

Wow Story: Veteran's Day

One of our assistant principals emailed the faculty asking for activity suggestions for Veteran's Day. As Gaither High School's Reading Coach, I considered this not only an opportunity to give students greater insights into who veterans are and what they've experienced, but a perfect avenue for modeling "Before" and "After" listening/reading strategies that address the state's reading benchmarks as well as model and identify higher order thinking. Each faculty member received the handout I've attached. In addition, I shared this with Reading Coaches throughout the district. The feedback from students, teachers, and other coaches was phenomenal. I hope this can be of use to other teachers/schools.

VETERANS' DAY OBSERVATION

Gaither High School

November 10, 2005

Gaither community: Students, faculty, support personnel will be encouraged to wear red, white and blue clothing.

NJROTC: The NJROTC Honor Guard will be posted at the main entrance before school and prior to dismissal. Throughout the day, NJROTC students (in uniform) will march in the corridors throughout the school. This action signifies that all day, somewhere, our men and women in uniform are on duty.

Teachers will begin every period with a patriotic Read Aloud. During Read Alouds, teachers read an article of interest while students listen. Students do not have text in front of them. Although they should be risk-free for the learner, students should be expected to listen actively. They should be prepared to make comparisons to other texts, comment about the language, offer opinions about people's motivation ask questions, make judgments basically to contribute and extend each other's comments.

The Reading Coach has provided a Before Listening prompt to direct students' focus and serve as a basis for discussion. The questions will target the Sunshine State Standards in Reading and higher order thinking. Due to the length of the passages, time will range between two and ten minutes.

Period 1:

Before Listening: As I read Some Reflective Thoughts Regarding Veterans, listen for the author's surprising claims about the contributions of veterans.

Some Reflective Thoughts Regarding Veterans

It is the Veteran not the preacher who has given us freedom of religion.
It is the Veteran, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the Veteran, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.
It is the Veteran, not the campus organizer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.
It is the Veteran, not the politician, who has given us the vote.
It is the Veteran who salutes the flag.
It is the Veteran who serves under the flag.

After Listening: How can this writer justify any of his assertions?
(How can a veteran be responsible for freedom of religion or the right to vote?)
CAUSE/EFFECT

Period 2:

Before Listening: As I read, "You Can't Tell a Vet Just by Looking," consider why the author wrote his piece? What point was he trying to make with his readers?

You Can't Tell a Vet Just by Looking

He is the cop on the beat who spent six months in Saudi Arabia sweating two gallons a day making sure the armored personnel carrier didn't run out fuel.

He is the barroom loudmouth whose behavior is outweighed in the cosmic scales by four hours of unparalleled bravery near the 38th Parallel in Korea.

She is the nurse who fought against futility in Da Nang and went to sleep sobbing every night for two solid years.

He is the POW who left one person and came back another.

He is the drill instructor who has never been in combat, but has saved countless lives by turning no-accounts into Marines.

He is the parade-riding legionnaire who pins on his ribbons and medals with a prosthetic hand.

He is the white-haired guy bagging groceries at the supermarket, aggravatingly slow, who helped liberate a Nazi death camp.

A vet is an ordinary and extraordinary human being, someone who offered his life's vital years in the service of his country.

He is a soldier and a savior and a sword against the darkness, and nothing more than the finest, greatest testimony on behalf of the finest greatest nation ever know. We will never be able to repay the debt of gratitude.

After Listening: What do you think the author is trying to say?

MAIN IDEA

Period 3:

Teachers will leave doors open after the bell. Trumpeters will be stationed throughout the building and will play "Taps."

Before Listening: What do you think of when you hear "Taps"? You might be interested to know it originally had nothing to do with death or funerals. As I read the lyrics, see if you can figure out how the song applies to both its original and its current applications.

"Taps"

"TAPS" is the most beautiful bugle call. Played slowly and softly, it has a smooth, tender and touching character. The bugle call was written during the Peninsula Campaign of the Civil War by General Butterfield, with an assist from his bugler, Oliver W. Norton, in 1862.

"TAPS" went on from its origin as an alternative to "Lights Out" to become not only a signal that day was done, but also to say good-bye to a fallen comrade.

"TAPS" is customarily played at funerals at Arlington National Cemetery as well as at ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

"Fading light dims the sight,
And a star gems the sky, gleaming bright
From afar drawing night, Falls the night.

Day is done, gone the sun,
From the lake, from the hills, from the sky.
All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.

Then good night, peaceful night,
Till the light of the dawn shineth bright, God is near, do not fear
Friend, good night.

After Listening: Consider the lyrics or words. Does the song portray death as positive or negative? What words/phrases lead you to your conclusion? **RELEVANT DETAILS** Why would the military choose to use this song to honor its dead? **MILITARY'S PURPOSE**

Period 4:

Before Listening: The most famous American military cemetery is Arlington National Cemetery. It is a burial place for Any active-duty member of the U.S. armed forces or American veteran retired from active service. Which of its tomb do you think is the most famous? (Some may suggest burial

places of Presidents.) Certainly one of the most visited is the Tomb of the Unknowns.

Statues and Memorials: Tomb of the Unknowns

Located in Arlington National Cemetery, in Arlington, VA. the Tomb of the Unknowns stands on top of a hill facing east toward Washington, DC. Also known as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, it was constructed to mark the grave of an unidentified American soldier from World War I.

The Tomb is made of white Yule marble and is rectangular in shape with columns set into the surface. In total, it weighs approximately 124 and is over 8 feet tall. The side that faces Washington, DC contains three Greek figures that are engraved into the marble and represent Peace, Victory, and Valor. The back of the Tomb has the following inscribed:

HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD

On April 6, 1948, the Tomb Guard of the U. S. Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment (also known as The Old Guard) began guarding the Tomb 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The method used to guard the Tomb is very specific. While on duty, the sentinel crosses a 63-foot rubber surfaced walkway in exactly 21 steps. He then faces the Tomb for 21 seconds, turns again and pauses an additional 21 seconds before retracing his steps. The number 21 is symbolic of the highest salute according to dignitaries in military and state ceremonies. To prevent intruders, the sentinel always points his weapon away from the Tomb. Only under exceptional circumstances may the guard speak or break his silence. The guard will issue a warning if anyone attempts to enter the restricted area around the Tomb, but first will halt and bring his rifle to port arms.

Since the first interment (burial) of the Unknown Soldier from World War I, there have been three graves added for unknowns from World War II, Korea, and the Vietnam War. These unknowns were interred with their graves laid to the west of the World War I unknown. Due to the results of a DNA test in 1998, the Vietnam Unknown was identified as Air Force 1st Lt. Michael J. Blassie. His remains were removed (disinterred) from the gravesite and it has been decided that the grave of the Vietnam Unknown will remain empty.

After Listening: Why do you suppose so much honor and ceremony is devoted to the burial places of people whose wartime deeds are unknown?

INFERENCE

Period 5:

Before Listening: Some people have objections to reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. You might find the following recollection from Senator

John McCain very moving.

"The Pledge of Allegiance"
by Senator John McCain

As you may know, I spent five and one half years as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War. In the early years of our imprisonment, the NVA kept us in solitary confinement or two or three to a cell. In 1971 the NVA moved us from these conditions of isolation into large rooms with as many as 30 to 40 men to a room.

This was, as you can imagine, a wonderful change and was a direct result of the efforts of millions of Americans on behalf of a few hundred POWs 10,000 miles from home.

One of the men who moved into my room was a young man named Mike Christian. Mike came from a small town near Selma, Alabama. He didn't wear a pair of shoes until he was 13 years old. At 17, he enlisted in the US Navy. He later earned a commission by going to Officer Training School. Then he became a Naval Flight Officer and was shot down and captured in 1967. Mike had a keen and deep appreciation of the opportunities this country and our military provide for people who want to work and want to succeed.

As part of the change in treatment, the Vietnamese allowed some prisoners to receive packages from home. In some of these packages were handkerchiefs, scarves and other items of clothing.

Mike got himself a bamboo needle. Over a period of a couple of months, he created an American flag and sewed on the inside of his shirt. Every afternoon, before we had a bowl of soup, we would hang Mike's shirt on the wall of the cell and say the Pledge of Allegiance. I know the Pledge of Allegiance may not seem the most important part of our day now, but I can assure you that in that stark cell it was indeed the most important and meaningful event.

One day the Vietnamese searched our cell, as they did periodically, and discovered Mike's shirt with the flag sewn inside, and removed it. That evening they returned, opened the door of the cell, and for the benefit of all of us, beat Mike Christian severely for the next couple of hours. Then, they opened the door of the cell and threw him in. We cleaned him up as well as we could. The cell in which we lived had a concrete slab in the middle on which we slept. Four naked light bulbs hung in each corner of the room.

As I said, we tried to clean up Mike as well as we could. After the excitement died down, I looked in the corner of the room, and sitting there beneath that dim light bulb with a piece of red cloth, another shirt and his bamboo needle, was my friend, Mike Christian. He was sitting there with his eyes almost shut from the beating he had received, making another American flag. He was not making the

flag because it made Mike Christian feel better. He was making that flag because he knew how important it was to us to be able to Pledge our allegiance to our flag and country. So the next time you say the Pledge of Allegiance, you must never forget the sacrifice and courage that thousands of Americans have made to build our nation and promote freedom around the world. You must remember our duty, our honor, and our country.

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

After Listening: Why do you suppose McCain wrote this article? AUTHOR'S PURPOSE What did he say that might make someone reexamine his feelings about saying the pledge? DEVICES OF PERSUASION Do you think he achieved his purpose? How? EFFECTIVENESS OF PERSUASIVE DEVICES

Period 6:

Before Listening: What do you imagine happens to a soldier when he/she comes home from war? Listen for the unexpected.

The Homecoming, and then the Hard Part from "My Turn" Newsweek
by Anthony Swofford

In my mother's house there hangs a photo of the two of us taken days after my return from the 1991 gulf war. In the photo, we're both smiling and my mother is crying as I remove a yellow ribbon from a tree in her front yard. The ribbon meant everything to her, my safety and my life, my past and my future, a notice to the world that she had a son at war - and nothing to me.

Ribbons, flags and parades help convince families and the citizenry that our cause is just and that the price paid by the few death, heinous injury, a long-term psychological disorder is worth the gain for us all. The soldier appreciates these gestures but knows that flags and ribbons will not save his life.

When the soldier returns on leave, there are many homecomings. He is back in this physical and philosophical space, America: the republic he fought for, ideally. He returns to a base, a spit-and-polish space where he must shave daily and shine his boots to glass chores that have no meaning after combat. And he returns home.

Those who greet him at his homecoming party will have no idea what he has endured. Family and friends must remember that no matter how many hours of war coverage they've watched how many newspaper articles they've read or how many photos of injured and dead soldiers they've turned away from in shock, their soldier has lived this war, and he has a reel of these events playing constantly in his head.

Because scenes of combat are constantly available to the soldier does not mean that he is prepared to transfer this horror to his loved ones. Instead, he'll tell stories about the time the movie star or politician appeared for a photo op, his first hot shower in 40 days or the Iraqi children he played soccer with. He won't tell about watching his squad leader get hit in the chest with an RPG, or the day the Humvee in front of his detonated a roadside bomb, killing three men from his company. He won't mention the dead Iraqi children.

The soldier will visit friends from high school. They'll ask him what he really saw, now that his mom isn't around. He'll tell them that he was afraid of death, and they won't know how to respond because they've never had to consider dying in combat. The chasm between the men will be obvious. After the high-school friends depart, the soldier will call one of his platoon mates who is also on leave and attempting to make sense of a changed world, a changed self.

The soldier will sleep restlessly. After a year or longer of sleeping on the desert floor or a cot, a mattress will feel dangerously comfortable. He's used to sleeping with a rifle or pistol; he'll reach for it at night and awake with a start when it isn't there. He'll walk the neighborhood at 3 in the morning. He'll welcome the smell of his mother's breakfast. She shouldn't be surprised when he devours it in tow minutes and then leaves for a run. Early-morning exercise is a part of his military schedule, and the solace and fatigue it brings will help him cope with his new reality.

It's likely the soldier will return from leave early. After a week, the parties will be over and he'll have grown tired of the questions: How many Iraqis did you kiss? Did your unit get Saddam? He'll call his platoon mates to find out if they, too, are bored and miss each other and if they'd like to meet back at base sooner rather than later.

This will be the soldier's most important return. He'll be living among the soldiers he served with, people who won't ask how many Iraqis he killed because they know and don't care whether the number is zero or five. He'll be safe.

And now the government that spent years and thousands of dollars preparing the soldier for war should take responsibility for his physical and mental health. The post war saga of physically and psychologically injured American soldiers is nearly always a bureaucratic sinkhole. In "Home to War," author Gerald Nicosia narrates the embarrassing treatment Vietnam vets received from the Veterans Administration. Agent Orange and posttraumatic-stress disorder killed and paralyzed veterans for many years before the VA began to treat them. Currently, veterans of the first gulf war are battling to receive benefits for the multiple ailments known as gulf-war syndrome.

The soldier's family must give him time allow him to share his experiences at his

leisure, or never. But the government must act immediately on his return from battle. This responsibility is not just to the soldier, but to his family and the citizens in whose names he fought.

After Listening: What did the soldier say that was unexpected or that surprised you? **RELEVANT DETAILS** We have an image of the American soldier. How does this man fit that image? In what ways might he be different?
COMPARISON/CONTRAST

Period 7:

Before Listening: What's your favorite patriotic song? Even though the "National Anthem" and "America the Beautiful" are moving, there are few songs that speak as strongly to America's patriotic pride as Lee Greenwood's classic "God Bless the U.S.A.". America is a land filled with courageous, giving people. People who fight for what is right. People who won't tolerate bullies. People who are there in times of crisis. And people who lend a hand. We are a people who are proud to call ourselves Americans. God Bless the U.S.A. is a celebration of the legacy of freedom and determination that made the U.S.A. the country it is. (Distribute copies of the lyrics and invite students to sing along as the song is played over the intercom.)

'God Bless the US'
by Lee Greenwood

If tomorrow all the things were gone I'd worked for all my life, And I had to start again with just my children and my wife.

I'd thank my lucky stars to be living here today, 'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land God bless the U.S.A.

And I'm proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free.
And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me.
And I'm gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land God bless the U.S.A.

From the lakes of Minnesota, to the hills of Tennessee,
across the plains of Texas, from sea to shining sea,

From Detroit down to Houston and New York to LA,
Well, there's pride in every American heart, and it's time to stand
and say:

I'm proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free.
And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me.
And I'd gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today.
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land God bless the U.S.A.

After Listening: Patriotic music doesn't always evoke the same feelings. Some songs are sad, others sweet. How does Greenwood's song make you feel? AUTHOR'S PURPOSE What about the song makes you feel the way you do? CAUSE/EFFECT

REFLECTION: About 10 minutes before the bell, have students take out paper and pen/pencil and write the word Reflection on the top. Tell them to think silently about the passages they've listened to today. Did they have a favorite? Did they find any disturbing? Inspiring? Surprising? How did these readings affect their thoughts about Veterans' Day? Give them a few seconds to think in silence. Then have them write a few sentences about their response to our observance of this holiday. They do not have to write their name, but they must write a response. It will serve as their Exit Slip from class.

SYNTHESIZE INFORMATION FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS

Teachers, please read over the Exit Slips and place any you consider insightful or meaningful in the folder labeled "Exit Slips" on the counter in the main office.

Thank you for taking part in honoring those who serve our country.