Telling My Story: Using the "Sociological Imagination" to Build Classroom Community

Barbara Prillaman

Introduction

Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.[1] -- C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination

Walking into the dark blue room, one first sees the three cabinet-like rows in which twenty-four computers and comfy chairs are located. Looking to the front of the room there are two large screens any sports aficionado would love to watch an NFL football game. On those large screens, contrary to football players in uniform, one sees similar rooms at two other locations – two high schools in our district. Students are everywhere! Imagine this as your classroom in which you are the teacher for students at all three locations. It is my reality and, at first, it was terrifying! Frantic questions would come to my mind: What if I could not remember how to use all this new technology? Will all the students stay off of social media during the majority of class? How could I meet the needs of everyone in all places? I believed that a sense of community is what would help foster learning in the classroom.

The mention of community was what resonated with me most when my future seminar leader, Leslie Reidel, spoke at the Delaware Teacher Institute (DTI) Open House. His words illustrated the idea that stories could create a sense of community through communication. In our seminar, *Stories in Performance: Drama, Fable, Story, and Oral Tradition*, I began my quest to create a unit that focuses on the Sociological Imagination that is a pattern of questioning and understanding (O'Flaherty) to comprehend where individuals fit into in society. One must locate oneself within his period of time, place, and space. Through these personal journeys, students would see the commonalities amongst all people to tell their individual story as well as our collective story. They will investigate the events of the day they were born (known hereafter as *birth* day) to create stories of the history of their birthdates and forge them into dramatic structures that will help generate empathy and a commonality of experience that will lead to a broader sense of community. As Reidel stated, from Aristotle's perspective, drama, helped balance and stabilize communities through the process of identification and catharsis. This unit brings Social Thought and Dramatic theory together in a very imaginative way.

Rationale

Because it is a dual-enrollment course in conjunction with our local community college, I have specific guidelines as to what I can/cannot do regarding grading, assessments, and curriculum choices. During the time that I have taught this course, I have had the opportunity to develop five units from my participation in local and national seminars. With the help of the readings, research, and participation in, *Stories in Performance: Drama, Fable, Myth, Legend and the Oral Tradition,* I will have a sixth unit – one that will be used to introduce my students to the discipline of sociology. In our first DTI seminar, Reidel spoke about the idea of stories and literature being conveyed through performance – that, in reality, literature (reading being an individual experience) loses some of what is its true meaning – creating that sense of community through communication. I need to be truly cognizant of this as my classroom is really in three different schools at the same time. Most of these students have not seen each other before and have certain thoughts or ideas about the "other" high schools. A sense of community is essential to our work together.

This particular unit is designed for the high school juniors and seniors who choose to take this social sciences course, <u>Sociology</u>, as an elective. Due to scheduling requirements, most of them tend to be seniors who have already met their graduation requirements. These students must complete and pass a basic literacy test given by the local community college to gain entrance. Additionally, their families must pay a tuition fee, albeit reduced. This ensures if they complete the work at a satisfactory level and pass with a predetermined grade average, they will receive community college credit that tends to be easily transferred to local universities/colleges. This year there are twenty students enrolled in the *distance-learning course* – ten at my school, six at the one sister school site and four more at the other sister school to which this course is broadcast. These students vary in many aspects – race, ethnicity, work ethic, and skills set. Although I have been a teacher for eighteen years, this is only my sixth year working with high school students and the fourth one teaching in a distance-learning laboratory. I continue to increase my level of comfort in this type of teaching/learning environment as well as mastery of the content that I had not interacted with since completing my undergraduate degree many, many years ago. I believe that it is really important for me to assist students in not only acquiring a content knowledge base but also the academic skills necessary to be successful at a higher learning institution where they need to learn more independently.

Objectives

The *College Wide Core Course (CCC) Performance Objective* that I follow (based on the local community college) for this unit is: *describe what is meant by sociological imagination and the implications of this concept*. Students need to be able to define the sociological imagination, explain the concept of the sociological imagination, read, comprehend, and synthesize a variety of sources to express their personal understanding

of the sociological imagination – their place in space and time, and "perform/tell" individual/personal narrative (sociological imagination).

Enduring Understandings are the main ideas of the unit and are vital to students' comprehension of content and concepts. They have lasting value and help to make the content meaningful.[2] The *Enduring Understandings* are taken from the Core Concepts of our textbook's chapter on the Sociological Imagination. After the unit, students will be able to: *understand that sociologists focus on the social forces that shape human activity* (Core Concept #1/content from the textbook), *define the sociological imagination* (Collegewide Core Curriculum Competency Performance Objective 3.1) and *explain the concept of the sociological imagination* (Collegewide Core Curriculum Competency Performance Objective 3.2). Though the exploration of primary source documents, students will be able to see how their individual story of their birth days are also a collective story in which "every life is different and every life is the same."[3] They will focus on the *Essential Questions* that help to guide us throughout our unit. These include: (1) What is the sociological imagination theoretically (according to the discipline of sociology) and personally (according to an individual)? (2) How does performance engage others and help to build and transform a *community of learners*? and, (3) How does the use of multiple sources lend itself to the development of a coherent understanding of an idea or event?

Over the past two years, our district social studies consortium has begun to focus on the Common Core State Standards and how social studies/history teachers can support these through the teaching of how to effectively read informational texts. We have begun to map out the interpretation and application of the standards indicating what types of activities align with them. In our Professional Learning Community (PLC), we spend time together talking about strategies that we believe will help our students to be more effective readers. We try them out in class and report back on our findings, focusing on the most successful ones. In this unit, I would like for my students to focus on two of the CCSS standards under the Common Core's Integration of Knowledge and Ideas section under History/Social Studies. Listed as *Integration and Ideas/*CSSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 *Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem* and *Integration and Ideas*/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 *Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.* A variety of texts will be used in this unit. From the reading of these texts, students will develop an understanding of the Sociological Imagination and how it relates to them – to each of their *individual stories* as well as our *collective one*. Students will closely read a number of texts from various Internet sources that they will analyze and synthesize to write their *story* according to the parameters of the Sociological Imagination.

Demographics

Conrad Schools of Science (CSS) is a school that has finally completed its transition, changing into a science/biotechnology magnet school serving over 1100 students in grades 6 – 12. It is considered an urban school, situated on the outskirts of the most populated city in the state of Delaware, Wilmington. CSS students come from all over our state's largest county. The school's increasing popularity is obvious as many families complete the *Choice* application process seeking admission to our school. Due to the rise in applications, most students now come from within our district's boundaries. At the high school level, students can choose to focus on a variety of learning "*strands*" such as biotechnology, physical therapy/athletic healthcare, biomedical science, animal science and nursing to include the only Delaware Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program in a high school that is not vocational-technology (Vo-Tech).

Why Do We Tell Stories?

Who doesn't love a good story? Whether it is viewing a film or television program, seeing a play, or listening to a friend – if it is good enough to capture our attention, it can transport us to another time or place, make us feel great sadness or joy, even cry or laugh. It is something that is told and re-told over time – embellished or simplified – stories make us feel good or bad BUT a good story should always make one feel something! From the very beginning of our time together, Seminar Leader Reidel, said that drama and story telling should create a sense of community. In this action, there is an energy that is present when people are together. Story telling is a group event that produces this sense of community. There is a mutual experience that all are experiencing simultaneously. A sense of community is fostered because of this familiarity – when strange things become familiar.

Storytelling is a principle way in which human relationships are created, strengthened, and maintained. Through conversations, these stories are introduced to include new events and reinterpretations of collective events.[4] The individual stories that are told combine to create a collective storyline that describe the culture of the organization, whether that is a family, group of friends or colleagues from the workplace. In my case, the organization is my classroom environment. Storytelling is done in groups – in person and directly involve the listeners – much like drama in the theater. There is a sense of reciprocity to the relationship between the storyteller and his audience – each party is getting something from the exchange. The storyteller gets the reaction from the audience and the audience receives a message. The audience has chosen to be there to be present for the event. As listeners, we envision what is being told and, if engaged, we help to co-produce by responding to the storyteller through visual cues such as focusing on them – eye contact and body language as well as the expression of our own emotions like laughing and crying.

During seminar, we have looked at many story formats that include myth, legend, fable, and fairy tale. We have read a variety of these formats and "interacted" with them. Aristotle's theory of tragedy was a central component of our discussions. Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, was the first to write about the essential elements of a tragedy. He thought "tragedy is higher and more philosophical than history because history simply relates what has happened while tragedy dramatizes what may happen, 'what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity.'"[5] History deals with the particular, drama with the universal[6] such as the feelings of pity and fear. My challenge is how to bring this into our classroom – that the students' *birth* day stories do not just tell history but also the universal stories behind the news events they report out on. I think that after hearing everyone's stories, we will be able to point to those themes and create a collective story that focuses on the themes bringing in the drama aspect.

Aristotle, a great Greek philosopher who lived from 384 – 322 BC, was the first person that articulated what the elements of a good drama were. These included: plot, theme, characters, dialogue, music/rhythm, and spectacle. The plot, the most essential element, is what happens, it's the action – the storyline. It's a journey of self-illumination in which something is revealed about you, the observer. The theme – a statement – is the meaning of the play, the main idea and/or lesson. It will be interesting to hear what students will be able to determine about the theme of their *birth* day as well as collectively, of the entire class. Characters, the people and/or animals – depending on the format – are those that move the action or plot ahead. They are derived from the plot. You need to have a variety of characters – depending on whom you are interacting with. This is derivative of action. It comes after action – someone's *character* is a product of what he did. They provide the reasons for the events of the plot. Having "vivid characters" that face and overcome obstacles is essential. They are the agents of conflict. This conflict is the internal or external struggle between opposing forces, ideas, or interests that create dramatic tension[7]. Characters should have profound qualities that are realistic,[8] moral characteristics, (true to type – who you are – your role/what are the characteristics of your personality, do they fit one's role) and be true to themselves. Their actions should be consistent throughout the play and follow their characteristic patterns. The dialogue, words and conversations that are spoken amongst the characters, should be engaging and be meaningful to central idea of the production. Its' purpose is to specify character in action. The rhythm refers to the actors' voices as they speak which should be easy to listen to. This is the heart of the play. It's the combination of all these rhythms – plot, character, language, and spectacle – to create the impelling force of the play leading to a final climax and denouement. It creates the mood.[9] The last element, spectacle, is what the audience sees in the play.

There are other performance elements that speaking (mode of expression), breath control (proper use of the lungs and diaphragm muscle for maximum capacity and efficiency of breath for speaking), vocal expression (the use of voice to express character), inflection (change in pitch or loudness of the voice), projection (carrying of

the voice), speaking style (delivery of lines), and diction (clarity of speech, selection and pronunciation of words). Gestures or the movement of body parts help to convey meaning and facial expression or physical and vocal aspects are used to convey mood, feeling, or personality. All of these can be used in a performance of a drama. In our case, it would be applied to the students' presentations of their *birth* day.   Since "performance is a mode of language use, a way of speaking…a domain of verbal art as spoken communication."[10]

> Fundamentally, performance as a mode of spoken
> communication consists in the assumption of responsibility
> to an audience for a display of communicative competence.
> This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak
> in socially appropriate ways. Performance involves on the part
> of the performer an assumption of accountability to an
> audience for the way in which communication is carried out,
> above and beyond its referential content. From the point of view
> audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is
> thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the
> relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of
> competence. Additionally, it is marked as available for the
> enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of
> the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself. Performance
> thus calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of
> the act of expression, and gives license to the audience to regard
> the act of expression and the performer with special intensity.[11]

Having students present their findings enables them to practice these performance techniques that are essential components of telling a story and of the art of speaking well. These students are college bound and need to be able to pay detailed attention to their oral abilities to express themselves well. Practicing in our classroom of how to choose one's words wisely, how to breath, when to pause, how to raise and lower one's voice are all excellent skills in the beauty of storytelling as well as self-expression.

Dramatic Structure

Much of our seminar was dedicated to the discussion of Dramatic Structure. This comprises of six parts: *introduction, inciting incident, rising action, crisis, climax*, and *resolution*. Reidel shared with us a distinct model that is dynamic and a more accurate description of what a great play should embody – continuous action. The *introduction* is the portion in which the conflict is presented. The *inciting incident* is the moment in which you know that the conflict is in action. Most of the play is the *rising action*. It's the complications, twists and turns of what follows and makes one continually question what is going to happen next. One should feel like he is on the edge of his seat wondering

what will happen! The *crisis, climax*, and *resolution* are a "tight package" each one happening right after the other. The *crisis* is the point in which the action cannot rise anymore – it's the boiling point – the moment before. The *climax* is what everyone has been waiting for and building up to. The last part, the *resolution*, is the fulfillment of the journey. There is an opportunity for new and good beginnings that are appropriate to the story line.

