

Art imitates LIFE

Not only does art imitate
life but life imitates art.
Perhaps we not only
learn about life from
stories, perhaps we
make our lives through
the stories we tell
ourselves about the
things that happen to us.

Ramona Koval

QuoteAddicts

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Rationale

As an educator, I look forward to opportunities to integrate curricular areas for my students so that they see the interconnectedness of their learning. I want my students to understand that reading in English is more than simply decoding and comprehending the patterns, trends, and ethical issues, and identifying big ideas as well as unanswered questions. As students engage in this series of lessons, I fully anticipate that they will have questions. I fully anticipate that they will have comments. What I want is for those students to persevere, ask difficult questions, make choices, and express their opinions.

While 8th grade history classes provide students with information about US History that potentially mean very little to their present lives, English class has the power and privilege to transport students to various times and spaces, unhindered by the specifics of Common Core Standards. This unit of study centers around one piece of literature that are written by a Chinese author and introduces readers to a not so distant time in China when one man turned a country on its head. Students will deal with a wealth of information regarding the time period, and read articles and excerpts from memoirs in addition to the literature. It will challenge them to think more critically about the role of art and literature in society and politics.

While engaging in meaningful dialogue about the texts, students will be faced with issues regarding class, nationalism, and politics. With the help of works like “To Live” by Yu Hua, and excerpts from Tombstone by Yang Jisheng and Dikotter’s Mao’s Great Famine, students will be engaged in a unit of study that focuses on art’s commentary on social issues because, as Chairman Mao say, “There is in fact no such thing as art for art’s sake...[it is], as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.” Through this study, it is my hope that students will learn more about China, its culture, beliefs, and struggles and discover that authors and artists have the power to reshape and reframe history.

Skill and content objectives

Refer to the CA and NCHS world history standards or the CA language arts standards (included in the “Reference” section of your seminar binder) and identify which of these is addressed by your lesson plans.

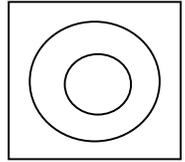
Reading Standards for Literature, grade 8

1. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
6. Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
7. Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

Social Studies/History Standards for grade 8

1. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
2. Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).
3. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
5. Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
6. Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
7. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

The Lessons



Day 1 - Definitions and Introductions

Materials: Essential Questions, “What is Art?” and “Who Is Mao Zedong?” on pieces of chart paper

Students will take a moment as the Warm Up to answer the question, and share their response with an elbow partner. A few students will be selected to share out.

Students will then be introduced to Chairman Mao.

- The teacher will have several pictures and/or objects in a paper bag that represent the Chairman (a little red book, a red arm band, for example)
- Students will receive sentence strips that contain pieces of Mao’s biography. In a “tea party” style, students will circulate the room, sharing their fact about Chairman Mao until the music stops.
- Students will then share out what they shared or what they heard and a recorder will write the information on a chart to be saved and referred to during the unit.

Day 2 - Art’s Purpose

Materials: Essential Questions, “What is the purpose of art?” and “What did Mao Zedong believe?” on pieces of chart paper

Create a T-chart with one essential question on either side of the T, leaving space for students to respond.

Then, show the students the quote by Mao Zedong on art and literature:

- “There is in fact no such thing as art for art’s sake...[it is], as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.”
- Ask the students to explain what this means based on what they know about Mao Zedong - chart it on the T-chart
- Do students agree or disagree? Why? Have students explain and encourage discussion using evidence from the texts that they have, including the charts that have been created.

