Unit: Multi-Cultural Heritage
Topic: Yonsei

INTRODUCTION:

During Hawai‘i's plantation era, each ethnic group strove to maintain the pride and respect inherent in their culture. The ethnic divisions of plantation villages (Filipino camp, Japanese camp, etc.) reinforced and facilitated immigrants in this task. Additionally, immigrants were saddled with the problem of finding some means of communication with other ethnic groups. As a result of inter-racial communication, intermarriage, and the accepting of others' traditions, Hawai‘i people are a cosmopolitan group with a distinct "local" (or multi-) culture.

The development of Hawai‘i's multi-cultural heritage was also influenced by the dominant American culture. Acceptance and internalization of American values and beliefs were the focus of the socialization process in the schools, communities, work environment and political ideology; his effort has been successful as today we are now all Americans.

Hawai‘i's youth are American. As the original plantation immigrants, their children, and grandchildren fade away, the task of maintaining the pride and respect inherent in a family's native culture fall on today's "yonsei," or fourth generation (Japanese) youth. There are a few of Hawai‘i's youth who have accepted the responsibility of this task. However, the greater majority of the youth today are oblivious to and/or choose not to maintain the cultural traditions of the generations before them.

Perhaps this nonchalant attitude or resistance is the result of the media and the mass marketing strategies of advertising experts enticing youth to gain status through the accumulation of material items (i.e. Nintendo, Game Genie...) as part of the "American dream." Perhaps the rapid technology today has deemed traditional activities a waste of time, for example, why pound mochi from scratch when one can more easily purchase it from the large supermarket chains. Perhaps the breakdown of the family unit coupled with today's economic conditions have not reinforced the maintenance of traditional values. Whatever the case...

"Yonsei is a reflection of that attitude." Yonsei examines the disparity between the generations with regards to cultural obligations. Are cultural traditions approached with respect by Hawai‘i’s youth or do the youth of today participate in an unconscious routine of family obligations?

This lesson provides students with the opportunity to reflect upon and share their own values, beliefs and traditions. It also allows the students to examine the

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adult's perception of youth today and the sense of obligation to perpetuate their family heritage.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Integrate literature into the history curriculum.
2. Appreciate the literary works of Hawaii'i's local writers.
3. Examine the authors' perception of yonsei today.
4. Share ideas and experiences in cultural traditions.
5. Examine personal values and beliefs.
6. Practice group communication skills.
7. Write a poem or prose as a personal reflection of the literary work cited.

PROCEDURE:

Teacher plan: Listen to the tape of the poem (available from Bamboo Ridge Press). Practice reading the poem aloud with feeling.

I. Class Activity: Generations.
   A. Have students group themselves by generations: issei, nisei, sansei, yonsei, etc.
   B. Subdivide groups (4-5 per group) and have them quickly find a common value or answer "why is school important?"
   C. Have groups share answers. Look for commonalities and differences.
   D. Create groups for the rest of his lesson. Suggest to create groups such that one student from each "generation" group (issei, nisei...) is in each group, or some balance/varied opinions like that.

II. Introduce the poem: Yonsei.
   A. Discuss the need to tell our own history (stories) rather than some expert from Hollywood.
   B. Read the poem to the class with feeling or listen to the tape.
   C. Have students practice reading the poem aloud with feeling.

III. Group assignment:
   A. Have students read the poem aloud with feeling. Individual or choral reading.
   B. If need, briefly discuss:
      (1) Voice: Who is telling the story?
      (2) Setting: Where/when is the poem taking place?
      (3) Character: Who is the character in the poem?
      (4) Plot: What is happening in the poem?

C. Roundtable:

   What the author sees...
   What the author feels...
D. Look over the lists in item C. (Roam the Room).
   (1) Describe the character observed by the author: gender, age, physical
       characteristics, dress, habits, most likely place to find the
       character, values, behavior, etc. Illustrate the character in its
       typical setting.
   (2) Describe and illustrate the author using the items in (1).

4. Share ideas and experiences in cultural traditions.
5. Examine personal values and beliefs.
6. Practice group communication skills.
7. Write a poem or prose as a personal reflection of the literary work cited.

IV. Group presentations. Have groups present and describe illustrations to the
    class. List values and beliefs of the author and character as presented by
    each group. Use T-chart.

VALUES AND BELIEFS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Character</th>
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V. Class Discussion:
A. Compare illustrations of the author.
   (1) Discuss values and beliefs associated with the author.
   (2) Discuss cultural/historic influences on the author's values and beliefs.
   (3) Have class determine: "What one symbol would best represent the
       author?" Explain.
B. Compare illustrations of the character.
   (1) Discuss values and beliefs of the character. Does the character share the
       same attitude, beliefs, and values as the author? Why or why not?
   (2) Discuss influences on the characters' values and beliefs.
   (3) What one symbol would best represent the character?
C. Compare author/character symbols.
   (1) What similarities do the personalities share?
   (2) What kinds of problems would you expect to see if the two people,
       characters were to live together?

VI. Pairs

A. "Are your values and beliefs similar to those of the author?"
B. "Is there anyone in your family (or acquaintance) like the author's
   character?"
C. Compare your values and beliefs with those of your family. (Teacher
   can choose whatever topics s/he wants. Sample:)

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200
FAMILY BELIEFS:

I believe:

My parents/family believes:
Cremation/Burial:
Life after Death:
Ancestral Spirits:

Memorial Day Customs:

VII. Pairs share.

VIII. Individual Assignment: In your journal, write about one of the following: (poem or prose)

A. Who would you rather be like, the author or the character? In what ways are you similar or different from the character of the story?

B. Will the character ever conform to traditional/ancestral culture? Is there a need to accept and truly believe in your family's traditional culture? Explain.

C. What will Hawaii (and the world) be like if the majority of the population were like the character?

D. Pretend that you invited the author and the character to a party. Describe the behavior of the author and character at the party. Sample questions:

What would each do at the party?
Where would they "hang out?"
Who would they socialize with? each other?
What would they talk about?
When would each leave? Why would each leave?

E. Pretend that you are the character, write your perception of the author.

REFERENCES:


WRITTEN BY: Denise Arai
Liliuokalani is a play about the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and the annexation of the islands into the United States. Morris became intrigued by the topic in 1929 when she came to make her home in the islands. Hawaii had been an American territory for 31 years and its last monarch had been dead for only 12. But loving memories of Queen Liliuokalani still persisted, amounting to near reverence.

This product was added to our catalog on Tuesday 21 October, 2003.