

Emily Shrestha

World Experience: English

Section 5: China: "Literature and Liberation--The Power of Literature"

Unit Overview : Literature and Liberation

For this unit, the basis of discussion will be the novel *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* as well as the film version of the novel. I pair this work with short stories and poetry that will thematically match the chapters for discussion. A common theme we discuss in literature is the idea of the "One Story" and who write the story of a people. This larger theme of the "one story" runs throughout all of the literature we study as well as the theme of power. What they discover by the end of the year is interesting: Whoever has the power writes the story, but the best stories are written about the powerless finding individual power.

* NOTE: This unit is a joint venture with components included in both the World Experience: Literature and World Experience AP: History class. The culminating project will be shared, but there will be separate lesson plans for both the history and literature classes. The focus is the individual components included in both the history and literature classrooms.

Essential Question(s):

- How can freedom in literature be liberating to those who have never been exposed to freedom?
- How can the "one story" be interpreted by its readers?

Duration:

3 weeks (15 class periods: including 3 for watching the film version and debriefing in discussion)

Objectives:

- students will understand the connection between the controversial role literature plays in societies with people otherwise persecuted and oppressed.
- students will understand the theme of the power of literature and how the written word has been a source of controversy since its inception in that it motivates readers to act when they otherwise have never been exposed to the opportunities to act upon

Section 6: RESOURCES

Text/ Literature:

Primary TEXT:

- Novel:
 - *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*

Supplementary TEXTS:

- Short Stories
 - “Night Duty” by Chen Ruoxi in *The Execution of Mayor Yin*
 - Selections from *The Bridegroom* by Ha Jin
 - Selections from *Under the RedFlag* by Ha Jin
 - Selections from *Shifu, You’ll Do Anything for a Laugh* by Mo Yan

Formative Assessment(s):

- Novel discussion checks
- Graded discussion/ Socratic Seminars
- Multiple entry/ multiple voice journals (Length: a page each)
 - Possible Prompts to begin and end the collection:
 - 1st: From the perspective of one of the characters in the novel (what you know about them now), write a letter to your parents describing the experiences you had getting to the “reeducation” location and in your first day there.
 - Last entry: from the perspective of one of the characters in the novel (now that you’ve finished you know a lot more about this person), write a letter to your parents about your last days at the “reeducation” location and your feelings on your impending departure.

Summative Assessment:

- Comparative Essay: Thinking of the “one story” concept we have discussed all year, and taking into account the short stories, novel, and film adaptation you studied, consider this question: How does the acquisition of power impact the perspective of a story and what about the powerless finding individual power makes for an intriguing and moving story? Pay special attention to using examples from the novel in comparison to at least one of the short stories we studied.