

“That’s why literature is so fascinating. It’s always up for interpretation, and could be a hundred different things to a hundred different people. It’s never the same thing twice.”

-Sara Raasch, Snow Like Ashes

Literary Criticism / Short Stories 2016

This was a more “traditional” main lesson block which I put together to help prepare my 8th grade daughter for public high school English classes. I have listed all of the resources below. This is the order in which we did the 9 stories; obviously, you can rearrange as you see fit.

Total cost: \$ 15.25

3 days	“The Lottery”	Shirley Jackson	\$	0.00
1 day	“Determining Theme” lesson plan		\$	0.00
2 days	“The Cask of Amontillado”	Edgar Allan Poe	\$	0.00
2 days	“The Necklace”	Guy de Maupassant	\$	3.00
2 days	“Lamb to the Slaughter”	Roald Dahl	\$	2.50
1 day	“Robot Dreams”	Isaac Asimov	\$	1.25
3 days	“The Scarlet Ibis”	James Hurst	\$	2.50
2 days	“The Gift of the Magi”	O. Henry	\$	2.50
1 day	“Marionettes, Inc.”	Ray Bradbury	\$	1.25
3 days	“The Interlopers”	Saki	\$	2.25
			\$	15.25

“The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson

Links

FREE lesson plan “The Lottery: Tradition’s Impact on Human Behavior”
<http://www.cpalms.org/Public/PreviewResourceLesson/Preview/32908>

“The Lottery” story:
https://sites.middlebury.edu/individualandthesociety/files/2010/09/jackson_lottery.pdf

“Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” article:
<http://www.ohio.edu/people/thompsoc/Body.html>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials	Lesson plan sections Prior Knowledge, Teaching Phase, and Guided Practice #1	Remainder of Guided Practice, Independent Practice, and Closure	Read and discuss Horace Miner’s “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” - what are the traditions & rituals we don’t question because we don’t see them?
print “The Lottery” story			Practice writing like an ethnographer - examine a room or behavior in your own home.
print “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” article			

Notes

It is worth reviewing tradition *versus* ritual. And Natalie correctly remarked during the Prior Knowledge discussion that if Christmas was a ritual you would need to give the same presents every year. I thought this was a good way to remember the difference!

“Determining Theme” lesson plan

Links

FREE lesson plan created by Carla McLeod, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Determining-Theme-FREE-Activity-Handout-2254375>

YouTube video “How to Find a Theme” by Mr. Sato 411
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4qME64SkxM>

YouTube video “The Actual '73 Giving Tree Movie Spoken By Shel Silverstein” (optional)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TZCP6OqRIE>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials **	Entire lesson plan		
internet access for YouTube video			
The Giving Tree or another picture book of your choice			

Notes

I thought the video lesson was EXCELLENT and the follow-up activity was thought provoking. We did it with the picture book [The Giving Tree](#) by Shel Silverstein.

After my daughters chose their movie soundtrack songs, we talked about how [The Giving Tree](#) was actually made into a movie with music and narration by Shel Silverstein himself. We then watched it.

Afterwards we had an interesting discussion about how the voice of the person reading the story can change your perception of the theme... the nuances in Shel's voice definitely make the story sadder. He also leaves out a line, which I think is crucial to the original version, and that made us curious as to why he might have done that. Did he want to make the theme less obvious to the reader?

** Print several extra copies of this activity; we returned to it again and again during the unit.

"The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe

Links

FREE lesson plan created by Laura Randazzo, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/The-Cask-of-Amontillado-FREE-2-day-lesson-lit-analysis-storytelling-arc-717888>

YouTube video "The Empire of Death - Paris Catacombs" by Travel TV News (optional)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsqCXXyzIUM>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials	Lesson plan #1 (read Poe's bio from Poetry for Young People to your child), #2, #3	Lesson plan #4 (we did not do #5, the storytelling arc; I waited until later in the MLB to introduce this type of graphic organizer)	
print "The Cask of Amontillado" story (included in her lesson plan)			
Poetry for Young People: Edgar Allan Poe (optional)			
internet access for YouTube video (optional)			

Notes

I really like the biography of Poe in the front of [Poetry for Young People](#), but be extra sure you read it to your child instead of handing him/her the book. There is a "spoiler" which tells how "The Cask of Amontillado" ends!

“The Necklace” by Guy de Maupassant

Links

Lesson plan created by by Laura Randazzo, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/The-Necklace-two-day-plan-dynamic-approach-to-de-Maupassants-short-story-661677>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials	Lesson plan for Day 1	Lesson plan for Day 2, except we preferred the “Determining Theme” assignment from Carla McLeod to the essay prompt she gives on the final slide	
print “The Necklace” story (included in her lesson plan)			
download Prezi software			
computer access to play Prezi			

Notes

Revisiting the “Determining Themes” lesson works well here. Of the five possible themes for this story which Natalie developed, her favorite was "Dreaming about the future will not lead you to appreciate the present."

