



Many Stories: The Monologue Project

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Grade level: 9-12

Length: 4-5 weeks

Introduction

A global tragedy like September 11th can sometimes obscure the impact it had on individual lives. As demonstrated in this excerpt from the HBO documentary [What Happened on September 11](#), hearing a personal story can shine a light on the effects of terrorism on people's everyday lives, and allows the students to relate to someone who was directly affected by the attacks.

Watch the [Understanding 9/11 Through Personal Stories](#) excerpt, then explore this lesson plan to see how an oral history can be a tool to teach 9/11.

Objective

To explore "the danger of a single story" by inviting students to think about stories told through multiple different perspectives. Students will explore this theme by expanding the conversation to include the real stories of real people.

Common Core Standards

Comprehensive Common Core Alignments at end of lesson plan.

Reading Standards for Literature: 2, 3

English Language Arts Standards for Writing: 2B, 2C, 2D, 3, 4, 5

English Language Arts Standards for Speaking & Listening: 6

Resources

- [Understanding 9/11 Through Personal Stories](#) Excerpt
- "[What Happened on September 11](#)", HBO
- [With Their Eyes: September 11th, the View from a High School at Ground Zero](#), ed. Annie Thoms (selections)
- *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- *The Passion*
- *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi

Preparation

Read "Half of a Yellow Sun," "The Passion," and excerpts from "Reading Lolita in Tehran," all books that give voice and space to multiple perspectives and invite us to think about stories told in more than one way.

Activity

Students will interview a person of their choosing and create a poetic monologue using their words, using techniques developed by playwright and actor Anna Deavere Smith. Students will listen to their interviewees and learn their speech patterns, exploring the ways that character and identity live in language.

1. Choose an interviewee — someone who has a story to tell that you feel isn't part of the "single story" often told about their demographic group. Whose story do you want to hear? Whose story do you want to share?
2. Draft a series of questions to ask your interviewee. Try to get to the heart of what you'd like to capture about this person.
3. Conduct the interview in person. Make it very clear to your interviewee that you plan to create poetry from their words and that you plan to perform a monologue based on the interview. Record the audio of the interview. You will need to listen to it several times. During the interview, take note of your interviewee's body language.

4. Listen to the interview. Listen to it again. Ask yourself, where does this person's character live? Choose a 1-2 minute segment of the interview to transcribe, word for word. Transcribe every word of it, including all the "um"s, "uh"s, and "like"s.
5. Draft a monologue from the transcription, using line breaks to indicate natural pauses in speech. This monologue is the script from which you will perform your interviewee. The more you craft your monologue, using "um"s and line breaks, the easier it will be for you to accurately perform your interviewee.
6. Practice your monologue. Practice your interviewee's speech patterns, pauses, and body language.

Assessment/Reflection

Students will perform their monologues in front of their classmates and invited guests. Students are encouraged, but not required, to memorize their monologues and perform in costume.

Common Core Alignments

These alignments were written for the 9th-12th grade level. However, this lesson can easily be adjusted for use in other grades and corresponds to the following Common Core Standards. Student assessments and expectation may vary depending upon grade level and ability.

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Details

- Standard 2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- Standard 3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

ELA Standards for Writing

Text Types and Purposes

- Standard 2B: Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- Standard 2C: Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- Standard 2D: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.
- Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- Standard 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Standard 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

ELA Standards for Speaking & Listening

Presentation and Knowledge of Ideas

- Standard 6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.