

Unit of Study

Adolescents in Search for Identity



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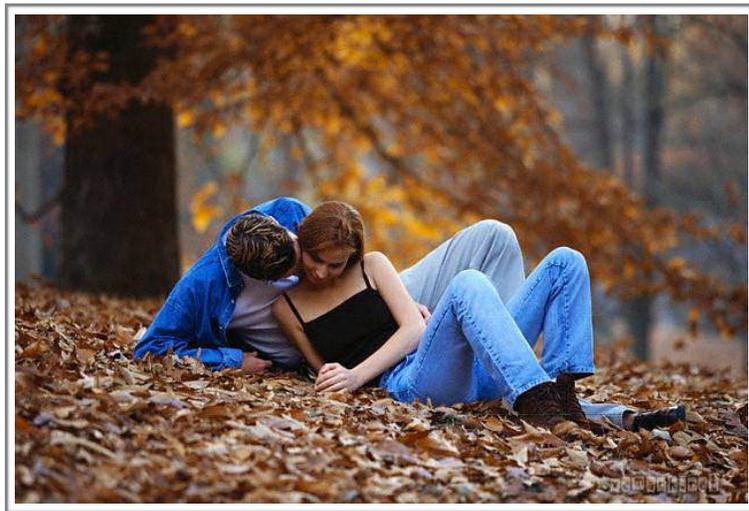
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Rationale

Why Teach Books About Identities?

Our Identities affect Our Relationships

Our idea of self is the most influential subconscious thought that we carry as adolescents. Who we think we are affects what we do and thus our actions are either good for us or harming to ourselves and others. When children read stories



about identity crises, they are encouraged to reflect on themselves and who they are vs who they want to be. Its possible that they like to pretend they are in the shoes of a character within a novel. Theses characters, who face difficult decisions in their lives, guide the reader into a stage of critical thinking where they must analyze what the correct decision was or should have been; and thus demonstrating to themselves,(by observing the way they think) who they already are or in what situation they currently find themselves in.

YA lit has a variety of books that deal with emotional instability. Many times adolescents feel emotionally vulnerable within their relationships and because

sometimes they depend so much on certain relationships, they don't distinguish between healthy and toxic relationships. It's crucial for them to read about relationships in which they can identify so that they can understand which relationships they should keep and not too become vulnerable. To be able to do this, however, they should know who they are and learn how to say no. YA literature provides books about real life experiences. In chapter four of *Adolescents in the Search For Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*, readers can read more about books that involve "making life choices, facing violence or abuse, and living through family and relationship issues."

Introducing Identity

Essay 1

As a standard assessment essay, the students will be asked to write to the following prompt: Think about your identity in terms of character development. How have you developed as a person? Are you who you want to be? How would someone describe you and does that description coincide with who you think you are? (Remember your identity as a family member, a friend, a mentor, or any other form of identity you wish to write about).

Class Activity

Ask the students to sit in groups and write one word that describes themselves, together they will share their word and write a haiku poem about their identity. This serves as an introduction to one form of poetry, and as way to break the ice and start building community. To set an example, the teacher should give a template of a haiku and the teacher should introduce her/himself first.

Sustained Silent Reading

To begin each class, students will be reading a book of their choice (chosen from a list of books dealing with identity) Because there are so many types of identity, this list allows them to choose the book that they can most identify with. They will read for 15 minutes in class, but for homework, they should read thirty pages per night. Later in the semester they will write a comparative essay in which they compare themselves with a character. The prompt will be the following: Think about a relationship you have or have had in the past, in which who feel that the relationship has influenced your identity and decisions you have taken. Was it a healthy relationship or not? Explain. Then, compare your relationship with a relationship from the book. What advice would you give to that character.

Centerpiece Work



Centerpiece Work

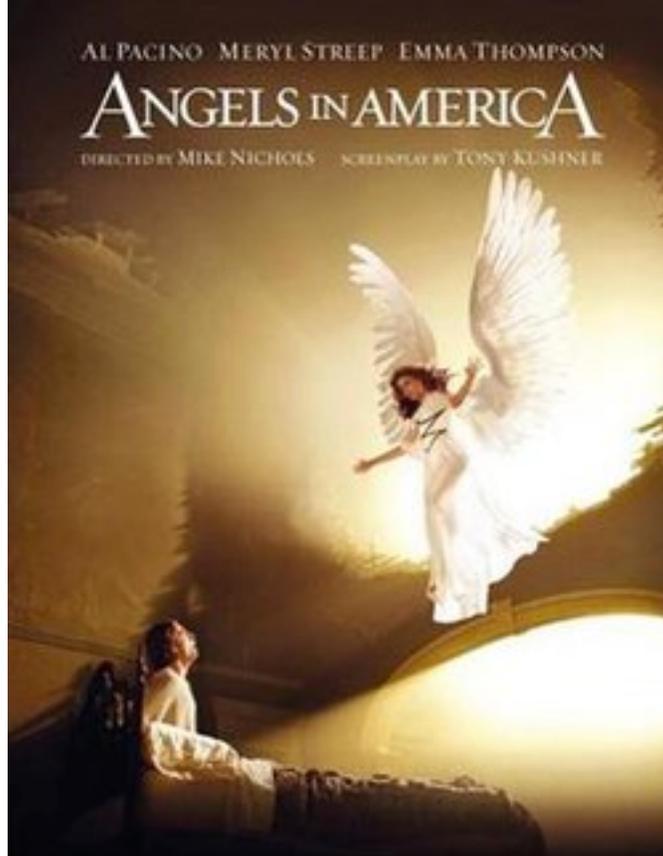
The main text I will teach is going to be *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. We will read this text together, not in class, but the students will need to read one chapter over night. This book deals with an identity crises because Huck, the white little boy faces an important decision to make. He must either turn in his best friend Ben to his master (because Jim is a run away slave) or he may choose to keep him a free man. Huck must first figure out what is the correct thing to do. In order to do this Huck also needs to figure out who he wants to be. He either can choose to be a good friend, or a loyal citizen. It is up to him to choose his own identity.

Class Activity

After the class finishes the main text, they will get into what is called a socratic seminar, where the students can discuss major characters and how their characters develop over the plots unfolding. Each will provide one observation about a character.

Continuing the Unit

To continue the unit, the class will read a play called *Angels in America* directed by Mike Nichols. This play takes place in 1985. It is about a gay couple who lives in Manhattan, Prior Walter has aids and he must tell Lou, being together for several years. However, when he does, Lou abandons him. Prior Walter becomes emotionally devastated because he was so emotionally attached to Lou that he loses his sense of identity. Suicidal thoughts and overdosing of drugs is a major consequence of feeling alone and lost for other minor characters. The class will watch the play on the last day of class.



Other books we may read and discuss if there is time:

We Were Here- Matt de La Pena

Things We know by Heart- Jesse Kirby

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Concluding the Unit

Many of these works will show different issues of identity. The purpose of the students reading is so that they may connect with some character and learn something about their own identity.

Works Cited

“Popular YA War Books.” *goodreads.com*. www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/ya-war 20, Nov. 2018.

Warner, Mary L. “Chapter 4.” *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*, Scarecrow Press, 2006, pp. 217-239

