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Grade 10 - 2AE American Literature
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Nature, Magic & Reality on Cape Cod: How Setting Creates Meaning in Literature and Life

Unit Overview

This unit will be the first literary unit of the school year for my 10th grade American Literature course. The unit focuses heavily on the importance of place within Alice Hoffman's *Blackbird House*, a novel made up of twelve separate short stories, all which are set on Cape Cod at the fictional Blackbird House. Students will review the concept of setting and be introduced to the aesthetic of Cape Cod by reading excerpts of Henry David Thoreau's *Cape Cod*. Analyzing these passages will serve several purposes: a) students will be introduced to the life and writing style of one of the course's major authors, b) students will learn the skills of passage analysis, and c) students will gain prior knowledge of the novel's setting, particularly the aesthetic of the landscape and dwellings, the power and majesty of the ocean, and the sense of community here. Students will specifically know how the author constructs place by infusing her setting with evocative nature imagery. Students will be introduced to the concept of magical realism, a term used to define literature or art that blends dreamlike elements into realistic settings to produce a deeper sense of reality. At the end of the unit, students will be asked to reflect on a place that has had impact in their lives, and describe that place in their identity journals. They will be invited to use techniques from the unit to describe and create their chosen setting.

Objectives

- ❖ Students will be able to identify how an author construct setting using details, description, imagery, as well as subtle or direct mention of a place's history, local color, and mythology.
- ❖ Students will understand the concept of *place* in literature and life, particularly how a every place has its own story, comprised of the social, environmental and historical experiences of a common people contribute to the makeup and evolution of a place.
- ❖ Students will know the definition and elements of magical realism in art and literature, and be able to recognize how magical realism can be a tool used to develop the sense of a place by contributing to its historical and mythological narrative.
- ❖ Students will demonstrate their understanding of course topics and literary themes through effective and well-supported oral discussion with peers.
- ❖ Students will write a journal entry in which they will construct a real setting using literary tools and techniques learned in this unit.

Lesson Plans

Lesson #1: Sense of Place in Narrative Nonfiction

Overview:

In this lesson, students will read excerpts from “The Shipwreck”, the first chapter of Henry David Thoreau’s *Cape Cod*, in order to develop a shared understanding of the landscape, aesthetics and community that is Cape Cod, Massachusetts. We will use this as our first text of the school year to discuss the impact of a place on the people who visit or live there, and learn how an author creates setting, or a sense of place, beyond simply using imagery. Students will engage in learning by answering a series of questions about Thoreau’s choices in establishing tone, narrative style and setting. Students will ultimately develop a sense of how Cape Cod looks, feels, smells, and sounds, as well as practice selecting evidence to support their conclusions.

Duration: two 47-minute class periods

Goals:

- Students will analyze the significance of a photograph, citing visual details to support ideas.
- Students will identify the way an author uses characterization, imagery, and mood to create setting.
- Students will be able to answer the following Essential Questions:
 - *How does an author construct setting?*
 - *How does setting impact narrative?*
 - *What other factors impact the way a reader thinks about setting?*

MA Curriculum Frameworks: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf>

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- Determine the figurative or connotative meaning(s) of words and phrases as they are used in a text; analyze the impact of words with multiple meanings, as well as symbols or metaphors that extend throughout a text and shape its meaning.
- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Day 1 Agenda:

Do Now: Students will view a photograph titled “Shipwreck on Cape Cod Beach” to activate their thinking. I won’t tell the students the title or artist’s name yet, because I want them to focus on the artistic details of the picture itself first. Many of my students have likely visited Cape Cod with their families or friends; quite possibly some of them have family homes on the Cape. I don’t want them to associate personal memories with their visual interpretation. (Some may do so naturally, but I don’t want them to be confined to that descriptor yet). As students arrive to class, the photograph

will be projected on the whiteboard. Once the bell rings, students will be asked to write a response to the following questions in their notebooks:

- *What is your initial reaction to the photograph? What does it say to you, personally?*
- *Write about the mood of the photograph. Which details are most effective in setting the mood?*
- *How does the artist use elements of photography or composition to create meaning in this piece?*

Students will write silently for about 5 minutes.

1. Pair-Share: After five minutes has passed, I will ask students to take another five minutes to share their reflections with a partner who sits near them. At this point, I will write the title of the photograph and the artist's name on the board.

