



The Study of Theme and Figurative Language in Poetry and/or Prose — Grade Nine

Ohio Standards Connections

Reading Applications: Literary Text

Benchmark D

Identify similar recurring themes across different works. (Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 5

Identify and explain universal themes across different works by the same author and by different authors. (Grade 8)

Benchmark F

Identify and analyze how an author uses figurative language, sound devices and literary techniques to shape plot, set meaning and develop tone. (Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 9

Analyze ways in which the author conveys mood and tone through word choice, figurative language and syntax. (Grade 9)

Benchmark G

Explain techniques used by authors to develop style. (Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 10

Explain how authors use symbols to create broader meanings. (Grade 9)

Lesson Summary:

Students will learn how to identify and analyze the use of figurative language used in selected poems, short stories or other pieces of prose chosen by the teacher. These pieces of literature will represent at least two pieces by one writer and at least two pieces by different writers. Students will also learn to identify similar recurring themes across the different works and analyze the universality of the themes. Students will demonstrate, through their writing, their ability to document textual evidence which justifies their interpretation of the literary selections.

Estimated Duration: Two to three hours

Commentary:

Readers use a variety of techniques to develop an interpretation of literary text. This lesson addresses how readers identify and analyze theme and figurative language devices that are used in poetry and prose.

In the Ohio's English Language Arts Academic Content Standards, identifying the theme of a text is introduced as an indicator in the second grade. Students build on this skill, so that by the third grade they are able to describe methods authors use to influence readers' feelings and attitudes (e.g., appeal of characters in a picture book, use of figurative language). These techniques are explained, examined, identified and critiqued at every grade level leading to the ninth grade. By the time teachers and students follow this model lesson, students should be able to do more than just identify or explain literary techniques. Students should be able to analyze the techniques authors choose to use in their literature. The post-assessment in this lesson takes the form of an expository essay used as a vehicle by which strategic readers analyze and evaluate theme, figurative language, mood, tone, etc. The essay also enables students to demonstrate their understanding of literary techniques used in the Reading Applications: Literary Text Standard.

By the fourth grade, most students have developed the ability to use a variety of reading comprehension techniques, such as comparing and contrasting, inferring theme and meaning and analyzing an author's use of language.

Pre-Assessment:

Give students a copy of a poem (not one selected for the lesson), and ask them to write an interpretation of the poem. They are asked to identify the theme and any figurative language used in the poem and to describe their importance to the interpretation of the poem. Students should also relate the theme to any other literary works with which they are familiar.

Scoring Guidelines:

3 = Student can identify the theme of the poem correctly, analyze the use of all figurative language devices and relate the theme to at least one other literary work.



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Other Related Ohio Standards

Writing Applications

Benchmark B

Write responses to literature that extend beyond the summary and support references to the text, other works, other authors or to personal knowledge.
(Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 2

Write responses to literature that organize an insightful interpretation around several clear ideas, premises or images and support judgments with specific references to the original text, to other texts, authors and to prior knowledge.
(Grade 9)

2 = Student can identify the theme of the poem correctly, and identify some figurative devices used but cannot relate the theme to other works.

1 = Student cannot identify the theme of the poem but can identify some of the figurative language used in the poem.

0 = Student cannot identify the theme or use of figurative language and cannot interpret the poem.

Post-Assessment:

- Students will write an expository essay on two works of literature of their choice. The teacher can provide a list of literary selections from which the students can choose two.
- Students will present an analysis of the two works that includes theme, figurative language and other literary devices used by the authors.

Scoring Guidelines:

3 = The student successfully analyzes and interprets two pieces of literary text. The student can identify figurative language, the theme and other literary devices used by the author and the student can analyze their effectiveness.

2 = The student interprets two pieces of literary text but does not demonstrate the ability to successfully analyze the use of literary devices. The student does demonstrate the ability to identify the use of figurative language.

1 = The student summarizes the two pieces of literary text but demonstrates no ability to interpret theme, identify figurative language or analyze the text.

0 = Student does not attempt the essay.

Instructional Procedures:

1. Explain to the students that they will be reading four different works of literature.
2. Explain that they will be learning about figurative language, symbolism and other literary devices that will help them do an analysis of literary text.
3. Distribute definitions of metaphor, simile, personification, symbolism and theme. This is to insure that all students are working from the same definitions. Include examples from literature that illustrates each definition.
4. Distribute copies of the literary texts to be used.
5. Arrange students into four groups and ask each group to read from one of the works of literary text chosen. Then ask each group to react to the text and to identify figurative language and other literary devices used by the author.
6. Have groups report their reactions and findings to the entire class.
7. Repeat the process as the groups analyze each work of literary text.
8. Ask the class to discuss the effectiveness of literary devices used in each work of literary text.
9. Have the class discuss the theme of each work and analyze the universality

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of the theme.

Differentiated Instructional Support:

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator (s).

- Students may be given literary texts that are not as rigorous in terms of readability but still contain all of the elements of the other texts. Fairytales, poems and contemporary literature are good choices.
- Students are asked to read a critical analysis of the works of literature that are selected and to write reactions to those critiques.

Extension:

- Students look at selections of literary text that represent diverse cultural groups.
- Ask students to draw conclusions about the universality of literary expression.

Homework Options and Home Connections:

The post assessment paper should require some out-of-class research and time.

Materials/Resources Needed:

For the teacher: Four selections of literature (two by the same poet and two by different authors); worksheets with the figurative language terms (metaphor, simile and personification) and story elements (theme, literary analysis, and symbolism); handouts with examples of the uses of metaphor, simile, personification, theme and symbolism; a glossary of literary terms (e.g., Ohio's K-12 English Language Arts Academic Content Standards); a chalkboard and chalk and/or an overhead projector, sheets of transparencies and transparency markers and a brief bio-sketch of the writers (photographs optional).

For the students: Copies of the selected works of literature

Key Vocabulary:

- figurative language
- simile
- metaphor
- personification
- theme
- universality
- analyze
- symbolism

General Tips:

Choose literary texts that have some connections to the students in the class (cultural diversity, interests, community values, etc.).