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ENGL-112B

Dr. Warner's

Unit of Study - Bullying

Bullying is an experience that various people had or still have to face today. Whether it's school, workplace, or anywhere in society, being harassed both verbally and physically could leave a huge impact on the victims' lives and possibly traumas in the future. The majority of bullying started early and as a result, it is quite common for students who are minorities and folks who can't defend themselves to be these bullies' main targets.

When I first moved to America, I felt emotionally lost and deeply hurt due to always being picked on by other kids. Bullying is always on caution and is considered a priority in each classroom, yet it never seems to get resolved whenever I reach out to the teachers, which only gives my bullies more reasons to take revenge and laugh at me. This eventually shaped me into someone full of insecurities as I was growing older, affected my ability to speak in a crowd, and having anxiety. I was lucky enough to snap out of this later in high school, yet it was still a very big issue because there were still victims of harassment even at that grade level.

The reason why bullying as a subject within literature is important for young adults because it's such a common act between students and many are victims at a very young age. There is a lot of uncertainty for young adult students because teachers often expect these victims to speak up about the bullying issues, yet the majority of these victims are very afraid of its consequences and act of revenge from the offenders. Exploring bullying as a theme in literature and focusing on the impact of it can help high school students to connect the unit of study with their own experience of either being the victim or someone that has witnessed the act of bullying.

American Born Chinese written and illustrated by Gene Luen Yang is a comic novel that examines the impact of bullying within the character development of Jin Wang. The young boy started as a very kind and sweet person who wanted to express his love to the girl that he has a crush on, but after being intimidated by Greg, he became a different person. He lost the confidence that he once had in front of the crowd and especially the girl that he loved. He also felt extremely insecure until the point of hurting the people that are closed to him. He wished to change his identities and bury his past forever. The story shows how toxic bullying truly is, the novel is served to inform students that persecution, discrimination, and any act of putting other down could hurt them in a long term, and encourage people to share their stories instead of keeping them to themselves until it's too late.

Covering the issue of bullying in a unit of study is helpful and will allow the victims to speak up comfortably, something that I wish I could've when I was younger. Through young literature, one can learn that their stories are important and become more prepared to deal with harassment in their daily lives. The goal of the unit is for students to appreciate each other more, open up to the victims, and allow the offenders to learn from their past mistakes. After this unit, students will be able to be more aware of the weight words hold toward others and how to be prepared to deal with bullying outside of the classroom.

Introduction to the Unit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iM3hKILS5E&feature=youtu.be>

This clip from the documentary drama-film *Bully* shows how bullying works in the school environment that students may be able to relate to or have witnessed. Not only Alex was isolated by his peers, but he also received death threats on the school bus. The threats have happened so often that Alex himself just accepts everything that his bully said to him. This

documentary drama film shows the seriousness and how immoral these offenders could be that sometimes adults are ignorant toward and allowing the acts to keep going.

Students will be broken into small groups for a general discussion about the video before transitioning into a class-wide discussion. Each discussion will be timed and students will volunteer to share their thoughts and opinions about the subject of bullying along with how they feel watching the story of Alex in the documentary. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, students are also allowed to share stories that they've witnessed, they're not limited to personal experience only. This would help to warm up the topic of intimidation for students to be more connected with Jin Wang's emotions in *American Born Chinese* since they already just witnessed and talked about similar scenarios.

Extending *American Born Chinese*

Readings:

The very first half of the book will be assigned to be done outside of class. For the second half of the novel, I'll read to demonstrate and set an example for students to follow and volunteer to read next, if no student volunteers then the last person to read will be able to pick in popcorn reading style.

SSW:

Part 1: Students will examine what they've read and have 5-10 minutes to write down their thoughts and opinions on the context of the reading. Students who finished early can use the rest time to prepare materials for the discussion.

Part 2: During the last 10 minutes of class, students will write down some main points that other students brought up during the class discussion that they find interesting and informative. These

notes can be used for the next class discussion, and turn in for extra credits by the end of the semester.

Class Discussion:

The discussion will be centered on the contexts of last night's readings. Students will pick random numbers to be paired into small groups and discuss *American Born Chinese* amongst themselves before gathering together. The students will be able to share what they've experienced or find interesting from the reading, how they could relate the contexts to real-world situations. The students will gather after 10 minutes of group discussion and discuss the topic class-wide. Students will add to each other's opinions or share their thoughts by respectfully raising their hands in case someone is speaking. Every student is required to participate at least once during class for everyone to have their thoughts heard, one of the main lessons from the reading.

Outside Reading Activity

Small-Group Reading Assignment: Twitter Book Report

1. Two small groups from the class discussions will be combined into one, each group representative will pick a random number from 1-5 that stands for a different YA novel to read together. The group will have to work together outside of class, analyze and discuss the reading amongst each other.
2. Students will have to create Twitter accounts and take advantage of the thread feature on the website. This will allow them to work on and share the information that they've learned about their chosen YA novel on the popular social media platform. Students will

arrange on who to work on which part of the thread since it'll have at least 5 main key ideas.

The Twitter thread will include:

- I. Author biography and website. A summary with main points about them that connects to the novel that was chosen.
- II. Highlights and summary of the novel itself. Students can also include images of the panels or cover to help highlight the critical part of the story, no spoilers.
- III. List of characters, students will introduce the characters that are either victims or offenders of bullying in the YA novel. Provide quotes and images of the characters and an explanation of what went wrong in these characters' arcs together.
- IV. Quotes from the YA novel that support the themes as well as connecting to *American Born Chinese*, and explain why the chosen quotes are significant.
- V. Personal thoughts on the YA novels and how they were able to understand the contexts of bullying within the texts by connecting it with *American Born Chinese*.

3. Each group will give a 5-10 presentation on their Twitter book talk thread, whichever groups receive the most likes and retweets on the website will give 5 extra points due to their works becoming influential on the social media platform.

YA Novel Choices

Vicious: True Stories by Teens About Bullying edited by Hope Vanderberg

A collection of stories by young adult victims that covered every form of bullying, from physical and verbal to relational and cyberbullying. It reveals multiple ways that bullying could affect

people, sharing the stories in the hope to shed light on victims who are still unable to speak for themselves.

Crossing Lines by Paul Volponi

A story about an offender who hesitated when his team wanted to set up a big plan that could harm a new boy in school that wore lipstick. He started to question whether it's time for him to stop all this bullying, or join his teammates and stay fit in with the crowd.

Please Stop Laughing at Me: One Woman's Inspirational True Story by Jodee Blanco

Based on the author's true story, Blanco defended some deaf students who were picked on by hearing students. Blanco eventually became these bullies' new target and was spat on, taunted, and physically abused just for being a good person.

Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

Clay is one of 13 students sent a box by Hannah Baker, a student who's recently killed herself. He and the students learned that every little thing that had been said to Hannah had slowly killed her mentally which became the cause for her death physically.

The Girls by Amy Goldman Koss

Maya lost her friends because the most popular girl in the school didn't want them to hang out with her anymore. She became discriminated against and isolated in school just because her "friends" wanted to please the popular kid.

Closing the Unit

For me to see the student's understanding of the novel and its concepts, I would like them to have a whole class period to write an in-class essay that answers this prompt: "Why did Jin wish to become a Caucasian person in *American Born Chinese*? How do the Monkey King stories apply to present-day society?" The Monkey King part of the novel is a story about redemption and self-empowerment. I would like my students to use it as a method to apply to reality because it would be much more effective to connect novel contexts to real-life events than simply having a distance between it and their own lives.

Work Cited

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