

The Modern Period: Ourselves Among Others
SE Asian Literature & Non-fiction
Understanding By Design – (Wiggins & McTighe, 2002)

Brief Summary of Unit

This sub-unit is to be considered supplementary to Collection 7 (The Modern Period) in the Arlington Public Schools (APS) adopted text for English 12, *HOLT Elements of Literature*, 6th Edition. The population of Arlington County (VA) is highly diverse, with many immigrant families arriving from Central America, Asia, and Africa. High school teachers have the opportunity to guide their students to think critically, not only regarding their content areas, but also regarding the larger community in which they live. It is important to note that, historically, my English classes are composed of 90-94% former English language learners (ELLs), i.e., immigrants to the Arlington community.

One rationale for integrating SE Asian writing into the curriculum is based on observations that some APS students regard all Asian students as “Chinos” (as they refer to them). It is hoped that directing attention to the lives and distinct cultures of Thailand and Vietnam (the home country of a number of APS classmates) will result in recognition of shared experiences and, ultimately, a deeper understanding of different cultures living in a small community.

In this unit, students read the literature (in Collection 7) represented by New Zealand, Wales, Chile, England, China, and India and complete writing assignments (comparing and contrasting characters, comparing and contrasting sonnets, a character analysis, etc.) as presented in the curriculum. In addition, students will be presented with literature and non-fiction articles written by Thai (Cornwel-Smith, 2005; Singh & Bowie, 2004) and Vietnamese (Lam, 2005) writers. In preparation for reading, students will research and present the historical and geographical contexts for each reading. They will also compare and contrast two short stories: “The Necklace” by Singh & Bowie (2004) and “The Necklace” by de Maupassant. Moreover, the students will analyze points of view on human rights, including Ha Jin (China), the UN Commission on Human Rights, Desmond Tutu (South Africa), and Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar).

In a culminating activity, students will organize and invite SE Asian community leaders to a panel discussion, to be videotaped by students enrolled in the county’s TV Production class. With the permission of the panelists, the discussion may be aired on Arlington’s cable TV. The sub-unit concludes with students’ reflections on the readings and activities, especially focusing on the theme, “Ourselves Among Others.”

Stage 1 – Desired Results

Established Goals:

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL)*:

- 12.4d Relate literary works and authors to major themes and issues of their eras;
- 12.5a Generate and respond logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, synthesizing, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading

texts;

- 12.5b Analyze and synthesize information in order to solve problems, answer questions, and generate new knowledge;
- 12.5 c Analyze two or more texts addressing the same topic to identify author's purpose and determine how authors reach similar or different conclusions;
- 12. 6 Generate, gather, and organize ideas for writing to address a specific audience and purpose;
- 12.7 The student will write, revise, and edit writing;
- 12.8 The student will write documented research papers;
- 12.1 the student will make a formal oral presentation in a group or individually.

(*Based on VDOE Standards Final Review 11/18/2010 to be adopted AY 2012-2013).

Understanding (s):

Students will understand that...

- experiences of “solitude and difficulty” (Neruda, in *Elements of Literature*, 2007, p. 1251) are universal;
- communicating and sharing life experiences makes understanding others possible;
- writing about ourselves helps in self-knowledge, i.e., in knowing “what we are” (Neruda, in *Elements of Literature*, 2007, p. 1251).

Essential Question(s):

- What does the title of the sub-unit, “Ourselves Among Others” (*Elements of Literature*, 2007, p. 1251) mean?
- How does our writing define us?
- How do authors demonstrate values and culture in their writing?
- Why is understanding others important in the 21st century?
- How does the writing of the modern period reflect this era's great diversity of issues and styles? (*Elements of Literature*, 2007, p. 1329).

Students will be able to:

- Identify and discuss the literary elements: theme, irony, metaphor, setting, and elegy;
- Apply the writing process to create:
 - an essay comparing and contrasting two sonnets;
 - an essay comparing and contrasting two characters;
 - a character analysis;
 - reflective essays;
 - an essay comparing and contrasting two short stories.
- Research and present a historical and/or geographical context in preparation for reading literature (New Zealand, Chile, Wales, India, England, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Burma, South Africa);
- Understand and identify cases of human rights violations in the present world;
- Work with school and community leaders to organize a panel discussion.

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Performance Task(s):

- Unit quizzes and tests: Vocabulary, comprehension (*Elements of Literature*, 2007) in addition to teacher-written quizzes and tests
- Essays: Compare and contrast; character analysis; reflective essays; research paper.

(Use APS ELA established rubric to assess and evaluate)

- Oral presentation: Historical and geographical context (Use APS rubric)
- Community Panel Discussion: (Students to identify, invite, decide on topics/questions, facilitate, and self-assess their performance).

Other Evidence:

- Daily warm-up activities (vocabulary-, grammar-, or comprehension-based)
- Journal responses
- Written evaluation from school staff and administration

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Learning Activities:

Students will

- Review Essential Questions, get an overview of the unit, and be reminded of rubrics
- Read, discuss, and take text’s quizzes on the readings in Collection 7
- Write a reflective essay: *The Arlington Community*
- Review the writing process, focusing on comparison and contrast structures and character analysis
- Draft, proofread, edit and submit aforementioned writing assignments
- Write journal responses to readings and activities and submit to teacher
- Research and present historical and geographical context for readings in Collection 7 and sub-unit (SE Asian countries)
- Read, discuss, write reflective essays, and take quizzes on supplemental readings:
 - “Rit’s First Mistake” and “The Necklace” by Singh & Bowie (2004);
 - “Child of Two Worlds”, “My Vietnam, My America”, “Two Passports”, and “Letter to a Young Refugee” by Lam (2005);
- Collaborate with classmates and community members to organize a panel discussion on immigration and human rights
- Create a self-assessment of participation regarding panel discussion
- Collaborate with APS TV production to videotape and air on county cable station

The teacher will

- Present the Essential Questions
- Prepare and present visual displays, including information on personal experience traveling in Thailand and Vietnam
- Prepare materials, including daily warm-up activities, vocabulary lists, writing prompts and rubrics, periodical comprehension exercises, grammar exercises, exemplary writing samples,
- Order books
- Lead discussions on readings
- Guide students through the stages of the writing process
- Assess and respond to journal responses
- Provide ongoing guidance and feedback to oral presentations regarding historical and geographical contexts
- Create and assess quizzes based on SE Asian readings
- Observe, encourage, and assess individual participation
- Advise, when necessary, on matters of logistics regarding the panel discussion

References

- Cornwel-Smith, P. (2005). *Very Thai: Everyday popular culture*. Tatieen, Thailand: River Books Co., Ltd.
- Elements of Literature*, 6th course. (2007). Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. [VA Edition].
- Lam, A. (2005). *Perfume dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese diaspora*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Publications.
- Singh, S. & Bowie, K.A. (2004). *Voices from the Thai countryside*. Madison, WI: Center for Southeast Asian Studies.
- Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2006). *Understanding by design*. (2nd Edition). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.