

I Sing Myself

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*With music strong I come, with my coronets and my drums,
I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches for
conquer'd and slain persons.*

-Walt Whitman

Rationale

Before he was considered America's "Good Grey Poet," Walt Whitman used poetry as an outlet to explore his individuality. He was generally seen by critics as an outsider and an extremist. Ironically, teachers and students now often read his work and the works of many other revolutionary authors with indifference. According to Sonia Nieto, "A third of students in a desegregated junior high school said that none of the class content related to their lives" (127). Is this an intrinsic flaw in the texts themselves or in the way these texts are approached? This unit approaches texts as products of individuals struggling to express themselves often counter to the morés within societies.

"I Sing Myself" is a six week, inquiry-based unit designed for a high school American literature curriculum. It will focus on finding, exploring, and recognizing the individual voice within America by encouraging students to question the authors and themselves. A large variety of texts will be assigned ranging from the destitute conditions of the Native American reservations to the high society of the affluent white male. Yet all of the texts contain the views of outsiders. Through interpreting the views

of outsiders, students will become more aware of their own emerging identity and the importance of voicing that identity and “to use that outsider stance as provocateur to push the conventions to wider inclusivity” (Fecho 104). The “Song of Myself” project, the main form of assessment in this unit, will hone their ability to successfully express their voice.

E.D. Hirsch argues that “education ought to reinforce the history and cultural practices of the West- societies that have roots in Western Europe, including the United States” (Smagorinsky 93). However, individuals such as Thoreau and Whitman, authors that Hirsch would argue are worth teaching, took a stand against cultural practices of the West. Not only that, but it is absurd to think that the only people who exist in Western Europe and the United States all hold the same values. For example, the Native Americans have thousands of years of diverse culture, and we cannot just ignore it. Hirsch’s viewpoint is a product of the ignorant mindset that this unit will directly combat. Extensive research has been done that proves that students “tend to value endeavors that invite multiple viewpoints” (Heron 576).

Sherman Alexie’s *Reservation Blues* is the final text we will focus on as well as the only novel read in its entirety. This work explores the point of view of a group that is most often pushed to the side. Native Americans are generally overlooked or misread in school, their voices unheard. The storyline follows a group of bored, middle-aged Native Americans who form a rock and blues band centered around Robert Johnson’s mystical guitar. They travel the countryside expressing their views in song presented in vignettes at the beginning of every chapter. This provides a wonderful opportunity to slide poetry under the noses of unsuspecting students. However, we understand that some parents and

students will have conflicts with the language and sexual content. As for the sexual references, Shakespeare and Chaucer are significantly more explicit. The language in *Reservation Blues* is not written to be vulgar or creative. It is there as an honest reflection. Alexie never uses curse words in his narration, only in his dialogue. The novel's value comes from Alexie's ability to show Native Americans in their natural element, away from the cultural clichés and stereotyping prevalent in other works. In this way we are able to hear the Native American's own true voice and individuality which is so important to the theme of this unit.

Another text in this unit is "Sounds," an excerpt from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. As an upper class white male, the author also struggled with expressing his individuality in a society obsessed with material objects. Through his trip to Walden, Thoreau sought to rediscover the simple roots of the American lifestyle. Within "Sounds," Thoreau gives his unique and often caustic perspective on the unnecessary complications that arrive with the emerging technologies of his time- a perspective that could easily be applied to the rapidly accelerating nature of modern affluent culture. Thoreau felt this heedless expansion had smothered the creative spirit of mainstream America. Even the word "American" needed to be redefined in order to make room for individual expression.

Another text the unit will focus on is Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself." Whitman epitomizes the exploration of the self. In "Song of Myself," he explores and reinvents the individual's lust for life and place in the American Dream. Whitman revels in the overlooked nooks of life while challenging mainstream authorities on the place of autocratic religion and socially-constructed gender roles. His opus, "Leaves of Grass"

will also give students the unique ability to view a work in progress. By comparing selections from the first version of “Leaves of Grass” to selections from the final or “deathbed” version, a greater sense of the effects of time on an individual will be seen. It could be interpreted that Whitman collapsed under the pressures of society and by the end of his life had conformed his once revolutionary poem to societal norms.

In contrast to Whitman’s final version of “Leaves of Grass,” another canonical poem the unit will include is Langston Hughes’ “I, too, Sing America.” Hughes is an African American writer whose poem speaks openly of the oppression Whitman only hints at by the metamorphosis of his works. The poem broadens the definition “American” and will remind students that people possess the power to speak out in appropriate ways against previously accepted norms, along with the detrimental effects of students not verbalizing their identity. In exploring the differences and complexities presented by these two poems, the unit encourages good teaching, which “take[s] place when teachers welcome difficult issues and events and use human difference as a basis for the curriculum” (Nieto 131).

