



Lesson Plans: Intersecting Identities - An Introduction

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Grade Level: 10-12th

Time Required: 5-6 50-minute class periods

Introduction

The intersection of myriad identities can unify and divide. Within communities, humans encounter and interact with one another on a daily basis; often, one does not always have control over the types of people with whom their worlds collide. High schools are no exception.

Students, particularly young adults, are in a constant state of identity exploration. Many are desperate to belong -- or to *not* belong. As a high school teacher, I have witnessed students proudly carry the designation of a particular social group one year, and in the following year reject this community and their membership entirely. As identity groups splinter, preferences change, and interests shift within the high school microcosm, students explore and define the varying spaces they occupy in the world.

In this study, high school students will evaluate the experiences of writers with varying identities. Some have embraced their hyphenated identities, some have attempted to abandon or avoid their culture(s), and other wrestle with how they are perceived by the world. Ultimately, this will allow young adults to turn inward and examine their own identities and varying senses of self while introducing our course's yearlong studies of worldview, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativism.

Guiding Questions

1. How can the intersection of identities unify *and* divide?
2. Can borders -- tangible and intangible, real or imagined -- limit or complicate an individual's life?
3. What is worldview, and how does culture and cultural affiliation(s) impact one's worldview and/or sense of self?
4. In which ways can poetry help explore or acknowledge one's culture/cultures or identity/identities?

Instructional Objectives and Student Learning

LESSON 1:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

LESSON 2:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.6

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

Materials and Resources

- Student journal (physical or digital) or notebook paper
- A physical and/or digital copy of each of the following poems (1 per student):
 - “The Changeling” by Judith Ortíz Cofer
 - “Good Hair” by Sherman Alexie
 - “Guidelines” by Lisa Suhair Majaj
 - “The Man from Up-Country Talking” by João Cabral de Melo Neto
 - “‘Race’ Politics” by Luis J. Rodríguez
 - “Sugar’ by Pat Mora
 - “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes
 - “Two Worlds” by Pat Mora
- iPad or other digital creation tool with access to one or all of the following content apps/programs:
 - PicCollage
 - Tellegami
 - Educreations
 - Explain Everything
 - Powtoon
 - Adobe Spark
 - Word processing app/program
- Butcher paper and colored markers
- Slide or projection of entry task prompts and instructions
- Slides with detailed activity instructions, including needed accommodations and modifications
- Document Camera/Projector
- Laptop with Internet connectivity
- Speakers
- If available, online course management program (e.g. Canvas) for student submissions

Instructional and Lesson Activities (Engage, Explore, Explain)

LESSON 1

Lesson activities are to be delivered over 3-4 instructional class periods; allow for more time if thorough discussion and analysis is needed.

Entry Task:

Students will begin by taking 5-8 minutes to respond to the following prompt in their writing journals:

Evaluate the following quote:

“Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.”

- Parker J. Palmer, author, educator, and activist

What is the meaning of this quote? Describe how this perspective on life and identity relates to you and your own identity/identities.

Lesson Content:

The teacher will then spend approximately 5 minutes establishing context for the lesson.

- An easy and relatable introduction might include the teacher sharing her own individual roles and identities (*ex: teacher, wife, woman, white-identifying, cisgendered, English-speaker, US citizen, Californian-Oregonian-Washingtonian etc.*).
- The teacher will give students 2 minutes to individually -- without overanalyzing -- make a numbered list in their journal of their various identities, cultures, and/or groups.
- With their shoulder partner, students will discuss some of their identities and how they converge, diverge, and intersect within themselves, within the school community, and within their world.
 - The role of borders and boundaries (culturally, socially, physically, etc.) should also be discussed.
 - The teacher should define the concept of *intersectionality* and provide examples for context.

The teacher will review AVID strategies for Critical Reading ([Writing in the Margins: Six Strategies at a Glance](#)) before modeling how to annotate a poem.

The teacher will then read the poem [“Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes](#), the first in the identity poem collection, aloud. Students should annotate the text as they listen to and track the poem’s lines.

After modeling and introducing the first poem, the class will discuss their questions, connections, and thoughts. Guiding questions or concepts to aid analysis might include:

- Some might see Hughes and his instructor as very different, based on general assumptions about their identities. So:
 - How might Hughes and his instructor seem different?
 - How might Hughes *resemble* his instructor?
- Hughes notes in stanza 3 that “I guess what I’m what/I feel and see and hear”: what are these things for him, at age 22? How might these change as he grows older?
- What are the challenges Hughes might face based upon his various identities? What might he gain?

Students will then be released to read and annotate each piece within the collection of poems. Students are expected to return to class at a later date with all poems read, annotated, and generally understood (*for the sake of time, it might be preferable to divide the identity poems into categories -- perhaps on one*

day, students explore identity poems that focus upon binationalism or national/racial/ethnic affiliations, and on the following they center upon more internalized identities, like gender and sexual identities, etc.)

At the start of the lesson's final class period, the teacher will group students randomly and assign each a poem to analyze as a team. Each group will be provided with questions to help them evaluate the poet's claim, tone, form, voice, and conventions. Student teams will be given the entire class period to evaluate their assigned work, and will be asked to produce a physical (butcher paper) and digital (PicCollage) representation of their collective interpretations of the poem. They will provide both to the teacher before the end of the period.

As homework, students will type or write a brief summary of the discussion completed within their small table groups, and synthesize their own personal conclusions about their assigned poem. The writing should be delivered in paragraphs that clearly establish their interpretation of the author's claim, and provide textual evidence from the poem in support of their inductive reasoning. Completed work is uploaded onto the online course (Canvas) or will be handed in during the following day's meeting.

LESSON 2

Lesson activities are to be delivered over 2-3 instructional class periods; allow for more time if thorough discussion and analysis is needed.

Entry Task:

In your journal, evaluate the following quote from "The woman the boy became" by poet Kate Tempest:

*How many yous have you been?
How many,
Lined up inside,
Each killing the last.*

Write a paragraph that explores your former self or selves, and the reason behind these transformations in your identity.

Lesson Content:

Class will begin with a gallery walk; students will review the interpretations each team developed while analyzing each poem at table stations, while the teacher will project a slide show of the digital PicCollage interpretations. Once students return to their seats, the class will conduct a brief reflective discussion about their insights for each team's close reading selection.

Over the next few class periods, students will write their own culture- or identity-focused lyrical poem, and present this personal study by creating an animated depiction with voiceover on their iPads.

The autobiographical poem can be written in any format or scheme, but must include at least 8 lines and center upon **one** of the following guiding topics:

- A current culture or identity they possess and how it shapes them
- Varying current cultures or identities they possess that clash, work in opposition, or are distinctly different
- A time or place when their identity or identities clashed with others
- An culture, identity, or identities that they used to embody
- An identity or identities that they would like to embody
- An identity they would prefer to abandon or escape

The teacher, as time permits, should check in and conference with each student as they edit and revise their poems.

Students will use their iPads to create an animated depiction of their poem. The animation should include imagery and symbolism that connects with the theme or underlying meaning of their poem and include a voiceover reading of the poem in accompaniment. Student animations may be completed using Tellegami, Educreations, Explain Everything, Powtoon, or Adobe Spark.

When complete, students will upload their video file or post a link to their finished product on the online course manager (Canvas).

Additional Learning (Extend/Elaborate)

After completing these lessons, the teacher will make all videos available on the online course manager. At the start of each subsequent class period, the group will begin each period by watching approximately 5 student videos and writing a reflection focusing on at least one video in their journal.

Following the presentation of these lessons, the teacher will then align this study of intersecting identities with **worldview**, the focal point and driving concept of the entire school year's lesson content. Students will segue into this work by watching the [TED Talk "Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Adichie](#) as reinforcement for the concept that one must look beyond one singular truth (and perhaps even misconception, partial truth, or falsity) to explore others' authentic stories and intersecting identities. A novel study of [Things Fall Apart by Chinua Adichie](#) will follow, as students explore what happens when a) individuals attempt to escape the identities, concepts, or places essential to their lives' fabric, and b) how singular "stories" might inform decisions that impact cultural communities and cause subsequent conflict.

Assessment (Evaluate)

LESSON 1:

Students will compose a brief summary of the discussion completed in their small table groups and synthesize their own personal conclusions about their assigned poem. The writing should be delivered in

paragraphs that clearly establish their interpretation of the author’s claim, and provide textual evidence from the poem in support of their inductive reasoning.

A rubric for their written summary is provided below:

<i>Identifying Main Claims Rubric</i>	High Proficiency 4	Proficient 3	Developing 2	Undeveloped 1
<i>Identification</i>	Student accurately identifies/argues in support of author’s main claim.	Student adequately identifies/argues in support of author’s main claim.	Student shows minimal or vague connection to author’s claim.	Student incorrectly identifies claim.
<i>Textual Evidence</i>	Student provides substantial textual evidence to support the main claim and presents evidence in proper MLA in-text citation format.	Student provides adequate textual support for the main claim and attempts to present in MLA in-text citation format.	Student provides minimal or vague textual evidence to support the main claim and may not include MLA in-text citation format.	Student provides insufficient or irrelevant textual evidence to support the main claim.

LESSON 2:

Students will write their own culture- or identity-focused poem, and present this personal study by creating an animated depiction with voiceover on their iPads.

The autobiographical poem can be written in any format or scheme, but must include at least 8 lines and center upon **one** of the following guiding topics:

- A current culture or identity they possess and how it shapes them
- Varying current cultures or identities they possess that clash, work in opposition, or are distinctly different
- A time or place when their identity or identities clashed with others
- An culture, identity, or identities that they used to embody
- An identity or identities that they would like to embody
- An identity they would prefer to abandon or escape

Student animations may be completed using Tellegami, Educreations, Explain Everything, Powtoon, Toontastic, or Adobe Spark.

The animation should use imagery and symbolism that connects with the theme or underlying meaning of their poem and include a voiceover reading of the poem in accompaniment.

A rubric for the animation project is provided below:

<i>Identity Poem Multimedia Project Rubric</i>	High Proficiency 4	Proficient 3	Developing 2	Undeveloped 1
<i>Theme</i>	All aspects of the poem integrate the topic with clarity, honesty, and sophistication.	Most aspects of the poem successfully integrate the topic.	Most aspects of the poem successfully integrate the topic, but some lines or author choices seem disconnected or unrelated.	Connection to topic is limited, vague, or not evident.
<i>Voice</i>	A compelling and engaging voice is evident in the poem. The reader can infer how the author thinks or feels about the culture/identity explored in their poem.	The writer's personal voice is fairly evident. The reader can make some inferences about how the author thinks or feels about the culture/identity explored in their poem.	Some sense of the writer's personal voice is evident. The reader may struggle to make inferences about how the author thinks or feels about the culture/identity explored in their poem.	Little to no personal voice is evident. The reader has difficulty inferring how the author thinks or feels about the culture/identity explored in the poem.
<i>Conventions</i>	The poem contains no errors. The writer shows understanding of capitalization, punctuation and spelling rules OR intentionality in breaking the rules.	The poem contains few errors. The writer shows understanding of capitalization, punctuation and spelling rules OR intentionality in breaking the rules.	The poem contains noticeable errors. The writer shows some disregard for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling rules OR no clear intentionality in breaking the rules.	The poem contains numerous errors that affect its meaning. Writer shows little understanding of the use or manipulation of writing conventions.
<i>Animation Content</i>	The animation uses images or symbols that expertly connect to the content of their poem.	The animation uses images that appropriately connect much of to the content of their poem.	The animation uses images that loosely align with some content in their poem.	The animation does not appear to align with content in the poem.

Accommodations and Modifications

All lesson activities can be modified to meet the individualized needs of students, including those with IEPs and on 504 Plans.

Teachers can provide identity-focused poetry in native languages for English Language Learners, and/or ask students to produce their written poem in their native tongue.

I recommend incorporating sheltered instruction (SIOP) strategies for all students, such as sentence frames, vocabulary foldouts, stand up-hand up-pair up, etc. in order to increase the level of student talk.

College and Career Readiness

While Washington state does not currently align any curriculum standards with its “High School and Beyond” College and Career Readiness program, the tasks affiliated with Intersecting Identities will afford students the opportunity to practice the following essential skills:

- Critical Reading (*visualize, summarize, clarify, connect, respond, question*)
- Analyzing a diverse set of challenging texts
- Evaluating various worldviews (*cultural relativism*)
- Reflecting verbally and in writing about their own perspective(s)
- Supporting a position by providing and explaining relevant evidence
- Using technology to communicate and enhance their own voice

Additional Resources

Teachers can introduce a host of other poems, short stories, articles, and news stories that center upon identity development, identity politics, and their intersections. This will also provide the opportunity to customize material to best fit the needs of their student population.

Excellent resources for those just starting to explore, or struggling to introduce identity studies within their classroom can be found via [Teaching Tolerance](#).

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Reflection

As a teacher of a worldview- and global literature-centric English class, I often struggle with getting students invested in the importance of hearing, evaluating, and understanding the authentic and diverse perspectives of people who may not resemble themselves. It's increasingly easy in the United States for one to align themselves with a particular belief or value system, culture, or identity group and avoid interacting with others almost entirely. This insular school of thought breeds misunderstanding, restricts empathy, and can even breed hate. For students to be successful in my class, they must employ open mindedness throughout the entire year as they navigate various opportunities to practice critical thinking and cultural relativism.

Historically, I have limited identity studies to short stories and discussion at the end of the year, following a more rigorous literary curriculum. I believed, perhaps incorrectly, that students would be less willing to share their authentic selves at the start of the year and wanted to wait until we established a safe and respectful classroom culture. However, in preparing these lesson activities, I realize that perhaps it would be more impactful, and more logical, to begin the year with a unit focusing upon Intersecting Identities. Not only can 10th grade students relate to high school as a microcosm, a world filled with varying, dominant, and even competing identities, but at this age they are also seeking to define themselves as young adults. By beginning the school year with this study, students will better recognize the connection between identity/identities and worldview development, and should therefore be more prepared to evaluate and analyze global literature from myriad lenses.