Students will solidify their understanding of C. Wright Mills' explanation of the Sociological Imagination and combine that knowledge with the elements of Dramatic Structure to tell the story of their *birth* day. For our purposes, in our classroom, we will look at the sequence of events of the students' *birth* days from the information that they have gathered and synthesized from multiple sources, in a way in which the "day" is dramatized – one event after another – leading up to the most interesting, dramatic, and/or exciting; the items (in this case, the events of the day) are put into order according to the dramatic structure. Then, they will collectively tell the story of their *birth* days contributing each of their individual days' events to the collective whole to describe the time frame in which they were born. In doing so, they will be able to better comprehend what is the sociological imagination theoretically (according to the discipline of sociology) and personally (according to an individual). Additionally, the use of the dramatic structure and performance will help to engage students as they come to know one another and help to build a community of learners.

A Sense of Community in a Distance Learning Laboratory

As with storytelling and drama, education is similar in that it is interactive in nature between teacher and student and student-to-student in a social arena, the classroom – in which people have come together to learn.

The impetus for choosing this seminar was that by participating – learning about performance within the realm of stories – I would be able to create a better "community feel" in my distance-learning laboratory. For these students, it is the first time that they are in this type of learning environment via distance for most of them. At two of the schools, students do not have the teacher in front of them – only on the screen. I fully believe that it is important to build and provide supportive social relationships amongst the students as well as between teacher/student.[12] As a caretaker, a community builder in the classroom, it is important to me that students feel comfortable. I know this helps with the learning process – if students feel supported and safe they are more willing to take chances in their learning as well with their discussions. Focus on the idea that it is a highly interactive learning environment that depends on the quality of interaction. Bork contends that our environment, the distance-learning laboratory, does not lend itself to capitalization of interactions. I think that from what I have read, there are ways to work around this – to promote opportunities for student-to-student interaction. This is essential to our distance learning class since we are located at three different locations (our school

and two sister high schools in our district) and trying to forge relationships and a sense of community via cameras across distances.

Research states that students who had a sense of belonging to the "classroom" community had a better experience during the course.[13] I see this already in my class for numerous reasons. Most of the students in my Sociology course at my school, those who are in the actual classroom setting with me I have already taught the year prior in my Psychology course. I am right there with them – sitting next to them. They feel very comfortable in asking me questions to clarify what they don't understand, for example. They already know me as a teacher and of my high expectations. If they need to speak with me, they can drop by privately at another time. Their comfort level is noticeably higher than those students at the two sister high school sites. Technology is another key component to success. In one study, researchers determined that many students did not volunteer in class because they didn't know the people at the other sites. "Not knowing far-site classmates impeded interactions."[14] I have also seen this in our classroom – not being able to refer to a classmate by name minimizes the impact of a point being made or a community feeling. This is one reason that I spend a lot of time doing interactive activities at the very beginning of the course so that people will at least get to know each other's names and can call on each other.

McMillan identified four components of a sense of community within the classroom: spirit (to be a member of an accepting group of people), trust (organization around rules), trade (reciprocity in the relationships of the members), and art (emotional connection).[15] When reflecting on these *community* components, I think about my distance-learning group. There is a definite "specialness" in stating that you are a Distance Laboratory student. For example, it is specially designed to include technology at the very heart of its' purpose. Students all have access to a computer each time we meet. There are special, comfortable, business-like chairs in a non-classroom type of environment. The courses are electives which include: criminal justice, sociology, advanced placement human geography, Italian, and military history. Rules are quickly established in the distance laboratory such as no drinks or food or putting your computer down halfway so that the instructor has everyone's attention. Promoting reciprocity is a goal that is met through the use of Google Docs, for example. Students must work together to accomplish a pre-determined goal. In this case, students will collectively determine how to tell the story of the time frame in which they were born. Lastly, it is much more difficult to establish an emotional connection across the distance between the students. At the beginning, having students share some of their personal information about likes and dislikes, helps students to have a better understanding of each other. However, this is not enough and it is still very difficult to achieve. I believe that this collaborative experience in which students will see that the unfamiliar becomes more familiar as they get to know each other.

