

Grade level: 9th-12th Grade

Subject: Language Arts

Rationale:

Students will examine the use of suspense, theme, and imagery in the Manga Classics adaptation of Edgar Allen Poe's short stories and poems. Students will be asked to focus on specific illustrations in the novel and consider how the artist creates meaning with the visual medium of a graphic novel.

Instructional Duration: 3-4 hours

Objectives:

Students will:

- ✓ Read the graphic novel *The Stories of Edgar Allen Poe* and consider it as a visual adaptation of classic pieces of literature.
- ✓ Use images from the text to answer specific essential questions.
- ✓ Understand the concepts of theme, suspense, and romanticism as it pertains to a graphic adaptation of a classic text

Front-loaded information / understanding:

Theme - Students should be able to define and identify one or more themes from the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Imagery - Students should be able to define and identify imagery in the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Symbolism – Students should be able to define and identify one or more symbol from the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Suspense - Students should be able to understand the concept of suspense (including foreshadowing and tone) in the text(s) and how it is used to introduce and define characters or emphasize particular events. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Manga – Many students have not been exposed to this type of reading. Prior to assigning any reading in the Manga Classic Text, instructors should cover the “How to read manga” section at the beginning of the book with their students to ensure understanding.

Instructional Strategies:

NOTE: The lessons contained below assume that students are reading the Manga Classic adaptation after having already been exposed to all or some part of the original text. If you are using the graphic novel adaptation as an alternative to reading the original novel, the lessons can still be utilized with modifications.

Students should have read the original stories or poems (*The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Raven*, *The Masque of the Red Death* and/or *The Fall of the House of Usher*) by Edgar Allen Poe. Have them share with the class what they know about the text itself. Specific attention should be paid to how students

visualize some of the more crucial moments of the text including, but not limited to, character appearance, conflict, thematic elements, verse, and symbolism.

Activity #1 – Answering Essential Questions (Pre-Reading)

Students should be asked to recall their experiences reading one of Poe's works. Instruct them to think about what parts of the text stood out to them and why. Students should then be broken into groups of 3-4 and asked to consider how they themselves would adapt the text to a visual medium. In doing so, they will answer the following essential questions:

- ✓ *What is suspense? How does the author build suspense within the text?*
- ✓ *Which 3 scenes are the most suspenseful? What elements in the text are used to create this emotion?*
- ✓ *What is the tone of the text?*
- ✓ *What clues exist in the body of the text that hint at what may happen at the end?*
- ✓ *Why did you choose each of these scenes?*
- ✓ *How would you utilize visual imagery to make these scenes come to life?*

Students will then be asked to provide three sketches (one for each scene selected). These sketches do not need to be elaborate but should stage the scene in some way (position of characters, background, and objects). Sketches should include some sort of caption that contains specific guiding information that explains how the images shape understanding of the text (2-3 sentences).

Activity #2 – Who Was Edgar Allen Poe?

Have students research Edgar Allen Poe (Biography.com is a good site to start - <https://www.biography.com/people/edgar-allan-poe-9443160>) with a document that contains specific questions that they have to research and read to answer about both Kipling and his writing. Each question should have a point value attached based on the complexity and difficulty.

Some sample questions could include (but are not limited to):

1. Where did Poe grow up?
2. What was his relationship to his family?
3. What events in his life may have contributed to his choice to focus on gothic literature?
4. What kinds of controversies has Poe been involved in?
5. What are the circumstances around his death?
6. How do scholars view his work today?

Students can be assessed on the questions they are able/choose to answer and their results can spark initial class discussion on their predictions and expectations from the text.

Activity #3 – Suspenseful Stories

Break the class into groups and assign each group a different story or poem. In the event that you are utilizing the graphic novel to focus on only one specific work, have all groups focus on the same story or poem. Ask the students to identify those moments that seem to be most effective in building suspense. Have them point to moments where the combination of images and text create a sense of foreboding or anticipation.

In addition, have students examine the artwork to establish tone. Ask them to identify how the artist's choices create a uncertain, dark, morose, or gloomy air to the story?

Have them work together to select a specific page or set of pages where they feel this is the most pronounced or effective. Next, have them together brainstorm and create a suspenseful story of their own. The tale can be real or imagined and must be illustrated. They can assign roles (or the teacher can create them) in order to divide the work logically. The teacher can provide materials for them to complete this, including art supplies.

Have them prepare a short presentation for the class where they share their analysis with the rest of the class by referring specifically to the text and the images therein. They will also unveil their own stories and the other members of the class can assess them based on standards established by the classroom teacher. How can art build suspense and which story does it best?

