

Integrating Thoreau and Emerson into American Voices and Expository Writing:

English Elective Courses at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School

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American Voices
One semester course
Open to 10, 11, 12
Range of difficulty 2-4

1. Rationale

American Voices may focus on literary works from any of the following cultures: African American, Latin American, Canadian, immigrant, women's literature, and Native American. The goal of this course is to deepen the students' understanding of the various cultures in the Western Hemisphere through a variety of genres.

2. Topics and Themes Emphasized

- seeing the Western Hemisphere as a whole, as a spectrum of cultures, peoples, and ecologies
- examining the heroes and villains engendered here, the choices that confront them, their aspirations and fears
- hearing how voice is established in poetry, drama, and fiction, using word, image, tone, and rhythm
- hearing how students construct their voices using these same tools each time they speak or write; hearing their own voice as poetic
- recognizing the spirit of place established by terrain, weather, season, architecture, light, and history
- asking, "Is reality fabulous?" when exploring the possibilities of "magic realism" in Latin American fiction and poetry
- comparing the place of poets in Latin and North American cultures
- tracing the influence of U.S. and Canadian film on hemispheric values

3. Methods and Sample Assignments

The following list represents several methods that may be used to expose students to various aspects of the different cultures studied as well as to help students find their own voice:

- short stories, novels, plays, poems, etc.
- art
- music
- foods
- individual projects and presentations
- group discussion
- films
- reading aloud in class
- guest speakers who might be immigrants, or Latin American, Native American, Canadian, African American, etc.

Types of Assignments:

Writing will be done both in and out of class. Types of writing assignments will include: journal entries, short reaction pieces, informal papers, mini-research papers, creative pieces, and analytical papers.

Reading assignments will vary on a nightly basis, depending primarily upon the work being studied. Approximately 20 pages a night will be assigned when short stories and novels are being studied; less when poetry is being studied. Some assignments will be read in class by the instructor and students.

Students may also be asked to do group projects and presentations. They will be expected to do some research on various topics that deal with the culture, history, and other facts about the people and countries being studied. Students will be expected to present their work in a coherent, intelligent, and entertaining manner.

4. Expectations for Students

We expect students to enter into the reading of the literature of various cultures enthusiastically and with open minds. We also expect students to challenge their own assumptions. Reading and writing assignments and other projects will facilitate this process.

5. Reading List and Other Materials

Eight Men

The Women of Brewster Place

Dutchman and the Slave

Eye of the Heart (collection)

Pedro Paramo

View from the Bridge

Dharma Bums

Sula

The American Experience in Literature

Black Voices

Imagining America

One Day When I Was Lost

New Worlds of Literature

Crossing the River

a variety of current films

No No Boy

Bright Lights, Big City

