

Yale 2017 PIER Summer Institute: Africa and the World

Title of Lesson: WHAT IS SHORT FICTION?

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Subject Area(s): English; Comparative literature, World literature
Grade Level(s): Undergraduate
Time Allotment: 3 days, 1:20min per day

Lesson Description: *Include- why is this important for students to know?*

This lesson seeks to offer an introduction to the theory of short fiction. The students will be asked to reflect on the short form through a close reading of two short fiction theory pieces: "Defining the Short Story: Impressionism and Form" by Suzanne Ferguson and "Twice-Told Tales: a Review" by Edgar Allan Poe, and through a discussion on a short film entitled "Pumzi" by Wanuri Kahiu.

Learning Context: *How does this lesson/unit fit within the context of the the larger unit or other units?*

This lesson is an introduction in three sessions to the following course: "The Art of the Ordinary: 20th to 21th Centuries Short Fiction" which is an undergraduate course and will be taught at Gaston Berger University in Saint Louis, Senegal. The course examines short fiction produced from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. The approach to this course will be thematic as well as stylistic. A variety of themes and characters illustrated in the texts that will be presented demonstrate the transcendental and universal dimension of short fiction, as the individual anecdote becomes representative of a wider societal phenomenon. The stories will cover a broad range of themes including identity and self-determination, social and cultural encounters, gender struggles, cultural nationalism, exile, war, violence and trauma.

Compelling Question(s): *What question(s) will guide student inquiry during the lesson/unit?*

What is the context in which this document was written/published?
What do we observe, how do we describe this document?
What is the main idea presented by the author of this document?
What is our interpretation of the stylistic devices used in this document and what are the effects created on the audience?

How can we compare and contrast the different documents presented in this unit?

Content Standards: *What standards are addressed through the teaching of this lesson/unit?*

- Produce a critical response evaluating some aspects of text, context and meaning
- Demonstrate an ability to express ideas clearly and with fluency in both written and oral communication
- Explore literary works in detail

Points to be considered could include:

- understand the explicit and implicit meanings in a text
- identify and situate a text or an extract in the context of a larger work
- respond to the key features of texts such as language, characterization and structure.
 - Demonstrate how the formal elements of the text, genre and structure can not only be seen to influence meaning but can also be influenced by context.

Aspects to be considered could include:

- narrative technique
- characterization
- elements of style and structure
- poetic language.
 - Understand the attitudes and values expressed by literary texts and their impact on readers

Students should be able to recognize that:

- there can be very different readings of the same text
- the context of reception, including the individual reader, influences the way a text is read
- different values may be in contention within a text.

Lesson Objectives/Learning Intentions:

From Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) Core curriculum.

The distinctive SAS Core Curriculum is structured as a set of core liberal arts and sciences learning goals.

Areas of Inquiry: Arts and Humanities

- Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.
- Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.
- Understand the nature of human languages and their speakers.
- Engage critically in the process of creative expression.

Lesson Vocabulary:

Content Vocabulary

Skill/Process Vocabulary

Theory, Methodology, Context, Literature, Fiction, Genre, Form, Tales, Ordinary, Impressionism, Transcendentalism, Universalism, Theme, Style, Characterization, Society, Individual, Anecdote	Know, Understand, Describe, Analyze, Interpret, Synthesize, Contrast, Compare, Evaluate, Apply, Question
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Supporting Questions: *These questions are intended to contribute knowledge and insights to the inquiry behind the compelling question. These questions should provide students with the opportunity to explore content essential to advance the inquiry. Supporting questions should also serve to support development of formative assessment tasks (progress monitoring) and teacher or student selection of resources/teaching materials.*

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
(Day 1) What do you observe? What is the context in which this film was produced? How do you describe the setting, plot, characters, themes, and atmosphere? What is the specificity of the short form used to convey meaning?	(Day 2) What is the connection between the different excerpts/texts that you read? How do you synthesize the various arguments presented? What do you conclude?	(Day 3) What is the connection between the different texts that you read? How do you synthesize the various arguments presented? What do you conclude?
Formative Assessment	Formative Assessment	Formative Assessment
Students will describe and interpret the short film “Pumzi” by using the “Image Analysis” worksheet	Students will read, synthesize, compare and contrast the definitions presented in the documents: “What is Short Fiction” and “Defining the Short Story: Impressionism and Form”	Students will read, synthesize, compare and contrast the definitions presented in the articles: “Defining the Short Story: Impressionism and Form”, “Twice-Told Tales”: a Review”
Materials/Resources	Materials/Resources	Materials/Resources

<p>“Pumzi” “Image Analysis” (exercise worksheet)</p>	<p>“What is Short Fiction” (compilation of definitions of the short story)</p>	<p>Ferguson, Suzanne C. “Defining the Short Story: Impressionism and Form” Poe, Edgar Allan. “Twice-Told Tales: a Review”</p>
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Summative Assessment/Performance Task:

The summative performance task will assess all the supporting questions. Students will write a definition of short fiction based on their readings.

Lesson Activities:

Procedure:
Day 1 – 1:20min.
 This lesson begins as an introduction to the course and the notion of genre, with a focus on theory and definitions.

Engage

- Students will watch the short film “Pumzi” as an introduction to the short form.
- **Formative Assessment:** Students will be divided into groups and will cooperatively describe and attempt to interpret the film by answering the questions on the “Image Analysis” worksheet.
- Teacher will list on the board all the observations and interpretations provided by the groups and will clarify any misunderstandings.
- Teacher will guide a short discussion with supporting questions on the topics presented in the film.
- Teacher will conclude by drawing a connection between the short film and the short story by showing how the short form can effectively convey meaning through a certain set of stylistic tools.

Day 2 – 1:20min.

Evaluate and Explain

- Teacher will introduce the historical background of the short story form by looking at its evolution in Europe as well as in Africa through the oral tradition.
- Teacher will hand out the document “What is Short Fiction” to the students who will read and annotate the document.
- Teacher will record on the board the main ideas annotated by the students.
- **Formative assessment:** Students will be asked to compare and contrast the various definitions of the short story provided.
- Teacher will hand out “Defining the Short Story” by Suzanne Ferguson and will ask the students to read and annotate the article.

Day 3 – 1:20min.

Review, Evaluate and Define

- **Formative assessment:** Teacher will hand out “Twice-Told Tales: a Review” by Edgar Allan Poe and will ask the students to read and annotate the review as well as compare and contrast it with Ferguson’s article
- Teacher will record all the observations made by the students and will clarify any misunderstandings.

Take-home Summative examination (due for next class): Teacher will ask the students to write a definition of short fiction by drawing conclusions from their readings and from class discussions from Day 1, Day 2 and Day 3. The definition should be supported by direct quotes from the readings completed in class and should be about 1-2 pages long.

