

Song of Everlasting Sorrow

Chad Espinoza

Introduction and Rationale

The rationale of this lesson is to expose students to nonwestern poetry epics. This will make students aware of different poetry styles and traditions. It will also give students insight into East Asian culture. This unit will fit into a larger unit on epic poetry. When this lesson takes place, students will know who Bai Juyi is and the significance he had on poetry during the Tang Dynasty. The students will also have a basic understanding of the Tang Dynasty's culture and history. Students will have several skills and content knowledge before the beginning of this lesson. Students will have experience with both text-dependent questions for understanding and analysis. Students will also know how to write a CEEL argumentative paragraph. Because of the prior content knowledge and skills, students will be ready to analyze this relatively complex poem by analyzing its treatment of the themes of love and regret.

Lesson Cycle Date Range: 6/8-6/12 (3 lessons)

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| Standard: | ELA RL.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. | |
| Standard Unpacked: What do students need to know and be able to do to meet the standard? | Know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central themes/ ideas of the text ● How the text develops themes/ideas ● How themes/ideas interact with each other ● Objective summary | Show <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify central themes ● Explain how themes/idea develop ● Explain how themes/ideas interact with each other ● Write an objective summary |
| Big Idea of Text: What do scholars need to get from the reading that will build towards the larger understanding of the text/unit? | The big idea of <i>The Song of Everlasting Sorrow</i> is about love and regret. The poem by Bai Juyi centers on an emperor and his love for a young, beautiful woman. He makes her his concubine and the couple spends every minute they can with each other. Soon a war breaks out, and the emperor must leave his palace to lead his troops. He brings his love with him. Because he is so entranced by his love, he is unable to effectively lead his troops. His troops demand that she die so the emperor can free up his mind and lead them to victory. The emperor obliges, kills his love, and leads his troops to victory. When he returns to his palace, he deals with his regret by reminiscing about his love. He then asks a priest to search the afterlife for her. The priest finds her and to the emperor's dismay, she is uninterested in the matters of earth. However, she tells him that they do belong together and will be together again, but her promise, thought sincere, is vague. | |
| Lesson Cycle Objective: Using the standard and text, determine the purpose of the lesson cycle. | SWBAT determine if the love between the emperor and the concubine was beneficial using specific lines from the text as support. | |
| Culminating Question or Task: How will students demonstrate their understanding of the big ideas and meet the objective? | Prompt: Was the love between the emperor and the concubine beneficial? Use specific lines from the text to support your answer. (lesson 3) | |

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| <p>Text-Dependent Questions: Identify a strategic sequence of questions to guide student understanding toward the culminating question or task.</p> | <p>Lesson 1 First read/Text-dependent questions for comprehension. This is the students' first engagement with the text. The questions are written to check students' understanding of the text.</p> <p>Lesson 2 Second read/Text-dependent questions for analysis. This is the students' second engagement with the text. The questions are engineered to ensure students are able to make inferences about the themes and ideas in the text.</p> <p>Lesson 3 Third read/culminating task. This is the students' third and final interaction with the text. The culminating task is designed to challenge students to develop a single, complex inference about the text.</p> |
| <p>Plan Support: Identify look fors and potential misconceptions. Plan supporting questions and scaffolds.</p> | <p>Students may become confused by the plot of the poem, so the text is chunked with a TDQ for understanding after each chunk.</p> <p>Students may have difficulty developing an argument, so a dialectical journal is provided.</p> <p>Students may have difficulties writing an argument, so a rubric, sentence starters, and a self-edit checklist is provided.</p> |

The Song of Everlasting Sorrow Lesson 1

Opening Discussion

Directions: in your table groups, discuss the following 2 questions. Write your response in the spaces below.

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| <p>Discussion Question #1: <i>What is love?</i></p> |
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| <p>Discussion Question #1: <i>Can love cause regret?</i></p> |
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Reading #1 and TDQs for Understanding

Directions: read the text and answer the TDQs below. You may work with ONE partner. You may also use the [link](#) to listen to an explanation of the text and an audio recording of the text.

Criteria for success: Each answer must be a full sentence and must directly answer the TDQ. You must also highlight/underline the line in the text that you believe answers the question.

The Song of Everlasting Sorrow

The Emperor of China longed for a beauty able to topple the empire.
Despite many years of reign he could not fulfill his desire.
Meanwhile, a lass in the Yang family had reached puberty.
As she was raised deep in her boudoir, no one knew her beauty.
Her heavenly glamour could not be concealed forever.
One day she was chosen to entertain the Emperor.
When she turned and smiled, the coquetry created was tremendous,
Rendering all concubines of the six palaces lusterless.

She was privileged to bathe in Hua-Qing Spa on a cold day of spring,
Washing her creamy skin with slippery water of the warm spring.
As she was languorous, a maid helped her out of the spa.
This was when they first mated, the beginning of a saga.
Her cloud-like hair was held by a gold hairpin, her face flowery.
They spent the night under the warmth of a hibiscus canopy.
They rose with the sun up high, complaining of the night too short.
From this day on the Emperor missed each and every morning court.

Why did the emperor love the young woman?

Between revels and banquets the Emperor was fully occupied.
Every spring day they toured and by night they copulated.
All three thousand concubines in the rear palaces were ignored.
On only one person was the royal affection concentrated.
In her Gold Chamber she dressed up and entertained the Emperor,
Indulging in inebriety and coition after every feast at Jade Tower.
All her sisters and brothers had royal demesnes granted.
Imperial but pitiful glory on the Yang family was bestowed.

On the mindset of all parents her success was a strong influence.
Baby girls instead of baby boys became the popular preference.
Li Palace rose upright, high into the atmosphere.
Divine music carried by the wind was heard everywhere.
Strings and pipes accompanied soft songs and slow dances.
Day after day the Emperor could not get enough of these.
One day the war drums from Yuyang came and shook the ground,
Interrupting the tune of the Rainbow Dress and Feather Gown.

How does the reader know the emperor was obsessed with his concubine?

From inside the nine-tier imperial walls dust clouds originated.
Thousands of wagons moved southwest as the monarch retreated.
When they paraded, the imperial banner waved and led the way.
Suddenly the troops halted west of the capital just thirty miles away.
All six regiments refused to march, rendering the Emperor powerless.
Her execution in front of the steeds was torturous and hopeless.
The scatter of her precious jewelry on the ground added to the sorrow.
Among them was a green jade comb with a decorative gold sparrow.

Refrained from saving her, the Emperor covered his face.
Tears dropped like her blood shed as he turned to gaze.
The chilly wind facilitated the yellow dust to propagate.
Via torturous trails in the cloud they crossed the Sword Gate.
Beneath Mount Emei travelers were hardly seen.
The imperial banner lost its gleam in the sunset scene.
But Shu rivers remained blue and Shu mountains green.
Day in and day out His Majesty's eternal love grew keen.

Why did the emperor kill his wife?

Viewing the moon in the temporary palace escalated sadness.
Hearing wind charms in rainy nights deepened brokenheartedness.
Finally the rebellion was suppressed and the monarchy reinstated.
As they returned to the very spot, the Emperor hesitated.
Under the Mawei Slope he searched in the mud,
But failed to find any trace where she shed her blood.
The Emperor and his ministers all wept in a gloomy state.
Their horses took them eastwards, back to the capital gate.

Upon return, the ponds and gardens seemed like old days,
Hibiscus by Lake Taiye and willows by Weiyang Palace.
Her face resembled a hibiscus, her eyebrows willow leaves.
Viewing these, how could he stop the tears down his face?
When vernal breeze blew, peach trees blossomed all around.
When autumn rain came, plane tree leaves fell on the ground.
Autumn weeds grew tall in the West and South Palaces.
No one swept those stairs covered by the red leaves.

How did the emperor deal with the death of his wife?

The hairs of the royal opera players looked whiter.
The pretty maids of the Empress' Palace grew older.
Fireflies flew over the hall as he meditated in twilight.
The lamp wick burned out as he stayed awake all night.
The hourly bell and drum always seemed late in the long night.
The Milky Way projected its glow to bring out the twilight.
Heavy frost made the cold ceramic tiles on the roof seem bright.
Under the cold green comfort, with whom could he spend the night?

Many years had gone by since the life and death separation.
Yet not even in his dream did he meet her incarnation.
A Taoist from Lingqiong was in the capital for a visitation,
Capable of summoning spirits with his eldritch concentration.
The Taoist was deeply moved by Emperor's constant yearning.
To find her incarnation, he engaged an exhaustive searching.
He moved through ether, traveled as fast as lightning.
Nowhere in the air or on the earth was he not seeking.

Why did the Taoist look for the emperor's wife?

Up in heaven and down to hell he went.
Both places were hazy, failing his intent.
Then he heard an enchanted mountain at sea,
Floating in the mist that no one could see.
Adorned towers rose above five-colored clouds,
Where many beautiful fairies gathered in crowds.
Among them was the one named Taizhen.
Same flowery face and silky skin were reborn again.

Under the gold gate of West Hall he knocked on the jade door.
From Xiaoyu to Shuangcheng the call was sent to her floor.
A messenger from the Emperor waiting was Taizhen told,
As she was wakened in the flowery canopy, quite startled.
She put on her gown, pushed away the pillow, and wandered around.
Then, through the pearl shade and silver screen she came down.
As she just woke up, her cloud-like hair was still pushed aside.

She entered the anteroom with her flowery crown hanging awry.

Where did the Taoist find the emperor's wife?

With sleeves waving in the wind, she was like a goddess at a glance,
As if she were in the Rainbow Dress and Feather Gown dance.
Loneliness appeared on her pretty face with tear stain,
Like a blossom on a pear tree after a spring rain.
With affection in her eyes she thanked for Emperor's indulgence.
Ever since they're parted, she missed his voice and appearance.
Their passion in Zhaoyang Palace was long ended.
Her solitary life in Penglai Temple had just started.

How did the wife feel about the earth?

She turned and looked down toward the mortal world,
Not a glimpse of the capital, just dust and cloud.
She took out some old gifts, showing her nostalgic feeling,
A gold hairpin and an inlaid case to renew the pledging.
She kept one branch of the hairpin and one side of the box,
As she split the hairpin and broke in half the box.
"Let our pledge be as strong as the inlaid and the gold."
"We will reunite, if not in heaven, in the mortal world."

She asked the messenger to bring back a verse with a clue.
There was a vow in the verse only the two of them knew.
On a Valentine's Day in Longevity Hall away from the crowd,
At midnight when no one else was around, they vowed.
"Let's be two birds in the sky flying side by side."
"Let's be two branches on the earth inseparably tied."
The sky and the earth will not be eternal, however.
Only this regret remains and lasts for ever and ever.

What hope does the emperor's wife give the emperor?

TDQs for Analysis Lesson 2

Opening Discussion

Directions: in your table groups, discuss the following 2 questions. Write your response in the spaces below.

Discussion Question #1: *Is the emperor a selfish person?*

Discussion Question #2: *Did the emperor make the right choice in killing his wife?*

Reading #2 and TDQs for Analysis

Directions: Answer the TDQs for analysis using the graphic organizers. You may work with ONE partner.

Criteria for success: Each answer must be a full sentence. You must provide evidence for your answers. You must use all sentences provided. Your answer must be supported by your evidence and it must directly answer the question. You must cite the stanza for the evidence you use.

Was it necessary for the emperor to kill his wife?

Evidence

In stanza _____, it says...

Answer

In other words...

Therefore... because...

Does the wife still love the emperor after she dies?

Evidence

In stanza _____, it says...

Answer

In other words...

Therefore... because...

Culminating Task Lesson 3

Directions: answer the prompt in a CEEL paragraph. This is due at the end of class.

Criteria for success

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| Response clearly answers the prompt. Provides multiple pieces of evidence. Connection between evidence and claim is thoroughly explained. | Response mostly answers the prompt. Provides multiple pieces of evidence. Connection between evidence and claim is mostly explained. | Response somewhat answers the prompt. Provides multiple pieces of evidence. Connection between evidence and claim is somewhat explained. | Response makes little to no attempt to answer the prompt. |

Prewrite

Directions: Find evidence that answers the question. Write down what you can infer from the evidence to answer the prompt. You may do this with ONE partner.

| Evidence | Inference |
|----------|-----------|
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Sentence Stems

Claim: The love between the emperor and his wife was beneficial because... / The love between the emperor and his wife was not beneficial because...

Evidence: In stanza #, the poem says...

Explanation: In other words...

Link: Therefore...

CEEL Paragraph

Directions: respond to the prompt using a CEEL paragraph. This may not be done with a partner. After you finish, use the rubric and self-edit checklist to evaluate your work.

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Self-Edit Checklist

- Did you accurately respond to the prompt?
- Did you reread your writing for clarity?
- Did you use the rubric?
- Did you make sure your analysis does not simply repeat your claim?

Grade