

Unit Snapshot: Teaching Rhetoric Through the Lens of Appalachian Studies

2018

All handouts can also be found at jessicasalfia.com

Rationale:

Students will identify elements of classical rhetoric and practice rhetorical analysis through an Appalachian literature and studies unit. This unit will ask students to debunk the single story of Appalachia through rhetorical analysis of works by Appalachian writers and texts about Appalachia.

Texts and Materials Needed:

Written Texts:

- [What You are Getting Wrong About Appalachia](#) by Elizabeth Catte
- *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance
- [Affrilachia](#) by Frank X Walker
- [“Hunting While Black”](#) by Jonathan Hall
- [“Growing Up in a Sundown Town”](#) by Silas House
- [Trampoline](#) by Robert Gipe
- [Chasing Utopia](#) by Nikki Giovanni
- [“Appalachia: Who Cares and So What?”](#) by Chad Berry

Visual Texts

- Ted Talk, [The Danger of the Single Story](#) by Chimamanda Adichie
- [Sludge \(film 2005\)](#)
- [Photography of Builder Levy](#)
- [Looking at Appalachia Project](#)
- [Parts Unknown: West Virginia](#)
- [Heroin\(e\) & Recovery Boys](#), dir. Elaine McMillion Sheldon

Overview:

Students will establish a basic understanding of rhetoric, the rhetorical situation, and rhetorical appeals. Using Appalachian literature and studies students will practice rhetorical analysis and apply rhetorical skills to speech writing, poetry writing, and creating a visual essay. Students will also gain an appreciation for Appalachian literature and culture, and explore how being from Appalachia contributes to their own identities.

Unit Overview:

1. Students will watch Adichie’s *Danger of the Single Story* TED Talk, and identify her claim and the evidence she uses to support her claim about stereotypes.
2. Then, read, analyze, and discuss *Affrilachia* by Frank X Walker, identify his claim and the evidence he uses to support his claim. Compare and contrast the arguments presented in *Affrilachia* and *The Danger of the Single Story*. Show clips from both *Hee-Haw* and *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Discuss modern day stereotypes with which the students are familiar. (i.e. WGN’s *The Outsiders*, *Wrong Turn*, MTV’s *Buckwild*)

3. Introduce students to the photography of Builder Levy and the Looking at Appalachia project. Students will complete a mini-analysis of the argument presented in the photographs. Photographs will be used as visual essay for Socratic discussion and warm-ups.
4. Have students read and complete SOAPStone analysis for the following:
 - “Appalachia, Who Cares and So What” by Chad Berry
 - “Growing Up in a Sundown Town” by Silas House
 - Anthony Bourdain’s Parts Unknown: West Virginia
 - Parts Unknown companion piece: “Hunting While Black” by Dr. Jonathan Hall
 - Looking at Appalachia
4. Show *Sludge* (2005). Have students take notes as though they are “annotating an essay.” Identify the filmmakers claim. Think about how the visuals, text on screen, cartoons, and music work together to create a visual argument.
5. Read chapters 1-5 of the novel *Trampoline*, by Robert Gipe. Identify Dawn and Mamaw’s rhetorical situation. Complete a “visual analysis” of the rhetorical situation using infographics as the model for this assignment.
6. Form groups of 2-3. Using text and notes, write a speech for Dawn. Pretend the town invited her back to speak again. This time she has enlisted YOU to help her write a speech for this event. Think about what you learned about coal and coal communities from *Sludge*. Remember that Dawn loves the folks in her community. How could she best appeal to this audience and convince them to stop mining Blue Bear Mountain.
7. Explore the work of the following Appalachian writers:
 - a. [The Affrilachian Poets](#)
 - b. [Queer Appalachia](#)
 - c. [The Travelin’ Appalachian Revue](#)
8. Show either *Herion(e)* or *Recovery Boys*. Have students take notes as though they are “annotating an essay.” Identify the filmmaker’s claim and how the claim is supported. What kind of evidence and reasoning does Elaine Sheldon McMillian use?

Final Project:

1. Socratic Seminar: The Rhetoric of Appalachia (1-2 days)
2. Students will now apply their knowledge of rhetoric to completing a final project:

Option 1 (did this in 2016 and 2017)	Option 2 (did this this fall)
<p data-bbox="207 1541 841 1598">Proposals to present at the National Appalachian Studies Association Conference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="256 1633 808 1690">1. Students may work independently or as a team. Introduce the project this way: <p data-bbox="207 1726 841 1988">“Consider the rhetorical situation of the Appalachian Studies Conference—the audience, the theme of the conference, the exigence of presenting. You are the speaker. What would the scholars and writers at this conference want to hear from you, the future of Appalachia? Pitch me an idea. Write a proposal to present at this conference. You need to approach this task like a persuasive</p>	<p data-bbox="954 1541 1430 1577">Appalachian Identity Projects</p> <p data-bbox="873 1612 1256 1648"><u>Affrilachia Imitation (50 points)</u></p> <p data-bbox="873 1654 1511 1892">One of the first texts we read in this unit was Frank X Walker’s “Affrilachia.” In this poem he creates his own identity—one that combines the places and identities that define him. Like Frank X, you are from a region that is defined as Appalachia and that carries with it the connotations of “place,” but that is unlike the rest of West Virginia.</p> <p data-bbox="873 1934 1110 1969">Task: Write a Poem</p>

writing activity. What kind of language and what topics would the conference committee find most appealing? What would this audience want to hear from you?"

2. Pass out task sheets for this activity. Students then have 3-4 days to write their proposal and create a mini-visual to present that proposal to the class.
3. Proposals will be presented to class.

*****The top 5 proposals are selected by a panel of teachers were submitted to be a part of this panel presentation.***

Use Walker's poem as your mentor text, and write your own poem about your identity as a young person from this place. How do you fit into all that is Appalachia?

Guidelines:

- Title your poem with your identity- You may create a word like Walker, or use an existing word.
- Your poem must consist of roughly the same amount of lines as Walker's (give or take 1 or 2).
- Your poem must explore first the obvious differences and then the similarities you see in yourself and the "Appalachian" identity.

Assignment 2: Looking at Appalachia Imitation (50 points)

Roger May's Looking at Appalachia project challenges stereotypes and photos "taken" of Appalachia during the War on Poverty. The photographers in this project "make" pictures of the region.

Task: "Make" a Picture

Using Looking at Appalachia as a model, create a photo essay that challenges or confronts stereotypes of this place. Your photo essay must consist of one picture you have "made" and 350 word explanation of what is in the photograph and how it challenges or confronts stereotypes of Appalachia.

Appalachian Authors for Further Reading

There is no better way to understand a place or a people than by reading the literature of that place. Here is a suggested list of Appalachian writers:

- o Silas House
- o Lee Smith
- o David Joy
- o Ron Rash
- o Wiley Cash
- o Natalie Sypolt
- o Marc Harshman
- o Randi Ward
- o Crystal Wilkinson
- o Lee Smith
- o Sharyn McCrumb
- o Charles Frazier
- o Glenn Taylor
- o Rebecca Gayle Howell
- o Robert Morgan
- o Frank X Walker
- o Denise Giardina
- o Adriana Trigiani
- o Jonathan Corcoran
- o Doug Van Gundy
- o Jesse Stuart
- o Harriet Arnow

Part 1: What is the Single Story?

Directions: Fill in the outline of West Virginia with as many words as you can that you have heard used to describe our state or its people, or that people associate with our state and its people.



The Danger of the Single Story Rhetorical Situation Analysis

SOAPStone Analysis

Subject: What is subject matter of this TED Talk?	
Occasion: What is the occasion for this speech? What is her need for communication?	
Audience: Who is her audience? (be sure to include yourself)	
Purpose: What is the speaker's goal? What is the need for communication?	
Speaker: Who is the speaker in this TED talk? List everything you learn about her in the lecture. What ethos does she bring to this speech?	
Tone: What is the speaker's tone? List specific words and phrases in the box indicate her tone.	

