

Title: The struggle between being an individual and being part of a group

Time: 50 minutes

Setting: Tenth grade classroom with 25 students

Theory Into Practice Background

1. This lesson was created based on a line in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, where Gordy says “Life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community” (132). The point of the lesson is to explore individual and group identities but we will be relating our discussion directly to the text. Jim Burke says, “students think better and deeper if they have texts to respond to, to argue with, to check against their thinking” (263). Continuing in the footsteps of yesterday’s lesson, students will form groups to discuss questions based on the text. Burke notes the importance of working in groups and says, “our country’s economic future may well depend on such capacities for creative thinking through collaboration with others” (245). To further explore the idea of individual and group identity we will turn to poetry. Burke says, “poems help us get inside texts and the characters inside those texts. They help us place ourselves in the world in relation to others. Mostly, however, they give us a different way of thinking about things” (203). Students will be writing a journey poem from Junior’s point of view, detailing his thoughts on his journey from the reservation to Reardan.
2. Prior to this lesson students will have completed “Apple Worksheets”, exploring Junior’s internal and external identity. This lesson was meant to prime them for today’s lesson, where they explore Junior in relation to those around him.
3. This lesson continues to use the chapters “Dance, Dance, Dance” and “Don’t Trust your Computer” as the basis for discussion. Again, these chapters focus on Junior’s struggle with his dual-identity; specifically, his being seen as a Native American who betrayed his tribe and is therefore actually white on the inside. They provide a good platform for talking about individual and group identity.
4. This lesson builds on yesterday’s lesson because both lessons focus on Junior’s identity and his relationship with other people. The information gained in this lesson regarding Junior’s identity will be useful throughout the rest of the unit.

Objectives:

- Students will explore the struggle of being an individual and being a part of a community.
- Students will read and create poetry to better understand Junior’s struggle in the text.

Materials:

Discussion question handout (see Attachment 1)

Poem “Endless Search” by Alonzo Lopez (see Attachment 2)

Preparation:

Make seven copies of the discussion questions and the poem.

Procedure:

1. (5 min) Tell students to take out their copies of *Part-Time Indian* and turn to page 132. Have a volunteer read from “Well, life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community” to the end of the page.
2. (15 min) Arrange students into groups of 5 and pass out the discussion sheet handout. Have students discuss the questions as a group and write down their answers on a separate sheet of paper (each member should have answers to turn in). After about ten minutes ask for volunteers to share their answers with the rest of the class.
3. (10 min) Pass out the poem “Endless Search” to students and read it out loud. Ask students how the poem could be related to Junior’s struggle. Does the poem have anything in common with what we have read so far? How is the poem structured? What do you notice about the style? Does the poem’s structure reflect its message?”
4. (20 min) Tell students that they will be writing *Journey Poems* from Junior’s point of view. The poems should focus on Junior’s struggle with his identity in moving between the reservation and Reardan. As students finish up their poems, ask for volunteers to come to the front of the class and read their poems to the rest of the students. Ask students questions about their writing process.

Discussion Ideas

-Ask students how the poem could be related to Junior’s struggle. Does the poem have anything in common with what we have read so far? How is the poem structured? What do you notice about the style? Does the poem’s structure reflect its message?”

-See discussion question sheet (Attachment 1)

BILINGUAL/ESL AND ENGLISHES ACCOMMODATIONS: Spanish and AAVE

Spanish: Our student who speaks Spanish and is an English Language Learner can use Spanish-English dictionaries to translate class discussion and to help him when he is creating his poetry. During group work, the other students can try to help the student if he is having trouble understanding certain words/idea (i.e. they might reword certain ideas for him). We can also provide him a translator if necessary.

AAVE: We will discuss that any form of English can be used during the entirety of today’s lesson (In discussion and on the poetry).

Special Education Accommodations:

Autism: “Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences” (<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/html/categories.htm>).

Our student with asperger’s syndrome will be given accommodations throughout the lesson. Instructions for the activities in this lesson will be provided verbally and on handouts so that they are made very clear. To make sure the student is comfortable during group work, he will be placed with students who he is used to and has been shown to work well with in the past.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on their ability to work as a group and come up with answers to the discussion questions. They will turn in their responses to the questions to be graded. Each question will be worth one point. Since there are no right answers to the questions, the questions will be graded for completion.

Student poetry will also be turned in and students will get points towards participation for turning in a completed poem.

Extension Ideas

-Using poetry throughout the unit might be helpful in having students explore their own identity. Since we only focus on one type of poetry in today’s lesson, we might have students look at other types in a future lesson.

Source of Activity

Thanks to Jacklyn Ippolito for the idea of focusing a lesson on Gordy’s quote about individual vs. community. Jim Burke deserves credit for providing a wealth of ideas and strategies for creating and implementing the lesson. I would also like to thank Professor Lisa Monda-Amaya for her suggestions on how to accommodate students with Asperger’s Syndrome.

Resources and References

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007.

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: a Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. 3 ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2008. Print.

Illinois State Board of Education: Illinois Learning Standards .2010. Illinois State Board of Education. < <http://www.isbe.net/ils/ela/standards.htm>>

Illinois State Board of Education: Special Education Categories.2010. Illinois State Board of Education. <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/html/categories.htm>

Ippolito, Jacklyn. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian Lesson Plan Unit*. Lesson plan. 2008.

Lopez, Alonzo. "Today's Beautiful Gem." *Uma Ramamurthy's Home Page*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.uramamurthy.com>>

Illinois State English Language Arts Goals

STATE GOAL 1: Read with understanding and fluency

1.C.4d Summarize and make generalizations from content and relate them to the purpose of the material

Students will fulfill this goal by using what they know about Junior to create poetry based on his life. In order to do this successfully they will need to generalize what they have learned about him so far.

1.B.4b Analyze, interpret and compare a variety of texts for purpose, structure, content, detail and effect

Students will fulfill this goal by reading “Endless Search” by Alonzo Lopez. In order to better understand the poem, students will be asked to analyze its structure and content to see what effects the poem has.

ATTACHMENT 1

Complete the following discussion questions with your group. Please write down your answers on a separate sheet of paper to be turned in to me. Everyone should turn in a copy of their group's answers.

1. In what ways does Junior struggle to be an individual? In what ways does he struggle to be a part of a group?
2. Gordy and Junior talk about “weird” people in society. How does society decide what “weird” is? What makes a person “weird” or “normal”?
3. Junior says that “Some Indians think you *become* white if you try to make your life better, if you become successful” (131). Why do you think they feel this way? Why is being white associated with being successful? Is there any truth to this way of thinking? What is problematic about thinking this way?

ATTACHMENT 2

"Endless Search" by (American Indian poet) Alonzo Lopez

"Searching, forever searching.
Looking, but never finding.
Day and night, my eyes roam the world.
Searching, not knowing how to end.
This search for myself."