Day 3-12 - *To Live*, by Yu Hua

Materials: Copies of *To Live* for students to read and annotate, chart paper for Clues, Problems, and Wonderings

1. Before students begin reading the excerpt, they will browse it looking for clues (what they think the story will be about), problems (words they don’t understand or can’t pronounce), and wonderings (questions they have about the text)

2. Student will begin reading the excerpt, noting themes, author's tone and mood, and identify literary devices employed in order to tell the story
3. As students read, annotate, and discuss the story, have students keep track of compelling quotes from their annotations on a "Say Mean Matter" Chart.
4. On the last day of reading and discussing, students will determine the ethical issues, and analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in the story propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. (using evidence from the texts)

Day 13-17 - article, "China's Great Famine: the true story" by Tania Branigan

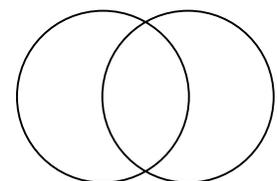
Materials: Copies of "China's Great Famine" for students to read and annotate, chart paper for Clues, Problems, and Wonderings

1. Before students begin reading the excerpt, ask the students what they would think if they found out that the famine that they read about actually happened? Have students turn and talk.
2. Then, they will browse the article looking for clues (what they think the story will be about), problems (words they don't understand or can't pronounce), and wonderings (questions they have about the text)
3. Student will begin reading the article, noting key details
4. As students read, annotate, and discuss the story, have students keep track of compelling quotes from their annotations on a "Say Mean Matter" Chart.
5. On the last day of reading and discussing, students will determine the ethical issues, and analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in the story propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. (using evidence from the texts)

Day 18 - Comparisons and Contrasts

Materials: Texts read previously, and Blank Venn diagram

1. Now that students have read and discussed both texts and know a brief history of China, what similarities do they notice? What differences do they notice? Discuss
2. Have students complete the Venn Diagram



Day 19-21 - *To Live* - The Movie

Materials: *To Live* the movie, T-chart – one side for the printed text and the other for the movie – to make comparisons

1. Students will watch the movie and take notes, paying attention to any similarities
2. Have students analyze the extent to which the filmed production of the story stays faithful to or departs from the text, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
3. Discuss motives for possible choices

Day 22 - What about Mao?

Materials: Texts read previously, completed charts and Venn Diagram

1. Have students revisit all of their documents and go back to the quote by Chairman Mao.
 - a. “There is in fact no such thing as art for art’s sake...[it is], as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.”
2. Turn and talk. What is their assessment? Does this art serve a greater purpose than just entertainment?

Assessments, Culminating Activities, Projects, etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept maps • Data tables • Cause and effect diagrams • Graphs • Flowcharts 	<p>Graphic Organizers and Concept Mapping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correlation/scatter diagrams • Idea webs/graphic organizers • Geographic maps • Time lines • Venn diagrams • Event chains • Histograms • Connecting elephants • Big idea generation • Ranking ladders • Mind maps • Business letters • Autobiographies • Editorials • Displays • Drawings/illustrations • Experiments • Essays • Surveys • Storyboard reports • Book reviews • Bulletins • Critiques • Designs • Vitas/Resumes • Inventions • Information-seeking letters • Management plans • Writing samples • Cartoons or comics • Collages • Consumer reports • Handbooks • Booklets 	<p>Performance Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlets • Observation reports • Research reports • Posters • Workplace scrapbooks • Team reports • Video yearbooks • Exhibits • Ballads • Announcements • Biographies • Questionnaires • Interviews • Issues/controversy • Workplace skits • Slide shows/video • Human graphs • Announcements <p>Live Performances and Presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-led conferences • Story time/anecdotes • Prepared and extemporaneous speeches • Commercials • Demonstrations • Newscasts • Plays-TV/radio broadcasts
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Extracurricular Extensions

Students may take field trips to the following locations:

Asia Society Southern California, Los Angeles

<http://asiasociety.org/southern-california>

Chinese American Museum, Los Angeles

<http://camla.org/>

LACMA, Los Angeles

<http://www.lacma.org/>

USC Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena

<http://www.pacificasiamuseum.org/>

Resources

- Yu Hua. *To Live*. Translated by Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books, 2003. Originally published in 1993.
- Tania Branigan. *The Guardian*, January 1, 2013
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/01/china-great-famine-book-tombstone>
- Frank Dikotter. Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962. London: Walker Books, 2011
- Yang Jisheng. Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962. Translated by Edward Friedman. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012
- *To Live*. Zhang Yimou, director. 1994.