

Lesson Plan A**TITLE**

“Speaking to You (From Rock Bottom)” by Ondaatje: Relating poetry to *In the Skin of a Lion*

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

To make poetry interesting, I think it is very important to go beyond just lecturing at the students. I often think it is very useful to incorporate group work into topics that student often find less exciting, such as poetry, so that students can work with their peers, move around the classroom, and do something a little different. Jim Burke states that, “students often remember the student-led classes as some of the most powerful,” which supports my concept of having students work with one another on a collaborative task (100). In this activity, students are able to facilitate their own learning and generate their own discussions and ideas about the poem, the novel, and the way that they relate to one another. As Burke demonstrates, students find meaning when they get to take the lead in their own education, and I strive to provide students with the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, I believe that working in groups is very important to developing our positive classroom atmosphere. I think that group work increases a class sense of community because the members must collaborate with one another, but they must also take chances with one another when they are trying to come up with ideas. As Weinstein and Novodorski states, “despite the potential pitfalls, we believe group work should be an integral part of the secondary classrooms—particularly as you work to establish a caring, supportive community” (287). It is critical to me that my students feel safe and comfortable sharing their ideas or thoughts with the class. I believe that working as a group can help students develop the ability to share with others and work with peers in a community that fosters learning.

Background information that has been used in this lesson is the understanding of Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of the Lion*. Students will also need to have an understanding of how to read poetry, a concept we have

covered in units earlier in the year. Students will need to have an understanding of Patrick's love life and his letter writing to his lovers.

Content material used in this lesson include the novel *In the Skin of a Lion* and Ondaatje's poem "Speaking to You (From Rock Bottom)." *In the Skin of a Lion* tells the story of Patrick Lewis, his love life, his observation of immigrant workers, and his struggle with being alone. Ondaatje's poem is about love, solitude, and seeking the comfort of another. The two will be used together to compare and contrast similar ideas and concepts.

This lesson is linked to lessons to follow because students are required to compare and contrast in many ways throughout the unit. Students will use the skills developed in this lesson in a later lesson when they read excerpts from *The Jungle*. The students will again have to compare and contrast immigrants across the continent and look at two different types of texts to find similarities and differences.

OBJECTIVES

When the lesson is complete, students should be able to:

- describe ideas or concepts within a poem
- explain ideas or concepts within a novel
- understand poetic symbolism and figurative language.
- work effectively with others in a group to accomplish a common goal.
- analyze poetry and apply their understanding of the poem to their reading of a novel.

MATERIALS

E.L. Doctorow poem, 25 copies

Popsicle sticks numbered one through six for group assignment, 24 total

Posters, 4

Markers, 4 packs

Journals, students should have these with them daily in class

Extra notebook paper, 1 pack, for students who forgot their journals

In the Skin of a Lion (students bring their own copies) 2-3 extra copies

PREPARATION

Before class I need to have the bell work question projected on the board for students to reflect upon in their journals. I will have the Popsicle sticks prepared beforehand so that the groups can be easily assigned and prevent any problems with groups forming. I will have the handouts already counted out for the groups and organized for the groups to begin. I will have the timer open and ready to be displayed. I will have to print out a copy of the poem in Spanish for the Spanish speaker in my classroom as well. I will also have to have a copy of the discussion questions ready to project on the board for once students begin group work.

PROCEDURE

Bell Work (5 minutes)

- Students write in their journals responding to the questions on the board.
- Reflect on stories that your parents or another older adult has told you about their lives or people they know. Think about any stories that told a history or experience. Do you think that you have a better understanding of this adult or yourself because of that story? What

stories do you think you'll have to be sure to tell your children or family? How important is it to tell these stories?

Poem read aloud (5 minutes)

- Read the poem aloud to the class

Group Work (15 minutes)

- Have students pick a Popsicle stick to determine their group assignment. Groups are numbered one through six.
- Instruct students to form their desks into circles with their group members.
- Pass out handouts with discussion questions.
- Explain to students that there is a mini rubric on the back of the handout in which they will be assessed for completion of this lesson.
- Project timer on the board for students to see how much time they have left to discuss.
- Walk around from group to group in order to monitor that all groups are on task and that all students are actively participating. Clear up any confusion and answer any questions.
- If students appear lulled in conversation, offer thoughts or questions discussed in "Discussion Ideas" below to spark more ideas into their conversation.
- Students should take notes on their poem handout.

Turn Poem into picture (15 minutes)

- Students are to take the poem turn it into a visual picture that represents this poem and *In the Skin of a Lion*
- Encourage students to be creative, connect the poem and the novel, and use symbols and drawings to illustrate their group's discussion

Hang Pictures and View as Class (5 minutes)

- Students will hang their posters on the wall
- All students will walk around and look at the other groups images and write at least two comments about other groups' posters on their handout

Concluding remarks (5 minutes)

- Sum up any salient points and clarify the connection of the poem and our reading of *In the Skin of a Lion*

DISCUSSION IDEAS

- What similarities do you notice between the poem and the novel?
- What character(s) could imagine as the poem's speaker? Why?
- What difficulties did you encounter using art as a method to convey your understandings? Why do you think this way difficult?
- How effective or ineffective is the poem at telling a story?
- How does the format of this poem effect your understanding of its meaning?

LANGUAGES ACCOMMODATIONS

I will provide the Spanish-speaking student with a Spanish version of novel and a Spanish translation of the poem. I will allow the students who speak AAE to write and discuss in the language they are most comfortable with. Since I am most concerned with the students' learning and discussion, I am less focused on their use of Standard English as I am generating meaningful discussion. The notes on the worksheet are mostly for the students and to check for completion, so students may write in the language they feel they can best demonstrate their thoughts. I will offer the students the opportunity to take the worksheet home and turn in tomorrow if they need extra time to translate and finish answering the questions.

SPECIAL EDUCATION ACCOMMODATIONS

To accommodate my blind student I will make sure that I print out copies of all the handouts in text large enough that he can effectively read. I will be sure that the student has a copy of the novel in Braille or extra large text so that he does not struggle with getting the reading done. I will check in with this student regularly to be sure that he is keeping up and that his vision is not causing any problems in his learning. For the student with the emotional behavior disorder, I will make sure that I work it so that he is in a group with students that he feels comfortable working. I will give him the agenda and plan ahead of time since he needs consistency and schedule to work most effectively. I will keep an eye on his group to make sure he remains on task and is paying attention. I will offer the student who is blind and the student with the emotional behavior disorder to take home their assignment sheet if they need more time.

ASSESSMENT

In order to assess this lesson, I will collect the handouts that students work on during their discussion and well as the posters that they create with their group. I have attached a rubric at the end of this lesson plan that I am going to use to assess student work during this discussion. I will walk around during discussion to assess that all students are involved in the conversation and participating in discussion actively with their peers. I will look over the students' posters to check for creativity and for an overall understanding. Using the rubric provided, each aspect of today's lesson will contribute to how I assess the students for the day. Students' ability to effectively answer questions and engage in conversation will help me to assess how well they understood the lesson and its content.

EXTENSION IDEAS

Students could extend their reading and writing of poetry into future readings and writing outside of this lesson. Writing more poems and reading more poems will help students expand their understanding of poetic elements. Students could also write poems after the conclusion of the novel to display their overall understanding of the novel. Other possible extension ideas include further poetry units or reading of Doctorow poems. It may also be a fun activity for students to take a poem and edit it so that the poem is more relevant to the novel or could be written from one of the character's point of view.

SOURCE OF ACTIVITY

My learning experiences in the classrooms of Professor Arlette Willis and Hilarie Welsh have inadvertently contributed to the spirit and content of this lesson. My field experiences in the classroom of Krista Hinkley also indirectly contributed to this lesson because of the

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

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- the profession* (3rd ed). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
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- Weinstein, C. S., & Novodorski, I. (2011). *Middle and secondary classroom management: Lessons from research and practice* (4th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Welsh, Hilarie. "Curriculum and Instruction 401-402." University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Lecture. Fall 2011-Spring 2012.
- Willis, Arlette. "Curriculum and Instruction 403." University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Lecture. Fall 2012.

ILLINOIS STATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GOALS

Performance Indicator II: The competent teacher stimulates prior knowledge and links new ideas to already familiar ideas and experiences.

My lesson plan addresses this performance indicator because the lesson has students connect their previous reading of *In the Skin of a Lion* to the poem they are introduced to in class today. Students have to relate their own experiences and understandings of their readings within their group discussions.

Knowledge Indicator 5C: The competent teacher knows how to implement effective differentiated instruction through the use of a wide variety of materials, technologies, and resources.

The knowledge indicator is met by my lesson plan because there is a variety of instruction used within this lesson. Students first journal and reflect, then they move on to group discussions, take notes and answer questions on a handout, then they work on their artistic and creative skills, and then they observe and comment on others' work. Students have the opportunity to learn in several different ways during this lesson in an attempt to help all students gain a full understanding of the poem and its relation to the novel.

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 students must draw up *In the Skin of a Lion* as a form of source material in this poem. Students must then use the information they know about the novel in order to help them shape their understanding about the poem. The students must then use their abilities to

draw on and transform material in the novel and poem to create their own artistic portrayal of the two texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

This standard is met by my lesson because the students work in groups that are random and different from other group work previously done in class. In this group discussion, the students discuss a range of questions about two different types of literacy: novel and poem. In their discussions, students are expected to voice their own opinions and expand upon the ideas of others. After discussion, students are expected to have come to a clear understanding of the concepts and have created effective arguments in support of their theories and ideas.

Rubric for group discussion and poster creation

| | 3 | 2 | 1 |
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| Student actively participates within group discussion | | | |
| Poster is creative and detailed | | | |
| Group has an understanding of the poem and its relation to the novel | | | |
| Student walks and observes other posters and make at least 2 comments on their worksheet | | | |
| Overall job | | | |