

**A Crazy Perspective:
An Analysis of Mental Illness in Literature and How it Connects with Society**

Heather Bullis
Carnegie Vanguard High School

Introduction

One of my favorite novels of all time is *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey. I have taught the novel before, and the subject of mental illness is one that intrigues my students. This novel connects with the students on various levels: most are familiar with depression, they tend to be familiar with Alzheimer's and other diseases dealing with dementia, and they are plagued with concerns about being seen as "crazy" (a concept I will explore in this unit) because of their interests or just being different. Some authors that also work with these ideas and whom I intend to explore in this unit along with Kesey are Emily Dickinson, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Edgar Allan Poe, and William Faulkner. The unique perspective that these writers offer are through narrators who are struggling with insanity versus sanity and the individual versus society. The audience must begin to ask questions such as what is real and not real, what is sane and insane, and what does it mean to be crazy?

The subject of mental illness is often very personal, and most of the students can relate one way or another. Teenagers can relate personally with the issue of depression, having either experienced it themselves to some degree or having seen their friends struggle. I have also found that many of my students have a family member that has battled with some form of dementia, so they can relate to the first theme through their own interactions with their family. I am always finding that if my students can relate to the subject on a personal level, their focus on the topic is much stronger because they care. Often students are comforted in knowing that they are not alone with their experiences and questions about this sensitive subject.

I am not defining a specific timeline for this unit. My hope is that the versatility of my unit will work better than a unit with a more rigid and specific timeline. I am always finding great lessons that I want to incorporate into my class, but I have to adjust them to fit the amount of time I have available, and I love that flexibility. My plan for each lesson is that each can be taught together or separately. The lessons provided will be open enough so each can be used with a variety of pieces of literature. Depending on which literary work is taught, teach the complete unit over a period of 2-4 weeks. A novel will require more time than a short story or poem, but my lessons will be appropriate for each separately or all of them working together. To give more freedom in choosing the most appropriate literary work, I organized the unit thematically. I have tried hard to make all my lessons flexible so they can be easily modified for different learning styles. The two themes I will concentrate on are insanity versus sanity and the individual versus society. Both themes are closely related and often taught together in literature classrooms. Many literary movements contain these themes, but I am focusing on American writers in the Romantic, Transcendental, and Modern periods.

OBJECTIVES

Reading

2). Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

- a). Analyze how the genre of texts with similar themes shapes meaning, and
- c). Relate the figurative language of a literary work to its historical and cultural setting

3). Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the effects of diction and imagery (e.g., controlling images, figurative language, understatement, overstatement, irony, paradox) in poetry.

5) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

- b). analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils, and
- c). analyze the way in which a work of fiction is shaped by the narrator's point of view.

7) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the role of irony, sarcasm, and paradox in literary works.

Writing

13). Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to:

- a). plan a first draft by selecting the correct genre for conveying the intended meaning to multiple audiences, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea;
- b). structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way (e.g., using outlines, note taking, graphic organizers, lists) and develop drafts in timed and open-ended situations that include transitions and the rhetorical devices used to convey meaning;
- c). revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed;
- d). edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; and
- e). revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences.

15). Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to:

- a). write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes:
 - (i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;
 - (ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;
 - (iii) a controlling idea or thesis;
 - (iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; and
 - (v) relevant information and valid inferences.

c). write an interpretative response to an expository or a literary text (e.g., essay or review) that:

- (i) extends beyond a summary and literal analysis;
- (ii) addresses the writing skills for an analytical essay and provides evidence from the text using embedded quotations; and
- (iii) analyzes the aesthetic effects of an author's use of stylistic or rhetorical devices.

16). Writing/Persuasive Texts. Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write an argumentative essay to the appropriate audience that includes:

- a). a clear thesis or position based on logical reasons supported by precise and relevant evidence;
- b). consideration of the whole range of information and views on the topic and accurate and honest representation of these views;
- c). counter-arguments based on evidence to anticipate and address objections;
- d). an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context; and
- e). an analysis of the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas.

20). Research/Research Plan. Students ask open-ended research questions and develop a plan for answering them. Students are expected to:

- a). brainstorm, consult with others, decide upon a topic, and formulate a major research question to address the major research topic; and
- b). formulate a plan for engaging in research on a complex, multi-faceted topic.

Listening/Speaking

24). Students will use comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings.

Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:

- a). listen responsively to a speaker by taking notes that summarize, synthesize, or highlight the speaker's ideas for critical reflection and by asking questions related to the content for clarification and elaboration;
- b). follow and give complex oral instructions to perform specific tasks, answer questions, solve problems, and complete processes; and
- c). evaluate the effectiveness of a speaker's main and supporting ideas.

25). Students speak clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to give presentations using informal, formal, and technical language effectively to meet the needs of audience, purpose, and occasion, employing eye contact, speaking rate (e.g., pauses for effect), volume, enunciation, purposeful gestures, and conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively.

26). Students work productively with others in teams. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate productively in teams, building on the ideas of others, contributing relevant information, developing a plan for consensus-building, and setting ground rules for decision-making.

RATIONALE

When deciding what seminar to apply for with the Houston Teacher's Institute, my first thought was to choose the one on Shakespeare. As an English teacher, Shakespeare made the most sense.

However, I knew the professor, Dr. Joseph Kotarba, instructing the Health Issues of the 21st Century from a previous seminar, and enjoyed learning and working with him, so I could not resist. Next, I had to decide how to connect this subject to English. The first thing that jumped to mind was Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. I have always loved teaching this novel because of the themes of insanity vs. sanity and the individual vs. society. My students always have fun discussing the effect society and the majority have on the individual, so I wanted to explore this topic further and with other pieces of literature.

While researching mental illness in literature, one word continued to pop out – stigma. There has always been a stigma attached to people with mental illnesses, even relatively minor ones such as clinical depression. People with mental illness are different. They don't fit in with society. People who choose to go against the social norms that have been established also don't fit in, so they too have a stigma attached. While these people are not clinically labeled with some type of mental illness, they are still seen as “crazy.” I often overhear my students discussing a student who does not fit in, who has willingly isolated himself from the rest of the students. It is almost as if this student is unable to conform (Goffman 130). This misfit student seems to thrive in this type of rebellion, while the rest of the students are glad to be separated and make no attempt to get to know the alienated student. They make judgments which further the isolation of the student. I hope that reading the selections in this unit will help my students to stop seeing their “deviant” peers as crazy, and instead learn to tolerate and understand instead of reject and alienate (Goffman 140).

One of my main goals as a teacher is to force my students to question anything and everything. I want them to stop taking things for granted and look for a deeper meaning. The themes mentioned in this unit will help them question what is real and not real. I want to force the students to start looking at their own choices and start taking responsibility for their actions, which is not always easy. This questioning will contribute directly to their personal development, not only in the world of academia, but also in their everyday lives.

I teach all Pre-AP Gifted and Talented students at a small, nationally recognized Blue-Ribbon school, Carnegie Vanguard. The Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act defines gifted and talented (GT) students as “students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.” In other words, smart students who tend to bring a creative point of view to learning. GT students are not always gifted in every subject, usually only one or two. Carnegie is an all-GT school, so students are receiving a challenging academic curriculum in all subjects. This sounds great at first, but when dealing with students who are not GT in English, I must find a way to differentiate the curriculum so that all students' needs are met. Differentiated lessons are a must in a GT classroom, but they are very difficult to incorporate daily, so to meet this need, I assign a lot of projects. The students have a lot of freedom with the structural design of the project. I will assign a project that has a broad subject and that relates to a novel we are reading in class. It is up to the students to narrow down the subject and make it more specific. They also get to choose the format, although I will have specific requirements like a paper or a visual, sometimes both. Some students love and embrace the chance to make some choices, while others hesitate and need me to guide them through the first few steps.

Pre-AP simply means that my class is preparing them for the AP English classes they will be taking junior and senior year. Their AP classes prepare the students for the AP tests, which if scored high enough on, will give them college credit. Junior year, students enroll in AP Language and Composition, and senior year, students enroll in AP Literature. AP is the required curriculum for GT students. The problem is that AP and GT do not always mix. AP lacks the

creative aspect that GT requires, so blending the two can create many problems. GT students tend to be lazy and are easily distracted by what they think of as more interesting subjects, so the rigid curriculum of AP can cause them to struggle. It is the goal of all teachers at Carnegie, me included, to prepare the students successfully for their AP exams by also meeting their GT needs. Therefore, I have very high expectations for my students.

