Lesson Plan: Analyzing Race Relationships in Bernice Sims’ “Selma Bridge Crossing”
(To be used in conjunction with To Kill a Mockingbird)

Descriptive Data:

Grade Level: 9 / 10
Theme / Topic: Analyzing Race Relationships in Bernice Sims’ “Selma Bridge Crossing”
Duration / Length of the lesson: 1 class period (50 minutes)

Goal:

Using multiple perspectives, students will examine Bernice Sims’ painting, “Selma Bridge Crossing.” Students will use the painting to identify and analyze the conflicts that occurred between African American and white citizens of the American South during the 1960s.

Objectives:

The student will be able to verbalize central conflicts that occurred between African American and white citizens in American South during the 1960s.

The student will be able to evaluate the relationship between African American and white citizens in the American South during the 1960s.

The student will be able to identify the perspective of various individuals associated with the Selma Bridge Crossing.

The student will be able to verbally compare and contrast conflicting perspectives of American citizens in the 1960s.

Materials:

- Bernice Sims’ painting, “Selma Bridge Crossing” (see link below)
- Whiteboard markers
• Copies of *The Culture of Civil Rights* by Claudia Dreifus
• Overhead markers
• Diary Entry Rubric (Please see below)

**Procedure:**

1. Statement of purpose

Students are preparing to read Harper Lee’s novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In order to gain a sense of the history that encompasses Harper Lee’s novel, students will be looking at the historical events that were occurring during the time of this novel’s publication. This lesson calls students to use Bernice Sims’ painting as an analytical tool to help them understand the history surrounding Harper Lee’s novel. Thus, students will be examining the civil rights movement of the 1960s. For this lesson, students will be analyzing Bernice Sims’ painting, “Selma Bridge Crossing,” which depicts the moment when civil rights marchers were attacked by Alabama state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama in March of 1965. Students will analyze the event from the various perspectives of those individuals portrayed in the painting. This activity will allow students to gain a more complete understanding of the racial conflict that penetrated the American South during this time period.

2. Anticipatory Set:

As students enter the room, the following quote from Harper Lee’s novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is displayed on the overhead: “You never really understand a person until you understand things from his point of view – until you climb into his skin and walk about in it.”

The teacher reads the quote aloud to the students. She asks the students to recall an instance when they misunderstood someone or to recall an instance when they were misunderstood by another person. The teacher asks students to verbally state if this misunderstanding was resolved. If the misunderstanding was resolved, how was it resolved? Did it help to view the problem from the other person’s perspective? Students take turns verbally sharing their personal experiences with the class. Those students who do not feel comfortable sharing their experiences with the class are not required to share. However, all students are required to listen respectfully while their classmates are sharing.
3. Instructional Input:

The teacher displays Bernice Sims’ painting, “Selma Bridge Crossing,” on the overhead. The teacher asks the students to study the painting and brainstorm what the painting might depict. The teacher uses the think-pair-share method for this activity. Students write down their own prediction of what they believe the painting is about and then share this prediction with a partner. Finally, each pair reaches a conclusion and shares their prediction with the entire class. The teacher records each pair’s prediction on the white board.

The teacher hands out a copy of the article, *The Culture of Civil Rights* by Claudia Dreifus to each student. The teacher also reads this article aloud to the class. The article explores the “Selma Bridge Crossing” painting and the history that surrounds the event that came to be known as “Bloody Sunday.” As the teacher is reading, she pauses periodically to ask questions, clarify information, and actively involve the students in an interactive read aloud.

4. Modeling:

The teacher models her use of perspective by examining Bernice Sims’ “Selma Bridge Crossing” from the viewpoint of the fisherman in the painting. The teacher asks the class, “What do you think the fisherman might say about the events occurring on the bridge?” She also asks, “What do you think the fisherman is thinking as he witnesses this event? What evidence in the painting supports your prediction?” The teacher records students’ answers on the white board.

The teacher then explains that she will now pretend to be the fisherman writing in his journal / diary. The teacher asks, “What do you think the fisherman will write about?” The teacher records students’ answers on the white board. The teacher then models how to complete a diary entry on the overhead. The teacher states that each diary entry must begin with a salutation and include three pieces of concrete evidence from the painting. The teacher uses the overhead to model a complete example of a diary entry from the fisherman’s perspective.

5. Check for Understanding:

The teacher checks for understanding by monitoring students’ interaction during the article read aloud. When modeling the diary entry, the teacher asks for “thumbs up / thumbs down” to check for understanding. The teacher also monitors small group discussions throughout the lesson. Additionally, the teacher uses close proximity with those students who may require additional assistance. The teacher also monitors body language throughout this lesson to ensure
students are comfortable discussing the relationships between the various groups in Bernice Sims’ painting.

6. Guided Practice:

In small groups, students discuss the painting from the perspective of the authority figures in the painting. The teacher instructs each group to address the following questions: Who are the authority figures in the painting? What is their relationship with the other individuals in the painting? What are the authority figures doing in the painting? Why do you think this is happening? What types of feelings do you think the authority figures have during this event?

Students discuss these questions aloud in small groups, and then each group composes one diary entry from an authority figure’s perspective. The teacher reminds students that each entry must include a salutation and at least three concrete details from the painting. Students are encouraged to ask their peers and the teacher for additional clarification or assistance. Additionally, each group shares their diary entry with the entire class upon completion.

7. Independent Practice:

Students work independently to analyze the painting from the civil rights marchers’ point of view. The teacher encourages each student to address the following questions: Who are the civil rights marchers in the painting? What is their relationship with the other individuals in the painting? What are the civil rights marchers doing? What is the result of their actions? What types of feelings do you think the civil rights marchers have during this event?

Students individually compose a diary entry from a civil rights marcher’s perspective. The teacher reminds students that each diary entry must include a salutation and at least three concrete details from the painting.

8. Closure / Follow Up:

Each student verbally states one concrete detail he or she used to describe the event from a civil rights marcher’s perspective. Students take turns sharing their examples.
As a whole group, the class discusses Bernice Sims’ painting and the effects that the Selma Bridge Crossing had on the various individuals in the painting. The class discusses the conflict that is occurring in the painting and the relationships between those involved.

Assessment:

The teacher assesses student understanding throughout the lesson by monitoring small group discussion and body language. The teacher observes cooperative learning skills while students work in small groups. The teacher collects the diary entries completed in small groups and those completed individually. Diary entries are graded per the rubric (below).

References:


Image:

Diary Entry Rubric

General Scoring Criteria

(4 Points Possible)

• Excellent: 4 Points
  o The student includes a salutation for the diary entry.
  o The student includes at least three concrete details from Bernice Sims’ painting, “Selma Bridge Crossing.”

• Good: 3 Points
  o The student includes a salutation for the diary entry.
  o The student includes two concrete details from the painting.

• Average: 2 Points
  o The student includes a salutation.
  o The student includes one concrete detail from the painting.

• Poor: 0 - 1 Points
  o The student fails to include a salutation.
  o The student fails to include any concrete details from the painting.