

Their stories are our stories

A literary research project designed to enhance the enjoyment of reading and composing literature.

Secondary English Language Arts
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This unit will serve as the capstone for Honors English II.

Enduring Understandings

- Writers are never insulated from their environment. Everything that happens to, or around an author will be reflected in his or her written work.
- Everything that happens to a reader shapes the way he or she will view a literary work.

Essential Questions

- Do authors choose a topic, or does a topic choose an author?
- What similarities are found in the lives of great authors?
- Why do most writers sit down to compose in the first place?

Learned Skills that will be reinforced

- Students will need to be able to conduct substantive research. This will require the use of critical reading and thinking skills associated with determining the value and credibility of information.
- Students will must also know how to generate a question or hypothesis to research.
- Various composition skills will also be necessary.

The goal of this unit is for students to understand the affect of “place” on a writer.

- “Place” is defined as the context surrounding an author's growth and development, both before and while he or she is composing.

The this unit will take place over the course of 4 weeks.

Why do most writers sit down to compose in the first place?

Student Learning Objectives

What will students know?

- Students will learn that authors are inspired by geography, politics, relationships, death, success, education, hardships, etc.

(North Carolina Standard Course of Study: Competency Goal 2.01)

- Students will learn that some of the greatest writers in the world lived lives remarkably similar to their own. (NCSCS: CG 1.02)

What skills will students demonstrate?

- Students will be able to pose questions prompted by a selected text. (NCSCS: CG 2.03)
- Students will demonstrate the ability to investigate the root causes or influences of a literary composition. (NCSCS: CG 2.02)
- Students will be able to compare and contrast his or her own life with the life of a selected author. (NCSCS: CG 4.02, 1.02)
- Students will be able to access prior knowledge and experience that will contribute to an original composition. (NCSCS: CG 1.01)

LEARNING PLAN: Outline the teaching and learning plan, describing learning experiences that support students in reaching unit goals. Learning plan should be guided by the unit's "big idea" and essential questions, and give context for the performance tasks.

Step 1

- **The Story Behind a Story**

So much of a student's background knowledge comes from whatever he or she remembers a teacher having said in class. This project gives each student the opportunity to discover the background information of an author on his or her own. What each student learns is entirely up to the research he or she conducts, and the research conducted by each student is driven by his or her interest.

- Students will choose an author to research.
- Students will read several sources related to the life and works of a chosen author.
- Students will collect information on the chosen author.
- Students will write an abbreviated research paper on the chosen author's life.

Step 2

- **The Fruits of Inspiration**

Above all else, literature is written to be enjoyed. A deeper understanding of any given literary work will no doubt enhance our reading, but our quest for depth should accompany and never detract from our enjoyment of what we read.

- Students will perform an author's work. This will be a scored reading of several poems, and or excerpts from a longer works written by the chosen author.
- Students will explain the significance of the work, focusing on the context in which it was written.
- Students will explain the possible influences that are likely to have shaped the author's written work.

- **Tell your story**

While it is important to read and enjoy literature, it must be noted that the greatest literary works are deemed great because they cause the reader to reflect upon his or her own existence. If and when such a reflection occurs, it ought to be met with a willingness to join in the creative process. Essentially, it is my firm belief that we read great stories so that we will be inspired to write our own.

- Students will choose a literary genre studied at some point during the year. (poetry, nonfiction, short story, drama)
- Students will complete several brainstorming activities that will require each of them to consider how various life experiences have influenced on their own writing.
- Students will draft an original literary work that reflects the students' interest.
- Students will revise and edit their original works.
- Students will publish their original works in a class anthology, and post them to the school's website.
- There will be a public reading / literary fair where students will be required to present their creative works as well as the knowledge gained from having studied an author.