



Comparing/Contrasting Characters Through Two-Voice Poems

Characterization



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Grade Level	9th – 10th Grade	Time Frame	2-4 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	150 minutes

Essential Question

How do authors develop characters over the course of a text?

Summary

Students will activate prior knowledge and make connections to the post-WWII era in America by looking at images from the time period. In addition, students will read poems that depict contrasting points of view from the decade (the point of view of an American versus a Holocaust survivor resettled in America.) Then, students will read the short story "Adam" by Kurt Vonnegut and complete a Venn diagram with details from the story in order to track the development of characters. Finally, students will work in pairs to create and perform two-voice poems that reveal the characterization of the two contrasting figures in the story. This lesson may be adapted to fit any text where characterization plays a role.

Snapshot

Engage

Students draw a character name and sit in a group of four, complete a Quick Write over the essential question, and then analyze images related to the historical context.

Explore

Students will read poems in their small groups and draw conclusions, then, as a class, compare and contrast the differing points of view.

Explain

Next, students will read the short story "Adam" and fill out half of a Venn diagram, focusing on physical descriptions, dialogue, character thoughts and feelings, and the narrator's comments about their character.

Extend

Students will break out of their small groups to create new partner groups. In pairs, students will complete both sides of their Venn diagram and then continue working in pairs to write a Two-Voice Poem using a provided template.

Evaluate

Students will perform their poems, and, as a final assessment, write a paragraph re-addressing the essential question using textual evidence from the story.

Standards

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

IDT501: Infer a central idea or theme in somewhat challenging passages or their paragraphs

SYN301: Make straightforward comparisons between two passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.3.R.1: Analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts.

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

9.4.W.2: Select language to create a specific effect in writing according to purpose and audience.

Attachments

- [Adam by Kurt Vonnegut—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Adam by Kurt Vonnegut—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Adam by Kurt Vonnegut—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.docx](#)
- [Adam by Kurt Vonnegut—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.pdf](#)
- [Character Labels—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Character Labels—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Character Labels—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.docx](#)
- [Character Labels—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.pdf](#)
- [Images—Comparing Contrasting Character Voices Through Two Voice Poems.pdf](#)
- [Poem Handout One Holocaust—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Poem Handout One Holocaust—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Poem Handout One Holocaust—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.docx](#)
- [Poem Handout One Holocaust—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.pdf](#)
- [Poem Handout Two Americana—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Poem Handout Two Americana—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Poem Handout Two Americana—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.docx](#)
- [Poem Handout Two Americana—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.pdf](#)
- [Teacher Key—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.docx](#)
- [Teacher Key—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.pdf](#)
- [Two Voice Poem Template—Comparing Contrasting Character Voices Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Two Voice Poem Template—Comparing Contrasting Character Voices Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Two Voice Poem Template—Comparing Contrasting Character Voices Through Two Voice Poems.docx](#)
- [Two Voice Poem Template—Comparing Contrasting Character Voices Through Two Voice Poems.pdf](#)
- [Venn Diagram—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Venn Diagram—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Venn Diagram—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.docx](#)
- [Venn Diagram—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two Voice Poems.pdf](#)

Materials

- Basket/cup/etc. with slips of paper that read "Sousa" or "Knechtmann" (attached)
- Three poems about American post-war culture: "Little Boxes," "Baby Boomers," and "Young Mantle Hits One" (attached; one per group)
- Three poems about Holocaust Survival: "The Action in the Ghetto of Rohatyn, MARCH 1942," "The Creed of a Holocaust Survivor," and "I Wish" (attached; one per group)
- Images (attached; two per group of students)
- "Adam" by Kurt Vonnegut, short story (attached; one per student; also available in the Oklahoma Literature book, page 1122.)
- Venn diagram graphic organizer (attached; one per student)
- Two-Voice Poem template (attached; one per student)
- Optional: Video example of Two-Voice Poem (Link: <https://youtu.be/Hsab375fGcc>)
- Optional: Technology to record student performances
- Writing materials: pens, pencils, paper, etc.

Engage

Using the attached **Character Labels** handout, prepare slips of paper, either handwritten or printed, with the name "Mr. Sousa" or the name "Mr. Knechtmann" on each and place them in a basket or cup. Print the signs reading "Mr. Sousa" and "Mr. Knechtmann" from the same handout.

Teacher's Note

Make sure you have enough slips for every student to draw one. You should prepare an even amount of "Mr. Sousa" and "Mr. Knechtmann" slips since these students will eventually pair up with each other. (If you have an uneven amount of students, there will have to be one group of three, or one independent worker.)

Play up the mystery and excitement of the activity as much as possible in these beginning stages. Don't reveal to students what the names mean yet!

Prior to class, arrange desks in groups of four. Tape the signs reading "Mr. Sousa" and "Mr. Knechtmann" to each table of desks. Students should sit at a table that correlates with the name that they drew, so they are sitting in homogeneous groups of four students who drew the same name.

Next, ask students to get out a piece (or two) of notebook paper. Tell students that over the next few days, we will be trying to answer this essential question: *How do authors develop characters over the course of a text?* Write the question somewhere it can stay for the duration of the lesson, which will likely take a few days.

Ask students to copy the question on the top line of their paper. Then, take 3-5 minutes for students to [Quick Write](#), reflecting on the essential question. (*Students can write possible answers to the question, other questions this one brings up, where/with what texts they have heard this before, etc.*) The goal of a Quick Write is to put pen to paper, get ideas or thoughts on the page, and let students think about the concept on their own before jumping into the text.

Teacher's Note

If your students have a regular spot like a notebook or document where they complete a daily warm-up or [Bell Ringer](#), you could have them do their Quick Write there.

Have students pair up and share their ideas, and then ask a few students share out with the whole class some of the things they wrote down in their Quick Write. Explain to students that essential questions are very broad, and they can't be fully answered right away. We will come back to the essential question after we do some investigating.

Print out the images on the attached **Images** handout. Hand out images to students. Ask groups who drew the name "Sousa" to look at the first page of images (1950's Americana). Ask groups who drew the name "Knechtmann" to look at the second page of images (Holocaust/resettlement). Don't tell students the title of the documents so they have to do some inferencing on their own. Ask students to write down predictions about the who, what, when, where, and why of the short story they are going to read later on in this lesson, based on the images provided. (*Who do you think the story will be about? What is going to happen? What time period will the story take place in? Where do you think the setting will be? Why do you think an author would write about this topic?*) Encourage them to be descriptive and come up with more than simple, one-word answers. They should write these answers on their notebook paper, below their Quick Write. Although they are working together, ask all students to write down their own answers so all students are actively engaged.

Teacher's Note

You may prefer to have packets of the images/poems already sitting on the tables when students arrive, so you don't have to take extra time handing out papers. It is best to have at least two copies per table, so all students can see the documents at the same time.

Have a few students share out predictions to the class again. Sum up the class consensus and then transition to the poems. For example, you might say, "Wow, it looks like most of the class agrees we are going to read about a story where...happens." or "It seems like half of you think the story will be tragic, and the other half thinks the story will be about overcoming hardships." Then say, "Let's look at some poems next to get us thinking about the time period and other possible themes."

Explore

Print the attached **Poems Handout One: Americans** and **Poems Handout Two: Holocaust** documents. Ask students to look at the poems. Students who drew Mr. Sousa should receive the following poems from Poems Handout One: Americans:

- "Little Boxes"
- "Baby Boomers"
- "Young Mantle Hits One"

while students who drew Mr. Knechtmann get the following poems from Poems Handout Two: Holocaust:

- "The Action in the Ghetto of Rohatyn, MARCH 1942"
- "The Creed of a Holocaust Survivor"
- "I Wish"

Students should read each poem aloud in their small groups. On their same piece of notebook paper, students should write down the main idea in one-two sentences and four or five imagery words that stand out. If students are struggling, tell them that they may write down a question. For example, "What does the author mean when he says...?"

Teacher's Note

The poems and images are intended to activate student's prior knowledge and make connections to history before reading the short story "Adam" by Kurt Vonnegut. Allow students to explore these resources and try to draw conclusions with very little guidance from you.

Make a large [T-Chart](#) on the board in front of the class labeled: Post-WWII American Culture/ Post-WWII Holocaust Survivors. Have students copy an identical chart onto their notebook paper. Let students from both sides share out any words, main ideas, or questions associated with their group of people (Americans or Survivors) and jot them down on the T-Chart. Once you and the students have completed a T-Chart to your satisfaction, model how to "think-aloud" by looking at the list with students and asking some guiding questions. Questions you may ask include, but are not limited to:

- *What are the most important take-aways from this list? Do we notice any patterns?*
- *How does this information fit in with what we already know about the post WWII era in America?*
- *What similarities and differences do we notice between the two sides?*
- *Where might we find for more information on the topic, or answers to our questions?*

Explain

After exploring with images and poems, hand out the attached **Venn Diagram** worksheet. Begin reading "Adam" as a class and pause at major breaks in the text to allow time for students to record details in their Venn diagrams. Students should record textual evidence about their assigned character including physical appearance, thoughts and feelings, dialogue, and narrator's comments. Next, students should write a brief comment/inference that explains why the quote is significant. For a model of what this should look like by the end of the lesson, see the attached **Teacher Key**.

Since students should still be sitting in small groups of four, allow them to work with each other to complete the Venn diagram. Make sure students are filling out only the side of the Venn diagram that correlates with his or her assigned character (Mr. Sousa or Mr. Knechtmann).

Teacher's Note

If you would like to minimize the amount of copies you have to print, simply have students draw the Venn diagram on their second piece of notebook paper. Be sure to tell them to draw it large enough.

For students who need more support, pre-teach any vocabulary words that might trip them up (*see the attached **Adam Vocabulary***) and point out specific lines of text they should focus on while completing their Venn diagrams.

Class period one should end here after beginning the story. As a closing, ask students to predict what they think might happen next in the story.

Extend

The next day, finish reading the story "Adam" and filling out Venn diagrams. Be sure to re-focus students by asking them to recall what they have read so far.

Once students have successfully read the story and filled in their Venn diagrams, pair students for the two-voice poem activity! Feel free to either pair students strategically or, for more mature students, allow them to pair themselves, so long as there is one "Mr. Sousa" and one "Mr. Knechtmann" in each group. Another option is to use the [Fold The Line](#) strategy: have the "Mr. Sousa" and "Mr. Knechtmann" students line up on opposite sides of the room, either in a random line, or according to some factor like height or birthday month. Next, have students point to the person directly across from them, who will be their partner.

Once students are paired, allow them to share notes and complete their Venn diagrams. They should work together to fill in the center of the diagram with similarities between Mr. Sousa and Mr. Knechtmann.

Teacher's Note

This is probably where class period two should end. As a closing, have students share out some of the details on their diagrams. Another idea is to have students place their Venn diagrams on their desks, and do a quick [Gallery Walk](#) where students can view their peers' work. If you have time, you can even ask students to leave constructive comments next to each other's work using sticky notes.

On day three, hand out the two-voice poem template and briefly explain that Two-Voice Poem is a poem that compares/contrasts two different points-of-view, and that its purpose is to describe characterization in a fun and creative way. Show students [this video](#) so they can hear how a two-voice poem should sound, but emphasize that they should use their own creativity, and no two poems should sound exactly alike.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=Hsab375fGcc>

Students should pull details and concepts directly from their Venn diagrams, T-Charts, and predictions that they made based on the images to create their poems. They are not, however, limited to the words or ideas they already wrote down. Two-Voice Poems should be written in the first person.

Teacher's Note: Time Management

Be sure to give students plenty of time to write their poems. Most students will need at least one full class fully dedicated to writing the poems.

Teacher's Note: Options

If you don't want to print the poem template (or if the template is too simple for advanced writers), just show the example and have students write their poems on notebook paper. Students can color-code their poems by highlighting or underlining Mr. Sousa lines in one color, and Mr. Knechtmann lines in another color, leaving the lines both characters share blank. Color coding will make poems written on notebook paper much easier to read.

Evaluate

Allow students to perform their poems for the class. Make sure students understand how Two-Voice Poems should be recited: each character recites their own lines independently, and lines the characters share are read simultaneously. (It should be clear to students if you showed them the video example and looked at the template example.) Before the performances begin, allow students to tear small pieces of scrap paper. As they perform, ask classmates to write a positive comment for their peer. This will keep them focused and attentive as audience members.

Teacher's Note: Technology

If you have technology in the classroom, or are comfortable having some students use their cell phones, record the performances! That little bit of extra pressure really forces the students to take the performances more seriously, plus, you get examples to show off to other students or teachers.

Teacher's Note: Participation

If students are reluctant to present their poems, provide them with an incentive, such as candy, a free quiz grade, etc.

Teacher's Note: Time Management

If all students are performing, this lesson will probably bleed into day 4.

As a final assessment, have students reflect on the essential question independently: *How do authors develop characters over the course of a text?* Have students write the question again. Then, have them write a [CER](#) (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) paragraph to answer the question with textual evidence from the story "Adam."

Students should write this on the back of their notebook paper and turn all their work in for a grade—notebook paper with Quick-Write, predictions, T-Chart, and final CER paragraph, in addition to their Venn diagram and completed two-voice poem template. You may opt instead to have students turn in their work in smaller chunks over the course of the lesson, but the benefit of waiting is for students to see the progression of their thoughts over the topic of characterization all on the same page.

Teacher's Note

If you have time, you may want to talk to students about the meaning of the title, "Adam," which is a religious reference that symbolizes the Knechtmann family. You could ask students to write a second CER (Claim Evidence, Reasoning) paragraph that explains the meaning of the title.

Resources

- Auerbacher, I. (1994). I Wish. Beyond the Yellow Star. <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/baby-boomers/>
- Donaghue, S. (2016, June 8). twovoicepoem [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hsab375fGcc>
- Harrison, R. (1999). Baseball poems. 1952 Mantle Hits One. http://www.baseball-almanac.com/poetry/po_1953.shtml
- I Cannot Forget, Two poems by Alexander Kimel. (1995). remember.org. <http://remember.org/witness/kimel2>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Bell ringers and exit tickets. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/125>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Claim, evidence, reasoning (CER). Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/156>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Fold the line. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/171>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Gallery walk/carousel. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/118>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quick write. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1127>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). T-chart. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/86>
- McDougal. (2008). Adam. Short Story by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. <https://www.asd20.org/Schools/rhs/Teachers/Nicole.Kinzer/10th%20Grade/2.0%20STORYTELLING/Adam%20and%20Survival%20at%20Auschwitz.pdf>
- Reynolds, M. (1962). Little boxes. <http://people.wku.edu/charles.smith/MALVINA/mr094.htm>
- Smith, P. (2007). Baby boomers. <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/baby-boomers/>
- Two-Voice Poem. <http://www.ws.k12.ny.us/Downloads/Two-Voice%20Poem%20Packet.pdf>