Although the “soundtrack” part of the Determining Theme activity initially seemed cheesy and meant to appease the “digital generation,” I have found that it really does help students. It truly forces them to pinpoint what they think the theme is by considering how it would look stated another way, through the lyrics and symbolism of a song.

"Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl

Links

Lesson plan created by by Laura Randazzo, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Lamb-to-the-Slaughter-by-Roald-Dahl-literary-analysis-real-world-writing-task-714231>

"Lamb to the Slaughter" story:

http://www.depa.univ-paris8.fr/IMG/pdf/lamb_to_the_slaughter_by_roald_dahl-2.pdf

Alfred Hitchcock Presents "Lamb to the Slaughter" (1958)

<http://www.schooltube.com/video/b4ffb2ed2146057eda1d/Alfred%20Hitchcock%20Presents%20Lamb%20to%20the%20Slaughter.%20%281958%29>

Venn Diagram horizontal orientation: <http://www.studenthandouts.com/3batch/venn2.pdf>

Venn Diagram vertical orientation: <http://www.studenthandouts.com/3batch/venn1.pdf>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials	Lesson plan #1, #2	Lesson plan #3, #4, #5 writing task	View film. Complete a Venn diagram to compare/contrast the film version with the original story.
print "Lamb to the Slaughter" story			
internet access for Alfred Hitchcock Presents video			
print Venn Diagram (optional)			

Notes

We were fascinated by the changes Hitchcock made. Most notably, in the film version Mary's husband bluntly explains why he is leaving her. If, as the comprehension questions imply, Dahl may have kept this unspoken to help the reader identify more with Mary and create sympathy, why would Hitchcock make such a change? And does the change make her less of a sympathetic character?? Although Laura Randazzo has indicated the film can be an extra treat, to me this definitely deserves a day.

“Robot Dreams” by Isaac Asimov

Links

Lesson plan created by Laura Randazzo, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Robot-Dreams-Literary-Analysis-Worksheet-for-Isaac-Asimovs-Short-Story-Sci-Fi-1332995>

“Robot Dreams” story:
<https://dscyfeducation.wikispaces.com/file/view/Robot%20Dreams%20Full%20Text.doc/457058804/Robot%20Dreams%20Full%20Text.doc>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials	Lesson plan #1, #2, #3		
print “Robot Dreams” story			
Light: The First Seven Days by Sarah Waldman (optional)			
The Dreamer by Cynthia Rylant (optional)			

Notes

We felt that "and there is suddenly light" and "eventually one man appeared" were both references to the book of Genesis and made parallels to the Creation of LVX-1 as a new being. If you want to go this route, two absolutely beautiful picture books to introduce the story (given that not everyone may know the Judeo-Christian Creation story) are [Light: The First Seven Days](#) by Sarah Waldman and [The Dreamer](#) by Cynthia Rylant. These would both be appropriate for a classroom read aloud to add to the discussion. Naturally, if you had a copy of the Bible, you could use that as well.

“The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst

Links

Lesson plan created by by Laura Randazzo, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/The-Scarlet-Ibis-3-day-lesson-materials-lit-analysis-writing-tasks-683570>

We listened to the audio file of this story; however, you still need to print the story in order to do text analysis:

<http://whs.wsd.wednet.edu/Faculty/Zobel/documents/TheScarletIbisText.pdf>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials	Lesson plan #1, #2	Lesson plan #3, #4	Lesson plan #5 writing task
download “The Scarlet Ibis” audio file (included in her lesson plan)			
print “The Scarlet Ibis” story			

Notes

The graphic organizer which forces you to find examples of different types of symbolism is very helpful here, and asking Natalie to consider the symbolism of “red” built on the discussions of “black” in “The Gift of the Magi” and “white” in “Lamb to the Slaughter.” I could see her literary criticism skills increasing with continued practice. I also enjoyed playing Devil’s advocate and pushing her to defend her ideas with support from the text. The first few times I read this story I thought that the death of Doodle was 100% Brother’s fault, through his egocentric thoughtlessness and cruelty, but we got into a discussion as to whether or not it was the Scarlet Ibis that actually killed Doodle. After all, it was on the day that the bird arrived, and he painstakingly dug its grave and wore himself out, that Doodle died. If that bird hadn’t shown up, would Doodle have been able to make it through the physical exercises that Brother assigned him? The answer here doesn’t matter so much; it’s not a question of whether we are right or wrong in how we look at the story. It is the discussion and analysis of the text that matters.

“The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry

Links

Lesson plan created by Laura Randazzo, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/The-Gift-of-the-Magi-two-day-lesson-O-Henrys-short-story-of-love-irony-713138>

We listened to the audio file of this story; however, you still need to print the story in order to do text analysis.

