

Minnesota Writing Project

--- Demonstration Lesson ---

Title of lesson:

ArtsLiteracy Community Building and Entering Text: an introduction to The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Suggested grade/age:

High school from grade 9 (although can be applied to texts for younger students)

Approximate time needed to complete lesson:

One classroom period with limited warm up exercises.

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:

Students will be introduced to the book, The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. Students will understand theme.

Students will work with a guiding question in order to define the prominent theme of “resilience.” Students will begin to experience working with a difficult text.

Brief summary/outline of lesson:

This lesson introduces the text, The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass through an exploration of the theme of resilience. The lesson is designed to get students engaged in the book as well as build community and safe space. Students will “enter the text” through theater and writing exercises designed to engage and ignite understanding about Frederick Douglass and resilience. (See Performance Cycle below) They will work with the following quote:

“I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty – to wit, the white man’s power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. . . Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope and a fixed purpose at whatever cost of trouble to learn how to read.”

-Frederick Douglass

Essential question: What does it mean to be resilient?

Guiding question: What does resilience look like?

Warm up:

Warm up games “prime the pump” for the lesson. The games are simple and can be played quickly. See artslit.org handbook, community building.

Lesson:

Students will begin to work with text and theme by playing The Balloon Game. They are each given a balloon and slip of paper with an excerpt from the quote above: *I set out with high hope and a fixed purpose at whatever cost of trouble to _____*. They are asked to fill in the blank with a statement of their own, keeping in mind the guiding question. These writings are placed into their balloon and the game begins.

During the game students form small groups. In their groups, they compose a “poem” from student writings and create a performance (choral reading with sound and movement) of that poem. Students rehearse and perform for their classmates.

Reflection:

Following performances, students reflect in writing about the idea of resilience in the context of their experience.

Next Steps:

As students begin their study, they can participate in additional “Entering Text” activities or move on to lessons that explore deeper reading and comprehension.

Related Resources:

Artslit.org

Acting, Learning and Change: Creating Original Plays with Adolescents by Jan Mandell and Jennifer Lynn Wolf

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:

- Warm up exercises are designed for on-going use for community building or to work with other texts.
- Exercises can be used to help students generate their own writing.

The Performance Cycle

