

Lesson Plan A

TITLE

The Epic of Gilgamesh: How is Patrick a hero like Gilgamesh?

TIME

50 minutes

SETTING

The setting for this unit is a standard academic literature class for 10th Grade. The class consists of twenty-four students, ten girls and fourteen boys. This high school is located in a rural town, middle socioeconomic status. There are three students who receive free or reduced lunch. Most students are on track for their grade level reading, however two students read at above average and five students read two years below grade level. Twenty of the students are Caucasian and speak English. Three students are African American and speak in the African American English Vernacular. One student is fluent in Spanish but has limited English proficiency. He has difficulty writing in English but is working on it. One student has an emotional behavior disorder that makes it difficult for him to stay on task and concentrate in class. One student is diagnosed as legally blind, however still has the ability to read large print text. The district is composed of 97.6% white students, 0.6% Black students, 0% Hispanic students, 1% Asian students, and 0.4% Native American students. 7.1% of the school population is low income, the attendance rate is 94% and the high school graduation rate is 91.5%. The average ACT composite score is 21.0. The average size of a high school class is 16.6.

THEORY INTO PRACTICE BACKGROUND

Teacher-led discussions or recitations can get very boring for students because they simply have to sit back and listen to the educator talking at them. While the teacher can effectively involve students in teacher-led discussions, there is also a risk of “losing pace, focus, and student involvement” (298). However, when students have the opportunity to get up and get involved in what is being discussed and where the conversation is headed, they are more likely to be interested. “In both the recitation and the teacher-led discussion the teacher is in charge, determining the content, the participants, and the pacing. In contrast, the *student-centered discussion* provides an opportunity for students to interact directly with one another, while the teacher acts as a facilitator or moderator,” and this gives more of the power to the students (313). As Burke states, “the class responds to student’s ideas,” which is “particularly effective for reluctant students or those, such as ESL students, who are uncomfortable with speaking up in class” (246). Since students have the opportunity to contribute their own thoughts, that they have already had time to think about, they are not put on the spot and they have more of an opportunity to converse with their peers. I strive to maintain a classroom that is like a community where all students feel comfortable to share their ideas and participate in the class’s conversations.

Background information to be covered in this lesson includes informing students about *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. The Epic of Gilgamesh tells the story of a great king who was part man part god. He sought to become immortal, and though he failed to be immortal himself, he discovers at the end of the epic that his contributions to the civilization are the way that he will last forever (Sumer). Students must also have a thorough understanding of the novel *In the Skin of the Lion* and understand the story’s main character, Patrick Lewis.

The students will be reading a summary and a passage from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which is described above. The students will compare their reading of the epic to that of Ondaatje's novel focusing around the main characters and their heroic qualities. *In the Skin of the Lion* tells about Patrick's movement from observer to criminal to attempted bomber to storyteller. Students will compare Gilgamesh and Patrick and see what makes the two men alike and different.

This lesson is link to lessons to follow because the student's will readdress *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and its role in Ondaatje's creation of this novel. This lesson is also relevant to future lessons because students must always use their abilities to compare and contrast in addition to putting different texts in relation to one another. It is a very useful skill to be able to use an ancient text, such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and a more modern text to see what lessons are still the same.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson students will:

- enhance their listening skills
- participate in a group discussion by adding on to or challenging the ideas of others
- compare and contrast two texts and their main characters
- think critically and analytically about a character

MATERIALS

Gilgamesh worksheets, 25

3-5 extra copies of *In the Skin of a Lion*, for students who may have forgot their copy
Whiteboard with bell instructions written out

PREPARATION

In order to prepare for this lesson, I will need to have the classroom set up in a circle with one seat in the middle before the students arrive to class. I will also need to have the worksheets already placed on the students' desks so that they know they are to begin the assignment as soon as the bell rings. I will have written instructions on the board for students so that they know there is no normal bell-work, but they are to get started on the handout at the bell.

PROCEDURE

Students begin reading and working on worksheet upon arrival (20 minutes)

- The worksheet will be on students desk to complete upon arrival
- Students will need to read about the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the passage from the epic poem in order to complete the worksheet
- Students can use their books to assist their completion of the worksheet

Circle Discussion (25 minutes)

- Students will form their desks into a big circle
- There will be one desk in the center of the circle. The only person who can speak during this discussion is the person who is sitting in the center desk.
- Students should share their answers from their worksheet and generate further class discussion or debate.
- Discussion questions should be displayed on board to inspire additional ideas or suggestions for concepts to discuss with the class

- Display timer on the board so that the students know how much time they have left and how much more they should contribute
- Students should take notes during class discussion. Even when students are not talking or engaging in conversation, they should be actively listening to their peers.
- Stop discussion at appropriate times to clarify any confusion or misconceptions.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Wrap up classroom with any important facts or concepts missed in discussion
- Remind students of salient points from the circle discussion and comment on the classroom community created throughout the effective group work.

DISCUSSION IDEAS

- Why do you think Ondaatje chose something from such an old piece of work as the title for his novel?
- What do you think the title *In the Skin of a Lion* actually means?
- What does it mean to be a hero?
- What is the lasting effect of Patrick as a hero?
- What ideas or events will be “everlasting” from *In the Skin of a Lion*?

LANGUAGES ACCOMMODATIONS

For the Spanish-speaking student, I will provide a copy of the novel in Spanish and I will also translate the worksheet into the best version of Spanish that I can find. I will provide him with both copies of the handout. I will encourage this student to participate actively in the class discussion, however, I will not dock him many points if he feels uncomfortable being the center of attention because of his language. I will try to talk to him before class so that he can be prepared to start, and I will ask him if he would like to begin the conversation by sharing one of his answers. This way, he will not have to compete for participation and he can have extra time to prepare what he would like to say. I will encourage AAE speakers to speak in Standard English when possible so it is easiest for all to understand, however, I will not dock them any points since it is just a discussion. While I want the discussion to be relatively formal, I want students to focus on the thoughts and ideas and not let language hinder their learning.

SPECIAL EDUCATION ACCOMMODATIONS

For the student with EBD, I will give him the assignment ahead of time so he can be aware that he is going to have to participate and interact within the group. I will try to have him select a certain interval when he would like to begin or I will create a transition in which I select him to go to the middle and begin a new conversation so that he does not feel uncomfortable trying to fight for a role in the middle to speak. This student will have the opportunity to turn in his worksheet for extra credit if he does not get to participate enough in class. This way, I can still be sure that he is thinking and listening even if he is too uncomfortable to participate. For the blind student, I will make sure there is an enlarged version of the worksheet for him to read. I will make sure that his text is either in Braille or also enlarged.

ASSESSMENT

To assess this activity, I am going to have an exit slip at the end of the lesson. The students are going to write down their understanding from the lesson from the day and write any additional questions that they have or write down things that they are still confused about. This will be a good way for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding to me. I will be able to assess whether or not students

have an understanding of the Epic of Gilgamesh and if they have developed the skill to compare two texts and two characters to each other. I will assess this worksheet for completion.

EXTENSION IDEAS

Possible ideas for extension include incorporating the use of circle discussion further in the classroom for other topics. It may also be a useful technique to use in smaller groups and still maintain the idea of one speaker at a time. Students could take their work on the worksheet in addition to their participation in and to the classroom discussion to write a research paper about the relationship between the two texts.

SOURCE OF ACTIVITY

Part of this activity came from reading the weebly I found where students discussed their reading of *In the Skin of a Lion*. One student, Lucy, discussed the connection to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. So I decided to turn this into a full lesson. My activity idea came from my high school English teacher, Gina Enk, in which we had many discussions where only the student in the center was able to voice their thoughts. It really encouraged everyone to listen while still being different from the normal class discussion. Also, the skills and techniques taught in Professor Arlette Willis and Hilarie Welsh's classrooms during my experiences in their classrooms helped shaped my understanding for an inclusive education for all of my students and effect classroom management.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

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ILLINOIS STATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GOALS

Knowledge Indicator 1A: The competent teacher understands the cognitive processes associated with various kinds of learning.

My lesson plan meets this standard because I understand that in order to get the students really thinking and reflecting they need time to sort out their ideas before they have to present it to the class. In this activity, students are to read, reflect, write, think, and prepare before they are going to have to share with the rest of the class. It can be hard to come to conclusions when rushed to talk about it with others, so this activity gives students plenty of times to go through cognitive thinking before having to present.

Performance Indicator 2C: The competent teacher varies his or her role in the instructional process as instructor, facilitator, coach, or audience in relation to the content and purposes of instruction and the needs of students.

This indicator is met by my lesson plan because my role in the classroom varies during this activity. At first, I am the instructor informing students what is expected to them. Throughout the discussion, I am a silent audience member, a coach directing students towards good conversation, and a facilitator if the discussion gets off topic.

COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.9 Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

My lesson plan meets this standard because it requires students to take the source material from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and assess its use as the name for *In the Skin of a Lion*. The students will have to analyze the author's use of this title in addition to their comparisons of the characters in the two texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

This standard is addressed by this lesson plan because students must use textual evidence from Ondaatje's novel to support their arguments. Students should quote from the text and direct their classmates to actual page numbers in which they are referring to provide evidence for their claims.