4/2/14

Grade Nine World History

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

Lesson: “Sudan – Part 2: Contemporary Sudanese Literature”

Enduring Understandings:

* Literature and storytelling are powerful mediums for cultural preservation and give insights into a society’s lifestyle and value system.
* Our perception of the world is shaped by manufactured historical lenses and continues to be influenced by socio-political and cultural forces.

Essential Questions:

* How does someone’s culture affect their interpretation of actions and interactions of everyday life?
* What connections do Eggars and Deng make between Valentino’s experiences in Africa and America? How are they similar and how are they different?

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 *What is the What* analysis handout

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 *What is the What* excerpt:
2. Who knocks on Valentino’s door? What do they want?
3. Where are Kakuma and Pinyudo? What were Valentino’s experiences there?
4. Where does Valentino live and what is his job? Is he satisfied with it?

These questions are mostly plot-driven and do not require much 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. **Introduce Author (5 minutes):** Before we discuss student answers to the “Do-Now” questions, I will briefly introduce Valentino Achak Deng, the subject of the book, and how he came to partner with author Dave Eggars to tell his story.
2. **Do-Now Discussion (5 minutes):** I will then return to the “Do-Now” questions about *What is the What* 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, building off of our discussion of the third question, I will project the following passage onto the SMART Board that relays Deng’s intertwining feelings of satisfaction and disappointment about his new American reality:

“I am tired of this country. I am thankful for it, yes, I have cherished many aspects of it for the three years I have been here, but I am tired of the promises. I came here, four thousand of us came here, contemplating and expecting quiet. Peace and college and safety. We expected a land without war and, I suppose, a land without misery. We were giddy and impatient. We wanted it all immediately-homes, families, college, the ability to send money home, advanced degrees, and finally some influence. But for most of us, the slowness of our transition-after five years I still do not have the necessary credits to apply to a four-year college-has wrought chaos. We waited ten years at Kakuma and I suppose we did not want to start over here. We wanted the next step, and quickly.

But this has not happened, not in most cases, and in the interim, we have found ways to spend the time. I have held too many menial jobs, and currently work at the front desk of a health club, on the earliest possible shift, checking in members and explaining the club's benefits to prospective members. This is not glamorous, but it represents a level of stability unknown to some. Too many have fallen, too many feel they have failed. The pressures upon us, the promises we cannot keep with ourselves-these things are making monsters of too many of us.”

I will facilitate students in making connections between this passage and the impressions, expectations, and worries about America expressed in the *Lost Boys of Sudan* documentary we watched in class yesterday.

1. **Literature Analysis (25 minutes):** Students will work with their “letter groups” to analyze passages from *What is the What*. Students in “letter groups” A, B, and C will receive a handout with passages, an accompanying chart, and a final question related to Valentino’s impressions of the robbers and the robbers’ impressions of Valentino. Students in “letter groups” D, E, F, and G will receive a handout with passages, an accompanying chart, and a final question related to Valentino’s experiences of robbery, betrayal, violence, and friendship in Africa and America. Additionally, each person will have a role in the analysis according to their “number groups.” Before students begin their analyses in their “letter groups” I will remind students that there is explicit language in this text and in some of these passages. I will say that it is there purposefully to convey real, authentic experiences and emotions. I will say that when reading the passages aloud they may pronounce the expletives, but only if they think they can do so with maturity and respect for the literary work. I will circulate among the groups to guide students’ understanding and keep them on track.
2. **Jigsaw and Wrap-up (10 minutes):** Students will convene in their “number groups” and share their “letter groups’” analysis of the final question. Students in “letter groups” A, B, and C discussed the question:

“Consider Valentino’s interaction with the robbers as a whole. What has Valentino learned about Americans? What have Americans learned about Africans/Sudanese? How might this interaction influence future interactions between these two groups? How might their impressions of one another be improved?”

Students in “letter groups” D, E, F, and G discussed the question:

“What is the difference between robbery, betrayal, violence, and friendship in Africa and America? Where is it ‘better’? Why do you think Eggers chose to relay Deng’s experiences with these issues by flashing between the past and present?”

Students in “letter groups” A, B, and C will share first, followed by students in “letter groups” D, E, F, and G. To conclude, we will come back together as a class and discuss these 2 final questions.

Homework:

* Prepare for Friday’s writing exercise