writers often base conversations between characters and actual people of the past on research and sometimes on recorded dialogues. I will point out that Joyce Hansen spent a great deal of time researching slave narratives before writing this novel in order to make the story as real and convincing as possible.

Before reading the novel, students will be asked- What do you already know about what life was like on a Southern plantation during and after the Civil War? Why was it illegal to teach slaves to read and write? What would you like to learn about the lives of the freed slaves? The discussion of these questions along with a lesson on a map of America at the time of the Civil War will be used to incite interest in reading the novel.

Students will write two Response to and Analysis of Reading Informational Texts. These responses will be written on the Reconstruction after the Civil War and on Phyllis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass. Students will read the information and then summarize it. They will analyze the information and write about how these two people overcame their slavery and became heroes in the fight against slavery. The other response will be written after reading the article on Reconstruction after the Civil War in the back of the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly. These responses should identify the main idea of the article. They should support their answers with sufficient evidence from the text and there should be no errors in text-based details. They should analyze the text with clear and accurate information. There should be clear inferences with text-based examples. The response should draw an insightful conclusion.

Students will write a Response to and Analysis of Reading after reading the poem, "On Being Brought from Africa to America", by Phyllis Wheatley. Students will write a response that identifies the main idea of the poem. They will identify key poetic devices and insightfully interpret those key poetic devices to communicate the meaning of the poem. They will evaluate the author's purpose for writing the poem.

Since the novel, is based on slave narratives, some slave narratives will be read to the class. Many of the narratives that I have read are not appropriate to read in the classroom with young children. However, the slave narratives in the book, Her Stories, by Joyce Hansen are appropriate to read to young children. I will read these narratives to the class and discuss the diaries with them. One story is of a woman who was a slave in North Carolina. Her name was Millie Evans. This woman told the story of how the Mistress cared for the slave children. She would call the children to the "big house" and give them buttermilk and Johnny cake. The milk was placed in a trough and the children drank directly from the trough. The story gives insight into the daily lives of slaves. Her master did not want to part with his slaves. So he moved his entire family and slaves to Arkansas, thinking that Arkansas was still a slavery state. He died on

the way. When they arrived there, they found out that Arkansas was also free. Lettice Boyer was one hundred and ten years old when she was interviewed. She told about her life and her superstitions. She was sad when she had to rely on the hospitality of relatives at the end of her life. These stories will enlighten the children of slave conditions in the South told by former slaves in their own words.

Students and teacher will read books in preparation for reading the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly. These books are picture books. They will be read to help the students acquire knowledge about that time in history. Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco will be read to the class so that they may have some knowledge of relationships between whites and African Americans at that time. They will also see the prejudice and hostility of marauders and confederate soldiers as well. This book is about two characters, Pinkus Aylee and Say Curtis. It is a picture book. In this book, two young boys who are fighting for the Union army meet on a battlefield where Say has been injured. Pink, a black soldier takes Say home to his mother so that she can care for him. While they are there, marauders come to the house and kill Pink's mother, Moe Moe Bay. They are eventually captured by Southern troops. Say is placed in a prisoners' camp. Pink is hanged. Say's descendants have passed this story through their generations. At the end of the book, the author says that the story has been dedicated to Pinkus Aylee in order to keep his memory alive as well. The author asks the reader to say Pink's name before closing the book. My students in the past have always said his name with great respect. This book will serve as the start of a discussion of how people cared for each other in the face of slavery and hostility.

Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters will help the students to understand the differences between the lives of the slaves who worked in the fields and the slaves who lived in the big house. Students will write a descriptive essay about one of the Christmases. They will pretend to be a character in the book and explain how this character sees and celebrates Christmas. The descriptive essay should be focused on the topic and purposes. Several characters feelings and thoughts about the subject are included. Precise words and figurative language should be used to bring sensory details to life. Conclusion should mention why Christmas is significant to this character.