AP Lang Summer Reading Test

Hillbilly Elegy & What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia

1. J.D. Vance presents several causes for the economic hardship the characters in his book experience. List at least two causes he believes has caused the struggle the characters and people in his book experience.
2. Vance cites a report by the Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund stating that well over half of working-class people had suffered at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), and over 40 percent had experienced several (p. 226-7). He writes extensively about his own traumatic childhood: his mother's drug addiction and arrest, the constant revolving door of father figures, and Papaw's alcoholism, among others. Which of these experiences appear to affect Vance most deeply, and why?
3. Throughout his memoir, Vance talks about government policy and programs. At one point in the story, he describes his experience working at a grocery store and his encounters with customers using food stamps: I "learned how people gamed the welfare system. They'd buy two dozen-packs of soda with food stamps and then sell them at a discount for cash. They'd ring up their orders separately, buying food with food stamps, and beer, wine, and cigarettes with cash" (p. 139). How does Vance portray people receiving government assistance? How does this compare with his portrayal of his own family's poverty?
4. Vance provides many examples of lives interrupted and plagued by addiction to alcohol and drugs, including his own mother's. Though his mother's drug addiction is ultimately what forces Vance to choose to permanently live with Mamaw instead of his mother, Mamaw persuades him to help his mother cheat on a drug test, saying, "I know this isn't right, honey. But she's your mother and she's my daughter. And maybe, if we help her this time, she'll finally learn her lesson" (p. 131). Throughout their lives, Vance's mother struggles with her drug addiction, and Vance struggles with how much to help her, financially and emotionally. Were Vance and Mamaw enabling his mother to continue using drugs by helping her pass the drug test?
5. In the book's introduction, Vance states that his success had little to do with his own intelligence or extraordinary ability, and much more to do with "a handful of loving people" who rescued him (p.2). Despite this, throughout the book Vance draws attention again and again to the element of personal responsibility, perhaps nowhere so clearly as in relating Mamaw's flood parable: "God helps those who help themselves" (p. 87). Where else do you see this tension between personal responsibility and the need for familial, governmental, or social support?
6. Vance discusses education in a multitude of ways. At one point he states, "In Middletown, 20 percent of the public high school's entering freshmen won't make it to graduation. Most won't graduate from college" (p. 56). Though Vance struggled in school through much of his childhood, when he stayed with his grandmother his senior year, he was able to focus on school and found teachers who inspired his love of learning (p. 151). He remembers when Mamaw spent \$180 on a graphing calculator when they had little money for other things like cell phones and nice clothes (p. 137). In the end, Vance goes on to earn a law degree from Yale. How does Vance view the role of education in society and its impact on his own life?
7. In the introduction, Vance provides multiple reasons for writing his memoir and suggests that he wants people to understand the lives of poor people. When reading the book, do you see any

tension between Vance's telling of his own story and his cultural analysis of the "hillbilly" way of life? Can one person's experience represent an entire group's?

8. Vance's book proudly uses the word "elegy" in the title. An elegy is typically a poem of serious reflection, typically a lament for the dead. In Elizabeth Catte's book, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*, she points out that in ancient Greece "elegies" were usually used as political propaganda. Do you see Vance's book playing a role as political propaganda? Why or why not?
9. Catte's book is a direct rebuttal to Vance's portrait of Appalachia. Identify at least one major flaw she sees in his portrait of the Appalachian region.
10. Catte claims that Vance uses an "enduring myth about race in Appalachia and parts of the Rust Belt to give Hillbilly Elegy its organizational logic." She uses three examples of ways this myth has been perpetuated: the Scots-Irish myth, "Hollow folk," and the (re)discovery of Appalachia. Choose one of these examples and explain how it has been used to perpetuate stereotypes about Appalachia.
11. On page 98 Catte says, "To the *National Review*, Appalachia is the "white ghetto," a place filled with "the unemployed, the dependent, and the addicted." To me, Appalachia is a battleground, where industry barons, social reformers, and workers wage a constant war that is passed down through generations, often reflecting inherited struggles that feel repeated and never-ending." She then gives several examples of these social reformers and workers, and says, "This is who we have been all this time." List one of the examples she gives of a social reformer or activist and explain how this example refutes and debunks Vance's view of the region.
12. On page 112, Catte discusses the prison industry in Appalachia, and says, "For activists in Central Appalachia, the racism of the prison industrial complex is central to their political and community organizing. Tarence Ray, an organizer with the Letcher County Governance Project, a community group that formed to oppose the proposed prison, believes that bringing prisons to rural predominately white communities fits an established pattern of pitting poor white individuals against African American people by convincing them that their economic survival depends on supporting structures that harm and oppress." How else does she support this claim? Give one example.
13. Catte references Blair Mountain in her book several times. Where is it and what happened there? And how do the events of Blair Mountain contradict the view J.D. Vance paints of Appalachia?
14. I asked Catte herself what she wanted YOU (my students) to take away from her text. She replied, "I argue that some of Appalachia's history hasn't been forgotten, but repressed," and suggests that photography played a key role in this repression. Give an example from her text where she explains how photography was used to create an incomplete narrative of the region.
15. The texts you read this summer provided you with two very different views of the people of Appalachia. What did you learn about this place you live and yourself from this summer reading? With which view do you most identify? Have your views about West Virginia and Appalachia changed?