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials	Lesson plan for Day 1	Lesson plan for Day 2: creative writing piece	
download “The Gift of the Magi” audio file (included in her lesson plan)			
print “The Gift of the Magi” story (included in her lesson plan)			
colored pencils are needed for Day 2			

Notes

One note of interest: My daughter struggled with the symbolism of "platinum." The only connection she had with this was references on the radio to records "going platinum." Her logic therefore went as follows. When an album goes platinum it means it has sold a lot of copies and so she thought the chain could have gone through a lot of hands before it got to Jim, meaning it was perfect for only him, or Della could have searched through a lot of items to find that chain and had not given up. I appreciate that even when she's "wrong" she's thinking hard about the story and I can see her understanding of symbolism is increasing as we go through the main lesson block.

"Marionettes, Inc." by Ray Bradbury

Links

Lesson plan created by Laura Randazzo, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Marionettes-Inc-Literary-Analysis-Worksheet-for-Ray-Bradburys-Short-Story-1325716>

"Marionettes, Inc." story:
<http://www.angelfire.com/or/grace/marionettes.html>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials	Entire lesson plan		
print "Marionettes, Inc." story			

Notes

We had an interesting discussion with question #7. We thought that "someone" could leave open the possibility that Braling won the fight with his marionette and that he has now decided to truly appreciate his wife and treat her better, given that he narrowly escaped death. After all, we don't really know who won the physical altercation (though it's likely the machine).

OR, Bradbury could refer to Braling II as "someone" because by developing free will and a personality of his own, and falling in love, he has woken up and is now alive. This time in taking Mr. Braling's place, he is no longer a "creature;" he is now a person in his own right. He *is* someone.

"The Interlopers" by Saki

Links

Lesson plan created by Laura Randazzo, master teacher on Teachers Pay Teachers
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/The-Interlopers-Saki-45-min-lesson-lit-analysis-writing-task-664925>

FREE lesson plans by Rebecca Ray:
<http://www.storyboardthat.com/teacher-guide/the-interlopers-by-saki>

FREE storyboard template:
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Storyboard-332876>

FREE plot diagram template:
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Short-Story-Planning-Guide-687890>

Pacing

Prep	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
print lesson plan / student materials by Laura Randazzo	Lesson plan by Laura Randazzo: read story comprehension questions	Lesson plans by Rebecca Ray storyboarding: • plot diagrams • visual vocabulary cards • types of conflict	Lesson plan by Laura Randazzo: creative writing piece
print lesson plans / student materials by Rebecca Ray			
print three copies of storyboard template, one for each activity			
print plot diagram template			
colored pencils are needed for Day 2			
<u>Reviving the Essay</u> by Gretchen Bernabei (optional)			

Notes

This main lesson block has a combination of literary analysis and creative writing assignments. Reviving the Essay: How to Teach Structure Without Formula (Grades 4-12) by Gretchen Bernabei is a GREAT resource if you want to do additional essay writing with your child. These lessons are inspirational and lead to high quality non-formulaic not-boring results. Lesson One, "Truisms," is an excellent choice for this story. On page 5 you will find a picture to go with the truism "People create their own punishments." We did Truisms as a week-long lesson.

Day One:

"People create their own punishments" as the Truism for Step 1, 16 visuals from Architectural Digest magazine for Step 2, "Something surprising" for Step 3, and the Debriefing Questions.

(for the images I chose and the truisms they came up with, read my blog post at <http://switzerite.blogspot.com/2015/09/reviving-essay-truisms.html>)

Day Two:

Spin-off #4 with "The House That Ate Mosquito Pie" from e.e. cumming's Fairy Tales.

Day Three:

Spin-off #4 (with variation on page 8) with "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" by Rudyard Kipling.

(this showed me how little my daughters understood at the time about Theme; see my blog post: <http://switzerite.blogspot.com/2015/09/reviving-essay-truisms.html>)

Day Four:

We repeated Spin-off #4 with variation on page 8, with much better results! This time I used the Robert Frost poem "Out, Out —" from Poetry for Young People. You can also find it at <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/238122>.

(read their truisms: <http://switzerite.blogspot.com/2015/10/learning-about-statistics.html>)

One Final Thought on Punctuation:

If your child is writing an essay and has trouble remembering when to underline/italicize the title of a piece of literature and when to put the title in quotation marks, I recommend the mini-lesson "The Punctuating Pie." This lesson is FREE on Teachers Pay Teachers. It especially works well to make them into body movements... open your arms wide out to your sides for a whole, or touch your two elbows together and make a little piece of pie shape with your arms and wiggle your fingers like quotations marks. Seems silly but it works! Whenever I ask my daughters now if something is a whole work or a piece of a work, they make the little pie wedge with their arms, wiggle their fingers, and go write quotation marks on their paper!

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Punctuating-Titles-Mini-Lesson-1735961>

I hope these notes have been helpful as you plan your own block. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at waldorf.curric@gmail.com.