Students will read the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly, in a large group setting, a small group setting, and with the teacher. Questioning the author questions will be used so that higher level thinking questions will be asked. Since the novel is written in diary entries, the students will create a storyboard for the plot of the story. After beginning the novel and reading the beginning diary entries, students will keep a personal diary during the reading of the novel, since the book is written as a diary.

The reading of the novel will also contribute to the student's reading log. There is a requirement in the sixth grade to read 25 books per year. This will count as one book on that reading log.

Activities

Activity 1

Students will have lessons on the elements of fiction in the Elements of Literature textbook. Plot and setting is introduced on pp. 2 and 3. This lesson teaches the students to identify the main character. What is this character's problem or conflict? What complications arise for this character? What is the climax? How is the conflict resolved? Setting is where and when the action takes place.

Read the short story, "Just Once," by Thomas J. Dygard on pp. 18-26 of the textbook. In this story the main character, Moose, is a high school football player. He longs to hear the crowd shout his name. How he goes about this creates the conflict in the story. After reading the story, students will create a story map to outline the main parts of the story's plot. Characters, setting, problem/conflict, major events, and the resolution are parts of the map.

A lesson on characters and the way that character traits influence the story is on pp. 124 and 125 of the textbook. What happens in a story depends on how a character responds to internal and external conflict.

Activity 2

Read the short story, Ta-Na-E-Ka by Mary Whitebird on pp. 135-141 of the textbook. This story is about a young girl, named Mary, who is a member of the Kaw tribe. She and her cousin are made to participate in a rite of initiation, Ta-Na-E-Ka. They are to survive alone in the woods for five days. Mary secretly borrows money and spends her five days in a restaurant. At the end of the five days, Mary is clean and well-fed. Her grandfather decides that she has passed the initiation in her own way. After reading the story, students will work in pairs to describe Mary's characteristics. They will discuss what Mary's internal and external conflicts are and how they are resolved.

Activity 3

Make a list of literary genre on the board. Discuss each one. Present Historical fiction and tie the elements of fiction into the presentation. Divide the class into groups of four. Students are to list what they know about the time of the Civil War. What was life like for the people who lived on Southern plantations-both the slaves and the landowners? What happened to the freed slaves after the Civil War? Why was it illegal to teach slaves to read and write? Prepare a transparency of a map of the U.S. at the time of the Civil War. Discuss the different sections of the map at that time. Discuss the history of slavery in America.

Activity 4

Read the information about the time of Reconstruction after the Civil War in the back of the novel, I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly. Discuss this time in history. Students will write a Response and Analysis of Informational Text about this information. They will summarize the information and then explain how the freed slaves were not truly free. This responses should identify the main idea of the article. They should give sufficient evidence from the text and there

should be no errors in text-based details. They should analyze the text with clear and accurate information. There should be clear inferences with text-based examples. The response should draw an insightful conclusion.

Activity 5

Students will read about Phyllis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass in the book, Bury Me Not in a Land of Slaves by Joyce Hansen. They will write a Response to and Analysis of Informational Text on these two people. They will summarize their lives and write about how these two people became heroes in the advancement of freedmen.

Activity 6

Students will read the poem, “On Being Brought from Africa to America.” Discuss the main idea of the poem with the class. What is the main idea of the poem? What is the author’s purpose of writing the poem? What is the message of the poem? What poetic element is used in the poem? Students will write a Response and Analysis to Poetry answering the above questions.

Activity 7

The teacher will read the slave narratives to the class from Her Stories by Joyce Hansen. These are true stories of real people. I will remind the students that Joyce Hansen researched many slave narratives before writing I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly. I will read these narratives and then discuss them with the class.

Activity 8

The teacher will read Pink and Say and discuss the story with the class. Ask the students these questions:

In which army were Pink and Say members in the Civil War?

How did these two characters become friends?

Where did Pink take Say to help him get well again?

Why was this dangerous for Pink’s mother?

What happened to Pink’s mother?

Why was Pink eager to fight in the war?

Why didn’t Say want to fight in the war?

What happens to both characters at the end of the book?

Why did the author write the book?

