

Style, Genre and Disaster: Using Disaster to Teach Writing

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Synopsis

This unit is designed for advanced 11th and/or 12th graders, geared towards fostering skills in the following areas: researching critically and responsibly, summarizing effectively and interpreting truthfully, writing with a strong and relatable voice and studying various genres of writing from fiction to nonfiction, informational to narrative, PSA to memoir, while adopting the point-of-view, context and background of a witness to/survivor of disaster. Students will be required to gain a concrete and factual sense of the concept of “disaster” and to answer questions such as, how do we define disaster? How do we respond to them? (from a family standpoint, community, or larger societal sense) and how do we learn from them/archive them in the collective memory through art, folklore and other creative ways? In a more social sense, students should be demonstrating the ability to “get inside” the mind of another person, to wear their shoes, figuratively speaking, and to view various types of disasters (both natural and man-made) through the eyes of another person (be it fictional or historical). The emphasis on the final writing portion of the unit should be that the student can write through the lens of a witness or a survivor, and “lose themselves” in the experience of others while possibly gaining a new perspective on their own lives and experience.