Teaching Unit Plan on Stereotyping

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: THE PURPOSE OF THIS NINE WEEK UNIT PLAN IS TO USE SHORT STORIES, NOVELS, FILMS AND POETRY TO EXPOSE STUDENTS TO AND INFORM STUDENTS ABOUT THE MANY WAYS THAT PEOPLE STEREOTYPE ONE ANOTHER.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR STUDENTS DURING STEREOTYPING UNIT

1. The student should have a better understanding at the end of this unit of the many forms that stereotyping can assume than the understanding the student had before he or she was exposed to the unit.

2. The student should be able to discuss the different purposes of the creators of different mediums of expression. For example, the student should be able to discuss intelligently the different purposes an author of a short story might have compared to the purposes of a filmmaker presenting essentially the same material.

3. The student should be able to compare and contrast parts of a written work with parts of the film version of that work with sufficient skill so that a reader or listener could comprehend the student's main points.

4. The student should be able to recognize that every person is stereotyped at one point or more often in his or her life, and the student should be able to differentiate between when these stereotypes are harmful and when these stereotypes may be beneficial.

5. The student should be able to write about stereotyping, about film versus written work, and the student should be able to create an individual project within guidelines using either stereotyping or comparing written works with the film versions of those works.
MATERIALS TO BE USED DURING STEREOTYPING UNIT

FILMS

THE EYE OF THE STORM
THE BREAKFAST CLUB
BILL COSBY ON PREJUDICE
THE SKY IS GRAY
THE CHOSEN
REFINER'S FIRE

LITERATURE

Selections from Richard Wright's Uncle Tom's Children
Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun
N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn
Chaim Potok's The Chosen
Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God
William Bradford Huie's "The South Kills Another Negro"
Dolores Curran's recorded interview "The Slum Is Me..."
Clavin Skagg's "An Interview with Ernest J. Gaines"

OTHER MATERIALS

A film projector, a take-up reel and a screen would be needed.
A television and a video tape machine would be needed.
Some type of machine capable of making copies would be needed to
duplicate the poems, worksheets and assignment sheets included
within the text of this unit.
THE STUDENTS THIS UNIT WAS WRITTEN FOR

This Unit Plan is organized primarily to be used with an upper level, probably Senior level, college preparatory class. The Unit also has been developed with two assumptions taken by the author of the Unit Plan. These two assumptions are that the students in the classroom are able to read and that the students in the classroom are not hostile to the teacher. If the class has members who are not able to read or who are hostile to the teacher, then some ramifications in the Unit Plan may be necessary.
UNIT PLAN ON STEREOTYPING

On the initial day of this Unit, the students will be shown the twenty-eight minute film THE EYE OF THE STORM. This film is a re-enactment of an actual classroom experiment done in an elementary classroom in Riceville, Iowa. In this experiment, the classroom teacher encourages the students to stereotype one another on the basis of eye and hair color, and the filmmaker simply records how the students treat one another. The discussion following the film will focus primarily on how the students treat one another and how they feel about themselves when they are in the group which is told they are the superior group and also how they treat one another and feel about themselves when they are in the group which is told they are inferior group. The teacher will attempt to direct the discussion about the film's message in an attempt to attain a working definition of the term "stereotype" and in an attempt to clearly explain to the students the purpose of the Unit they will be participating in for the next nine weeks.

On the second day of the first week, the students will be shown the first part of the ninety minute film THE BREAKFAST CLUB. The presentation of this film will be prefaced with a discussion which will explain that some of the language in the film and some of the topics discussed in the film are intended for a mature audience, and the students will be told that the teacher expects them to view the film focusing on the filmmaker's attempt to present a message through the film. [This author, as many
other teachers might, feels that she should first acquire the approval of each of the student's parents before showing THE BREAKFAST CLUB. A possible alternative to showing this film would be to show the film REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE.

On the third day of the first week, the students would be shown the remaining portion of THE BREAKFAST CLUB. The discussion following the film would focus primarily on the responses the students have to specific scenes in the film which discuss stereotypes. For example, a scene in the latter part of the film discusses how the five students will treat one another when they return to their classes on Monday and the reasons why they feel they have to treat one another in certain ways. A very strong message is given in this scene about peer pressure, and that message may become the central focus of the discussion. Also, the teacher should attempt to point out [if not simply replay] some of the lines spoken by the students in the film and ask students for their responses to those lines. For example, at the beginning of the film the athlete tells the delinquent that he simply does not matter, that if he were to disappear from the school or from life nobody would notice. Later in the film, the viewer learns that the delinquent may very well be the most intelligent, certainly the most perceptive, of the five students, and the viewer sees the character remind the athlete how badly he treated another person simply because of his appearance and reputation. This film almost demands that the teacher view it once or twice before showing it to his or her students so that he or she can find lines such as those mentioned above. This
also would provide the teacher with an opportunity to choose only certain scenes to show to his or her students if he or she finds difficulty with some of the language or any of the topics discussed. The film's central focus is stereotyping, and this author feels very strongly that the additional amount of time and effort required to prepare the film for presentation to the students would certainly be time and effort exceptionally well spent. At the end of the hour, the students would be told that they are to write a response to one of the two films to be handed in at the beginning of the hour the following day. This response must be at least two paragraphs which synopsize the message or one of the messages of the film the student chooses to write about, and the response must explain how the student felt about the message presented, as well as an explanation of why the student thinks he/she had this response.

On the fourth day of the first week, the students would turn in the assignment from the previous day, and then they would view the twenty-five minute film BILL COSBY ON PREJUDICE. This film presents a person, Bill Cosby, who is prejudiced against everyone. Every student in every class would be stereotyped by Bill Cosby at least once in this film. The man in the film declares that all people, old people, children, Niggers, Japanese, Indians, Chinese, Jewish people, Catholics, Protestants, and may other people, should be taken out of society and put somewhere. He emphasizes purifying society, but he stereotypes so many groups that seemingly no one person is left to be a member of this purified society. This film is not humorous as are most works Bill Cosby is in, but the film makes a point dramatically.
The students may react to this film in many different ways. The teacher would ask the students to write a response to the film in paragraph form. The paragraphs would be collected and read by the teacher without the name of the student who wrote the paragraph being revealed. These paragraphs would simply be graded on a credit/no credit basis.

If time permitted, a discussion about whether or not Bill Cosby is effective in this role could be started. The teacher could also ask the students to support his or her reaction to the film and to Bill Cosby in that particular role. The teacher could also begin to discuss techniques, such as lighting and camera angles, used by the filmmaker to evoke certain feelings from the audience.

On the fifth day of the first week, the students would participate in an exercise. In this exercise, the students would be put into groups. Ideally, the groups would consist of four students, but a variation in number from three to five per group should not hinder the effectiveness of the exercise. The activities in these groups would center around labeling. Each student would draw a slip from a pile of slips and have another student in the group put that slip on his or her forehead so that the student wearing the label never sees what is written on the label. Labels similar to those used to put names on gifts could be used because they have adhesive on the backs of them. Plain white labels would be used. Each student in each group would have a label on his or her forehead. The groups
would each be given a certain situation and told that the group has fifteen minutes to solve the problem or problems posed by the situation. The point of the exercise is to have each student ignore what every other student is saying while reacting only to the labels on the foreheads of the students in his or her group. A small list of labels is given below to illustrate what exactly is meant by a label.

One student would wear the label which says "Agree with me."
One student would wear the label which says "Act shy when I speak."
One student would wear the label which says "Laugh at what I say."
One student would wear the label which says "Smile at me."
One student would wear the label which says "Listen to me."
One student would wear the label which says "Ask me questions."
One student would wear the label which says "Treat me like a child."
One student would wear the label which says "Compliment me."

Many more labels for this exercise could easily be developed. The intent of the exercise is to get the students only to pay attention to the labels on the other students' foreheads. After the fifteen minutes have elapsed, each student is supposed to be able to determine what the label on his or her forehead actually says. The point of doing this exercise is that the students learn what it feels like to be labeled, and in a loose way stereotyped, without knowing why they are being labeled. Even if the student in this exercise is able to recognize what the label on his or her forehead says, he or she will not be able to do anything about being labeled, which leads directly into the discussions to be held during the remainder of this Unit.
On the first day of the second week, the students would be given a worksheet with passages from *Uncle Tom's Children*, *House Made of Dawn*, *The Chosen*, and *Their Eyes were Watching God*. This worksheet can be found immediately following this page. The students would be asked to read the passages and then be asked to write descriptions of the person speaking in each of the passages. The students would be given twenty to twenty-five minutes to write their descriptions.

After the students have finished writing their descriptions, the teacher would begin a discussion by going through each passage and asking the students to describe the person speaking. The oral responses would be recorded on the blackboard by the teacher for each of the passages. The teacher would help facilitate the discussion by asking questions such as those listed below:

1. What led you to come to that conclusion about the speaker?
2. Can you point to a specific detail in the passage that suggests your description or did you just feel the speaker had those qualities?
3. Why are some of the descriptions on the board easily agreed upon by the class? Why are some of the other descriptions causing disagreement among class members?
4. Why do you think the speaker would look like that?
5. Does a person's speech reveal very much about him or her, or do we draw conclusions from the way people speak? Could these conclusions be mistaken? If so, what could be the result of such mistakes?

Each of these questions could easily involve an immense amount of time for discussion, but the teacher would attempt to direct the progress of the discussion toward question five because it leads directly into
DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET

During class, you are to read over the passages below. After reading each passage, write a complete description of the person speaking in the space provided. Tell me in your description if you think the speaker is young or old, male or female, rich or poor, smart or dumb, educated or not educated. You may tell me any other things you wish in your descriptions about the person speaking. Also, tell me what you think the person speaking would look like if you met him or her on the street.

Please put thought into your descriptions because they will be the basis for discussion taking place later this period. These descriptions WILL BE COLLECTED at the end of the hour for use later.

1. "Hello, Benally... Let's see your hands, Benally. Your hands, Benally, they're shaking. Who's your friend, Benally? Turn them over, Benally."

2. "Don't worry! Yuh'll git a chance t' ride in tha boat, Peewee. When Ah lef Bowmans place Ah caughta ride downtown in a motorboat with Brother Hall..."

3. "But nothing can't stop you from wishin'. You can't beat nobody down so low till you can rob 'em of they will. Ah didn't want to be used for a work-ox and a brood-sow and Ah didn't want mah daughter used dat way either."
4. "Oh yes. I wonder if you know of anyone here who will do some work for me. I have bought some wood that has to be cut. You see, I have taken a house at Los Ojos..."

5. "Yeah? Well, you watch guys like that, kid. You watch them real good, you hear? Anyone clops you, he's got a thing going. ...You watch them."

6. "I always wanted a bright boy for a son. And you are bright. I will tell you what they told me about the eye. The eye is all right. It is fine. In a few days they will remove the bandages and you will come home."

7. "You have to forget about the way it was, how you grew up and all. Sometimes it's hard, but you have to do it. Well, he didn't want to change....That made it a lot harder for him. He wasn't as lucky as the rest of us."

8. "And now listen to me further. In gematriya, the letters of the word 'traklin,' hall, the hall that refers to the world-to-come, come out three hundred ninety-nine, and 'prozdor', the vestibule, the vestibule that is the world, comes out five hundred thirteen."
the purpose of the Unit as a whole, which is to make the students more aware of the many different ways people stereotype one another. The discussion would last the portion of the hour not used filling out the worksheet. If the discussion does not develop, the teacher could begin the introduction to Richard Wright. At the end of the hour, the students would be given the assignment to be completed by the fifth day of the Unit. The students would be given copies of Uncle Tom's Children and told to read any three of the six sections of the book by the fifth day of that week. The students would also be told that the section entitled "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" is to be read for the next class meeting.

On the second day of the second week, the students would be given a break from the immense amount of material which has been presented to them in six class days. This day would be spent primarily as a day for reading and also to complete any presentations or assignments which the students might not have had time to complete.

On the third day of the second week, the teacher would lead a discussion of "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow." This discussion would be prepared with the students' knowledge of black/white relationships as its basis. The discussion would attempt to ascertain the students' perception about black/white relationships in their school, their neighborhoods, their places of employment, their parents' places of employment, and any other applicable situation. The purpose of the discussion is to ask the students if there is a difference in perception between black/white relationships in one setting as compared to those same relationships in another situation. If so, then why?
On the fourth day of the second week, the students would be shown the film THE SKY IS GRAY. Following the conclusion of the film, the students would be given a copy of Calvin Skagg's "An Interview with Ernest J. Gaines" to be read during class and discussed the following day.

On the fifth day of the second week, the students would be given an assignment to be completed during the class period. The students would be asked to pick any two of the three sections they chose to read from Uncle Tom's Children or to pick one of the three sections from the book and THE SKY IS GRAY and explain how they illustrate different responses to white racism by black victims of that racism. Each explanation should be at least one page in length, and each explanation should use generalizations supported by specific examples from the texts being used. The students would be told that these explanations would be graded just as a theme would be graded; therefore, they should follow all appropriate grammatical rules. The students would probably not have ample time to complete the assignment, so they would be given extra time if they request it.

On the first day of the third week, the students would be given copies of A Raisin in the Sun. The teacher would provide a very brief introduction to the play and some advice on how students should approach reading a play. The remainder of the class hour would be spent assigning roles to students. As in every class, some students will excel reading aloud and others will struggle; however, if the teacher knows his or her students well, he or she will be able to assign roles to the students which will best meet the needs of each student. Very often, the students
who are given the parts are the only students who actually listen during class. Therefore, each role could be assigned to more than one student with the students alternating every ten pages. The teacher should emphasize that the intent of reading the play aloud is not to torture the students, but rather the intent is to see genuine emotional response to the literature as it is read and felt by each student. If the teacher encourages the students to get very involved in the roles they are portraying, the students may actually enjoy reading aloud. In fact, the teacher's intent is to get the students to act as they read simply from emotional responses evoked from the lines Hansberry has written.

On the second and third days of the third week, the students would continue to read the play aloud, and discussions would be held about crucial lines in the play to enable the students to fully understand the play as a whole. At the end of the third day, the entire play would be discussed with discussion directed toward how the play belongs or does not belong with the other materials presented in the Unit thus far and the overall purpose of the Unit.

On the fourth day of the third week, the students would be allowed to discuss the response to the approach taken by the teacher in teaching the play. Any questions still lingering about the play or about the unit should be answered at this time. The students would be given copies of a few poems and asked to read them during class. Those poems are included following this page.

On the fifth day of the third week, the students would sit in a large circle and discuss black/white relationships. Specifically, the students would be asked to discuss the problems they perceived in the
He always wanted to say things. But no one understood. He always wanted to explain things. But no one cared.

Sometimes he would just draw and it wasn't anything. He wanted to carve it in stone or write it in the sky. He would lie out in the grass and look up to the sky. And it would be him and the sky and the things inside that needed saying.

It was after that, that he drew the picture. It was a beautiful picture. He kept it under his pillow and would let no one see it. And he would look at it every night and think about it. And when it was dark and his eyes were closed, he could still see it. And it was all of him. And he loved it.

When he started school, he brought it with him. Not to show anything, but just to have it with him—a friend. It was funny about school...He sat in a square, brown desk like all the other square, brown desks... But he thought it should be red. And his room was a square, brown room. Like all the rooms. And it was tight and close. And stiff.

He hated to hold the pencil and the chalk, with his arm stiff and his feet flat on the floor stiff, with the teacher watching and watching. And they had to write numbers. And they weren't anything. They were worse than the letters that could be something...if you put them together. And the numbers were tight and stiff and he hated the whole thing.

The teacher came and spoke to him. She told him to wear a tie like all the other boys. He said he didn't like them and she said it didn't matter. After that, they drew. And he drew all yellow and it was the way he felt about the morning. And it was beautiful.

The teacher came and smiled at him. "What's this?" she said. "Why don't you drew something like Ken's drawing? Isn't that beautiful?"

It was all questions. After that, his mother bought him a tie and he always drew airplanes and rocket ships like everyone else. And he threw the old picture away. And when he lay out alone looking at the sky, it was big and blue and all of everything but he wasn't anymore.

He was square inside and brown, and his hands were stiff, and he was like anyone else, and the thing inside him that needed saying didn't need saying anymore... It had stopped pushing. It was crushed. Stiff. Like everything else.

Anonymous
Don't be fooled by me.
Don't be fooled by the face I wear.
For I wear a mask, I wear a thousand masks,
masks that I'm afraid to take off,
and none of them are me.
Pretending is an art that's second
nature with me, but don't be fooled,
for God's sake, don't be fooled.
I give you the impression that I'm
secure and all is well with me,
that all is sunny and
unruffled with me, within as well
as without, that confidence is my
name and coolness is my name, that the
water's calm and I'm in command,
and that I need no one.
But don't believe me. Please.
My surface may seem smooth, but
my surface is my mask,
my ever-varying and ever-concealing
mask.
Beneath lies no smugness, no complacence.
Beneath dwells the real me, in confusion,
in fear, in aloneness,
But I hide this,
I don't want anybody to know it.
I panic at the thought of my weakness
and fear being exposed.
That's why I frantically create a mask
to hide behind, a nonchalant,
sophisticated facade, to help me pretend,
to shield me from
the glance that knows.
But such a glance is my
salvation. My only salvation.
And I know it.
That is if it's followed by acceptance,
if it's followed by love.
It's the only thing that can liberate me
from my self-built walls, from the
barriers that I so painstakingly erect.
It's the only thing that will assure me
of what I can't assure myself,
that I'm really worth something.
But I don't tell you this. I don't dare
I'm afraid to. I'm afraid that you'll think
less of me, that you'll laugh, and
your laugh would kill me.
I'm afraid that deep down inside my nothing
that I'm just no good, and that you
will see this and reject me.
So I play my game, my desperate pretending
game, with a facade of assurance
without and a trembling child within.
And so begins the parade of masks, the
glittering but empty parade of masks.
And my life becomes a front. I idly chatter
to you in the suave times of surface talk.
I tell you everything that's really nothing,
and nothing of what's everything, of what's crying
inside me. So when I'm going through
my routine, do no be fooled by what I'm saying.
Please listen carefully and try to
hear what I'm not saying, what I'd like to
be able to say, what for survival I need to say,
but can't say.
I dislike hiding, honestly. I dislike the
superficial game I'm playing, the superficial
phony game. I'd really like to be genuine
and spontaneous, and me, but you've got to help me. You've got to hold out your hand
even when that's the last thing I seem to want
or need. Only you can wipe away from my eyes
the blank stare of the breathing dead.
Only you can call me into aliveness. Each time
you're kind, and gentle, and encouraging,
each time you try to understand because
you really care, my heart begins to grow wings,
very small, very feeble, but wings.
With your sensitivity and sympathy, and your
power of understanding, you can breathe life
into me. I want you to know that.
I want you to know how important you are to me,
how you can be a creator of life, of the person
that is me if you choose to.
Please choose to. You can break down the
wall behind which I tremble, you alone can
remove my mask, you alone can release
me from my shadow world of panic and uncertainty,
from my lonely prison. So do not pass me by.
It will not be easy for you. A long conviction
of worthlessness builds strong walls; the
nearer you approach me, the harder I may
strike back. It's irrational, but despite
what books say about man, I am irrational.
I fight against the very thing I cry out for.
And in this lies hope. My only hope.
Please try to beat down those walls with
firm but gentle hands.
For a child is very sensitive.