Usually people expect these students to be the easiest to teach, but in all truth, they are some of the hardest I have ever taught. They tend to have a very short attention span and need many hands-on activities because once they are bored, they are lost, and it is very difficult to get them back on track. However, I can give these students more freedom with their work than I could elsewhere. Because of this, I have a project-based curriculum. The lessons in this unit can be used over one day or spread out over a couple of weeks as a project. If a GT student is interested in the subject, he or she tends to want to research and find as many details about the subject as possible. These students are extremely capable of tackling the philosophical questions brought up in this unit. However, I teach ninth graders, and intend to use this unit with my ninth graders, so my approach when presenting this information is to link these ideas and concepts to their own lives. I hope that this will help them learn the information more successfully.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Insanity vs. Sanity

What is “crazy”? That question must be answered before tackling this theme. Depending on what the term is applied to, it could have a wide range of meanings. It seems when my students describe something as crazy, they tend to mean something is strange, unusual, or even mind-blowing. Usually it is something that surprises them: an action, a person, an object, or an event. Humor can often be attached, and sometimes fear, depending on the situation. Most often it is something that they are uncomfortable with, something not in their norm – the other.

The concept of “the other” is something that my students struggle with, especially since my students are a diverse group ethnically and socio-economically. “The other” is something that is not a part of the majority, so it is not always accepted as something right or good. If something is different from what the students are used to, they isolate it from themselves until they become comfortable enough to either accept it in their lives and way of thinking, or they can let it go and move on, no longer ostracizing the subject. “Crazy” in this unit will cover clinical insanity as well as the notion of “the other.”

Clinical insanity often has a stigma attached. People who suffer from depression fall under the category of having a mental illness. They often fear discussing their emotions or what they are going through because of the stigma of having a mental illness and being seen as “crazy” by society (Karp 46). This stigma supports the notion of “the other” because ultimately people fear what they do not understand. People do not commonly understand multiple personalities and schizophrenia disorders, so when something mild like depression is labeled a mental illness and falls under the same category as the previous mentioned disorders, the stigma follows.

Mental illness and writers seem to go hand in hand. Whether they write from a personal perspective or a socially conscious one, the subject of insanity has always held a place in literature. Comparing the insane with the sane as in *The Sound and the Fury* has a similar affect as a foil character. A “foil” is a minor character that has the opposite traits of the protagonist, thus emphasizing the traits in the protagonist. By juxtaposing insane characters with sane characters, the traits associated with the insane characters are highlighted.

Sometimes the characters are not clinically insane but labeled such because that character does not follow the rules established by society, as seen in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. Women were often “diagnosed” with mental illness labels because they did not follow the

accepted gender role that society has defined. So are these characters crazy? Or has society labeled them crazy in hopes of keeping control and order?

Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The Sound and the Fury* by Faulkner, "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Poe, "Much Madness Is Divinest Sense" by Dickinson, and "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Gilman best explore the theme of insanity versus sanity. All of these works deal with the question of what is sane or insane. Each narrator attempts to define sanity and insanity, and usually their definitions differ from society's and the reader's. Insanity has different degrees. It can be flouting the accepted norms of society, or it can be more extreme where someone becomes a danger to themselves or others. All of these works place society as the opposing force because it is the majority that decides what is right or wrong, or in this case, what is sane or insane. It is also clear that some of the characters in these works truly are a danger to themselves or others because they are suffering from mental retardation, dementia, or schizophrenia. If a person suffers from these conditions, are they insane?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

In Kesey's novel, the characters "are seen more as political prisoners" than mentally ill people seeking help (Bosky 1). This is especially true for McMurphy. He has chosen to be committed, albeit for selfish reasons, but it is through his disobeying the rules and conflicts with Nurse Ratched that he is punished and given a lobotomy making him clinically insane. The ironic situation of McMurphy becoming truly "crazy" once admitted into the psych ward is Kesey's direct claim that society (represented by Nurse Ratched) tries to control free thinkers by punishing these challengers of the norm by ostracizing and alienating them. The irony is continued through Chief Bromden, who is clinically insane initially, but learns from McMurphy how to live and survive in society when he escapes the psych ward at the end of the novel (Napierkowski).