In Class Essay:

In this class you will learn how to form claims, craft good arguments, and take positions on topics with which you both agree and disagree. In his book, J.D. Vance makes several claims about the Appalachian region-- among them are that the people here are impoverished, poorly educated, not diverse, and that one can only really find success by leaving. Many

people from Appalachia, including Elizabeth Catte, disagree with the portrayal of the region Vance presents in his text. Choose a claim from *Hillbilly Elegy*, and then in a well-crafted essay discuss how Elizabeth Catte confronts and disproves this claim in her book, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*.

Rhetorical Analysis Notes

	Appalachia by Frank X Walker	Silas House Time Essay	Parts Unknown	Looking At Appalachia
Summary- What was this piece about?				
Speaker/writer/creator				
Occasion (context, time, place, need for communication)				
Audience				
Purpose (goal of the piece)				
Tone	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
appeals to ethos (speaker credibility)				
appeals to pathos (emotional appeals to audience)				
appeals to logos (reasoning, logic, case studies, statistics)				
What appealed to YOU? What did you find to be				

the most compelling part of this work?				
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Dawn's Rhetorical Situation

Analysis and Action

Think Infographic!

The Task:

Create a visual diagram that explicitly identifies all the parts of Dawn's rhetorical situation. Use both text, symbols, colors, and visual elements to create this a complete analysis of the all the elements of Dawn's rhetorical situation.

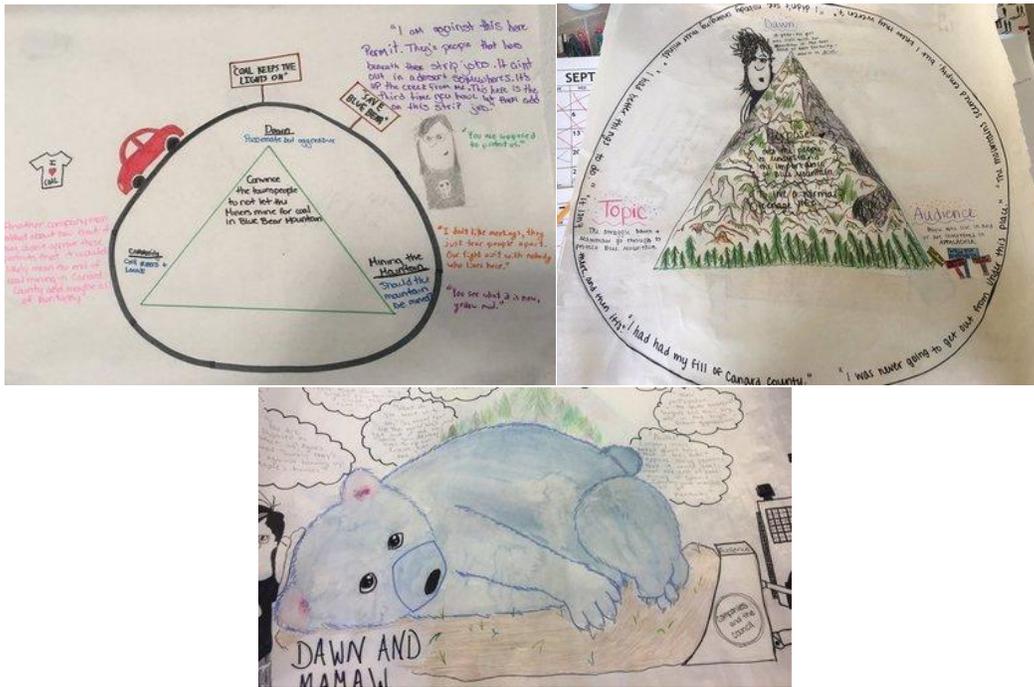
Directions:

1. Form a group of 2 or 3.
2. Compare notes. Share out what you noted about Dawn's rhetorical situation, and what you learned about coal communities from the documentary, *Sludge*.
3. Plan out your infographic.
4. Cut a piece of white butcher paper and make it happen!

