

Interpreting Poetry: Not Waving But Drowning

Interpreting Poetry

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Published by *K20 Center*

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Grade Level	11th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	100 minutes
Course	A.P. Language and Composition, A.P. Literature and Composition, British Literature, Composition, Creative Wri		

Essential Question

How does our worldview shape how we view ourselves?

Summary

This lesson will provide students with a personal understanding of Stevie Smith's poem, "Not Waving but Drowning." Students will practice inferencing and analytical skills during this lesson. Students will be assessed by utilizing a graphic organizer and a writing prompt encouraging a personal relationship with the poem. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 11th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 11 through 12, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students will use the instructional strategy Agreement Circles to discuss whether people are generally understood or misunderstood.

Explore

Students will read "Not Waving but Drowning" as a class.

Explain

Students will utilize "Literature Graffiti," a graphic organizer, to analyze the poem.

Extend

Students will create a two-minute paper relating his/her life to the protagonist in the poem.

Evaluate

Students will use the RAFT strategy to demonstrate higher order thinking while analyzing the poem.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 11)

11.3.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

11.3.R.6: Analyze how informational text structures support the author's purpose.

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

11.3.W.2: Compose informative essays, reports, or technical writing that:
- objectively introduce and develop topics
- include a defensible thesis
- incorporate evidence (e.g., specific facts, details, charts and graphs, data)
- maintain an organized structure
- use sentence variety and word choice to create clarity and concision
- establish and maintain a formal style
- emulate literary devices from mentor texts

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—Interpreting Poetry Not Waving But Drowning.pptx
- Literature Graffiti.pdf
- Not Waving but Drowning.docx
- Not Waving but Drowning.pdf
- StudentRAFTself-evaluation.docx
- StudentRAFTself-evaluation.pdf

Materials

- Computer with speakers and projector
- Copy of text (or 12th grade OKCPS literature book)
- Copies of Literature Graffiti graphic organizer and Student RAFT Self-Evaluation handouts
- Attached PowerPoint
- Writing materials: pens, pencils, paper, etc.

10 minutes

Engage

To begin the lesson, engage students in a strategy called Agreement Circles. Begin by instructing all students to stand, then read the following statement: “People misunderstand each other." If students agree with the statement, they are to stand in the center of the circle. If they disagree with the statement, they are to stand on the outside of the circle. Allow students to talk to their "face partner" for 30 seconds each between statements. Repeat with the following statements: #2— “People are lonely.” #3—”You see what's around you.” #4—'“Two people can see the same thing and interpret something completely different.”

The statements for the Agreement Circles are posed in **slides 3-6** of the attached **Lesson Slides**.

Teacher's Note

A large area is needed for this strategy. Suggestions may include: utilizing the hallway, having students push desks to one side, etc.

30 minutes

Explore

The class will listen to Stevie Smith's poem "Not Waving but Drowning."

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

Teacher's Note

The poem is available in the attachments section. It is also available in the 12th grade literature book adopted by OKCPS for the 2015-2016 school year.

After the initial reading, go to **slide 7** and have the class discuss initial interpretations of the poem. Discussion questions may include the following

1. Who is the speaker of the poem? Who does the speaker align himself with- the drowning man or the onlookers?
2. What is the effect of repetition in the poem?
3. By altering the first stanza's final phrase, what does Smith suggest about the life of the drowned man?
4. Smith's poem asks us to think about the ways in which we misunderstand or misread the people around us. What opinion does the gathered crowd seem to have of the drowned man?
5. Does the poem suggest that they ever know the truth about him? Can you imagine the type of person he was from the poem's descriptions?
   (Questions from http://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/core-poems/detail/46479)

Teacher's Note

You may choose to discuss the poem as a whole class, or utilize the Think-Pair-Share strategy where students first come up with an answer, then discuss with an elbow partner, and finally share their collaborative answer with the class.

Teacher's Note

Additional resources regarding both the poem and the author can be found in the resources section at the end of this lesson. You may want to review these resources to aid in class discussion in the next section.

20 minutes

Explain

Move to **slide 8.** Students will use the Literature Graffiti graphic organizer to personally analyze the poem. First, pass out the attached **Literature Graffiti** handout and explain to students that they are to complete the "graffiti" section on the left first. This section is to be the cover art for the poem. If the poem was to be captured in one picture, what would that picture be? After the "graffiti" section is complete, they can complete the right-hand side of the page.

Encourage students to work collaboratively and share their creations with others.

Teacher's Note

Allow approximately 20 minutes for the graffiti assignment. A countdown clock on the board could serve as a good time management tool for students.

5 minutes

Extend

After students have completed the Graffiti Literature assignment, move to **slide 9**. Students will write a Two-Minute Paper answering ONE of the following: *How has your life (either now or in the past) been like the drowning man? How is your life opposite of the drowning man?*

During the writing, students must write the entire time. They are not allowed to stop writing. Assure students that the goal of the paper is to get ideas across, not necessarily to excel at spelling, grammar, and mechanics.

Encourage students to share their paper with an elbow partner, and ask for volunteers to share out with the whole class.

Evaluate

Show **slide 10** and have students answer one of the following using the RAFT instructional strategy. Using the questions on the slide, have students write a well thought out response no longer than one page in length:

1. You are a news reporter writing the account of the man who died. Use quotes from the bystanders, emergency workers, and/or his friends.

2. Imagine that the drowning man has a computer and is allowed one last Facebook post. What would his status be? (The status must address: how the man got there, his last thoughts, and what he is thinking about when staring at the onlookers.)

Teacher's Note

Pass out the attached Student Self-Evaluation Rubric with the RAFT assignment. Students will complete this rubric and attach it to the final RAFT product.

Ask if any students would like to share their RAFT with the class. The publication stage of the writing process is often neglected, but is important to student efficacy.

Resources

- Videocast analysis of the poem: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCnDgBre-k8
- Short biography of poet Stevie Smith: https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/stevie-smith
- Themes, criticism, and historical context: http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-2691100026/not-waving-but-drowning.html
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Agreement circles. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/157
- K20 Center. (n.d.). RAFT. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/158
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-Pair-Share. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-minute paper. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/152