

Our Oakland

Grade 9

Length of Unit: 4 weeks

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Overview of unit: This expository writing unit is part of a much larger unit which aims to develop interviewing skills. As a model for effective interviewing and inspiration for issues to investigate, students read Anna Deveare-Smith's Twilight Los Angeles as well as Our America by LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman. For the sake of this package, I have tried to divorce the expository writing from the reading component, though they were very much intertwined. Any gaps in lessons are attributed to reading activities and class time students used to write their essays.

In this unit, students will identify issues of concern in their Oakland communities. They will learn how to write good questions. Students will also learn the etiquette of interviewing strangers and gain practice doing so. The information they gather from conducting these interviews will be used as evidence in their final expository essay in which they answer the essential question below.

Essential question(s): What wounds exist in our Oakland and how can we heal them? How does your issue affect life in Oakland?

Differentiating Instruction: Included the handouts and resources is "Handout_Day_8.1" This is the essay packet, which provides scaffolds and structures for reluctant writers. In some cases these structures are debilitating for more fluent and confident writers, and students should be encouraged to outline and pre-write in other ways that suit their needs. Additionally, for struggling writers, integrating quotes from their interviews proved to be very challenging. Allowances for these students should be made to assure that they are writing a cohesive essay. For these students, one piece of anecdotal evidence in the entire essay is the new goal, rather than three.

Connection to these standards:

Writing Applications – 1,500 words or more

2.3 Write expository compositions, including analytical essays and research reports:

- a. Marshal evidence in support of a thesis and related claims, including information on all relevant perspectives.
- b. Convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources accurately and coherently.
- c. Make distinctions between the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas.
- d. Include visual aids by employing appropriate technology to organize and record information on charts, maps, and graphs.

- e. Anticipate and address readers' potential misunderstandings, biases and expectations.
- f. Use technical terms and notations accurately.

Writing Strategies

Students write coherent and focused essays that convey a well-defined perspective and tightly reasoned argument. The writing demonstrates students' awareness of the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

- 1.1 Establish a controlling impression or **coherent thesis** that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a **consistent tone** and **focus** throughout the piece of writing.
- 1.2 Use **precise language**, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate modifiers, and the active rather than the passive voice.
- 1.3 Use **clear research questions** and suitable research methods (e.g., library, electronic media, personal interview) to elicit and present evidence from primary and secondary sources.
- 1.4 Develop the main ideas within the body of the composition through supporting **evidence** (e.g., scenarios, commonly held beliefs, hypotheses, and definitions).
- 1.5 Synthesize information from **multiple sources** and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information and the different perspectives found in each medium (e.g., almanacs, microfiche, news sources, in-depth field studies, speeches, journals, technical documents).
- 1.6 **Integrate quotations and citations** into a written text while maintaining the flow of ideas.
- 1.7 Use appropriate **conventions** for documentation in the text, notes, and bibliographies by adhering to those in style manuals (e.g., *Modern Language Association Handbook*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*).
- 1.8 Design and publish documents by using advanced publishing software and graphic programs.
- 1.9 **Revise** writing to improve the logic and coherence of the organization and controlling perspective, the precision of word choice, and the tone by taking into consideration the audience, purpose, and formality of the context.

Resources:

[Our America](#) by LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman with David Isay. Published by Pocket in 1998. ISBN: 0671004646

[Twilight Los Angeles](#) by Anna Deavere-Smith. Published by Anchor in 1994. ISBN: 0385473761

"Facing History, Facing Ourselves" resources for Our America. Visit their website: <http://www.facinghistory.org/campus/reslib.nsf>

Our Oakland Calendar

Guiding Question: *What wounds exist in our Oakland and how can we heal them?*

	Activities	Homework
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Brainstorm issues in Oakland– Develop initial and follow-up questions for first interview– Complete analysis of first interview (“So What?” #1).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Write interview questions and decide on who to interview– Conduct first interview
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Conduct second and third interviews– Complete analysis of these interviews (“So What?” #2 and #3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Conduct 2nd and 3rd interviews.
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Prewriting activities for expository essay– Thesis writing– Complete outline in “Our Oakland” packet.– Write essay from outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Complete essay packet
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Direct instruction on concluding paragraphs– Peer Assessment– Revision Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Complete Revision Plan and follow through on revisions.– Final Drafts due!

