

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Haunted Houses"

Lesson Plan

A resource developed through Longfellow and the Forging of American Identity

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Suggested Grade Level: Middle School

Subject Area: English, Language Arts, Social Studies, History

Maine Learning Results:

English Language Arts:

Process of Reading: A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, A7, A9

Literature and Culture: B1, B6, B8, B10

Language and Images: C1, C2, C3

Processes of Writing and Speaking: E1, E2, E3

Standard English Conventions: F1, F2

Time Required:

This lesson can be done in two sessions

1. One class to read/discuss the poem, include time for the students to start original poem
2. A follow-up session with a Poetry Workshop/sharing time

Learning Objectives:

Students will develop an interest and an appreciation of Longfellow's poetry. They will learn more about poetic form and technique. Students will use "Haunted Houses" as a model to create an original poem.

Materials and Resources Required:

Copies of the poem "Haunted Houses," dictionaries, and the handout "Poetry Response Guide." It is helpful to have a handout of "Poetry – Some Terms and Techniques" for reference.

Preparation:

Give the students a copy of the poem and assign them to look up any unfamiliar vocabulary (impalpable, inoffensive, wafts, ethereal, equipoise, perturbations, and aspirations). Have the students carefully read the poem (paying close attention to the rhythm and rhyme, and thinking about what the author is saying). Have the students complete the Poetry Response Guide before class.

Lesson Outline:

1. Orally read the poem.
2. Class discussion of the poem. Students should respond to the content and effectiveness of the poem, and discuss the technical aspects (rhyme, rhythm, imagery – talk about what makes this poem work). Refer to Poetry Response Guide.
3. Creation of original student work to be started in class and finished for homework. Students will write a poem on a haunted house or a haunted place with a minimum of 3 stanzas, 4 lines/stanza, ABAB.

4. Oral sharing of original poetry – workshop model. An extension would be to illustrate and display the poetry.
5. The poetry may be collected and evaluated by the teacher for a grade.

Assessment Summary:

All students are encouraged to participate in class discussion. Students will be encouraged to orally share their original work; positive and constructive feedback will be shared. The teacher may collect the poetry for a closer reading/evaluation and return them with comments/rubric to the students. Student revision (if requested). Students should file a copy of both poems in their portfolio. A written reflection of the student work or the original poem may also be requested.

Poetry Response Guide for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Haunted Houses"

Student's Name _____

What feelings do you have as you read the poem?

In your own words, tell what the poem is about.

Check any of the following techniques you recognize in the poem?

Alliteration

Allusion

Imagery

Metaphor

Simile

Onomatopoeia

Repetition

Personification

Copy a part of the poem which you like the most.

Haunted Houses

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through the open doors
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the doorway, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more guests at table, than the hosts
Invited; the illuminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have no title-deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

The spirit-world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapors dense
A vital breath of more ethereal air.

Our little lives are kept in equipoise
By opposite attractions and desires;
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
And the more noble instinct that aspires.

These perturbations, this perpetual jar
Of earthly wants and aspirations high,
Come from the influence of an unseen star,
An undiscovered planet in our sky.

And as the moon from some dark gate of cloud
Throws o'er the sea a floating bridge of light,
Across whose trembling planks our fancies crowd
Into the realm of mystery and night,--

So from the world of spirits there descends
A bridge of light, connecting it with this,
O'er whose unsteady floor, that sways and bends,
Wander our thoughts above the dark abyss.

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Created by Gail Roller

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