

Eudora Welty's Secret Sharer: The Outside World and The Writer's Imagination

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Regina Johnson

Overview: This lesson is designed for an 11th grade writing class, but it can be adapted for most high school English classrooms. The main text used for this lesson is Eudora Welty's *One Writer's Beginnings*. All of the lesson's activities connect to reading assignments from this text and support reading discussions.

Goals:

- Recognize the characteristics of life writing and imitate techniques
- Create a realization of the importance of historical context
- Demonstrate close reading techniques with annotation
- Read visual texts

Objectives:

- Create descriptive writing
- Revise writing to strengthen specific detail
- Identify and analyze the elements of voice, diction, and point of view in written text
- Analyze photographs as visual texts
- Discuss the influence of historical context in personal writing

Time Allowance: Two-three weeks

Opening of the Unit:

- Motivational starter: Begin with a game of "gossip" or "telephone". In this game, students sit in rows or a circle and pass along a short (2-3 sentences) message. The last student will share the message with the class, and this will lead into a class discussion of the sharing process. Did the message change? If so, how did it change and why?
- After the game, engage the class in a discussion about memory. Consider the following points during your discussion (as referred to by Welty and Welty scholars):
 - Memory can connect seemingly unlikely events together
 - Sometimes we connect a good memory to a bad memory in order to cope with situations
 - A specific memory can change each time we recall it or as we age

You may want to use personal examples or current events to illustrate each of the memory concepts mentioned above.

- Life writing: Discuss and define some of the types of life writing. As an example, use an excerpt from Zora Neale Hurston's book *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Read the passage silently and aloud. Ask students to highlight or underline examples of specific diction choices, sensory detail, and split points of view. Discuss students' findings and have them share examples from the passage. Ask students to write a paragraph response to the passage or outline a response to the passage. Their response should consider how Hurston uses split points of view and other elements to create a moment in her childhood experience.
- Homework: Students will write a mini-memoir that captures a moment from their past. They should imitate Hurston's example by using specific diction and sensory detail to bring the moment to life. The writing will include a rough draft with revision and a final writing of 250-350 words.

Reading activities for "Listening":

- Text pages to connect to discussions: 11,12,14,15, and 38
- Have students keep a list of all the things Welty "listens to" or "hears" within the first section of the book. Use this list to discuss the literal and figurative meaning of "listening". Talk about the difference between "hearing" and "listening" with examples to illustrate both. Ask, "When do we use each skill?"
- Discuss the concept of reading with students in terms of its importance in the Welty household. Go beyond the text and talk about view of reading in our society-share an article or some personal experience to illustrate the concepts covered in discussion.
- Homework: Students will write a 2-3 page Reading Autobiography. The autobiography will trace their development as a reader from a specific point in their memory. In their essays, students will discuss their feelings about reading, what they read changes in reading habits, their likes/dislikes, and other details. They will see examples in class to help them visualize the final product. They should complete a rough draft with revisions. You may want to have volunteers share their work in class.

Reading activities for "Learning to See":

- Text pages to connect to discussions: 44,54,62,66,67,and 68
- Students will record their favorite sensory passages from Welty and explain how or why each passage creates a sensory impression.
- Activity: Students will analyze song lyrics that capture a moment with sensory details. Using "Just a Girl" by No Doubt and "Grey Street" by The Dave Matthews Band, students will annotate the lyrics for specific details that capture the moment (connotation, sensory language, figurative language, etc.). Students should read the lyrics silently, listen to the artists, and discuss with a partner before whole class discussion. Collect the lyrics at the end of the exercise and you may want to have them write responses to each song or to the class discussion.

Reading activities for “Finding a Voice”:

- Text pages to connect to activities: 74,76,102,104
- Lead a discussion about voice. What is “voice”? Is “finding your voice” important? How does Welty find her voice?
- Discuss the concept of “confluence” as presented in the last section of the work. Use examples beyond the text to illustrate the idea.
- Activity: Discuss apostrophe as a literary technique in which the speaker directly and often emotionally addresses an audience/person who is dead or otherwise not physically present. The speaker addresses the audience/person as if this audience/person were capable of responding and understanding. Students will write an apostrophe in the form of a letter or poem to a specific audience. They should choose specific diction to reveal their tone and communicate their feelings clearly about a specific issue. Example- Address a specific group at school that has misconceptions about who you are or what you believe. Students will include a rough draft with revisions and a final with 200-250 words or a 20-25-line poem.
- Final activity: Connecting to the confluence discussion, have students create a creative representation of “confluence. They will accomplish this task by combining three different sources (one must be a written text)- such as a photograph, poem, original writing, song, etc. “. They should consider how each element flows together to represent who they are as a person. It is up to the student to choose his or her own creative format for display and presentation.

Other sources to add to class discussion or activities:

- Excerpts from *The Optimist's Daughter* (Especially passages that demonstrate voice or memory of specific events)
- “The Whistle” by Eudora Welty (An excellent example of description, sensory detail, and historical context)
- The Eudora Welty House Virtual Tour: <http://mdah.state.ms.us/welty/>
(To build background)