3. Art Analysis: Discussion will open up to the entire group. Students will share observations of setting, mood, and the **details** that create both. After discussing their observations, I'll ask them to think about the following questions:

How does the painting reflect the ideals and characteristics of Cape Cod?

What meaning does this photograph convey?

I will record their answers on a projected document (that will be shared with students), separating the lists into "details", "ideals/characteristics", and "meaning". Students will be able to see how these three elements are intertwined, how the details in a piece of art conveys the characteristics of a place, and how that place takes on a meaning that transcends location or description. I want students to understand the important relationship between these concepts, and how they are interrelated.

4. Next, students are going to read through some passages about Cape Cod written by Henry David Thoreau, a local literary legend, and one of our course's major authors. Selections will come from Thoreau's *Cape Cod*. I'll inform students that we will learn more about Thoreau's life later in the course, but that today and tomorrow we are focusing on his narrative style and focusing on how his writing both reflects and is impacted by the ideals and characteristics of Cape Cod. They will begin by reading a short excerpt from the chapter titled "Across The Cape" and answering three questions to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts from today's class. They should turn these in before leaving.

Homework: Read and annotate passage from Henry David Thoreau's chapter titled "The Shipwreck". Students should not answer the questions provided with the passages.

Day 2 Agenda

Do Now: Students' homework will be checked for credit.

Agenda:

1. Students will then assemble into groups of 3-4 to analyze passages from "The Shipwreck". Each group will be assigned 1-2 questions to answer. I will ask groups to be prepared to perform an analysis of the passage based on the question they were assigned. They will have no more than 10 minutes to complete their question/passage analysis within their group.

2. When we come together as a class, each passage will be projected on the whiteboard for groups to present. After groups present their passages, focusing on Thoreau's narrative style, use of description, and his manner of relaying the characteristics and ideals of Cape Cod, other students will be encouraged to contribute their thoughts, or to ask questions about passages. This will continue until all passages have been presented/discussed.

Exit Ticket: Students can answer this in their notebooks. *Based on Thoreau's narrative and the photograph you viewed yesterday, what might be the power or importance of shipwrecks to the identity of Cape Cod?*

Materials/Resources

Photograph: "Shipwreck on Cape Cod Beach" by Dapixara Art

<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/shipwreck-on-cape-cod-beach-dapixara-art.html>

The Boston Globe article: "Henry David Thoreau's 'Cape Cod'" ("Across The Cape" excerpt)

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/travel/2014/08/30/henry-david-thoreau-cape-cod/2sEsrQ9LkIRBLrlaPNiAeN/story.html#comments>

"Across The Cape" Questions

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VtQH326oW7_nEYkdqCtfpGiRuSkvXzighHykGYZpDzg/edit

"The Shipwreck" Passages and Questions

https://docs.google.com/document/d/16iqw2RRcjwwoBNWa2WBqpyBIE-jnR00sOsy_YJ2x_Uk/edit

Lesson #2: The Impact of Setting on Character

Overview:

In this lesson, students will have read the first three stories in *Blackbird House*, "The Edge of the World," "The Witch of Truro" and "The Token". My goal with this lesson is for students to realize that Hoffman has created a setting (or settings) that provides her characters with motivation, fear,

hope, purpose and respite, ultimately impacting the trajectories of these characters' lives. Students will identify details from Hoffman's descriptions of setting and find comparisons or contrasts with details of characterization, ultimately deciding how one impacts the other.

Duration: one 47-minute class period

Goals:

Students will identify the setting of the work with textual evidence.

Students will identify the characterization of multiple characters with textual evidence.

Students will explain the way the setting symbolically reflects the characters' characterization with textual evidence.

Students will express orally in a class discussion and in a cohesive paragraph their response to the following essential question: *How does landscape impact characterization?*

MA Curriculum Frameworks: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf>

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Agenda:

Do Now: In their notebooks, students will respond to the following prompt: *Write 3-5 sentences about one pattern (or motif) you are seeing emerge between all three stories.*

Agenda

1. Chalk Talk - Students will be given the guidelines of a chalk talk before participating in the chalk talk. Each student will be given a white board marker to use.

2. Chalk Talk topics will be written on separate white boards around the classroom: Topics include "The Power of Nature" "Getting Lost and Being Found", and "Ghosts, Omens and Signs". Students will spend 10 minutes participating in the chalk talk.

