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TechnoFusion: Literature Online

Tory Babcock and Vicki Storey

Grade 9-12: English/Language Arts

Business Partner: C.U.E. of Santa Barbara County



HOW IT WORKS

T*Technofusion: Literature On-Line*

is a project assigned twice a year to senior English students which requires the students to choose books they wish to read from an extensive list of multicultural and contemporary novels.

Students read for the sheer joy of reading, then have an in-depth conversation with the teacher about their selected books. After “testing out” orally on their books, they then write a brief book review (similar to the book recommendations seen in book stores) and it is posted on the school web page where other students can refer to it to see if the book would interest them. Grades are predicated on the number of pages they read and the students become a strong community of readers as they read at length and recommend good reads to each other.

WHY IT WORKS

Aligned closely with California Language Arts standards, this project (run once each semester) allows students to make their own selections from a wide range of modern novels. Engaging in a detailed conversation with the instructor about the books, the students have a chance to respond on a personal, unstructured level that fosters reading just for the sheer joy of reading. Student learning is assessed through the question/response sessions and through the online book reviews they write. Numerous Reading, Writing and Speaking standards are met with this project in a most enjoyable fashion.

THE STUDENTS

In 2004-2005, three classes of 73 students read and were questioned on over 130,000 pages of classic multicultural and contemporary literature.

WHAT YOU NEED

You will need a list of good books that the teacher has read thoroughly, an extensive school library, and a school web page. The curriculum packet includes a list of excellent multicultural and contemporary books, as well as technical information for the web page portion.

ADAPTATION TIPS

This project can be taught on virtually any level, dependent upon the books selected. The technical portion could be modified to include listings on a teacher’s individual web page, or assignments to write up and publish individual student book reviews.

THE STAFF

Tory and Vicky have been colleagues at Santa Ynez High School for thirteen years and work closely together to ensure that students continue to read widely and well.

For More Information:

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TECHNOFUSION: LITERATURE ON LINE

**Vicky Storey and Tory Babcock
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Project Overview: This project for grade levels 6-12 combines both Language Arts and Technology. Students select several texts from an extensive list of “free reading books” and read them over a period of six to eight weeks outside of class. Once they have read a book, they come in and have a detailed conversation with the English instructor about the book, then they receive additional credit to write an on-line review of the book, posted on the school web page.

Assigned twice a year, the assignment requires the students to choose any number of books they wish to read from an extensive list (see attachment). Based on our own readings and the California state framework, over the years the list has been modified based on student feedback. The students’ enthusiasm sells the books much more quickly than we can (for example, a few students started reading Golden’s *Memoirs of a Geisha* and as word spread, more and more students added it to their own reading list). When presenting the assignment, the students are given a brief synopsis of each book and personalized recommendations are also often given by the instructor based on each student’s interests. Using both library funds and teachers’ personal funding, the librarian has established an entire section of these books, along with attractive displays to provoke student interest. Students compose their own personalized reading list, then fill out a 3X5 card with a list of the books and page numbers. This provides a handy reference for the instructor when they come in to be “checked out” on the book. Checking out consists of having a short conversation with the instructor (usually around 10 minutes) about their book. The conversations are nonthreatening, more like a casual conversation between friends about a great book that they have read. The instructor asks questions to ascertain if the

students have indeed read the books and if they have thought about them. (The books have all been read by the instructor.) Questions range from knowledge-based queries to more critical thinking types of questions, such as what they have learned about other cultures from the books and have they helped to explode any racial stereotypes or preconceptions they may have had (if germane to the book's subject matter). Students "check out" once they show that they have read and thought about their book. Grades are predicated on the number of pages they have read. Students can drop in any time outside of normal class hours to chat about their books. The second phase of the project is when students are asked to write a brief critique of the book, much like the critiques or recommendations seen in bookstores. The critique is then reviewed by the instructor and well-written critiques are submitted to the school web page. Students are encouraged to consult the web page for current reviews by their own peers, which encourages student participation and buy-in to the project.

What You Need: Selected books (see attached reading list), Web Page, FTP (file transfer protocol) Program, e mail (editing component).

Reading List and Grading Rubric:

Achebe, No Longer at Ease (194)
Alexie, Ten Little Indians (256)
Allende, The House of the Spirits (433), Daughter of Fortune (399)
Alvarez, The Day the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent (290), Yo (309)
Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (289), The Heart of a Woman (324)
Baldwin, Go Tell it on the Mountain (221)
Boyle, The Tortilla Curtain (355)
Courtenay, Bryce, The Power of One (513)
Ellison, The Invisible Man (581)
Esquivel, Laura, Like Water for Chocolate (246)
Fontes, Dreams of the Centaur (349)
Golden, Memoirs of a Geisha (428)
Gutterson, Snow Falling on Cedars (460)
Haddon, Mark, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time (280)
Hegi, Ursula, Stones From the River (525)
Hosseini, Khaled, The Kite Runner (384)

Houston, Farewell to Manzanar (203)
Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God (193)
Kidd, The Secret Life of Bees (301)
Kingsolver, Bean Tree (232), Pigs in Heaven (343), Animal Dreams (342), The Poisonwood Bible (543)
Martel, Yann, Life of Pi (326)
McCourt, Frank, Angela's Ashes (459)
Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain (50), House Made of Dawn (212)
Morrison, The Bluest Eye(206), Song of Solomon (337), Tar Baby, Sula (174), Beloved(275)
Potok, The Chosen (283)
Silko, Ceremony (260)
Spiegelman, Art, Maus (comic book—I give 200 pgs. credit for these 2 volumes)
Tan, The Joy Luck Club (288), The Kitchen God's Wife (415), One Hundred Secret Senses (399), The Bonesetter's Daughter (353)
Tsukiyama, Women of the Silk (278), The Language of Threads (276), The Samurai's Garden (211), Night of Many Dreams (275), Dreaming Water (288)
Villasenor, Rain of Gold (559), Macho! (240)
Walker, The Color Purple (343)
Welch, Winter in the Blood (176), Fools Crow (391)
Wiesel, Night (114)
Wright, The Native Son (502)

Moving off the multicultural list into the realm of other popular, but excellent fiction, you may read any of the following books:

Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale (295)
Barker, Regeneration (250), Eye in the Door (277), Ghost Road (275)
Brown, Angels & Demons (569), The Da Vinci Code (454)
Conroy, Lords of Discipline (498), The Great Santini (440), My Losing Season (400)
Enger, Peace Like a River (311)
Fitch, White Oleander (446)
Follet, Pillars of the Earth (983)
Hamilton, A Map of the World (390)
Haruf, Plainsong (301)
Le Carre, The Constant Gardener (487)
McEwan, Atonement (351)
O'Brien, The Things They Carried (246)
Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (373)
Russo, Empire Falls (483)
Shreve, The Pilot's Wife (293)
Smiley, A Thousand Acres (399)

Criteria for grading for A.P. students is as follows:

1000 pages	A+	850 pages	B+	700 pages	C+
950 pages	A	800 pages	B	650 pages	C
900 pages	A-	750 pages	B-	600 pages	C- etc.

Criteria for grading for C.P. students is as follows:

800 pages	A+	650 pages	B+	500 pages	C+
750 pages	A	600 pages	B	450 pages	C
700 pages	A-	550 pages	B-	400 pages	C- etc.