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English 112B

Professor Warner

Unit of Study

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Courage and Survival

**Rationale**: Many of today’s youth in America have no idea what it is like to live in a country that is at war. Young adults also have no idea what experiencing war can be like, for the individual and their family. Today’s youth also love to idolize heroes who do battle with an enemy in order to save the people around them or the people they love.

In providing texts that show the experience of war and what it can be like for the individual, such as sacrifices and survival, perhaps the young reader will be able to realize that heroes really do live among us and that they may not be in the capes that we dream up or watch on tv.

Many people, (possibly many youth) have the perception that war corrupts the people involved. By educating students with exposure to authors who have first hand experiences and novels on war, maybe they could grasp an idea that we all are faced with choices, and very rarely are we ever forced to do something, we always have a choice; war corrupts those who let it do so.

Chapter 7 in Adolescents in Search for Meaning deals with topics and strategies on teachings of people involved in two situational themes: courage and survival . Many people have family in the military and some people will never be in the military. Either way, it would serve as an enlightenment to teens to read of the real heroes who leave behind their families in order to fight for the greater good.

If people are changed by war, these readings will help youth understand why and would make them question what they would do in similar situations. The people in each of these novels are faced with tough decisions to make. Placing the students in the shoes of the characters they’re reading about can give the students a different perspective of hardships and the virtues and moral compass of themselves and others.

**Initiating the Unit:** The main theme, courage and survival normally places characters in overwhelming situations that require the most from these characters. *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins is a perfect read to engage the students in the beginnings of the unit. Katniss Everdeen comes across situations where she needs to make a choice if she should trust a certain person or not. She also sacrifices herself as tribute in order to keep her sister safe. Throughout the book she uses her mind and her skill in order to survive.

**Class Activity:** Until we are finished with the book, every class session will include 20 minutes of SSR (Sustained Silent Reading). The goal will to be to read 10 pages in class, then 10 pages at home, whatever isn’t finished in class is added to the 10 pages at home. After, we’ll have 10 minutes to write in our Journal Entries which we’ll keep up with everyday. They’ll be able to write about what they liked, what they didn’t like, what they noticed. We’ll then discuss in class the things we’ve noticed in the reading: Do we notice any tough decisions any of the characters have to make? Try to imagine if this story were real life. What would you do? Do you agree with the character’s decision? BUT BEFORE WE DISCUSS!!

The main thing I’ve noticed that hinders youth from speaking their mind in front of the class, is what their classmates will end up thinking of them. So a year long agreement we’ll all make with each other is this: DON’T YUCK MY YUM. I’ll ask the class what they think it means. I’ll always ask them what they think before I give them an answer, Engage, Engage, Engage. Whether somebody answers correctly or incorrectly, I’ll go on to tell the class, “Raise your hand if you like pizza.” When I get a billion hands raised I’ll tell the class to look around. I’ll then say, “Raise your hand if you like plain, cheese pizza,” less people will have their hands raised. After that I’ll tell them to, “raise their hand if they like pepperoni pizza.” Each question should divide the amount of hands raised, I’ll continue if it looks the same. My last question will be the first I asked, Raise your hand if you like pizza.” This will bring the amount of hands as one whole collective. Then I’ll ask, “Whether it be cheese or pepperoni pizza, can we all agree that we all like pizza?” “So just because I don’t think or like things the in the same way you do, or vice versa, you and I still have some similarities.” DON’T YUCK MY YUM.

**Continuing the Unit:** I’d follow up with a novel I find that young adults can relate to, *I Pledge Allegiance* by Chris Lynch. The story is about four friends, one of which ends up being drafted into the Vietnam War. The other three sign up so that they can fight the war together, although they are all in separate branches. Throughout the story, the main character re faced with decisions that can affect themselves or their friends and squadmates. This being about four young boys fighting for each other, this is relevant to youth and also pairs well with two aspects of the Exeter Qualities: 4) Characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can go beyond the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives 6) Themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues.

**Class Activity:** This book they’ll be required to read at home and they will need to continue their journal entries. For this we’ll start having objectives each night, read two chapters or so, etc. We’ll continue discussions in class, what they thought of the previous night’s reading, could they picture themselves in these tight situations, who else, other than the certain character is affected by certain decisions. Every few days or so, we will act out a piece of my choosing creating groups on who will go and when. This will keep them engaged and add a experience speaking in front of a class or group of people.

**Concluding the Unit:** There will be a variety of books we will be reading and discussing throughout the unit:

*The Book Thief*-Markus Zusak

*The Things They Carried*-Tim O’Brien

*The Things a Brother Knows*-Dana Reinhardt

*A Long Way Gone*-Ishmael Beah

Each of these novels place the main characters in moral and mental self sacrificing situations. The goal is to place the students in another person’s shoes during an unfortunate event, or at least get them thinking. We’ll end with an analytical essay on either of the books of their choice, it can be on one book, they can compare and contrast themes or situations in each of the books. We’ll go back to our journals and look at what we thought earlier and see if we still agree or disagree with what we wrote. By the end of the unit we will have read and been exposed to the beginnings of explicating literature. We will have tried to connect with the readings by placing ourselves in the character’s shoes. We will have been exposed to tough decision making and the consequences of our choices and actions.

Works Cited

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