

AP Brit Lit: Sonnets

Week One

Day One: Sonnets 101 (2/2/09)

Duration

One 35-minute class period (5-7 minutes pre-factored in for prayer, announcements, assignment collection, pack-up and dismissal)

Standards

This lesson is aligned with the Iowa Department of Education's Grade 12 Standards for Literacy (2008).

- Content Standard 1: Students can comprehend what they read in a variety of literary and informational texts.
 - Benchmark J: Students can recognize aspects of a passage's style and structure and can recognize literary techniques.

Objectives

- Students will understand the basics of sonnet form and function.
- Students will be able to distinguish between Petrarchian/Italian, Spenserian, and Shakespearian sonnets.

Materials

- "Sonnets 101" worksheet (Appendix A)
- Writing utensils
- White board
- Copies of student textbook

Anticipatory Set

Ask students: What do you know about sonnets already?

Purpose

- Students will learn about the development of the sonnet across Europe.
- Students will learn how to distinguish between different types of sonnets, and the form and function of each.

Model

- The ST will ask students what they know about sonnets off the top of their heads. She will record their answers on the white board (5-7 minutes).
- The ST will hand out the “Sonnets 101” worksheet. Students will be given 7-10 minutes to try and fill out as much of the front side as they can on their own, using copies of their textbook. (They should have previously read selections of Spenserian, Sidney, and Shakespearian sonnets.)
- The ST will go over the worksheet (5-7 minutes). The ST will demonstrate iambic pentameter using a selection from the students' textbook, and will explain the way lines are counted (octave, sestet, etc.).

Check for Understanding

- The class will go over the back side of the “Sonnets 101” worksheet together – students will pick apart a Spenserian sonnet for rhyme scheme, etc.

Closure

- The ST will note that the next class discussion will focus on Spenserian sonnets, so students should make sure to read these selections from the textbook if they haven't already.
- The ST will write assignments on the white board and also the Homework Page.

Day Two: Spenserian Sonnets (2/3/09)

Duration

One 35-minute class period (5-7 minutes pre-factored in for prayer, announcements, assignment collection, pack-up and dismissal)

Standards

This lesson is aligned with the Iowa Department of Education's Grade 12 Standards for Literacy (2008).

- Content Standard 1: Students can comprehend what they read in a variety of literary and informational texts.
 - Benchmark B: Students can determine the literal meaning of specific words.
 - Benchmark C: Students can draw conclusions, make inferences, and deduce meaning.
 - Benchmark D: Students can infer traits, feelings, and motives of characters or individuals.
 - Benchmark F: Students can interpret nonliteral language used in a text.
 - Benchmark G: Students can determine the main idea, topic, or theme and make generalizations.
 - Benchmark H: Students can distinguish among facts, opinions, and assumptions.
 - Benchmark J: Students can recognize aspects of a passage's style and structure and can recognize literary techniques.

Objectives

- Students will analyze three samples of Spenserian sonnets for their form and function.
- Students will discuss the meaning, literal and non-literal, of a selection of Spenserian sonnets.
- Students will understand the context of a selection of Spenserian sonnets through discussion of the author's thoughts, beliefs, and motivations.

Materials

- Copies of students' textbooks (p. 209-211)
- "The Life & Times of Edmund Spenser"/ "References in Spenser's Sonnets" (Appendix B)
- Writing utensils
- White board

Anticipatory Set

Ask students to review information from the previous class day (3-5 minutes).

- What are the characteristics of a Spenserian sonnet?
 - Three interlocking quatrains and a rhyming couplet: ABAB BCBC CDCD EE.
 - Hybrid of Italian and Shakespearian sonnets – Has a volta (turning point) in line 9 that begins with 'yet' or 'but', a characteristic of Italian/Petrarchian sonnets; however, the turning point doesn't come until the rhyming couplet in line 13-14, as it does in a Shakespearian sonnet.
 - Has 14 lines.

