

Being Mindful of Sadness in "The Scarlet Ibis"

Theme and Characterization

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Published by *K20 Center*

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Grade Level	9th Grade	**Time Frame**	160 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	3-4 class periods
Course	American Literature		

Essential Question

How does a character's state of mind affect their development and the development of the theme in a text?

Summary

In this lesson, students explore emotional resilience and mental health through writing, media, group analysis, and literature. The lesson begins with a Quick Write on coping with uncertain times, followed by discussions and videos introducing mental health counseling and social work. Students analyze emotional tone using the "It's OPTIC-al" strategy with impactful images, then apply those insights while reading "The Scarlet Ibis" by James Hurst, focusing on the emotional journey of the main character, Brother. Through text analysis and connections to a self-care video and article, students deepen their understanding of mental wellness and character emotions. The lesson culminates in a creative "Two-Voice Poem" assignment where students script a supportive conversation with Brother, reinforcing themes of empathy, emotional growth, and mental health support.

Snapshot

Engage

Students complete a Quick Write in response to their ideas regarding uncertain times.

Explore

Students analyze famous paintings to interpret the overall impression or mood created by the image.

Explain

Students read "The Scarlet Ibis" by James Hurst and analyze key scenes for word choice and mood in order to understand the character's feelings and emotions.

Extend

Students analyze a video and an article in order to make connections between self-care concepts and "The Scarlet Ibis" by analyzing what is said and what is meant.

Evaluate

Students create a Two-Voice Poem to establish a conversation that provides helpful and supportive advice.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

WME301: Analyze how the choice of a specific word or phrase shapes meaning or tone in somewhat challenging passages when the effect is simple
SYN301: Make straightforward comparisons between two passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.3.R.3: Evaluate how literary elements impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:
- setting
- plot structure (e.g., foreshadowing, flashback, *in media res*)
- conflict (i.e., internal, external)
- characters (e.g., protagonist, antagonist)
- characterization (i.e., direct, indirect)
- point of view (e.g., narrator reliability)
- archetypes

9.3.R.4: Evaluate how literary devices impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:
- figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism)
- sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance)
- irony (i.e., verbal, situational, dramatic)

9.3.R.7: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics, using textual evidence to support their claims and inferences.

Attachments

- 11 Self-Care Tips for Teens and Young Adults—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis .pdf
- 11 Self-Care Tips for Teens and Young Adults—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis.docx
- Conversation with Brother Rubric—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis .pdf
- Conversation with Brother Rubric—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis.docx
- It's OPTIC-al Images—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis .pdf
- It's OPTIC-al Images—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis.docx
- It's OPTIC-al—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis .pdf
- It's OPTIC-al—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis.docx
- Lesson Slides—Being Mindful of Sadness in "The Scarlet Ibis".pptx
- Text Analysis Chart—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis .pdf
- Text Analysis Chart—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis.docx
- What it Says, Why it Matters Chart—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis .pdf
- What it Says, Why it Matters Chart—Being Mindful of Sadness in The Scarlet Ibis.docx

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- It's OPTIC-al Images (attached; one per group)
- Text Analysis Chart (attached; one per student)
- What it Says, Why it Matters Chart (attached; one per student)
- 11 Self-Care Tips for Teens and Young Adults (attached; one per student)
- Conversation with Brother (attached; one per pair)
- Conversation with Brother Rubric (attached; optional; one per pair)
- "The Scarlet Ibis" by James Hurst (link provided)

30 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to facilitate this lesson. Begin by showing **slides 2-4** to introduce the title of the lesson, the essential question, and the learning objective.

Move to **slide 5** and explain the Quick Write strategy. Ask students to write for 3 full minutes in response to the following prompt: *How do you deal with uncertain times?* When time is up, lead a discussion regarding the notes students made.

Move to **slide 6** and play the video on mental health counseling.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=UpsQX4nxZUI

Show **slide 7** and watch the career talk on social work with Natalie Gallo.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=BN10mvJYoTA

After watching the videos, discuss with students how mental health counseling and therapists can help people deal with uncertain times.

20 minutes

Explore

Move to **slide 8** and explain the It's OPTIC-al strategy. Place students in groups and assign each group one page of the **It's OPTIC-al Images** handout (attached). In groups, provide each student a copy of the **It's OPTIC-al** handout (attached) and ask students to work collaboratively to analyze their assigned image to determine the overall impression or mood created by the image.

