

Reframing the Gaze: Incorporating Joy into Our Truth-telling
Unit plan by Jairus Hallums

Day One	
Today's Theme	Truth
Essential Questions	What is truth? Why is it important in society? Why is truth important in the reporting of the news? What is the purpose of the news media?
Opener	Students will respond to the following question: What is your definition of "truth"? (Remote Learning) Nearpod, Padlet (In-Person Learning) Post-It Notes
Activity	<p><i>Focus Point: Today, I want to facilitate a discussion about the significance of truth, and its importance in news reporting. We do this by asking questions like "What is truth?" and "Why is truth important in the reporting of news stories?" We do this to understand how stories are told, and how they frame our outlook on particular ideas and communities.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly discuss student responses to opening question on truth. 2. Students will read one of the focus texts for the day. [Students should annotate the text, and determine the central idea and author's purpose] 3. Using the text(s) as the launching pad, facilitate a discussion using the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What issue (or issues) is the author highlighting? What is the author saying about that issue (or issues)? b. Based on the text, what truth is being reported on? c. What is the impact of this truth on our perception of the idea, person, or community being reported on?
Focus Text(s):	<p>"An Essential Business for a Vulnerable Population" by Sylvester Brown Jr.</p> <p>or</p> <p>"St. Louis, Mo. 63106: A Health Risk Even Without Coronavirus" by Stu Durando and Wiley Price</p>
Closing	Students will write a reflection to the following prompt: Why does reporting on a story involving minority communities tend to focus on the negative? Is that [always] a bad thing? Is the truth always negative?

Day Two	
Today's Theme	Truth
Essential Questions	What is the importance of bearing witness to truth? Has the whole truth been told? What is missing? How do we tell the whole truth of a story?
Opener	Post a photo of (or identify and describe) a person you consider to be a truth-teller in society (Remote or In-Person) Padlet, Flipgrid
Activity	<p><i>Focus Point: Today I want to facilitate a discussion about the purpose of bearing witness. We will do this by defining what it means to bear witness, and what it entails (and should entail) in reporting on experiences of minority communities. We do this to understand that bearing witness to truth requires telling a complete story about a community's experiences, for the sake of how others perceive it, and engage with it.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review: What is truth? Why is it important in telling the stories of minority experiences? 2. We will view a clip from "Bear Witness, Take Action," and discuss what it means to bear witness. What does it look like? (What should it look like?) (Clip: 59:27 - 1:08:00) 3. Students will choose a story from a local media outlet or publication. Respond to the following: How is the author bearing witness to the truth in their story?
Focus Text(s)	Pulitzer Center "Issue Portal"
Closing	Students will write a reflection in response to the following prompt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How will you "bear witness" to truth in your life, right now? ● Students will visit the Pulitzer Center "Issue Portal" and choose a story from a local/national media outlet or publication. Respond to the following: How is the author bearing witness to the truth in their story?

Day Three	
Today's Theme	The Gaze
Essential Questions	<p>How does one's gaze impact their interactions?</p> <p>How is one's gaze informed/influenced?</p> <p>If we changed our gaze, what else could we see?</p>
Opener	<p>(Remote or In-Person) "It's Not a Box" (Inspired by the children's book)</p> <p>Students will be asked to view a square. They will be asked to turn that square into something else, but making sure they retain the square in the midst of the drawing. This will introduce the idea of how we see ideas, concepts, objects differently, and we approach them differently.</p> <p>*Allow time for students to share what they created.</p>
Activity	<p><i>Focus Point: Today I want to facilitate a discussion on how the gaze impacts how narratives are shaped, and told. We do this by determining, and analyzing, how perspectives are informed, analyzing how certain perspectives lead to certain narratives being told, and then asking ourselves, "If we changed our gaze, what else could we see?" We do this to challenge our perceptions and perspectives of what truth is, in order to understand the fullness of minority experiences.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch the FOX and MSNBC response to Michelle Obama 2012 DNC Speech (As students are viewing the clip, they should be noting what they hear from each network.) 2. Teacher should lead a compare and contrast conversation between the respective outlets, related to perspective. Teacher can lead brief conversation, using the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What motivates each perspective? b. Does the audience, of either network, have access to the truth based on the perspective that is reflected? 3. Teacher will ask the question: What informs our gaze? (Or "How do we come to view things the way that we do?") [This can be a verbal exercise or a written one] 4. Teacher will facilitate discussion about how our experiences, beliefs, values, etc. impact how we view things, ideas, and communities. (Facilitator could use Toni Morrison's comments on the white gaze to initiate conversation.)
Closing	<p>(This could be homework, as well)</p> <p>Students will write a reflection in response to the following prompt:</p> <p>What biases do I have? How did I come to them? If I were honest with myself,</p>

