

Welty and the Civil Rights Movement- Across the Curriculum

Karen Dunaway and Deborah Smith

Millsaps College July 20- 26

NEH workshop- Eudora Welty's Secret Sharer: The Outside World and the Writer's Imagination

Unit Overview

This unit is devised to be an integrated lesson plan for English II, Drama, and Mississippi Studies. English II and Mississippi Studies are required to be completed by the students seeking a regular track diploma, and our students must choose between Drama and Music as one of the two art electives offered at our school required for graduation. The focus of the unit is to investigate and discover connections of the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi during the 1960's involving historical research, literary selections from Eudora Welty, and a dramatical presentation. Having the same theme of the Civil Rights movement present in all these courses will show the student relevance of the topic in several areas of their education. The option for the instructors would be for the assignments to run simultaneously throughout each course or in an order of succession. The suggestion for successive units would be that Mississippi Studies will introduce the topic to students the first week, and English II will explore the literary view the following week, and Drama will produce a dramatic presentation the final week.

Mississippi Studies—Course outline

Day 1--- Introduction of the topic- Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi (1960's). The instructor will lead discussion and lecture of the major leaders and happenings of the Civil Rights Era in Mississippi during the 1960's. Attention will be focused on the reasons for the movement, the reactions to the movement, and the results of the happenings from this time period. Also close attention will be paid to specific leaders of the movement in Mississippi. A variety of resources will be used to aid the students in the discussion. Handouts, slides, etc. will all be involved in the instructor's presentation of the information.

Day 2—An assignment will be made to each student to choose and research a Civil Rights leader that has been assassinated. The student will compose a research report of at least two pages discussing the life, accomplishments, and events surrounding the death of the chosen leader. The students will have access to the computer lab during this class period and later in the week to aid in the writing of the assignment. The student must also prepare a media presentation (example: power point) to be graded separately utilizing the information discovered while investigating their Civil Rights leader. This media presentation will be shared with the class.

Day 3- The teacher will show a media presentation or news reel of several local events during the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi. The instructor will mainly focus on the Medgar Evers assassination and the 1966 slaying of a 67 year old black sharecropper in the Homochitto National Forest by Earnest Avants. The Homochitto National Forest is in extremely close proximity to our local school and community, which makes this a very real and relevant story (outreach.olemiss.edu, Natchez Democrat.com, query: nytimes.com)The students will then write a response journal entry to the presentation of the instructor. Time will be allowed for students to go to the computer lab to work on the research report and media presentation.

Day 4- A national connection- The students will view or listen to John F. Kennedy's Civil Rights speech. This speech was delivered the same day of the assassination of Medgar Evers. Discussion will follow with directive questions to the students for them to consider the implications, causes, results, rationale, etc. for the assassination of Evers, and later of Kennedy himself. The students' reactions to this speech will eventually cultivate a written essay from each student.

Day 5- The students will give presentations of reports and power points on the Civil Rights leader that each one has chosen. The instructor will evaluate the media presentation and the reports of each student for a grade.

Day 6- The instructor will assign the student a writing to be completed in class. The response journals will be used in this assignment. The student is to write a personal essay describing their own personal reactions to one quote from the Kennedy speech and the event of the Medgar Evers assassination that followed shortly afterward.

English II- Course outline

Day 1- Biographical information of Eudora Welty will be presented through, Video, notes, lecture, and discussion. A focus will be brought to the time period of Welty's career during the Civil Rights Movement to further the connection for the cross curriculum unit for which this is intended. The teacher will inform the students that throughout the course of study on Welty and the Civil Rights Movement, they will be collecting and creating information and writings that are to be assembled in a portfolio for assessment of the unit at the end of the study. The portfolio should include all of the following information and assignments: Short biographical research report on Eudora Welty, A short autobiographical "item essay" on the individual student, a copy of Welty's short story "Where is the Voice Coming From?", Reader response/double entry journal to the short story "Where is the Voice Coming From?", List of items and observations the student finds interesting and notable from the Welty House, List of items and observations that are interesting and notable from the site of Medgar Evers' home. An informative essay on the field trip experience, a typed copy of an originally composed "conversation" that might

have occurred between Welty and Evers if he would have survived the assassination attempt, and any other writing extracted from the students during this course of study. Each item of the portfolio will count towards the final grade. Also each individual writing assignment will be taken as a grade as well.