After the groups have analyzed their assigned images, use the Numbered Heads Together strategy to identify a spokesperson from each group. Move through **slides 9-13** with each of the images. Ask the randomly selected student from each group to share the overall impression/mood their image creates and explain how they came to their conclusion.

50 minutes

Explain

Teacher's Note: Accessing the Text

At the time of publishing this lesson, "The Scarlet Ibis" by James Hurst can be found on Actively Learn.

Move to **slide 14**. Provide each student a copy of "The Scarlet Ibis" text. Ask students to focus on the emotional state of Brother, the main character, as they read the story. Present the following questions for students to think about as they read:

- *How do you know what he is feeling throughout the story?*
- *How do his emotions change throughout the story?*
- *What do his emotions tell us about the theme(s) in the story?*

After reading, provide a copy of the **Text Analysis Chart** handout (attached) to each student. Use **slide 15** to explain to students how to complete the handout, looking for key scenes that show Brother's emotions. After students have had time to identify what the text says, identify the character's mood or state of mind, and identify their reactions to it, use **slide 16** to lead a discussion.

Teacher's Note: Sample Scenes

Possible key scenes to analyze:

- Introduction to Doodle (Paragraph 3)
- Brother plans to kill Doodle (Paragraph 5)
- Brother shares Old Woman Swamp (Paragraph 9)
- Brother scares Doodle by showing him the casket (Paragraph 13)
- Brother teaches Doodle to walk (Paragraph 19)
- Doodle buries the Scarlet Ibis (Paragraph 72)
- Brother races home in the rain (Paragraphs 79–80)

30 minutes

Extend

Move to **slide 17**. Provide each student a copy of the **What it Says, Why it Matters Chart** handout (attached). Explain that they will watch the "Self-Care in High School" video on slide 17 and read the "11 Self-Care Tips for Teens and Young Adults" article (attached) in order to make connections between self-care concepts and "The Scarlet Ibis." Instruct your students to add anything they find that connects the video and the article to the story to their chart.

After watching the video and reading the article, have students use the Most Valuable Point strategy. Ask students to pair up or place them into small groups to share their charts and discuss the connections they made between the article and the short story.

30 minutes

Evaluate

Teacher's Note: Understanding the Rubric

The **Conversation with Brother Rubric** is provided for this assignment. In the rubric, you will notice the use of "helpful" and "supportive" as format criteria. It is possible that a student's advice within the assignment can be helpful, but the tone or word choice is not supportive, or vice versa. Helping students understand and recognize this key distinction prior to completing the assignment may help them succeed in their assignment.

Display **slide 18**. Pair students up and explain the Two-Voice Poem strategy. Explain that pairs will be creating a poster where Brother has a conversation with someone else who provides him with some insight into or ways to process his sadness. Provide each pair with the **Conversation with Brother** handout (attached) and have students assign their roles. One student will speak as Brother. The other student can choose to speak as Mom, Dad, Aunt Nicey, a friend, or a counselor.

Move to **slide 19** and share the **Conversation with Brother Rubric** (attached) to inform students of how this assignment will be evaluated prior to beginning the assignment.

Once students have had enough time to create their conversation posters, ask some pairs to act out their conversation to the class. After each presentation, lead a class discussion identifying the advice that was given and discussing its relevance and effectiveness to "The Scarlet Ibis."

Resources

- Bereson, G. (2019, May 5). 11 self-care tips for teens and young adults. The Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds.
- Dalí, S. (1931). The persistence of memory [Painting]. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.
- Forrester, C. (2015). Uganda [Painting]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.
- Hopper, E. (1942). Nighthawks [Painting]. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- Hurst, J. (July 1960). "The Scarlet Ibis." The Atlantic Monthly. Actively Learn.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). It's OPTIC-al. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/99
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Most valuable point. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/3034
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Numbered heads together. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/2476
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quick write. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1127
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-voice poem. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/133
- K20 Center. (2021, March 12). K20 ICAP - Natalie Gallo. Licensed Professional Counselor - Are We Okay? [Video]. YouTube.
- K20 Center. (2021, September 21). K20 Center 3-minute timer. [Video]. YouTube.
- MGHClayCenter. (2019, May 5). Self-care in high school. [Video]. YouTube.
- NYU Steinhardt (2014, Oct 2). What is mental health counseling? [Video]. YouTube.
- Picasso, P. (1903–1904). The old guitarist [Painting]. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- Van Gogh, V. (1890). The church at Auvers [Painting]. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.