

# 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**

As a final assessment, students will create a CER statement readdressing 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.docx
- Adam by Kurt Vonnegut—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two-Voice Poems.pdf
- CER Organizer—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two-Voice Poems.docx
- CER Organizer—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two-Voice Poems.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
- Lesson Slides—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two-Voice Poems.pptx
- 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.docx
- Venn Diagram—Comparing Contrasting Characters Through Two-Voice Poems.pdf

## Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Character Labels handout (attached, print one-sided)
- Images handout (attached; print one-sided; two per group of students)
- "Adam" by Kurt Vonnegut, short story (attached; print two-sided; one per student)
- Venn Diagram graphic organizer (attached; print one-sided; one per student)
- Two-Voice Poem template (attached; print two-sided; one per student)
- CER Organizer handout (attached; print one-sided, one per student)

- Poems about American post-war culture: "Little Boxes" and "1953 Young Mantle Hits One" (linked; print one-sided; one set per group)
- Poems about Holocaust Survival: "The Action in the Ghetto of Rohatyn, MARCH 1942" and "The Creed of a Holocaust Survivor" (linked; print one-sided; one set per group)
- Basket or cup
- Technology to record student performances (optional)
- Writing materials: pens, pencils, paper, etc.

# Preparation

Prior to class, arrange desks in groups of four.

Prepare slips of paper with the name “Mr. Sousa” or the name “Mr. Knechtmann.” Either handwrite or use the attached **Character Labels** handout to print the pre-typed slips and cut them out. Place the finished slips into a basket or cup.

Print the signs with the character names from the Character Labels handout. Tape a sign for either "Mr. Sousa" or "Mr. Knechtmann" to each table of desks.

Print and staple the attached **Images** handout. Make sure to print enough for two copies per table.

10 minutes

# Engage

**Teacher's Note: Planning Ahead**

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 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!

Using the attached **Lesson Slides**, display **slide 3** and take out the basket or cup with the slips of paper. Ask each student to randomly choose a slip of paper from the basket and reveal whether they pulled Mr. Sousa or Mr. Knechtmann. Then, have students sit at a table in the classroom that correlates with the name they drew. This will ensure that students sit in a homogeneous group of four who all drew the same name.

Transition to **slide 4** and ask students to get out a piece of notebook paper. Explain to students that over the next few days, they will be trying to answer the essential question: *How do authors develop characters over the course of a text?* Ask students to copy the question on the top line of their paper. Then, review the learning objective on **slide 5**.

Move to **slide 6** and review the Quick Write strategy with students. Play the *3-minute timer* and ask students to reflect on the essential question by responding to it, writing down additional questions, or recording any other texts and stories they can think of that relate to the question. 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.

Place students into pairs. Have them share their responses from their quick writes, then ask a few pairs to share out their ideas with the whole class. Explain to students that essential questions are very broad, and they can't be fully answered right away.

Display **slide 7** and pass out two copies of the attached **Images** handout to each table. 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). Refrain from telling students the theme of the images to encourage them to make inferences on their own. Ask students to use the same paper they wrote their quick write on and explain to them that these images relate to the story they will read. Instruct students to review each image on the page, then have them write down predictions about the who, what, when, where, and why of the short story they will read later in this lesson.

**Teacher's Note: Guiding Questions**

Consider asking the following questions to students to help guide their predictions:

- 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.

Invite a few students to share their predictions with the class. Summarize common ideas and thoughts.

20 minutes

# Explore

Ask groups that drew the name Mr. Knechtmann to read through the following poems out loud in their groups:

- "The Action in the Ghetto of Rohtyn, March 1942" - Alexander Kimel
- "The Creed of a Holocaust Survivor" - Alexander Kimel

Then, ask groups that drew the name Mr. Sousa to read the following poems out loud in their groups:

- "Little Boxes" - Malvina Reynolds
- "1953 Young Mantle Hits One" - Robert L. Harrison

Once they have read the poems, move to **slide 8** and instruct students to use the same notebook paper from their quick write and consider all the poems they read and record the overall main idea in 1–2 sentences as well as four imagery words that stand out.

**Teacher's Note: Activity Intention**

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.

Next, display **slide 9** and make a large T-Chart on the board in front of the class with one column labeled Post-WWII American Culture and the other column labeled Post-WWII Holocaust Survivors.

Have students copy an identical chart onto their notebook paper. Invite students from both sides to share any words, main ideas, or questions associated with their group of people (Americans or Survivors) and jot them down on the T-Chart, asking students to do the same. 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.

**Teacher's Note: Guiding Questions**

Questions you may ask include but are not limited to:

- What are the most important takeaways 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 more information on the topic, or answers to our questions?

25 minutes

# Explain

Display **slide 10** and pass out the attached **Venn Diagram** handout to each student as well at the attached story **"Adam."** Explain to students that you will be reading the story "Adam" out loud and they will be following along. Tell students you will pause at major breaks throughout the story to allow them time to record details in their Venn diagram. Ask them to include and record any textual evidence about their assigned character that includes the following:

- Physical appearance
- Thoughts and feelings
- Dialogue
- Narrator's comments

Encourage students to add a summarizing statement near the textual evidence they recorded.

**Teacher's Note: Additional Support**

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

As a closing, ask students to predict what they think might happen next after the end of the story.

25 minutes

# Extend

Display **slide 11** and pair students for the two-voice poem activity. Ask students to decide which partner will be Mr. Sousa and which partner will be Mr. Knechtmann. 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.

Pass out the attached **Two-Voice Poem** template to each student. Explain that two-voice poem is a poem that compares and contrasts two different points-of-view, and that its purpose is to describe characterization in a fun and creative way. Move to **slide 12** and play the *two-voice poem* video so students can hear how a two-voice poem should sound. Emphasize that they should use their own creativity, and no two poems should sound exactly alike.

**Embedded video**
https://youtube.com/watch?v=Hsab375fGcc

Encourage students to use details and concepts directly from their Venn diagrams, T-Charts, and image predictions to create their poems. Explain that they are not limited to the words or ideas they already wrote down. Two-voice poems should be written in the first person.

15 minutes

# Evaluate

Allow students to perform their poems for the class.

Ensure that students understand how two-voice poems should be recited: each character recites their own lines independently, and lines the characters share are read simultaneously.

Once all students have presented, display **slide 13** and ask them to individually reflect on the essential question: *How do authors develop characters over the course of a text?*

Next, review the CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) strategy with students and pass out the attached **CER Organizer** handout to each student. Review the handout with students and allow them time to work through it.

**Teacher's Note: If Time Allows**

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


- Donaghue, S. (2016, June 8). *twovoicepoem* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hsab375fGcc
- Harrison, R. (1999). Baseball poems. 1953 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.). Claim, evidence, reasoning (CER). Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/156
- K20 Center. (2021, September 21). *K20 Center 3 minute timer* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iISP02KPau0
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quick write. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1127
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- 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
- Two-voice poem. http://www.ws.k12.ny.us/Downloads/Two-Voice%20Poem%20Packet.pdf