Finally, there will be an excerpt from the Nobel Prize winning novel *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison. Morrison is acclaimed by critics as one of the best writers in touch with the African American community. Many of her novels focus on black identity and the journey to find one’s self. In this novel, the reader follows Milkman in a search for his heritage. When he returns home, Milkman knows where he came from, which gives him a new sense of who he is and what it means to know your name. This excerpt deals with Milkman’s appreciation for names, realizing how much they mean to who one is. Through an examination of this passage, students “should...come to a better

understanding of their personal knowledge and experience,” an understanding which we expect to mature with the completion of the unit project (Smagorinsky 154).

To add an interesting spark to this lesson, we plan to locate songs about identity from several different genres. They will not take up much class time, probably the first five to ten minutes of class each day. Each song will be relevant in that it will either express deep-seeded emotion or talk about identity. We feel that voicing who you are is as important as realizing who you are: “our ability to make meaning of texts, with text defined broadly, enables readers to learn more about who they are even as they learn how that “who” relates to the cultures that surround it” (Fecho 94). By playing songs of artists who proudly describe a part of themselves, we hope to encourage self expression among our students. Sometimes, we can write about or sing about how we really feel in three minutes better than we could explain in thirty minutes. After playing a new song while the students get ready for class, we can discuss the relevance the song has to voicing an identity. By incorporating a familiar medium that is already part of the students’ culture “teachers can successfully engage students in high levels of reasoning about literary texts by drawing on their tacit knowledge about cultural forms out of school” (Hull and Schultz 35). The diversity imbedded in these songs could lead to a variety of discussions, which are not necessarily addressed in a general high school curriculum. One artist we will listen to, Robert Johnson also happens to be a character in *Reservation Blues*. The other songs were chosen for either their freedom of expression or because of their call for such expression.

To further our students’ ability to express themselves in writing, our unit will explore the alternative stylistics of Grammar B. Grammar B is a structured grammar style that

breaks conventional grammar rules purposefully to allow greater control over the rhythm and flow of a piece of writing. In keeping with the musical theme of the unit, our instructional days will be entitled, “Grammar B Good.” These instructional days will explore different aspects of Grammar B and the related traditional grammar rules that will be broken. By comparing the two sets of rules, our students will be able to better grasp both. Our students will be assessed on their understanding of Grammar B principles by requiring the use of these principles in written assignments during the unit.

Expression of self is important to teenagers as they go through school. The way they dress, speak, and their peer groups help shape who they will be. This unit will provide a constructive and appropriate way for students to read the views of others and express their individuality in the hopes that they will continue this exploration on their own. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi writes, “If educators, instead of treating literacy as a tool, focused on the rewards intrinsic to literacy, they might get students interested enough in exploring the various domains of learning for the sake of what they can find there” (125). The most important aspect of our unit is to increase the intrinsic motivation of our students by helping them see the relevancy of certain texts to their lives and driving them to seriously consider the viewpoints of others when looking at themselves.

Works Cited

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Goals

- 1) Through “I Sing Myself,” we hope that students will gain a broader understanding of themselves through learning about individuals in America.
- 2) Students will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the myriad cultures in America.
- 3) Students will gain appropriate outlets for their emerging identities.
- 4) Students will experiment with different genres to gain a wider literary understanding.
- 5) Teachers will establish a stronger relationship with their students
- 6) Through music, students will expand their definition of literacy

Culminating Project: Essay

Choose two or more authors explored throughout this unit to compare their views on individuality to one another and your own. This is a formal paper, yet first person is appropriate. Keep in mind grammar, use multiple quotes from each author, and establish a thesis that you support throughout the paper.

- Include cover page with name, date, teacher, and title
- Show proof of peer editing
- Use Times New Roman, 12 font, and 1 inch margins

CATEGORY	A	B	C	D
Adding Personality (Voice)	The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience. The author has taken the ideas and made them "his own."	The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but there is some lack of ownership of the topic.	The writer relates some of his own knowledge or experience, but it adds nothing to the discussion of the topic.	The writer has not tried to transform the information in a personal way. The ideas and the way they are expressed seem to belong to someone else.
Sequencing (Organization)	Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented effectively keeps the interest of the reader.	Details are placed in a logical order, but the way in which they are presented/introduced sometimes makes the writing less interesting.	Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader.	Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized.
Support for Topic (Content)	Relevant, telling, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but one key issue or portion of the storyline is unsupported.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but several key issues or portions of the storyline are unsupported.	Supporting details and information are typically unclear or not related to the topic.
Focus on Topic (Content)	There is one clear, well-focused topic. Main idea stands out and is supported by detailed information.	Main idea is clear but the supporting information is general.	Main idea is somewhat clear but there is a need for more supporting information.	The main idea is not clear. There is a seemingly random collection of information.
Grammar & Spelling (Conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

Culminating Project: Creating Poems

Create five or more original poems connecting the texts we have read and what you have learned about yourself. You need to include a minimum of two foot-noted references per poem. A short, informal rationale must accompany each poem to explain its relevancy.