LESSON PLANS

DAY 1

DO NOW: Journal Write: 1) *What does the word ghetto mean to you? What do you think of when you think of this word?* 2) *What does the word “neighborhood” mean to you? How is it’s meaning similar or different to the word “ghetto”?*

1)Extra Credit Share:

- Students who read what they wrote for their journal writing today will get extra credit. Let’s hear multiple voices.

2)Mini-Lesson:

- Ask students to take notes on the bottom of their journal writing from today. They will copy directly from the OHP (overhead projector)
 - ❖ Denotation: the strict definition of a word, as found in the dictionary *Ex: A home is the place where someone lives.*
 - ❖ Connotation: the meaning of a word beyond its dictionary definition; all of the emotion and implications (both good and bad) that we bring to a word.
Ex: The positive connotation of home is that you feel safe there, and loved. For some people the word home has a negative connotation because they are not happy at home.
- Write down the denotation and connotation of the word “ghetto.” Ask for a volunteer to look up ghetto in the dictionary.
 - ❖ Denotation: a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live because of social, legal, or economic pressure. *Is there anything negative or positive associated with this meaning? Not really.*
 - ❖ During the Middle Ages, the church enacted a series of laws that isolated Jews from their Christian neighbors. In many places in Europe, Jews were forced to live in a ghetto—a separate section of a town or city. Sometimes officials built high walls around that section of the city and placed Christian guards at every gate. In the 1700s and 1800s those walls began to crumble. Most countries now allowed Jews to mix freely with others in the community. The ghettos were abandoned until Adolf Hitler re-established them during World War II.
 - ❖ Connotation: a poor place where people of color are forced to live because of racism and discrimination, a place that is difficult to escape because of violence, a place that has so much struggle and beauty, where kids have to find creative ways to have fun – for example. *Make sure students are contributing to the connotation definition so that I am not putting connotations on the word for them.*

3) Pair/Share:

- Discuss the following questions with your partner: *LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman call their radio documentary GHETTO LIFE 101 (this was later turned into Our America). What does the word ghetto mean to them? How do you think their community is different than the ghettos of the Middle Ages? How do you think it is similar?*
- Share with class: how do you guys feel about using the word ghetto? Do you understand that for some people it has a positive connotation but for others it has a negative? We have to be aware of these things.

HW: Look around your neighborhood as if you didn't live there. Start collecting thoughts in your mind about what you see, hear, smell, etc.

Materials Needed:

- OHP of the definitions and visual for students to follow
- Journal write prompt on the board

DAY 2

1) Brainstorm issues:

- *Soon you will be getting out into the community to explore what issues are really important there, just like LeAlan and Lloyd did. However, in order to have some common ground for what will become the main project of this semester, as a class we need to choose some central issues that we will investigate.*
- *Before we choose as a class, I want each of you to do some work on your own.*
- Pass out the “Brainstorm” graphic organizer and post the OHP version
- Begin by asking students to brainstorm all the different issues in Oakland, guiding them through this. Write what they say on the OHP. After a few minutes, tell them to continue on their own through Steps 2 and 3
- Students should pick three issues that really matter to them and then try to select just one.
- While they do this, I’m going to go around and see what they’ve chosen and make a tally so that I can get the highest priority issues up on the board (immigration policy, poverty, violence, racism, access to health care, etc.)

2) Share Out and Whole Class Vote:

- Once students have finished steps 1-3, I will write up on the board the top hits. I won't write up an issue that doesn't have at least three people attached to it.
- Give students some time to talk it out. If they want to give a reason why they think their issues should be one of the chosen, have them speak. We can only have three if we are going to be able to complete the group component at the end of the project.
- Vote and select THREE! (I hope this works)
- Of these three, have students write down the one that they are going to work on, on a notecard with their name. Collect notecards.
- Then, for homework, they need to brainstorm a list of 5-7 people they might be able to interview for this assignment. Emphasize that they must be a diverse group.

HW: At the bottom of your brainstorm graphic organizer, make a list of the people you could interview on this issue, taking into account diversity.

Materials Needed:

- Brainstorm Issues Handout
- OHP of handout
- Notecards for issue selection

DAY 3

1) Announce the Investigation Issues:

- Each class will be different
- Tell them that I tried my best to assign each student to one of their top choices, but that we had to go with some issues that had common ground for all of them.
- Pass back brainstorm sheet to each student with their issue circled on their paper.
- Then, they need to complete number 4 by adjusting for their new issues. They must pick a diverse group of people to interview: different races, ages, genders, incomes, etc. Monitor this as they work.