Activity 9

The students will write a Descriptive essay creating a scene that might have taken place during Reconstruction at Christmas. Students will follow the steps of the writing process. They will use sensory language and figures of speech. A rubric for this writing will include that the student clearly identifies the subject being described. Sensory language and figures of speech will be

included. Details will be organized in a clear way. The essay will reveal the writer's thoughts and feelings about the subject.

The teacher will read Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters and discuss it with the class.

1. Students will complete a graphic organizer to compare and contrast the way that Christmas was celebrated in these two places.
2. Students will write a descriptive essay from the point of view of one of the people who would have been at either of the celebrations. Create a character who would have lived in either the big house or the slave quarters. Describe what Christmas looks like for you and how you celebrate it. Students will use sensory details and figurative language to create the essay.
3. Students will share their essays with the class.

Activity 10

Students will use the internet to research the biography of Joyce Hansen. Share findings with the class.

Activity 11

Introduce vocabulary words: emancipation, literacy, apprentice, amnesty, arbor, calico, chilblain, curtail, degradation, elite. Present the vocabulary in story form so that the students may understand the words in context. Students should use these words in sentences.

Activity 12

Read the novel with students aloud or have students read together in pairs and answer discussion questions. Create worksheets with boxes to create a story board. Students should write the plot of the novel as they read it.

Discussion questions:

Read pp. 3-19

1. What is the name of the diary?
2. Why would people think that Yankees have horns and tails?
3. How has Patsy dealt with the unknowns of her life?
4. What do you think about the rules for freed slaves?
5. Why didn't Patsy want the name of her Master and Mistress?

Read pp. 20-29

1. Why didn't James tell Master he was leaving?
2. Why did only those in the gallery have to recite the catechism?

Read pp. 30-51

1. What was Patsy really doing when she pretended to be dusting the library?
2. What happened when Nancy and her mother met?
3. What happened to Cook?

Read pp. 51-69

1. Why does Patsy always think about Douglas?
2. Why did the plantation workers hold services in the bush arbor?

3. Why do you suppose the story about the people flying back to Africa was so important to Patsy?
4. If the people are free, why are they still on the plantation?

Read pp. 69-87

1. Was education more important in the story than it is today/ Why?
2. Why doesn't Patsy feel sorry for Nancy?
3. When is Patsy able to speak freely without stuttering? Why do you think this is?

Read pp. 87-108

1. How does Patsy's confession that she can read and write affect the others on the plantation? How does this affect Patsy/
2. What does the delay of the teacher coming mean to Patsy?

Read pp. 109-124

1. Why isn't the teacher coming?
2. Why does Patsy feel really needed?
3. What does Patsy one day hope to read in one of the newspapers?

Read pp. 125-146

1. How did Sir's death change things on the plantation, especially for Patsy?
2. Why did Ma'am tell Nancy that reading and writing wasn't important for black people?
3. Why do you think that Patsy wants to find her own name?

Read pp. 147-161

1. Why is it so important that the children of the freed slaves be educated?
2. Why do you feel Nancy is willing to do all the work in exchange for reading lessons?
3. Even though the former slaves are now free, how do the "Black Codes" restrict their freedom?

Read pp. 162-172

1. How does Patsy get her new name?
2. Why wouldn't the plantation workers sign the sharecropping contract?
3. Why does Patsy say, "my soul did rise and fly?"
4. Do you think Patsy made a wise decision to leave the plantation at the end of the novel?

Activity 13

Students will write a Compare and Contrast essay. They will compare and contrast the two characters, Patsy and Nancy. They will prepare to write the essay by creating a diamante poem about Patsy and Nancy. This poem is a seven line poem in the shape of a diamond. The essay will be focused on the topic and purpose and identify the two subjects. It will discuss meaningful similarities and differences. Topic sentences will state the main ideas. Details and examples will be given to support the topic. An appropriate method of organization will be used throughout the essay. The conclusion will sum up the main ideas.

Students will then read the scene in the book where Nancy's mother comes to get her. In this scene, Nancy, who has no memory of her mother, refuses to leave Mistress Davis to go with her mother. Patsy, who longs for knowledge of her own family, thinks that Nancy is terrible treating her mother that way. This scene will help the students to read the scene and understand the two characters' perspective of what's happening. They will write a short summary of the scene and, then, write about the characters' reactions to the scene and why they behave this way.

