

Introduction

The novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God" by Zora Neale Hurston is a compelling piece of literature that offers valuable opportunities for ESL students to explore themes such as identity, empowerment, and resilience. This ESL lesson plan aims to engage students with the text through various activities and discussions, allowing them to improve their language skills while delving into the rich cultural and historical contexts embedded in the novel. By focusing on this topic, students can enhance their vocabulary, reading comprehension, and critical thinking abilities while also gaining insights into African American literature and history.

Vocabulary Building

Vocab

Vocab	Definition
Resilience	the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness
Empowerment	the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights
Identity	the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks, and/or expressions that make a person or group
"Their Eyes Were Watching God"	(title) an exploration of the journey towards self-awareness and independence for the protagonist Janie Crawford
"Zora Neale Hurston"	(author) an influential figure in the Harlem Renaissance known for her anthropological work and literary contributions

Contextual Usage

1. After facing several challenges, Janie showed remarkable **resilience** as she bounced back from each setback with renewed determination.
2. Through education and perseverance, the protagonist experienced **empowerment** as she gained control over her own destiny.
3. The novel delves into Janie's journey of self-discovery as she grapples with her **identity** amidst societal expectations.
4. \"Their Eyes Were Watching God\" is a poignant portrayal of a woman's quest for independence against societal norms.
5. Zora Neale Hurston's groundbreaking works continue to resonate with readers today due to their powerful exploration of African American culture.

ESL Warm-up Activity

To set the tone for the lesson on \"Their Eyes Were Watching God,\" start with a captivating warm-up activity. Create a scenario where students can discuss and share their own experiences of empowerment or moments when they demonstrated resilience. Encourage them to use vocabulary related to the novel's themes, such as \"empowerment,\" \"resilience,\" and \"identity\" when discussing their stories. This will not only capture their attention but also introduce key language elements relevant to the lesson, preparing them for deeper exploration of these concepts within the context of the book.

Main ESL Lesson Activities

Vocabulary Activity: Word Collage

Create a word collage with key vocabulary from the novel such as \"resilience,\" \"empowerment,\" and \"identity.\" Have students cut out images or words from magazines that represent these concepts and then present their collages to the class, explaining their choices. This encourages vocabulary retention and offers opportunities for group discussions.

Listening Exercise: Character Interviews

Assign each student a character from the novel and have them prepare interview questions based on the character's experiences. They can then conduct mock interviews in pairs, practicing active listening and speaking skills while embodying the characters' perspectives.

Roleplay Activity: Exploring Themes

Divide students into groups and assign each group a theme from the novel, such as "love," "independence," or "social expectations." Have them create short roleplays that illustrate these themes, encouraging creativity and critical thinking while reinforcing comprehension of abstract concepts.

Reading and Writing: Journal Reflections

Ask students to maintain a journal throughout their reading of the novel. Instruct them to reflect on specific prompts related to character development, plot progression, or personal connections with the text. This activity fosters individual engagement with the material and provides opportunities for self-expression through writing.

ESL Homework Assignment

Encourage students to continue their engagement with the novel outside of the classroom by assigning them the task of writing a reflective essay on a theme or character from "Their Eyes Were Watching God." This will reinforce their understanding of the lesson content and provide an opportunity for further exploration and critical analysis. Additionally, they can be tasked with finding modern examples in media or real life that relate to the themes discussed in class, fostering an application of their learning beyond the text.

Conclusion

Key Points Summary

Throughout this lesson, students have explored the themes of resilience, empowerment, and identity through the lens of "Their Eyes Were Watching God." Engaging in various activities enabled them to enhance their vocabulary, listening, speaking, and writing skills while delving into the rich narrative woven by Zora Neale Hurston.

Reflection and Application

As students reflect on their learning journey with this novel, they are encouraged to consider how the themes and language elements can be applied in their language development. Understanding diverse perspectives and navigating complex themes in literature not only improves language proficiency but also fosters critical thinking skills essential for effective communication.

Why this topic is great for ESL learning

Engagement with Complex Themes

Their Eyes Were Watching God provides a rich literary landscape for ESL students to engage with complex and thought-provoking themes such as resilience, empowerment, and identity. This allows for in-depth discussions that enhance language proficiency while encouraging critical thinking and analytical skills.

Cultural and Historical Relevance

Exploring the novel exposes ESL students to the cultural and historical context of 20th-century African American society, providing valuable insights into diverse perspectives and experiences. This can broaden students' understanding of different cultures and histories, contributing to their overall language development.

Enhanced Language Skills

The narrative depth of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* offers ample opportunities for vocabulary expansion, reading comprehension, listening practice, and expressive writing. Engaging with this text can significantly improve language skills across multiple domains while nurturing an appreciation for literature.