Purpose

- Students will do a literary analysis of a selection of Spenserian sonnets.
- Students will understand how Spenserian sonnets are organized.
- Students will discuss the context of Spenser's poems by analyzing his lifestyle, motivations, opinions, etc.

Model

- The ST will disperse copies of "The Life & Times of Edmund Spenser" hand-out (Appendix B) to the class. She will discuss conversationally highlights of the author's life (7-10 minutes).
- The ST will ask a student volunteer to read Sonnet 1 aloud.

- The ST will ask students questions about the meaning of the poem – for example, “What is love/the speaker's heart being compared to?” (A book.) The ST will also discuss the reference to Helicon, using the “References in Spenser's Sonnets” portion of Appendix B, and ask students to point out the rhyme scheme, the location of the volta, etc. (10 minutes)
- The ST will read Sonnet 35 aloud. The ST will ask students similar questions as before to determine the meaning of the poem, as well as its literary characteristics. The ST will also give the class background information on Narcissus (10 minutes).
- The ST will briefly go over Sonnet 75, pointing out that the poem seems written in 'simpler' language than the previous selections, though it still fits into the Spenserian sonnet format (5 minutes).

Check for Understanding

- The ST will walk students through Sonnet 1, but students will primarily translate and discuss Sonnet 35 for its literary qualities and meaning.

Closure

- Students should have previously read the selection of Sidney sonnets in their text for the next class day (2/4).
- The ST will ask students to read the Renaissance background information in their textbooks (p. 198-203). They will be discussing it on the early release day on 2/6.
- The ST will point out that assignments and activities are recorded on the white board and the school's Homework Page.

Day Three: Sidney Sonnets (2/4/09)

Duration

One 35-minute class period (5-7 minutes pre-factored in for prayer, announcements, assignment collection, pack-up and dismissal)

Standards

This lesson is aligned with the Iowa Department of Education's Grade 12 Standards for Literacy (2008).

- Content Standard 1: Students can comprehend what they read in a variety of literary and informational texts.
 - Benchmark A: Students can understand stated information they have read.
 - Benchmark B: Students can determine the literal meaning of specific words.
 - Benchmark C: Students can draw conclusions, make inferences, and deduce meaning.
 - Benchmark D: Students can infer traits, feelings, and motives of characters or individuals.
 - Benchmark F: Students can interpret nonliteral language used in a text.
 - Benchmark G: Students can determine the main idea, topic, or theme and make generalizations.
 - Benchmark H: Students can identify the author's view or purposes.
 - Benchmark J: Students can recognize aspects of a passage's style and structure and can recognize literary techniques.

Objectives

- Students will analyze two samples of sonnets by Sidney for their form and function.
- Students will discuss the meaning, literal and non-literal, of a selection of Sidney's sonnets.
- Students will understand the context of a selection of Sidney's sonnets through discussion of the author's thoughts, beliefs, and motivations.

Materials

- Copies of students' textbooks (p. 212-213)
- Writing utensils
- White board
- "Sir Philip Sidney" hand-out (Appendix C)

Purpose

- Students will do a literary analysis of a selection of sonnets by Sidney.
- Students will understand how Sidney's sonnets revive the Petrarchian form.
- Students will discuss the context of Sidney's poems by analyzing his lifestyle, motivations, opinions, etc.

Anticipatory Set

Ask students to review information from the previous class day (5 minutes).

- What are the characteristics of a Petrarchian sonnet?
 - 14 lines
 - Rhyme scheme: ABBA ABBA CDECDE / CDCCDC / CDEDCE
 - Structure: Octave – states problem/question; sestet – resolution
 - Volta in line 9 (yet/but/then – signifies new subject, resolution to question)
- What is personification? (The ST will write a definition on the white board: "Giving human traits to non-human objects.)

Model

- The ST will pass out the hand-out on Sidney, and highlight some of the most notable facts about Sidney.
- The ST will ask for a student volunteer to read Sonnet 31 aloud.
- The ST will ask students whether the sonnet follows Petrarchian form, and why. (Has octave

and sestet, but the sestet rhyme scheme is untraditional. Volta is “then” in line 9, and indicates beginning of resolution, as is traditional in Italian sonnets.

- The ST will ask students to decipher the meaning of the poem.
 - The octave sets up the problem/situation: Astrophel sees the moon climbing in the sky at night, and he recognizes in its pale face the same love sickness that he experiences. He suggests that, perhaps even in the heights of the sky, Cupid's arrows are powerful enough to shoot the moon. Then, Astrophel becomes completely certain that the moon is lovesick. He recognizes its looks and its languishing grace because they are the same looks and grace that he recognizes in himself” (Gradesaver.com, 2009).
 - The sestet dutifully gives us the resolution: “He asks the moon what life and love are like upon its surface. He asks: Is the faithful lover viewed as an idiot? Are beautiful women as proud as they are on earth? Do they desire love and attention but scorn those who give it to them? Do they call ungratefulness a virtue?”
 - From Gradesaver.com: “Sidney's connection to the moon is an example of a "pathetic fallacy" in which elements of nature appear to experience human emotions. At first Sidney describes the moon in accordance with classical mythology, as an individual being. Yet, his insistence that the moon is lovesick does not make sense in this context because the goddess of the moon is Diana, a perpetual virgin who is not affected by love. Then, Sidney switches his perception of the moon to adhere to Copernican belief, and he describes the moon as a planet. The series of questions he asks expresses his desire for a logical explanation of Stella's behavior. He wants to know if the scorn his love receives at her hands is limited to the earth.”
- The ST will ask a student to read Sonnet 39 aloud, and then ask the class similar questions to

discuss the meaning and form of the poem.

- The form is not traditionally Petrarchian. The rhyme scheme, in fact, is ABAB ABAB CDCD EE. A critical analysis of Sidney points out: "It is as if he takes the Petrarchan idea but becomes critical of the 'Petrarchan convention' and decides to write from his heart than mimic others ... Sidney separates himself from past writers including Petrarch by stating he is not merely copying, 'Petrarch's long-deceased woes'. He isn't writing stale flowers, he is taking this literary tradition and altering with his focus on Stella. He realizes that he must write from the heart to capture Stella in the most spiritual/heavenly form" (Monique, 2004).
- From Gradesaver.com: "Sidney personifies sleep and begins to have a conversation with it. He prays that Sleep will come and release him from his current misery. Only when he is asleep is he able to ease his suffering and stem the civil war that is waging between his heart and his head, between his love and his reason. He wonders what price he must pay in order to convince the god of Sleep to come to him, and he promises a "good tribute." Smooth pillows, a comfortable bed, and a dark, quiet room are all that he desires, if only he can persuade Sleep to come. Finally, Sidney comes up with a way to convince Sleep to come to him. When he is asleep, he argues, the image of Stella will appear in his dreams, and Sleep will be able to watch. This is the greatest tribute that he can pay." (The ST will ask students whether or not they agree with this/why.)
- "This is an example of a sonnet in which Sidney's persona talks to an entity other than Stella. In addition to "Sleep," Sidney also directs his speeches to the allegorical "Reason," "Love," "Queen Virtue," "Patience," "Desire," and more. In literature and rhetoric, this act of addressing something that is not a person is referred to as "apostrophe." The irony in this sonnet is very interesting. Sidney begs for Sleep to come and rescue him from his love and

suffering for Stella. Yet, at the same time, an image of Stella will automatically come to his head while he is asleep. Whether he is asleep or awake, Stella is always in his mind. He prefers the Stella in his dreams because he does not have to face the reality that she is not his own.”

Check for Understanding

- The ST will ask students for their own interpretations and translations of the sonnets, rather than relying on her own notes and just telling them what the answers are.

Closure

- Students should read Shakespearian sonnet selections for 2/5 (p. 220-223).
- Students should read Renaissance background information for 2/6 (p. 198-203).
- Students should read Act I of Macbeth for 2/9 (also in their textbooks).

Day Four: Shakespearian Sonnets (2/5/09)

Duration

One 35-minute class period (5-7 minutes pre-factored in for prayer, announcements, assignment collection, pack-up and dismissal)

Standards

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- Content Standard 1: Students can comprehend what they read in a variety of literary and informational texts.
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- Benchmark C: Students can draw conclusions, make inferences, and deduce meaning.
- Benchmark D: Students can infer traits, feelings, and motives of characters or individuals.
- Benchmark F: Students can interpret nonliteral language used in a text.
- Benchmark G: Students can determine the main idea, topic, or theme and make generalizations.
- Benchmark H: Students can identify the author's view or purposes.
- Benchmark J: Students can recognize aspects of a passage's style and structure and can recognize literary techniques.

Objectives

- Students will analyze four samples of Shakespearian sonnets for their form and function.
- Students will discuss the meaning, literal and non-literal, of a selection of Shakespeare's sonnets.
- Students will understand the context of a selection of Shakespeare's sonnets through discussion of the author's thoughts, beliefs, and motivations.

Materials

- Copies of students' textbooks (p. 220-223)
- Writing utensils
- White board

Purpose

- Students will do a literary analysis of a selection of sonnets by Shakespeare.
- Students will understand how Shakespeare's sonnets are inspired/influenced by both Spenser and Sidney.
- Students will discuss the context of Shakespeare's poems by analyzing his lifestyle, motivations,

opinions, etc.

- Students will work in small groups to determine the meaning of each sonnet.

Anticipatory Set

- The ST will ask students to review the characteristics of Shakespearian sonnets (3-5 minutes):
 - 14 lines, three quatrains and one rhyming couplet; ABAB CDCD EFEF GG
 - Conclusion/resolution does not come until lines 13-14. Does not adhere to Petrarchan observation of the volta/turning point.

Model

- The ST will note that students will receive a primer on the Renaissance and Shakespeare before they read Macbeth, so there won't be much of an emphasis on his life and times in this lesson.
- The ST will ask students to break into four groups, and will assign each group a sonnet. The ST will ask each group to do the following (she will write directions on the white board):
 - Summarize/translate the poem into 'modern' English;
 - Identify whether it is in traditional Shakespearian sonnet form;
 - Do the group members agree with what Shakespeare is saying about love?

Check for Understanding

- The ST will ask students follow-up questions:
 - How does Shakespeare's treatment of the subject of love differ from Spenser/Sidney?
 - Which author is easier to relate to?
 - Do certain authors seem to prize certain forms of love over others?

Closure

- Renaissance background reading (p. 198-203), due 2/6;
- Macbeth, Act I, due 2/9.

Day Five (2/6/09): Renaissance 101

Duration

20 minutes – 3-5 minutes pre-factored in for announcements, prayer, reminding students of due dates, etc.

Standards

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 - Benchmark A: Students can understand stated information they have read.
 - Benchmark G: Students can determine the main idea, topic, or theme and make generalizations.

Objectives

- Students will discuss the significance of the Renaissance, after reading a brief history of the time period in their textbook.

Materials

- White board
- Writing utensils
- Student textbooks, p. 198-203

Purpose

- Students will understand how the Renaissance fits into the backdrop of an upcoming unit on

Shakespeare – specifically, *Macbeth*.

Model

- The ST will lecture on a number of topics covered in students' textbooks concerning the Renaissance:
 - The Tudors
 - The Stuarts
 - Religious upheavals during the Renaissance
 - Renaissance culture:
 - Literature
 - Exploration

Check for Understanding

The ST will write specific names and dates of importance on the white board to aid in students' note-taking, and will ask students follow-up questions about the reading.

Closure

- Macbeth, Act I (2/9)
- The ST will give students copies of hand-outs, "Motifs, Themes, and Oddities in *Macbeth*" (Appendix D), and an article by Alfred Harbage on the play (Appendix E). Students should read these over the weekend, as well, as they will be discussed in class on Monday (2/9).