	has my gaze hindered my ability to see certain groups in a favorable way? What do I need to do to reframe my gaze, so that I can look upon everyone justly?
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Day Four	
Today's Theme	Joy
Essential Questions	What is joy? Why is it important in society? Why should it be factored into reporting? Why does it seem absent? How has joy been expressed outside of the news media?
Opener	Students will respond to the following question: What is your definition of "joy"? (Remote Learning) Nearpod, Padlet (In-Person Learning) Post-It Notes
Activity	<p><i>Focus Point: Today I will facilitate a discussion about the importance of joy in truth-telling. We do this by asking the questions "What is the purpose of joy?" and "How do we report on stories that reveal joy, as a part of bearing witness to truth?" We do this because joy is an aspect of truth that must be displayed, in order to positively impact the gaze, and to shift the narrative on justice.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher will briefly allow space to discuss the responses to the opening question. 2. Teacher will "connect the dots" of the last few sessions. They can say something like, "Our sessions together have emphasized big themes about truth and the gaze. Today and tomorrow, we will shift, again, to focusing on joy. The role of media is [ideally] to bring truth to its audience, bearing witness to the experiences of the various communities that make up our society. We find that that oftentimes can be negative. Our gaze informs how we view things, ideas, communities, etc. The media's gaze impacts the narratives they tell. Our goal is to be able to tell a full truth, in that we acknowledge the hard realities, but also the bright spots of minority life. Thus, we will look into how to identify, and highlight, joy in the midst of the oftentimes dark realities portrayed in news reporting." 3. Using the focus text images, first, ask students to describe the emotions evoked in them, and what emotions are evoked viewing the images. 4. Students should then read the text, independently. (Or teacher can lead a group reading.)

	<p>5. Teacher will facilitate a discussion using some or all of the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What ideas is Melissa Bunni Elian connecting together? b. What is her central idea she is developing? c. How is Black life represented in a different way in this work than how it was presented in works from the previous days? d. How does joy aid in changing your perspective about particular communities?
Focus Text(s)	<p>“Afropunk Brings The 'Black Lives Matter' Ethos Abroad” by Melissa Bunni Elian</p>
Closing	<p>(This could be homework, as well)</p> <p>Students will write a reflection in response to the following prompt:</p> <p>What is the connection between joy and justice?</p>

Day Five	
Today's Theme	Joy
Essential Questions	How do we discover joy in our truth-telling? How does joy thrive in the midst of suffering?
Opener	(Remote or In-Person Learning) Nearpod, Padlet, Flipgrid Students will respond to the following question: What brings you joy?
Activity	<p><i>Focus Point: Today I will facilitate our final discussion, continuing our focus on discovering joy in our truth-telling, and brainstorming ways a renewed gaze, with joy in mind, can shape justice work. We will do this by asking, "How does joy thrive in the midst of the suffering we see reported?" and "What ways can we highlight joy for the sake of justice?" We do this to shift our thinking, and renew our gaze, so that the justice work may be approached in a new way. (If the perception of particular communities can be altered in a positive way, there is the possibility the interactions with these communities can be altered in a positive way.)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Display a choice board with the following quote selections. Have students choose one that stands out to them, and have them respond, verbally or in writing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Psalm 30:5b, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." (Christian Bible) b. "If you carry joy in your heart, you can heal any moment." (Ascribed to several individuals, unsure of originator) c. "Joy is the serious business of heaven." (C.S. Lewis) d. "Let us live in joy, not hating those who hate us. Among those who hate us, we live free of hate. Let us live in joy, free from disease among those who are diseased. Among those who are diseased, let us live free of disease. Let us live in joy, free from greed among the greedy. Among those who are greedy, we live free of greed. Let us live in joy, though we possess nothing. Let us live feeding on joy, like the bright gods." (The Buddha) e. "Black joy is an act of resistance." f. "We need joy as we need air. We need love as we need water. We need each other as we need the earth we share." (Maya Angelou) 2. Students will read the focus text, independently or in pairs. (Guiding questions: What is the central idea? What issues does the author highlight? Where is joy found?) 3. Teacher will facilitate a conversation using some or all of the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are the common themes among these excerpts?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. What can these excerpts teach us about the necessity of joy in dark times? c. How can a reframed gaze aid in identifying joy in the midst of suffering? d. How might the emphasis on joy help the “other” be seen differently? e. How might our work for justice deepen if we told stories of the joy? How might the majority culture view the minority differently?
Focus Text(s)	"Life in St. Louis's Most Vulnerable Neighborhoods in the Time of Coronavirus" by Sylvester Brown Jr.
Closing	<p>Students will write a reflection in response to the following prompt:</p> <p>What specific idea, quotation, or text kept you thinking the most? Why?</p>