3. Once the ten minutes has expired, or students appear to be finished with the activity, everyone will return their markers and take their seats. I will guide them through a discussion about their observations and questions. I will continue to remind them that we are looking for ways that the setting impacts or informs characterization. Students will be reminded to pull ideas from their Do

Now response to identify patterns in the text. This discussion could last anywhere from 15-20 minutes until the bell rings.

4. Assign HW

Homework: Students will complete a 1-page (minimum) reflection in their notebooks which explains how the landscape specifically inspires one character's motivations, fears, hopes or desires, or behaviors. They must use at least 2 pieces of direct evidence in their entry. Journals will be collected and graded (10pts for completion). I'll ask a few students to share their writing at the start of the next class to wrap up our lesson on characterization.

Materials/Resources

Chalk Talk Guidelines

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bNsB11Aco9BJwtgBj6NpUqR4G_0AUyzyPFmEBzCucVQ/edit

Lesson #3: Introduction to Magical Realism - History and Mythology of a Place

Overview:

By this lesson, students will have read approximately six of the twelve stories in *Blackbird House*. In this lesson, they will learn about the genre of magical realism through some lecture-style, whole-group presentation and some research. Students will take notes and orally participate in the lecture by answering questions prompted by their teacher throughout the presentation. The goals of this lesson are for students to a) have the tools to be able to recognize magical realism within an artistic work, and b) be able to identify how magical realism in *Blackbird House* contributes to advancing symbolism or theme, and c) be able to identify how magical realism creates the mystery and

mythology that serves to connect all of these stories and their characters. Students will demonstrate their learning through art analysis, by keeping a reading log and through the Final Discussion, which will take place at the end of this unit. Their logs will be checked for a homework grade, and can be used in the final discussion on the novel.

Duration: two or three 47-minute class periods

Goals:

- Students will be able to define magical realism.
- Students will be able to identify some of the fundamental elements of magical realism in literature.
- Students will practice identifying magical realism through art analysis.
- Students will seek out examples of magic in the setting of *Blackbird House* and determine how Hoffman uses a realistic voice to give the episodes a sense of truth.
- Students will be able to answer the following Essential Questions: *What is magical realism? How does an author blur the line between fantasy and reality? How do magic and fantasy help you arrive at realism? How does magical realism lend mystery or myth to a place's narrative history?*

MA Curriculum Frameworks: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf>

- Independently and proficiently read and comprehend literary nonfiction representing a variety of genres, cultures, and perspectives and exhibiting complexity appropriate for the grade/course.
- Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized or deemphasized in each account.
- Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., audio, visual, interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support written analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research, applying one or more grades 9–10 Standards for Reading Literature or Reading Informational Text as needed.
- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Agenda:

Do Now: Students will view a short video of author Salman Rushdie explaining how fiction uses “untruth” to arrive at truth and gives meaning to what is really important in life. He explains that magical, or fantasy, is believable when characters are realistic and when specific tone or voice is used to “deliver the magic.”

1. What is Magical Realism? Students will be given Chromebooks to use to conduct an in-class research exercise. They will unearth the definition and important elements of Magical Realism. I will provide some links to get started.

2. Students will then view several pieces of artwork of Paul Bond, looking for and listing characteristics of magical realism that they see in his work. They should be writing down the elements that they see.

HW: Students will find another artist who uses magical realism in their work. On our course website discussion board, post a piece of artwork that contains elements of magical realism. Be prepared to explain why you chose it and how it blends truth with fiction.

Day 2 Agenda

Do Now: Students will grab a playing card from my desk when they enter the room.

Agenda:

1. Students will take a playing card from my desk upon entering the classroom. Numbers and suits will be called at random to prompt participation from students.

2. First, we will review the elements of magical realism.

3. Then, I will project the discussion board and call on students to participate (using the cards). This session will probably take anywhere from 15-25 minutes.

4. Exit Ticket:

- a) Choose your favorite “magical” event from the novel so far.
- b) Write down a few words describing the tone or voice you would have if describing or witnessing this event.
- c) Then, locate details in the text which reflect Hoffman’s tone in describing the event.
- d) Answer the following question: *How does Hoffman blur the line between fantasy and reality in this episode?* Use textual evidence in your explanation.

Homework: From this point forward, students should log instances of magical realism on their reading log chart.

Materials/Resources

Salman Rushdie video clip: <https://bigthink.com/videos/magical-realism-is-still-realism>

Magical Realism Research Activity

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ee8tw30pHXI-dL2vBtczZV0bCzOrT5htEgFYsEtssks/edit>

Magical Realism Reading Log

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dJNK3Qi3Jq4MTAoLPLf7LaYYtEnxIS8ruPAjvpJPN_0/cdit?usp=sharing

Lesson #4: How Setting Creates Meaning - Identifying Universal Themes in *Blackbird House*

Overview:

In this lesson, students will prepare for and participate in an oral, student-led discussion (over two days) which explores the big ideas and themes of the novel using cited evidence and students' original reactions to the text. Students will make the leap from analyzing the form and function of individual stories, to the function and meaning of the collection as a whole, focusing on universal themes and topics such as landscape, human emotion, death, the power of nature, survival, superstition and the passage of time. They should draw upon all concepts learned this unit to deepen their understanding and analysis of *Blackbird House*.

Duration: two or three class periods (depends on whether the teacher wants to hold one or two discussions)

Goals:

- Explore our unit themes

- Analyze the text for meaning
- Reinforce the use of text-based evidence to support analysis
- Practice effective oral speaking skills
- Come to a deeper understanding of how setting can impacts the themes or character development of a literary work

MA Curriculum Frameworks: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf>

- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support written analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research.
- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, vocabulary, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Agenda:

Do Now: Students will pick up the materials for our graded Final Discussion on their way into the classroom.

Day 1 Agenda

1. We will go over the format, guidelines and questions for our final discussion on *Blackbird House*.
2. Students will have the class period to prepare their graphic organizer for the discussion. These will be collected after the discussion, and used toward their final grade for this assessment.

Days 2 & 3 Agendas

3. Students will engage in discussion while teacher tracks comments and contributions.
4. After the discussion ends, we will “shout out” 3 things that went well and 3 things we can do to improve discussions.

Materials/Resources

Blackbird House Final Discussion: Graphic Organizer & Rubric

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1n1HIDq2sLFjzA7tJQeSXY3P8ot4ybR0LKWI9TSgkpM/edit>

Lesson #5: Writing About Place

Overview:

In this lesson, students will write a journal entry in their Identity Journals, applying at least one technique learned in this unit. Identity Journals are a yearlong practice in which students explore their identities through a number of lenses and using diverse prompts. These journals culminate in an end-of-the-year Identity Essay that explores how the course texts have informed one important aspect of their identity. In this entry, students will use either characterization or magical realism in their description of a real setting. The setting should be a place of significance to them, somewhere that has meaning to them and has somehow impacted their identity development. They will have written the entry at home, and will be coming into this class period ready to share these entries.

Duration: one 47-minute class period

Goals:

- Students will apply techniques of descriptive writing, characterization or elements of magical realism into their writing.
- Students will convey through writing how a specific place has impacted their identity development.
- Students will write an engaging journal entry that explores something of personal importance.
- Students will engage in sharing their work, and give and receive constructive feedback.

MA Curriculum Frameworks: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf>

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.
- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Agenda:

Students have been informed that they will share their most recent journal entries with each other in small groups. Students will have written this entry for homework. Today, they will share them in small circles with 3 other peers.

1. Students will circle up and spread out around the room.
2. Students will review a group sharing protocol created at the beginning of the course.
3. One by one, students will read their pieces aloud. They will not say anything about their piece, they will not introduce it or comment on it. They must simply read it, word for word, from their paper. When the individual has finished reading, the group will take 5-10 seconds of silence to process the piece. They may make notes on their paper to share later, but no one can comment or give any feedback yet. (rule courtesy of Janet Burne).
4. Once all members of the group have shared, groups will offer feedback to each member, one by one. They should discuss everything from what they liked, what worked well, favorite lines, how the writer's identity emerged, and the effectiveness of their use of techniques.
5. Once all group members have received feedback, students will pull together as a class to comment on what they learned through writing this entry. They will be asked if and how their study of *Blackbird House* may have informed their writing. I will encourage them to share their thoughts about how place and setting has impacted their lives, personally.

Materials/Resources

None. Journals are graded each quarter based on a number of entries submitted, quality of effort in entries, and meeting length minimum for each entry.

Bibliography

Hoffman, Alice. *Blackbird House*. Ballantine Books, 2004.

Thoreau, Henry David, and Jeffrey S. Cramer. *The Portable Thoreau*. Penguin Books, 2012.

