



Eudora Welty's Secret Sharer: The Outside World and The Writer's Imagination Project
July 25, 2008
Lesson Plan

One Mississippi: Many Voices

Mrs. Margaret Jennings

Examining Faulkner's, Walker's, Welty's, and Wright's view of Mississippi



Reading Selections

The following selections must be read to complete the assignment:

- Faulkner, William. (1946) *Race at Morning*
- Walker, Margaret. (1989). "My Mississippi in the Spring" "Jackson, Mississippi" "Micah" *This Is My Century*.
- Welty, Eudora. (1984)"Listening" *One Writer's Beginnings*.
- Wright, Richard. (1945) *Black Boy*. (Chapter 1 and 2)

Guiding Questions

- How does Faulkner's, Welty's, and Wright's forms for the novel—a series of competing voices and perspectives presented as a multiple-voice narrative— and Walker's poem work for or against the works' title?
- What does the final portrait of Mississippi look like? Is it full of despair, dichotomy, and dissolution? Or are their works a tribute to the vigor and rich culture of the southern state?

Learning Objectives

After completing the lessons in this unit, students will be able to:

- Locate each author's Mississippi home on a map
- Describe Faulkner's, Walker's, Welty's and Wright's "Mississippi" in the context of the historical South
- Understand and explore the use of multiple voices in narration

- Examine the author's closeness in proximity yet the subjective differences in multiplicity of characters and settings

Preparing to Teach this Lesson

Reading selections will be provided for students. Background information on authors may be provided for students for clarity. Video on each author is available on United Streaming.

Activity

Each title of the reading selections indicate action that occurs, a hunting expedition, a tribute to African American life, an auditory command, and a race identification. What do these actions suggest about The South, the authority of the narrator, and the institution of the family? Each author's artistic depth allows for all of these possibilities.

Are these works pessimistic or optimistic about life in Mississippi?

One way of reading each of the works is to see the myths of Mississippi slowly revealed through the eyes of each character and the voice of each author.

Another way of reading the works involves recognizing the images of success and endurance. Students might examine the comedic and optimistic aspects of the writings. While Faulkner's "boy" does not succeed in killing the deer, he does earn the opportunity to get a formal education. Walker's characters are not muddled down with despair to the point they cannot enjoy some aspects of life. Welty's ambitious desire to be independent and a nurturing mother do inspire her to become an author. And Wright does escape the poverty and hardship he faced in Mississippi to become a prominent voice in African American Literature.

Students should visit Welty's *A Place in Fiction*, where she said that "Feelings are bound up in place, and in art, from time to time, place undoubtedly works upon genius. Can anyone well explain otherwise what makes a given dot on the map come passionately alive, for good and all, in a novel-like one of those novae that suddenly blaze with inexplicable fire in the heavens?"

Considering Welty's statement students will examine in the works and write on the elements that make the places come to life.

Assessment

- Students can write an entry—create a character and voice appropriate to the works and describe an encounter somewhere along their journey. Students should consider carefully issues of voice, including point-of-view, the personality and tone of their character, the extent of the character's knowledge of the events, and so on. A brief paragraph should conclude the assignment, giving a critical assessment of the choices the student decided to make and why.
- Write an excerpt from where the student listens to the voice that creates his/her on place in Mississippi.
- Rewrite any of the works described above in the voice of a single narrator. This can be done individually or in pairs. The results can be read to the class.
- Take-home essay as described above or multimedia presentation by students on either of the guiding questions listed above.