

Advocacy Ashamed: Then and Now

By Sue Huetteman

Overview

This lesson **encourages** students to understand that events and emotions can be expressed through writing short stories and verse. Inspiration has many sources, such as reading other authors, observing how people interact, and questioning why things happen or wondering what could happen. **Writing poetry is appropriate for K-12**

Objectives

Students will:

- Read and analyze some of Langston Hughes' poetry
- Understand the thematic elements in "Cora Unashamed"
- Write their own poems
- Understand the connection between art and life

Skills Attained

- Close text reading
- Analysis of poetry and short stories
- Creative expression through writing of poetry

The Lesson

Anticipatory Set

Discussion: Langston Hughes drew upon every day life experiences for all of his writing. He traveled extensively, experienced oppression, and witnessed human abuse. His stories and poems depict the world he lived in and witnessed. Question to pose:

How does life affect art?

Lesson Outline

1. Read [Advocacy Unashamed](#), the essay.
2. Discuss the poetry selections from the essay by asking the students to speculate where Hughes received his inspiration for each poem. A close text reading of the essay should help students connect the poems to the passages about Hughes' life.
3. Read other poems by Langston Hughes, discussing the relationship of the poem(s) to his life and works.
4. Read "Cora Unashamed."
5. Guided group practice: Groups may debate or argue the main theme, motivations, and morality in "Cora Unashamed". They may also include the roles of the protagonist, antagonist, and catalyst for change.
6. Ask the following questions:
 - a. How does Hughes' poetry relate to the themes presented in "Cora Unashamed?"
 - b. Is the message of his poetry stronger or weaker than the short story?
7. Discuss the answers in a class discussion.

8. Homework: Write a poem that a) represents the student's own life experience or thoughts *or* b) write a poem based on "Cora Unashamed." Alternate homework: substitute short story or essay.
9. Present the poems in class the following day. Teachers may choose a variety of formats for presentation, including the following:
 - a. Volunteer readers: Students can volunteer to read their poems, short story, or essay aloud to class. Class and student writer discuss content and motivation.
 - b. Small Groups: Divide into groups of five students, reading five other students' works. Groups select one work to be read either by the student author or by a representative in the study group.
10. Ask the question again: How does life affect art? Is your work a reflection of your life? Discuss.

Assessment

Completion: Students may be evaluated by teacher or by student groups.

Participation: Students may develop questions to ask the presenting student authors.

Suggested Resources

Advocacy Unashamed Bibliography

Interdisciplinary links

History and Social Studies:

The African-American experience in the 20th and 21st centuries in America.

Minority writers in history.

Education, its uneven evolution toward equality.

Music:

African-American poetry in music from folk to popular music and the American stage.

Extension Activity

Students may present a book of student authors: poetry, short stories and illustrations.

This lesson was submitted by Sue Huettelman, a retired teacher in Rhode Island.