

NEH Hudson River Workshop Lesson Plan 2013

Teacher: Kathleen Mersman

Subject: Interdisciplinary (Social Studies)

Grade Level: High School/7th-8th Grade

Summary:

Students will take steps necessary to better understand what American identity is and what it was in the 1800s. Students will also investigate whether American Identity is shaped by society or if society is shaped by American Identity. This lesson is interdisciplinary. Students will look at the art, literature, history, American studies, and geography.

The Headless Horseman comes to Kansas

High School Interdisciplinary (possibly Middle School?) - 5 Days

Written by Kathleen Mersman, St. Ann Catholic School

This lesson was inspired by Judith Richardson's assertion in *Possessions* that "Irving's tales are often as much about the making of ghost stories as about ghosts." I wanted students to recognize the geographic, historic, and social elements Irving used in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and then identify geographic, historic, and social elements to create a Kansas story.

Goals:

1. *For students to develop an appreciation of early American art and literature, and to consider how they contributed to the development of a national identity*
2. *For students to recognize ways that place influences culture*

Essential Questions:

1. *What makes these samples of art/literature uniquely American?*
2. *What are the historical and environmental factors that influenced the author/painter?*
3. *What is "culture" and where does it come from?*

Students will be able to

1. *Locate the Hudson River, the Erie Canal, the Catskills, & the Great Plains on a U.S. map.*
2. *Identify Thomas Cole, Washington Irving, & George Catlin.*
3. *Describe characteristics of the Hudson River School*
4. *Define "romanticism"*
5. *Analyze the characters and setting of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.*
6. *Analyze a Hudson River School painting.*
7. *Analyze a painting of the Great Plains from the 1800s.*
8. *Contrast the characters/settings of the two regions (the Hudson River Valley & the Great Plains) in art and literature.*
9. *Construct an original folk tale or ghost story with a Kansas (or regional) setting.*

Learning Plan:

Day 1-

1. Review the economic and social changes that occurred after the War of 1812. Review the impact of the Erie Canal.
2. Introduce the lesson by asking students:

What is culture? How would you define American culture? How do you think American culture was different in the 1820s-1830s?

3. Tell students that the early 1800s was a period when Americans began to develop a national identity and that we will be analyzing how art and literature of the period both shaped that identity and was influenced by it. (You could briefly discuss modern television – does it reflect society or does society reflect tv?)
4. **Homework:** Watch 5-minute video about romanticism (education-portal.com) & take quiz at end. Bring quiz answers on loose-leaf paper to class.

Day 2 -

1. Ask students how many know the story of the headless horseman and what they know about it. Did they know the original title, the general setting, or time period?
2. Begin reading *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* to the students (stop at the introduction of Katrina) as they read along silently. Discuss setting and characters thus far. Students record setting/character analysis in their reading journal.
3. **HOMEWORK** - students continue reading on their own. (or read as a class in Lit class)

Day 3 -

1. Have Thomas Cole painting on Smartboard when students arrive. Hand out questions/painting analysis worksheet for them to work on silently. When students are finished, discuss answers.
2. Discussion & PPT Notes on Hudson River School.
3. Exit Question – In what ways is this painting uniquely American? (What does it tell us about America in the 1830s)
4. **HOMEWORK**- continue and/or finish reading *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Day 4 –

1. Remind students that the painting from yesterday reflects the setting of TLOSH.
2. Analyze the characters from the story. Discuss why those characters are specific to that region. Would they work in a Kansas City ghost story?
3. Theorize as a class – what regional historical eras and events lend themselves to a ghost story? What regional historical figures would we use? Who are the marginalized in our region?
4. Look at George Catlin painting of the Great Plains. Contrast this setting with that of the Hudson Valley, and the setting of TLOSH.
5. Hand out writing assignment and go over rubric. Students will write a Kansas (or Kansas City) ghost story using setting, characters, and historical events appropriate for the region.

Assessment:

1. Reading journal
2. Writing assignment with rubric – Students will write a regional ghost story or folktale. May be done in English class or as a homework assignment in SS.
3. Interpretive test question – students analyze a HRS painting as part of their unit test.
4. Multiple choice/matching questions on test.