2) "Question Creation" Model:

- Pass out the handout to each student
- Go through how to fill out this handout by modeling on the OHP, using one of the central issues the students picked.
- They will be in a larger group of people who are investigating the same central issue, so they will work together to come up with good questions to ask about that issue, keeping in mind that some questions will not be appropriate for everyone to ask their subjects.

3) Large Group Work:

- Make it clear to students that the groups they are in today are support groups for this project, that doesn't mean these are the groups they will do their final project with.
- Fill out initial and follow-up questions for both level 1 and 2
- By the end of this time, students should know who they will ask their questions to and how they will get started

4) Assign Interview:

- *This weekend, you have three days to locate your first subject and conduct your interview.*
- Tell students they must take notes and/or record and transcribe what their interviewee says.
- They may tape or video record the interview. We have a limited number of tape recorders they can check out for the weekend (4 per class, no more). Or, they may be able to use their cell phone voice recorders to do, keeping in mind that these usually only record about 30 seconds. However, if they record, they have to then transcribe which can be time consuming. Keep this in mind!
- Interviews are due on Monday.
- Answer questions
- Go over how to use the tape recorder and check out to students who want to use it this weekend (Emmanuel!)

HW: Conduct your first interview around the central issue that you chose. You cannot change your central issue.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the "Question Creation" handout & OHP
- Circled issue on student brainstorm sheets
- "Tips for Asking Good Questions" handout

DAY 4

1) Quote and Response:

- Model how to respond to a quote by using an OHP of the "So What?" document with examples.
- Tell students that by doing this, when it comes time for them to write their essay it will be soooooo much easier! So pay attention!
- Give students time to do this on their own after walking them through the whole process.
- They may be asked to finish Step #5 on their own for homework.
- Collect if they are finished. Also collect the interview notes that have been stamped off for being on time, if this task only takes this period to finish

HW: Finish combining your writing for Step #5

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the “So What?” packet
- OHP of the “So What?” packet

DAY 5

1) Question Creation:

- Match up students in pairs within their larger issue support group (from an opposite small group so they will get a variety of questions in their larger groups)
- In their pairs today, they need to write questions for their second interviews. They should tailor their questions to the person they are actually going to be asking.

2) Independent Work:

- “Question Creation” for the third interview
- Check out tape recorders to students who want them

HW: Conduct your second interview. Notes are due on Thursday!**Materials Needed:**

- Copies of the “Question Creation” handout again (2 copies for each student = 140)
- list of student groups to make pairs from
- interviewee permission forms

DAY 6

DO NOW: Take out your Interview #2 questions, notes, and permission forms. Staple them together with the interview on top.

1) Project Overview:

- Pass out the project overview
- Go over on the OHP with students and answer any questions
- Emphasize the need for diverse perspectives and visuals.

2) Direct Instruction “So What?:”

- Give the class some general feedback from Monday’s “So What?”
 - Reflect on the interview as a whole and then on a specific piece of the interview (a quote)
 - Don’t feel stuck using the same sentence structures I used. If you use the sentence, “I used to think...” you are telling your reader that the interviewee changed your mind. You must then tell them how they changed your mind. Don’t use this unless you mean it!

- Many students did not combine #2 with #4.
- Show Alina's example and point out what is good about it: transition, use of quote, it all makes sense!
- Pass out "So What" #2.

3) Independent Work Time:

- Students should work on answering the "So what" of their Interview #2
- If they finish in class, they can turn it in before leaving today. Otherwise, it is due tomorrow at the latest!

**If there's still time, Question Creation for Interview #3

HW: Finish "So What #2." Finish reading Chapter 16. Study for tomorrow's vocab quiz.

Materials Needed:

- "So What #2" copies
- OHP of student sample of "So What #1"

DAY 7

1) "So What?:"

- Ask students to take out their third and final interview.
- I will stamp these off while a student passes out the third and final "So What?" packet
- Students have the remainder of the period to work on these.
- If possible, pass back the "So What?" packet #2 for them to see how they improved from #1 to #2
- They need to turn in the "So What?" packet to the writing folders
- Tell them Interview #3 and "So What?" #3 will be collected tomorrow.

HW: Complete your "So What?" #3

Materials Needed:

- Copies of "So What?" #3 Packets
- Corrected "So What?" #2 Packets

DAY 8

DO NOW: 1) Turn in your typed documentary poems, each one with your name on it as it was on the sample poem. Do NOT turn in your

interviews because you need them for today! 2) Go to your writing folder and take out your “So What” #1

*At this point, I will pass back “So What” #2 and #3

1) Our Oakland introduction:

- *By now you probably know that all of the work you’ve done in the last month or so was in preparation for you to write an essay! You have a chance to bring everything you’ve learned about the issue you chose into one place and show what you know. Remember how you wrote an expository essay about Oakland? Well, now you are going to get more specific and improve upon the work you did before.*
- *Your final essay will be a part of the portfolio you are going to put together of work from all of your classes this year and will be on display for parents, teachers, and community members to look at during Exhibition Night!*
- *What I’m going over today is very important. In order to do well in this class, you’ll want to do well on this essay. Please listen carefully.*
- Post the OHP at this point and walk students through the opening of the essay. Tell them that you are going to walk them through the stages of writing this essay.
- Pass out the packet but ask them not to flip through (don’t want to overwhelm yet)

2) Quickwrite:

- *This quickwrite does not go in your notebook, but rather on a separate piece of paper. It is not numbered. In order to do this quickwrite, you need to have on your desk your 1) “So What” packets, 2) 3 interviews, 3) Math packets. Please take out all the materials you will need. You have 20 minutes to write.*
 - What do you believe about your issue now that you’ve conducted your research?
 - How has your opinion changed since you began this project?
 - What are the three main reasons why your issue affects your Oakland neighborhood?
 - How do the statistics that you found in Math support or go against your opinions?

3) Prewriting Step #2:

- Lead students through looking over their quickwrite and identifying three main points.
- When they are done, they need to turn to a neighbor and tell them what they think the three main points are. Model this by using the example essay.
- Post the OHP of the model essay at this point and review the thesis statement of that essay and explain.

4) Prewriting Step #3:

- Point out to students that they may have only one main point to make or they may have more than one. The blanks can be used or not.
- Have students fill in this part and check each thesis statement.
- Remind students that their thesis may change as they begin to write their essay because we often discover what it is we want to say as we write. It's okay to go back and change the thesis to fit.

5) Set-Up Introductory Paragraph:

- Go through line by line and ask questions like, "What is a catchy line or hook?" Then, "Let's look at an example from the teachers' essay."
- Tell students they will need to write just their introductory paragraph in the outline for homework.

**If there's still time, finish reading the model essay

HW: Complete the outline of your introductory paragraph (page 2 of your packet)

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the "Our Oakland Essay" packet
- OHP of packet
- Class set of model essay & OHP (need a few more)
- Graded and recorded "So What" packets for each class

DAY 9

DO NOW: 1) Take out your essay packet and turn to page 2 for a homework stamp.

1) Model Essay Review & Dissection of a Paragraph:

- Read the essay together with copies in front of students.
- When you get to body paragraph #2, post the "Math At Large" document on the overhead so that we can dissect the paragraph.
- Walk students through each step of the paragraph and the graphic organizer.
- Things to point out:
 - Point out what gets deleted when it's time to write out in an essay format.
 - Tell students that if they work really hard on their outline, their essay is practically written for them
 - Point out that this is the format for each paragraph. Point out the lead-ins in the margin.

- Let them know that if they want to write more than three body paragraphs they can, and I have extra graphic organizers for them.

2) Begin Outline:

- Students work independently to fill out their outline, which will lead to their essay.
- I will be closely monitoring and working with students who need extra help.

HW: Finish your essay outline. Be ready to begin writing your essay on Monday! Your rough draft will be due Tuesday.

Materials Needed:

- OHP and class set of model essay
- “Math at Large” OHP
- Patience!

DAY 10

DO NOW: Take out the typed copy of your essay (all four paragraphs for now). Staple the rough draft to your yellow essay packet (put the rough draft on top).

1) Review Essay Rubric:

- Pass out copies of the revised essay rubric and go through it line by line for 1-4. Answer questions.
- Make sure students understand the idea of a Controlling Idea and what they are looking for as they read their partner’s paper.
- Emphasize that this is a holistic rubric so they are really looking for an overall sense of how the writer did, not just focusing on one of the criterion.