McMurphy and Bromden are juxtaposed in order to explore the theme of insanity vs. sanity. McMurphy's struggles require the audience to question society's definitions of sanity and insanity. Often in the novel, it seems as if sanity is synonymous with conformity with society and its norms (Napierkowski). McMurphy does not understand why many of the Acutes have entered the hospital voluntarily and questions their motives. The response by Billy Bibbit is that they don't have the "guts" to survive in society. Ratched undermines their confidence, furthering their fear of rejoining society. Kesey "portrays his society's definition of madness as something used by an authoritarian culture to dehumanize the individual and replace it with an automaton that dwells in conformity" (Napierkowski).

The Sound and the Fury

With Faulkner, the theme is explored through the contrast of Benjy with Dilsey and Jason. Benjy is an idiot who does not understand the realities of life he faces daily, whereas Dilsey and Jason, the only two "sane" characters, have accepted the realities of life, although Jason's perception is altered due to resentments which he cannot seem to let go. Through Benjy's eyes, the audience sees a world of chaos. A series of meaningless "sensory reactions to sounds, sight, and language" are explored through the character of Benjy (Napierkowski). The audience must sort through these reactions to figure out what is happening. Because it is from the perspective of Benjy, and these senses are real to Benjy, the question of what is real must be explored. It is real to Benjy, but he is clinically insane, so like Chief Bromden, can we trust him as a narrator?

Another character, Quentin, is suffering from depression and eventually commits suicide because he can no longer accept reality. This is an act of insanity and is juxtaposed with Dilsey's complete acceptance of reality. The contrast between the two shows how important the

relationship between sanity and reality is, and when there is a lack of understanding of reality or desire to accept reality, insanity prevails.

The Tell-Tale Heart

Many of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories examine the concept of insanity. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," the narrator attempts to convince the audience of his own sanity, but with each attempt ironically proves how insane he truly is. This is closely related to the guilt the narrator feels for killing someone for no apparent reason. This act is considered insane because of the lack of motive. However, the narrator never claims to be innocent; he is honest about what he has done from the beginning. Instead he blames an outside uncontrollable force. This force can affect anyone and cause a person to commit an "insane" crime. So the audience must question whether or not the narrator is insane or a victim. It would seem that the narrator's claim that he is "sane, calculating, and methodical is unconvincing, however, and his erratic and confused language suggests that he is disordered" (Napierkowski). The narrator's evidence of a sane person is actually seen as the opposite, insane. Whatever the case may be, the narrator seems to be obsessed with proving his sanity, and the act of murder is commonly accepted as an insane act, especially when a person claims an outside force made him do it!

Much Madness Is Divinest Sense

This poem by Emily Dickinson specifically focuses on the definition of sanity and insanity by comparing society's definition with her beliefs. The main idea of the poem is the definition of these two concepts. Can we trust the definitions that we have always been exposed to because it is the majority (the people who have power) that defined these terms and apply them where they see fit? Dickinson suggests the majority is misusing its power in order to control those who would question its motives. Because the definition of sanity is ambiguous, it often takes its meaning from its surroundings, so what is considered crazy in one society is sane in another. Since the majority determines what is right and wrong, deviation from its established standards cannot occur or the majority will lose its power.

Dickinson is focusing on established gender roles and discussing women's rights and the attempts by the majority to suppress them. Although the feminist aspect is not literally portrayed in the poem, it is still suggested because of other writers at the time who discussed oppression in terms of insanity.

The Yellow Wallpaper

Charlotte Perkins Gilman writes about a woman suffering from the stages of a mental breakdown. The narrator has been isolated in a room and ordered to do nothing that would require any mental stimulation. She goes insane and believes a woman has become trapped in the yellow wallpaper in her room, symbolizing her own physical, intellectual, and emotional entrapment. Mental illness in women during this time was often dismissed as hysteria and not considered serious, so the common recommendation by doctors at the time was bed rest. Gilman herself was suffering from post-partum depression and went through an experience similar to the character's in the story. As in Dickinson's poem, the struggle between the majority and the minority is continued with the exercise of an abusive power.

Individual vs. Society

The theme of the individual versus society can also be followed in most of the previous works. This theme is directly related to insanity vs. sanity because it is society that defines the terms and labels the individual as sane or insane. The question is what are the motives of the majority? If the motives are simply to help those in need, there is no conflict. However, in novels like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the motives are not innocent. It is about who has

the power and about being able to keep the power. The majority is the controlling group that has the most power and will do anything to hold on to its power. The majority will attempt to alienate the individual who is going against the norms. Alienation comes in different degrees and different forms. People can alienate themselves or be alienated through rejection and ostracization. Labeling someone as “crazy” or mentally ill is the easiest way to alienate a person, which is best portrayed in the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, and the poem “Much Madness Is Divinest Sense.”