Who am I you may wonder? I am somebody you
know very well. For I am every man
you meet and every woman you meet.

Anonymous
I AM MYSELF

I am myself
a person, a being, an individual
and as that individual
I have my emotions,
My feelings
and my flaws.
I seek not praise or pity,
only respect and understanding.
Do not try to mold me to suit your needs
or standards.
Nor try to impress your feelings and opinions
upon me.
Do not condemn me, or degrade me,
For not matching up to your design.
To do so would mean the loss of my identity.
And I would no longer be me.

I am myself,
a person, a being, and individual.
I have in myself a knowledge, and an awareness
of that which I am.
Though I am not within the realm of perfection,
I strive toward the limits of my identity.
And for this effort I ask you to respect me.
Disagree with me, if you will,
And I will still respect you, because you are,
as I, of one identity and self.

I know who I am
I like who I am,
I am at peace with myself,
And I am happy.

Simply,
I am myself,
a person, a being, and individual.

I am myself!

Mark Mikal
I watched them tearing a building down
A gang of men in a busy town.
With a ho-heave-ho and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and a sidewalk fell.
I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled,
As the men you'd hire if you had to build?"
He gave a laugh and said, "No, indeed!
Just common labor is all I need.
I can easily wreck in a day or two
What builders have taken a year to do."
And I thought to myself as I went my way,
Which of these two roles have I tried to play?

Am I a builder who works with care
Measuring life by the rule and square?
Am I shaping my life by a well-made plan
Patiently doing the best I can?
Or am I a wrecker who walks the town
Content with the labor of tearing down?
literature they had been asked to read and the films which had been shown to them, as well as the problems they have perceived in their own experiences. This would be done in attempt to develop an awareness of each student's own role in these relationships and also in an attempt to let the students develop some ways of overcoming the problems Wright, Hansberry, Gaines and others perceive in these relationships.

On the first day of the fourth week, the teacher would present the students with introductory material about Native Americans. In this introduction, the teacher would explain that the Native American concept of the universe is very different than the concept that most of the students have of the universe. Specifically, the Native American concept of time, space, nature, animals, land, religion, and life and death would briefly be discussed. Most of the information for this presentation can be found in any good history text or in any good anthology of Native American Literature, and it would be easier for each teacher to recognize his or her students' knowledge of Native Americans and develop introductory material with that knowledge as its basis than for this author to prepare introductory material which may very well be too familiar to many students or too advanced for others. Certainly, each teacher should emphasis the cyclical nature of the Native American perception of the universe which focuses on the seasons of the year and on land as opposed to the very linear perception most others in the United States have of the universe.

On the second day of the fourth week, the teacher should introduce N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn. In this introduction, the
teacher should emphasize the themes the students should notice while they are reading. Specifically, the students should be informed that the novel is divided into essentially four sections including the Prologue. The students should be informed that the Sun is an exceptionally important symbol in the novel, and the students should be informed that the names of each of the characters are significant. Other themes and symbols the students should be informed about include the theme of Abel, the main character, being Able to adapt to certain situations and Unable to adapt to others, the significance of lightness and darkness and varying degrees of both during the course of the novel, and also the students should be encouraged to attempt to understand Abel and his relationship to the Land. At the end of the hour, the students would be told to read pages 1-32.

On the third day of the fourth week, the students would discuss the pages read for this day, and the rest of the hour would be spent reading to page 81, which is the end of the first section. If the students had not been able to reach page 81, they would be told that they must have the assignment finished before the next class meeting.

On the fourth day of the fourth week, the students would be asked to define the term "Longhair", which is the title of the first section of the novel. A discussion of what is meant by this term should lead the students to recognize that a Longhair is one who follows old traditions and customs of the Native Americans, some of which do not assimilate into the traditions and customs and rules of contemporary society in the United States.
After this discussion, the students would be given the remainder of the hour to begin reading the section entitled "The Priest of the Sun." The students would be told that they should have this section read by the next class meeting.

On the fifth day of the fourth week, the students would be given some time during class to continue reading and to ask questions about the novel. Many questions about the comments made in the second section by Tosamah, The Priest of the Sun, may be asked because Tosamah reveals much in this section about the differences between the life of a Longhair, epitomized in Abel, and the life of a Native American who has been able to adapt to the life as a Native American within the structures of the society of the United States. Tosamah also explains much of the history of one particular Indian tribe, and the students may have questions concerning that information. If not, the students would be given time during class to continue reading. The students would be told that the remainder of the novel is to be read outside of class and to be finished by the second day of the fifth week. The students would be told that they would need to be able to discuss the conclusion of the novel and the major themes of the novel by the second day of the fifth week.

On the first day of the fifth week, the students would be shown one shot from the film THE CHOSEN. The teacher would play only the part of The Chosen which initially introduces the viewer to the dress of the Hasidic Jew, Daniel. The videotape would then be shut off, and the
students would be asked to write a paragraph about what that character in the film would be like. In essence, the students would be asked to describe the character from the visual image presented to them much in the same way they were asked to describe the character from the written word presented to them earlier in the Unit when they did the Description Worksheet. After the paragraphs have been completed, they would be collected by the teacher, and the assignment for the next class would be given.

As stated, the students would know that they should complete House Made of Dawn before the next class meeting. The students would be told to bring a two to four page handwritten essay to class the next day discussing a major theme of the novel. This theme could be one discussed in class or one the student has found himself/herself. The students would be told that they could use approximately half of the next class hour to complete the assignment, but the teacher should stress that this essay should be almost complete as the students come to class the next day. The students should have approximately half of the current class hour to continue reading or to begin writing the essays they will be writing.

On the second day of the fifth week, the students would be given half of the class hour to complete their essays, and the teacher would collect the essays after the first half of class has passed. Then, the teacher would give the students some background information, probably through lecture format, about the Jewish faith and Jewish people. The teacher would include definitions of terms found in Chaim Potok's novel The Chosen which the students may find difficult, and the
source of the background information to be presented in the lecture which this author found most helpful was taken from one segment of a film series entitled THE LONG SEARCH, which is produced and narrated by Ronald Eyre and distributed by Time-Life Video. The segment referred to is entitled "The Chosen People."

On the third day of the fifth week, the teacher would pass out copies of The Chosen to his or her students and inform them that the book is quite difficult to read; yet, he or she needs to stress the faith he or she has in the students to rise to a tough, challenging assignment. After the students have been given their novels, the students would be shown the first portion of the 137 minute film THE CHOSEN. The teacher would suggest that the students take notes either on paper or mentally of the differences between the film and the novel. The film would be stopped periodically to answer questions and in an effort to ensure that the students comprehend the plot of the film. One specific instance in the film which may cause problems for students is the one in which Daniel and Reuven are in the synagogue because many of the students may not understand why grown men are kissing symbols or why there are no women in the synagogue.

On the fourth and fifth days of the fifth week, the students would continue to view the remainder of the film. On the fifth day, the paragraphs which had been written on the first day of the fifth week would be returned to the students after the film concluded. A discussion about the descriptions written based only on the one shot of film shown to the students on the first day as compared to the descriptions the students would write about Daniel after viewing the film would occur at this point. This discussion could lead the students to recognize that they
may have stereotyped Daniel simply because of his dress. Ten minutes at the end of this hour could be reserved for the discussion of the students' next major assignment. The assignment would be to write a four to six page essay comparing one of the characters in the novel to the actor portraying that character in the film or to write an essay of the same length comparing two of the characters, such as Daniel's father and Reuven's father. The students would be required to include at least two similarities and two differences between the character he or she chose and the actor portraying that character or two similarities and two differences between two characters in the novel or two actors portraying those characters in the film. The students should have been reading the novel outside of class, but if it apparent that they have not been doing so, it might be wise for the teacher to give a quiz or a small homework assignment in the middle of the fifth week. The four to six page essay would be collected on the third day of the sixth week, so the students would have five days to complete the assignment if the fifth day of the fifth week happens to be a Friday.

