



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

Symbolism



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Grade Level	8th – 9th Grade	Time Frame	1-2 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	90 minutes

Essential Question

What can poetry tell us about culture?

Summary

Students will use close reading strategies to analyze symbolism in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven." The class will begin by observing symbols being displayed on the board, transition into recognizing the main symbol in the poem, and finally create a symbolic poem of their own. Through collaborative exercises, students will eventually scaffold knowledge of symbolism and connect the literary device to their personal life. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 8th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 8 through 9, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students will complete quickwrite over symbol (of their choosing) being displayed on the board.

Explore

Students will read "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe and use the CER strategy as well as the 4-2-1 strategy to analyze the poem.

Explain

Students will share findings with their peers.

Extend

Students will create free verse poem featuring a symbol that represents them.

Evaluate

Students will share free verse poems aloud. Peers will evaluate poems that are shared via rubric.

Standards

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

- [C.E.R. Graphic Organizer - Spanish.docx](#)
- [C.E.R. Graphic Organizer - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [C.E.R. Graphic Organizer.docx](#)
- [C.E.R. Graphic Organizer.pdf](#)
- [The Raven Handout - Spanish.docx](#)
- [The Raven Handout - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [The Raven Handout.docx](#)
- [The Raven Handout.pdf](#)

Materials

- Laptop Computer (if available)
- Literature Book with "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe
- The Raven Handout (can be shared via PDF on laptop or printed)
- C.E.R Graphic Organizer (offered as both a PDF or a Word Doc)
- Notebook/Copy Paper
- Pens/Pencils

Engage

To begin, find an image of a human skull and a human heart. When students enter the classroom, direct students' attention to a projector or SMARTboard which will be displaying the images of a skull and a heart. Allow the students 3-5 minutes to complete a quickwrite over the prompt "What these parts of human anatomy represent to you?" Once the 3-5 minutes are up, the students will partner up and share, with their partner, their meaning behind the symbol. Ask for a few other groups to share their quickwrites aloud.

Teacher's Note

If a projector or SMARTboard is not available, teachers can print/draw a picture of symbols and post on a whiteboard or chalkboard.

Teacher's Note

In their quickwrite, the hope is that the students explain what the symbol means to THEM not in general or how society perceives it. Possible answers could mean a particular love, death of someone close to them, etc.

Explore

Transitioning to the poem "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe, students will read the poem on their own. After students have completed the reading, students participate in a [4-2-1](#) strategy. Individually, a student will identify what they feel are the 4 most important sentences, then they will pair up with a partner and complete the 4-2-1 strategy.

For the 4-2-1 strategy, students will:

1) Pair up and compare their 4 most important sentences identified in the poem. 2) Narrow each of their lists down to 2 sentences. 3) Agree on what they feel is the most important sentence regarding the raven and what it represents in the poem.

After they have narrowed it down to the most significant sentence that focuses on the raven itself and write them down using the [CER](#) strategy.

For the CER strategy, students will:

1. Make a claim regarding the sentence they have chosen.
2. Use evidence as to why this sentence is vital to the poem.
3. Explain the reasoning behind its importance.

Teacher's Note

Each response should be a well-developed paragraph for CER strategy. If students need more scaffolding, a graphic organizer is included in the attachments of this lesson. If you're working with ELL or Special Ed. students, you may modify the CER strategy to just a claim and then build evidence and reasoning together as a class. (Hopefully students will be able to recognize the emotion behind the raven (i.e. his lost love coming back in the form of a Raven to torment him. If not, try and steer them in that direction by asking how they think the narrator feels as he is telling this haunting story.)

Explain

After groups have completed the 4-2-1 and C.E.R. strategies, they will then select one spokesperson to explain why they believe Poe chose a raven as a symbol and what they feel it represents to Poe himself.

Teacher's Note

If students have no prior exposure to Poe and his life, it would be helpful to briefly discuss his bizarre love life and tragic end after the initial quickwrite 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.

Possible Student Responses:

"the raven symbolizes the death of Lenore" or "the narrator feels guilty over the death of his lost love and the raven symbolizes the torment he feels everyday."

Extend

After each group has shared, students will create their own poem with symbolism. Walk them through the following steps to help scaffold the writing of the poem:

1. Draw a symbol that represents them personally.
2. Write a paragraph that explains why this symbol represents them.
3. Turn their paragraph into a free verse poem that is no more than 5 sentences.

Teacher's Note

Allow students the most time (15-20 minutes) for free verse poem.

Teacher's Note

When working with ELL and Special Ed. students, you may modify the free verse poem to 3 sentences or accept the symbol and explanation as their finished product.

Evaluate

Once the students have completed their own free verse poem, ask for a few volunteers to share their poems aloud. As the students are sharing their poems, their peers will evaluate it by completing the 3-2-1 strategy.

For the 3-2-1 strategy, students will:

1. Write down 3 things they liked about the poem.
2. Construct 2 questions for the speaker.
3. Offer 1 suggestion regards to something they would change in the poem.

Teacher's Note

3-2-1 papers can be used as an exit ticket.

Resources

- <http://www.ibiblio.org/ebooks/Poe/Raven.pdf>
- <https://www.poemuseum.org/life.php>