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Conceptual Unit

Horror and Suspense: Edgar Allan Poe

The best way to engage teenagers in an academic setting is to mask the academia. By using the genre of horror and suspense I will be able to keep my students' attention. Many young people are into scary movies and everyone can appreciate a good plot. This genre will be filled with works by Poe that will keep students on the edge of their seats as opposed to making them want to put their head on their desk. Because these stories and poems will keep students' interest, they will know the stories when it comes time to do activities which makes for easier transition into follow up activities.

One of the eighth grade standards states that:

Focus Standard: ELA8W2. The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres. The student produces a narrative (fictional, personal, experiential) that: a. Engages readers by establishing and developing a plot, setting, and point of view that are appropriate to the story (e.g., varied beginnings, standard plot line, cohesive devices, and a sharpened focus).

This standard focuses on the importance of students being able to create their own story and fully develop it. Poe's stories are great models for all of the objectives mentioned in the standard. This unit will focus on *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *The Black Cat*, and *The Tell-Tale Heart*, all of which are short stories. It will also focus on these poems, "The Raven," "The Haunted Palace," and "To Helen". Students will be given opportunities to take apart each of these works to find their literary value and to learn more literary vocabulary. They will be given a lot of time to work in groups so that they can work together in learning about the literature.

In this second standard you will see similar wording to the first one, and these objectives as well can be taught using Poe's works.

ELA8W1 The student produces writing that establishes an appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals a satisfying closure.

Once we have read the works we will discuss how Poe organizes his works and we will talk about how the students can use what they have learned to apply to their own papers.

Although I have added my explanation for how I will use these works to teach the written standards set for Georgia, I feel that I will run into some parents and perhaps administrators who do not agree with my choice of stories. I think that most people will agree that Poe was a powerful writer and one that can be taught, but some may feel that his stories are too scary for the eighth grade reader. I disagree. The images in Poe's works are no more frightening than those suggested in *The Giver* or things discussed in *Twilight*. I think that the eighth grade reader is mature enough to read these works and not go home with nightmares. However, if parents are not pleased, I will be willing to give their student another work by Poe to complete the assignments. I may even send out a newsletter at the beginning of the unit to let parents know what will be going on in class for the next 3 weeks and that way if they have any objections I can hear them before their student is exposed to the material.

In addition to reading Poe's short stories, we will also read his poems. Poetry is in some ways more difficult to understand than prose. By allowing students to read the short stories first, their brains should be warmed up to the idea of thinking about the meaning of a work. Being able to interpret a poem is a skill that students need to have. They will be given many

opportunities to work as a class and in groups to learn how to break poems down for understanding and then they will test their understanding by creating their own poem. A lot of standardized tests are filled with poetry and this unit is designed to introduce to students ways to find meaning and understanding in whatever they may read.

Overall I believe that using a horror and suspense theme to teach writing will work. The use of Edgar Allen Poe is a good choice because he is a figure in American Literature that students should be familiar with. Poe inspired many writers in the horror and mystery genre and through this unit he will inspire a new generation of writers. Students will be able to read some great works that give them a wonderful model for creating their own pieces. The point of this unit is to present the elements of writing in a new and fun way. Students will be given an opportunity to engage in the literature and then model what they have learned in their own pieces.

Goals and Rubrics

Creative Writing

At the end of this unit students will be asked to create a horror and suspense story of their own. It will be graded based on their ability to develop the plot of the story as well as their organizational skills demonstrated and modeled from the works they have read. They are not to copy what they have read but instead take it as an example and create fiction of their own. Using the techniques found in the writing is important because it will demonstrate how well the students understood the material. They must write their story in a way that they convince me that they have learned something about foreshadowing, imagery, plot set up, and much more from the works in the unit.

Creative Writing Rubric

I created my rubric from the model for the rubric for the Georgia High School Graduation Test. It is a good idea for the students to get use to this type of grading style so that they will be familiar with it once they enter high school.

Score 1: A score of "1" is assigned to a paper so lacking in development and organization that a controlling idea is not clear in the reader's mind. The reader is unable to follow the story and ends up confused and lost. The writer has not followed the assignment and has gone off topic. It appears that this writer has no evidence of a plan and therefore has written a poorly developed paper.