- Include cover page with name, date, teacher, and title
- Show proof of peer editing
- Use Times New Roman, 12 font, and 1 inch margins

CATEGORY	A	B	C	D
Focus on Assigned Topic	The entire rationale is related to the poem and allows the reader to understand much more about the poem.	Most of the entire rationale is related to the poem. The rationale wanders off at one point, but the reader can still learn something about the poem.	Some of the rationale is related to the poem, but a reader does not learn much about the poem.	No attempt has been made to relate the rationale to the poem.
Creativity	The poem contains many creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has really used his imagination.	The poem contains a few creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has used his imagination.	The poem contains a few creative details and/or descriptions, but they distract from the story. The author has tried to use his imagination.	There is little evidence of creativity in the poem. The author does not seem to have used much imagination.
Poem Title	Title is creative, sparks interest and is related to the poem and topic.	Title is related to the poem and topic.	Title is present, but does not appear to be related to the poem and topic.	No reason given for lack of title.

Culminating Project: CD Selection

Choose ten songs from the list I have provided that speak to your individuality. Your accompanying rationale should state why you chose these songs. Establish an overarching theme supported by at least two texts we have studied in this unit. You will discuss this theme in each rationale. You also need to illustrate, in a creative way, a cd cover that relates to your song choices.

- Each rationale needs to be half a page of writing.
- From each text choose at least two quotes
- Out of the ten rationales you write, four will have quotes in them
- Include cover page with name, date, teacher, and title
- Show proof of peer editing
- Use Times New Roman, 12 font, and 1 inch margins

CATEGORY	A	B	C	D
Focus on Assigned Topic	The entire collection is related to the assigned topic and allows the reader to understand much more about the topic.	Most of the collection is related to the assigned topic. The story wanders off at one point, but the reader can still learn something about the topic.	Some of the collection is related to the assigned topic, but a reader does not learn much about the topic.	No attempt has been made to relate the collection to the assigned topic.
Organization	The collection is very well organized. One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions.	The collection is pretty well organized. One idea or scene may seem out of place. Clear transitions are used.	The collection is a little hard to follow. The transitions are sometimes not clear.	Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged.
Creativity	The collection contains many creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has really used his imagination.	The collection contains a few creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has used his imagination.	The collection contains a few creative details and/or descriptions, but they distract from the collection. The author has tried to use his imagination.	There is little evidence of creativity in the collection. The author does not seem to have used much imagination.
Spelling and Grammar in Rationale	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content in the rationale.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content in the rationale.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content in the rationale.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content in the rationale.

Mini-assessments

All of these mini-assessments will be graded mainly for completion. Each one will give the students the opportunity to experiment with each genre that will appear in the culminating assessment. Students can then choose the genre through which they feel most comfortable expressing themselves.

- 1) found poem
- 2) original song
- 3) formal response
- 4) find out family history

Day 1 (Monday)

Where I'm From: Introductory Activity

When the students enter the classroom, the song “Who Are You?” by The Who will be playing on the CD player. This gives them a chance to settle down and begins the trend of listening to music at the start of each class for the duration of this unit. When the song ends, the teacher will read aloud his or her example of the “Where I’m From” poem. The teacher explains the use of predominantly concrete images in the poem, images drawn from his or her background. Then the first prompt will be read aloud and the students will have five minutes to respond by listing concrete images that are relevant for each prompt. This is repeated with each new prompt until the poem is finished. The students will then be broken into small groups because they will be more likely to share personal information in an intimate setting. After each group member has read his or her poem, volunteers will have the opportunity to share with the class. This is an appropriate introductory activity for “I Sing Myself” because it allows them to express their voice and hear the voices of others. It also provides an extraordinarily simplified version of the unit’s cumulative project.

Lesson Plan Minutes:

5 min: Read example of “Where I’m From” poem; explain the directions

5 min: I am from: places, things from environment, sights and sounds

5 min: I am from: food, special occasions, family gatherings

5 min: I am from: family sayings, expressions, familiar phrases

5 min: I am from: people and friends

10 min: Small group sharing in groups of four

5 min: Voluntary sharing as a class

Remainder of class time: Explain how the “I Am From” poem relates to unit theme

Day 2 (Tuesday)

5 min.: David Bowie’s “Changes;” housekeeping & attendance (H&A)

10 min.: Describe the context of and read aloud excerpt from *Song of Solomon* (provided)

15 min.: Literature circles in groups of four will discuss excerpt along with the following prompt: How much do you know about your family’s history? Does that knowledge/lack of knowledge draw you closer or push you away from your family?

15 min.: Bring groups together for class discussion and ask these questions: Do you value Milkman’s quest for knowledge of his family? Do you think this knowledge will affect who you are?

5 min.: Introduce an example of our own family shield and explain the directions for making their own: gather information from the internet, family, and friends. Iterate that this is not a family tree so a complete family history is not required. We will begin constructing the shields Wednesday in class.

Day 3 (Wednesday)

5 min.: Staind's "Me;" H&A

45 min.: Explain prompt for shield: must address their place in their family, family's place in the community, can refer back to "I am From" poem, etc. We will provide a variety of materials including construction paper, saran wrap and aluminum foil, cloth, and yarn and will encourage them to bring in materials from home. They will have the entire class time to work on the shield and anything left unfinished will be homework.

Day 4 (Thursday)

5 min.: Good Charlotte's "Anthem;" H&A

30 min.: Short presentations where they will share their favorite two aspects of the shield.

15 min.: Guided class discussion about common themes, trends, similarities and differences noticed in the presentations.

Day 5 (Friday): Grammar B Fridays

5 min.: Whitney Houston's "I'm Every Woman;" H&A

7 min.: Explain activity (provided below) and have students write a paragraph on a non-alcoholic beverage.

10 min.: Students will draw a variation and alter their paragraphs accordingly. Sentence variations are on slips of paper in a hat:

- 1) Recast your paragraph using words of one syllable only.
- 2) Recast your paragraph using words of two or more syllables only.
- 3) Recast your paragraph into a single, labyrinthine sentence.
- 4) Recast your sentences so they contain four or fewer words each.
- 5) Recast your paragraph using as many synonyms as possible.
- 6) Recast your paragraph using more specific verbs.
- 7) Revise sentences so that they contain opening modifiers. (Example: *Full of jolt*, joe perks me up.)
- 8) Add adjectives to your nouns. (Example: My husband hates skim milt because of its *watery* texture.)
- 9) Add adverbs to your verbs. (Example: My husband *vehemently* hates skim milt because of its watery texture.)

20 min: Students will repeat the process twice, drawing different prompts from the hat each time.

8 min: Explain to students that they just used Grammar B and that we will be exploring Grammar B every Friday throughout the unit. We will share altered paragraphs until the bell rings.

Style Play- Sentence (Non)sense

Many rules exist about sentence length and complexity, but the usual prescription is for sentences that are not too long, and not too short, and not too complex. Clear, concise, coherent. Okay, but sometimes we enjoy the reverse. The labyrinthine sentence, properly handled can be elegantly elaborate. To prove that neither short nor long, simple or complex, can possibly be the rule, sentences can have complicated rhythms and balances, parallel structures, teetering and tottering digressions to create an effect.

Professional writers in all venues, all genres, play with sentence variation. What happens when you do the same?

- 1) Recast your paragraph using words of one syllable only.
- 2) Recast your paragraph using words of two or more syllables only.
- 3) Recast your paragraph into a single, labyrinthine sentence.
- 4) Recast your sentences so they contain four or fewer words each.
- 5) Recast your paragraph using as many synonyms as possible.
- 6) Recast your paragraph using more specific verbs.
- 7) Revise sentences so that they contain opening modifiers. (Example: *Full of jolt*, joe perks me up.)
- 8) Add adjectives to your nouns. (Example: My husband hates skim milk because of its *watery* texture.)
- 9) Add adverbs to your verbs. (Example: My husband *vehemently* hates skim milk because of its watery texture.)

Source:

Bishop, Wendy, ed. *The Subject is Writing*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1999.

Week Two

Day 6 (Monday):

5 min: David Gray's "What Are You?;" H&A

20 min: To show students how to do a parallel poem, we will introduce the parallel poems from Mel Glenn's young adult novel *Who Killed Mr. Chippendale?* The poems are included below. We will also do a book talk, which includes an enticing lead-in to the novel. Introducing these parallel poems will give students an appropriate background before they read and compare Whitman's versions of *Leaves of Grass*.

15 min: Introduce Walt Whitman, making sure to touch on his birthday, where he lived, what period he wrote in, and radical views on authority, religion, sexuality and individuality. Also focus on his major work, *Leaves of Grass*, its multiple versions, and the free verse style.

10 min: Read aloud deathbed version; worksheet can be found below.

Parallel Poems from Mel Glenn's *Who Killed Mr. Chippendale?***Celia Campbell**

Oh my God,
It's true, then,
Mr. C., oh my God,
I can't believe it.
I hope no one sees me crying.
I hope his soul goes straight to heaven.
What that man did for me,
I don't have the words for it.
He made me feel smarter than I am.
He praised my poetry.
He thought I was college material.
You know, in many ways he
Reminded me of my father:
Quiet,
Modest,
Brave.
When's the funeral?
I must go and pay my respects.
He was the best teacher I ever had.
You can ask my twin.

Delia Campbell

Oh my God,
It's true, then,
Mr. C., oh my God,
I can't believe it.
I hope no one sees me laughing.
I hope his soul goes straight to hell.
What that man did to me,
I don't have the words for it.
He made me feel stupider than I am.
He trashed my poetry.
He thought I wasn't college material.
You know, in many ways he
Reminded me of my father:
Loud,
Vain,
Cowardly.
When's the funeral?
You won't catch me anywhere near it.
He was the worst teacher I ever had.
You can ask my twin.

Whitman Comparisons Group One

The 1855 version is listed first, followed by the Deathbed version.

1

I celebrate myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease.... observing a spear of summer grass

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes.... the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and like it.
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

1

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.
My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

Whitman Comparisons Group Two

The 1855 version is listed first, followed by the Deathbed version.

2

I am satisfied. . . . I see, dance laugh, sing;

As God comes a loving bedfellow and sleeps at my side all night and close on the peep of
day,

And leaves for me baskets covered with white towels bulging the house with their plenty,

Shall I postpone my acceptance and realization and scream at my eyes,

That they turn from gazing after and down the road,

And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,

Exactly the contents of one, and exactly the contents of two, and which is ahead?

2

I am satisfied-I see, dance, laugh, sing;

As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the night, and withdraws
at the peep of the day with stealthy tread,

Leaving my baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house with their plenty,

Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my eyes,

That they turn from gazing after and down the road,

And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,

Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which is ahead?

Whitman Comparisons Group Three

The 1855 version is listed first, followed by the Deathbed version.

3

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
This is the common air that bathes the globe.

This is the breath of laws and songs and behaviour,
This is the tasteless water of souls.... This is the true sustenance,
It is for the illiterate.... it is for the judges of the supreme court.... it is for the federal
capitol and the state capitols,
It is for the admirable communes of literary men and composers and singers and lecturers
and engineers and savans,
It is for the endless races of working people and farmers and seamen.
This is the trill of a thousand clear cornets and scream of the octave flute and strike of
triangles.

I play not a march for victors only.... I play great marches for conquered and slain
persons.

3

This is the common air that bathes the globe.

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,
I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches for conquer'd and slain
persons.

Whitman Comparisons Group Four

The 1855 version is listed first, followed by the Deathbed version.

4

Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos,
Disorderly fleshy and sensual.... Eating drinking and breeding,
No sentimentalist.... No stander above men and women or apart from them.... No more
modest than immodest

Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me.... Whatever is done or said returns at last to me,
And whatever I do or say I also return.

4

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating drinking and breeding,
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from them,
No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves form their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Whitman Comparisons Group Five

The 1855 version is listed first, followed by the Deathbed version.

5

Eleves I salute you,
I see the approach of your numberless gangs... I see you understand yourselves and me,
And know that they who have eyes are divine, and the blind and lame are equally divine,
And that my steps drag behind yours yet go before them,
And are aware how I am with you no more than I am with everybody.

The friendly and flowing savage.... Who is he?
Is he waiting for civilization or past it and mastering it?

5

Eleves, I salute you! come forward!
Continue your annotations, continue you questionings.

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?

Whitman Comparisons Group Six

The 1855 version is listed first, followed by the Deathbed version.

6

My words are words of a questioning, and to indicate reality;
This is a printed and bound book.... but the printer and the printing office boy?
The marriage estate and settlement.... but the body and mind of the bridegroom? also
those of the bride?
The panorama of the sea.... but the sea itself?
The well-taken photographs.... but your wife or friend close and solid in your arms?
The fleet of ships of the line and all the modern improvements.... but the craft and pluck
of the admiral?

6

Not words of routine this song of mine,
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring;
This printed and bound book-but the printer and the printing-office boy?
The well taken photographs-but your wife or friend close and solid in your arms?
The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her turrets-but the pluck of the
captain and engineers?

Day 7 (Tuesday)

5 min: Madonna's "Express Yourself;" H&A

20 min: Put students groups of four and have them compare/contrast the selected deathbed version and the first edition (1855) of *Leaves of Grass*. This will be their first time reading the first edition; the teacher will provide a handout with selections that match deathbed selections. Have students consider the following guided questions: (1) What are the textual similarities/differences? (2) Does the tone change because of these textual differences? How? (3) Does reading the unedited version change your reading of the edited version? (4) Which version do you think is most effective and why?

25 min: Class discussion: Each group presents the answers to the questions and from those answers the class generates a list of thematic changes between the poems.

Day 8 (Wednesday)

5 min: Flogging Molly's "Drunken Lullabies;" H&A

5 min: Read Langston Hughes' poem "I, Too" aloud without any sort of background to the poem or author.

30 min: Have the students do a sketch-to-stretch comparing Walt Whitman and Hughes' views on individual expression in America. Each sketch will be a personal artistic interpretation. This is designed to be a very raw interpretation of a first reading.

10 min: Give background information on Hughes and his poem; reread.

Day 9 (Thursday)

5 min: James Taylor's "Fire and Rain;" H&A

15 min: Present sketches in groups of four. Keeping in mind the newly acquired background information on Hughes, have students suggest revisions.

10 min: As a group, generate a list of themes, commonalities, and differences.

20 min: Present sketches to class on a voluntary basis; have each group share from their list of themes, commonalities, and differences. Discuss these findings as a class.

Day 10 (Friday)

5 min: Chuck Berry's "Johnny Be Goode;" H&A

5 min: Introduce the paper that will be due the following Wednesday; rough drafts are due Monday. The paper should be a compare/contrast between "I, Too" and "Song of Myself" or the deathbed and 1855 versions of "Song of Myself." The paper should be two pages in length and is an ideal place for students to experiment with Grammar B because this paper will be graded predominantly for completion and clarity of focus.

30 min: Grammar B: Time will be spent experimenting with repetend, an element of Grammar B. Student handout and in-class assignment included below.

10 min: Question and answer time for paper and SSR.

Grammar B Good

All following Grammar B definitions and examples are courtesy of Mrs. Rickert of Hilliard Davidson High School

[Date assigned]

Repetend- is similar to repetition except the purpose is to create a central theme in your writing, usually in a collection of writings. It provides your reader with reoccurring images and phrases, which can create consistency and connectedness between your writings. (Remember the line “So it goes” in *Slaughterhouse Five*? Or “The farmer in the dell” in *I am the Cheese*?)

- Include the same phrase, sentence, or passage throughout your writings
- Include a description of design in your writings (written or visual)
- Include story line commentary following and precluding each writing
- Create a character and follow his/her reaction to the carious writings
- Create a character involved somehow in each piece of writing

Today in class

- 1) Referring back to the list of themes, commonalities, and differences we listed together as a class yesterday, decide which paper topic you want to explore,
- 2) Find a word or a phrase that represents your main idea,
- 3) And brainstorm ways in which you can include this in your paper using repetend.
- 4) Begin working on your paper, a rough draft of which is due on Monday.

Week Three

Day 11 (Monday)

5 min: Creed's "What If;" H&A

45 min: Peer edit rough drafts of paper by dividing class up into groups of three. Each person in the group will be assigned a role, roles that include an "expert" on (1) focus of topic, (2) organization, and (3) appropriate use of Grammar B. The papers will be passed around and read; in their editing, each expert will focus on their assigned aspect.

Day 12 (Tuesday)

5 min: Britney Spears' "Brave New Girl;" H&A

15 min: Share background information of Thoreau making sure to include basic biographical information, his works (especially *Walden*), how his works, especially *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience*, were considered radical, and how he connects to Whitman.

5 min: Model a think aloud using an unfamiliar text. A think aloud makes evident the process a reader goes through in order to understand what they are reading.

10 min: Conduct a class think-aloud with Thoreau using the first page of "Sounds" from *Walden*.

15 min: Break up into groups of four and continue think aloud. Have students finish reading for homework.

Day 13 (Wednesday)

5 min: Brooks and Dunn's "Only in America;" H&A

10 min: Have students find a sentence, phrase, and word they feel represent "Sounds" for a text rendering activity.

10 min: Circle around the room three times and have everyone share their sentence, phrase, and word.

20 min: As a class, discuss the trends and differences found to emphasize the possibilities of multiple interpretations of the same text.

5 min: Introduce found poems and share teacher's example from Walt Whitman (example included below).

Found Poem

I dote on myself,
One of the roughs,
Prodigal- an American!

Mine is no callus shell,
I am undisguised and naked
Some where waiting for you.

Walking the path where the panthers walk,
I talk wildly
As the trill of a thousand clear cornets,
And breathe the air.

Day 14 (Thursday)

5 min: Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti;" H&A

25 min: Work on found poems from "Sounds."

20 min: Share poems with the class.

Day 15 (Friday)

5 min: En Vogue's "Free Your Mind;" H&A

20 min: Grammar B: We will experiment with sentence fragments and the labyrinth sentence, two more elements of Grammar B. Student handout and class activity provided below.

15 min: Introduce Sherman Alexie and *Reservation Blues*. Make sure to include in the introduction Alexie's biographical information and how he struggles through expressing his voice in an America he feels oppresses non-mainstream cultures. Tie this in with previously read works in this unit. Address some major themes that pervade the *Reservation Blues*, including oppression, familial relations, the supernatural, and culture.

10 min: SSR, begin reading novel. Assign first two chapters of novel (p 1-52) for homework and warn them of quiz on Monday.

Grammar B Good
[Date Assigned]

Sentence Fragment- is a word or phrase that is *intentionally* not a complete sentence, usually used to emphasize an isolated idea. It looks like a sentence- it has a capital letter and a period- but is not really a complete sentence. Its purpose is to make the reader isolate and concentrate on individual images, ideas, or even words.

Pounding feet now, echoing on the pavement and the echoes loud because his ear was pressed to the pavement; his cheek felt bruised, lacerated, and he was still facing his mother and she was still dead, of course, her head at a peculiar angle. He did not want to look at her anymore. He lay numb, in a vacuum except for the echo of sounds in his ear and he tried to raise his head from the pavement but couldn't and he wanted to close his eyes but couldn't and he couldn't bear to look at his mother anymore. He. Did. Not. Want. To. Look. At. Her. Anymore. She. Was. Dead.

-Robert Cormier

Labyrinth Sentence- is a finely crafted collection of words that weaves in and out, adding information, riding rhythms of parallel sentence structure, tacking on phrases and clauses to form a flowing sentence. Yes, it is often a run-on.

Into them. Into his father, his mother, himself. The car smashing, shattering. A flash of steel, sun glinting, and he felt himself, crazily, moving through the air, no feeling, no pain, no sense of flight, but actually in the air, not flying but moving as if in slow motion, everything slowed down, tumbling now and twisting and in the tumbling and the twisting he saw his mother die... One moment, she was spinning the way he was spinning, like a top released from its string, and suddenly she was actually on the hood of the car, sliding, toward the front of the car, as if someone had reversed the film projector, and she fell to the pavement, not sliding off but plunging to the pavement strangely, awkwardly, her head at an odd angle, almost at a right angle to her body.

-Robert Cormier

Taking the following labyrinthine sentence from Thoreau's essay "Sounds," break the sentence into as many fragments as you can. You can omit a few words in the process if necessary, but make sure to keep the main idea. Notice how the tone changes when the sentence is broken up. Write a few sentences to explain the reasoning behind your placement of the periods. Turn in upon completion.

The large buds, suddenly pushing out late in the spring from dry sticks which had seemed to be dead, developed themselves as by magic into graceful green and tender boughs, an inch in diameter; and sometimes, as I sat at my window, so heedlessly did they grow and tax their weak joints, I heard a fresh and tender bough suddenly fall like a fan to the ground, when there was not a breath of air stirring, broken off by its own weight.

-Thoreau

Week 4

Day 16 (Monday)

5 min: Robert Johnson's "Crossroad Blues;" H&A

15 min: Quiz: Name three events in the plot that you felt were important and why. Make sure you show knowledge of first three chapters.

10 min: Discuss the songs at the beginning of the first two chapters; make sure to include how they relate both to the novel and to the Blues. Allow students to ask questions they have.

20 min: Watch selections from the first episode of the PBS documentary *Feel Like Going Home* directed by Martin Scorsese. More information can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/theblues/>. Assign third chapter of novel (p 53-91) for homework.

Day 17 (Tuesday)

5 min: Jim Boyd's "Reservation Blues;" H&A

10 min: Introduce Body Biographies (explained in an earlier unit) and the concept of character bulletin boards. For the character bulletin boards, the class will divide into five groups. Under each character, students will post character traits to the bulletin board using post-it notes. Each group has their own color post-its and must post at least three traits for each character by Wednesday. The following characters will be examined: Thomas-Builds-the-Fire, Victor, Chess, Checkers, or Junior. On Wednesday the groups will be assigned specific characters for the Body Biography.

5 min: Pass out anticipation guide (included below) and have students answer.

30 min: Discuss all the controversial ideas that are presented in the anticipation guide and will be present in the novel.

Assign chapter four (p92-129) for homework.

Anticipation Guide for Reservation Blues

Directions: Read each of the following statements and write Yes in the blank if you believe the statement and could support it or put No if you do not believe the statement and cannot support it. After you finish reading the selections, revisit the statements. This time, decide how a character in the story would react to each statement.

Before**After**

- | | | |
|-------|--|-------|
| _____ | 1. Most Native Americans live on reservations. | _____ |
| _____ | 2. African Americans experience the worst discrimination in American society. | _____ |
| _____ | 3. Societal status should be taken into account when looking for a husband or wife. | _____ |
| _____ | 4. Voodoo and magic are strictly myths. | _____ |
| _____ | 5. Certain races are better at performing certain types of music.
(ex: African Americans cannot play rock & roll) | _____ |
| _____ | 6. Discrimination is on its way down in modern society. | _____ |
| _____ | 7. Music is poetry. | _____ |
| _____ | 8. Alcoholism is not a problem on reservations. | _____ |
| _____ | 9. Storytelling is important in Native American culture. | _____ |
| _____ | 10. Fiction and fact are hard to separate. | _____ |

Day 18 (Wednesday)

5 min: Dixie Chicks' "Wide Open Spaces;" H&A

5 min: Have students put any last post-it notes on the bulletin board.

10 min: Using a piece of string and push-pins, students will connect commonalities among character traits of different characters. For example, both Chess and Checkers are affected by the alcoholism of their father and the death of their brother.

30 min: Assign each previously formed group a character from the bulletin board. Work on Body Biographies.

Assign chapter five for homework (p 132-169)

Day 19 (Thursday)

5 min: Toots and the Maytals' "5446 Was My Number;" H&A

45 min: Finish Body Biographies

Assign chapter 6 for homework (p 170-195)

Day 20 (Friday)

5 min: Dashboard Confessional's "The Places You Have Come to Fear the Most;" H&A

25 min: Have groups present Body Biographies to the class.

20 min: Assign and go over culminating unit project; pass out descriptions and rubrics for all three possible projects. Inform students that the project will be due a week from Monday.

Assign chapters seven and eight for homework (p198-244); inform students of a reading quiz on Monday.

Song List for “I Sing Myself”

The Who’s “Who Are You?”
David Bowie’s “Changes”
Staind’s “Me”
Good Charlotte’s “Anthem”
Whitney Houston’s “I’m Every Woman”
David Gray’s “What Are You?”
Madonna’s “Express Yourself”
Flogging Molly’s “Drunken Lullabies”
James Taylor’s “Fire and Rain”
Chuck Berry’s “Johnny Be Goode”
Creed’s “What If”
Britney Spears’ “Brave New Girl”
Brooks and Dunn’s “Only in America”
Little Richard’s “Tutti Frutti”
En Vogue’s “Free Your Mind”
Robert Johnson’s “Crossroad Blues”
Jim Boyd’s “Reservation Blues”
Dixie Chicks’ “Wide Open Spaces”
Toots and the Maytals’ “5446 Was My Number”
Dashboard Confessional’s “The Places You Have Come to Fear the Most”
Tom Waits’ “Hold On”
Dave Mathew’s “Ants Marching”
Lauryn Hill’s “Freedom Time”
The Flaming Lips’ “Fight Test”

Day 21 (Monday)

5 min: Tom Waits' "Hold On;" H&A

15 min: Reading Quiz. Teacher will read aloud the following passage from page 236 of *Reservation Blues* and have students comment upon its significance in the plot.

Checkers? Asked the voice, like a knock on the door.

Chess, Checkers whispered as she rushed to the door and opened it.

Hello, said Phil Sheridan as he pushed his way into the room.

What do you want? Checkers asked.

I came to apologize, Sheridan said. *Where is everybody?*

They all just left. They'll be back soon.

You're alone?

For just a little while, Checkers said and edged back toward the door. Sheridan stepped around her, shut the door, and locked it. He stared at Checkers. His eyes were wild, furtive.

You guys really blew it, Sheridan said.

What do you mean?

You blew it by acting like a bunch of goddamn wild Indians. I might have been able to talk Mr. Armstrong into listening to you again. He might have been able to talk Mr. Armstrong into listening to you again. He might have given you another chance. But not after that shit you pulled in the studio. You caused a lot of damage.

We didn't start it.

That's what you Indians always say. The white men did this to us, the white men did that to us. When are you ever going to take responsibility for yourselves?

30 min: Go over quiz and share possible answers; allow this discussion to bleed over into a discussion based on the following questions:

1. What were your feelings while reading this book?
2. With which character in the book do you have the most empathy? Why? The least? Why?
3. What does the story convey to you about the search for human identity?
4. What questions does this book plant in your mind?
5. How do you feel about seeking retribution for historical injustices?

Questions adapted from http://www.uua.org/re/reach/spring00/adult/discussion_guide_jacqui.html

Assign chapter nine for homework (p 245-274). Also have students start generating ideas on paper for their unit project because there will be student-teacher conferences on Wednesday and Thursday.

Day 22 (Tuesday)

5 min: Dave Matthews' "Ants Marching;" H&A

10 min: Have students get back in their original groups, come up with five newly revealed character traits (one from each character) and post on bulletin board. These will help with the Body Biography revisions on Wednesday.

35 min: Assign groups of two a song from the beginning of each chapter (1-10) and have them decide on the major themes. Using those themes, students can write a new song in a genre they feel comfortable with (ex. Rap, Dr. Seuss, Country, etc.). The length should be no shorter than twelve lines. Feel free to be silly! The songs will be graded for completion.

Assign chapter 10 for homework (p 275-end)

Day 23 (Wednesday)

5 min: Lauryn Hill's "Freedom Time;" H&A

45 min: In the Body Biography groups, have students add to their Body Biographies. Create new clothes or objects for body biography out of butcher paper and staple to original body biography in the form of a flap. One can lift up the additions to compare the original interpretations to how the students see the character after reading the entire novel. Throughout class time teacher will call students individually to desk and conduct student-teacher conferences.

Have students bring all materials to class tomorrow to work on culminating projects. Also, we will pass around a list where students can sign up for the food or drink items they want to bring for Jukebox Day on Friday.

Day 24 (Thursday)

5 min: The Flaming Lips' "Fight Test," H&A

45 min: Students will have entire class time to work on culminating projects. Throughout class time teacher will call students individually to desk and conduct student-teacher conferences

Day 25 (Friday): Jukebox Day

50 min: From song list given to students on the previous Friday, they will request a "Top 15" to be played by the teacher. This will allow students to hear some of the songs they will be allowed to choose from for their projects without having to buy the cds. As we listen to the songs, there will be eating and drinking.

Projects will be turned in on Monday of next week. Unit officially ends on Friday.