

STORYTELLING IS PERSONAL by Tia Bankosky

GRADE LEVEL/SUBJECT/COURSE: English, Grades 9-12

OVERALL EXPECTATION(S):

Oral Communication: 1, 2

Writing: 1, 4

SPECIFIC EXPECTATION(S):

Oral Communication: 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 2.2

Writing: 1.2, 1.4

OVERVIEW: This lesson aims to introduce students to different forms of storytelling and story-making as methods of understanding the social, political, economic, and environmental issues embedded in our everyday lives. Students will also practice organizing ideas and thoughts creatively and coherently to use metaphors and stories to convey experiences.

KEY WORDS: story, storytelling, Indigenous, positionality, representation, belonging, video, reflection

PLAN OF INSTRUCTION (approximately 75 minutes):

Step 1: Warm up (10-15 minutes)

Watch “My Name Is Dovie” by Dovie Thomason (0:00-3:34) on Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/193972360>

Warning: this video uses the word gypsy, which is a harmful slur to Romani peoples.

In small groups, discuss their initial thoughts on the story Dovie shared of her school experience. Students are welcome to discuss their impressions of this story and teller. Each group can be given 2-3 of the questions below (depending on class size) to guide their discussion.

- Who was represented in the story?
- Who was missing from it? Why? Where were they?
- Do they “belong” to that place? Do they have a sense of belonging?
- What kinds of problems is Dovie facing? What kinds of problems is Dovie not facing?
- What kinds of problems do we think are identified or explored by Dovie?
- What do we know about these issues?
- If comfortable sharing, do you personally relate to this story in any way? Why or why not?

Step 2: Discussion (10 minutes)

As a class, each group will be asked to summarize and share their thoughts. Time will be given for the groups to ask each other questions.

Facilitators should be prepared for potential discussions around bullying, exclusion, and residential schools.

Step 3: Modeling and Guided Practice (10 minutes)

Where you demonstrate the kinds of actions/skills/thinking patterns for the class

As a class, identify some of the elements of Dovie's story:

Setting: Texas in the 1950s

People: Dovie, her father, her teachers, the principal, her classmates

Positionalities: Apache, Scottish, white Americans, young girl, young boys, older teacher, differing levels of privilege, hunters

Issues: racism, colonialism, stereotypes, bullying

Conclusion/Resolution: her grandmother's house

For grades 9-10:

Why are these elements important? How do they relate to our present-day lives? What kinds of power do certain people have or not have?

For grades 11-12:

Why are these elements important? How do they inform our understanding of the story? How do they relate to our present-day lives? What kinds of power do certain people have or not have? What kinds of techniques did Dovie use to tell this story (think of timing, tone, mood, volume, engagement with the audience)?

Step 4: Independent Activity (20-25 minutes)

In smaller groups or pairs, students will be asked to write or create their own story outlines. This can be a personal story, it can be a fictional story, or a fictional story with personal elements. Decide on setting, characters/people, their backgrounds/positionality, and a rough idea of the plotline (what is the problem and how may it be resolved or concluded if it is). Ideally, the problem will be a social justice issue. Students will be reminded that the target audience of these stories are their classmates.

For grades 11-12:

Identify useful literary devices (e.g., metaphor, foreshadowing, imagery, etc.) or oral storytelling techniques (e.g., tone, volume, body language, etc.) that will help you convey meaning or inform the reader or listener to the processes or events of the stories as they relate to the problem.

Step 6: Sharing / Discussing / Teaching (20-25 minutes)

Student pairs or small groups will be asked to share their story outlines with another pair or group. These groups will then reflect on the other group's outline using similar questions we used previously when reflecting on Dovie's story:

- Who was represented in the stories?
- Who was missing from it? Why? Where were they? Do we know where they were?

- Do they “belong” to that place? Do they have a sense of belonging?
- What kinds of problems do the characters face? What kinds of problems do they not face?
- What kinds of problems do we think are identified or explored by the creators?
- If comfortable sharing, do you personally relate to this story in any way? Why or why not?

Groups will then come together as a class and will have the opportunity to share some of their reflections if they wish.

As a class, we will conclude the class by reflecting:

- How do our stories compare with the stories we like to listen or watch for entertainment?
- Is storytelling a large part of your life? How do you think it influences you?

ASSESSMENT:

In discussions, listen for students making comparisons between the events of the story or processes throughout outcomes occurred and events they have seen or experienced outside the context of the class. While sharing, students’ stories aim to be organized and demonstrate an understanding of the different elements to making a story. Grades 11-12 will clearly use literary devices or oral storytelling techniques to convey meaning about their identified issue(s).

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