The Homework assignment is to write an autobiographical informative essay focusing on one personal item acquired by the student in their lifetime. They are to explain how they acquired the item, what it means to them, and what the significant item says about them personally. The rough drafts will be turned in before the departure of the field trip the next morning. (This exercise will help prepare them for the informative essay required for the MSAT).

Day 2- A field trip to the Eudora Welty House and Medgar Evers' home will be a welcome change for the students. Also a driving tour of Eudora Welty's Jackson, MS and the Civil Rights driving tour of Jackson, MS will introduce students to places of historical and literary significance. This trip will emphasize the sense of place that they will be introduced to in the short stories that they will study in this unit. It will also make the students realize that they live very close to widely interesting and cultural places- very important places in the Civil Rights Struggle. The students will be assigned to write down any observations or list any items during the field trip that they find of interest. These observations and notations will be used later as a writing assignment for a student response to the trip experience itself and in a creative writing assignment later on.

Day 3- The teacher will return the first drafts of the "Special Item" essays to the students for the necessary revisions. The final copy is to be prepared to be included in the portfolio on Monday (of course all plans are tentative, time is fleeting, so it may be adjusted to fit the schedules of the student and teacher!)The students will discuss the field trip and the experience of the day before. As a reaction to the trip the student will write an informative essay on three things they learned as a result of the tour (This exercise will help them prepare for the informative essay section of the MSAT). Rough drafts of the essay are due the next day. In class writing may be done if time allows.

Day 4- Rough Drafts of the "Field Trip" essay are due. As a class, the students will read "Where is the Voice Coming From?" Discussion of the background and the text itself will be discussed before the students read the text. The student led discussion of the historical significance and sense of place will take place after the students respond in their journals to the story. The students will complete the double entry journal during discussion. The other elements of the short story besides setting and place would most certainly be identified at this time too. The teacher could also discuss figurative language and references as well. For Homework, The students are to create a "Conversation" between Eudora Welty and Medgar Evers. The students must be prepared to share their ideas with the class.

Day 5- Drafts of the "Field Trip" essay are given back to the students for necessary revision. The final draft should be prepared for the inclusion to the Portfolio due at the end of the study. Discussion and

sharing of the “created conversations” will take place during class time. If time allows any necessary revisions or work on portfolios may be done at this time.

Day 6- Ideally the portfolios would be produced and due in a week. However, schedules could be changed to fit the progress of each individual class.

Drama I-Course Outline

For the past two weeks, the students have been exposed to both Eudora Welty and her stories as well as to the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. Attention has been given to the murder of Medger Evers who was murdered under his own carport. Utilizing the previous gained knowledge culminated with the additional research, students will compose a one act play featuring the trials of Byron de La Beckwith, the man responsible for taking the life of Mr. Evers. The play will feature three scenes which represent the three separate trials.

Day 1---A field trip to witness an actual courtroom trial will be beneficial to the students in terms of what actions take place, what terminology means, and how much the fate of a person’s life rests in the hands of twelve people better known as the jury. Students will be given a list of terms to consider before entering the courtroom in an attempt to acquaint them with unfamiliar terms.

Each student will be given a homework assignment to begin researching the trials of Byron de La Beckwith.

Day 2---Students will be divided into three groups. Group A will research the first trial held in 1964 which ended in a mistrial. Group B will research the second trial held in 1964 which also ended in a mistrial. Group C will research the 1994 trial in which Byron de La Beckwith was convicted. The computer lab will be utilized for this class meeting.

Day 3---Students will compose a list of characters and setting for the trial, write a brief plot, design the set, collect props and costumes.

Day 4---Group A will write Act I scene 1. Group B will write Act I scene 2. Group C will write Act I scene 3. Students will audition for parts.

Day 5---Parts will be assigned, and rehearsal will begin.

Day 6---Rehearsal will continue.

Day 7---Play performance.

