

Title: Exploring War Themes in Art and Poetry

Grade Ranges:

 K-4

 5-8

 X 9-12

Subject Tag:

Language Arts: Literature: British Literature

Language Arts: Literature: Poetry

Writing Guides: Writing Composition

Synopsis:

This lesson focuses on the theme of war through a student-centered approach to analysis. The lesson initially involves student open ended responses to Picasso's painting "Guernica." After responding in writing and through whole group discussion, the class reads and responds to Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum Est." Following a whole group discussion on the poem, students make connections between the painting and the poem. Finally, students complete a more formal written analysis on the two works. Students will support their interpretations with specific evidence from the painting and the poem. Students will leave the lesson with a better understanding of the themes of war in both works, and they will engage thoughtfully with both the written and the visual. This lesson plan complements a unit on war that might include poems, short stories, and novels. It can also be used as part of a unit on ethical dilemmas.

Keywords:

trench poets, Picasso, "Guernica," Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est," reader response criticism, poetry analysis, war themes, World War I

Body:

1. Begin class with a focus and review of war as an ethical dilemma. Then show students a reproduction of Picasso's painting entitled "Guernica." (Painting viewable online at: http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/a_nav/guernica_nav/main_guerfrm.html; available for purchase at: <http://www.art.com/>)
2. Initially, ask students to write down (simply list) everything they see, or *think* they see in the painting.
3. After they have finished their individual lists, students write down one word that best sums up their emotional responses to the painting. Have everyone in the class share his/her response. Follow this with a whole class discussion on items from their initial lists and how the figures in the painting affect emotional responses.
4. Students then read Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" and mark words/phrases/lines that they like or understand. They should also mark passages,

ideas, or vocabulary words that are confusing. (poem available online at: <http://www.cis.vt.edu/modernworld/d/Owen.html>)

5. Ask students to then share their initial responses to the poem. If time allows, students can share in pairs first, followed by whole class discussion.
6. After students discover Owen's belief that "it is not sweet and honorable to die for one's country," ask them to compare Picasso's work to Owen's poetry. Choose a line from the poem that would make an appropriate title for the painting.
7. As a follow-up writing assignment, have students write a formal reader response to the art and the poem. The response needs to address specifics in both works that support their opinions.

Note: You can also have students conduct Internet searches for more research, using the search terms Picasso, World War I, trench poets, or Guernica.

Related Links:

Guernica: Testimony of War, from PBS

http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/a_nav/guernica_nav/main_guerfrm.html

This site offers historical context on the events that inspired the painting and on Picasso and his artistic process.

Art.com

<http://www.art.com/>

Reprints of Picasso's "Guernica" are available here. Search for "Guernica."

"Dulce Et Decorum Est," by Wilfred Owen

<http://www.cis.vt.edu/modernworld/d/Owen.html>

Full text of Owen's 1920 poem presented here

Features:

- ___ Contains special education tips
- ___ Quick Activity (less than 30 minutes; story starter)
- ___ Requires Internet access for students to complete

Objectives:

1. Students will interpret different media forms that focus on a common theme
2. Students will compare and contrast a visual representation and a text representation of war
3. Students will support their interpretations with specific evidence

Standards:

- NY:**
1. Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.
 4. Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

NYC: A2a. Make an oral presentation of project plans or findings to an audience with expertise in the subject matter. **A5a.** Participate in the establishment and operation of self-directed work teams. **E3b.** Participate in group meetings. **E5a.** Respond to poetry using interpretative and critical processes.

CT: 1. Reading and responding: Students will read and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts. **4. Exploring and responding to texts:** Students will use the language arts to explore and respond to classical and contemporary texts from many cultures and literary periods.

NJ: 3.4. Students will read various materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis. **3.5.** Students will view, understand, and use nontextual visual information.

Prerequisite Skills:

1. Some previous experience with reader response is helpful but not essential.

Time Required:

60-90 minutes (formal written assignment can be completed in class or out of class)

Technology and Materials Needed:

1. Reproduction of Pablo Picasso's "Guernica"
2. Copies of Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est"

Procedures

Assessment Criteria:

1. Class participation
2. Written formal response should contain specific evidence from the works

Recommended Lesson Plan Review Date:

Review Comments: