3/27/14

Grade Nine World History

Unit: Central and Eastern Africa: Cultural History and Modern Voices

Lesson: “Contemporary Congolese Literature”

Enduring Understandings:

* Foreign occupation and encounters have lasting and complex social, political, and cultural consequences.
* Literature and storytelling are powerful mediums for cultural preservation and give insights into a society’s lifestyle and value system.
* The dual desires to maintain tradition and achieve progress are sometimes at odds.

Essential Questions:

* How did encounters with the East and West affect the traditional lifestyle of the Efè people?
* What are the cultural connections between the present day Congolese people and their ancestors?

Standards:

* CC.8.5.9-10.B: Determine the central ideas of information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key ideas develop over the course of the text.
* CC.8.5.9-10.E: Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

Set-up:

* Connect computer to SMART Board
* Make copies of the *Tomorrow I’ll Be Twenty* analysis handout
* Upload *The Guardian* article about Italian-Ethiopian relations to Edline

Activities:

1. **Do-Now (5 minutes):** When students enter the classroom they will sit in their assigned seats and answer the following questions projected onto the SMART Board about last night’s reading of the *Tomorrow I’ll Be Twenty* excerpt:
2. What is the relationship between maman Martine and Michel?
3. Who is Roger le Prince? What does he do to stir up controversy in Kinkosso?
4. How do Roger le Prince and maman Martine meet?

These questions are entirely plot-driven and do not require an analysis or interpretation of the text to answer. I will begin with these questions to ensure students have a sound surface understanding of the text before we delve into deeper analysis.

1. **Brief Lecture (5 minutes):** Before we discuss student answers to the “Do-Now” questions, I will present one slide about the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s history through the modern era so they can better contextualize Mabanckou’s account of the DRC in the 1970s. In presenting this history, I will focus on the ways in which encounters from the East and West affected the traditional Efè lifestyle.
2. **Do-Now Discussion (5 minutes):** I will then return to the “Do-Now” questions about *Tomorrow I’ll Be Twenty* and we will discuss student answers. The discussion will be brief because for the most part the answers to the questions are concrete and plot-based. However, in our discussion of answers to the first question, we will build into a broader conversation about the portrayal of familial relationships in the excerpt. Students will make connections between Mabanckou’s description of his multiple mothers and fathers and broad array of siblings and the cooperative parenting style of the Efè people. To scaffold students’ understanding of this connection, I will project the following quote on the SMART Board in which Mabanckou introduces these complex relationships in passing:

“We’re sitting outside the front door. Maman Martine is scaling the fish we’re going to eat this evening when everyone’s here. It doesn’t matter if it’s not beef and beans. I eat everything here, and I pretend I like everything. I can be fussy with maman Pauline but not with maman Martine, it would really upset her.

At home there’s only Mbombie, Maximilien and little Félicienne, who’s just pissed on me when I was being really kind and giving her her bottle. I don’t know where the other children have gone. Yaya Gaston left early this morning for the port, and papa Roger won’t get back till sundown. My other brothers and sisters ought to be here too, because it’s the end of year holiday.”

1. **Literature Analysis (25 minutes):** Students will sit in their “number groups” (6-7 people), forming their desks into a circle, and analyze 4 passages from the *Tomorrow I’ll Be Twenty* excerpt using a guided handout. Students will sit in a circle in their slightly larger number groups in order to imitate the decision-making style of the elders of an Efè tribe. Students will analyze each of the 4 passages according to the following 3 steps:

A: Which character says the quote? To whom is this character speaking?

B: Write the passage in your own words.

C: What is the connection between this passage and Congolese cultural roots?

After this process is complete for each of the 4 passages, groups will discuss and record their thoughts on the following final question:

“Roger le Prince and Maman Martine were not *actually* levitating and dancing ten centimeters off the ground. Explain this metaphor.”

Additionally, each person will have a role in the analysis according to their “letter groups.”

1. **Wrap-up (10 minutes):** We will come back together as a class and review students’ analyses of each of the 4 passages and the final discussion question. After a few groups have shared their interpretation of the metaphor of “dancing ten centimeters off the ground,” I will project the following quote that highlights this metaphor, and frames it as the desire of the younger generation to build off of Africa’s cultural roots to modernize the continent, thereby causing tension with the older generation who prefers a stronger adherence to tradition:

“‘These old men are afraid they’ll look stupid, no dancer from this village has ever gone higher than ten centimetres, even though the levitation dance first started here in Kinkosso. We won’t be influenced by a handful of old goats who fancy themselves the guardians of tradition. We’ve learned their technique, we’ve mastered it, and now we’re the best in the region. And tonight we’ll prove it again, so get yourselves ready and don’t lose heart. You beat your tam-tams, as usual, and I’ll look after the rest.’”

We will read and discuss this quote as a class.

Homework:

* Read and print *The Guardian* article about Italian-Ethiopian relations, and answer the 3 accompanying questions.