

NEH Hudson River Workshop Lesson Plan 2013

Teacher: Tanya Pastor

Subject: English

Grade Level: 9th Grade

Summary: Students will create poetry based on *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. Their poems must be connected to nature so they will focus on the Salinas River from Section one of the novel. What students take from this lesson on the Salinas River and the text will be used in further lessons as the class continues to read the book.

**Reflecting on the River:
Writing Found Poetry Inspired by
Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck**
a lesson plan created by Tanya Pastor

Grade Level: Ninth Grade English

Technology and Materials: *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, lined paper, pencil/pen, whiteboard, markers for whiteboard

Length of Lesson: 80 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What are the functions of rivers?
- What symbolic meanings are associated with rivers?
- How does poetry affect one's connection with and understanding of nature?

Objectives:

- Identify and analyze John Steinbeck's depiction of the Salinas River in section 1 of *Of Mice and Men*.
- Make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections.
- Create found poetry inspired by section 1 of *Of Mice and Men*.
- Identify and analyze the significance of and symbolism behind the Salinas River in *Of Mice and Men*.

Background:

This lesson is meant to be presented in a ninth grade English classroom as an introduction to John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937). It has been preceded by a group project in which students researched and presented on a topic related to *Of Mice and Men*. Students selected from the following topics for their presentations: the Great Depression, the New Deal, the Migrant Experience, 1930s Dust Bowl, Lynching and Racism, the American Dream, John Steinbeck, and Naturalism. Students have received a copy of *Of Mice and Men*, but have not begun reading it. The class consists of approximately 24 students. The room is set up in a circle.

Lesson Development/Sequence:

1. Do Now: What comes to mind when you hear the word *river*? Be specific in your response. Keep writing until your teacher calls time. (7 minutes)
2. Students should highlight a phrase or sentence in their Do Now that they consider to be interesting or meaningful. (1 minute)
3. Students share the phrases or sentences they have highlighted. Students should write down at least three of their classmates' responses that strike them. We will be referencing some of the students' reflections later in the lesson. (10 minutes)

4. Students take out their novels and read the first ten paragraphs of *Of Mice and Men*. Ask for a volunteer to begin reading. Then, continue along the circle. Each student should read a paragraph. (5 minutes)
5. Ask the students to share their first thoughts related to the *language* of the text. All comments should be specific to the language, not the content. Students should take notes on the discussion. (5 minutes)
6. Explain to students that they will be writing found poetry based on *Of Mice and Men* in groups of three. Students are to pick out words, phrases, and lines from the first ten paragraphs of *Of Mice and Men*. In their groups, they should arrange and format the words and phrases in these paragraphs in any order they wish to compose their own poetry. An example of a found poem can be found on the ReadWriteThink website at:
http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson33/foundparallelpoems.pdf
Each poem should be at least 12 lines in length and have a title. The poetry does not need to rhyme. (7 minutes)
7. Students write their found poetry in groups of three. (15 minutes)
8. Students will form a large circle. A representative from each group should read their group's found poem aloud to the class. As students share their poetry, a designated secretary should take notes on the whiteboard regarding the representation of the river in these poems. Students should copy down these notes. Possible responses to the poem include:
 - peaceful/calm/serene
 - nature/green
 - beautiful
 - animals/ecosystem
 - sacred
 - an escape/retreat
 - free/accessible to all
 - necessary to live/life
 - destructive/dangerous
 - dirty/unsafe/unclean
 - mysterious
 - stagnation
 - changing/flowing(25 minutes)
9. Closure. Remind students to keep their notes in a safe place. As we continue reading, we will look back on these notes to compare and contrast the depiction of the river as the novella continues. Students copy down their homework. (5 minutes)

Homework:

1. Finish reading section 1 of *Of Mice and Men*. Be prepared for a reading check quiz at the start of the next class.
2. Do some additional research on the Salinas River. Visit <http://conservationconsulting.net/UpsideDownRiver.html>. Copy down ten facts

from this website that you find interesting. Be prepared to integrate your findings into our discussion during the next class.

Possible Lesson Extensions and Connections:

1. Compare and contrast depictions of the Salinas River in section 1 to the depiction in the final section, section 6.
2. After reading the entire novella, discuss these questions: Why does Steinbeck choose to begin and end this novella with the Salinas River? What might the river symbolize?
3. Compare and contrast the depiction of the river in Steinbeck's novella to that in the 1992 film, *Of Mice and Men*.
4. Research a river of your choice. How is the river reflected in literature, film, art, theater, music, dance, etc.?

Common Core English Standards for the Ninth and Tenth Grades:

RL.9-10.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

RL.9-10.10. By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

RI.9-10.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.9-10.6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

W.9-10.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.9-10.5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

W.9-10.10. 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.

SL.9-10.1. 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.

SL.9-10.6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

L.9-10.1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L.9-10.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L.9-10.3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in

different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

L.9-10.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.