

"The Importance of Choice"

Standards

CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.1
CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.3.E
CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.1.D

Lesson Time

30-35 minutes

Essential Question

What is the role of choice in *written* language use?

Key Vocabulary

Glossary

- Dialect
- Standard English
- Non-Standard English
- African American Vernacular English (AAVE)
- Tone

Lesson Materials

Two Excerpts

- The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin
- Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston
- Comparative Questions Handout
- Pencil/Pen
- Tablet/Paper

Higher Order Questions

- How does the author’s choice of dialect connect to the text’s purpose?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of writing in one dialect rather than another in different settings?
- How does dialect influence how the audience interacts with a text?

Assessment of Objective

- Students will be able to reflect on how the choice of using different dialects in writing is influenced by the audience and purpose of the text.
- Students will be able to compare how AAVE and Standard English influence how the text communicates the author’s message.

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Lesson Sequence

1. Partner Discussion (3-7 minutes)

- Discovering dialects
 - Students discuss with their partner how they have been taught to write essays, science papers, poetry, and creative writing in school
 - Students discuss how their writing in school might differ from writing they do outside of the classroom (*eg. personal journaling, texting, blogs/social media posts*)
 - Students discuss if they have ever read something that sounded “different” or more “informal” compared to what they read in their assigned books and share their experiences of how they reacted
 - Eg. think about dialogue or poetry versus research papers*
- Teacher may transition into comparing authors work after explaining the definition of a dialect

2. Comparative Writing Analysis (10-13 minutes)

- Comparative Questions Handout
 - Summarize the passage
 - What similarities and differences do you notice between the texts on a sentence level?
 - Eg. Hurson’s use of the apostrophe for contractions compared to Baldwin’s lack of contractions*
 - How does the use of AAVE support the purpose of the first passage?
 - Eg. author is showcasing natural dialogue*
 - How does the use of Standard English support the purpose of the second passage?
 - Eg. author is writing a published letter*
 - How does the way the author writes change the tone of the text?
 - Eg. changes in formality*

3. Reflective Writing (7-10 minutes)

- Students write a reflection regarding what was discussed and noticed about authors’ dialectical choices
 - Since you can choose how you write, in what circumstances and for what audience would you write in Standard English or non-standard English? Consider the influence of factors such as the setting’s formality and your social status compared to the other person.

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Idea to Continue This Lesson

Journal Prompts

- Students are given a prompt weekly/monthly and are invited to free write an answer to the prompt concerning writing in different dialects
 - When/where did you see a text written in a different dialect? What did you notice about that piece of writing?
 - Write a dialogue between two people using two different dialects
 - Reflect on what would happen if everyone wrote in their own dialect all the time
 - What does writing in a dialect mean to you?