

Lesson Plan: "The Most Southern Place on Earth: workshop

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Broad-based Theme: Place as text in The Most Southern Place on Earth
Generalizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ literature can often be contextualized in terms categories, such as race, gender, class, geography, time period, and religion</li><li>▪ the blues, as with other place/time specific genres, can be read both as literature and history</li><li>▪ knowing the history of a region can aid one in explicating songs and poetry, and visa-versa</li></ul>
Guiding Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ What is an explication?</li><li>▪ How can artistic representation/literatures be viewed as representations of specific places/historical epochs?</li></ul>

**Lesson Plan Objectives:**

- Students will learn how to write an explication.
- Students will learn and work with the following terms:
  - Explication
  - Rhyme
  - Metaphor
  - Simile
  - Assonance
  - Alliteration
  - Euphemism
- Students will learn to view a piece of literature/song/poem as something contextualized by geography and history.

**Procedure:**

1. Present vocabulary sheet (explication . . . euphemism) and work up examples
2. Present a blues song (to be determined)
3. Present brief reading(s) on the Delta (reading to be determined)
4. Given the reading, what representations of Delta life are in the song?
  - The river (what did the river mean to the people of the region?)
  - The train?
  - Themes of religion?
  - Desire for escape? (From where? To where?)
  - Sharecropping?
  - Racial injustices?
  - Specific historical events (the 1927 flood? The Great Depression? The Civil War?)
  - Mechanics of the song: find examples of euphemism, etc. and, as a class, determine the role of such devices in the song.
5. Model, through class discussion, graphic organizers, and my own essay on the song, how an explication can be structured.
6. Distribute examples of Delta blues songs to the students – all students will receive a different song – have the students write their own explications. Question the students about additional research they will have to do concerning their song (students will *at least* be tasked with researching the author/performer of their song).
7. Students research, write essays, *and* turn their findings into a three to five-minute oral presentation on their song.

**The next step.**

8. Working with a particular region and time period, students will have to briefly research – are there geographic entities? Religious/racial/class etc. disputes and tensions? Emergent and disputatious technologies? Economic and political upheaval? Etc.
9. Students will, in the course of their research, be asked to find a representative song or poem from their time/place assignment.
10. Students will, again, write an explication and present a three to five-minute oral presentation on their song.
  - The list of topics will have to be determined by Murdock (all students will have a different topic); however, topics may include: the American dustbowl of the 1920's; American post-assassination songs (Lincoln, J. and R. Kennedy; MLK); Appalachian coal-strikes; California surf-music; British punk music; British dub music; Jamaican/Kingston reggae; Mexican narco-*corridos*; American Civil-War (and other wars, certainly) songs; American depression songs; Nigerian river delta songs (in the wake of 19<sup>th</sup> century European colonialism and in the current Shell oil era; Central-American revolution songs; recent songs arising out of Mexican (and Guatemalan, etc.) emigration through the Arizona and New Mexican deserts; songs arising from both sides of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands; songs arising out of various Communist and anti-Communist revolutions in Russia and its satellites; American Native-American songs; various songs arising out of indigenous and colonized cultures, New York and Los Angeles *gangsta-rap*; ETC.

**Looking toward the future:**

It is my hope that this project could serve to demystify poetry for my students and serve as a jumping-off point to more complex (or shall we say intimidating?) poems and poets we encounter. I see this project very much dovetailing with, for example, a Shakespeare unit wherein we would tackle the sonnets.

