



INDIGENOUS WISDOM: CENTURIES OF PUEBLO IMPACT IN NEW MEXICO

A Pueblo-Based Educational Curriculum • IndianPuebloEducation.org

HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

2nd Edition

Title of Unit: Simon Ortiz's Autobiographical Essay: A Perspective on Language and Life

Content Area: Language Arts

Grade Level: 9-12

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Section A: Introductory Materials

Name: Agnes Lucero

Title of Unit: Simon Ortiz’s Autobiographical Essay: A Perspective on Language and Life

Content Area: Language Arts

Grade Level: 11-12

Rationale:

The purpose of this unit is to provide students with an in-depth understanding of how language has a profound impact on one’s sense of self as it relates to identity, in addition to understanding how language influences one’s place in culture and society. The core values of respect, compassion and love are addressed within. This unit introduces a literary piece written by the author, Simon Ortiz, who was born in 1941 at Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico; he is recognized as a prolific Pueblo author of

poetry, short stories, and essays. In his autobiographical essay, “*The Language We Know*,” readers are taken through a journey of his life from time immemorial into the present while recounting events, teachings, and experiences-all of which, he believes, have come into existence through language. Ortiz asserts this belief by stating, "It is language that brings us into being in order to know life." The goal of this unit is to present students with various levels of thought and understanding while acquiring an appreciation of insightful, personal writing by a contemporary Pueblo author.

Unit Goals:

- Students will understand the perception of life and identity through a notable Acoma Pueblo author born in 1941.
- Students will develop an in-depth understanding of how language influences one’s comprehension of the world.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of the content by supporting or negating the author’s claims.
- Students will analyze how the core values of respect and compassion become significant in their daily lives.

Standards:

CCSS-
Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3
Craft and Structure: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10

Section B: Lesson Plan One

Title: The Language We Speak: Language and Respect

Duration: 20 minutes

Grade Levels: 11th-12th Grade

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand the meaning and importance of how language is communicated in different social contexts.
- Students will be able to analyze how language influences individual thought and interpretation.
- Students will be able to identify how language is inherent to respect, identity, and personal experiences.

Prerequisite Skills:

- Practice in contributing ideas and participating in class discussions.

Materials and Resources:

- 3x5 index cards
- pen/pencil

Guiding Questions:

1. In what way does personal experience influence the use of language?
2. Under what circumstances is the spoken word more powerful than the written word?
3. Why should a young person consider the core values of respect and compassion when speaking to an older person, such as an elder of a family or community?

Core Values: Respect, Compassion

Procedure:

1. Hand out 5 index cards to each student. As a pre-reading activity, have students write down a single word on each of the cards related to the idea of "Language and Respect." Ask them to think of words that are important to them and how their choice of words convey their perception about this idea.
2. Ask students (at least 7 to 10) to share a word and explain its significance to the idea of "Language and Respect."
3. The teacher should create a 2-column chart on the board (one side of the column labeled Word, the second column labeled Significance) to record the student's words and explanations for all to view.
4. Based on the students' contributions, the teacher will debrief this activity, inviting students to draw some conclusions about what is revealed through the variation and choice of words, and explaining how meaning is created and influenced by individual experiences.

Assessment:

Completed Exit Slip, Handout #1

Modifications/Accommodations:

1. One-on-one peer or teacher assistance.
2. Allow extended time to complete assignment.
3. Provide examples or models for student(s) to view.
4. Provided further explanation as needed.

Notes to Teacher:

As this is an activity that draws upon students' own thoughts and experiences, the teacher should rotate among the class to make observations and provide prompts as students search for words to complete the task. Encourage students to contribute; give praise for contributing ideas to the class.

Handout #1: Exit Slips

Exit Slip - Think of a word that is associated with the value of Respect. Write the word, what it means to you, and describe the social context in which it is used.

Exit Slip - Think of a word that is associated with the value of Respect. Write the word, what it means to you, and describe the social context in which it is used.

Exit Slip - Think of a word that is associated with the value of Respect. Write the word, what it means to you, and describe the social context in which it is used.

Lesson Plan Two

Title: Language, Life, and Identity: Analyzing Meaning and Importance

Duration: 40 minutes

Grade Levels: 11th-12th Grades

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will use prior knowledge to make connections of personal language(s) to text.
- Students will evaluate the author's word choice and usage.
- Students will understand how particular words relate to the author's message of respect, love of one's culture and identity.

Prerequisite Skills:

- Students should be able to analyze and synthesize ideas for deeper meaning.
- Students should be able to identify the type of audience addressed by a text.

Materials and Resources:

- Handout #1: Essay by Simon Ortiz, "The Language We Know," found in the following book: Riley, Patricia (1993). *Growing Up Native American*. <https://bi.hcpdts.com/reflowable/scrollableiframe/9780061759680HarperCollins Publishers Inc.: New York>.
- Handout #2: Team Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool
- butcher paper
- markers
- scotch tape or push pins

Guiding Questions:

1. Under what circumstances is the spoken word more powerful than the written word?
2. Why should an individual choose their words carefully before speaking?

Core Values: Respect, Love

Procedure:

1. Group students into clusters of at least 4 students per group.
2. Hand out copies of Simon Ortiz's essay to each student.
3. While seated within the group, have students silently read paragraphs 1, 3, and 6 of the essay.
4. After reading paragraphs 1, 3, and 6, give each group a sheet of butcher paper to create a 3-column chart under the heading: RESPECT, LOVE & IDENTITY. Have students label each of the 3 columns on the chart with the following headings: WORD, MEANING, IMPORTANCE.
Technology alternative: Have each group create a jamboard , google slide or

- equivalent document page with information from activity above.
5. Students will collaborate within each group to share ideas on Simon Ortiz's message within paragraphs 1, 3, and 6. They will be specifically looking for and identifying 7 to 10 words that represent Ortiz's message on the core values of respect and love as it relates to identity. They will list each word under the column heading labeled WORD. As a group they must then decide what meaning the author gives to the term and record these under the MEANING column and lastly, its associated importance under the third column labeled IMPORTANCE.
 6. Upon completion, each group will present their ideas by posting the charts on the wall or bulletin board. Invite students to engage in a Gallery Walk to view each group's interpretation of Simon Ortiz's ideas and compare their discussions.
Technology alternative: Gallery walk through electronic document with students posting comments on the interpretations by the group. Select term/phrase they most identify with and why.
 7. Close the activity by inviting students to draw conclusions about the relationship between language use and how words convey important meanings about respect, love of one's culture, and identity. Groups present student about about what they identify with and reflect on whether or not that changes perceptions for any of the students in groups.

Assessment:

Team Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool, Handout #2

Modifications/Accommodations:

1. Provide extended reading time.
2. Provide one-on-one peer or teacher assistance.
3. Provide a vocabulary/definition word list.
4. Paraphrase ideas presented in the text.
5. Emphasize important points in the text.
6. Allow extended time to complete assignments.
7. Provide examples or models for student(s) to view.
8. Read orally to the student(s).
9. Provide time to work with a peer partner to re-read the text.
10. Gallery walk/electronic document allows all students to make contributions.

Notes to Teacher:

1. Read the essay, "The Language We Know" by Simon Ortiz beforehand, paying particular attention to the content of paragraphs 1, 3, and 6 for this activity.
2. Consider providing some time to conduct a vocabulary-building exercise drawing attention to the following terms used by the author in paragraph 3 of the text: ostracism, invocation, impede, disdain, vistas, impetus, acculturation.

Handout #2:

Team Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool

Read through each of the following categories. Rate yourself by placing a circle around the number which best corresponds to your level of group involvement. After you have completed the assessment, total the circled number values for all categories. Compare your total with values and characteristics at the bottom of the page.

Contribution:

- I am usually quiet and tend not to share ideas or information. 1
- I like to share ideas and information even though I hesitate. 2
- I find enjoyment in freely sharing ideas and information. 3

Participation:

- I find it difficult to participate or remain engaged in group work. 1
- I usually make an effort to participate and remain engaged. 2
- I can be relied on for full participation and engagement. 3

Group Support:

- I tend to be critical of how groups function. 1
- I am occasionally critical of groups but remain positive enough to represent the group. 2
- I fully support the group, am positive, and eager to represent the group. 3

TOTAL

Characteristic Indicators:

- Absolute Team Member/Group Leader: 9
- Effective Team Member/Group Leader: 6, 7, 8
- Minimal Team Member/Group Leader: 3, 4, 5

Lesson Plan Three

Title: Making a Connection to the Author's Claim: Argumentative Essays

Duration: 60 minutes

Grade Levels: 11th and 12th Grades

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will analyze and interpret the author's claim as it relates to the cultural context and core values of respect, compassion, and love.
- Students will synthesize ideas to develop a well-constructed response to the claim.
- Students will write an Argumentative Essay by taking a position on the author's claim.

Prerequisite Skills:

- Students should review and be familiar with an essay format.
- Students should have knowledge of in-text citations.
- Students should have prior knowledge of argumentative writing.

Materials and Resources:

- lined paper
- pen/pencil
- Student copy of Simon Ortiz's essay, "The Language We Know," found in the following book: Riley, Patricia (1993). *Growing Up Native American*. HarperCollins Publishers Inc.: New York.
<https://bi.hcpdts.com/reflowable/scrollableiframe/9780061759680>
- Reference Tool: (MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics) available at: owl.english.purdue.edu
- Handout #1: Argumentative Essay Rubric

Guiding Questions:

1. What is the author's overall message within the essay?
2. What is the author's point of view and intended purpose?

Core Values: Respect, Compassion, Love

Procedure:

1. Students will read the essay in its entirety to obtain an overall understanding of the text.
2. After reading the essay, students will write an Argumentative Essay based on the author's claim: "We have always had this language, and it is the language, spoken and unspoken, that determines our existence. . ."
3. Explain to the students that they will take a position to defend, challenge, or qualify the author's claim by presenting strong textual evidence within an argumentative essay.

4. As part of a pre-writing stage, provide students an opportunity to explore different methods for generating ideas, such as a creating a web, list, or an outline of thoughts, ideas or key words.
5. Students' writing should consist of multiple drafts followed by peer-reading and editing conferences.
6. Students will produce one final, revised draft for teacher evaluation.

Assessment:

Argumentative Essay Rubric, Handout #1

Modifications/Accommodations:

1. Provide extended reading time.
2. Provide one-on-one peer or teacher assistance.
3. Provide a vocabulary/definition word list.
4. Paraphrase ideas presented in the text.
5. Emphasize important points in the text.
6. Allow extended time to complete assignments.
7. Provide examples or models for student(s) to view.
8. Read orally to the student(s).
9. Provide opportunity to work with a partner to re-read the text.

Notes to Teacher:

1. Consider providing some time to conduct a vocabulary-building exercise drawing attention to the following terms used by the author beyond paragraph 3 of the text: unarticulated, moil, precociousness, denigrating, inculcated, bespoke, inexorably, bequeath, surmised, latent, hedged, guttural
2. Provide time to model how in-text citations are formatted for student writing.

Culminating Activity:

As a culminating activity, the following suggestions for this unit include the following Ideas:

- Create anagrams using the core values of respect, compassion, and love.
- Create a visual depicting one or more of the core values, such as an editorial cartoon or word collage.
- Illustrate an important scene from Simon Ortiz's autobiography that conveys important core values.
- Provide a public reading of student essays at Speech & Debate events and/or New Mexico History school competitions.

Handout #1:

Argumentative Essay Writing
Rubric Grades 11/12

Purpose/Focus Weight 40%	Evidence/Elaboration Weight 40%	Convention/Editing Weight 20%
The claim is clearly stated, focused, and strongly maintained throughout the writing.	The claim is supported by textual evidence such as facts and supporting details.	The response demonstrates adequate command of prose while adhering to the conventions of writing.
An alternate or opposing claim is presented.	The evidence is smoothly integrated into the writing.	Some errors in word usage and syntax may be present but does not create a repetitive pattern which loses sight of the subject matter.
The response is effectively organized, appropriate for the purpose, audience, and task.	The evidence is clearly paraphrased or appropriately cited.	Mechanics such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are adequately displayed.
Transitional strategies are effectively utilized to develop relationships between and among ideas.	Ideas are effectively expressed through the use of precise language and word usage.	
There is a clear, logical progression of ideas from beginning to end; the flow of ideas from the introduction to conclusion is apparent.	Appropriate use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is evident and maintained for the audience and purpose.	
A variety of sentence structures (syntax) are present in the writing.		