On the first day of the sixth week, the students would be given the entire class hour to devote to the essay assigned on The Chosen.

On the second day of the sixth week, the first half of the class hour would also be given to the students to devote to completing their essays. Also, the students would be given the opportunity to ask any questions they may still have concerning the literature and the films covered thus far in the Unit. The remainder of the class period could be spent briefly outlining the remainder of the Unit, specifically informing the students that they will have two weeks to complete an
individual assignment which each student will choose for himself/herself. The students would be told that they will be given the majority of the last ten class periods of the Unit to complete the assignments. The students would be told that they should begin thinking about topics which they might enjoy learning more about; the only stipulation to the topics is that they must have some relation to the Stereotyping Unit.

On the third day of the sixth week, the teacher would lead a discussion of the expected roles of Males and Females in the United States. This discussion would focus not only on the roles which men and women are expected to play in the United States, but the discussion would also focus on the expectations men have of women, the expectations women have of men, the expectations men have of other men, and the expectations women have of other women. The development of the discussion would depend very much on the attitudes of the students, as will all the discussion in this Unit, but if the teacher would be able to present the students with different situations in which the expectations people have of one another differ, the discussion could be very enlightening not only for the students, but also for their teacher. The purpose of the discussion is simply to preface the next novel to be read by the students. At the end of the class, the teacher would collect the students' essays on The Chosen.

On the fourth day of the sixth week, the students would be given copies of Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, and the students would be given the remainder of the class to begin reading.
On the fifth day of the sixth week, the students would be asked to discuss Janie's, the main character's, relationships with her mother, her first husband and her second husband. The students may not have been able to read enough to be able to discuss Janie's relationship with her second husband, but there is enough information about the other two relationships and about Janie for a discussion to last an entire class period. If not, the students may continue to read.

On the first day of the seventh week, the students would be given a five question reading quiz during the first fifteen minutes of the class period. After the quiz, the answers would be given and discussion of how the questions relate to major themes in the novel, such as male-female relationships and communication between two people, would follow. The students would be told that they should finish the novel by the third day of the seventh week.

On the second day of the seventh week, the students will be asked to write down three questions about the novel they would ask their students if they were the teacher of the class. The teacher would collect these when the students were finished and then some of the questions would be selected for class discussion during that class period.

On the third day, the students would be asked to evaluate the novel by the criteria determined during the discussion on third day of the sixth week concerning the expectations males and females have of one another in different situations. The students would be asked by the teacher, and the teacher hopes by the other students, which relationships in the novel are the best and why. Then, the students would be asked if the best relationships are those which follow the expectations the class previously outlined or if the best relationships in the novel are those
which do not follow the expectations the class previously outlined. The purpose of the discussion is primarily to let the students reveal to themselves that certain expectations do exist in male-female relationships and those expectations are not necessarily bad, unless the expectations of a person in a relationship become more important than the person involved in the relationship. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston presents three male-female relationships which portray three different situations because the people in the relationships had very different perceptions and expectations of and from one another in a male-female relationship.

On the fourth day of the seventh week, the teacher would provide the students with a handout which would explain the guidelines and options for the Individual Assignments to be completed by the fourth day of the ninth week of the Unit. Each student would be told that he or she could choose one of the five options listed on the handout given to the students. Once a student has chosen which one of the five options he or she wishes to pursue, then he or she must have that topic approved by the teacher. From the moment the teacher approves the topic, the student is expected to utilize the time given to him or her during class to begin his or her project. The handout with the list of the five options for the Individual Assignments can be found immediately following this page.

From the fifth day of the seventh week through the fourth day of the ninth week, the students would be given each class period to work on their Individual Assignments. Many students would need to spend time in the library while others would only use the class time provided to read. The most difficult challenge of the entire Unit would be encountered
OPTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS

OPTION 1: If you enjoyed the selections you read from Richard Wright's Uncle Tom's Children or you enjoyed the film THE SKY IS GRAY, then Option 1 may interest you.

Option 1 involves reading four of the works listed below:

"Split Cherry Tree" by Jesse Stuart
"A Good Long Sidewalk" by William Melvin Kelley
"I'm a Fool" by Sherwood Anderson
"The Library Card" by Richard Wright
"Sucker" by Carson McCullers
"On the Road" by Langston Hughes
"Blood-Burning Moon" by Jean Toomer

After you have read four of the above works, choose one of the items below for your individual project.

1. Compare the main characters in each of the four short stories with the main characters in the selections you read from Uncle Tom's Children or with the little boy in THE SKY IS GRAY. Write a five to seven page paper on this topic.

2. Take one of the stories you read and develop it into a film. You must inform me of all the decisions you had to make while adapting the short story to film. I also need to know who you have casted to play each character and why. I need to know what changes in dialogue and dialect you made while adapting the short story to film. I need to know what you feel is the crucial point, the climax, of your film, and I need to know how you plan to present that particular scene in such a way that your viewer will know that this particular scene is the climax. I need to know what message you hope to convey to your audience and how that message relates to the Unit we have been studying. THIS PROJECT IS VERY FUN; HOWEVER, PLEASE BE CAREFUL WHEN CHOOSING IT BECAUSE IT REQUIRES DEDICATION AND HARD WORK.

3. Pick characters, settings, plots, and dialects from the four short stories you read and write a new short story. You must be sure to keep the characters recognizable, and your story must be related to the Stereotyping Unit we have been studying. Since you are creating, the limits on this part of Option 1, such as length, need to be discussed on an individual basis.
OPTION 2: If you enjoyed the poems which were given to you earlier in the Unit, then you may be interested in Option 2. Also, if you enjoyed A Raisin in the Sun, then Option 2 may interest you.

If you choose Option 2, you may choose one of the projects listed below:

1. Compile a poetry notebook consisting of at least thirty poems written by others and any number written by you which relate to the Stereotyping Unit we have been studying.

2. Find a combination of twenty magazines and newspaper articles which focus on stereotyping and ways to alleviate stereotyping. Read all the articles and turn them in along with a five page reaction to the articles which would explain what you learned from the articles and what information was included in the articles.

3. Write an original play with Stereotyping being one of the themes of the play. If you choose to do this, you must be willing to work very closely with me so that together we can develop guidelines for length and standards which I will use to grade your play.

4. Make an oral presentation about a topic we have or have not been able to cover during class. If you choose this, I ask only that the presentation is organized well and that your desire as presenter is to teach your audience about your topic.
OPTION 3: If you enjoy reading or have become interested in a particular group or a particular author or have an interest in a topic we have not been able to discuss due to time limitations, then Option 3 may interest you.

If you choose Option 3, you have the most freedom found in any of the five options. I ask that you read another novel which is on the topic you would like to learn more about. You must have the novel approved by me before you begin the project. If you have an interest but don't have an idea about a novel to read, I can offer some suggestions and send you to resources which will help you with your particular topic. After you have finished the novel, you will write at least a seven to ten page paper explaining how the novel fits into the Stereotyping Unit we have been studying. If you have trouble with writing the essay, please ask because some novels may be difficult to explain in an essay this short.

OPTION 4: If none of the other options have appealed to you and you have enjoyed the films we have seen in class, then Option 4 may interest you.

If you choose Option 4, you must watch two films which can be related to the Stereotyping Unit plan we have been studying. One of the two films must be at least 60 minutes in length. After you have viewed the two films, you will write reactions to them both and hand them in. In these reaction papers which must be at least one page each, you must synopsize the film and explain how they relate to the Stereotyping Unit. Then, I will return your reaction papers to you will compare one of the films you viewed as part of your project with one of the films we viewed during class. This comparison should be in essay format and should be at least four pages in length.

OPTION 5: If you have an idea which has not been covered in any of the first four options, such as a desire to dramatize a piece of literature in front of your classmates or a desire to write and produce an album on the subject of Stereotyping, then find me in the next two class periods, and we will discuss whether or not your idea can be used for your individual assignment.
by the teacher at this point. The teacher would need to be very involved in each student's project in order to help the student maintain enthusiasm for the nine class days he or she has been given to work on this project. The teacher would probably be wise to require some work be completed by each student to be shown to the teacher at the end of the eighth week. The teacher would have to adjust the required amount of work to be completed by the end of the eighth week to each individual project. The teacher would need to be very willing to help students acquire materials for their projects which may not be available from their high school library. Also, the teacher might consider spending half a class period during one of those nine periods being given to the students simply to have small group discussion about each individual's project and how each is progressing or not progressing.

At this point, the teacher must recognize that he or she has become a resource person to whom the students will come to locate new information and possibly to ask questions, but the students are their own teachers during the last two weeks of this Unit.