Score 2: A score of "2" is assigned to a paper that has a vague, poorly developed response to the assigned task. The writer has attempted to write the story but all of the elements are properly developed. The characters and plot need more work. There are enough elements to see the making of a good story but they are not developed enough. There seems to be a beginning middle and end, even though they are underdeveloped.

Score 3: A score of "3" is assigned to a paper that has a clear plot and is well developed throughout. This story appears to be in logical order. It seems to have a sense of completeness with a strong ending. However, development may be uneven, with some parts of the story full of details where others may lack detail.

Score 4: A score of "4" is assigned to a story that has a strong plot and well developed storyline. This story is evenly balanced throughout. All of the characters and scenes are well developed. There is evidence that the writer did revisions and has several drafts. There are very few spelling and punctuation errors. This story demonstrates that the student had an overall understanding of the assignment and executed it properly.

Create your own Poem

After reading and discussing the poems at length the students will be asked to create their own poem. The poem can have a scary theme or they can do their poem based on an eerie object.

Like a black cat or a bloody knife. The point is to stick to the horror theme and to be as creative as possible. After writing their poems, students will be asked to use any art material they choose to create an illustration for their poem and then incorporate their poem somewhere on this same artwork.

Poem Rubric

Creativity 20%

Students will be expected to have an illustration on the paper with their poem. They are not expected to be great artists but there must be some evidence of effort. They are welcome to go to the library and make computer cut outs. What I am looking for here is just a colorful, well

designed background. Creativity also deals with how much effort was put into the poem. Students will be graded higher depending on how clever and witty their poems are.

Content 40%

It is very hard to grade for content but students will be expected to have a well thought out poem. They are to have a poem of good length and style. If the poem is a short one, there should be evidence of a certain form used.

Proof of revision or brainstorming 10%

Students will be given the opportunity to brainstorm before they do the final product. I am just interested in seeing their process. I want to see their notes and any other ideas they came up with before the finished produce.

Appropriate use of grammar and punctuation as needed 10%

It is understood that poems are not always grammatically correct or punctuated the normal way but it is important that students when and where things are appropriate. I will not count off for errors as long as it is a stylistic choice as opposed to a grammar mistake. I will be able to tell the difference based on the way it is used and if it makes sense within the poem.

Illustration 20%

Illustration is much like creativity but this deals solely with the illustration. This assignment is supposed to be fun and I would like to reward those students who may not be strong writers but have gifts in other areas.

Unit Grade

Because much of this unit will be group work and class participation, there will also be a unit grade. This grade will incorporate everything that was done during the unit as well as a place for participation. I will be paying close attention to see if students are working together during small groups as well as observing who is participating in the class discussions. I will have a class list and make notes of my observations.

Unit Grade Rubric

Participation 50%

Poem 25%

Creative Writing 25%

Introductory Activities

In my introductory activities I would like to introduce the concept of fear to the students and also get them thinking about what is needed to make a great creative writing piece. I will try to get the students interested in the literature by starting with familiar things and then work towards the unfamiliar.

Day One: (90 min class)

5 min- Attendance and general announcements

20 min- Watch and Discuss Harry Potter Movie Clip from the third movie (Prisoner of Askaban). This will be the part of the movie with the Boggart. The Boggart is a creature in the movie that scares people by turning into whatever they are afraid of. This will be a good intro into writing about fears.

15 min- Students will write about what scares them or why they like to be scared.

15 min- Students will break off into groups according to what they wrote about and see what they would like to share with the class. Once students have been given time to pull their ideas together, each group will share with the class something that was discussed.

20 min- Class Discussion

- During this time students will share what scares them or why they like to be scared.
- Other students will be given the opportunity to comment on what the others have said.
- Ask students if they feel that their experiences would make for good story plots.

20 min- I will use the remainder of the time to tell the students about Poe and the readings that will be coming up.

Day 2: (90 min class)

5 min- Attendance and general announcements

15 min- Quick Write: What is scarier, reading a scary story or watching a scary movie?

15 min- Class Discussion on what was written

- Have a small discussion on what the students' reasons are for choosing each answer.

- Separate students into two groups based on what they chose and see which group came up with the most valid points to back up their argument.

40 min- The students will watch a scene from Twilight. After watching Twilight I will read to them the same scene from the book.

15 min- As a class: For the remainder of the class we will talk about the differences between the movie and the book. We will also talk about what is needed as writers in order for people to form in their mind what we are trying to describe.

