

**TITLE**

**Social Activism Project:** How do we give those suffering from silent injustices a voice?

**TIME**

One class period that is 50 minutes long.

**SETTING**

Standard Academic Literature Class for 10th Grade

The class consists of twenty-four students, ten girls and fourteen boys. This high school is located in a rural town, middle socioeconomic status. There are three students who receive free or reduced lunch. Most students are on track for their grade level reading, however two students read at above average and five students read two years below grade level. Twenty of the students are Caucasian and speak English. Three students are African American and speak in the African American English Vernacular. One student is fluent in Spanish but has limited English proficiency. He has difficulty writing in English but is working on it. One student has an emotional behavior disorder that makes it difficult for him to stay on task and concentrate in class. One student is diagnosed as legally blind, however still has the ability to read large print text.

The district is composed of 97.6% white students, 0.6% Black students, 0% Hispanic students, 1% Asian students, and 0.4% Native American students. 7.1% of the school population is low income, the attendance rate is 94% and the high school graduation rate is 91.5%. The average ACT composite score is 21.0. The average size of a high school class is 16.6.

**THEORY INTO PRACTICE BACKGROUND**

The idea for this lesson comes from Jim Burke's novel, *The English Teacher's Companion*. In his chapter on "Teaching Reading in High School", Burke emphasizes connecting "the novel and its ideas to [students'] personal lives as well as the society in which they live, while relating it also to the literacy tradition of which it is a part and the cultures of the students who are reading the novel" (74). In this lesson students are introduced to social activism project, which I intend will succeed in connecting main ideas and themes from *In the Skin of a Lion* to students' personal lives and more importantly to the society in which they live by having students research about a social injustice that is interesting to them. Burke also explains that the novel can be used as a vehicle to "address those issues of social injustice and ethical complexity inherent in any serious work of literature so that students come to recognize the complexity of such issues and how to discuss those issues with intelligence and sensitivity" (74). In addition to learning about the social injustice that is uncovered in the novel, students will also be researching and learning about additional social injustices currently happening in society. By researching such topics students will begin to understand the complexities of these issues and will learn how to discuss them in a respectful and sensitive light when they present their research and findings to the 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

**OBJECTIVE/S**

- Students will think critically about the novel in terms of giving those who are silenced a voice.
- Students will learn about an additional social injustice currently occurring by completing outside research.

- Students will collaborate with their peers to in order to design posters and pamphlets, outlining the important information to know about their social injustice topic.
- Students will present their research to an audience in order to showcase the information that they have learned about their social injustice topic.
- Students will gain a greater understanding of the effective and informative role that they can have within society.

## **MATERIALS**

- 24 copies of the Social Activism project instructions
- 24 copies of “Uncovering Injustices Research Guide”

## **PREPARATION**

In order to prepare for this lesson I will have to have 24 copies of each of the following documents for students ready: Social Activism project instructions and “Uncovering Injustices Research Guide”. I will also have to reserve the computer lab for class the next day. Additionally I will have to clear it with our principal that it is okay that students present their information on their topic of injustice during the 9<sup>th</sup> graders lunch on Friday. Also I need to talk with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade English teachers to confirm with them that they will allow their students to participate in this project with my classes.

## **PROCEDURE**

### ***Opening***

I will first ask students what they think was Michael Ondaatje’s main intention for writing his novel *In the Skin of a Lion*. We will discuss as a class the possible reasons and motivations that prompted him to write this novel. We will discuss the hardships of the characters and the working conditions for the immigrants. We will discuss how Ondaatje provided a voice for the immigrants who had no say in the course of their lives at this time, if they wanted to continue living. Next I will ask students to take out a piece of scratch paper and brainstorm some of the injustices in our society today that are apparent yet continue to cause problems for people and pose a threat to the well-being of our society. I will give students five minutes to silently brainstorm on their own. After the five minutes have elapsed I will ask for volunteers to share some of the examples that they thought of. (20 minutes)

### ***Body***

I will explain to students that they will be completing a social activism project on some of the topics that students have just brainstormed. I will pass out the attached handout that details the social activism project assignment. I will explain the assignment as students follow along. Once students understand the assignment I will tell students that they will be working in groups of four to complete this assignment. I will put six topics on the white board that students previously mentioned in class as a social injustice. Such topics could be cruelty to animals, unfair hiring procedures, unaffordable post-secondary school education, racial profiling, etc. I will assign each group of four students a topic to further investigate and complete their social activism project on. (15 minutes)

### ***Closing***

I will give students the remainder of the period to meet with their groups and begin brainstorming ideas for their topic and how they will divide up the work. I will also use this time

to answer any questions that students may have about the project. I will also inform students that tomorrow we will be in the computer lab so that students can research information for their projects. (15 minutes)

### **DISCUSSION IDEAS**

- Why do you think there are social injustices occurring in the world?
- What do you think is our role as citizens in helping combat these social injustices?
- Why do you think having these conversations in the classroom are important to our role as participants in society?

### **LANGUAGE/S ACCOMMODATIONS**

In order to accommodate for the students who speak African American English and the student who speaks Spanish I will ask that they write in standard English on this project to the best of their ability. They will have an adequate amount of time to complete this project so they can come to me as a resource to help them translate or they can receive help from the school aid. They also will be working in groups with fellow classmates so I expect the groups to be collaborating a lot and therefore helping each other utilize standard English to the best of their abilities. Having group members will help the students' whose first language is not standard English to correct some of their work and help them correctly write on the posters and pamphlets. I do not expect their "Research Guides" to be completed in standard English. Because the "Research Guides" are a somewhat informal assignment, they will be allowed to complete them in their dialect.

I do expect that the groups' presentations try to be spoken in standard English, however I understand this difficultly and as long as students can effectively communicate their ideas that will be satisfactory.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION ACCOMMODATIONS**

In order to accommodate for the student with emotional behavioral disorder I will choose the groups that the class is divided into in order to combat the issues of the student not being chosen to be in a group. This will also eliminate a chaotic environment for the student that could make the student uncomfortable. I will also observe the student while they are brainstorming with their group at the end of class to make sure that the student is properly being included in the group and that the student is also effectively participating. I will inform make sure that the student knows at the end of class that we will be in the computer lab during class tomorrow so that the student does not come to the classroom confused and unaware.

In order to accommodate for the student considered legally blind, I will make sure that I have copies of the project guidelines and research packet printed in large type font that the student can read. I will also encourage the group that this student is in to make their posters and pamphlets in enlarged font type to accommodate for this student. The student will be allowed to use their designated assistive technology as usual, especially when filling out the research packet.

### **ASSESSMENT**

There is no direct assessment for this lesson plan because this lesson plan serves as an introduction for a large project that students will be working on throughout the remainder of the week. For the project that I am introducing, students will be assessed on the research that they conduct, along with the posters and

pamphlets that students create and their participation in the “Social Injustices Workshop”. Attached are rubrics outlining in detail what I expect out of students for this project.

### **EXTENSION IDEAS**

- If extra time permitted in this lesson, I would have students look at examples of students’ projects from previous years of teaching this class. This would give students a visual of what I am expecting for their projects.
- Additionally if there was extra time in this lesson, I would allow students to research possible topics to complete for this project before they chose what topic that they wanted to do their project on.
- Another idea to extend this lesson would be for students to research ways that people of society have tried to help immigrants receive better treatment and more rights.

### **SOURCE OF ACTIVITY**

This social activism project will serve as our final component of the *In the Skin of a Lion* and immigration unit. I wanted to incorporate a social activism project into this unit plan because in a unit plan that I created for a previous Curriculum and Instruction course with Hilarie Welsh I implemented a social activism project. My previous instructor also often talked about the benefits of doing these type of projects in class and how it feels to get students involved in their community and give them a greater sense of purpose in their society. Burke also talks about the importance of students understanding the addressed issues of social justice in the novel and how it is important that connect these ideas to their personal lives and to society.

### **RESOURCES AND REFERENCES**

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2008. Print.

“Illinois Learning Standards.” Illinois State Board of Education. Web. 2 Oct 2012.

<<http://www.isbe.state.il.us>>.

“The Standards.” Common Core State Standards Initiative. Web. 2 Oct. 2012.

<<http://www.corestandards.org>>.

Ondaatje, Michael. *In the Skin of a Lion*. New York: Vintage International, 1997. Print.

Welsh, Hilarie. “Curriculum and Instruction 401-402.” University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Lecture. Fall 2011-Spring 2012.

### **ILLINOIS STATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GOALS**

#### ***Standard 8 – Collaborative Relationships***

Knowledge Indicators—The competent teacher:

8A) understands schools as organizations within the larger community context;

This indicator is successfully represented in my lesson plan because I have planned a social activism project for students to complete that takes them out of the classroom setting and asks that they explore larger topics of debate occurring in society. By presenting their projects to fellow school peers, my

students will be making others aware of the injustices that are occurring within the larger community context and provide ways for these students to become informed and aware and to hopefully take action and become involved. This will succeed in showing students the benefits of collaboration between school systems and the community and how promoting change can help solve the injustices in our society.

***Standard 9 – Professionalism, Leadership, and Advocacy***

Performance Indicators—The competent teacher:

9O) collaborates with other teachers, students, parents or guardians, specialists, administrators, and community partners to enhance students' learning and school improvement;

I am able to meet this indicator in my lesson plan because in order to prepare for this social activism project I had to collaborate with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to ask if they would like to participate in this project with my classes. This collaboration between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and students will greatly enhance students' learning by having my students present their projects to the 9<sup>th</sup> graders and teach them about their research topics. This will also help improve the school environment by forming collaborative relationships between students across grade levels.

**COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

My lesson plan meets this Common Core Standard because students will be working in groups to complete these projects which will require that students share their ideas and research with each other. This will promote students to engage in collaborative discussions where they build on each other's ideas and come to conclusions together about how to best complete their projects.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

This Common Core Standard is present in my lesson plan because students will be researching information on important topics that deal with injustices in society. Students will be presenting the information that they find to the 9<sup>th</sup> graders, therefore their projects will have to be well researched and clearly organized in order for their audience to understand the information in their projects so that they can take away valuable information.

## **HOW DO WE GIVE THOSE SUFFERING FROM SILENT INJUSTICES A VOICE?**

*How We Can Promote Activism Within Our School, Community, & Society*

*In the Skin of a Lion* gives a voice to the helpless immigrants who built Toronto, exposing the many struggles that they were forced to endure. But what about the many other injustices in the world?

In groups of 4 students, you will research information and provide assistance such as hotlines/help lines, counseling, and the available programs to help those suffering the injustices of one of the topics that you are assigned in class.

Groups will create posters and pamphlets to inform the school about the seriousness of these injustices and provide information for those in need of resources to help receive advice and assistance and additionally provide ways for students to get involved to combat these injustices. You will be setting up booths during your lunch period to teach the 9<sup>th</sup> graders who have lunch during our class period about being aware of these injustices and how they can get involved.

**March 26<sup>th</sup> will be a computer lab day.** This is where the bulk of your research should be done.

**March 27<sup>th</sup> & March 28<sup>th</sup>** will be designated class time to meet with groups and design posters, pamphlets, etc.

**March 28<sup>th</sup>** will be our presentations on “Uncovering Injustices”. Each group will have a station in the cafeteria for them to display their research and resources. Because our class takes place during the 9<sup>th</sup> graders lunch time, I have talked to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teachers and they have given their students an assignment to complete that correlates with the information that groups will be presenting. So, please be prepared to be able to talk about your topic to an audience and answer any questions that they may have. I will also have one group from our class walking around at a time so that you can see your fellow classmates’ work and learn about their topics as well.

Please take this assignment seriously because these are not issues to be dealt with lightly. The more we know, and the more knowledge that we spread help to make us better citizens of our community.

You will receive a grade as a group. Every group member will receive the same grade so make sure that you are being an active participant, so that everyone will earn the grade that they deserve. I will expect groups to be cooperative and respectful to each other at all times. Be accountable for yourself and your group members. This assignment is worth 60 points. You will be graded on the following criteria:

**10 points:** Each group member hands in a copy of their research information

**10 points:** Each group member engages and actively participates at the “Uncovering Injustices” workshop during lunchtime

**20 points:** Evaluation of 1 poster

**20 points:** Evaluation of 1 handout/pamphlet

**= 60 points Total**

Each group must have 2 posters and multiple handouts for students to look at when stopping by at your booth. Groups will select one poster and one handout/pamphlet to hand in for a grade. Both the poster and the handout will have the possibility of earning up to 20 points each. Both the posters and handouts should follow the rubric on the next page.

## RUBRIC FOR POSTERS & HANDOUT/PAMPHLETS

\*Remember: I will grade each component separately. Both will follow this rubric.

<b>Points</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Research/Content</b>	Extensive research was conducted. Information put into own words; conversational tone.	Good amount of research is apparent.	Minimal details of research. Information reads like a textbook.	Seems as if no research was conducted.
<b>Organization</b>	Clear layout, nicely organized with titles, proper font sizing, colorful & eye-catching.	Information is organized with titles.	Information is not organized, no titles or creativity.	Information is not legible. No clear layout/sloppy.
<b>Graphics</b>	Display of multiple graphics that help showcase the topic but don't overdo it.	2 or 3 graphics relate to topic.	1 graphic relates to topic.	No graphics or graphics do not relate to topic.
<b>Sources</b>	3 sources are visible.	2 sources are visible.	1 source is visible.	No visible sources.
<b>Spelling/Grammar</b>	No spelling or grammatical errors.	One or two spelling & grammatical errors.	Three or more spelling & grammatical errors.	Many spelling & grammatical errors; unreadable.





- What can you, as a student do to help combat these issues of social injustice?
  
- Why is it important to be informed?
  
- Provide two additional pieces of information that surprised or interested you.