VOICE OF WITNESS

Six by Ten: Stories from Solitary Curriculum

Introduction

The oral histories in *Six by Ten: Stories from Solitary* articulate many sobering realities of the U.S. prison system. They give us a firsthand glimpse into the many ways in which societal prejudice related to ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality are amplified within the walls of U.S. prisons, as well as exploring the link between trauma and crime/criminal behavior, and how the use of solitary confinement deepens this trauma. In bringing these stories to light, *Six by Ten* co-editors Mateo Hoke and Taylor Pendergrass are asking us as teachers and learners to think critically about the use of solitary confinement and mass incarceration in general. We hope that students who have been impacted by the criminal justice system will see their experiences reflected, while students who are encountering these issues for the first time will address the question, *"now that I have this information, what am I going to do with it?"*

In the lesson plans that follow, our goal is to support teachers and students in deepening their own understanding of the prison system through the power of personal narrative. We have designed the curriculum to be as flexible and inclusive as possible for older middle school, high school, and college students. All of the lessons can be done as a unit, or individually, or teachers can use different parts of several lessons to create their own versions. Each lesson also provides tips and strategies to support English language learners. We have also made available a short audio recording of *Six by Ten* narrator Mohammed "Mike" Ali reading excerpts from his story, so students can experience his story in a more personal way. The lessons also provide opportunities for students to practice oral history skills (listening, interviewing, editing) to pursue their understanding of the issues presented in *Six by Ten* beyond the four walls of the classroom. We have also put together a list of discussion questions that would be ideal for a facilitated group discussion or a book club.

Alongside the narratives, we crafted lessons that weave together themes and issues related to the criminalization of trauma, an examination of the Eighth Amendment (cruel and unusual punishment) exploring the intersectionality of imprisonment and the application of solitary confinement, and by interrogating what our criminal justice system seeks to do, and whether or not it functions as it's intended to. The lessons also encourage students to be civic participants and critical thinkers, while nurturing their empathy and curiosity through oral history.

Our thanks to outgoing Voice of Witness Curriculum Specialist Claire Kiefer for her experience and expertise; Amy Jamgochian, Academic Program Director with the Prison University Project for her valuable and timely feedback; and the students of the Prison University Project for inspiring the oral history/memoir lesson contained in this curriculum. We'd also like to thank *Six by Ten* narrator Mohammad "Mike" Ali for taking the time to record his story.

With respect,

The Voice of Witness Education Team

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

VOICE OF WITNESS

Curriculum Map

Lesson Theme	Intersectional Identities & The Law	Trauma & Adolescence	Questioning Systems of Oppression	Oral History and Personal Narrative Writing
Language	English	English	English	English
ELA Standards	RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.7 RI.11-12.7.SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.2.W.9-10.2, 11-12.2.L.9-10.3, 11-12.3.	SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.2. W.9-10.2, 11-12.2. L.9-10.3, 11-12.3.	RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.7 RI.11-12.7. SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.2. W.9-10.2, 11-12.2. L.9-10.3, 11-12.3.	SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.2. W.9-10.2, 11-12.2. L.9-10.3, 11-12.3
Narrator	Maryam Henderson-Uloho	Brian Nelson	Mohammed "Mike" Ali	n/a
Student Objectives	Students will discuss the efficacy and enforcement of the Bill of Rights, particularly the Eighth Amendment. Students will examine an individual's needs and experience based on their intersectional identities.	Students will examine the impacts of trauma in the adolescent years on brain development. Students will critically analyze physical and emotional health as it pertains to punishment and human rights.	Students will learn to craft generative questions that deepen their understanding and critically analyze the carceral system. Students will apply critical reading techniques to both text and visual images.	Students will utilize the oral history storytelling process to develop their own written personal narratives.
Ethnic Studies-Aligned Topics	• Intersectionality and Identity • Transforming Systems of Power • Civil Liberties and Rights	• Impacts of Systemic Oppression • Empathy and Understanding Others	• Transforming Systems of Power • Human Rights • Justice	• Community Engagement • Identity and Personal Narrative • Empathy and Understanding Others

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

VOICE OF WITNESS

Six by Ten Lesson Plan One:

Maryam Henderson-Uloho

Time Needed: Three class periods.

Materials:

- Maryam Henderson-Uloho's story from *Six by Ten*
- Copies of the ACLU simplified Bill of Rights: https://aclu-de.org/resources/know-your-rights/bill-of-rights-in-simple-language
- Copies of Thinking Notes from Teaching Tolerance: https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/Thinking%20Notes.pdf
- Square video on Maryam Henderson-Uloho and Sister Hearts: https://squareup.com/dreams/sister-hearts

Objective: Students will learn the concept of intersectionality and be able to explain it in their own words. Students will critically examine the challenges of reentry into society from prison in the United States and suggest four improvements that would mitigate these challenges, through the lens of intersectionality.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: Reading Informational Texts RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.7 RI.11-12.7. Speaking and Listening SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.2. Writing W.9-10.2, 11-12.2. Language L.9-10.3, 11-12.3.

Connections: This lesson plan can be used in conjunction with the stories/lessons from *Surviving Justice: America's Wrongfully Convicted and Exonerated* and *Inside This Place, Not of It: Narratives from Women's Prisons.*

Essential Questions:

- The Eighth Amendment to the Constitution bans the "cruel and unusual punishment" of people who are incarcerated. How do we determine if punishment is cruel and unusual?
- Do people/does society have a responsibility to help people reintegrate into society after they are released from prison? Why or why not?
- In what ways should we consider intersectionality as we plan systems, laws, and institutions in the United States?

