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Middle School ELA
Steinbeck Institute 2018

Learning About the Land

An Exploration into Our Knowledge (or Lack Thereof) of the Agricultural System

Objective 1: To use multiple modes of text in order to explore our common awareness of the agricultural system

Objective 2: To respond to fiction and non-fiction texts both verbally and in writing

Objective 3: To compare/contrast various authors' (including John Steinbeck) views on agriculture

Texts:

“Rice” – Mary Oliver

“The Land Ethic” – Aldo Leopold

Chapter 5 from *The Grapes of Wrath* – John Steinbeck

“The Pleasures of Eating” – Wendell Berry

Excerpt from *The Omnivore's Dilemma* – Michael Pollan

Note: This learning segment is designed for roughly two weeks, with four classes per week. Each class presents a text and a learning strategy (in italics). These strategies/methods could be easily switched for other methods.

Week 1

Day 1: What do we know about the land?

Introduction, brainstorm prior knowledge

“Rice”

Poetry Analysis

Day 2: Why should we know about the land?

“The Land Ethic”

Annotate “The Land Ethic”

Day 3: What happens when we don’t know about the land?

Chapter 5: *Grapes of Wrath*

Class *discussion*, show pictures from the Dust Bowl

Prepare for literature circles

Day 4: What do my peers think? What questions do we have about the texts?

Literature Circles

Week 2

Day 1: What should we know about the land?

“The Pleasures of Eating”

Written Conversation

Day 2: How can we learn about the land?

Excerpts from *Omnivore’s Dilemma* – introduction

Coding Text

Day 3: Why does all of this matter? What are we going to do about it?

Timed essay: compare/contrast texts, analyze arguments, respond to texts with personal thoughts

Day 4 : Why does all of this matter? What are we going to do about it?

Discuss takeaways from texts/discussions

Draft list of questions for farm/a farmer

Possible prep for field trip

Possible closure activity: Field trip to farm

Resources (please note sources)

1. “Rice” – Mary Oliver
2. Sample poetry analysis steps
3. “The Land Ethic” – Aldo Leopold
4. Chapter 5 from *The Grapes of Wrath* – John Steinbeck
5. Literature Circle templates
6. “The Pleasures of Eating” – Wendell Berry
7. Written conversation instructions – from *Subjects Matter* (Daniels and Zemelman)
8. Excerpt from *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* – published in an article from ABC News
9. Coding text instructions – from *Subjects Matter* (Daniels and Zemelman)