

Instructional Lesson Plan EXCERPT
Advanced / Gifted and Talented (GT) English Language Arts

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| Grade: 12GT | Unit Title: Journey | Length: Six 45-minute periods |
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Lesson Overview

Students will analyze allusions in T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" in order to understand the role they play in understanding the poem and as one of the experimental techniques used in the Modernist movement. Students will read excerpts of Eliot's critical essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in order to paraphrase Eliot's points about the role of allusion in his poetry. They will create a hypertext for the poem and write an essay analyzing how Eliot uses elements such as allusion, figurative language, and tone to convey his complex response to the modern world.

Essential Question

How do authors use conventions of grammar, word relationships, and nuance to develop fulfilled or unfulfilled dramatic and philosophical journeys?

Lesson Procedure

Day Two

- Explain to students that Eliot was a leader in the Modernist literary movement, a movement whose followers rejected conventional poetic forms and high-flown, artificial language. His work expresses his sense of the "anarchy and futility" of modern life: its inhumanity, its delusions of "progress," the decline of human values and community in its oppressive cities, the void created by the disappearance of the spiritual in a world dominated by technology. He often used experimental techniques in his poems – collage-like juxtaposition of narrative fragments and allusions from various times, places, and levels of culture. More on the Modernist movement and T.S. Eliot can be found at http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/courses/teachers_corner/29773.html
- Direct students to consider and define fully the term *allusion* and to describe the role it plays in "The Hollow Men." Have students identify all of the material in the poem that they think has an important part in developing an understanding of the content of the poem's meaning.
- Break students into expert groups to close read excerpts which support T.S. Eliot's claim about the role of the poet and his or her poetry in his critical essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Have students paraphrase Eliot's point consider what T.S. Eliot might say about the role of allusion in his poetry. The essay is in the public domain; resources like <http://www.bartleby.com/200/sw4.html> include the full text. Suggested excerpts are:

"Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity."

"No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of æsthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities."

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"Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry. If we attend to the confused cries of the newspaper critics and the susurrus of popular repetition that follows, we shall hear the names of poets in great numbers; if we seek not Blue-book knowledge but the enjoyment of poetry, and ask for a poem, we shall seldom find it. In the last article I tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. The other aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of the poem to its author. And I hinted, by an analogy, that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of "personality," not being necessarily more interesting, or having "more to say," but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations."

- Jigsaw the expert groups. Have students report on their expert groups' decisions. Have the jigsaw groups collaboratively write an additional paragraph in the voice of T.S. Eliot, synthesizing the ideas of the three excerpts, to be added to "Tradition and the Individual Talent." The paragraph should explain the role of allusion as it connects to Eliot's ideas regarding literary tradition.

Days Three and Four

- Assign four to five students to groups to research the allusions in the poem so that they can access the full meaning of Eliot's words and expressions. Students should generate a research topics list within their groups based on their lingering questions and uncertainties in meaning. Application of different literary approaches (especially archetypal and historical/biographical) may help students to identify a variety of areas for further inquiry and investigation. Possible topics could be author biography, poem's place in history, embedded quotations, literary characters and works, setting descriptions, historical events, symbols, etc. Students should be encouraged to continuously add their list of topics as their investigation proceeds. MLA citation information should be recorded.
- Students may choose to take notes using a collaborative Web 2.0 like Google Docs or one of the products described at <http://mashable.com/2008/08/19/online-note-taking-applications/>

Day Five

- Introduce students to the task of creating a hypertext document to describe and explain allusions in a poem. A simple example is this hypertext for "I Seek a Form"
http://plato.mercyhurst.edu/english/breed/www/i_seek_a_form.htm.
- Additional examples of hypertext poems can be found at <http://www.starve.org/teaching/intro-poetry/hyper-poems.html>.
- A college-level hypertext assignment can be found at <http://mason.gmu.edu/~rmatz/201assign.html>
- Have students collaboratively create a hypertext document using a product like Google docs to describe and explain each of the allusions in "The Hollow Men."
- A teacher reference on creating hypertext for "The Hollow Men" can be found at <http://aduni.org/~heather/occs/honors/whyhypertext.htm>
- The hypertext should include factual material, links to the poem, possible analysis and interpretation, and MLA citation information. Some rubrics for evaluating hypertext documents can be found at:
 - <http://www.uco.edu/edgrants/faculty/spencer/rubrics/additional.html>
 - <http://web.njit.edu/~cjohnson/twassess/assmt/criteria.htm>
 - <http://www.pflugervilleisd.net/curriculum/ela/grade12/documents/hypertextrubric1.pdf>

Day Six

- Have students respond to the following essay prompt in a first-draft only essay:
In "The Hollow Men," the poet T.S. Eliot expresses his sense of the anarchy and futility of modern life: its inhumanity, its delusions of progress, the decline of human values, and the void created by the disappearance of the spiritual. Read the poem carefully. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Eliot uses elements such as allusion, figurative language, and tone to convey Eliot's complex response to the modern world.