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Always Judging 55 min

Objective:

In this lesson, students will examine their own biases when it comes to ethnic, racial, and other socioeconomic and cultural indicators. The anchor text is *Recitatif* by Toni Morrison, which is freely available online in PDF format, and is linked here. Students will also use reading strategies to annotate and determine meanings, both said and unsaid, in this complex text.

[Recitatif full text](#)

Big Idea:

Students will examine their own biases and formulate analyses of characters based on text evidence.

1. Warm Up / Anticipatory 10 min

To begin, ask students to complete the following anticipatory guide:

For each of the following statements, choose agree or disagree. You must commit to one or the other; no in between for this one.

Belief Statements

AGREE

DISAGREE

1. My best friend knows everything about me.
2. There are certain things about my ethnicity or culture that tell others who I am as a person.
3. Addiction, depression, and/or anxiety can affect anyone, no matter their history or background.
4. I accept others for who they are.
5. Family is a stronger bond than friendship.
6. I would change my personality or actions in order to better fit into a group.

7. Everyone in the United States has an equal opportunity to succeed and have a good life.
8. I judge people based on their appearance, gender, social status, or class before speaking with them.
9. A person's occupation may indicate his or her race.
10. I can look at a person's name and determine his or her race, having never met the person or seen a photo of him or her.

Once they have completed this, ask them to stand up and head to one side of the room for "Agree" and one for "Disagree", according to their beliefs on each statement, going through one at a time. An alternative way to do this is to use Poll Everywhere or Mentimeter to have them vote. This way, you'll have a record and can compare results. This would require students to have devices, however.

[Poll Everywhere](#)

[Mentimeter](#)

2. Investigation and New Learning 30 min

Next, distribute copies of the first two pages of Toni Morrison's *Recitatif*. Also, give each student a unique playing card, which will be used for grouping and questioning. Then, give the following instructions:

- Read the text and mark any points at which you see evidence of characterization with "C".
- When you finish reading, write a one sentence summary in your own words of the two pages for someone who has never read it.
- Then, choose one character, describe him/her and use evidence from the text to support your description. This can be literal or figurative, but it must be based on what you read.

Ask students to share their summaries allowed and clarify any misunderstandings. Then, ask students to form groups of three or four. A good way to do this equitably is to give each one a playing card and have them make a group of four like suits, colors, numbers, etc. In these groups, students will:

- Share their character descriptions.
- Choose the best one as they see it.
- Transfer the description to a piece of chart paper and add an image to represent the character, based on the description and text evidence.

3. Review & Check for Understanding 30 min

Once students have a chart paper completed, they should elect one group member to defend their choice of the best description and the representative image. Students in the class should then vote anonymously on the best chart paper, giving a one or two sentence rationale for their choices. Then, assess all individual student work, including the annotations, summary, and character descriptions. Time may be needed to adjust their individual work after listening to the group share.

To end, ask students to reflect by looking at the Wonder of the Day: Do you judge a book by its cover? and responding to the question. Take them through the wonder or if they have devices, ask them to explore it. As an exit slip or discussion, students should answer the question and explain how it ties to the text from today.

Note: Check my resources for a five - six day series of lessons on this whole text.