Sociological Imagination

C. Wright Mills was an American sociologist who focused on the implication of Max Weber's theories of class, status, and power roles in stratification systems and politics. He studied in Texas and Wisconsin and later began his teaching/researching career at Columbia University where he became an expert on social research – specifically in the areas of interviews and large surveys. During his tenure at Columbia in the 1950s, he was not cautious about his political and social views. He spoke passionately about his thoughts regarding social responsibility. Mills believed that he and his peers should be models of moral leadership. His most famous work on which this unit is based, is embedded in his book, The Sociological Imagination, which was published in 1959. The focus is on the "mindset for doing sociology that stresses being able to connect individual experiences and societal relationships."[16]

   Our Sociology textbook defines the sociological imagination as "a quality of mind that allows people to see how larger social forces, especially their place in history and the ways in which society is organized, shape their life stories or biographies". [17] To understand this important concept students must understand three parts: *history*, *biography*, and *social structure*. First, *history* explains how society came to be and how it is changing. Second, one must know about the term *biography*, the who is a part of the society. This is referred to as "all the day-to-day activities from birth to death that make up a person's life."[18] Those activities can include taking out a loan to pay for college, a car, or a house; charging something on a credit card; or looking for a job"[19] – amongst others. "Social forces are any human created ways of doing things that influence, pressure, or force people to behave, interact with others, and think in specified ways. Social forces are considered remote and impersonal because, for the most part, people have no hand in creating them, nor do they know those who did. People can embrace social forces, be swept along or bypassed by them, and most importantly challenge them."[20] These forces create the opportunities and constraints that fundamentally shape our lives. Each one of us is born into a 'social location' reflecting the sum total of our social statuses. This social location profoundly shapes who we are and the range of possibilities that define who we are likely to become. No two social locations are identical, which creates inequalities of opportunity and differential exposure to risks."[21] These are "organized patterns of behavior or experience that persist in space and time and which are created by two or more people."[22] This means that it is the relationships and interactions among people or groups of people.

   Third, sociologists are interested in studying *social structures*. "Social structure refers to a complex, multifaceted set of phenomena that define a person's situation. Social structures can be thought of in terms of levels of aggregation, that is, levels of analysis roughly matching the number of people who are organized. There are different levels of aggregation"[23] from dyads to institutions in which they are highly structured from between two people (in love) to higher levels of institutions competing with each other. Additionally, social structures can be understood by a person's status, place within the

group, as the status has opportunities, limitations, and norms – rules that must be followed. It is also looked at by the "codes, schemas, scripts, rules, and regulations, written and unwritten, explicitly stated and implicitly understood, that govern our behavior."[24]

Strategies

Students come into our Distance Learning Laboratory with varying skills – technological, conversational, writing, and reading. All of these skills are essential to their academic success – in our classroom and beyond. I need to employ teaching strategies that work towards strengthening these skills throughout the school year. One can talk with a number of my school colleagues to know that while my conversational, reading, and writing skills were strong I still needed to improve upon my technological skills! Immersing myself in this Distance Laboratory helped me to improve upon these skills. I searched out multiple opportunities to learn from my colleagues, district personnel, and spent numerous hours working with different types of practices such as Video Chat or Google Docs. My ultimate goal is to ready these students for the 21st century learning that will be expected of them when they leave high school to pursue higher education or enter the workforce. This unit is early in the year and students must be working towards mastering the following strategies at the very beginning of our course to be successful throughout the year.

Collaborative Learning/Groupwork

Students need to learn how to work together to accomplish goals – those set by the teacher and themselves. This is a basic requirement for many positions or jobs that they will hold in the future. Working together, relying on each other helps to build team-working skills. This strategy is somewhat challenging for us in that there are two groups of students at three different high schools. For the intense conversations that follow the readings of important concepts such as gender, race, or religion a facilitator must be certain that there is a strong sense of camaraderie, trust, and willingness to work with and listen to others in the group. In collaborative learning, each group member is accountable to each other, dependent upon each other and contributes the established goals. Everyone has some strength to share.[25] Together, more is accomplished. Opportunities to learn about each other before and while working help to promote the collegiality and cohesiveness necessary to work well together. Individual and group evaluations are necessary to monitor the group's work (product) and their progress in teamwork. This is essential especially for our environment of bringing students from three schools together via cameras and technology.