A compare and contrast essay will be written about the two characters. The teacher and students will brainstorm, in a whole group discussion, the similarities of the two characters: both are freed slaves, they both live on the Davis plantation, they both worked in the “house” on the plantation, and they both were taken to the “house” by Mistress Davis. In contrast, though, Nancy was brought to the “house” after Mistress Davis’s child died in childbirth. She was trained to care for Mistress Davis as a personal maid. Patsy was brought to the “house” because she was very ill. She was cared for by the cook. She then was given chores such as emptying the chamber pots, cleaning, and caring for the young visiting children. Other contrasts between the two characters are Patsy is literate and Nancy is illiterate. Patsy limps and stutters while Nancy flounces around the “house” in silk dresses. Patsy is well liked by the other freed slaves on the plantation, but Nancy is not. Patsy is intelligent, sensible and waiting for changes to take place; but, Nancy wants things to stay the same.

The assignment will be to write an essay constructed in this fashion: 1st paragraph- introduction of the novel including the title, author, and setting, and the Nancy and Patsy, 2nd paragraph- similarities of the two characters, 3rd paragraph- contrasts of the two characters, and the 4th paragraph- conclusion: students should summarize the similarities and differences of the two characters.

Compare and Contrast essay- there are two preparatory activities before writing the Compare and Contrast essay: the diamante poem and the comparison of Nancy and Patsy’s reaction to a scene in the novel.

Diamante poem.

Line 1 noun (subject)

Line 2 two adjectives describing the noun in the first line

Line 3 three ing verbs that describe the actions of the subject in the first line

Line 4 two nouns that are important to the subject in line one, and two nouns that are important to the subject in the last line of the poem.

Line 5 three ing verbs that describe the actions of the subject in the last line

Line 6 two adjectives describing the noun in the last line

Line 7 noun (subject)

The poem is in a diamond shape showing contrast between the noun at the beginning and the noun at the end of the poem.

Students will create a diamante poem that will contrast the two characters Patsy and Nancy.

Line 1 Patsy’s name

Line 2 Two adjectives that describe Patsy’s personality

Line 3 Three ing verbs that tell about Patsy’s actions

Line 4 Four nouns (the first two nouns are the two most important people, places, or things related to Patsy; the next two nouns are people, places, or things related to Nancy)

Line 5 Three ing verbs that tell about Nancy’s action

Line 6 Two adjectives that describe Nancy’s personality

Line 7 Nancy’s name

For example:

Patsy
nice nervous
reading limping stuttering
diary Ruth Master Mistress
flouncing complaining crying
mean bossy
Nancy

Choose a scene from the novel. For example, Nancy's mother comes for her to take her with her after the war. How do Nancy and Patsy react differently in the scene. What do we know about each of them that causes them to react this way? Discuss answers that the students have written with the whole class.

Writing the essay-

1. Brainstorm on easel paper with the class the similarities and differences of Patsy and Nancy.
2. On a graphic organizer of two interconnected circles, the students will write the similarities of the two characters in the overlapping section of the two circles and the differences in the outer circles.
3. An outline of the essay is presented to the class.

Introduction- Intro the two characters.

Include the title and author of the novel, the genre, and the setting,

Similarities-State the main idea of the paragraph in a topic sentence and then give details of how the characters are similar.

Differences-State the main idea of the paragraph in a topic sentence and then give details of how the characters are different. Use transitional words to compare and contrast the two characters.

Conclusion-summarize the comparisons and differences of the two characters.

Activity 14

At the conclusion of the book, students will make a final diary entry for Patsy. She will look back at her life and realize something about herself or another character. Students will write a last diary entry for Patsy. They will include where she is when she makes the entry, her hopes for the future and news of what has happened to other characters in the book.

Activity 15

Students will write a newspaper article similar to the ones that Patsy read to the freedmen in the quarters. Students will write a newspaper article on a slave who has left a plantation and has done well. They will create a character and then tell what happened to this character after he/she left the plantation. They should include how the freedman became literate, how they left the plantation, where they went, if they went searching for family members, the type of work that they found, and if they endured any trouble from the time that they left.

Activity 16

After reading the novel, the students will write a Response to and Analysis of Narrative Text. This response will identify the theme of the novel. Students should be able support their answers with sufficient evidence from the text. They should interpret the text with appropriate information. They should explain inferences and support them with adequate text-based examples. The conclusion should draw adequate conclusions and identify the author's point of view.

They will answer these questions:

What is the theme of this novel?

How is this theme introduced?

How does the author develop this theme throughout the book?

Choose one diary entry from the book that you think clearly illustrates the theme you've identified.

How does this entry convey the theme?

Does the diary format help the author succeed in getting her main point across?

Teacher's Reading List:

Bullock, Henry Allen. A History of Black Education in the South. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1967.

The historical development of educational opportunities for African-Americans from 1619 to 1967.

Cremin, Lawrence A. The Republic and the School: Horace Mann On the Education of Free Men. New York: Teachers College. 1957.

A biography of Horace Mann and his work in securing public education for all people.

Fletcher, Ralph. Live Writing. New York: Avon Books. 1999.

Creative writing strategies for children.

Haskins, Jim. Separate but not Equal-The Dream and the Struggle. New York: Scholastic. 1998.

A history of black education from colonial times to the present.

Van Patten, James and Pulliam, John D. History of Education in America. 6th edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 1995.

The history of education in America from colonial times to the present.

Webster, Staten W. The Education of Black Americans. New York: Intext Educational Publishers. 1974.

The history of African-American education from colonial times to the present.

Young, Mary. All My Trials, Lord-Selections from Women's Slave Narratives. New York: Franklin Watts. 1995

Selections of women slaves' narratives that were either dictated to other people or written by the slave women.

Children's Reading List:

Hamilton, Virginia. Her Stories. New York: Blue Sky Press. 1995.

American Folk Lore Society. Journal of American Folk Lore. Volume II "Millie Evans: North Carolina. 1889

Collected by Bernice Kelly. Such as Us: Southern Voices of the Thirties. Edited by Tom E. Terril and Jerrold Hirsh. University of North Carolina Press. 1978

Slave narratives that were dictated to people and then placed in volumes of collections of slave narratives.

Elements of Literature. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2005.

Communications textbook used at the sixth grade level.

Hansen, Joyce. I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly-The Diary of Patsy, a Freed Girl. New York: Scholastic, 1997.

An account of African-American life in the period of Reconstruction following the Civil War, based on first-person narratives, contemporary documents, and other historical sources.

Hansen, Joyce. Bury Me Not in a Land of Slaves-African Americans in the Time of Reconstruction. New York: Grolier Publishing. 2000.

An account of African American life in the period of Reconstruction following the Civil War, based on first-person narratives, contemporary documents, and other historical sources.

Joyce Hansen." 3 Mar.-Apr. 2006 <<http://www.joycehansen.com>>.

A website that gives a short biography on Joyce Hansen.

McKissack, Frederick and Patricia. Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters. New York: Scholastic. 1994.

Describes the customs, recipes, poems, and songs used to celebrate Christmas in the big plantation houses and in the slave quarters just before the Civil War.

Polacco, Patricia. Pink and Say. New York: Philomel Books. 1994.

A picture book set during the Civil War that describes the meeting of two Union soldiers, one white and one black, and the relationship that develops between them.

VanSpanckeren, Kathryn. "An Outline of American Literature"
<http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/LIT/wheatley.htm>

A short biographical sketch on Phyllis Wheatley.

Standards

- 1.1 Learning to read independently
- 1.2 Reading critically in all content areas
- 1.3 Reading, analyzing, and interpreting literature
- 1.4 Types of writing
- 1.5 Quality of writing
- 1.6 Speaking and listening
- 1.7 Characteristics and functions of English language
- 1.8 Research