Activity #4 – Theme Identification

There are many themes within this text. Most of which connect to Romanticism or the idea of gothic style literature and include (but are not limited to) death, mourning, darkness, isolation, the supernatural, the force of nature, terror, and sorrow. For example:

The Tell-Tale Heart:

Page 9 – The old man's eye

Pages 16-17 – The close up of the old man's face and eye

Page 25 – The terror of the old man

Page 36 – The rage murder of the old man

Page 46 – The heart begins to beat

Page 48 – The suspense builds as the heart grows louder in the protagonist's mind

Pages 51-52 – The protagonist cracks and reveals his crime

The Cask of Amontillado:

Page 57 - The narrator's deception that builds a trust with Fortunato

Page 60 – The scope of the party and the shadow that rests upon the patrons

Page 66 – Fortunato as a drunken jester

Page 72 - Fortunato's fate foreshadowed by the first panel of the page. He is inside an alcove and the narrator's sinister face appears in the foreground

Page 77 – There appear to be "cracks" on Fortunato foreshadowing him being surrounded by stone and mortar soon

Page 80 - A mason!

Page 92 – The final block

Page 96 - Skulls of the dead

The Raven:

Page 99 – The narrator's solitude as expressed through the setting

Pages 101-102 – Lenore in the eye of the narrator, her fate, and its impact on the narrator

Page 108 – The raven appears!

Page 110 – "Nevermore" as spoken for the first time

Page 111 – The narrator appears in the eye of the raven just as Lenore appeared in his eye

Page 116 – the lifeless eyes of the raven

Pages 117, 121 – Images and shadows of the lost Lenore

Pages 125-127 – The final confrontation between the narrator and the raven

Page 130 – The shadow of the raven falls upon the narrator

The Masque of the Red Death:

Page 135 – The Red Death claims a life as we watch from above

Page 136 – The prosperity of Prince Prospero

Pages 140-141 – The juxtaposition of the safety of the rich with the death of the poor. The rich wear masks.

Page 147 – The one red room

Page 150 – The black (ebony) clock that tolls loudly

Page 157 – Oddities and eccentrics that are part of Prospero's court

Page 159 – The great ebony clock strikes!

Pages 171-173 – The masque appears and confronts Prospero

Page 180 – The figure leaves behind bloody footprints wherever it steps

Pages 184-188 – Prospero and his court's luck runs out

Pages 190-191 – Death claims us all

The Fall of the House of Usher:

Page 195 – A shadow falls on the narrator's face as he approaches the Usher grounds

Page 200 – The letter from Usher falls

Page 203 – The names of Roderick and Madeline in the Usher family tree

Pages 204, 206, 207-208 – The crack in the house

Pages 212-213 – Roderick's solitude in darkness

Pages 215-216 – Roderick's face described as a "cadaverousness of complexion"

Page 221 – Roderick as a clock – what is his relationship with time?

Page 222 – Fear as an entity torturing Roderick

Page 224 – The swirl of sorrow and darkness surrounds Roderick

Page 232 – Darkness pours from the objects around Roderick

Page 238 – The music conjures images from within Roderick's mind

Page 259 – The long stairway up from the place where Madeline is entombed

Page 270 – The tempest in Roderick's mind meets the storm outside

Pages 274-280 – The Mad Tryst (a story within a story)

Page 289 – Roderick's horrifying realization

Pages 294-297 – Madeline's macabre return

Page 320 – The fall of the house

Or any others where you feel the artwork creates a visual representation of the themes of the novel that you find particularly compelling. Have students answer the following question about the image with a short essay:

What elements of the artwork bring a strong understanding of a major theme of the novel on the page that text alone could not?

Final Assessment:

The works of Edgar Allen Poe are some of the most powerful and elegant examples of the Romantic Literary Movement that we bring to our students. Utilizing some of the work generated by Activity #4 above, have students establish a solid, arguable thesis for the representation of Romanticism in the Manga Classics adaptation of these works. They can then prepare a short essay (length determined by the classroom teacher) arguing this thesis. Some suggested thesis statements include:

- In the graphic novel adaptation of *The Raven*, the bird itself is drawn to seem supernatural in appearance in order to amp up the intensity of its impact on the narrator
- In the graphic novel adaptation of *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the use of visual cracks throughout the text allude to the crumbling stability of both the house itself and Roderick's mental state.
- In the graphic novel adaptation of *The Cask of Amontillado*, Fortunado's fate is alluded to throughout the text through the use of imagery which isolates his character by surrounding him in darkness.

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