



Kim Essenburg
Christian Academy in
Japan

English 10
World literature
44 students

Student Learning Result
“The day I chose to follow my consistent and loving God, I threw away the option of apathy.”

Tip
Be sure to teach the Biblical content you want students to use in the assessment.

Unit
Night (Elie Wiesel), 3 weeks

Essential Questions
What’s wrong with the world? Who is my neighbor?

Content
Holocaust, racism, discrimination, human dignity, the basis of human dignity (being created in God’s image)

Skills
Writing, discussion

Assessment
Essay

Instructional Strategies
Small groups, discussion, jigsaw, journaling

Resources
Night, Bible, various articles, *Hotel Rwanda*

What are you excited about?

Kim: I’m excited that 1 of my English 10 students wrote, “I have no right to choose whether I should help or not; the day I chose to follow my consistent and loving God, I threw away the option of apathy.”

What were your students studying?

Kim: Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, a Holocaust memoir. During their study, they focused on 2 essential questions: “What’s wrong with the world?” and “Who is my neighbor?”

At the end of the 3-week unit, my students wrote essays. I’m excited that their writing is improving, and I’m excited that they applied a Biblical perspective to a theme of *Night*, the mistreatment of others.

What was the essay prompt?

Kim: My students wrote 750-word essays on the following: How significant a part of what’s wrong with the world is the tendency to disregard the human dignity of others, and how should a Christian respond? Illustrate your answer from literature, history, current events, and your own experience. Be sure to address the relevance of the Biblical concepts of the image of God and the second greatest commandment.

How did you prepare your students for the essay?

Kim: Before they started reading *Night*, my students considered 2 essential questions (“What’s wrong with the world?” and “Who is my neighbor?”) and discussed “Justice in an Unjust World,” a 5-page article by Gary Haugen, president of International Justice Mission.

Then as they read *Night*, they discussed racism, discrimination, human dignity, and the basis of human dignity, being created in God’s image. They also increased their awareness of recent events by watching clips from *Hotel Rwanda* and jigsawing 4 articles:

1. “Being Muslim in a Mad, Sad, World”—an August 3, 2005, editorial in *The Yomiuri Shinbun* (which was reposting the article from *The Washington Post*).
2. “Keep Crying Out”—a 1-page description of Darfur from the December 9, 2006, edition of *The Economist*.
3. “A Responsibility to Protect”—a 2-page article from December 2006 edition of *Sojourners* that considers the question, “Is military intervention the only way?”
4. “Alien Nation”—an article by Isaac Canales from the fall 2007 edition of *Leadership* that discusses illegal aliens in California.

After reading *Night*, they discussed Wiesel’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech, which asserts that apathy helps the oppressor. They also worked in groups of 4 to study Leviticus 19:18 (which talks about loving our neighbor) and the 7 Bible passages mentioned in the NIV study note. For each of 8 passages, they identified the speaker, occasion, audience, and purpose.

What did you learn from teaching your *Night* unit?

Kim: Well, I have a deeper appreciation for the power of preparing students for an assessment before, during, and after the study of a piece of literature. And I realize that providing students with additional articles is helpful—last year they discussed 2 articles and this year they discussed 5. The additional articles helped my students get a better understanding of sin and its implications for how people treat each other.

Teaching can be discouraging at times, and reading essays in which students apply a Biblical perspective is encouraging! I was encouraged, for example, when I read, “Our voices can be heard. We just need to speak up loud enough for the world to hear; there are many ways to do this...[not] telling racist jokes is how I plan to do my part.”

Writing this essay helped my students more deeply connect what they study, their lives, and a Biblical perspective.

What modifications will you make to your unit?

Kim: I think I’ll update the articles I used to keep them current, and I’ll add more specifics to the assessment prompt—like the number of quotations they need to use.