

Delirium:

Dystopian Literature and Cultural Values

Summary

This genre study introduces students to the genre of dystopian fiction, a subset of speculative literature that has exploded in popularity in recent years. Throughout the unit, we question why dystopian fiction is so popular, what types of values it reflects, and how dystopian literature can resonate with the real world -- both on a personal and a global scale.

Because dystopian literature often employs unfamiliar societies and world-building (though not *too* unfamiliar), reading dystopian fiction helps introduce readers to meaning-making strategies, which we model and practice throughout the unit. Students work to develop annotation skills and use a variety of means -- from debating to creative writing to graphic design -- to uncover the core ideas of *Delirium* and then connect them into broader schemas of knowledge.

Outcomes

Speaking & Listening

GCO 1: Use oral language to learn

- 1.1 reinforce or develop new understanding from what others share during a discussion
- 1.2 ask questions for clarification, elaboration, to qualify, or question relevance, accuracy,
- 1.4 explain and advocate point of view and support it with evidence from various sources
- 1.5 listen critically and determine the effectiveness of the speaker based on the accuracy and appropriateness of the information he or she presents

GCO 2: Communicate using clear oral communication

- 2.1 contribute to small-group and whole class discussions using a variety of strategies for effective talk
- 2.2 use appropriate vocabulary, sentence structure, speed of talking, and tone for different audiences and purposes
- 2.6 understand how the content and message are affected by verbal and non-verbal language (repetition, eye contact, and volume)

GCO 3: Interact with sensitivity and respect

- 3.2 show respect and sensitivity toward others and their differences when giving personal opinions

Reading & Viewing

GCO 4: Read widely and with understanding

- 4.2 read a variety of texts including fiction and literature, non-fiction, and media texts from different provinces and countries
- 4.3 explain how authors use text features to create meaning and achieve different purposes
- 4.4 use text features to construct meaning and understand the text
- 4.6 independently use a range of reading strategies (predicting, connecting, questioning, inferring) to make meaning from complex print and media texts
- 4.7 consistently identify and discuss the kinds of strategies good readers and viewers use

GCO 6: respond personally

- 6.1 go beyond initial response to give more thoughtful interpretations by questioning, connecting, evaluating, and extending
- 6.2 support personal response to the issues, themes, and situations in texts and give personal examples and evidence from text with increasing sophistication

GCO 7: read critically

- 7.2 evaluate the relevance and reliability of the content presented
- 7.3 recognize increasingly complex tools authors use in their writing to achieve their purpose (organization of info, word choice, use of time, imagery)
- 7.4 evaluate the impact that text form, content, and structure have on meaning

Writing & Representing

GCO 8: Use many kinds of writing to think and learn

- 8.2 write for a variety of reasons
- 8.4 use various forms of note-making for different purposes and situations
- 8.5 integrate interesting effects in their writing (feelings and thoughts, detail, correct inconsistency, avoid extraneous detail, language choice, vocabulary, and phrasing)

GCO 9: Create a variety of texts

- 9.1 continue to use a variety of forms as well as other art forms such as visual arts, music, and drama

GCO 10: produce clear and effective writing and other representations

- 10.2 consistently use the conventions of written language in final products
- 10.3 use various technologies for the purpose of communicating (video, email, word processing, audiotape, Internet)
- 10.4 demonstrate a commitment to crafting writing and other representations

Time Frame

30 classes (approximately 6 weeks)

Outline

Introduction to Dystopian Literature -- 4 classes
Reading Strategies for Big Ideas & Dystopian Literature -- 4 classes
Themes, Symbols, and Beyond-the-Book Connections -- 4 classes
Character Development and Creative Writing -- 5 classes
Changing Attitudes and Perceptions -- 6 classes
Personal Values and Growth -- 2 classes
Creating Student Dystopias -- 5 classes

Assessment

1. *Conversation Journals*: Students will receive assessment for learning and personalized feedback in conversation journals, which they will write in regularly.
2. *Short Story*: Students will be writing a short story that focuses on character development and dystopia. Feedback will be formative.
3. *Book Cover Creation*: Students will be creating symbolic book covers for *Delirium*, focusing on theme, symbol, and important quotations. Feedback will be formative.
4. *Charts*: Throughout the unit, students will be asked to engage in close reading or analysis and track their findings on chart paper.
5. *Small Group Discussion*: Students will regularly meet in small groups to discuss ideas, read sections of the text, and ask questions. They will receive feedback on their participation and speaking and listening skills.
6. *Debate*: Students will engage in a debate mid-way through the unit to address speaking and listening skills. Assessment will be formative.
7. *Dystopian Community Creation*: In groups, students will create a dystopian community at the end of the unit to demonstrate that they understand the genre. Each student will be responsible for part of the project so that students can be assessed individually. Assessment will be summative.
8. *Reflective Portfolio*: Students will conclude the unit by submitting a reflective portfolio -- a collection of the pieces they have worked on throughout the unit with several items annotated by the student to demonstrate assessment as learning. Students will receive a mark for this.

Texts

After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia. Eds. Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling. New York: Hyperion, 2012. Anthology.

Aysha. "Cupid in a War Zone." *Brave New Voices*. YouTube.

"The Dark Side of Young Adult Fiction." Room for Debate. *The New York Times*. 26 December 2011. Web.

Durfee, Arik. Creating a Dystopia PREZI Lesson Plan. *Prezi*. Web.

Fisher, Helen. "The Brain in Love." *TED Talks*. YouTube.

- Ford, Katie. "Create Your Own Dystopian Society". *Dystopian Literature: What's Wrong With This Picture*. Web.
- Hambouz, Anissa and Schulten, Katherine. "Dark Materials: Reflecting on Dystopian Themes in Young Adult Literature." *The New York Times: The Learning Network*. 6 January 2011. Web.
- Hill Campbell, Kimberly. *Less Is More: Teaching Literature with Short Texts -- Grades 6-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 2007.
- Jemisin, N.K. "The Valedictorian." *After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia*. Eds. Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling. New York: Hyperion, 2012. 45-63.
- Nahill, Steven. Create Your Own Dystopia. *Prezi*. Web.
- Oliver, Lauren. *Delirium*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011. Novel.
- Sesler, Henry. "Examination Day." *The Boston Bachelor*. 20 October 2008. Web.
- Valentine, Genevieve. "The Segment." *After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia*. Eds. Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling. New York: Hyperion, 2012. PAGES.
- Wilcox, Christie. "Time -- and Brain Chemistry -- Heal All Wounds." *Scientific American*. 24 October 2011. Web.
- Wong, Jan. *Red China Blues: My Long March from Mao to Now*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1997. Memoir.