On the fourth day of the ninth week, the students would be shown the six minute film REFINER'S FIRE. In this film, squares and circles take on characteristics of humans as they group together to encounter conflict that arises between non-conformists and conformists. After the film has been shown, the students would be asked to explain what they had just seen. Many of the students would probably reply that they had just seen squares and circles stereotype one another on the basis of shape (this does happen in the film), but the teacher would continue to ask his or her students what they had just viewed on the screen. After many students attempt to answer the question, the teacher would be able to reveal to the student the answer he or she was
seeking. The actual answer to the question would be that the students saw squares and circles which moved around on the movie screen. The importance of this cannot be taken lightly because this shows the student, as it did the author of this Unit Plan, how very much each individual brings of himself or herself into every single situation he or she perceives. If the students have learned from the nine week Unit, the answer to the question asked about what they had seen on the screen would be a good answer because the teacher would know that the students were able to recognize stereotyping even in the absence of language, even in the absence of human beings, even in the absence of a situation which the students would be familiar with.

On the fifth day of the ninth week, the students would be asked to discuss orally which facets of the Unit they found the most beneficial, if any, and to discuss orally which facets of the Unit they found to be least beneficial. The students would also be asked to make any suggestions which they feel would make the Unit stronger. The students would be asked during the last twenty minutes of the class period to write down any response they had to the Unit as a whole or any response they had to any particular part of the Unit which they had not had the opportunity to discuss. The teacher would ask that the students make suggestions in writing which might improve the Unit or the teacher's method of teaching the Unit.

The remainder of the fifth day would be spent on any Oral Presentations which have not been given and spent on discussing some of the Individual Assignments which would have been turned in the previous day.
EVALUATION OF STUDENTS DURING UNIT ON STEREOTYPING

In this Unit, the evaluation of students will focus primarily on participation and on the assignments given. Many of the short responses to the films, the quiz, the description worksheet and participation in the labeling exercise could be graded on a Credit/No Credit basis. Certainly, the essay over the selections from **Uncle Tom's Children** should be weighed more heavily than those items listed above, but it should not be weighed as heavily as the four to six page essay on **The Chosen**, and the Individual Assignment should weigh the heaviest of all the assignments given during the nine week Unit.

The Unit and the teacher will be evaluated on the fifth day of the ninth week of the Unit, but the teacher and the Unit have been evaluated each time a student participates in class or turns in a paper because that is a reflection, most of the time, of what the student has or has not learned.
INTERVIEW WITH ERNEST J. GAINES*

INT: Do you have any memory of when the idea for this particular story, for "The Sky Is Gray," occurred to you? What was the germ of the story? Or what made you put these particular events together?

GAINES: I don't know exactly when—or what. I was writing stories all along. I had just left Stanford in nineteen fifty-nine, and I was working on a novel. Whenever I'd send a novel back to my agent, I would try to write short stories. And I'm pretty sure the idea must have come up about nineteen sixty-one or sixty-two, because we published the story in sixty-three. I can't give exact details as to how the idea of the story came up, but as a small child I had a toothache. I was eight or nine years old—maybe even younger than that—and my mother had taken me into town to have a tooth pulled. I knew all about the small towns, and I would eventually go to school in a small town, a Catholic school, my last three years in Louisiana. I knew all about riding in the back of the bus because at that time you would ride at the back of the bus. I knew about the uptown and the back of town, because uptown was where the whites could eat and go to school and we could not. We're talking about during the war years and earlier—the early and mid-forties.

So I knew all these things when I started writing the story, but exactly what clicked to make me write the story I cannot tell you. I know I'd had much of the same experience as our little fellow James has in the story—even to the killing of birds to eat, because we needed food. What I've done here is to try and combine all these things which might have taken place in my life except ten years and put them all into one day, because I wanted to give him an

* This interview was conducted by Calvin Stagg on October 19, 1979, at Mr. Gaines's home in San Francisco.
odyssey. I wanted him to start out in the morning and go out into the world, and I wanted to show the different people whom he'd come in contact with; show how he would meet these situations, not knowing what was going on but still learning something that later would have an impression on his life.

INT: Did you remember any incident back in the early forties in which you heard a kid say the kind of things the student says in the story?

GAINES: No, not in that kind of rhetorical way, in that intellectual way. But I'm sure I heard kids put down things like God, you know; kids say that there is nothing up there. When I wrote this in nineteen sixty-one or sixty-two, it was sort of predicting the Black Panthers—not knowing that there would be Black Panthers or Black Power. But I had never heard anyone speak that kind of thing when I was a child.

At the time I started writing the story, I'd been reading Joyce. I had just read *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Or at least it was still very fresh in my mind. I had also finished reading Dostoevsky's *Fathers and Sons* and probably I'd just read *Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment*. So I was reading at the time all these books about the existential intellectuals, and they made an impression on me—not only the direct experiences but the vicarious experiences work into the writer's mind when he is writing on a story. If I had not read those particular writers around the time I started the story, the student probably wouldn't have come into the story, but things do happen that way. Probably the clicking point for this story about James is a story I had studied years earlier, a story called "A Worn Path" by Eudora Welty. It made an impression on my mind then; years later I read it again. Old Phoenix, this old lady, must go to town on the Natchez Trail to get this medicine for this little boy. And it's cold. And that's probably why it's cold here for James. This is what I meant about the experiences that go into writing a story. Not only your direct experiences, but everything you go through—whether it's direct or vicarious, whether you read or hear about it, or see it in a film, or see it in a picture—these things do make impressions on you.

I remember a story about Hemingway. Somebody asked Hemingway about what writers he was influenced by, and I don't know how many writers he named. But then he started naming all these painters and all these bullfighters and all kinds of people like athletes and hunters. Just to show you that it's not only writers that influence the work, but everything influences a writer if he is open-minded. And the more you're open the more you're aware of and the more experience you do have, the more you can draw from to put into your own characters.

INT: I'm interested that you mentioned *Portrait of the Artist*, because I think one of the things a reader wants to know at the end of the story is what's going to happen to James. You wonder what this one day is going to do to him, because it is an odyssey story, and a strong one.

GAINES: Yes, but I don't know what's going to happen. We're hoping this has made an impression on his life; that was the intention of the story. In the series of stories called *Bloodline*, there's a series of experiences. That first story, "A Long Day in November," is from the point of view of a small child. He sees just so much, and in "The Sky Is Gray," he sees more. The first child stays on that plantation; he never moves. James moves from the plantation: He goes into town to see the white world in that kind of town. The third story is told by a person who is older, who has committed a murder. He ends up in jail. The next story is told by someone who goes away—who travels all over the country—to California and that sort of thing. So you have different experiences. So whatever happened to James on that particular day can be either good or detrimental to his life. He comes through the story pretty well, and that was the point of the story, how one comes through. Go through the experiences and suffer the inconveniences of whatever, of nature, of man. Suffer whatever they do to you, but then come through.

INT: I liked something you said to me once when we were riding along, that you always tighten the screws a little bit in your stories by making the weather or some aspect of nature itself put your characters in a bind—as well as the civilization.

GAINES: A person has to be able to put up with nature as well as anyone else. Just because Man treats you bad
down here, God isn't going to be patronizing, either. He's not going to make it cold in Russia, and make it warm on you just because you are in a segregated area. Sometimes He puts a little warmth down there but not all the time. He gives you a little chill every now and then, and you have to deal with it.

INT: Your student talks about what words mean and don't mean and says we can change the words around and make them different if we want to. And that of course is a beautiful and very evocative speech. It brings us back to the title, "The Sky Is Gray," and makes us wonder to what degree you wanted us to play with that title. Do we make the world the way it is because of the way we perceive it, or are there certain things that are fixed, like the weather, that we can't escape from? Or should we be playing with "The Sky Is Gray" in our imaginations in the same way the student plays with whether the grass is green or black and the wind is pink or colorless?

GAINES: Well, number one the day is cold; the day is overcast; the day is gray. I might have been a little pessimistic in that title. As I said a moment ago, I was reading these antiheroes. And I think at that time I might have put myself in the student's position and felt that nothing was absolutely "black," as black is pertaining to all problems, or "white," as blue skies or sunny skies. So I'm not going to any extreme, saying everything is right with our kind of life and everything is wrong with their kind. So it is somewhere between white and black. It's not all good, and it's not all bad; not all black and not all white . . . somewhere in between. And this is what I've been dealing with.

The student says things are changing because men are using their brains rather than their hearts. So things are not all heart and not all brain. You have all intellect with no heart, things are one way. All heart and no intellect, another way, and you're still in the same shoe. You're the good ol' mammy—which is the good ol' heart thing. And the student over here is all brain. He is antianything that his minister could possibly stand for. You can say that the student is all bad and the minister is really right, and others would say, Dammit, I go along with the student and not with the minister. So it's sort of an in-between thing. The gray is the in-between. The kid must find a balance somewhere between what the student is talking about and what the minister is talking about and what any extremes are. And that's why even though the day is gray, every now and then a little red comes through: the little girl with the red, the red coat, and of course the moment of warmth in Helena's store.

INT: Not to be too literal, but I wondered about Helena: I wondered whether you wanted us to think that there are people who don't live in a black-and-white world; there are people who try to make the world a little gray, a little in-between black and white. Did you have that in mind at all?

GAINES: Oh, yes. That's what I said. That little warmth I put in, to cut into that cold gray day. I needed that just as I needed that red coat. And I wanted it at the very end. You have the structured world that they walk through. You notice they never see any other people, never see a policeman, a sheriff, or anyone tell them not to come in here, nigger, or anything like that. But you know the world is so structured that you aren't supposed to do it. And then this woman at the very end. I need to put in things like that, just like a little red now and then—like Picasso once did in a painting. He used a red sun, but it didn't fit in with the painting as it was, and he took it out. They said, "Pablo, that red looks so good." And he said, "Well, I'll use it in the next painting." It's not wasted, I'll use it somewhere else. I don't know what made Helena come to the window and watch them, and yet I do know: because I have gray and I want warmth. What made the character come to the window, whether it's humanitarianism, Christianity, or some other kind of philosophy that I don't know a thing about, I don't know. Maybe because she recognizes pride, or stoicism. I suppose if I told the story from the writer's point of view, I would have thought through the reason she did this, but since the story is told from the child's point of view, as he saw it, you'll have to accept what he saw.

INT: Did you ever have some of your readers, white or black, comment on this ending? Say it wasn't angry enough? Or be angry because it shows this white lady trying to be generous?
GAINES: Oh, yes. I had a letter maybe two or three months ago, asking why her husband insists that she put on a shawl. Doesn't he want the rest of the white people to see her face? I've had these comments. Others have said they'd never have gone into that house because they wouldn't have known what she wanted to do (poison them?), because of the way they had been treated all the time. But no one looks at the story as being sympathetic toward whites.

I think most of the criticism has been that the mother was a little too rough with the kid. Young kids coming up now want to be patted, patted, patted on the shoulder, and they want a car to go to the dentist. They have no idea of the kinds of things people have gone through, so they criticize the mother more than anything else. Black and white. They say she's too tough. I know some of the militants have criticized it for the mother's being too strict. When she tells him to keep his eyes in front—they ask why he didn't have the freedom to look around, because that's how men grow. The younger militant students object. But no one has ever said anything about the ending being out of place.

INT: Let's go back to the origins of the story for a bit. You said you once had somebody pray over your tooth?

GAINES: Oh, yes. There were a lot of people in that area who thought they could cure things by praying over them.

INT: You were baptized a Protestant?

GAINES: Yes, I was baptized a Protestant, in the False River, the same river all my people for about four or five generations were baptized in. They also used it for fishing, and washing clothes. I was born and raised around water, until I came to California. And then I live right here by the Pacific Ocean. But my stepfather was a Creole and Catholic, and most of the people that I visited when I went around with him were Catholic and Creole. My last three years in Louisiana, I went to a Catholic school. So I had a good idea of Catholicism. I know that stereotyped image people have of southerners being all Baptists or Methodists, but parts of Louisiana would surprise them—to see how much Catholicism you have there.

INT: Let me ask about something else. When you learned that we were going to make a film of this story, what was your feeling? Of course, you'd been through the experience once before, with Miss Jane Pittman.

GAINES: Yes, that's what I was going to say. I wanted to see the script, but I had confidence in what could be done from what I'd seen before, in the previous series of films. I really liked the idea of you all making the film. And the way I look at it is: Well, I've written a book, and it's up to them to make the film. My book is there, and their film is there.

INT: Was there anything about the film version of Miss Jane Pittman that really surprised you?

GAINES: I was down there when they were shooting most of the film. So I wasn't surprised. But I'll tell you the thing that shocked other people. (Things don't shock me too much because I expect anything to happen.) They were surprised at the interviewer being a white reporter instead of a black schoolteacher, as he was in my book; at the horse being white instead of black. They were surprised at the walk to the fountain, which is not in the book. In my book a whole group of people who will go to Bayonne together are moving toward Miss Jane. Many people, especially students, have criticized the last scene of the film because Miss Jane does everything alone at the end, with the other people standing back as cowards. In my book, the people move forward. But the change had no effect on me. I thought it was just a good scene. I did not feel that it was distorting anything, because my book was my book. You can't change the book.

INT: One of the biggest challenges I found in making The Sky Is Gray is that the story is from the boy's point of view, number one. And number two, the boy is so aware not just of what he sees but of what he smells and hears and of the textures all around him. One of the things that the cast made a good bit of is that when she walks into that café, you say the boy noticed how her coat started smelling like a wet dog when it got warm. You can suggest those things on the screen but you can't tell them in the same way.
THE SOUTH KILLS ANOTHER NEGRO

BY WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE

You never heard of Roosevelt Wilson.
I never saw him more than twice. But Roosevelt Wilson continues to disturb me. Whenever I try to feel that I am an honest and self-assured supporter of the American Dream, Roosevelt Wilson perches on my shoulder, laughs sardonically, and reminds me that I am just another lousy compromiser; that once when I had my chance to strike a blow in defense of the Great Dream, I turned aside with the Pontius Pilates and whimpered: "What the hell can I do?"

To understand Roosevelt Wilson you'll have to visualize the loneliest, most insignificant human being in the world. The cipher in a social system. He never knew who his mother was. He just appeared as a nameless black brat in a cotton patch. He breathed. He grew. He chopped cotton for bread. He stole. And somebody, somewhere, labeled him Roosevelt Wilson. Think of him as a black, burr-headed creature who felt no superiority to a hound dog, and whose death would not have brought a waltz of regret across any heart in America.

When I first heard of Roosevelt Wilson he was a dog being chased by other dogs. He was a scurrying black animal to be shot on sight and left naked to rot in a ditch and be picked by buzzards. He had raped a white woman in a potato patch at Bug Tussle, and bloodhounds and a posse were chasing him. It is the old familiar fabric to every Southern reporter, so I methodically ground out eight paragraphs on The Chase. And when the black quarry had been captured by a sheriff and "spirited away for safekeeping," I ground out two editorial paragraphs congratulating the sheriff for preserving Alabama's proud record of not having had a lynching in three years.

When I arrived at the county courthouse to cover the trial, there was nothing unusual about the scene. The AP reporter and I sat in a dysentery parlor across the street, drank coffee, griped about the assignment, and hoped Justice would act swiftly so we could get back to Birmingham before night.

There were two or three thousand people massed in the streets leading up to the courthouse square. A scattering of

WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE comes from Birmingham, Alabama, the locale of this article, which after two years it is still the subject of heated discussion throughout the South. He is the author of two books, Mud on the Stars, a novel, and The Fight For Air Power. (November, 1941)
sticks and shotguns. Two companies of National Guardsmen had mounted machine guns around the courthouse and an officer with a loudspeaker kept issuing warnings forbidding anyone to cross the street to the courthouse. Only those who had stood in line and obtained tickets for the two hundred seats in the courtroom were allowed to pass into the courthouse, and these—both men and women—were searched for weapons. The scene in the courtroom was usual for such trials. State police and Guardsmen, armed with sidearms and nightsticks, were stationed around the walls and in the aisles.

The jury had been selected when I seated myself at the table which the sheriff had hastened to provide for the two out-of-town reporters. We had not been expected, it was a routine trial. We would not have been sent to cover it except for a dull news week. The jurors were farmers and townsmen and I observed that they appeared more intelligent than the average Alabama jury. This was because the verdict was a foregone conclusion and thus counsel had not made the usual effort to strike the more intelligent men but had simply taken the first twelve in the venire.

I looked across at the plaintiff. She was a husky, loose-jointed farm woman, perhaps thirty, with big, red hands, big feet, and a matted mass of blonde hair which some amateur barber had chopped squarely and roughly off. She reminded me of a gangling battle-axe I had once seen in a brothel whom the Madam used only as a shock trooper to take on the heavier and more bellicose clients who came in very late and very drunk. The two great press services dully agreed that young Roosevelt had shown damn poor taste in his selection of a Queen Bee worthy of his life.

Next to the plaintiff sat her husband, a brawny farmer whose cheap clothes were much too small for his bulging muscles and whose flushed face gave evidence of the great rage pent up inside him. Around the two sat an imposing array of counsel for the state. The Attorney-General himself was on hand, his hackles up, and issuing harsh statements by the bucketful. Every elected prosecutor in district and county was present, with assistants and volunteers, to see that swift justice was done. Such a case provides rare political opportunity and every attorney who plans to run for office rushes into participation gratis in the prosecution and make a hell-raising speech to the jury.

You had to look at counsel for the defense to appreciate the contrast. These two lawyers had been appointed by the Court, their names drawn from a box containing a list of all practicing members of the bar. Fate had frowned on poor Roosevelt again. For he had drawn a couple of old men who had no stomach for trial procedure. They were in mortal fear the populace would get the idea that they had willingly taken Roosevelt's case and that they believed him innocent. Before the trial began, one of them rose and addressed the Court.

