**Lesson Plan A**

**TITLE**

Creative Writing: mimicking an author’s style

**TIME**

50 minutes

**SETTING**

This lesson takes place in a regular level sophomore English class of 16 students in a small rural school. The school is predominantly white, middle-class, and many of the students have known each other since elementary school. The teacher also thoroughly relates to the students as she has taught in the area for 25 years and was also raised in a nearby community. The school lacks diversity because of this setting. However it seems to me apparent that the teachers and administrators are actively involved in helping improve the school because they frequently attend educational seminars to learn the latest in their fields. Because of these advantages, I believe that the school is very successful for its area and location, but lacks diversity to help push the standard higher. While I observed I saw little need for classroom punishment as most classrooms and even the hallway were well managed, which led to an overall feeling of a strong school community. In this classroom, there seems to be no students with specific special needs or accommodations, but the group is fairly imbalanced with their academic levels. For this lesson, the students are currently working on a short American literature unit.

**THEORY INTO PRACTICE BACKGROUND**

With this lesson, my aim to is have student use writing to think because as Jim Burke writes, “you cannot write without thinking” (Burke 245). Knowing this, I have created a lesson that requires students to write and discuss from a variety of viewpoints. First they journal which Burkes develops the importance of in several of his chapters. Although in this case, I am giving the students a specific goal with their journaling, over the course of the semester they used it for a huge variety of purposes. Burke asks this important question about journaling: “Is it just a short exercise to get them thinking, or is it a beginning of a much larger effort” – to which I would reply that this activity along with any other that the purpose is both (Burke 158). We want students to think but also develop that thinking. For one thing, this lesson acts as a way to get the class started and the students thinking about what is to come. Carol Weinstein writes that teachers lose a large amount of time to transitional activities rather than meaningful activities, and so, I created this activity so that right away students walked in and had something to do (Weinstein 190).

Before this lesson it is imperative that students cover and understand literary devices before they begin this lesson. However, we will review those topics through the journal activity and then through a brief classroom discussion. This is important because even though the student should know and understand the terms, I want to review to continue reminding them about the importance of understanding them. They should also have discussed and understood those devices in the context of *The Raven –* then when we complete the creativity writing activity they will better understand and appreciate the poetry and art of *The Raven.* Stephen Tchudi writes that “explorations that grow from literature need not be limited to talk,” and so while we have devoted one day to discussing *The Raven* today the goal is to understand the art of the literature as well (Tchudi 175). He further writes that student should “experiment with many different ways of describing their reactions to reading,” and so I have shown them the Tuscan Milk Review to expose them to a different perspective and to guide them to writing in a new way (Tchudi 175). In this lesson, we are using *The Raven* a poem by Edgar Allan Poe that is frequently studied in poetry units or American Literature units. Poe’s writing is part of the canon of literature and so discussing it while important should be taught in a context that makes it connect to students’ lives. A student quoted in *Exploring and Teaching the English Language Arts* said, “’I know the themes in the book are suppose to be great and important themes but why do we have to spend so much time wading through the language and antiquated sentence structures to get the themes’” (Tchudi 192). From this student’s perspective, we see the importance of connecting the writing to students lives today, and so I gave the students the opportunity to understand the writing of Edgar Allan Poe through their own point of view. This lesson connects to the lesson to come and those from before because it reviews and covers materials that the students have gone through and represents one aspect of the American literature unit that the students are working on. It helps to connect and develop the literary devices students should know, while also helping them better understand the language of Poe by putting it in context. In the future they will continue to use these literary terms as well as learn more while also discovering more authors’ writing styles.

**OBJECTIVE/S**

**By the end of class today, student should be able to:**

* Mimic a specific creative writing style type; either the Edgar Allan Poe or one of the flash fiction examples.
* Identify and use specific literary devices in poetry

**MATERIALS**

* Projector and computer to project review: “Tuscan Milk Review”
* 16 handouts of Flash Fiction directions (I am using the copy we used in CI 403)
* Students should bring their copies of *The Raven* from yesterday’s lesson

**PREPARATION**

Before class today students will have read and briefly discussed *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe. They should also bring to class their copies of *The Raven* from yesterday’s class

**PROCEDURE**

Warm up (5-7 minutes) – Directions will be written on the board as they walk in

* Students will silently take out *The Raven* and find 2 examples of these literary terms:

 -alliteration

 -assonance

 -consonance

 -symbolism

 AND describe the terms. Then, they will highlight and define 1 word that they did not know/understand in the poem. Then respond with general questions, responses, and ideas about the poem.

Main Activity (38-40 minutes)

* As a class share and discuss what they found in *The Raven* – Allow some volunteers to share their specific examples, definition, and vocabulary term (5-7 minutes). If you notice any students struggling with a specific term be sure to redefine it.
* Transition to the Tuscan Milk Review by stating that we are going to look at an author who mimicked Poe’s writing style and instruct them that they will have the opportunity to do so as well. (1 minute)
* Read aloud the Tuscan Milk review (4-6 minutes)

 -Have a quick discussion asking students what they thought about the poem

 -What relationships do they make between the Raven and the review?

 -Have them find and list its examples of the same terms we covered in the

 journal activity

* Flash fiction activity (15-20 minutes)

 -Pass out handouts and simultaneously give instructions: Students have the option of writing a poem that mimics Poe’s style or the Tuscan Milk review, a short story based off of the flash fiction templates, or short phrases of six words – if they choose to do the last one, they should write non-stop and reach at least 15 examples to earn credit. Students should write on their own paper in clear handwriting and make the best effort to fully complete the assignment during class.

 -Be sure to write the options and description for each on the board

 -Remind students to use the literary devices that we covered in class in their

 writing. Whatever they choose to write should utilize at least 2 devices;

 however, whoever uses the most will earn 2 points of extra credit, and the

 person using the second most will earn 1 point.

* Share stories with the remaining time (5 minutes) – call on volunteers to share. Students may also allow other classmates to read the story for them if they do not want to read aloud. Collect students’ writings as they leave class for assessment.

**DISCUSSION IDEAS**

What do you notice about Poe’s writing style?

What is going on in *The Raven?* What does that mean?

What comparisons do you see between the two poems?

How could you recreate the same type of imagery, tone, and structure?

**SPECIAL EDUCATION/ELL ACCOMMODATIONS**

Although in my classroom it seems as though there are no students with specific special needs or language accommodations, in general all of the students seem to work at a wide variety of paces and levels. Because of this I need to design the activities so that the students can move at their own pace but also will not become bored when finished. In order to do that, first the students are writing in their journals and completing my specific requirements. However, with any remaining time after completing those expectations, students should give general responses to the text. Then, as we share, I will call on volunteers rather than any students so that only those who are comfortable can share. As students work on writing their stories, they are expected to work at their own pace, but write the whole time. As I assess them, I am looking less at quality of creativity or length and more at their attempt to complete the assignment. In order to keep students on task and focused, I am giving clear directions, and writing them on the board when possible.

**ASSESSMENT**

First, I will assess how well they understood the literary devices in *The Raven* through the overall class discussion. This will give me a general understanding of how they understood the devices by their responses and examples. However, I will have a more through understanding by collecting their journals and assessing individuals. While group assessment is important because it helps me to recognize whether or not we can move forward with a lesson, it is not a proper form of assessment for truly understanding their capabilities, so reviewing their journals is necessary. Additionally, I will assess this lesson by reading their stories after class which will further show their understanding of the literary devices, but also allow me to see if they mastered mimicking an author’s style or completing the flash fiction requirements. When assessing I will look specifically for effort but also for how well they seemed to utilize literary devices while also adhering to the format. I will use the assessment rubric since this is a short in class activity.

**EXTENSION IDEAS**

Specifically, since I love the Flash fiction activity, this activity could easily be used in many other lessons to get the students working. Flash fiction is especially useful because online the list of options is almost endless for other scenarios. As for this lesson in particular, I could expand it by having students edit and revise their work. However, in that case would eliminate the option of six words or less because it is so short. If I were to expand the story activity, then I would give them less time to work in class, but assign it for homework. Then, the next day they could pair with partners and do peer reviews to provide feedback. Along with extending the activity as homework, we could also expand the short stories by either covering more of Poe’s work, or doing a small unit on American Authors in which we covered a larger variety and then allowed the students to choose one of those authors to mimic.

**SOURCE OF ACTIVITY**

I am adapting this lesson off of one we did in class using the flash fiction activity. Although I am not the most creative person, I particularly enjoyed the flash fiction activity because it gave us a structure to uphold. Because of that, I wanted to give the students the opportunity to write but also provide them with a similar structure. Knowing that we would cover *The Raven* in class and that I had just stumbled upon the Tuscan Milk Review, which is a really cool example, I wanted to give them a structure and opportunity to write. Additionally, while the students have already covered many of the literary devices used, I wanted to briefly review those topics and implement them in a way that encouraged them to better understand them. Since they play a small role in the lesson, I believe it gives me the chance to check their understanding while also letting them practice using the devices as well.

**RESOURCES AND REFERENCES**

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. Third ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2008. Print.

Tchudi, Stephen, and Diana Mitchell. *Exploring and Teaching the English Language Arts*. Fourth ed. New York: Longman, 1999. Print.

Weinstein, Carol Simon. *Middle and Secondary Classroom Management: Lessons from Research and Practice.* Fourth ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2010. Print.

**ILLINOIS STATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GOALS**

* RL.9-10.5. Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

 -Students will meet this standard by mimicking an author’s style. They will be able to show how the chooses to structure a text via the events, tone, literary techniques, because mimicking the author’s style requires that students understand how the author creates that style. Additionally, it will show their understand of the elements of the story/poem by being able to recreate those in their own story/poem. The journal aspect of this lesson will also first check that student can describe and identify the terms and themes that make up the quality of an author’s work.

* W.9-10.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

 -Students will meet this standard by writing the short story that uses specific techniques to illustrate key themes. After reading an author’s poem, they will attempt to recreate the tones and themes within that through their writing.

**REFLECTION**

One problem with this lesson is that I may be assuming too much of the students with their understanding of the literary devices and the meaning in *The Raven.* However, when I taught this lesson and if I were to cover it again, I would be sure to thoroughly cover both topics before. In this case, the teacher had covered those terms and *The Raven* previously that week so I knew the students had some understanding of each aspect. However, I hope in doing this lesson I did not neglect the importance of the story’s meaning. One thing to keep in mind is that the point of this lesson was to practice creative writing and the implementation of literary devices, not to necessarily understand a poem – although that aspect of literature is equally important. When both writing and completing this lesson, I greatly modified it because my original version also included going over verb tenses and their homework. By actually teaching the students that lesson, I learned that that was too much to do in addition to this, so it ended up taking 2 class periods. For this version, I left out that additional aspect, and instead focused simply on the creative writing aspect. Even though the lesson I originally planned had “failed,” it ended up working out well because it became two lessons and showed how important it is to over plan.