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Grade 12

INTRODUCTION:

The following lessons are conceived of as a part of a larger unit on women's lives. After reading several texts we will explore visual artworks related to the same theme, with the hope that students' overall understanding will be deepened. Throughout, the connection between literature and art will be emphasized. Literary terms we've been practicing for the Comprehensive Examination in English will be applied to the visual arts in order to strengthen and solidify them.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn about the lives of women from the 19th Century to the present by exploring diverse literary and visual works of art. Students will understand the inequalities that have often discounted and oppressed women's lives, while simultaneously acknowledging strong female artists who have persevered and gone on to achieve greatness. The class will also learn various sociological terms from current literary theory and cultural studies that have challenged traditional labels such as "woman" by utilizing the concept of fluid identity.

KEY QUESTIONS:

How have women traditionally been disenfranchised?
What opportunities have been available to women from the 19th Century till the present?
How have female authors and artists chosen to represent themselves or other women?
How have some women responded to the inequalities they faced?
Is there a difference between the way men have chosen to represent women?
How can art both define women and challenge the very possibility of definition?
What does it mean to be a "woman"? What weight or expectations does the label carry?

TEXTS:

"The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Summary: The doctor and family of an intelligent, free-thinking woman decide that it is best if she spends time resting in solitude away from the dangerous influence of books and art. Due to boredom and alienation, she becomes fixated on the pattern of the wallpaper in the room, and she eventually loses her mind completely.

"The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin

Summary: A woman with a heart condition is informed of her husband's death in a train accident. At first she mourns hysterically and then she escapes to her room alone. As the hour passes, a new and strange feeling of freedom and excitement about her new life rises within her. When she emerges, she looks victorious and royal as she descends the staircase. There is a knock at the door and it is her husband. He had been far from the scene of the

accident. She falls down and dies. The doctor says she died of: “Joy that kills.”

The Awakening by Kate Chopin

Summary: Edna Pontellier is a southern, upper-class woman vacationing on the Gulf of Mexico with her husband, children, and friends. While there she meets a young man whom she falls madly in love with. She also meets two strongly contrasting women, Adelle Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz. Adelle is the uber-mother, representing the traditional, expected role for women. Mlle. Reisz, on the other hand, represents the free-thinking, radical female artist who lives on the margins of society. Edna is tempted by the latter's lifestyle, but ultimately chooses not to pursue her passions. Finally, Edna takes one last “swim” in the “comforting” arms of the gulf.

AFAM OBJECTS:

The Apple Paring, Clementine Hunter

Freedom Quilt, Jessie B. Telfair

Life in the Twenties, Antonio Estevez

Mary Valentin Bucher and *Dr. Christian Bucher*, Jacob Maentel

Untitled (47 At Jennie Richee/Break jail killing/and wounding guards)/*Untitled* (48 At Jennie Richee...And are chased for a long distance by glandelinians with blood hounds while two little girls jump like cats onto the shoulders of two soldiers), Henry Darger

LESSON 1 – Image Discussion (Maentel portraits & *Life in the Twenties*)

Since my students are beginning viewers and because this is primarily an English class, I will start the discussion with open-ended questions that are usually used with younger students such as:

- What do you see?
- What more can we find?
- What's happening in this picture? (to develop narrative)

Discussion will be developed and lead to more guided and directed questions such as:

- Who do you think is the most important person in this painting? (if relevant)
- What might, the boy, woman, man or dog be feeling/thinking?

In order to ensure that student responses and interpretations are legitimate, supportive questions will be used throughout the discussion such as:

- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What clues does the author give you to tell you that?
- What are you looking at that makes you say that?

WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

After the image discussion, students will be asked to choose 1 of the 2 images and write a description. Responses must be organized and edited into thoughtful paragraphs. Their responses must include the following:

- A description using objective and subjective observations
- A statement of at least one theme of the object
- A discussion of how this object relates to the theme of at least one of the texts we've read

LESSON 2 – Adopt an Object

OVERVIEW:

In this lesson, students will adopt 1 of the 3 remaining objects related to women’s lives. They will complete Observation Worksheets requiring objective and subjective information.

OBJECTIVE	SUBJECTIVE
What do you see?	What inferences or assumptions can you make based on what you see?
	What is your reaction to the painting, emotional or otherwise?

What strikes you about this object?

How would you describe this object to someone who could not see it?

What questions do you still have about the object?

How does the object relate to the theme of women or women’s lives?

How would you describe the tone of the object? (critical, nostalgic, satiric, sympathetic, respectful, angry, etc.) Explain your response.

LESSON 3 – Debate

OVERVIEW:

In order for students to understand the complexity of the AFAM objects and to further critical thinking skills, they will debate 3 works from the collection according to the question below. It is deliberately broad to allow for a multitude of responses and takes on the question. The hope is that the students will debate not only the literal content of the works, but the background, tone, and intention of the artists. My classes are usually small

--Which object is a better representation of women?

Each team receives 1 of the 3 works.

Ground rules:

Your team must plan your argument and be prepared to debate.

Each member must present part of your argument.

At least one member must present in each of the three stages of the debate.

1. Opening remarks
2. Middle
3. Conclusion

Part A – UNIFIED ESSAY

Your Task: After you have read the passages and studied the works of art, choose one of each that you believe share a common theme about the lives of women. Write a unified essay about women’s lives as revealed in your chosen text and work of art. In your essay, use ideas from **both** sources to develop a controlling idea about the lives of women. Using evidence from **each** passage, develop your controlling idea and show how the author and artist use specific literary elements or techniques to convey that idea.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Use ideas from **both** sources (one text and one work of art) to establish a controlling idea about the lives of women
- Use specific and relevant evidence from **each** source to develop your controlling idea
- Show how both the author and the artist use specific literary elements (for example: theme, tone, setting, characterization, structure, point of view) or techniques (for example: symbolism, irony, figurative language) to convey the controlling idea
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Use language that communicates ideas effectively
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Part B – CRITICAL LENS

Your Task: Write a critical essay in which you discuss two works (one literary and one visual) from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the **Critical Lens**. In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it, and support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements from the two works.

Critical Lens: “The fact is, women are in chains, and their servitude is all the more debasing because they do not realize it.”

- Susan B. Anthony

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Provide a valid interpretation of the critical lens that clearly establishes the criteria for analysis
- Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it
- Choose **two** works (one literary and one visual) that you believe best support your opinion
- Use the criteria suggested by the critical lens to analyze the works you have chosen
- Avoid plot summary. Instead, use specific references to appropriate literary elements (for example: theme, tone, characterization, setting, point of view) to develop your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a unified and coherent manner
- Specify the titles, author and artist of the works you choose
- Follow the conventions of standard written English