Day 3: (90 min)

5 min- Attendance and general announcements

30 min- Read “The Tell-Tale Heart” popcorn style(one child will read and then pick another child to read the next paragraph).

30 min- Listen to the story on CD.

20 min- The students should make a list of the sensory details in the story. They will look for descriptions of sounds, smells, etc. This list will help students identify the details needed to create an effective story. We will have a class discussion about their lists and the importance of good details.

5 min- Their homework assignment is a task. They must bring an object to school that is representative of the story. The object must appeal to one of your senses. For example a plastic eye that represents the eye in the story or an object that makes a constant noise to represent the beating heart.

Day 4: (90 min)

5 min- Attendance and general announcements

10 min- Students will share their objects from homework last night. We will go around the room sharing the objects and why they were chosen.

40 min- We will begin reading “The Black Cat”. The students will break off into small groups of three or four and read together. This will give students more of an opportunity to read and help them to follow along better. If they finish early they can stay in their group and discuss the story and its details as well.

20 min- once everyone has finished the story they will stay in their groups and add to their lists of sensory details. They will discuss which story used more descriptions and which ones were most effective.

25 min- For the remainder of the class we will come together and discuss each groups findings.

Day 5: (90 min)

5 min- Attendance and general announcements

50 min- We will read “The Pit and the Pendulum”. We will listen to it on CD and stop periodically to discuss what has taken place thus far. Because this is a longer story I think it will be easier to listen to it than to have the students read it aloud. Stopping will help the students stay focused as well as give them a chance to dialog and ask questions if needed. I find that this method works well for eighth graders.

20 min- After reading the story, the students will break off into small groups and add to their details list. This time they will just find partners.

15 min- For the remainder of the class period I will divide the dry erase board into three parts. At the top of each section I will put the title of each story. Then I will ask the students to go up

and write the sensory details for each story. Afterward I will draw a line across the bottom and they will then write what details were found in all of the stories. We will discuss the importance of comparing them as we go. This activity will help the students to learn how to pick out details.

Day 6: (90 min)

5 min: Attendance and general announcements

5 min- I will explain to students that they are to now write a short story inspired by Poe's writings. I will pass out the rubrics and explain to them the importance of adding details and showing not telling.

15 min- After I explain the paper requirements the students will discuss with a partner some ideas for a good story. They will brainstorm together and write down the ideas until both partners have an idea for their story. I will walk around to see what students are doing and to assist in helping them come up with good ideas.

30 min- I will give students a chance to start writing their stories individually. They will write down ideas and even start their drafts if they would like.

20 min- A short grammar lesson will be presented to help students with dialog punctuation. Many of them will use dialog in their stories and it is important that they use it correctly.

15 min- Students will be given a worksheet to help them practice the concepts just learned.

Day 7: (90 min)

5 min- Attendance and general announcements

15 min- We will go over the worksheet from yesterday.

30 min- Students will pull out their stories from the day before and continue writing. By this time they should already have an outline or brainstorming plans and be moving toward the first draft stage.

30 min- We will have a mini lesson on catchy beginnings. I will start a discussion comparing the beginnings of the stories we just read. I will ask the students, “Did this beginning peak your interest? Why or why not.” The point is to help the students to find ways to make their own stories interesting, attention getters. I will also ask if there are any students that would like to share their beginning. We can discuss these beginnings as well and give helpful tips on how to make it better. I will remind students that we are to help one another and not make fun.

10 min- For the remainder of the period students will continue writing.

Day 8: (90 min)

5min: Attendance and general announcements

30 min: Mini lesson on the parts of a story. It is important that students know the parts of a story so that they can check to see that their stories are complete and well rounded. Students will be given a handout describing the parts of a story. Once the teacher reads and emphasizes each point, the students will be given a print out of *The Tell-Tale Heart*. The students will be instructed to get into groups of fours and label the parts of a story in Poe’s work. We will then, as a class, label the parts.

30 min: The students will now be given the opportunity to continue working on their own stories. I will go around seeing if any additional help is needed. I will read some of the students’ work and help those who are still unsure of how to get their stories started.

25 min: Students will switch papers with a partner and check for the parts of a story. They will label the parts and give each other suggestions on ways of improvement.

Homework: Finish stories and have them ready to edit tomorrow.

Day 9: (90 min)

5 min: Attendance and general announcements

10 min: It is time for students to edit their stories. I will give them a handout that shows which editing marks they should use. By using this handout the students will all be using the same marks and they will be able to better communicate with one another. I will give the students a quick overview about how to give good feedback and comments. I will stress to them that it is important to make comments and not just use the editing marks. The editing marks are so that the whole class is on one accord about what symbols we use but they must learn how to write helpful and encouraging comments as well.

30 min: Students will be given time to switch their papers to make editing suggestions and corrections. I will be walking around to make sure that students are on task and understand the assignment.

30 min: Now students will return the papers to the owners and take this time to make corrections.

15 min: We will come together as a large group and see if the students have any concerns. This is their time to ask any questions they may have before working on their final draft.

Homework: Students are to complete their stories for homework and have them ready to turn in tomorrow.

Reflection: Depending on how far along the stories are coming the due date may need to be pushed back. I will assess whether the students are ready to turn it in or if they need more time and guidance.

Day 10: (90 min)

5 min: Attendance and general announcements

10 min: I will introduce to the students the next part of the unit. The next part deals with poetry.

- Explain the definition of genre.
- I will explain to the students that the next part of the unit will be poetry.
- The first poem will be “The Raven”. I will give students a little back ground on the poem.

45 min: We will read the poem aloud as a class. We will stop in between stanzas to make sure that students understand the meaning and are following along.

30 min: For the remainder of the class I will explain to students that we will make a small journal entry about the poem we read. They are to comment on anything in the poem that interests them. They should also consider these questions while making their entries:

- What seems to be the style of the poem?
- Does the style work for or against the subject matter being discussed?
- What are your likes and dislikes about this poem?

Day 11: (90 min)

5 min: Attendance and general announcements

40 min: Students are now going to read “The Haunted Palace”. They will break up into groups of three or four (depending on the amount of students) and read the poem within their groups.

25 min: After the students have finished reading I want them to answer these questions:

- What are your likes and dislikes about the poem?
- What images appeared in the poem?

- How does the author present a story in poem form?
- Does the style of poetry limit his ability to tell the story?

20 min: Once the groups have come up with their answers we will discuss them as a class.

I want each of the groups to share their answers to each question and we will compare what observations each group made.

Day 12: (90 min)

5 min: Attendance and general announcements

30 min: The last poem the students will read is “To Helen”. I will read it aloud in class and ask that the students follow along with their copy (If it is not found in the book I will provide copies for them).

40min: Because “To Helen” is such an ambiguous poem it is a great poem to use in class discussion. I will have students take 5 to 10 minutes to write down their ideas about the poem. They should consider who do they think Helen is and why. Once the students have had a few minutes to write down their thoughts we will discuss as a class their opinions. We can even use this exercise as a little debate depending on the different responses. This would give students the ability to learn how to prove points by finding evidence in the text.

15 min: I will spend the remainder of class explaining to students the importance of the activity we just finished. I will explain to them that when they write papers about literature they should make sure to use evidence from the text, just as we have done in class.

Day 13: (90 min)

5 min: Attendance and general announcements

40 min: I will put students into groups of three or four. In their groups they will create found poems. I will explain to them that they are to take words, phrases, or sentences from the three poems we read and put them together to create their own poem. They will then transfer their poems onto a transparency to share with the class.

35 min: Once all the groups have finished we will come together as a class and watch each group present their poem.

5 min: For homework the students are to look up the term Mandala and bring in a picture tomorrow.

Day 14: (90 min)

5 min: Attendance and general announcements

30 min: Students will be asked to get out their homework. They should get into their groups from yesterday and look at the example of Mandalas that they have collected. Before they begin to compare I will ask for a volunteer to read the definition that they found. I will make sure that the class has an understanding of the definition.

30 min: The students will then use their examples and notes from this unit to create their own Mandala. It should be colorful and represent the themes presented in all three poems. The students should consider what the poems have in common and what is different about them. They can link the poems in any way that they choose.

25 min: For the remainder of class students will present their Mandalas.

Day 15: (90 min)

5 min: Attendance and general announcements

60 min: Today students will create their own poems. They are to create a poem based off of some of the themes we have studied in this unit. They will also create an illustration to go

along with their poem. They will write the poem on notebook paper, create the illustration and then figure out a creative way to put the poem on the illustration.

25 min: After the students have finished they can share. If the students do not finish they may use the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment.