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CI 403
Professor Willis
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Holden and Prufrock: A Comparison Across Literature

Time and Setting

The lesson is a fifty-minute lesson in a Sophomore English Honors class. The class consists of twenty-five students, with thirteen females and twelve males. There are thirteen white students, five African-American students, four Asian students, two Hispanic students and one Native American student in the classroom.

Theory into Practice Background

As I was rereading *Catcher in the Rye*, I could not help but think of the time when I first read it in high school. I really enjoyed it, and it occurred to me that it was during this time that I was introduced to one of my favorite poems, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T. S. Eliot. I immediately decided I had to use it in one of my lesson plans, even though I could not quite remember how my teacher used it with *Catcher*. As I figured out the lesson, ideas and suggestions from various readings came to me, especially from Tchudi and Mitchell’s *Exploring and Teaching the English Language Arts*, who stressed, “Readers must be given time to respond to and experience the poem before they are asked to analyze it... give them chances to hear or read the poem several times to get the feel of it and explain that the compressed language of poetry often needs more rumination to get involved in it” (176). That is why I chose to give the poem to the students the night before so they can read it once to themselves, hear it when I read it in class the next day, and hear it again when they take turns reading it. This gives students the chance to let the poem sink in, and by giving them the reading when they are reading the *Catcher* reading assignment, some may already see why the poem is being discussed in class. At this point in *Catcher*, Holden has agreed to have a prostitute come to his room, but he gets too nervous and chickens out and makes the prostitute leave. Students will have to analyze Prufrock, a tragic character who doubts his romantic and sexual prowess because of his old age and other insecurities, and compare him to Holden, despite their age differences. This will not only give students the chance to use other literature with *Catcher in the Rye*, but gives them practice in exploring poetry, which is another lesson in the coming weeks, which is a lesson plan A by Anna Lee.

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Compare Holden to a real life figure in their lives
- Analyze “The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock” in context to Holden’s prostitute experience in chapter thirteen

Materials

- Copy of *Catcher in the Rye*
- Prufrock Packet

Preparations

In order to be prepared for class, the Quick Write Question should be written on the board.

Procedure

- As students come in, make sure they notice the Quick Write so they begin working on it. Give them **eight minutes** to complete the response.
 - The question is, “Compare Holden to someone you know, whether it be a friend, family member, or yourself! Why do they remind you of him?”
 - After eight minutes, or if the students finish sooner, collect the journals and as your collecting them, ask a couple people to volunteer to say who they compared him to and why (two minutes)
- Ask the students to take out their Prufrock Packets, explaining the object of today’s lesson (like, “after his most recent adventure, we are going to look at a poem today in which the speaker of the poem has similar issues, despite the striking age difference”).
 - Explain that the poem can be confusing, so we are going to read it together twice more, out loud, so everyone can hear it being said and understand the many interpretations of the poem. Read the poem in its entirety once.
 - Read the poem in its entirety once, ignoring the epigraph explaining that it is a reference to *Inferno* that would make the poem more confusing than helpful for the sophomore students.
 - You will then begin reading the poem again, reading the first stanza. Ask for volunteers to continue reading, having students read out loud a stanza or a few lines at a time, asking for volunteers at first and when those dwindle, ask, “can someone who has not read out loud yet volunteer, please?”
 - As students read, there are points in the printed out page where the students are instructed to stop reading. These are points where the class will discuss the section and how it relates to Holden and his experience with the prostitute. Ask the students for their own interpretations with leading questions from the “Discussion Ideas” section. Continue this pattern until the entire poem is read.
 - Encourage note-taking along the margins of the poem as it is discussed to help them answer the response they will need to write after the reading is done.
 - Continuously walk around and check students behavior, making sure nothing is on their desk other than the poem and making sure no one is playing with cell phones or falling asleep.
 - This entire section should last **35 minutes**.
- In the last **seven minutes** of the class, pose the question, “So in your own words, how is Holden like J. Alfred Prufrock?”
 - Have students turn in their response as they leave the classroom.

Discussion Ideas

Leading discussion questions include but are not limited to:

- How does the first stanza reflect Holden and his actions?
- What do you think Eliot means by, “In the room the women come and go Talking of Michelangelo”?

- Why the emphasis of time in the third main stanza?
- Why does the speaker continually ask ‘Do I dare’?
- How does the speaker describe himself? Why does he describe himself in this way?
- Why would the Footman snicker at the speaker?
- How does the speaker describe women compared to Holden?
- Why would the mermaids not sing to him?
- What does the speaker mean when he says, “Till human voices wake us, and we drown”?

Bilingual/ESL and Englishes Accommodations (ELL Spanish-Speaking Student)

This poem is a difficult poem to begin with and can be even more challenging for those who do not speak “standard English”. As someone that knows what it is like to feel “behind” everyone else, I would not judge or criticize someone for the way they pronounce words when reading it out loud, and I would make a point to the class to always be respectful. It would certainly take more time for these students to understand the poem. I remember when I first read this I was completely lost, but my high school English teacher at the time was able to make it more approachable. I would hope this would be accommodating enough for my AAE students, because there is little that can be done with a classic English poem other than explaining it through discussion and respecting those that volunteer to read. I would also hope my students, especially my ELL student, take advantage of reading the poem on their own before class so they can read it on their own and prepare themselves to read it out loud, since at least half of the class will be reading it to the class. I would also ask her at the beginning of class if she wouldn’t mind reading to the class, in which case I will call on her or not if she feels too uncomfortable.

Special Education Accommodations (Student with Asperger’s Syndrome)

I would also have this student take the Prufrock Packet home the night before, but I do not think his comprehension of the poem will be an issue since he is quite intelligent. He knows he is intelligent, so he loves to participate, so reading out loud or joining in on the conversation will not be a problem. However, he occasionally makes scornful remarks to other students, so this would be something that would need to have my attention. If I do hear something they say, I would tell him to respect his peers and if he has nothing good to say, don’t say anything at all.

Assessment

The response at the end of the lesson is my way of assessing student comprehension and their recollection abilities. Students have to conclude in their own words the similarities between Prufrock and Holden, which is something they will not be successful at if they do not pay attention to the discussions or write valuable notes on the packet. Their work will be assessed by a homework rubric I have used in my first LPA, the Foil activity. The rubric consists of four criteria, including, neatness, completion, writing quality and idea development.

Extension Ideas

Eliot’s poem is dense and elaborate; a teacher can plan to discuss it for a few days if they

wanted to. Teachers can also have students split up the poem and take a more in depth analysis of their section, reconvene, and share their findings. However, time is an issue in our unit, so reading it together on one day seemed the best fit. One way I could extend the lesson or refer back to the poem is to use it as one of the essay questions students can choose at the end of the *Catcher* portion of the unit. There is a slight chance Eliot's poem can be used again when discussing Junior's crush on Penelope in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, but this would have to be carefully planned.

Source of Activity

I would like to acknowledge Professor Willis for modeling the Quick Write, as well as my former high school teacher Angela Barnes, who used "The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock" when we read *Catcher in the Rye*.

Resources and References

Eliot, T. S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Nina Baym. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007.

Mitchell, Diana and Stephen Tchudi. *Exploring and Teaching the English Language Arts*. New York: Longman, 1999.

Illinois State English Language Arts Goals

- **State Goal 2.B:** Students are able to read and interpret a variety of literary works.
 - The lesson takes the opportunity to have students read a variety of literary works, as well as compare and analyze the protagonists of each.
- **State goal 4.B:** Students are able to speak effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience.
 - Students will not only practice reading and articulating the poem out loud, but they will also share their thoughts through discussion with the rest of the class.

Reflection

Given that this is an Honors class, I hope the students will appreciate the poem and be able to understand it. If the lesson backfired and they are having a difficult time grasping its significance in relation to *Catcher in the Rye*, I would extend the conversation to the next day so they understand why it is relevant and why I brought it into the classroom. On the other hand, if they are really interested in the poem and we run out of time, we would continue our conversation the next day so they can all share what they think the poem means. This would be a great way to open up identity in terms of social relationships and even sexual identity, which would be an entire lesson in itself, but it doable given that Holden talks about sexuality and homosexuality in particular later on in the text.

T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

*S'io credesse che mia reposta fosse
A persona che mai ternasse al mondo
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'l'odo il vero
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question...
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'
Let us go make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep. STOP

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That life and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time

To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'
 Time to turn back and descend the stair,
 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair-
 [they will say: 'how his hair is growing thin!']
 My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
 My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin-
 [They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!']
 Do I dare
 Disturb the universe?
 In a minute there is time
 For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them already, known them all-
 Have known the evening, mornings, afternoons,
 I have measure out my life with coffee spoons;
 I know the voices dying with a dying fall
 Beneath the music from a farther room.
 So how should I presume? STOP

And I have known the eyes already, known them all-
 The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
 And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall
 Then how should I begin
 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
 And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all-
 Arms that are bracelet and white and bare
 [But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]
 Is it perfume from a dress
 That makes me so digress?
 Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
 And should I then presume?
 And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
 And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
 Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
 Scuttling across the floors of silent seas. STOP

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
 Smoothed by long fingers,
 Asleep... tired... or it malingers
 Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
 Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
 Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
 But through I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
 Through I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon a
 platter
 I am no prophet- and here's no great matter;

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
 And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
 And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
 After the cups of marmalade, the tea,
 Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
 Would it have been worth while
 To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
 To have squeezed the universe into a ball
 To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
 To say: 'I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
 Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all'
 If one, settling a pillow by her head,
 Should say: 'That is not what I meant at all.
 That is not it, at all.'

And would it have been worth it, after all,
 Would it have been worth while,
 After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
 After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor-
 And this, and so much more?
 It is impossible to say just what I mean!
 But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
 Would it have been worth while
 If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
 And turning toward the window, should say:
 That is not it at all,
 That is not what I meant at all.' STOP

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
 Am an attendant lord, one that will do
 To swell a progress, start a scene or two
 Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
 Deferential, glad to be of use,
 Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
 Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
 At times, indeed almost ridiculous-
 Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old... I grow old...
 I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare eat a peach?
 I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
 I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
 Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
 When the wind blows the water white and black.

**We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.**

Homework Rubric

1 Completion

- Your work satisfies all requirements of the assignment.

2 Idea Development

- You use effective examples to illustrate and support what you mean.

3 Writing Quality

- Your sentences are coherent.
- They are grammatically correct/
- they do not have spelling or punctuation errors.

4 Neatness/ Aesthetics

- Your handwriting is legible and neat.
- Your paper is in good condition.

/4 is your score.