

Edgar Allan Poe and the Mystery: A lesson plan for analyzing early American mysteries.

Introduction

Most students have limited exposure to Poe's works and most of that exposure is limited to a few pieces (**The Raven, Tell-Tale Heart**) and so few know of Poe's influence upon the genre of mystery writing. This lesson is aimed at helping high school students read, understand, and research one of the first mystery stories ever written, **Thou Art the Man**.

Preparation

Teachers are to introduce student to Poe and discuss the idea of what a mystery novel is compare to other works. Hooks and engagement could include the listing of Poe with other prominent mystery novelists, etc. Teachers also have to have access to the text of the story (attached in a separate file) or an internet connection and computers that could access the tale. The tale is a bit dense, but reinforcement of the main ideas and symbolism (names, places, etc) may help.

Day One:

Teachers guide students through the text by either independent reading, class wide reading, or a combination of both. Students needing differentiation could benefit from class wide discussion or other forms of individualization such as direct student/teacher discussion of text details.

Objectives:

- Understand the impact the techniques of this early mystery on the structure of later mysteries
- Understand the role of symbolism in the text
- Understand the role of plot twists and red herrings on the reader

Day Two:

Teachers begin by refreshing students of objectives from Day one. Teacher then questions students on the validity of Poe's detective techniques and his use of forensic science. Most will probably only know modern forensic techniques from television, so there will be little knowledge of police and detective work in the mid 1800s. Students will then be separated into teacher determined groups of 4 and will be given one of the following topics:

Bullet trajectory analysis in the 19th century

Poison detection in the 19th century (ancillary and may be of interest)

Police forces in 19th century United States

Punishment in the 19th century United States

Tracking/hunting in 19th century United States (represented in the story where they try to figure out where the horse went)

Crime rates in 19th century United States

Confidence schemes of the 19th century (ancillary)

Each group of four can be further divided into roles:

Visual research (finds pictures and documents sources)

Text research (2 people working to find credible sources)

Collaborator (compiles visual and textual data)

Days 3 and 4:

Refresh how to complete citations and also the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Depending upon the amount of class time and the availability of resources, students will need at least 2 days to compile their data and format it into a presentation. Additional days are at teacher discretion. Any presentation software or method can be used, but students must show that they can present in front of an audience, so pre-recorded videos would not be permissible. Students will be graded using the following rubric:

	5	4	3	2	1
Credible, reliable sources	All sources are from credible sites, authorship listed, cited	All sources are from credible sites, cited. Authorship not listed	Some sources from credible sites, all are cited	No sources from credible sources, but all are cited	No sources from credible sources, no citation
Primary Source Quote(s)	One or quotes from a primary source		Indirect reference to a primary source, no quote		No quote or quote from secondary source
Source visuals connect to audience	8 visuals that directly relate to presentation, sourced. Help audience understand	Of the 8 visuals, most of the visuals directly relate to the presentation and aid in audience understanding All are sourced.	Half of the visuals relate to the presentation and help. All are sourced	Less than 8 relevant visuals but they are sourced	Less than 8 relevant visuals and visuals are unsourced.
Connections between text and research	Presentation's primary focus is on connecting Poe's text and research. Answers how much is truth, how much is fiction.	Majority of the presentation focuses on connecting Poe and research Answers how much is truth, how much is fiction.	Some slides irrelevant, but the majority connects. Touches on the relationship of truth and fiction	Slides discuss text and discuss research but little connection made	Minimal connection between Poe and research. No discussion of truth and fiction