

VOICING OUR RIGHTS - DAY 1

Description: *This lesson is for a 9th grade drama class who for the most part, have previous drama skill, but have not covered the Voter Right Movement in history class. That is their upcoming unit. So the class will be examining ways to fight the recently proposed Arts Funding cuts (an issue that will directly affect them), practicing writing a petition, and discussing ways to make their petition visible to decision-makers in their school (i.e. the principal). The 10th, 11th and 12th graders have started a protest, but won't allow 9th graders to participate because they feel that they're too new to the school and aren't old enough to have an impact. The climate at school, especially in the arts classes, is very high and the 9th graders have expressed their interest in doing something but don't know how.*

Subject Matter: *Activism, arts funding cuts, exploring the different forms of a leader*

Rationale: *This lesson allows students to practice steps of activism toward topics that are personal to and directly affect them.*

Materials Needed: *Accessories for in-role character (hat, glasses, scarf, etc.), white butcher paper, markers, colorful construction paper, tape, chalk board and chalk*

Objectives: *By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...*

- *Develop problem solving skills for specific group actions around voting rights*
- *Relate to a concrete discriminatory situation in their school/immediate community*
- *Compare their action towards fighting for something they believe in to the voter rights movement in 1965 which we will transition into in the next lesson*

Lesson Plan

Preset: Desks should be in a semi circle as we usually have for drama class, Langston Hughes' "What Happens to a Dream Deferred?" on a chalk board.

Activities and Timeframe:

"What Happens to a Dream Deferred?" (15 minutes)

The poem by Langston Hughes will be written on the chalk board, at the top of class (after a warm up—stretches, raisin/banana), students will take turns reading lines from the poem.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Does anyone know who wrote this poem? (Langston Hughes 1951)

There is A LOT of imagery in this poem, so let's get on our feet and try to see what it might even look like in our bodies. Do you remember the part you read? Ok, we're going to speak the poem again, one line at a time but this time we will all physicalize what happens to the dream.

Students will walk around the space, physicalizing what happens to the personified “dream deferred.”

Transition

Great! Let's take a seat now. What did you notice about putting these words into motion? What movement made particular parts stand out to you this time reading the poem? Since we're about to move into plays of the 60s, I thought that we should gather some context of a particular play that I quite the fan of, which was inspired by this very poem --interruption, phone---

Instructor will pretend to see indicated message with bad news, stepping out, (in-role) art teacher walks in to “watch the students”, she is sobbing. She will tell the students that the Arts Funding is in the final stages of being cut, and will ask the students to draw self-portraits of them without art while they wait on the drama teacher to get back.

Me Without Art (15 minutes)

Students will be given construction paper and parkers to draw their self-portraits of them without art. They share afterwards. Inspired by the artwork, the teacher asks:

What do you notice about all of these? How do they relate to the poem that the drama teacher was sharing with you? What do you think are some solutions we could brainstorm? What are some ways we could possibly stop the Arts Funding? (suggestions: petition, letters, etc.)

Divide the class into two groups: One group will make banners w/ a good slogan, and one will make a petition to get at least 12 signatures today and think of three bullet points to tell people why they need art in their school. Share.

Transition

If we need more signature, we'll go out and find them! We will then come back to the classroom and discuss that experience.

Justify Your Right (5 minutes)

Hoo-Ray! The option for voting on the cuts has been provided and now STUDENTS can vote and send the results to the district! But not ALL student can vote...

Having been informed that only 10th, 11th and 12th graders can vote, have to decide whether to throw away their petitions and banners or justify why they too can vote! (choose to justify!) Students will stand in a line, responding to a 12th grader (in-role teacher) saying "you can't vote, you're just a puny Freshman!"

Those were some great responses...I feel pretty confident now that we may have some impact--- interruption, Drama teacher is "at the door"--

Closing (10 minutes):

Drama teacher returns, rather saddened. She explains the news she received about the Arts Funding cuts and apologizes for leaving class.

What did you discuss with the art teacher?

What were some things that made you want to get involved?

How do you think other people who want their voices heard have gone about doing it?

Why is this important?

What can we do further?

Extension Activity/Homework (if any):

Go home and, like Lorraine Hansberry, write your own story/monologue/poem/short play inspired by a line of text in this poem and what you discussed with the art teacher today. We'll come back and share next time.

Contingencies:

If I have less time, I can cut the "self-portrait" activity. If I have less, I will extend the conversation about "why we all deserve rights to vote, in this instance and in others." Leading into a conversation about Voter Rights Movement.

VOICING OUR RIGHTS - DAY 2: "Voter Rights & The Selma March of 1965"

Description: *This lesson, for 9th grade drama students, was going to cover the play "A Raisin in the Sun," but due to the recent Arts Funding cuts, we will continue to discuss Voter Rights, still staying on the topic of the discrimination in the 1960s. We will discuss the Selma March of 1965*

and what lead up to the event. This topic will also provide a perfect context for racial tension, in comparison to the students' own experiences standing up against age discrimination voting in their school in the last lesson.

Subject Matter: *Activism, discrimination, influences that evoked the Voter Rights Movement in the 1960's, the Selma March in Alabama March 7, 1965, unity/community*

Rationale: *Provides context for the racial discrimination that was prominent in the 1960s, which will inform an understanding of circumstance, stakes and social climate of the dramatic literature we intend to read later in the unit.*

Materials Needed: *image of Selma March of 1965, poster board, markers*

Objectives: *By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...*

- *Identify an event of the Voter Rights Movement by discussing the Selma March of 1965*
- *Demonstrate a visualization of a poem written by an early Civil Rights Activist*
- *Analyze inequalities and discrimination in relation to their own experiences of ageism in voting on particular issues in school*

Lesson

Preset: desks in a semi-circle, video of Selma March 1964 queued on computer or projector

Activities and Timeframe:

It's Time to be a Leader! (10 minutes)

Again working with the poem "What happens to a Dream Deferred?" Students will pick out a short phrase of just 2-4 words that stand out to you, write it down and create 4-count movement to it (for instance, show 4-count movement 1 and 2 and 3 and 4). It doesn't have to be very elaborate, just count to 4 and move your body to the counts. Great! Now come into a circle, let's share those movements. In between each one, we will clap four times to get the rhythm ready for the next person. Great, so now we feel in our bodies what it's like to be a leader right? Well I want you to carry that feeling with you today, I have a feeling we might need it later...

Transition

Students will take a seat in a circle
Why did you pick those particular words?
What about them stood out to you?
How did they feel put into action, in your body?

Selma Tableaux (15 minutes)

Share an image of the Selma March of 1965

What do you notice in this image?

What are they doing in this image?

Why might they be doing that?

Can you guess what time period it might be? Or where it might be?

How do you think the Black individuals in this image are feeling right now?

Students will then be instructed to break into three's or four's depending on class size and build three tableaux based on the image they see. Tableaux 1 will be a moment before this image, Tableaux 2 will be the moment of this image, and Tableaux 3 will be a moment after this image. Once each tableaux is shown, the performing students will shout out a phrase that their "character from the March" might be thinking/feeling. Share

Transition

Circle up.

What was an image that stood out to you?

Why were those images particularly resonant?

Have you ever had similar thoughts/feeling in your own life?

If you were to embark on a similar endeavor, would you do it the same way?

Does marching sound like a good idea for our own issue in school, the Arts Funding cuts and your right to vote on the issue even though you're 9th graders?

Closing (15 minutes):

*With a partner, create a poster that encompasses the thoughts you mentioned about your rights to vote on the Arts Funding cuts. What would be your slogan? The images you use?
(create and share)*

Extension Activity/Homework (if any):

N/A

Contingencies:

If there is extra time, we can further discuss the posters in the closing activity and talk about that process. *If we were to actually reenact a march, what fears of marching through the school and raising the posters might we encounter?* If I run short on time, I will cut the poster activity all together