Modular Lesson: Finding One’s Way: Voice and Identity in Skin I’m In (Sharon Flake)

Grade Level: 6-8; 9-12 Curriculum Focus: English/Language Arts and Social Studies
Time Frame: 1 week

Modular Lesson Description: This lesson allows students to explore the theme and verisimilitude and characterization of Sharon Flake’s award-winning novel, The Skin I’m In, published 2007. Students will understand how literature often reflects their everyday concerns, and the Activities will allow them to explore and analyze how Flake’s work speaks to them.

Focus Questions:
- How does literature connect to our everyday lives?
- How should we respond to peer pressure and bullying?
- What should we consider as important as we try to be comfortable in our own skin?

Be a Historian/ What Do We Already Know?
As a class discuss how bullying and the desire to be in certain social groups at school affect students like you. Consider in your discussions the following:
- Impact on school work
- Impact at home and with friends who are NOT in the popular social group
- Impact on being comfortable with yourself

As you discuss, maintain your own Digital Journal in which you record points and ideas you want to remember. Also, include images, articles, and any other resources you think help you describe bullying and the desire to be a member of popular groups. You will use this information later.

Learning Objective:
- Identify and analyze point of view in fiction
- Examine and discuss theme in fiction
- Understand and apply literary terms: verisimilitude, characterization, conflict, setting, metaphor

Digital Assets:
Videos:
The Individual as Hero: The Heroic in Everyday Life
Conflict
Individual & Society: Crime, Punishment, & Oppression
Individual & Self
Aspects of Characters
Time & Place
The Thematic Concern
Perspective
Tone & Point of View
What makes literary works important and valuable for us to read lies with an author’s ability to use literary devices that makes us *feel we see ourselves in those pages*.

Using the list below, select one topic and divide into four groups:

- Metaphor
- Conflict
- Point of View
- Setting

Flake uses Maleeka as a *metaphor of the outsider*—one who wants to be *inside* the popular social groups or organizations or, even social class. Maleeka feels she is the outsider because of her age, her race, her penchant for wanting to write, and her being *smart*. As the major metaphor in the novel, Maleeka’s outsider status establishes the conflicts, point of view, and setting in the novel.

Each group will use its reading and discussion of the novel to focus on the selected literary device. Each group will create a Digital Literary Map. Your Digital Literary Map will:

- Introduce and explain your selected literary term
- Analyze how this literary term evidences itself in the novel
- Evaluate the effectiveness of Flake’s use of your literary term

Use video chapters, images, quotations from the novel, articles, audio, and other Internet resources you deem appropriate to complete your Digital Literary Map.
Share your Digital Literary Map with the class for further discussion and analysis of Flake’s work.

**B: Project:** (NOTE: This project may extend beyond the week time allotment stated above)

**Difference and The Journey of Finding Oneself:**
The overriding theme in *The Skin I’m In* focuses on Maleeka’s finding herself and ultimately being comfortable and secure with who she is—not what others want her to be. **All** humans have *difference*. What matters to us all with our individual *differences* is *how* we manage our *difference* and use that *difference* to our best ability.

Think about *difference* and *finding yourself*. Using the notes in your **Digital Journal**, create a **Digital Autobiography** or a **Digital Biography**. Your goal with your **Digital Autobiography** or a **Digital Biography** will be to explore, identify, and analyze your difference and how you have found yourself, **OR** you will select an individual from history or real life to explore, identify, and analyze how that person identified difference and then found her/himself.

Use video chapters, images, audio, articles, interviews, and other Internet resources.

Once you have completed your **Digital Autobiography** or a **Digital Biography**, share with the class, and perhaps, ask the school if it will publish your work in the newspaper or the school’s cable system.

**Classroom Connection:**

**A. Verisimilitude: Peer Pressure:**
Peer pressure is a constant factor in all environments—school, work, community, for example. Create a **Digital Public Service Announcement** for elementary students, describing peer pressure and explaining why these young students should be careful of it.

Use video chapters, quotations from literary and non-literary sources, images, audio, interviews, and other Internet resources. Remember, elementary students are your audience; therefore, choose your examples accordingly.

Once you have completed your **Digital Public Service Announcement**, share with your class and allow the class to vote on the best one. Next, ask a principal at an elementary school in your area if she/he will allow you to present the winning **Digital Public Service Announcement** to the school.

**B. Theme: Voice and Identity:**
Since the beginning of the written word both men and women have maintained diaries and journals. By the late nineteenth century, however, diary-writing was viewed as traditionally done by women.

We now know that assumption to have been false.
Create your own **Digital Diary** in which you write and collect video chapters, images, articles, audio, and other Internet resources that allow you to express your own *voice and identity* just like Maleeka in the novel. You may even decide to maintain your **Digital Diary** indefinitely.

