

If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird

Symbolism in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"

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Grade Level	8th – 9th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 Class Periods
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	105 minutes

Essential Question

How are ideas communicated through symbols in poetry?

Summary

What does the raven really mean? In this lesson, students analyze Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" to uncover the meaning behind its iconic symbol. Then, they create free verse poems, using symbolism to express themselves.

Snapshot

Engage

Students complete a Quick Write to describe what the displayed symbols mean to them.

Explore

Students will read and analyze "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe.

Explain

Students watch a video defining symbolism and complete a CER over the symbolism in Poe's "The Raven."

Extend

Students will compose a free verse poem featuring symbols that represent themselves.

Evaluate

Students will reflect on their learning using the How Am I Feeling? What Am I Thinking? strategy.

Standards

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

CLR401: Locate important details in somewhat challenging passages
WME302: Interpret basic figurative language as it is used in a passage

Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.3.R.4: Students will evaluate literary devices to support interpretations of literary texts:
- simile
- metaphor
- personification
- onomatopoeia
- hyperbole
- imagery
- tone
- symbolism
- irony

Attachments

- Claim, Evidence, Reasoning-If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird.docx
- Claim, Evidence, Reasoning-If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird.pdf
- Claim, Evidence, Reasoning—If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird - Spanish.docx
- Claim, Evidence, Reasoning—If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird - Spanish.pdf
- Lesson Slides-If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird. pptx.pptx
- Symbols of Me Poem-If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird .docx
- Symbols of Me Poem-If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird .pdf
- Symbols of Me Poem—If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird - Spanish.docx
- Symbols of Me Poem—If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird - Spanish.pdf
- The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe-If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird.docx
- The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe-If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird.pdf
- The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe—If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird - Spanish.docx
- The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe—If You're a Bird, I'm a Bird - Spanish.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe (attached; one per student)
- Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (attached; one per student)
- Symbols of Me Poem (attached; one per student)
- Sticky notes
- Highlighters

10 minutes

Engage

Introduce the lesson using the attached **Lesson Slides**. Go over the essential question and learning objectives on **slides 3-4**.

Transition to **slide 5** and introduce students to the Quick Write instructional strategy. Instruct students to complete their quick write by responding to the prompt on the slide:

"What do these parts of human anatomy represent to you?"

Allow students 3-5 minutes to complete the task. When students have finished, instruct them to discuss their writing with a partner for a few minutes before moving to a whole class discussion in which students may share their thoughts with the class.

Goal of the Quick Write:

The goal for the Quick Write activity is for students to explain what the pictures mean to them rather than society's general perception. Some possible student answers could include:

- Love of some kind
- Death of someone known or unknown

Understanding Poe's Life:

If students have no prior exposure to Poe and his life, it might be helpful to discuss his bizarre love life and tragic end briefly after the initial Quick Write at the beginning of the lesson. You may use the Poe Museum website as a resource. Students could do a quick web inquiry to answer the question using the website as a resource.

15 minutes

Explore

Move to **slide 6** and distribute copies of **"The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe** (attached) and highlighters.

Introduce students to the Why-Lighting instructional strategy. Instruct students to read through the poem and use their highlighter to mark anything they believe to be important. Remind them to take time to write down in the margins of their paper why they chose to highlight a word, a phrase or a sentence.

Optional Narration:

Consider using the video below for students to listen to the poem while following along with their handout. The video is linked on hidden **slide 7**.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=guEuZMwdhY4

When students have finished reading, transition to **slide 8** and divide students into pairs. Instruct students to discuss the passages they highlighted with their partners. After a few minutes, facilitate a whole class discussion and ask for groups to share their thoughts.

40 minutes

Explain

Transition to **slide 9** and play the video on the slide, What is Symbolism?

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=8Vwek28P9Gk

When the video ends, move to **slide 10** and direct students to work with an Elbow Partner to think of symbols to represent the concepts listed on the slide. Allow 5-10 minutes for students to work.

Transition to **slide 11** and introduce students to the Stand Up, Sit Down instructional strategy. Instruct students to stand. Begin having pairs share what symbol they came up with for each concept. Make sure to do this for each concept individually. If a symbol is identified that another pair used, direct that pair to sit down. Continue until everyone is sitting and repeat the process for each symbol as time allows.

Move to **slide 12** and introduce students to the Claim, Evidence, Reasoning instructional strategy. Direct students to complete the graphic organizer using the instructions on the slide. Allow students 10-15 minutes to complete the graphic organizer.

When your students have finished, ask for volunteers to share their thoughts. During the discussion, take time to answer any clarifying questions about symbolism and clear up any misconceptions.

Possible Student Responses:

Some possible student responses may include:

"The raven symbolizes the death of Lenore."

"The narrator feels guilty over the death of his lost love, and the raven symbolizes the torment he feels every day."

35 minutes

Extend

Move to **slide 13** and distribute the **Symbols of Me Poem** handout (attached).

Inform students that they will create a free-verse poem about themselves using symbolism. Instruct them to follow the steps on their handout to create their poem and allow 25-30 minutes for students to work.

Scaffolding:

If students require further scaffolding, consider working through the handout as a class, allowing students intervals of time to complete each step before continuing.

When students have completed their poems, ask whether anyone would like to share their poem with the class. As these poems are personal, do not pressure students to share if they do not wish to. Direct students to turn in their work when they are finished.

5 minutes

Evaluate

Once students have completed their own free verse poem, pass out a sticky note to each student. Move to **slide 14** and introduce the How Am I Feeling? What Am I Thinking? strategy. Have students draw a line diagonally across the sticky note to divide it in half. On one half of the sticky note, have students draw a picture to symbolize how they feel about what they have learned in this lesson. On the other half, have students write a sentence explaining what they understand now about symbolism. This could be a question or comment about what they have learned or a description of the experience.

Once students have completed both parts of the sticky note, have them attach it to their paragraph/poem and hand both in. Both can be used to assess individual student understanding.

Resources

- Chungdahm Learning. (n.d.). What is symbolism? YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Vwek28P9Gk
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Claim, evidence, reasoning (CER). Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/156
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). How am I feeling? What am I thinking? Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/187
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quick write. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1127
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- Poe Museum. (n.d.). Poe and his circle filled ladies' albums with poetry. https://poemuseum.org/poe-biography/
- Rickman, Alan, (n.d.). "The Raven" by Edgard Allan Poe. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guEuZMwdhY4
- Wikimedia Commons. (2024 February 14). Caucasian Human Skull.jpg. https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Caucasian_Human_Skull.jpg&oldid=851823403.
- Wikimedia Commons. (2023 June 5). Human heart male adult autopsy.jpg. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Human_heart_male_adult_autopsy.jpg