

Lesson Plan for Using Personal Essays to Examine History

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CCSS Standard(s): CCS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA RH.11-12 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 (Social Studies)

Objective(s): To read essays that describe personal experiences or stories to examine historical events and subjects

Essential Question(s): In what ways is what we call “history” a reflection of individual lives and experiences?

Preparation for Teacher (Strategy and Purpose): Using the editor’s “intro” and “outro” from *Nobody’s Home*, the teacher will consider how beliefs, myths, and narratives affect individuals within Southern society in myriad ways. Then, the teacher will select and read essays from the list below that offer examples of how some lives in the South augment the larger narrative while others contradict it.

Preparation of Students (Strategy and Purpose): The teacher will conduct a social studies unit that focuses primarily on anchor standards 3 (“various explanations for actions or events”) and 6 (“authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event”). The unit should include direct instruction, informational texts on the chosen historical event or period, and some or all of the following six essays:

“Blood in the Pool ” by Matthew Teutsch • “Two Chairs” by Normal McMillan •
“The South in Texas” by S.L. Wisenberg • “For an Athlete Dying Young” by
Margaret Donovan Bauer • “Where Will They Go?” by Janet Lynne Douglass •
“Morality without God and Politics with Her” by Robert Stewart

All of these essays involve personal experiences or stories that were either shaped by Southern beliefs and narratives or contradict the mythic version of Southern history. Any or all of these can provide model examples for students to follow and offer an array of structures, tones, and voices.

In-class activities (recommended): The teacher will use the selected *Nobody’s Home* essay to augment lessons contained in direct instruction and readings about the related time period or subject. For example, “The South in Texas” can augment a discussion of that state’s history, or Robert Stewart’s essay on Alabama politics can provide insights into legislative processes in a government class. In a current events class, Douglass’s “Where Will They Go?” would function well in a current events class studying rural hospital closures, while Bauer’s and Teutsch’s essays provide intense perspectives on the issue of gun rights. “Two Chairs” could be used in a discussion of slavery and its legacy.

Lesson Follow-up (Recommendations): *Dependent upon teacher and lesson/unit

Technology: SmartBoard, Elmo, other device for sharing the texts

Tiered Instruction/Intervention/Differentiation: Accommodations per needs, IEPs, or 504s

Assessment: *Dependent upon teacher and lesson

Homework: See assessment suggestion above.

Comments: This lesson plan's activities are less specific intentionally. The six essays are topical and relate to specific issues and places. The editor's suggestion to social studies teacher here is that each could be used to say, *Here is a person who was there, who experienced it personally, and who sees it in a different way than is normally presented.*