

Lesson #1: Coming-of-Age readings: experiences in Korea and by Asians in America

Introduction:

During the course of my American Literature course, students read classic American literature, including many coming-of-age stories. Titles include *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, *Black Boy* by Richard Wright, *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok, *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, *The Great Gatsby* by F.Scott Fitzgerald as well as such short stories as “Leader of the People” by John Steinbeck. “Young Goodman Brown” by Nathaniel Hawthorne and the play “The Glass Menagerie” by Tennessee Williams.

To introduce students to experiences of Asian cultures, several small group options would work well: Novels and autobiographies would fit very nicely into the coming-of-age theme, especially autobiographies of first and second generation immigrants. Choices might include:

- Richard Kim-*Lost Names-sometimes listed as fiction as well as non-fiction*
- Linda Sue Park-*My Name Was Keoko* (fiction)
- Maxine Hong Kingston-*The Woman Warrior* (for more advanced students)
- Jeanne W. Houston and James Houston-*Farewell to Manzanar*
- Amy Tan-*The Joy Luck Club* (fiction)

These choices include two memoirs of Korea under Japanese occupation, a book about the Japanese internment camps in the U.S. during WWII, and a novel about coming to terms with Chinese-American identity. They include young women as well as young men and allow for different reading abilities.

Objectives:

1. to broaden student understanding of diverse cultures and the power of history
2. to include the Asian experience as part of students’ lives as the world shrinks to help them become more aware and connected to people from other cultures
3. to show resilience of the human spirit
4. to connect these readings with literary themes emphasized during the course

Methodology:

1. Students will select a book based on preliminary summaries obtained through the internet library catalogues or amazon.com.
2. Students will obtain relevant maps to understand the geography of their book.
3. If necessary, students will find relevant historical material to help them understand the historical topics presented in their reading.
4. Prior to small group reading and discussion and class presentation, students will analyze the aspects of the coming-of-age story as presented through their earlier readings so that they may make a comparison with their selection.
5. Students will note passages of powerful personal connection.
6. Students will note points that perplexed them or required them to understand aspects of a new culture.

7. Students will keep a reading chart:

Location and time	Transforming ex-Periences:	Point of view and its significance	Personal growth presented

8. Student will keep track of cultural references both explicit and implicit:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- etc.

9. After comparing notes in their small groups, students collaboratively will develop a 5-minute class presentation in one of the following modes:

- powerpoint
- graphic “novel”
- skit
- puppet show

to connect their book with earlier readings and to help their classmates understand the experiences presented.

10. Students will write a personal essay reflecting on their view of the experiences presented in the reading and how they do or do not connect with their lives. (one typed page)

Note to teachers: If you feel your students need far more structure than that presented by the charts above, the bibliographical citations that follow provide excellent study guides and questions. Some material makes suggestions about other kinds of pre-reading activities or material you may want to present such as Confucian beliefs and attitudes; Daoism: family relationships in China, Japan or Korea; calligraphy; naming; historical elements of WWII.

Bibliographical references to assist teachers:

The Lost Names

www.aasianst.org/EAA/lostname.htm (Interview + teaching suggestions)

www.koreasociety.org/KS_curriculum/SF/2001/Lessons/klp_xxii.pdf (lesson plans)

<http://koreaweb.ws/ks/ksr/ksr01-02.htm> (review)

www.kcta.ku.edu/lesson_plans/lost_names.doc

marcus.whitman.edu/~dottbr/lostnames.htm

The Woman Warrior

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin, ed. *Approaches to Teaching Kingston's The Woman Warrior*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1991.

Matuz, Roger, ed. "Maxine Hong Kingston" in *Contemporary Literary Criticism* 58. New York: Gale Research, 1990. 307–328.

Senick, Gerard J., ed. "Maxine Hong Kingston" in *Contemporary Literary Criticism* 12. New York: Gale Research, 1980. 312–315.

Maxine Hong Kingston Teacher Resource Guide at http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramse_yil/kingston.htm

My Name is Keoko

www.langintro.com/kintro (introduction to the Korean language)

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=0440419441&view=tg> (teacher's guide)

Joy Luck Club

<http://www.bookrags.com/notes/jlc/TOP1.htm> (summary and some analysis)

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/joyluck/> (summary used by students)

<http://www.randomhouse.com/highschool/guides/joyluck.html> teacher's guide

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2278/is_2_24/ai_59211511 (scholarly article on traditional Chinese beliefs in *The Joy Luck Club*)

Bloom, Harold, ed. Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations)

Farewell to Manzanar

<http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/manz/manztg.html>

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/houston.html>

<http://www.csun.edu/~pjs44945/manzan.html>

http://urbandreams.ousd.k12.ca.us/language_arts/core/09/houston/

http://www.cerritos.edu/library/guides/research/farewell_to_manzanar.html

http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwww/sch618/Farewell_to_Manzanar/Farewell_to_Manzanar.html (excellent site)

<http://www.writingproject.org/Resources/internment.htm>

<http://www.densho.org/resources/jaexperience.asp>

<http://www.smith.edu/fceas/curriculum/echev.htm> (teacher's guide)

State Standards alignment: language arts. Grades 11,12

Concepts of Print, Comprehension Strategies and Self-Monitoring Strategies Standard

Students develop and learn to apply strategies that help them to comprehend and interpret informational and literary texts. Reading and learning to read are problem solving processes that require strategies for the reader to make sense of written language and remain engaged with texts. Beginners develop basic concepts about print (e.g., that print holds meaning) and how books work (e.g., text organization). As strategic readers, students learn to analyze and evaluate texts to demonstrate their understanding of text. Additionally, students learn to self-monitor their own comprehension by asking and answering questions about the text, self-correcting errors and assessing their own understanding. They apply these strategies effectively to assigned and self-selected texts read in and out of the classroom.

Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text Standard

Students gain information from reading for purposes of learning about a subject, doing a job, making decisions and accomplishing a task. Students need to apply the reading process to various types of informational texts, including essays, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, instruction manuals, consumer and workplace documents, reference materials, multimedia and electronic resources. They learn to attend to text features, such as titles, subtitles and visual aids, to make predictions and build text knowledge. They learn to read diagrams, charts, graphs, maps and displays in text as sources of additional information. Students use their knowledge of text structure to organize content information, analyze it and draw inferences from it. Strategic readers learn to recognize arguments, bias, stereotyping and propaganda in informational text sources.

- A. Analyze the features and structures of documents and critique them for their effectiveness.
- B. Identify and analyze examples of rhetorical devices and valid and invalid inferences.
- C. Critique the effectiveness and validity of arguments in text and whether they achieve the author's purpose.
- D. Synthesize the content from several sources on a single issue or written by a single author, clarifying ideas and connecting them to other sources and related topics.

E. Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.

Literary Text Standard

Students enhance their understanding of the human story by reading literary texts that represent a variety of authors, cultures and eras. They learn to apply the reading process to the various genres of literature, including fables, folk tales, short stories, novels, poetry and drama. They demonstrate their comprehension by describing and discussing the elements of literature (e.g., setting, character and plot), analyzing the author's use of language (e.g., word choice and figurative language), comparing and contrasting texts, inferring theme and meaning and responding to text in critical and creative ways. Strategic readers learn to explain, analyze and critique literary text to achieve deep understanding

- A. Analyze and evaluate the five elements (e.g., plot, character, setting, point of view and theme) in literary text.
- B. Explain ways characters confront similar situations and conflict.
- C. Recognize and analyze characteristics of subgenres and literary periods.
- D. Analyze how an author uses figurative language and literary techniques to shape plot and set meaning.
- E. Critique an author's style.

Writing Applications Standard

Students need to understand that various types of writing require different language, formatting and special vocabulary. Writing serves many purposes across the curriculum and takes various forms. Beginning writers learn about the various purposes of writing; they attempt and use a small range of familiar forms (e.g., letters). Developing writers are able to select text forms to suit purpose and audience. They can explain why some text forms are more suited to a purpose than others and begin to use content-specific vocabulary to achieve their communication goals. Proficient writers control effectively the language and structural features of a large repertoire of text forms. They deliberately choose vocabulary to enhance text and structure their writing according to audience and purpose

- A. Compose reflective writings that balance reflections by using specific personal experiences to draw conclusions about life.
- B. Write responses to literature that provide an interpretation, recognize ambiguities, nuances and complexities and that understand the author's use of stylistic devices and effects created.

Research Standard

Students define and investigate self-selected or assigned issues, topics and problems. They locate, select and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference and technological sources. Students use an appropriate form to communicate their findings.

- A. Formulate open-ended research questions suitable for inquiry and investigation and adjust questions as necessary while research is conducted.
- B. Compile, organize and evaluate information, take notes and summarize findings.
- C. Evaluate the usefulness and credibility of data and sources and synthesize information from multiple sources.
- D. Communicate findings, reporting on the substance and processes orally, visually and in writing or through multimedia.

Communications: Oral and Visual Standard

Students learn to communicate effectively through exposure to good models and opportunities for practice. By speaking, listening and providing and interpreting visual images, they learn to apply their communication skills in increasingly sophisticated ways. Students learn to deliver presentations that effectively convey information and persuade or entertain

audiences. Proficient speakers control language and deliberately choose vocabulary to clarify points and adjust presentations according to audience and purpose.

- A. Give informational presentations that contain a clear perspective, present ideas from multiple sources in logical sequence and include a consistent organizational structure.
- B. Give presentations using a variety of delivery methods, visual displays and technology.