All of these works deal with alienation in different degrees because the writer has placed society as the enemy or as an opposing force that is trying to smother or repress the protagonist. Each of the selections shows the protagonist struggling with the effects of the abusive power used by society. The more successful writers have made it a point to present the negative side of society, in effect challenging society and going against the majority. This can be a difficult position to be in if the writer does not have a lot of support because he or she risks being shunned. There are cases when the individual is successful in challenging society, but it is usually only after enough support has been established in the public eye. It is never an overnight process, but usually takes a long period of time before the individual is successful. In the case of “The Yellow Wallpaper” and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, the individual must sacrifice his or her own sanity and life in order to help others escape the clutches of the dominating society.

Erving Goffman in his book *Stigma* explores the stigmas attached to mental illness and notes that “social deviants, minority members, and lower class persons are all likely on occasion to find themselves functioning as stigmatized individuals” (146). The people that Goffman is referring to are all people who do not fit in with the majority because of factors that are out of their hands, like race, religion, or ethnicity. Because they are unable to fit in and take on the characteristics of socially acceptable people, they have stigmas attached to them. The selections of literature that contain the theme of the individual vs. society usually have characters that are either women or men in the lower class. Both of these groups, but women especially, did not have the same rights as middle or upper class white society, so when they think for themselves and begin to question the rules, they are stigmatized and seen as “crazy.”

The Yellow Wallpaper

Gilman’s story deals with a woman whose sexuality and individuality is repressed because of her dependence on her husband. Psychologists frequently dismissed serious illnesses like depression as nothing more than hysteria, so the woman’s needs are dismissed. Men are seen as the source of power in this short story. The woman has almost no voice (we don’t even know her name), and only the reader is allowed to hear her thoughts. “John’s treatment of his wife represents the powerlessness and repression of women during the late nineteenth century” (Napierkowski). The narrator attempts to free the woman trapped in the yellow wallpaper by ripping it from the walls, which causes the husband to faint. There is a gender role-reversal taking place in this scene. The woman is acting out, rebelling, which is traditionally a male trait. The husband faints because he is so in shock of what he is seeing and cannot handle the reality of what his wife has done, which would be a stereotypical female reaction.

Even though it would seem society has won this fight since the woman in the story is driven crazy by the diagnosis and treatment assigned to her, which was common during this period, it can be argued that the individual, the woman, is the winner in this outcome because she is able to free the woman in the wallpaper. Of course, the woman in the wallpaper does not exist literally, but she figuratively represents all women of the period who were repressed by society.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest explores the direct relationship between society and mental illness and shows society as responsible for the problems the patients are dealing with. The restrictions and forced guidelines placed on all of these characters by society are what contribute to their mental illness. Throughout the novel, the audience sees McMurphy time and time again challenge Nurse Ratched's rules. Their constant struggle is a metaphor for the timeless struggle between the individual and society. The ward itself represents society because it has laws that rule over the inmates, orderlies, and even the nurses. With laws come punishments for breaking the established laws. The irony is that Nurse Ratched presents these laws as if they are democratic procedure (Napierkowski), but she is actually manipulating and controlling the inmates by making them fear her, and through her, society. McMurphy challenges her from the beginning, trying to point out the truth of Ratched's actions. "By having McMurphy question and ridicule Nurse Ratched's ludicrous, controlling rules, Kesey portrays the individual's struggle against a conformist society as a noble, meaningful task" (Napierkowski). It is the individual's duty to stand up against a tyrannical dictator, no matter the consequence.

In contrast to "The Yellow Wallpaper," women are given the power in this novel, and seen as the controlling dictator. This has caused a lot of debate and controversy over Ken Kesey's view on women's rights and what this novel may be saying about those rights.

Much Madness Is Divinest Sense

Dickinson introduces the idea of insane people being actually the sanest people because they are not following the majority blindly. The poem argues that society's attempt to classify anything different from what the majority accepts as sane actually stifles the "creative spirit" (Napierkowski) and that the individual must have the freedom to break away from the majority without being labeled insane. The poem shows an ongoing struggle for balance. The individual does not want to become a member of the majority because then he risks falling into the same traps as the majority has. Instead, the individual simply wants the freedom to express his or her feelings and thoughts, even if these feelings and thoughts go against the established norms. "Innovations occur when imagination is unconfined" (Napierkowski).

