

Unit Plan Example - Planning with Equity in Mind from Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom: An Equity Framework for Pedagogy by Dr. Adeyemi Stenbridge

Using Dr. Stenbridge's 5 Questions to Plan for Student Growth Goals

The revised Student Growth Goals process and criteria ask us to:

- Choose one unit and critical standard in a year long learning arch to embed the student growth goals within
- Select a critical standard and develop our understanding of the knowledge and skill necessary for mastery
- Design instruction that is culturally responsive, socially and emotionally literate, and inclusive of all students
- Implement formative and summative assessments that foster student self-assessment and create a feedback loop between students and teacher

Exploring a Unit Design with Student Growth Goals - Overview of 11th Grade ELA Song of Solomon Unit

Culturally Responsive Education lens	Assessments	Opportunities for student input and feedback
Cognitive engagement: analyzing and interpreting author's craft	<i>Formative</i> Question Formulation Technique slides and jamboard	Co-create ways of reading like artists / literary critics
Emotional engagement: thinking like artists makes us feel hunger, discovery, satisfaction, pride	<i>Summative</i> Sentence Explication & Reflection	Peer feedback on questions and explications Choice of artifact for summative assessment

Question One: What do I want learners to understand?¹

What is a deep and meaningful conceptual understanding about your content that matters tremendously for students so that they are able to think like practitioners in your field?

What do you remember about your own early emerging understandings of this concept? What did you figure out? How did you figure it out? How did it feel when you first understood?

Reader Lens: An author can convey the central ideas of a novel by carefully crafting the first sentence. I can discover meaning in a text by questioning how its details connect to the author/artist's purpose.

I remember an 'aha!' moment reading Toni Morrison's introduction to Song of Solomon where she analyzes her own first sentence of the novel: "The North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance agent promised to fly from Mercy to the other side of Lake Superior at three o'clock" (Morrison p. 3). Her sentence migrates from North Carolina to Lake Superior, mirroring the Great Migration. Themes of agency, flight, and mercy make their first appearance. Names and places carry deep connotations, just as they will through the novel. Reading her explication unlocked an understanding that she had created a puzzle in that first line, and that I could find rich meaning by doing my own close readings of her

¹ Stenbridge, Adeyemi Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom: An Equity Framework for Pedagogy (p. 121-123)

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sentences. As a teacher, Morrison's explication gave me the idea that my students should read closely looking for connotations, symbols, and themes.

Question Two: What do I want learners to feel?²

The asking of this question in the design of units and lessons requires us to recognize our students' humanity, particularly as social and cultural beings who bring a wealth of experiences and understandings with them to the classroom - even if these differ culturally and qualitatively from our own. Though the anticipation of what our students will feel is inexact, we should make an effort to place ourselves in their skin and imagine their affect without rejecting their values or projecting our own onto them.

I want learners to feel a sense of discovery. To recognize that a sentence that appears flat or opaque can crack into a chasm of meaning. I want them to feel smart, that the wonders nibbling at the edges of their reading are worth saying out loud. I want them to feel excited as they hear and see what others saw in a sentence. I want them to get carried away. And then I want them to step back and marvel at the genius of an author who buried these gems for them to unearth.

Question Three: What are the targets for rigor?³

How can students perform their rigorous understandings of a concept? When we consider the question, *What are the targets for rigor?* we are planning for those moments when students will demonstrate cognitive engagement to the point that they own the learning experience so profound that we, the teachers, are no longer in control - and that is, of course, a wonderful thing. We as teachers lose control whenever our students are leveraging their own assets and capital in building their own unique conceptual connections in their developing understandings.

Critical Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

DOK 3 Strategic Thinking or Reasoning

- Analyze or interpret author's craft to critique a text
 - Close read a sentence by questioning the explicit and implicit meanings of words
 - Look for patterns in characters, conflict, symbols, and themes
 - Ask open and closed questions about the author's choices in the sentence
 - Comment on the author's choice of words and syntax in connection with a her purpose
- Justify conclusions drawn
 - Prioritize questions that a literary critic would be most interested in and explain why

² Stemberge (p. 125-127)

³ Stemberge (p. 130-131)

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- Interpret characterization, conflict, symbols, and themes from sentence-level analysis
- Make claims about the author's sentence-level choices in connection with her purpose
- Cite evidence from the text to support claims and commentary

Question Four: What are the indicators of engagement?⁴

When we ask the question, *What are the indicators of engagement?* We are making predictions as to what engagement may look like in the learning experience, and we are prioritizing when and how we might yield some expectations for engagement in favor of others. We are essentially seeking the pathway to *Flow* - the perfect intersection of challenge and skill that will sustain students' self-driven investment in the learning. The key for teachers is to anticipate what those indicators for engagement might be so that we can authentically coach students along to even greater investment in the learning experience.

Engagement in the Question Formulation Technique (formative assessment):

- Learners are leaning in to view the image, taking time to examine the details. They might ask for more time looking at the image because they're so engrossed.
- Learners draft multiple questions before choosing which to post. Every learner asks a question and is able to flip a question from open to closed or vice versa.
- Groups talk about more than one question, sharing which ones they think a literary critic would prioritize and why. There is lively discussion about the questions the group will nominate. There are also pauses as the group considers each idea shared. All group members speak.
- If learners ask questions about the process, that is a sign of engagement as well - they're invested in our goals and want to make the most of our time together. Groups may modify the suggested process, spending more time sharing out loud or reading each other's posted questions. Maybe groups will add a step to look back at the image or ahead in the slide deck. These are signs of true ownership of learning.

Engagement in the Sentence Explication (summative assessment):

- Learners read several passages before choosing a sentence that they can read "like artists."
- Learners ask each other questions about the sentences they choose, referring to our class-generated tips for reading like literary critics.
- Learners rehearse their ideas by speaking, annotating, sketching, and/or writing. Through rehearsing ideas, learners revise or extend their original analysis.
- Before drafting their explication, learners choose one method to demonstrate their analysis: literary analysis paragraph, slide deck outlining analysis, think aloud recorded on screencastify, or facilitate a small group's reading of a passage. Learners select the method that is most exciting, interesting, comfortable, or challenging for them (based on their personal goals).
- If learners want to propose another method to perform their understanding and skills, that is a sign of deep engagement and ownership of their learning.

⁴ Stenbridge (133-135)

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Question Five: What are the opportunities to be responsive?⁵

In considering the question, What are the opportunities to be responsive? We should focus on our most vulnerable learners. Here is where we are deliberate about how we will incorporate meaningful protective factors into the fabric of the learning experience.

This question provides a rich opportunity to consider the ways in which my identity in the role of teacher as a cultural being may be limiting the expression of my students' competencies. We should be deliberate in our thinking about how we imagine our students to be capable and creative thinkers.

Consider how you will confirm that your students are perceiving the experience as responsive. When planning, I like to predict specific moments when I can be positioned to listen and respond to my students' thinking... these moments of responsiveness support students in developing greater agency and a detailed sense of what they are feeling - which are the essential ingredients of emotional intelligence. It is a powerful thing for a student to give a learning experience their serious attention and have a teacher, the more experienced thinker, acknowledge, support, and validate that effort.

I love that the Question Formulation Technique (formative assessment) starts with an image. There are learners in the room who will have more experience with art than I do, and I can invite their insights and questions. I can also share that while I was searching for an image that would get us ruminating on Song of Solomon's themes and Toni Morrison's craft, I was caught up in Kehinde Wiley's body of work. I can show that excitement to build the group's investment and to communicate that part of learning is *feeling*. I can acknowledge my identity as a reader and my racial identity when introducing Wesley Morris' excerpt which inspired our provocative statement: When we close read Song of Solomon we think like artists.

Launching our literary analysis with questions positions all learners as capable by leveraging their curiosity. Using a provocative image to spark those questions can draw in learners who may not feel confident in literary analysis. Learners will build understanding in community, both by sharing their own questions and by considering others' questions. The task to "flip" one question from open to closed (or vice versa) is one way to distill the concepts at the heart of the question and, in doing so, to try on another's thinking.

The questions the group prioritizes will reveal the parts of the image and statement they find most interesting, and give me formative data about how they conceive of the role of an artist and literary critic. I can be responsive by asking why we've prioritized these questions, revealing their criteria and justifications, and learners can fold those criteria into their identities as literary critics.

There may be readers who are developing fluency and word attack skills, and I can support those through repeated readings of significant passages. Learners can read a sentence playing with cadence and emphasis, and justify their choices in connection with the meaning. I can invite observations about word structure and syntax as part of our close reading routine; in a classroom which thrives on student questions, learners will be more comfortable trying on word attack and sentence analysis skills.

I can invite students to share their approaches to reading "like artists," which we can post on the classroom walls as living criteria for success. Throughout the unit, students can share their think-alouds with questions and 'aha!'s about passages of their choices to make their thinking visible to each other.

⁵ (p. 120)

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In the summative assessment, I can offer choice of the artifact students will develop to explicate a sentence that demonstrates Toni Morrison's artistry: they can choose to write a literary analysis paragraph, create a slide deck outlining their analysis, record a think-aloud in screencastify, or facilitate a small group's reading and analysis of a passage. Any of these products would show that students are able to perform their rigorous understandings of how Morrison's craft enacts her purpose.