

Cat Stevens, Blue Oyster Cult, Coolio, Weird Al Yankovic, the Righteous Brothers, the Police, and Billy Joel) to teach annotation; concepts such as tone, theme, parody, and mood; ideas such as quest, growing up, identity, independence, and obsession; and compare/contrast strategies.

I provide students with their own copies of all the texts we read so they can mark them up and practice highlighting. All copies are taped and/or stapled into their notebooks.

HOW THIS CURRICULUM IS TAUGHT

The first two weeks of school are spent building a reading and writing community in the classroom. Literature study begins in the third week with the analysis of character development in the 2002 film *Bang, Bang, You're Dead* since characters are the easiest way for many students to access literature. While watching the film, students take notes on who the character is, how he acts, how others react to him, and how stereotypes about who "good kids" and "bad kids" are shape our perceptions. I point out allusions they do not recognize and we discuss how those allusions add layers of meaning for the "reader." Music from the film is included in their analysis, that is, how it contributes to character developments.

Short stories are then used to teach other major elements of literature: setting, dialogue, plot, and theme. Students discuss setting in "The Tell-Tale Heart," internal dialogue and jargon in "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," and plot structure in "The Gift of the Magi." Students are encouraged to make inferences about such ideas as obsession and fear, ageism, stereotypes and prejudice, rebellion, and selflessness and to infer a theme for each story. I continue to note and discuss allusions.

At this point I introduce a close reading strategy called T-W-I-S-T (T-tone; W-word choice and diction; I-imagery and detail; S-style; and T-theme) to aid students in learning what to look for when they annotate their texts. Some poetry is also incorporated with the study of short stories when poems have titles that seem to coincide with the ideas in the stories. Students must make their own connections between the stories and the poems.

After the short story unit, students begin their study of *Animal Farm* looking first at characterization, setting, dialogue, and plot. They then

learn about symbolism and metaphorical allusions in characters' names and actions, willing suspension of disbelief, rhetorical questions and devices, satire and irony, and propaganda and bias in dialogue. They extract Orwell's ideas about fear, ageism, oppression, rebellion, and anarchy as well as freedom, conscience, and responsibility.

They also analyze Vonnegut's story "Harrison Bergeron" for satire, irony, and oxymorons (as well as for its ideas about anarchy, rebellion, misguided egalitarianism, and jealousy), and make comparisons with those elements in *Animal Farm*. They look at these elements in beast epics, beast fables, allegories, parables, fables, and fairy tales as well.

To understand better the "why" of Orwell's decision to use a genre traditionally associated with children, they analyze tricksters, anthropomorphism, and didactics in Aesop's fables and the Anansi stories. Selections from Kipling's *Just So Stories* reinforce students' background knowledge about character types and also provide other examples of didacticism.

Selections from *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* are used for comparison with the style of the oral tradition in Joel Chandler Harris's "The Wonderful Tar Baby" and "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox" and to complement the expression of oppression and fear in Orwell's novel. Since Maya Angelou is from Arkansas, her story strikes "closer to home" and heightens student interest.

Students extend their analysis of *Animal Farm* to the fifteenth-century allegorical play *Everyman* to identify the symbolism of characters' names and qualities, the conflict between good and evil, and the use of literature to teach morality. They then watch a short film clip of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and discuss the difference between illusion and reality in the parable and in the novel.

Students end their analysis of *Animal Farm* examining "The Ugly Duckling" and "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" for their didactic nature, their symbolism in numbers, colors, and character types, their plot structure, settings, and choices made, and how these contribute to audience expectations for outcomes to fairy tales. Students then assess how *Animal Farm* reinforces or contradicts these audience expectations and discuss how political satire may make for a more effective didactic text than a simple re-telling of political history.

In the second semester, students revisit fairy tales in order to begin an in-depth study of comedy in literature. Good comedy depends on the