CONCLUSION

Both themes are directly related to each other. There are many literary works that contain both themes, and in no way should this unit be limited to the ones I have covered. By reading literature about mentally ill people, students will have a better understanding of the mind and society. The depictions of the "crazy" characters in these literary works are scary and fascinating, which should also appeal to students.

These themes, especially the individual vs. society, are conflicts that my students face on a regular basis. Their own search for identity often finds them entertaining new styles of dress and music. It is in these choices that they will be either supported or ostracized by society. The irony is that they do not always realize how they themselves contribute to society's view on what is acceptable and not. I hope that by introducing these concepts and selections of literature to my students they will learn to be the individual who makes his or her own choices instead of following the majority. It is always easier to follow the majority, and most teens seem to want to take the easier path. However, when faced with the possibility of losing a freedom that they seriously desire, their desire to rebel builds.

The idea of rebellion is intriguing for teenagers, so they tend to enjoy anything we read that supports this idea. While this rebellion is natural, the degrees to which they do rebel depend on how willing they are to be viewed as "other" or "different." Most teens want to fit in with their peers and not be seen as different in a negative way. They do want to stand out and be noticed for

their unique qualities, however. They need to feel safe and supported before they speak up and show off, so they make sure their unique qualities are acceptable. Then there are the students who take pride in being alienated from their peers. Their reasons for differentiating themselves vary, but they are not willing to compromise what makes them unique and are willing to face the consequences of separating themselves from the majority.

Who is right? I don't know, and I don't think that really matters. What does matter is that my students start to think for themselves. They question everything that they read and see instead of blindly trusting the source, even when I am that source. The ultimate goal is that my students don't just learn to live in this world, they learn how to change this world.

LESSON PLANS

These lessons can be used individually or together depending on how many pieces of the suggested literature you choose. You can also use different literature as long as it fits the lesson objective.

Lesson Plan One: Sanity vs. Insanity: Trusting the Narrator

Objectives

The students will be expected to work in groups and analyze the point of view of the protagonist in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* or *The Sound and the Fury*. Students should work in cooperative groups analyzing the use of diction and syntax and any other literary devices used that portray the protagonist as either crazy or sane. The students need to come to a conclusion concerning the ability of the audience to trust the narrator's perspective.

The lesson should take two 45-minute class periods or one 90-minute class period. Students need to have begun reading the novel, but they do not need to have finished. Students also need to have been exposed to how the use of diction and syntax relate to characterization.

TEKS Objectives:

5) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

- b). analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils; and
- c). analyze the way in which a work of fiction is shaped by the narrator's point of view.

Materials and Resources

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest or *The Sound and the Fury*

(The lesson will use *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, but *The Sound and the Fury* can be used instead.)

Procedures and Activities

As a warm-up activity, the students need to brainstorm individually their definition of "crazy." Then they need to decide individually what characteristics are required in order for a narrator's point of view to be trusted. Can a "crazy" person be trusted? Chief Bromden is the narrator of this novel, but he is mentally unstable, so how can the audience trust or determine what is real and what is happening? Give the students about 5-10 minutes to jot down their responses. As a class, discuss the responses for the first question, what is the definition of "crazy"? Write down the responses on the board, and then as a class narrow down the responses to one cohesive definition that everyone agrees on. This will establish the parameters for the rest of the lesson.

Students should divide into groups with 3-5 students in each group. Each member of the group should present his or her list of characteristics a narrator should possess to be deemed trustworthy. From there the group should combine their lists into one master list, eliminating any repeated and similar responses. Next the group needs to create a list of characteristics for Chief Bromden. Once their list is complete, they should compare the two lists and see what the similarities and differences are between the two. The group needs to come to a consensus as to whether or not Chief's point of view can be trusted. Each group will present its findings.

The next part of this lesson is dealing with diction and syntax related to characterization. If this lesson is taking place over two 45-minute periods, this part should happen the second day. In their same groups, students need to pick one scene from the novel where the Chief is having a schizophrenic moment in the narration, and another scene where Chief seems to be narrating with clarity. For each scene, the students need to identify diction that helps create and directly support the two scenes. The schizophrenic scene will use diction that has connotations associated with schizophrenia. Remind students about the definition the class came up with together for "crazy." Any words in the selected schizophrenic scene that have "crazy" connotations should be selected. For the other scene, students should do the same, but instead find words that best show and support that in this scene Chief is narrating with a clear mind.

Once the students have identified the diction for each passage, they need to look at the syntax of each sentence in the passage. They should label each sentence as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex. If there are fragments, run-ons, interjections, or any other type of phrasing that is used, this should also be noted. Students should determine if the syntax relates to what is happening. Is there a specific type of sentence or phrase used more often for the schizophrenic scene? Each group should draw its own conclusions as to how Ken Kesey uses diction and syntax to portray Chief's mindset in the different scenes. Each group should then present to the class its findings.

Assessment

After all the groups have presented their analyses, each student should write an essay analyzing how syntax and diction are used to portray Chief's mindset as either schizophrenic or clear-minded. Based on his or her group's analysis, the student should explain in an essay how the audience can rely on diction and syntax to determine when to trust Chief's narration. In other words, the audience can determine what is real and what is "crazy" by following Kesey's use of diction and syntax.

Lesson Plan Two: Individual vs. Society

Objectives

The student will analyze the theme of the individual vs. society in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. The focus will be on the relationship between Nurse Ratched and McMurphy and how their relationship symbolizes the conflict between society (Ratched) and the individual (McMurphy). The end result will be a class debate.

Students need to have read the entire novel before completing this activity. This lesson will take two 45-minute classes or one 90-minute class; however, it could be spread out much longer if the teacher wants to go into more depth.

TEKS Objectives:

2). Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

25). Students speak clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to give presentations using informal, formal, and technical language effectively to meet the needs of audience, purpose, and occasion, employing eye contact, speaking rate (e.g., pauses for effect), volume, enunciation, purposeful gestures, and conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively.

26). Students work productively with others in teams. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate productively in teams, building on the ideas of others, contributing relevant information, developing a plan for consensus-building, and setting ground rules for decision-making.

Materials and Resources

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Procedures and Activities

In groups with 3-5 students per group, students will first outline the relationship between Ratched and McMurphy. In cooperative groups, students should create their own graphic organizer that will show how Ratched and McMurphy's relationship evolves throughout the novel. They will need to identify the specific conflicts between the two characters throughout the novel and the resolution of each.

Next, the students need to decide what each of the conflicts and resolutions could represent if Ratched symbolizes an authoritarian society and McMurphy the individual attempting to fight against the abusive power. Make sure the students are able to explain their connections. They may also want to discuss how each of the conflicts and resolutions affects Chief Bromden since he could represent how the individual learns to live in society after being alienated. Groups should share with the rest of the class their analysis. Based on the presentations, the teacher should guide the class in writing the key points for Ratched's and McMurphy's points of view. How does each character present his or her argument?

Based on the last discussion, each student should be assigned a role: the authoritarian society represented by Nurse Ratched or the rebellious individual represented by McMurphy. The class should be divided into the two sides. Each group will need to develop an argument about their side's point of view. (This could last its own class period depending on how long the teacher wants to give the students to develop their argument.) It may be easier for some groups to narrow the debate topic down to the final conflict between Ratched and McMurphy.

Once the argument has been completely explored and planned, a representative for each side should be chosen to present the argument.

Assessment

Once each side has presented its side, the students should individually write an evaluation of the other side's argument. The teacher will grade the evaluation based on the objectivity and thoroughness of the evaluation.

Lesson Plan Three: Poetry: Then and Now

Objectives

The student will analyze the poem "Much Madness Is Divinest Sense" by Emily Dickinson and find a contemporary poem or song that expresses the same argument.

The lesson should take one 45-minute class period, but the final assignment will need 3-5 days (teacher discretion).

TEKS Objectives:

3). Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the effects of diction and imagery (e.g., controlling images, figurative language, understatement, overstatement, irony, paradox) in poetry.

Materials and Resources

“Much Madness Is Divinest Sense” by Emily Dickinson

Procedures and Activities

Students will need to read the poem in class, which can be done individually, but I have found reading the poem several times out loud helps the students better grasp the meaning of the poem. Even though this is a short poem, it tends to be very difficult. The teacher will need to explain the use of punctuation as a style specific to Dickinson. Once the students have an understanding of what the poem is about, students need to analyze diction and punctuation to show how it corresponds to the meaning of the poem. Students should also focus on mood, tone, and any figurative language used in the poem. The best way to handle this is by using a graphic organizer. Have the student create a chart similar to this:

Literary Device:	Example with Explanation:
Diction	
Punctuation	
Mood	
Tone	
Figurative Language (simile, metaphor, etc.)	

Charts can be filled out individually, with partners, or in groups. At the end of class review the examples and explanations. The explanations need to show how the device corresponds to the meaning of the poem.

For homework, each student needs to find a contemporary poem or a song that conveys the same meaning as the Dickinson poem. The student will complete the same chart for their contemporary selection. The student should turn in a copy of the poem/song, the chart, and a couple of paragraphs explaining how their contemporary selection shares the same message as the Dickinson poem.

Assessment

The homework assignment and its components should be assessed. It is important that the student can complete the analysis of their poem/song with the same detail and thoroughness as the student did in class with the Emily Dickinson poem.

Lesson Plan Four: Gender Roles

Objectives

The students will research the roles of women during the time Emily Dickinson and Charlotte Perkins Gilman were writing. They will need to find a non-fiction persuasive selection that is a written by a woman of this period and synthesize how the poem “Much Madness Is Divinest Sense” by Dickinson and the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Gilman represent the argument presented in the non-fiction selection.

Students will need to have read and discussed the poem and short story in class. Students will also need to have prior knowledge about persuasive techniques, specifically the three appeals. The lesson itself can take place in one 45-minute class period, but the final product will need 1-2 weeks.

TEKS Objectives:

15). Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to:

- a). write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes:
 - (i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures;
 - (ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs;
 - (iii) a controlling idea or thesis;
 - (iv) an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context; and
 - (v) relevant information and valid inferences.
- c). write an interpretative response to an expository or a literary text (e.g., essay or review) that:
 - (i) extends beyond a summary and literal analysis;
 - (ii) addresses the writing skills for an analytical essay and provides evidence from the text using embedded quotations; and
 - (iii) analyzes the aesthetic effects of an author's use of stylistic or rhetorical devices.

Materials and Resources

“Much Madness Is Divinest Sense” by Dickinson

“The Yellow Wallpaper” by Gilman

Access to computers and library databases for research purposes

Procedures and Activities

After students have read and discussed the poem and short story in class with the teacher, students will need to research gender roles of the time. Students should analyze the poem and short story looking at how these gender roles are represented in the two pieces.

Next the students need to use library databases to find a piece of literary criticism or a persuasive essay written by a woman during the same period discussing women rights. Students need to identify how both the poem and the short story relate to the non-fiction piece they have found. Make sure the students refer to the types of persuasive appeals used in the non-fiction selection. The teacher may have to review the types of appeals with a mini-lesson.

Assessment

Students need to put their findings in a PowerPoint or Pod cast and present it to class. When assessing the PowerPoint, make sure both pieces of literature are represented and connected to the non-fiction selection. Students should also identify the type of appeals used in the non-fiction persuasive selection.

Lesson Plan Five: A thematic study of “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Objectives

The student will analyze the themes of the short story “The Tell-Tale Heart” and create a visual representation of life through the eyes of the narrator.

The lesson should take one 45-minute class period, but the final product should take 3-5 days (teacher's discretion).

TEKS Objectives:

2). Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Materials and Resources

“The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe

Photographs or artwork that shows everyday scenes and objects in a distorted way.

Procedures and Activities

The student will start by reading the story “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe. Discuss with the students the theme of sanity and insanity in the story. In groups, students need to discuss whether or not the narrator can be trusted and if he is crazy or not. They need to find textual evidence that supports their findings. Groups should present to the class and discuss each group's opinions.

Next, the teacher should talk to the students about what life would look like through the eyes of the narrator. Show the students photographs or artwork that is of normal everyday objects or scenes and then show the same pictures but altered or distorted in some way. It could be a picture of a house, building, car, or anything that we see on a daily basis. This can be done easily with a program like Adobe Photoshop. Ask the students to discuss how the visual distortion could portray the narrator's perspective. This may even lead into a discussion about how to determine what is real. For example, the teacher may ask the students how they can prove that what one student sees as green is the same color that another student sees.

Assessment

After the class discussion, tell students they need to create a visual representation of what they believe life looks like through the eyes of the narrator. This can be created from scratch or by using premade images, as long as the student distorts the image so it represents the narrator's point of view. Students will present their original or re-imagined artwork to the class.

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