**Target Vocabulary:**
Update your interactive vocabulary journal (IVJ) using the unit vocabulary below. You may use any of the digital assets in this lesson, and you may use other resources you find in and outside of class. For example, you may take your own photographs and incorporate them into your IVJ.

- Theme
- Verisimilitude
- Characterization
- Point of View
- Metaphor
- Conflict
- Setting
- Peer Pressure
- Bullying
- Voice
- Identity

**Assessment Rubric:**
This rubric is on a four-point scale and uses as references *The Skillful Teacher* by Jon Saphier and Robert Gower and *Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History and Instruction* by Nikki Mandell and Bobbie Malone.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. consistent use of multiple historical facts, perspectives, evidence</td>
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<td>2. uses variety of methods for supporting evidence</td>
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<td>3. relies on identification, evaluation, and comparison/contrast</td>
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<td>4. relies on historical context and change</td>
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<td>1. relies on multiple historical facts, perspectives, evidence</td>
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<td>2. use of supporting evidence</td>
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<td>3. use of differentiation between and among statements</td>
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<td>1. uses one historical fact or evidence</td>
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<td>2. limited support</td>
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<td>3. limited use of the historical context</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Evidence</th>
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<td>1. relies heavily on primary and secondary sources from a variety of resources</td>
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<td>2. uses deftly research</td>
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<td>1. uses some primary/secondary sources</td>
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<td>2. uses limited number of other resources</td>
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<td>1. uses very limited secondary sources—one or two</td>
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<td>1. if secondary sources are used, they are traditional: encyclopedia,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Cause and Effect</td>
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<td><strong>skills in documenting authorities and their impact on work/project</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. identifies, evaluates, and analyzes multiple causes/effects—both stated and inferred—intended/unintended—short term/long term</strong></td>
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<td>3. uses analysis, evaluation, synthesis throughout the work/project</td>
<td>2. differentiates and identifies how different groups act</td>
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<td>4. uses comparison/contrast to weigh impact of sources on work/project</td>
<td>1. identifies multiple causes/effects—both stated and inferred—intended/unintended—short term/long term</td>
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<td>2. uses very limited or no primary sources</td>
<td>1. addresses multiple causes/effects</td>
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<td>3. no attention to research skills evaluating authorities and their impact on work/project</td>
<td>2. addresses only short term/long term</td>
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<td>for example, and very limited use</td>
<td>1. addresses only one or two causes and/or effects</td>
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<td>2. one or no primary sources</td>
<td>2. addresses only short term</td>
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<td>3. no evaluation of credibility of sources</td>
<td><strong>1. identifies, evaluates, and analyzes multiple causes/effects—both stated and inferred—intended/unintended—short term/long term</strong></td>
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<td><strong>uses research skills on work/project with limited assessment of evaluation of source</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. differentiates and identifies how different groups act</strong></td>
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<td>4. uses identification and explanation from the sources on work/project</td>
<td><strong>1. identifies, evaluates, and analyzes multiple causes/effects—both stated and inferred—intended/unintended—short term/long term</strong></td>
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**Interpretation**

1. uses analysis and synthesis of evidence completely supported from variety of sources and resources
2. relies on explication of context for historical changes
3. provides rationale for using multiple sources and resources to accomplish work/project
4. evaluates and explains intricate connections between people, events, and ideas—both past and present

**Cause and Effect**

1. identifies, evaluates, and analyzes multiple causes/effects—both stated and inferred—intended/unintended—short term/long term
2. differentiates and identifies how different groups act
| Change and Continuity | evaluates how different groups act differently and why | differently and why | causes/effects that are obvious or intended | 1. understands that change and continuity are inextricably linked to specific events and/or developments  
2. evaluates change and continuity from variety of perspectives, including but not limited to social, political, economic, cultural levels  
3. includes in the analysis trends, movement, patterns | 1. understands that change and continuity are inextricably linked to specific events and/or developments  
2. addresses change and continuity in terms of trends and patterns  
3. may address one of the following perspectives: social, political, economic, cultural levels | 1. links change and continuity to one event or series of developments  
2. limited discussion and exploration of one of the following: social, political, economic, cultural levels | 1. addresses change or continuity but not both  
2. relationship between change or continuity to an event or series of developments not clearly developed or supported |
| Using the Past | 1. distinguishes, analyzes, synthesizes elements and patterns in historical periods that compare and contrast to the present  
2. uses knowledge of a past event or period to infer and thereby draw conclusions about a modern event or period | 1. chronicles the developmental relationship throughout time and space between patterns and contemporary events  
2. identifies which factors contributed to historical changes over time | 1. makes linear connections between past event and modern issues  
2. may see similarities and/or differences  
3. will not address the import of these connections or intervening developments | 1. sees and therefore cannot make any connections between the past and the present |

**Academic Standards:**
This Modular Lesson relies on national standards from NCTE and NCSS (National Council of Teachers of English and National Council for the Social Studies) and the Common Core.