Lesson I: An Introduction to Toni Morrison and *The Bluest Eye*

*North Carolina Standard Course of Study: Goals and Objectives*

- Competency Goal 1: The learner will demonstrate increasing insight and reflection to print and non-print text through personal expression.

  Objective 1.02: The learner will reflect and respond expressively to texts so that the audience will investigate connections between life and literature.

- Competency Goal 2: The learner will inform an audience by using a variety of media to research and explain insights into language and culture.

  Objective 2.03: The student will demonstrate the ability to read, listen to, and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print informational texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by analyzing and evaluating the connections or relationships between and among ideas, concepts, characters and/or experiences.

- Competency Goal 3: The learner will examine argumentation and develop informed opinions.

  Objective 3.02: The student will select an issue or theme and take a stance on that issue by showing sensitivity or empathy for the culture represented and by supporting the argument with specific reasons.

- Competency Goal 4: The learner will critically analyze text to gain meaning, develop thematic connections, and synthesize ideas.

  Objective 4.04: The student will demonstrate the ability to read, listen to, and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print critical texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by making connections between works, self, and related topics.

- Competency Goal 5: The learner will interpret and evaluate representative texts to deepen understanding of literature and the United States.

  Objective 5.03: The student will demonstrate the ability to read, listen to, and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print literacy texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader’s response to text.
Materials Required:

- Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*
- Video clip located at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbMigdel1lVM&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbMigdel1lVM&feature=related)
- Newspapers and Magazines
- Computer with Internet access

**Time:** Approximately 90 minutes

**Suggested Procedure:**

1. Students will begin by selecting an image of beauty from a magazine, newspaper, journal, or the internet (where technology permits).

2. Students will be divided into groups (or pairs depending upon class size) and will each be asked to state the specific name of the individual that they have chosen and why they have chosen this individual as an image of beauty.

3. Students will view the video clip located at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbMigdel1lVM&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbMigdel1lVM&feature=related).

4. After viewing the video clip, students will receive a brief biography of Toni Morrison along with the aforementioned excerpt from the foreword of *The Bluest Eye*.

5. A classroom discussion of Morrison’s inspiration for writing the novel from both video clip as well as the excerpt should follow. Questions about why Morrison views her friend with such disdain at having heard her wish and how this conflict affects society on an individual level is important for students to consider at this point.

6. Students will then compose a one page reflection on the two questions below. Note: It may be helpful to have students look at supplementary materials such as magazines and newspapers prior to the composition of their reflective essays.
   
   - What is beauty? Consider the following as you write: Think about someone that you feel is beautiful. Why do you believe that this individual is beautiful? What are some attributes that make a person beautiful?
   
   - How does society’s portrayal of what is beautiful influence the individual’s definition of beauty? Consider the following as you write: The media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, television, movies, etc.) and how it plays a role in how beauty is defined.
7. After students have had an opportunity to reflect, they will be asked to share their responses with their peers. These responses should facilitate a discussion of one of the primary themes of *The Bluest Eye*, before they have actually begun reading the novel itself.

8. Student’s reflective essay may be graded using the following rubric.

### Reflective Essay: *The Bluest Eye*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4 - Above Standards</th>
<th>3 - Meets Standards</th>
<th>2 - Approaching Standards</th>
<th>1 - Below Standards</th>
<th>Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Paragraph</td>
<td>The introductory paragraph has a strong hook or attention grabber that is appropriate for the audience.</td>
<td>The introductory paragraph has a hook or attention grabber, but it is weak, rambling or inappropriate for the audience.</td>
<td>The author has an interesting introductory paragraph but the connection to the topic is not clear.</td>
<td>The introductory paragraph is not interesting AND is not relevant to the topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capitalization &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>Author makes no errors in capitalization or punctuation, so the essay is exceptionally easy to read.</td>
<td>Author makes 1-2 errors in capitalization or punctuation, but the essay is still easy to read.</td>
<td>Author makes a few errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader’s attention and interrupt the flow.</td>
<td>Author makes several errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader’s attention and interrupt the flow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>A variety of thoughtful transitions are used. They clearly show how ideas are connected</td>
<td>Transitions show how ideas are connected, but there is little variety.</td>
<td>Some transitions work well, but some connections between ideas are fuzzy.</td>
<td>The transitions between ideas are unclear OR nonexistent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>All sentences are well-constructed with varied structure.</td>
<td>Most sentences are well-constructed and there is some varied sentence structure in the essay.</td>
<td>Most sentences are well-constructed, but there is no variation in structure.</td>
<td>Most sentences are not well-constructed or varied.</td>
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<td>Grammar &amp; Spelling</td>
<td>Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
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