Narrative Excerpt:

"In the tank, they strip you buck naked. They take all your clothes, put you in a smock, take your mattress and pillow, and give you a blanket/mattress thing and a roll of toilet paper. You can't make phone calls, can't get mail, you don't have communication with anybody. Usually, the girls that go in there don't come out alive. If they want to punish you real bad, they put you in there. And you know if you go in the tank, you might not come out alive. I went in not expecting to come out. I was in there two weeks. I kept my mind busy making flowers out of the toilet paper. My whole cell was filled with flowers. I was able to get a magazine from the guards, and I'd leach the ink out of the magazine pages to color my flowers. There were flowers all over the head and foot of my bed, the sink, the floor. That's how I made it through two weeks."

—Maryam Henderson-Uloho, *Six by Ten*, p. 29

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Day One

Overview
In this lesson, students will examine and discuss the Bill of Rights and solitary confinement with regards to one another. Students will read Maryam's narrative and reflect on how it makes them feel.

Step One: (5 minutes) Respond in writing to the following prompt:

> *What do you know about solitary confinement, or "the Hole?" How and why is it used in prisons?*

Step Two: (5 minutes) Ask for a few volunteers to share their answers to the prompt with the class.

> ***English Language Learners:** Consider using this time to define and discuss solitary confinement in the U.S. as a class or small group instead of a writing prompt.*

Step Three: (15 minutes) Hand out copies of the ACLU's Simplified Bill of Rights. Read them as a class and check for understanding as you go. Depending on your class, it may be useful to brainstorm examples of what each amendment looks like and write them on the board. For example, you could write the idea behind each amendment on the board and ask students to share examples they've encountered in their lives or in the media, movies, etc.

> Freedom of Religion—employers cannot discriminate against you because you wear a hijab
> Freedom of the Press—the government cannot dictate which information is published in the media
> Right to Bear Arms—citizens are allowed to purchase and own guns

Step Four: (10 minutes) Facilitate a class discussion about the Bill of Rights and their knowledge of the prison system and solitary confinement. Possible questions to discuss:

- Does the Bill of Rights remain in place when a U.S. citizen is incarcerated?
- Does the concept and implementation of solitary confinement follow or break any of these amendments?

Step Five: (20 minutes) Hand out copies of Teaching Tolerance's Thinking Notes and go over how to use them. Invite students to create their own key/code if they'd like to. Students will read Maryam Henderson-Uloho's narrative from *Six by Ten* as silent sustained reading, using their Thinking Notes chart/symbols as they read. If needed, students can also do this as homework.

> ***English Language Learners:** Instead of reading Maryam's entire narrative, focus on pages 24-30, under the sections "'Take that rag off your head!'" and "After a while, you start to lose hope."*

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Step Six: (5 minutes) As you collect students' Thinking Notes, ask them to share one word or phrase with the class that represents their feelings and thoughts about Maryam's story.

Day Two

Overview
In this lesson, students will learn about the concept of intersectionality and compare visible and invisible identities. They will brainstorm how those identities may have impacted Maryam's experience.

Step One: (5 minutes) Respond in writing to the following prompt:

> *Based on our conversation about the Bill of Rights yesterday, do you believe any amendments should be added or taken away? Why or why not?*

Step Two: (10 minutes) Pair Share. Students discuss their answers to the prompt with a partner.

Step Three: (15 minutes) Write the text of the Eighth Amendment on the board:

> *Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.*

Facilitate a discussion with the class using the following suggested questions:

- What constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment?"
- Did Maryam experience cruel and unusual punishment while she was incarcerated? Explain your perspective.
- Is the Eighth Amendment enforced in the United States? How so?
- If you could change the language of the Eighth Amendment, would you? If so, how would you change it?

***English Language Learners:** Consider including the "simplified" version of the amendment text for students, and focus on the first two discussion questions to give students an opportunity to process the concept of "cruel and unusual punishment."*

Step Four: (15 minutes) Write "Intersectionality" on the board and define it as:

> Intersectionality, *n.*
> The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise. (Oxford Dictionary)

Check for understanding with the class. Simplifying the definition as "multiple identities and how these identities interact with each other" may help students grasp the concept. Ask students to

give examples of identities, specifying that they do not need to share their own identities if they do not feel comfortable. Examples include: Asian, woman, able-bodied, father, bisexual, Muslim, transgender, economically advantaged.

Step Five: (10 minutes) Make a T-chart on the board and write "Visible Identities" on one side and "Invisible Identities" on the other side. Ask the class to assign each of the example identities they gave to one of the two categories. Discuss the differences between visible and invisible identities.

Step Six: (10 minutes) Divide the class into groups of 3–4. Ask each group to brainstorm Maryam's visible and invisible identities. Once they have generated a list, ask them to discuss how each of Maryam's identities impacted her experience in prison and how these identities interact with one another.

Day Three

Overview
In this lesson, students will watch a video about Maryam's story and discuss their emotional reactions. Students will write paragraph biographies about their own intersectional identities and interview one another using open ended questions and active listening skills.

Step One: Watch the Square video about Maryam Henderson-Uloho and Sister Hearts. (20 minutes)

Step Two: Class discussion. Use the following prompts to facilitate (10 minutes):

- Describe your emotional reaction to the video. What stood out to you and why?
- Why do you think Maryam said that she relates to the "discarded items" she sold after she got out of prison?
- Thinking back on the discussion about intersectionality, what different identities of Maryam's stand out for you? How do you think these identities have impacted the course of Maryam's life?
- What do you think that women reentering society from prison need? Consider their physical and emotional needs, and how intersectionality plays a role in these needs.
- If you could ask Maryam three questions, what would they be?

***English Language Learners:** Since captions are unavailable for the Square video, you may need to pause to check for understanding, and build time to answer questions for comprehension before discussing emotional reactions to the video. Students could also use this time to read more of Maryam's narrative instead.*

Step Three: Partner Interviews.

1. Ask each student to write a one-paragraph biography drawing on their various intersectional identities. Advise students that they will be sharing their biographies with a partner, so to only write down what they are comfortable sharing. (5 minutes)

2. Once students have completed their short biographies, they will exchange with a partner.

3. Each student will write three to five open-ended questions to ask their partner based on their biography. (5 minutes)

4. When their questions are completed, students will take turns interviewing their partner. They do not need to take notes, but remind them to use their active listening skills. Encourage pairs to move to different parts of the room or hallway. (5 minutes each interview)

***English Language Learners:** Provide students with a list of potential open-ended questions to choose from, while encouraging them to add their own.*

Can you tell me more about [identifier]?
Where does [identifier] come from?
Do you feel strongly about any one identifier? Can you explain why or why not?
Would you have chosen different identifiers last year? 2 years ago? Do you think your identifiers will change in the future?

Step Four: (5 minutes) Group debrief. Come back together as a class, and ask for volunteers to share their feelings about the partner interviews. Remind them to respect their partner's privacy. Suggested questions for class discussion:

- What was interesting about your interview? What was surprising?
- Did you learn anything new about the intersection of your partner's identities, or intersectionality in general?
- How does this interview relate to what you think Maryam may have experienced in telling her story?

Media Resources:

Webinar: Teaching Tolerance's free webinar on Intersectionality.
https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/webinars/intersectionality

Article: "Solitary Confinement Is Inhumane. I Should Know—I Spent 30 Days There" by Chandra Bozelko.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2016/apr/28/solitary-confinement-inhumane-prison-stories-6-x-9

Poem: "Who Said It Was Simple" by Audre Lorde.
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42587/who-said-it-was-simple

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

VOICE OF WITNESS

Six by Ten Lesson Two:

Brian Nelson and "The Circuit"

Time Needed: Two class periods.

Materials:

- Brian Nelson's story from *Six by Ten*
- Copies of Solitary Watch Fact Sheet: Children in Solitary Confinement http://solitarywatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/FACT-SHEET-Children-in-Solitary-Confinement1.pdf
- Access to short video clip from Human Rights Watch on teens in solitary confinement: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=i7hynBLs1fU
- Blank white paper; markers or colored pencils
- Post-it notes
- Optional: Oral History Resource Guide for English Language Learners http://voiceofwitness.org/lesson-plans/resource-guide-english-language-learners

Objective: Students will examine the impacts of trauma in the adolescent years on brain development and be able to articulate their understanding of these impacts. Students will critically analyze "the circuit" as it pertains to punishment and human rights.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: Speaking and Listening SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.2. Writing W.9-10.2, 11-12.2. Language L.9-10.3, 11-12.3.

Connections: This lesson can alongside the stories and lessons from *Surviving Justice: America's Wrongfully Convicted and Exonerated* and *Inside This Place, Not of It: Narratives from Women's Prisons.*

Essential Questions:

- How far-reaching are the impacts of trauma on adolescents?
- How much agency do people have in reversing the impacts of trauma on their lives? How much of our behavior and choices are determined by the early experiences that shape us?
- What is the purpose of solitary confinement?

Narrative Excerpt:

"Because I wouldn't be their informant or mediate a gang war, they put me on "the circuit." I didn't know what it was at the time, but it was sort of a psychological experiment. Being on the circuit meant I was constantly being transferred. I would eat one meal in one facility, the next in a different prison, and the third in a whole new facility. I was being driven around the state every day, and after every meal I just got in the car and they took me somewhere else. I was moving three times a day! Every time I got done eating, I'd get right back in a car and keep going. That went on for three months."

—Brian Nelson, *Six by Ten,* p. 43

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Day One

Overview
In this lesson, students will watch video clips about teens in solitary confinement and discuss with partners. Students will read a narrative and fill out a timeline. Students will reflect on the narrative they have read.

Step One: (5 minutes) Respond in writing to the following prompt:

What are some of the reasons young people join gangs?

Step Two: (10 minutes) Watch this short video clip from Human Rights Watch on teens in solitary confinement (English captions are available within the YouTube video settings): https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=i7hynBLs1fU

Step Three: (10 minutes) Ask students to turn to a partner to discuss their responses to the video, and how it relates to the previous writing prompt.

Step Four: (5 minutes) Introduce Brian Nelson to students by reading the introduction to his narrative out loud.

Step Five: (25 minutes) Read Brian's story. Depending on your class's needs, you can ask students to read individually as silent, sustained reading (SSR), in small groups, using popcorn reading, or any of the strategies from the English Language Learner resource guide. Students should fill out the timeline as they read.

> ***English Language Learners:** Instead of reading Brian's entire narrative, focus on pages 42-46, under the section "A sort of psychological experiment."*

Step Six: (5 minutes) Exit Cards. Distribute blank index cards to students and ask them to write a brief (two or three sentences) reflection on Brian's story. Students should turn in their exit cards before leaving class.

Day Two

Overview
In this lesson, students will create maps to visualize Brian's narrative using images and quotes from the text. Students will view other groups' maps and consider how the circuit affected Brian. Students will reflect on their own feelings.

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Step One: (25 minutes) Mapping "The Circuit." Divide students into groups of 3–4. Give each group a large piece of white poster or butcher paper and a set of markers or colored pencils. Groups should revisit pages 43-45 of Brian's story (where he describes "the circuit"). Groups will create a map of Brian's journey on the circuit. Encourage groups to be creative and use words, images, and even quotes in their maps. See page 5 from the English Language Learner resource guide for an example of a similar map.

Step Two: (10 minutes) Debrief with students about the maps they have created. Ask them to examine how much time he spent in each location, if defined, and to share a word or sentence describing their reaction to Brian's experience. If desired, students can refer to their Day One Exit Cards. Give them a few minutes to think silently about the physical, emotional, and psychological impacts that Brian may have suffered, and let them know they will be sharing these ideas on each other's maps in the next activity.

Step Four: (10 minutes) Gallery Walk. Tape the completed maps on different walls in the classroom. Give each student 5–10 post-it notes. Ask students to silently walk around the room and view each map. As students study each map, they should write down some of the physical, emotional, and psychological impacts that being on the circuit had on Brian and stick the notes on the appropriate places on the map. For example, if one map shows Brian being moved to three different prisons within the span of one day, a student might write the following on a post-it note and stick it on that section of the map:

- Back pain from being shackled and transported in a van all day
- Acute anxiety from not knowing where he is
- Depression/sadness because he can't communicate with his family, who are unable to visit him because they don't know his location
- Psychological distress from being confined to one room without anyone to talk to

***English Language Learners:** A chart of vocabulary for emotions and physical symptoms could provide students with a base of choices for what Brian might have felt; students could also write in their native language and translate the terms after the activity.*

Step Five: (10 minutes) Group discussion. Facilitate a debrief of Brian's story and the day's activities using the following prompts:

- How did you feel re-reading the excerpt from Brian's story about the circuit and mapping his journey?
- How do you think you would feel if you were held in solitary confinement?
- Today, Brian says that writing letters to prisoners helps him a lot. Why do you think that is?
- What kinds of civic action can people take to address the injustice of the circuit and the human rights violations associated with the use of solitary confinement?

Step Six/Homework (Optional): Write a letter to one of your local representatives expressing your views on the use of solitary confinement. Should it be legal? If so, should there be any regulations about who can be placed in solitary confinement (based on age, health, etc.)?

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Media Resources:
Article, Quartz, "Your Brain Is Particularly Vulnerable to Trauma at Two Distinct Ages" by Vivian Giang. Explores the significance of trauma on brain development at age two years old and in the teenage years.
https://qz.com/470751/your-brain-is-particularly-vulnerable-to-trauma-at-two-distinct-ages/

Article, KQED, "Young Inmates Help Turn Solitary Confinement Cells into Art Spaces" by Priska Neely:
https://www.kqed.org/news/11040591/young-inmates-help-turn-solitary-confinement-cells-into-art-spaces

Article, *New York Times*, "Have You Ever Seen Someone Be Killed?" by Emily Badger:
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/25/upshot/have-you-ever-seen-someone-get-killed.html

Organization, Uptown People's Law Center, Chicago:
http://www.uplcchicago.org

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

VOICE OF WITNESS

Six by Ten Lesson Three:

Mohammed "Mike" Ali

Time Needed: Two class periods.

Materials:

- Copies of Mike's narrative from *Six by Ten*
- Audio of Mike reading excerpts from his story: https://soundcloud.com/user-797254442/sets/six-by-ten-stories-from-solitary-mohammed-mike-ali
- Copies of Mike's Narrative Comprehension handout
- ASCD's "Sharing the Power of the Question": http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol7/713-rothstein.aspx
- Harvard Graduate School of Education's "Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Questions": http://hepg.org/hel-home/issues/27_5/helarticle/teaching-students-to-ask-their-own-questions_507
- "Questions that Deepen Comprehension" from Edutopia: https://www.edutopia.org/blog/questioning-that-deepens-comprehension-douglas-fisher-nancy-frey
- Access to digital images of Art from Solitary from Solitary Watch and a projector: http://solitarywatch.com/resources/multimedia/art/art-from-california-shus/
- Exit Cards (blank index cards)

Objective: Students will learn to craft generative questions that deepen their understanding of a text or an issue. Students will apply critical reading techniques to both text and visual images.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: Reading Informational Texts RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.7 RI.11-12.7. Speaking and Listening SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.2. Writing W.9-10.2, 11-12.2. Language L.9-10.3, 11-12.3.

Connections: This lesson can be used in conjunction with stories from *Surviving Justice: America's Wrongfully Convicted and Exonerated*, *Inside This Place, Not of It: Narratives from Women's Prisons*, and *Underground America: Narratives of Undocumented Lives.*

Essential Questions:

- What long-term effects can result from a person being held in isolation for years?
- What ethical problems result from privatizing prisons and detention centers?
- How can the process of developing and asking questions help us to guide our own research and gain deeper understanding of an issue?

Narrative Excerpt:

"Being in the SHU is like being a dog tied to a pole with a ten-foot chain. Imagine leaving a dog like that for months at a time. He could eat, drink, shit, you know, take a shower and everything, but just in that space right there, ten feet. He can't go anywhere besides that ten feet, you know? Imagine what he's going through. For thirty days, two months. Eight months. Ten months. Imagine."

—Mohammed "Mike" Ali, *Six by Ten,* p. 96

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Day One

Overview
In this lesson, students will brainstorm what they know about immigrant detention. Students will read a narrative and respond to it by generating lists of open ended questions.

Step One: (5 minutes) Respond in writing to the following prompt:

> *What do you know about immigration detention? How is it similar or different to other prisons in the country?*

Step Two: (10 minutes) Ask for volunteers to share their responses and write them on the board. Encourage students to think about the people that enter these systems, and how these systems interact with each other. *Is there overlap between the two populations of prisoners? How do these systems affect individuals, and how do they affect families?*

Step Three: (10 minutes) Introduce students to the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) developed by the Right Question Institute (http://rightquestion.org). Review these principles:

- Ask as many questions as you can without stopping to critique or review them.
- After you've generated a list of questions, think about how you can improve them to elicit the kind of answers that will best deepen your understanding. How can you narrow or expand them? Can you make them open-ended?
- Prioritize your questions and select the three most important ones from your list.

Step Four: (25 minutes) Read Mike's narrative aloud as a group using popcorn reading, through silent sustained reading, or one of the methods listed in the English Language Learner resource guide. Consider bringing the editor and narrator's voices into the room by listening to *Six by Ten* co-editor, Mateo Hoke read the introduction to Mike's narrative, and excerpts from Mike in the SoundCloud playlist.

> ***English Language Learners:** Instead of reading Mike's entire narrative, focus on pages 95-99, under the sections "Send me back to Fiji" and "I broke down and cried like crazy."*

Step Five: (10 minutes) QFT Practice. Ask each student to write a list of questions they have after reading or listening to Mike's story. Encourage students to write questions as they come to mind without worrying about how they are phrased. Collect students' lists of questions before they leave class.

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Day Two

Overview
In this lesson, students will ask questions they've generated to partners and respond in writing. Students will answer worksheet questions on text and image-based sources. Students will generate more questions about solitary confinement.

Step One: (10 minutes) Hand out the questions you collected from students at the end of the previous class. Ask each student to select one question for a peer to respond to and exchange questions with a neighbor. Each student should respond in writing to the question from their neighbor.

Step Two: (10 minutes) Ask for volunteers to share the question they were asked as well as their answer with the class.

Step Three: (15 minutes) Distribute copies of Handout One. Working in pairs, students should read the excerpt from Mike's story on Handout One and answer the questions that follow.

Step Four: (20 minutes) Using an overhead projector, look at the images that artists created while held in Security Housing Units (SHUs) in California. Choose 3–5 of these images to analyze using the same questions from Handout One (replace the words "text" and "narrator" with "image" and "artist"). Facilitate a class discussion analyzing these images and making connections between the pieces of art and Mike's story from *Six by Ten*.

Step Five: (5 minutes) Hand out Exit Cards. Ask each student to write down three questions they would ask legislators and/or the general public about the practice of solitary confinement in the United States. Encourage students to keep in mind what they have learned about crafting generative questions that deepen understanding. Collect exit cards as the students leave class, and if desired, use them to create letters to local representatives as described in Lesson Plan Two.

Media Resources:
Article (2017), from *GQ*: "Buried Alive: Stories from Inside Solitary Confinement" by Nathaniel Penn:
https://www.gq.com/story/buried-alive-solitary-confinement

Poem. "Count Time" by Jimmy Santiago Baca:
https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/count-time/

Online resource from Research Weekly. "Alternative to Solitary Confinement Offers Promising Results for Inmates"
https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/about-us/features-and-news/4467-research-weekly-alternative-to-solitary-confinement-offers-promising-results-for-inmates

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

VOICE OF WITNESS

Lesson Three: Narrative Comprehension Handout

Read the following excerpt from Mike's narrative from Six by Ten. Then, discuss the questions that follow with a partner and answer them below.

"In immigration detention, everybody was fighting for their lives but in different ways. In immigration you didn't know when you were getting out. You knew you might not ever see your family again. There's dudes I met that were just picked up at home after living their whole lives in the US. There's one cellie I had, a buddy from Vietnam. He was at home with his kids eating dinner when immigration came for him, came in the house and cuffed him in front of his kids. He'd been in the US twenty-four years. Turned out when he was eighteen, he'd gone joy riding in a car that a guy he knew had stolen. He didn't do nothing, but they found him twenty-four years later, came to his dinner table, cuffed him in front of his kids. He was in Eloy for six months." (p. 94)

Questions that Deepen Comprehension (from Edutopia):

What does the text say?	How does the text work?	What does the text mean?	What does the text inspire you to do?
What is the relationship between the narrator and the "main character?"	What words or phrases does the narrator repeat, and how do they affect the tone of this passage?	What is the narrator's attitude toward immigration detention?	Do you want to write a letter to the narrator? Why or why not?
		What can you tell us about the narrator? How do you know?	Do you want to talk with friends about this excerpt? Why or why not?
Does the author use any symbols? What do they mean?	What image most stands out to you? Why do you think the narrator focused on this image?		
		What can you tell us about the man from Vietnam? How do you know?	Do you want to engage in policy action around the issues in this excerpt? Why or why not?

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Six by Ten Lesson Four:

Oral History and Personal Narrative Writing

Time Needed: Three or four class periods.

Materials:

- Notebook paper or journals, pens
- Sample Interview Question handout
- Revising & Editing Tips handout
- Any narrative (or several excerpts) from *Six by Ten.*
- (optional) Audio of Mohammed "Mike" Ali reading excerpts from his story: https://soundcloud.com/user-797254442/sets/six-by-ten-stories-from-solitary-mohammed-mike-ali

Objective: Students will utilize the oral history storytelling process to develop their own written personal narratives.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: Speaking and Listening SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.2. Writing W.9-10.2, 11-12.2. Language L.9-10.3, 11-12.3

Connections: This lesson can be used in conjunction with any narrative in the VOW series and is adaptable to a variety of learning settings.

Essential Questions:

- How can my oral storytelling skills and personal narrative writing skills complement each other?
- What are the skill and habits of mind required to support and contribute to someone else's story?
- How can I develop my editing skills using first-person narrative?
- How can I create an oral history without access to a recording device?

***English Language Learners:** Consider substituting the interview activity with the "artifact interview" from the English Language Learner resource guide.*

Day One

Overview
In this lesson, students will share a story about their name with a partner. Students will consider why narrators choose to take part in an oral history project. Students will brainstorm stories about their life they would like to talk about. Students will generate interview questions based on their partner's story.

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Step One: (7-10 minutes) Working in pairs, students each take two minutes to share a story associated with their first names (could also be a chosen name or a nickname). Remind students it does not have to be an "origin story," but can be any story related to their first names. After each pair has shared with each other, ask for a few student volunteers to share something they learned about their partners.

Step Two: (10-15 minutes) Introduce students to *Six by Ten*, and answer any clarifying questions students have about the book or about oral history. As a class, read the intro to the selected narrative and several short excerpts. Have a brief class discussion after reading, so students can share their responses.

While reading the excerpts, ask students to think about the following:

- Why do you think the narrator agreed to be interviewed for the book? What reasons can you think of?
- Create one or two questions that you think the interviewer may have asked the narrator to elicit his/her story.
- What kinds of questions inspire people to share stories rather than just supply short answers?

Step Three: (10-12 minutes) Class oral histories: To begin the interview process, ask students to journal on the following suggested prompt:

- Think of an experience, memory, or moment from your life that you'd have an interest in talking about during an interview. It can be something funny, joyful, challenging, or confusing. Examples include: something you enjoyed when you were a little kid, a day that was memorable, a story about someone you always looked up to, or a time when things were not as they appeared. The choice is yours!

Remind students that that they will be sharing with a partner, so they should only write about something they're comfortable with.

Step Four: (10 minutes) Have a brief class discussion about open-ended questions, questions that inspire storytelling, follow-up questions, etc. Share and discuss the questions on the Interview Question Handout, and as a class create a few of your own sample interview questions.

Step Five: (7-10 minutes) Have students exchange their writing with a partner. After they have had time to read each other's story, ask them to create 3–5 interview questions based on their partner's story. These are the questions they will use to interview their partners. As students think about their questions, use the following suggested comments for encouragement:

- Lead with your curiosity! What do you want to know more about?
- What kinds of questions will inspire your narrator to go deeper into their story?

Step Six: (2 minutes) Exit Cards. As students are leaving class, ask them to create an interview question that they would like to be asked during their interview in the following class. Collect the cards.

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

VOICE OF WITNESS

Day Two

Overview
In this lesson, students will discuss what will help them feel safe and brave during an interview. Students will interview one another for ten minutes each, actively taking notes. Students will use the notes their partner took to add to their story.

Step One: (5 minutes) Give each student's partner the exit card with the interview question they would like to be asked during their interview. This may inspire students to create an additional question or two for their interviews.

Step Two: (10 minutes) Creating an environment for story sharing. In preparation for the interviews, have a brief class discussion using the following prompt:

- If you had a meaningful story to share with someone, what would you need to feel safe, to feel brave?

Write student responses on the board. Sample responses include:

- Trust
- Respect
- Non-judgment
- Genuine interest in narrator's story

Step Three: (25 minutes) Partner Interviews. Each student will have ten minutes to interview their partner. Make sure interviewers ask the question they were given by their narrators during the interview! Encourage students to write down as much as they can of what their partner tells them. Remind them that it's an exercise in maintaining focus—how can they stay present with their narrator while talking notes? After the interview, students are going to give their notes to their partners so they can use them to create their oral history. In essence, students are collaborating on each other's stories.

Step Four: (10+ minutes) With any remaining class time, students can begin to incorporate the notes their partner took during the interview into their story. This process should be continued as homework. Remind students they will be using the interview notes their partner gave them and adding anything to their stories they find interesting or useful. It's up to the students how much of their partner's notes they want to incorporate. To help get them started, here are a few examples of how to incorporate the notes:

- An interesting word or phrase
- An important or interesting detail
- "Finishing" parts of the story students did not have time to write about, but were able to speak about during their interview

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Day Three

Overview
In this lesson, students will edit their stories. Students will also use peer editing to get another perspective on their writing.

Step One: (7-10 minutes) As a warm up, ask the previous day's partners to discuss the following prompts.

- Was writing your story before you spoke about helpful? If so, how?
- Did your interview help you with writing your story? If so, how?

Ask for a few student volunteers to share with the class.

Step Two: (35-40 minutes) The Editing Process. Before beginning the actual editing, have a brief group discussion related to the following suggested prompt:

What are the elements of a good story? What pulls you in and what holds your interest?

Write student responses on the board. Share the editing handout and answer any clarifying questions, or provide specific examples of the editing choices mentioned. Give students time to edit/rewrite parts of their story. Save time for students to do some peer editing with their interview partners, incorporating any peer editing procedures that the class is familiar with.

Step Three: (5 minutes) Before the end of class, ask students to write down and share at least one challenge they encountered while editing, or one editing strategy they found helpful.

Homework: Students spend a bit of time doing final revisions to their stories in preparation for a Story Circle or Reader's Theater presentation during the next class. Providing snacks will make it even more festive!

Day Four

Overview
In this lesson, students will participate in a Story Circle, reading part or all of their story aloud to their classmates. Students will reflect on what it was like to hear their story read.

Step One: (5 minutes) As a class, set up the room however you'd like; a circle of chairs, create a small stage, etc.

Step Two: (30-35 minutes) Story Circle or Reader's Theater presentation.
Students read chosen excerpts from their stories, or if the stories are no more than a page, they can read all of it. Students can read as much or as little as they are comfortable with. Students can

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

also choose to have their interview partner or someone else in class read their story. Ideally, everyone's story is read aloud and celebrated.

Step Three: (10 minutes) As a class, have a short debrief about the story sharing experience. If desired, students can journal for a few minutes beforehand. Ask students to reflect on what it felt like hearing their story read, what they learned about themselves through the interview process, and how they can incorporate the writing/verbal storytelling process for other projects.

Educator Resource: Reader's Theater learning strategies from Facing History and Ourselves: https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/readers-theater

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

VOICE OF WITNESS

Sample Interview Questions Handout

The following kinds of questions can inspire your narrator to give detailed responses and go deeper into their own stories. What other kinds of questions can you think of?

- What were you feeling when…?
- What was going through your mind when…?
- What happened next?
- Can you give me an example of what you mean?
- Can you describe…?
- Follow up questions: "You mentioned a favorite teacher earlier. Can you say a bit more about that?
- What were you hoping for when…?
- What did you see? Can you describe it?
- What were some of the sounds you heard? How would you describe it?
- What were the people around you doing?

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

VOICE OF WITNESS

Revising and Editing Tips Handout

(adapted from Lisa Thyer and Mary Ogarek, Amos Alonzo Stagg High School)

As you revise and edit your story, feel free to focus on just one or two of these tips per draft so you don't have to focus on everything all at once!

- **The Narrative "Arc":** Do you have all the parts you need for a story? Does it have a narrative arc (a clear beginning, middle, and end)? Once you have created your first draft, go back through and label the necessary parts of a narrative.

- **Setting the Scene:** Find answers in your draft to the When? Where? Who? What? Questions. If these answers need to be inferred or unexpressed, make a note on the part of the text where the inference can be made.

- **Complication:** Sometimes called the "conflict" but does not always have to be negative. It should be a part of the story that introduces a dilemma, challenge, disruption, or added layer to the story. If you can't find anything like this, you may need to go back and add details/information.

- **Resolution:** In narrative writing the resolution or "end" comes when there has been some sort of solution to the complication. This ending does not have to be a "happy", positive resolution to the complication. Instead, think of the resolution as providing a sense of finality and purpose to your story. Perhaps something was learned from the complication or you find yourself reflecting on what elements of the complication have served to teach you that will then carry over into the future. You should also make sure all loose ends are nicely tied up. If there are questions left at the end or gaps in information vital to someone understanding your story, these need to be answered.

- **Let's get detailed!** Often what makes a story compelling or believable are the specific details that help to *show* and not tell your reader more about your story, the characters, the setting, etc. Since you are writing from your own experiences, concentrate to conjure that detail in your head—close your eyes, put yourself back in that moment and allow yourself to see the place you are, the people and things that are there, and the emotions you feel. *Focus specifically on the five senses: how did things smell, sound, feel, look, taste?*

- **Cutting out the "fat":** For your final revision, go back and read your story from start to finish. Are there parts that seem to detract from your main purpose? Are there parts that are confusing or even kind of boring? Not sure? *Trade with a partner* and ask them to mark areas that seem unrelated to the story, confusing, and/or even boring (don't worry, this doesn't mean *you* are boring). Do your best to cut, move or revise those sections. Although this may be hard, you want a story that will keep your reader's attention and sometimes that means making the hard cuts. Don't forget to double check your grammar and spelling!

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Six by Ten Curriculum – College/University

At Voice of Witness, we strive to provide teachers with a diversity of support and resources as they begin planning how they will use our books in the classroom. Below, we have outlined several potential assignments around which to center your teaching of *Six by Ten.* We have made sure that each of the assignments is flexible and modifiable to fit a wide variety of college level classes, including but not limited to Criminal Justice, Humanities, Psychology, Sociology, English, Philosophy, and various seminars. Each of these assignments and projects are designed to facilitate critical thinking and reading, broaden literacy and language skills, increase cultural awareness and competency, and foster connection in the classroom and greater community.

We recommend the following supplementary resources to pair with *Six by Ten:*

- *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*, book edited by Jean Casella, James Ridgeway, and Sarah Shourd: https://thenewpress.com/books/hell-very-small-place
- "Buried Alive: Stories from Inside Solitary Confinement," 2017 *GQ* article by Nathaniel Penn with quotes and images from solitary: https://www.gq.com/story/buried-alive-solitary-confinement
- *Herman's House*, a film written, produced, and directed by Angad Singh Bhalla: https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/amzn1.dv.gti.56a9f797-372a-4ae5-06b8-6f64dfaf1770?autoplay=0&ref_=atv_cf_strg_wb
- "Solitary by the Numbers," a 2017 article/online resource by Frontline, written by Dan Nolan and Chris Amico: http://apps.frontline.org/solitary-by-the-numbers/
- *Ear Hustle*, a podcast from PRX's Radiotopia, by Earlonne Woods and Nigel Poor: https://www.earhustlesq.com/about/
- "Camp J, Red Hats, and the Hole," a 2009 *Mother Jones* article about Angola's solitary unit by Brooke Shelby Biggs: https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2009/03/camp-j-red-hats-and-hole/
- *23/7: Pelican Bay Prison and the Rise of Long-Term Solitary Confinement*, a book by Keramet Reiter: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01LX1PXED/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1
- *Stories of Life in Solitary Confinement*, a short National Geographic film by Cali Bondad and Gabrielle Canon: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7ajzsh-i54
- "Reducing the Use and Impact of Solitary Confinement in Corrections," a 2016 academic article by Ahalt et al. from the International Journal of Prisoner Health: https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/IJPH-08-2016-0040
- "Half a Life: How Colorado Made a Young Man Insane," a 2013 *Atlantic* article by Andrew Cohen: https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/11/half-a-life-in-solitary-how-colorado-made-a-young-man-insane/281306/
- *Time: The Kalief Browder Story*, a Netflix docuseries by Jenner Furst, Julia Willoughby Nason, and Nick Sandow: https://www.netflix.com/title/80187052
- *Solitary Nation*, a 2014 PBS Frontline documentary: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/solitary-nation/

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

Assignment #1: Annotated Bibliography
Choose one narrative or one theme from *Six by Ten* around which to further your research. You may choose the psychological impacts of solitary confinement, inadequate medical care, the use of solitary confinement in immigrant detention, mental illness, or anything else you want to explore. Once you've chosen your theme, write an annotated bibliography using peer-reviewed scholarly articles written in the past five years. Each annotation should be 150–250 words.

Assignment #2: Analytical Paper
Using their annotated bibliographies as a starting point, students will identify a central idea or question to pose in their papers. Analytical papers do not argue a point or hypothesis; rather, they thoroughly explore a central idea or question. Students will reference *Six by Ten* as well as scholarly articles to analyze their central question or idea. Potential questions may include:

- What are the short and long term effects of solitary confinement?
- What connections can be made between a person's experiences of trauma in childhood (see the ACE study) and their likelihood of being incarcerated and/or held in solitary confinement?
- In what ways are already marginalized people (women, people of color, transgender people) further marginalized by the prison system and the disproportionate use of solitary confinement?
- What are the impacts of the use of solitary confinement as a "protective measure" for people whom the prison deems to be "at risk" due to their size, gender identity, or possible gang affiliation?

Assignment #3: Teaching Solitary Confinement
Students will design a short curricular unit for teaching Sonya Calico's story from *Six by Ten.* This assignment is ideal for students in a teacher education program but can also help students in any course learn the material well, critically analyze it, and be purposeful about determining how they would teach it to students. This project can vary in scope depending on students' capacity and available time in the semester. Students will identify themes and concepts that they want to teach and organize a curriculum around them.

This resource from Edutopia might be useful for students as they begin to plan their unit:
https://www.edutopia.org/blog/planning-best-curriculum-unit-ever-todd-finley

These resources from Teaching Tolerance might be useful as well:
https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/engaging-curriculum

Some ideas for students to consider as they begin to develop their units are as follows:

- Identify a learning goal, standard, concept, or final product that you would like your students to master by the end of the unit. Utilizing backward design, determine how you will assess student learning, and then craft a series of activities that will best result in this learning. Here is a good resource on backward design by Vanderbilt University's Center for Teaching:
  https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/understanding-by-design/#benefits
- Brainstorm different creative projects your students could do that would encompass a variety of learning styles. Give students options to choose from.

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org

- Decide which assessments will be most effective in showcasing student learning. Edutopia has a good breakdown of different types of assessments and what they accomplish here: https://www.edutopia.org/assessment-guide-description

Designing a curricular unit will help students to think about the text and themes in a new and purposeful way. Students will prioritize the issues they think are most important, research supplementary resources to use in their unit, and think critically about the most effective ways to teach the material. Even if the students are not in a teacher education program, this assignment will encourage creativity, critical thinking, and the mastery of new skills.

Assignment #4: Civic Action and Policy Change
Read Vernesia Gordon's and Heather Chapman's narratives from *Six by Ten.* Design a community project or civic action advocating for the relatives of people who are incarcerated. Students may create letter writing campaigns, community projects in which they partner with local organizations, schools, or nonprofits, or work with local congresspeople to help get legislation drafted.

Here is an example of a 2018 bill introduced into the California legislature by Tony Thurmond: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB2250.

It may be useful for students consult these resources as they begin to form their projects:

https://www.sfcipp.org/

http://www.parentinginsideout.org/the-children-of-incarcerated-parents-bill-of-rights/

http://skipinc.org/

https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/is-juvenile-justice-beyond-repair/507815/

https://youth.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents

https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=pocpwi10

http://www.projectavary.org/family-support/

© Voice of Witness | voiceofwitness.org