Blogs/Discussion

Another technological feature used in this unit is the blog known as a Discussion on Edline (the on-line system that our district chooses to use). A blog is an interactive site in which posts occur usually on a daily basis. Using a question or statement, I can preview what will be discussed and/or looked at that day or review or clarify something from the previous day's lesson. For an instructor and the students, this is an invaluable tool. For the instructor, it enables you to see what students understand and may have misconceived in addition to what they think. I like to have them write about the why of what they think, helping me to better understand their viewpoints. This also enables them to think before they speak as we use their blog posts as a means of conversation as well. For students, they are able to see their written conversations and leave multiple comments as well as questions for each other. This is a great pre- and post- activity for the day's lesson in which the same question or statement is added to at the end of the day's lesson helping all parties to see individual and group progress in regard to comprehending a point or concept.

This year I will continue to take the use of this strategy even further. Many college courses are now using this feature as part of measuring students' understanding of content concepts and ideas. Students post on-line outside of class and are scored/graded on the quality of their posts. I will work with the students at the beginning of our time together to establish a rubric that will be used for them to be graded for their posts. I have noticed from teaching this course previously that students need to cite the evidence within their work as reflected in the rubric (to score well). They need to identify this evidence in their work so that they can truly "see" it to understand why or why not they receive credit. As much as possible, I want to emulate what they will experience next or the following year at college.

Primary Sources

I find that my students seem to want activities in which they are to read a piece of text – not too difficult – and answer some questions. The idea of having difficulty, needing to think, and not knowing if they are "thinking correctly" – meaning, getting the right answer is something that I am constantly battling. Students complain, get upset, and all too often give up. Since I know that students are expected, when they go to college, to read and comprehend multiple, difficult texts, analyze them, and use these for application purposes – I know that I need to help them do this – especially since they will most likely be doing these things on their own. The use of primary sources is a rich opportunity for students to be engaged in the learning process, construct knowledge, and develop critical thinking skills.[26] Students will have access to information on a more personal level – being able to empathize with someone's narrative versus an excerpt from a textbook about a historical account enables students to humanize historical content. Using multiple sources also allows for students to view a place in time or event from multiple perspectives allowing them to "see" more. According to the Common Core standards students must be able to use primary (and/or secondary sources) to determine its' key

ideas and details as well as be able to interpret the craft and structure of the words used and the complexity of the piece. It asks that social studies teachers assist in teaching students how to read texts. The reading for the informational text section highlights a variety of things that we should be doing with our students. Regarding *Key Ideas and Details,* we should help them to: cite specific textual evidence from sources, connect insights to better understand text, determine the central ideas or information from a source, and provide a comprehensive summary with key ideas and details to support them.

Classroom Activities

The unit is divided into three sections tying in the sociological content with the ideas of the drama elements and dramatic structure to build the sense of community in the classroom.

C. Wright Mills/Sociological Imagination

In this lesson, students will be introduced to the sociologist, C. Wright Mills and his thoughts on the Sociological Imagination. Students will view a few on-line videos and read a variety of texts about this sociological concept, including excerpts from his book. Then, using a Classroom Blog/Discussion Tool, they will write a description of what they have learned in regard to their *own* understanding of C. Wright Mill's Sociological Imagination. Afterwards, using Google Docs, in small groups, students will create a short summary of his Mill's sociological concept. Lastly, they will present what they have written and compare and contrast each other's responses. This helps to promote discussion amongst the classroom members at each site. With this foundation of knowledge, students are ready to learn about the Theory of Drama and Dramatic Structure, the second piece of information that will lead to their culminating activity.

Aristotle's Theory of Drama and The Dramatic Structure

This lesson gives students an opportunity to learn about both of these and how they pertain not only to good plays and films but also to the events of a normal day – which the students will be able to understand when they piece together their own stories – individual and collective. Students will read information about Aristotle's Theory of Drama and Dramatic Structure. Most likely, they will be familiar with some of this information from their English classes. I will model this structure for students using a Shakespeare play that they already know such as Romeo and Juliet or Hamlet and then with the events of 9/11. Then, in small groups, students will do the same for fairy tales they are familiar with and individually for the events in a memorable day in their life. Combining the information of both of these lessons, students will then be ready for the next step.

Collective Story to Create a Sense of Community

The unfolding of a story is the essence of what can build a sense of community within the classroom. That is what students will be doing in this lesson. Through the investigation of on-line resources, students will learn about the major events that occurred on their *birth* day. They will use the information that they've learned about dramatic structure to create the story of that day making note of how to tell a good story by following the Dramatic Structure format. Then, students will share these events (their story) with those in our class using what has been learned to keep their audience members guessing about what happens next on the day that they were born. Lastly, in their small groups first and then with the entire class, they will determine how to tell the story of the time frame that they were born as a group. From this exercise they will be able to better communicate their understanding of who they are because of where and when they were born as well, how to tell a story within a dramatic structure format, and develop a better understanding of each other. An extension of this activity could also be that students look at the events that have occurred on their *birth* day each year that they have been alive to date. This might add some more intriguing elements to the dramatic structure of their individual stories as well as our collective one.

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Appendix A

In this unit, I will be using the local community college's Performance Objective that my students must meet as well as a Common Core Literacy Standards that focuses on the integration of knowledge and ideas. The College Wide Core Course (CCC) Performance Objective that I follow is: In this unit, I would like for my students to focus on two of the CCSS standards under the Common Core's Integration of Knowledge and Ideas section under History/Social Studies. Listed as *Integration and Ideas/*CSSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 *Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem* and *Integration and Ideas*/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 *Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.* A variety of texts (both for reading and viewing) will be used in this unit. From the comprehension of these texts, students will develop an understanding of the Sociological Imagination and how it relates to them – each of their *stories*. Students will closely read a number of texts from various Internet sources that they will analyze and synthesize to write their *story* according to the Sociological Imagination.

The CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Standard that I want students to focus on is to *Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.*

Instead of just memorizing and listing the information, students will *read, view, and discuss a variety of historical texts* regarding the day they were born to tell the story of their birth day using the dramatic format – building momentum by listing and telling one event after another – an articulation of the "plot". Then, collectively – to build our sense of community – students will put together all of their events in the same manner – using dramatic structure for community building purposes.

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[1] C. Wright Mills, 3.

[2] http://www.authenticeducation.org/ubd/ubd.lasso (accessed July 10, 2012).

[3] Shanahan and MacMillan, 3.

[4] Boje, 106.

[5] http://www2.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/poetics.html (accessed on October 11, 2014).

[6] Ibid.

[7] PowerPoint

[8] http://www2.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/poetics.html (accessed on October 11, 2014).

[9] https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/artshum/materials/drama/Hoffman accessed on October 11, 2014.

[10] Bauman, 293.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Social relationships: Learner Perceptions of interactions in distance learning 2000, 34.

[13] Lesniak and Hodes, 36.

[14] Ibid, 40.

[15] McMilan, 34.

[16] http://sociology.about.com/od/Profiels/p/C-Wright-Mills.htm (accessed on October 24, 2014).

[17] Ferrante, 4.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Shanahan and Macmillan, 11.

[22] Ibid, 9.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid, 11.

[25] http://www.studygs.net (accessed July 13, 2009).

[26] http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/whyuse.html (accessed July 10, 2014).

Curriculum Unit Title	**Telling My Story: Application of the Sociological Imagination to Build Classroom Community**	Author	Barbara Prillaman

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

Sociologists focus on the social forces that shape human activity.
The Sociological Imagination is the intersection between history, biography, and social structure.
Multiple sources lend itself to the development of a coherent understanding of an idea or event.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

(1) What is the sociological imagination theoretically (according to the discipline of sociology) and personally (according to an individual)?

(2) How does performance engage others and help to build and transform a *community of learners*?

(3) How does the use of multiple sources lend itself to the development of a coherent understanding of an idea or event?

CONCEPT A	CONCEPT B	CONCEPT C
C. Wright Mills/Sociological Imagination	Aristotle's Theory of Drama and The Dramatic Structure	Our Collective Story

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C
What is the sociological imagination theoretically (according to the discipline of sociology) and personally (according to an individual)?	What are the elements of Aristotle's Theory of Drama and The Dramatic Structure and how do they assist us in delivering a good story. How does performance engage others and help to build and transform a *community of learners*?	How does the use of multiple sources lend itself to the development of a coherent understanding of an idea or event?

VOCABULARY A	VOCABULARY B	VOCABULARY C
Sociological Imagination History Biography	Theory of Drama - plot, theme, characters, dialogue, music/rhythm, and spectacle Dramatic Structure – Introduction, Inciting Incident, Rising Action, Crisis, Climax, Resolution	Credibility of sources

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES