

Calendar for Unit on the Poetry and Fiction of Disability, Grades 9-12

Block 1: Introduction.

Opening activity and discussion (annotated self-portrait; viewing & discussing self-portraits by Renoir, Van Gogh, and Laura Swanson's anti-self portraits); intro to novel. Creating a safe community: ground rules for interaction. Read the poem "What You Mourn" by Sheila Black.

Homework: Read "A Short History of American Disability Poetry by Michael Northern" and *Me Who Dove Into the Heart of the World*, Chapters 1-2

Block 2: Poetry and essay.

Writing prompt: tell your story. Discussion of Northern's essay (two questions you had about the reading; discuss with a partner, switch to a new partner). Read Laura Hershey's essay "Getting Comfortable" and then read her poems "Working Together" and "Telling." Sm. Groups apply TPCASTT to the poem. Discuss language used and the risks taken in telling our stories.

Homework: Read *Me*, chapters 3-5

Block 3: Poetry and essay.

Writing prompt: A description of this classroom using on the senses of hearing, touch, and smell. Read Daniel Simpson's essay "Line Breaks the Way I See Them" and read and discuss his poems "School for the Blind" and "Broken Reverie." Read also "Only Bread, Only Light" by Stephen Kuusisto.

Homework: poetry response #1; read *Me*, chapters 6-7

Block 4: Novel discussion.

Writing prompt: analyze Karen Nieto's character in *Me*. Small groups conduct close readings of passages from the novel. Write around followed by whole-class discussion of *Me Who Dove Into the Heart of the World*.

Homework: Read *Me*, chapters 8-10

Block 5: Poetry and essay.

Read Brian Teare's essay "Lying Meditation" and discuss the structure and imagery of 5 of his poems from "The Empty Form Goes All the Way to Heaven." Write a poem in an imitative style.

Homework: Read *Me*, chapters 11-13

Block 6: Poetry and essay.

Writing prompt: impressions from the novel. Sm. group discussion of novel. Read Denise Leto's essay "Oulipo at the Laundromat" and her poems "Plaza Series.1" and "The Lost Word Association." Make two columns. In the first column, write down all the telling details you see in each poem. In the second column, provide an interpretation of these details.

Homework: poetry response #2; read *Me*, chapters 14-15

Block 7: Poetry and essay.

Read Cynthia Hogue's essay "The Creature Within: On Poetry and Dis/ability." Have three copies of each poem "Green surrounds the mind of summer," "In a Mute Season" and "Radical Optimism" posted around the room in a gallery walk. Have students walk around the room and journal their reactions to each poem, noting how reactions change each time they re-read a poem.

Homework: Read *Me*, chapters 16-18

Block 8: Novel discussion.

Writing prompt: Go around the room and respond to one of the statements that will be used in today's discussion. Fishbowl discussion of *Me Who Dove Into the Heart of the World*

Homework: Read *Me*, chapters 19-21

Block 9: Literary Analysis of Novel.

Small groups work together to create posters visually depicting the book's 1) themes, 2) characters, 3) settings 4) plot points, 5) imagery and language. Each group presents the poster and then they go up on the walls; students view them as a gallery.

Homework: first draft of literary analysis paper for *Me Who Dove Into the Heart of the World*

Block 10: Peer review workshop day.

Get into peer workshop groups and exchange papers. They read the papers and then write a letter to their peers explaining what was done well and what could be improved.

Homework: edit paper; final draft due in 2 class days

Block 11: Poetry and essay.

Read Ona Gritz's essay "A Conscious Decision" and her poem "We Are Everywhere." Then read "The Star Market" by Maria Howe. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the perceptions of disabled people presented in the two poems.

Homework: final draft of literary analysis paper for *Me Who Dove Into the Heart of the World* due next class day

Block 12: Reflections.

Students submit papers. Writing prompt: what was the most important thing you learned from one or more of the authors we read? Students pair and share responses. The rest of class consists of sharing poetry responses from the unit.