

Lesson Plan for Personal Narrative Writing (Epiphanies)

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CCSS Standard(s): CCS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA R.1, 3, 4, 5, 6; W. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; SL 1, 6
(ELA Anchor)

Objective(s): To write personal narratives that explore a single aspect of one's life in depth

Essential Question(s): How can a single experience become so important to our lives that it achieves mythic status for us, forever affecting our beliefs and shaping our narratives about life?

Preparation for Teacher (Strategy and Purpose): Using the editor's introduction from *Nobody's Home*, a 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 single experiences that shaped one person's worldview. This concept could then be applied to teaching students to, as NCTE's Beliefs on the Teaching of Writing put it, use writing as "a tool for thinking" about their own lives.

Preparation of Students (Strategy and Purpose): The teacher will conduct a unit on personal narrative writing that includes direct instruction (see comments below) and some or all of the following essays:

"My Ole Granny" by Karren Pell • "Melding in McCormick" by Pilar di Pietro • "What in the World?" by Stephanie Rose Bird • "The Yearbook Let Her Have the Last Word" by Van Newell • "The Rooster" by Spike Anderson • "For an Athlete Dying Young" by Margaret Donovan Bauer • "Where My Cousins Are From" by Kelly Gerow • "A Life in the Day of a Butterfly" by Margaret Donovan Bauer

All of these essays involve a singular experience from a life in the South that shaped the writers' beliefs, myths, and narratives. 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): Using the essays as examples, the teacher will lead class discussions about the readings, focusing on how the subject has become larger than life for that individual/writer. For the writing portion of the unit, students should begin by choosing a single experience that has had a significant impact on their lives. The teacher may choose to have students write drafts in class or for homework.

Lesson Follow-up (Recommendations): Students will participate in a peer review process to improve the clarity of the writing. The teacher will acknowledge to students that, when a subject is very close to one's own heart, a writer may trouble expressing how and why he, she, or it is meaningful. It should be made clear that the peer review and revision processes are not to second-guess the content or sentiment in the essay, but to help the writer express them fully.

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

Tiered Instruction/Intervention/Differentiation: If the teacher's classes contain students with varying levels of writing ability, the need for direct instruction about grammar and other fundamentals may differ dramatically.

Assessment: Students will write personal narrative essays about one significant experience that conveys how he, she, or it affected the writer's beliefs, myths, and narratives about life.

Homework: See assessment suggestion above.

Comments: See comments above.