

Minnesota Writing Project

---Demonstration Lesson---

Title of lesson: Identity and Disclosure in the ELA Classroom

Suggested grade/age: 8th Grade

Approximate time needed to complete lesson: 60 minutes

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson

- The Interest Inventory as a tool for developing meaningful writing topics for single writing sessions or extended projects especially among resistant writers.
 - It also works as marker of identity --- no students' Interest Inventories will be the same.
 - As a teacher, the Interest Inventory is a good way to get to know students while also disclosing appropriate teacher interests and personality.
- "I Was Raised By" Poem is a good way to establish and value identity within classroom.
 - The poem is a safe way of telling stories of self --- topics can be new or pulled from the Interest Inventory. Students choose the level at which they share, or what I call "degrees of disclosure.
 - Like the Interest Inventory, the poem is also an excellent way of getting to know students.
- Both projects involve using mentor texts (both teacher-created and professional), allowing students to try out writing by modeling their own texts after pre-existing ones.

Brief summary/outline of lesson

- This lesson is done early in the school year; the "I Was Raised By" Poem may be repeated near the end of the year to allow students to select different writing topics.
- This lesson builds into a revision/final draft, in which students create a polished version and create an illustration to represent their writing.

This lesson has two parts: the creation of an Interest Inventory to be placed in a Writers' Notebook or similar frequently used writing tool; and the creation of an "I Was Raised By" poem, based on "I Was Raised by Women" by Kelly Norman Ellis.

Part 1: Interest Inventory

- Class creates a shared text of possible broad topics that students could be interested in. For example:
 - Music/Books/Movies
 - Family/Friends
 - Foods
 - Sports
 - Hobbies
 - Places
 - Firsts and Lasts
 - Happiest/Saddest Memories
 - Hopes and Dreams

- Teachers may share their own Interest Inventories to give students an idea of the kinds/level of specificity.
- In 10 minutes, students will create their own Interest Inventory. They should be organized with larger topics, with more specific ones beneath. For example:
 - Food
 - Carnitas
 - Sushi
 - Pizza
 - Sports Teams
 - Vikings
 - Timberwolves
 - Brewers
- Once students are finished, they should complete a Quick Write as their first use of the Interest Inventory, using this topic:

The first time I ever met/heard/saw/tasted/read _____, I _____.

- Students do not share their writing, but instead only the **topic** they wrote about --- this allows students to hear what classmates may share interests with them, and gives the teacher an idea of the interests of the class a whole.
- Teacher should emphasize that the Interest Inventory will be used throughout the year, and should be considered a good resource when they “don’t know what to write about.”

Part 2: “I Was Raised By” Poem

- Students watch Kelly Norman Ellis’ “I Was Raised By Women”; they should also have a copy of the text so that they may read along.
- After the poem performance, students should work in pairs to identify key elements of form and structure. For example:
 - Repetition at end of line --- “kind of, sort of, type of, etc.”
 - Repetition at beginning of line --- “Some”
 - Things they do: Often has -ing descriptions
 - Things they say: Quotes
 - Things they do and things they say make them who they are
 - Overwhelmingly positive, some sprinkles of negativity squeezed in
 - Line breaks, short line lengths. A longer toward the end of the stanza.
 - Action packed --- propels you forward.
 - Stanzas are “themed” --- food, comfort, assertive/powerful, inside to outside (house to whole world), clothes, music
- Students are given past student examples to determine if they followed these “rules,” as a whole class.
- Teacher demonstrates strategies of brainstorming on overhead or whiteboard. Select a topic (for example, “my father) and put down words, descriptors, quotes, or phrases related to that topic.
- Once students understand, they select 2-3 topics to brainstorm with.
 - If possible, they should use topics from their Interest Inventory, though this isn’t required.
- Students will begin drafting a poem. With five minutes remaining in class, they should share their progress with a partner.

Related Resources

- [“I Was Raised by Women”](#) poem, by Kelly Norman Ellis
- Poetry lesson adapted from [Teaching for Joy and Justice](#), by Linda Christensen

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs

- Students may create longer or shorter versions of the poem.
- Students may use non-English languages, where appropriate.
- Students may comment on/review classmates’ poems during a Gallery Walk.
- Students may perform poems for the class.
- Students may create a polished final draft, with illustration, after a teacher conference.
- Students may create multiple stanzas about 1 topic, or multiple stanzas using a different topic for each.

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