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English 112B Sec 1

Prof. Warner

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Unit of Study

Young Adults and Self-Forgiveness

Why This Theme?

The theme of self-forgiveness is important as it can have a significant impact on personal growth and emotional perseverance. Many young adults are at a point in their lives where they blame themselves for things they may not have control over and have a hard time forgiving themselves for mistakes they may have made. By incorporating literature that is related to the theme of self-forgiveness, redemption, and self-acceptance I could help create a safe space for students to explore and understand these complex emotions.

The Core Text

We Were Here by Matt de la Peña

Matt de la Peña's *We Were Here* follows Miguel, a teenager dealing with guilt and seeking redemption after an accident that leads to his incarceration in a group home. Through a journey of self-discovery and unexpected friendships, Miguel comes to terms with his past and learns the importance of self-forgiveness. This story offers a deep insight into the theme of self-forgiveness, making it the perfect core text for my curriculum.

Supplementary Young Adult Literature

Where She Went by Gayle Forman

This novel is a sequel to *If I Stay* and is told from the perspective of Adam Wilde, Mia Hall's former boyfriend, three years after the events of the first book. Adam is now a successful rock star, but he is deeply unhappy and haunted by his past. After Mia recovered from the car accident that killed her family, she left Adam without explanation, which left him emotionally shattered. One night in New York City, their paths cross unexpectedly. Over the course of a single evening, they confront their unresolved feelings, the choices that led them apart, and the lingering pain from their shared tragedy. The story explores themes of love, loss, forgiveness, and the journey toward healing, with an emphasis on Adam's need to forgive himself for past mistakes and to find closure.

The Tragedy Paper by Elizabeth LaBan

Set in a prestigious boarding school, this novel intertwines the stories of two boys dealing with guilt and the quest for forgiveness, highlighting the impact of past actions on present lives. Tim Macbeth, a socially awkward teenager, and Duncan Meade, a current student who inherits Tim's room and, along with it, a set of CDs recounting Tim's tragic story. Tim's narrative reveals his struggle to fit in at the School and his unhappy romance with Vanessa, a popular girl who is already in a relationship. As Duncan listens to Tim's recordings, he confronts his own guilt over a past incident involving a classmate, tying his story thematically to Tim's. The novel's focus on the school's senior assignment, "The Tragedy Paper," really highlights the exploration of guilt, redemption, and self-forgiveness. Through the perspectives of the two, the book dives into

themes of regret, the consequences of choices, and the difficulty of forgiving oneself, making it a great example of human flaws and resilience.

When You Were Everything by Ashley Woodfolk

Cleo is a teenage girl who tries to come to terms with the end of her close friendship with her best friend, Layla. The novel switches between past and present events before and after the friendship's breakup as well as the events that led to their fallout in the first place. This includes misunderstandings, insecurities, and the challenges of change. In the end, Cleo struggles to move forward and rebuild her identity without Layla, as well as develop new friendships because she keeps dealing with guilt over her part in their friendship's end. Through Cleo's journey, the novel examines themes of forgiveness, both of others and oneself, as well as the importance of personal growth and letting go of the past. It's a great choice for diving into how relationships shape us and the resilience it takes to rebuild after loss.

Unit Launch Activity

Reflective Writing SSW Style:

This activity will encourage students to write about personal experiences where they wanted forgiveness or struggled to forgive themselves, enabling them to reflect on past feelings as well as build a foundation of the unit's overall theme. Also, there will be questions regarding what self-forgiveness means to them, what are common challenges to self-forgiveness, and what is its significance to personal growth. After there will be a period to share with the class. This will later be referenced in future activities as we progress through the unit.

Reading and Analysis

After reading each text, students are required to turn in a quick writing analysis on the following two topics:

Character Studies

Analyze protagonists' journeys toward self-forgiveness, focusing on their internal conflicts and resolutions.

Thematic Exploration:

Examine how each narrative portrays the process of forgiving oneself and the factors that facilitate or challenge this journey.

Creative Projects

At any point in the Unit, students may pick one text to do one of the following two activities.

Monologues:

Students create and perform monologues from the perspective of characters coming to terms with self-forgiveness, deepening their understanding of the emotional landscape.

Artistic Expression:

Create visual art pieces that represent themes of redemption and self-acceptance, allowing for personal interpretation and expression. (I thought of this after thinking of the brown bag item activity).

Concluding Activities

Class Discussions:

Go around reflecting on the insights from the novels that we gained about self-forgiveness and how these lessons can be applied in real-life contexts. We will discuss the challenges our characters faced as well as how they overcame said challenges in order to come to terms with themselves.

Personal Narratives:

Students will write a personal narrative or essay that connects the themes explored throughout the unit to their own experiences, connecting back to their personal reflection at the beginning of the unit. The point of this assignment is to promote personal growth and empathy.

By engaging with these texts and activities, students can develop a better understanding of self-forgiveness, recognizing its challenges and the profound impact it can have on their lives.