2) Assessment of Essay:

- Post the list of student pairs on the overhead along with the questions they will need to answer. These questions should be answered directly on the essay itself (the back, or the white space at the end of the essay).
- They need to answer the following questions:
 1. Based on the rubric, what grade would you give your partner’s essay?
 2. What evidence do you have to support your decision to give your partner this grade?
 3. Write down two things that they could do tonight to improve their essay in a significant way.

4. Now, go through the essay and make any grammar and spelling changes that are needed. Indicate any places where the essay does not make sense to you by writing comments in the margins.

3) Self-Assessment of Essay:

- Students get their essay back from their partners and read over the comments they made for them.
- Then, answer the following questions:
 1. What do you think about your partner's assessment of your essay?
 2. What will you change for homework tonight?

HW: Revise your essay, print up a clean copy of it, and staple the new copy on top of the others.

Materials Needed:

- OHP or rubrics
- Class set of rubrics
- OHP of peer/self-edit questions to be answered
- OHP list of student pairs

DAY 11

DO NOW: Take out your essay packet with your second rough draft on top of your essay packet.

1) Direct Instruction – Concluding Paragraphs

- Ask students to take out their model essay, the one that Ms. Hamilton and I wrote together.
- Walk students through the last page of the packet.
- Remind them to answer the essential questions at the top of the page. If they haven't answered it yet, they need to pull it together in the conclusion.
- Go over the bulleted ideas for ending the conclusion.
- Review transitions
- Rewrite the concluding paragraph into the student document (last page of their essay packet)

2) Student Writing Time:

- Students will work on writing their conclusion paragraph in class and finish it for homework (must be typed).

HW: Finish writing your conclusion paragraph and add it to your second draft. Then print a new copy of your essay and staple it to the top. I will collect this tomorrow!

Materials Needed:

- OHP of Model Essay (Handout_Day_8.3)
- OHP of conclusion page in the writing packet

DAY 12

1) Essay Reflection/Collection:

- Take out your third draft which must include all paragraphs (and conclusion).
- Staple it to the top of your essay packet.
- On the back of your most recent version of the essay, answer the following questions:
 1. What do you think you did really well on your essay?
 2. What was the most challenging part of writing this essay for you?

DAY 13

1) Essay Revision Direct Instruction:

- Show model sentences and paragraphs on the overhead
- Talk about what makes these models good/smooth out some together
- Discuss introducing people in the quotes, matching theses with topic sentences, and title.

2) Revision Partners:

- Match students up and ask them to exchange papers.
- Their goal is to hear their partner's ideas on the issues. In most cases, I matched students with the person who had ideas that were most similar so they could share statistics and ways of supporting those ideas.

HW: Complete your revision plan. Come prepared tomorrow to revise your essay.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of essay feedback and revision plan handout
- OHP of the student handout
- All essays graded and recorded in the gradebook

DAY 14

1) Direct Instruction on Dissecting a Paragraph:

- *As you know, or will find out in Ms. Hamilton's class today, part of your final project for "Our Oakland" is to get together with your group members and decide on what your two recommendations are for changing the issue you chose here in Oakland. Today, we will look at an example she and I wrote based on the information you've already read in our essay.*
- Pass out the two-sided handout
- Read the paragraph once asking students to follow along. Let them know that you will be stopping sometimes to let them fill in the word and make sure they are reading along.
- Ask students to turn to their partner and underline the first and second suggestion for change.
- Then, share out.
- Ask them if they can identify how they knew that this was the first and second suggestion. Hint: "First" and "second"
- Next move to the dissection of the paragraph. Read through again, this time stopping to fill in the arrows as we go. Do the first two together. Then do the third as a whole class. The fifth in partners and the sixth on their own. Check for comprehension.

2) Set-up for "Paragraph Planning:"

- Direct students to look at the backside of their paper.
- Point out that the structure of our paragraph is shown for them on this side and tell them that tomorrow, we will be asking them to meet with their groups, decide on their suggestions, and write this paragraph.
- Tell them to follow our model, use the transition words, and write a paragraph with their group. It will need to be typed.
- Answer questions

**HW: Finish essay revisions. Final essay (2 copies) due tomorrow!
Practice reading your poem.**

Materials Needed:

- "Suggestions for Change" handout & OHP