"Your Honor," he stammered, "to avoid any misconceptions here, my colleague and I would like you to explain publicly that we have been drafted by the Court to safeguard the constitutional rights of the defendant and that no sympathy for this defendant is implied by our actions."

This the judge did solemnly in the presence of the jury. But still the old fuddy-duddies weren't satisfied. They came over to us and requested we make clear in our stories that they were appearing only in compliance with constitutional requirement. The judge, a grayish politician of about sixty, tried nervously to rush the procedure. He wanted the trial over and the defendant safely back in state prison by nightfall.

There was a rumble in the courtroom. The big coppers and the Guardsmen hefted their nightsticks. You could feel the hackles rise and the hate charge the air. The defendant was trudging in with an escort of troopers. I gave him an unconcerned and half-amused glance and jotted down a note. Barefooted. Faded and patched pair of blue overalls and jumper. Hundred and thirty pounds. Five feet six. Burr-headed bastard. The troopers handcuffed him to a chair directly in front of us. With the trial about to start, his attorneys spoke contemptuously to him. It was the first time, apparently, that they had seen him.

"What's ya' name, boy?"

"Roosevelt Wilson."

"How old are ya?"

"Ah thinks ah's twenty-two."

Then they sat back and were ready. They assumed the defendant had no witnesses and that he should be pleaded not guilty so as to be certain of the death penalty.

The state called the plaintiff and recorded her story. Her husband had been off working in another county. While she was digging potatoes in one of the more remote fields, the nigger had sneaked out of the thicket and accosted her with a shotgun. He had threatened to kill her if she didn't go into the thicket and submit to him. So, with a choice between death and such a sacrifice, she had complied with his demands. After he had run off, she had heard the yells of some women looking for her, and she had rushed to them and reported the crime.

The defense cross-examined softly and sympathetically. "Not that we doubt your story, ma'am," they explained, "but just for the record."

The plaintiff agreed that the nigger had laid down his gun before the rape occurred, but the judge promptly explained to the jury that she had already been intimidated with the gun and was thus in mortal fear for her life even though the gun had been cast aside. The irreverent AP cocked an eyebrow and shook his head. The plaintiff weighed a good thirty pounds more than the defendant and could obviously have smacked him silly when he laid the gun down.

Then followed a succession of witnesses who established that the defendant had run when approached by the pose, that he carried the gun, and that he resisted arrest. Two women testified to the nervous state of the plaintiff after the crime.

II

At the noon recess I overhead a conversation between Roosevelt and his attorneys. They were telling him that there would be no need for him to take the
and defense counsel rose to inform the court solemnly that counsel had advised the defendant not to testify, but that he insisted on his constitutional right. The defense, therefore, was calling the defendant, Roosevelt Wilson, to the stand. If you had struck a match while that nig­ger was walking to the stand, the court­room would have exploded. I have never felt such tension, such organized hate focused on one insignificant object. Troop­ers clutched their nightsticks and the judge unconsciously rapped for order though the room was breathlessly silent.

“Now, Roosevelt, just go ahead and tell your story,” defense counsel said. “And make it short.” There was no effort to guide his testimony or to help him in any way.

“Well, judge, it wuz lak dis,” he began. “Ah got up dat mawnin’ an’ bor’ed Sam Winson’s gun to go rabbit-huntin’. Ef Sam wuz heah he’d tell ya ah did. Ah went ovah tow’d de nawth fawty an’ ah seen dis lady a-diggin’ taters. Ah’d seed her atime o’ two befo’ an’ she(seed) she wanted a ring ah had. Ah wawked up to her an’ ah show’d her de ring an’ we tawked a minute. Den ah axed her de question an’ she lukked aroun’ an’ said she wuz willin’...”

The room exploded. In a split second the husband had yanked open his britches and a dog howling under the moon. The loneliness of the cotton patch and a dog bowling under the moon. The loneliness and fear of the swamp with bloodhounds bay­ing. The loneliness and fear of a jail cell and a thunderbolt exploding in your body. I shrugged and turned away quickly.

Shortly after noon the state rested and defense counsel rose to inform the court that it would be best just to submit the case when the state closed. But Roosevelt objected.

“Naw, suh, boss,” he said. “De truf aint being tol’ deh. Ah got to git up deah an’ tell de truf. Ef dey kills me, ah got to git up deah an’ tell de truf.”

Believe me, it was no noble motive which inspired my intervention. I only wanted to blow up a dull story. I stepped up and said: “That’s right, Roosevelt. If they’re not telling the truth, you get up there and tell it. They’ve got to listen to you.” The lawyers then admitted to him that “of course, the court couldn’t deny him his constitutional right to testify in his own defense,” but his testim­ony would do no good. When they had gone, I stepped back in and gave Roosevelt some more encouragement.

“Get in there and give it to them straight, Roosevelt,” I said. Then, in that burr-headed nigger’s face, I saw something I didn’t want to see. I must have been the first white man ever to have spoken a civil word to him. He reacted like a dog when you pat him on the head. He let down his guard and I saw that he wasn’t a nameless animal but a living, breathing, feeling — even aspiring — person. He showed me all the loneliness and fear of his wretched life. The loneliness of the cotton patch and a dog howling under the moon. The loneliness and fear of the swamp with blood­hounds bay­ing. The loneliness and fear of a jail cell and a thunderbolt exploding in your body. I shrugged and turned away quickly.

Roosevelt’s story, had done a dual jackknife under a table.

It was half an hour before order could be restored. The jury, the husband, and the defendant were removed from the courtroom, and AP and I began burning up the wires with flashes. I asked the judge if he wouldn’t have to declare a mistrial. “I suppose I should,” he said, “but, hell, we’ve got to get rid of this mess.” He looked as if he were bothered by an offensive odor.

I went in to see Roosevelt, and his lawyers were upbraiding him. “We told you so. We told you not to get up there. Now you see we were right. When court goes back in session, we’ll just close the case.”

“Naw, suh, boss,” Roosevelt objected. “Ah’s jest got started good. De whole truf aint been tol’ yit.”

By now Roosevelt had me pulling for him. “Get back up there, Roosevelt,” I told him. “Don’t let ’em scare you. Tell it all.”

When trial was resumed, the defense apologized profusely and explained again that they had urged the defendant not to testify. Then they moved for a mistrial. The motion was denied and Roosevelt went back to the stand, completely surrounded by troopers. In a deadly silence broken by heavy breathing, he finished the story of a mutual love affair, hastened near the end by “some women hollerin’ fo’ dis lady.”

The cross-examination thunder began to roll. The prosecutors began jumping and yelling and shaking their fists.

“If you hadn’t committed a crime,” the Attorney-General bellowed, “why did you run like a scared rabbit when these men found you over there in that field?”

The reply was cool. “Ah seed a bunch—a runnin’ at me. Dey wuz a-cussin’ an’ a-shootin’. So ah jest run. Dey kept a-chasin’ me, so ah kept runnin’.”

For an hour the state battery took turns working out on Roosevelt. They attempted to cross him in every way. But his story never changed. The woman had gone to the woods with him willingly in exchange for the ring he had given her.

During the impassioned oratory to the jury, I convinced myself that the woman — the plaintiff — had smuggled the gun into the courtroom. The husband could hardly have brought it in, for he was the most suspect of all the spectators and two deputies had searched him thoroughly. But the matron admitted her search of the woman had been perfunctory. The plaintiff had known the story the nigger might tell and she had brought the gun in to have her husband kill him before he could tell it.

The jury required four minutes to go out, organize, and bring back dead. While it was out, I whispered to the judge: “Judge, I’ve lived around niggers all my life and if I ever heard one tell the truth, that little bastard was telling it this afternoon, wasn’t he?” The judge crouched down low behind his desk, nodded his head, and grinned: “By God, he shore was, wasn’t he?”

When the jury had been discharged, I spoke privately to several of the jurors. To each one I made the same statement I had made to the judge. In each case I
I forgot to drink," in toward a roadhouse. Who have had the courage to defy the judge. I thought of Emile in his faded overalls and bare feet, riding alone toward Death Row with a hundred Guardsmen to see him safely through the crowds and away from the reporters. We used the latest piece of Marlene Dietrich leg art instead. I wish I could tell you that the Case of Roosevelt Wilson perch on my shoulder like a raven, and that I never rested until I had freed him from his cell and thrown him back into the faces of the Pontius Pilates. I wish I could tell you that I made a brave speech to the editor of my paper; that I flung my job in his face; and that I fought for Roosevelt's freedom with pamphlets printed on a hand press. But none of these things happened. I told the editor the filthy facts and suggested a further story, but when he said, "Hell, Bill, you're crazy," I just said, "Yeah, I guess you're right."

I told the Governor the same filthy facts. He shrugged and said: "Boy, you're crazy. What the hell can I do? You know what it would mean if I intervened in a case like this."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," I said. "But you know I've read of governors who couldn't sleep after they had let an innocent man go to his death."

He laughed. I laughed, too. The kind of laugh you laugh to keep from crying. Then — incredible as it seems — I forgot Roosevelt Wilson and it was quite by accident that I ever saw him again.

IV

Thursday night is execution night at Alabama's big Kilby Prison. Most every week the state fries some black meat and occasionally a little white meat is thrown in for good measure. There was a young cop-killer sent up from Birmingham. He was a white boy from somewhere out West. He had been in the Marines and had hit the highways. He had gone jittery during a hold-up and plugged a cop. We had played the case with a lot of sob stuff and I was sent down to Montgomery to cover his burning.

The warden was impatient. "Come on, you guys, let's get started," he said to the reporters. "We got eight black boys to burn after we finish off this yellow cop-killer."

The cop-killer was yellow all right. There were six preachers with him when they brought him in the death house — all anxious to get their names spelled right — but he went hysterical and guards had to throw him in the chair.
You ain’t going to like what I got to say, but that doesn’t bother me. The only reason I’m here is because the Reverend asked me and I owe him some favors. As for me, I’m fed up to here with white-black talk. The more we talk, the poorer we get, the richer you get, and the better you feel. Well, I ain’t here to make you feel better.

I’m 13—my name is Roy—and I got 12 brothers and sisters—and a jail record. I got it when I first started as block leader for my gang two years ago. A landlord waited until a mother of 10 kids was in the hospital, and he dumped her furniture and kids out in the snow. We picked them up and hauled them up the eight floors to her flat. Our gang stayed there with the kids and dared the guy to dump them again. He didn’t, but he called the cops and told them I’d threatened him, so I was charged with “intent to do bodily harm.”

I didn’t have no lawyer and I didn’t give a damn besides, so I was convicted and got a suspended jail sentence and a police record. Ever since, the police pick me up any time they feel like it and give me a going over—“cause you got a jail record, hood,” they say.

I used to go to school, but I don’t bother with that crap anymore. Last year the Rangers controlled the turf where our high school was and didn’t let us in for school. They kept about 900 of us out of school for a year, but the school people didn’t care because it wasn’t so much trouble for them if we weren’t there. The cops said it was just two bunches of niggers fighting it out, so they didn’t do nothing. My mother said we were going to school, and she walked with us one day and almost got killed herself, so she let us stay out after that. Rather have dumb kids than dead ones, she said.

My old lady, she’s okay, but she doesn’t know what it’s like—I mean, she still thinks that if you’re real good and study hard and be nice to The Man, that he’ll notice you ain’t got nothing someday and give you a nickel. Me? I got different thoughts. I figure that if The Man was so all-Jesus good, he wouldn’t turn off our heat in the winter and pay off the cops to forget we reported it or dump us when we get behind in the rent a week. I figure The Man has had lots of time to be nice, and we ain’t seen much of it.

We live in a four-room flat, a real dump on the 10th floor, and pay $115 a month. My mother gets welfare and works cleaning when she can, and ain’t pregnant. Last year we couldn’t pay for a couple of months, and the landlord says get moving so my aunt and her seven kids moved in to help pay the rent. Now we got too many kids running around—hell, I don’t even know who lives there. Two of my brothers are gone most the time—to the streets or jail—so it leaves about 20 of us in the flat.

Yeah, I want a job, but a real job, not one of them poverty things where you don’t do nothing. No one’s paying me $1.25 an hour to cool me off in the summer so I forget what a slum I am and smile at Whitey and say thanks. Yeah, that’s what I am—a slum. You talk about moving the slum and clearing the slum and building new buildings to get rid of the slum—well, the slum ain’t buildings. The slum is me and people like me that you ain’t going to let out no matter how smart or nice or educated we get. Man, you’ve named us the slum so don’t crap if we act like the slum.

I got me a friend who took one of them poverty jobs, and you know what he did all summer? They gave him a rag and told him to polish the slide and stuff in a schoolyad. They just laughed about it. “Now, as long as you stay in that schoolyard polishing and off the streets, you’ll get your buck and a quarter.” Funny thing was, he didn’t get paid until it was snowing, and by then he was ready to riot for his money.
Do I think riots is any good? Well, let me tell you. They don't hurt any. Only thing is that the next riot ain't going to be in our neighborhood. If we burn, we burn Whitey, not ourselves. We'll start with Marshall Field's. Why Marshall Field's? Because it's white, man, all white. They don't want us in there except to sweep their floors and haul their garbage.

(At this point there was some audience dissent and a professional woman who was a Negro defended Floyd's attitude in these words: "There are many shots of Marshall Field stature in Chicago who ask to see my money first if I want to look at a $40 dress. And if I want to try the dress on, they ask a white clerk to model it for me—a clerk in my size—rather than let me try it on.")

Sure, there are some things I'd like to do. I'd like to fly planes or even fix planes, but that's far out. I can't even get into service with my jail record, and that's the only way someone like me is going to learn to fly. I got a friend whose brother got back from Vietnam, and he don't sit still for nobody. He says he learned to shoot over there, and ain't anybody going to make him Ralph Bunche it here, Ralph Bunche it? Well, that's like when somebody keeps saying, "Look, you can do it. If Ralph Bunche did it." My friend's brother says that when he wants to move to the South Side, ain't no bunch of Palocks going to stop him.

Sure, I carry a gun—got ta. The Rangers would take over our block if we didn't protect it. They'd even knife our mothers. The cops don't care. They only care when Whitey gets mixed up in it. My brother got rolled and cut up one night and my mother called the cops four times. They never did come. I got my gun for three bucks from an older guy but I know where you can get one now for two. Night before the riot, some Jews were selling them right out on the corner for two bucks.

Would more poverty laws help us? We don't want any more laws. We're sick of hearing about laws. Laws ain't for us. Our Uncle Toms bought the War on Poverty, didn't they? Are we any better off? We get laws and more laws, and things get worse and dirtier and hungrier. The cops get meaner and crookeder, and The Man talks about Ralph Bunche.

Well, The Man is going to get his lift. Lifts can't get any worse for us, can they? Can the Church help us? Holy Jesus, that's a laugh. All those prayers and Gospel hymns about sitting back and letting Whitey show us how to be Christian—"Blessed are the meek so they will get heaven." I ain't waiting for heaven, and neither are any other black guys any longer. We want a little piece of this life. And there ain't no Church trying to get us any. Father Groppi? I don't know what his angle is. But any time a white man lines up with black men, he wants something from them. I don't know much about him and his gang, but I know one thing. We don't want anything to do with a white man—preacher or anyone else—in our gang.

What's my future? How do I care? You don't and I don't either. I think the only one who'd rather see me alive than dead is my mother. No one else gives a damn, including me. So, I got nothing to lose if I set the match.

What do you mean, "I must want something out of life"? What I want don't make any difference. I'm black. I'm a slum. I got a police record. I don't get a good job—ever. If I get married, I won't be able to feed my kids. I'll run out on them, so welfare can feed them. Then they won't have a father, either. You guys hold all the strings so you tell me—what's so goddam great about living?

Chicago teenager as recorded by Dolores Curran in Ave Maria, July 20, 1968.
Row. I couldn't remember a suitable passage in the New Testament, so I opened the little Bible, pretended I was reading, and recited the last five verses of the Twenty-Third Psalm. Roosevelt repeated after me.

I fumbled for something to say to that Negro boy. I wanted to say something that would give him faith and comfort and hope. Something he could understand. Finally, I said: "Roosevelt, before you go in there, I want to say this to you. You are innocent. The jurors know you are innocent. The judge knows you are innocent. The faith and the hope and the courage of a nation. Small wonder that we have such difficulty rousing the Great Soul of America for its own defense. Small wonder that we can't project our dreams through the clouds of our own cynicism and behold a vision worth dying for. We are all soul-sick in America. It's a what-the-hell sickness compounded by the complacency and what-the-hell, I thi. ..."

He thought for a minute. "Does ya reckon ah'll go to Hebben, boss?"

"Well, Roosevelt," I answered, "I've heard it said that the folks here on earth who are done wrong like you, and the folks who have the worst luck — they are the folks who go to Heaven, and they are the ones who get the biggest crowns and the most gold. So I think you deserve to go there and I believe you will."

"Thank, ya, boss," he said. The warden was coming, and he turned and asked: "Will ya go in wif me, boss? It won't be so bad ef ya'll go wif me."

God, I hated to go back in there. It always made me sick. But I nodded. My folks don't shake hands with Negroes, but I took Roosevelt by the hand and we walked down the corridor. An old white-headed Negro preacher joined us.

You would have been proud of Roosevelt in the death house. He was scared, but there were no hysterics. At the chair he turned around and said: "G'bye, boss. G'bye, parson." The attendants clapped on the hood and adjusted the electrodes and the old preacher broke into "I am the Resurrection and the Life...."

For a second the frail form quivered in the chair, and then the sovereign State of Alabama exploded twenty-three hundred volts of lightning.

They buried him in the prison plot for unclaimed bodies. My paper ran a story headed Negro preacher joined us. Perhaps in retrospect I attach too much significance to this story of Roosevelt Wilson. It is a sordid story involving only an unfortunate woman and a black maverick. Of the score of interracial rape trials I have covered, it is not typical