Guidelines for infographic:

- A triangular shape must be central, and each point needs to represent speaker, audience, and purpose.
- The triangle needs to be surrounded in some way by the context. You may represent context with text, visuals, and/or symbols.
- Your diagram must also include 5-10 quotes from the text that represent the pro-mining position and 5-10 quotes from the text that represent the anti-mining position.

Here are some cool examples from last year:



Part 2: Writing Assignment

Introduction:

Dawn needs and wants to convince her community to stop mining Blue Bear Mountain. Let's pretend that she has a second chance. We're going to imagine that the town has called another community meeting and they have asked Dawn to speak. She must prepare a speech to give to her community, but now she has help...YOU!

You and your group are going to serve as Dawn's speech writers.

Guidelines:

1. Choose quality over quantity. Keep your speech for Dawn under 400 words.
 - a. Think about great speeches- the Gettysburg Address was only 278 words. Be concise and powerful.
2. Appeal to the audience with what you know about the damaging effects of coal from the documentary *Sludge*.

AP Students-

Think about chapter 1 of the Language of Composition and what you learned about the rhetorical situation. Turn to pages 78-80 of Lang. of Comp and review the list of rhetorical devices. USE AT LEAST 3 OF THOSE DEVICES IN THE SPEECH YOU CRAFT FOR DAWN.

Looking At Appalachia: A Closer Look

Your task:

Examine and analyze non-print texts that challenge and complicate the image of Appalachians.

Directions:

1. First, you'll need to get some background information on the War on Poverty. To do that, go here: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/War-on-Poverty> (It would be worth doing an image search for War on Poverty, too.)
2. Next, check out Roger May, creator of Looking At Appalachia, explain and introduce his project: <https://www.100daysinappalachia.com/2018/09/07/looking-at-appalachia/>
3. Now: look and think through several of the images linked on the above article AND on the Looking At Appalachia site, which you can find here: <https://lookingatappalachia.org/>

After you've spent some time really looking at *Looking At Appalachia*, choose 3 images you like best and fill in the spaces below.

Reproduce this graphic organizer on your own paper.

	Subject of Image	Explain how this image subverts, challenges, or complicates the image of an Appalachian.
Image 1		
Image 2		

Image 3		
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What does it mean to be Appalachian?

Debunk YOUR single story!

These assignments are due on _____. Please submit them as one single portfolio of work. Each assignment should serve as a compliment to the others in the portfolio.

Walt Whitman says in *Song of Myself*, "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes."

Elizabeth Cotte writes in the conclusion of the book, *55 Strong..*, "...you are one of us. If you are a person who deserves better, you are one of us. If you love someone who deserves better, you are one of us. If you can't be silent, you are one of us. How could you not be? Take your place."

Appalachia is large. It contains multitudes. And so do you. But you are also of this place. In this final project portfolio you will explore your identity as a teenager in West Virginia and Appalachia.

Assignment 1:

Affrilachia Imitation (50 points)

Task: Poem

One of the first texts we read in this unit was Frank X Walker’s “Affrilachia.” In this poem he creates his own identity—one that combines the places and identities that define him. Like Frank X, you are from a region that is defined as Appalachia and that carries with it the connotations of “place,” but that is unlike the rest of West Virginia.

Use Walker’s poem as your mentor text, and write your own poem about your identity as a young person from this place. How do you fit into all that is Appalachia?

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Assignment 2: Looking at Appalachia Imitation (50 points)

Roger May’s Looking at Appalachia project challenges stereotypes and photos “taken” of Appalachia during the War on Poverty. The photographers in this project “make” pictures of the region.

Task: “Make” a Picture

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Assignment 3: Appalachian Independent Read (75 points)

Write an essay exploring what you learned about Appalachia through this reading assignment. Your essay needs to respond to the following question: What did this book teach you about what it means to be Appalachian?

Include the following components:

- Who the book is by and when it was published.
- A short (1-2 paragraphs) summary of the book’s plot
- 2-3 paragraphs that explore your reaction to the book and what it has taught you about Appalachia

- Shoot for a word count of around 500-600 words. (In terms of length, use Silas House’s essay “Growing up in a Sundown Town” as your model. Also- this handout is 530 words—just a point of reference.)

Notes and Brainstorming: