

Grade level: 9th-12th Grade

Subject: Language Arts

Rationale:

Students will examine the use of theme in the Manga Classics adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma*. Students will be asked to consider 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 *Emma* and consider it as a visual adaptation of a classic piece of literature.
- ✓ Use images from the novel to answer specific essential questions.
- ✓ Understand the concept of theme as it pertains to a graphic novel 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.

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 may have read the original novel *Emma* by Jane Austen. 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, and symbolism.

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

Students should be asked to recall their experiences reading Austin’s *Emma*. Instruct them to think about what parts of the novel 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 one major theme of the novel?*
- ✓ *Which 3 scenes from the novel serve to best illustrate one of these themes?*
- ✓ *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) and share them with the class. These sketches do not need to be elaborate but should stage the scene in some way (position of characters, background, and objects).

Activity #2 – Pre-reading Minicomic

Once the scenes have been sketched out, it is time to take the activity to the next level. In their groups, students should identify which among them enjoy drawing or have some aptitude at sketching. Ideally, each group will have at least one student who identifies himself or herself this way. If not, tell students that the next activity will involve more elaborate drawing and some writing and ask for volunteers in each group to be the “artists.” If necessary, you can shift groups to accommodate an artist in each. Once you have an artist in each group, they can begin.

Each group is to choose one of the sketches from the previous activity. Using the text as a roadmap, have students draw a short minicomic of no more than four panels to recreate that scene. Use a document camera to share each group’s comic and have them explain their artistic process.

After this is complete, have students look at page 5 in the Manga Classics text and explore collage of characters from the text. Ask them if they can tell which character is which.

Activity #3 – Post-reading Comparison

Once students have had the opportunity to read the text, have them return to their minicomics from the previous activity and compare how artist Crystal S. Chan’s depiction of their event differs from their own rendition. Use this as an opportunity to talk about the concept of adaptation and how different approaches to a text yield different, but ultimately satisfying results.

Activity #4 – Theme Identification

Select specific points in the novel where the artwork illustrated a theme in a particularly compelling manner. For example:

Page 21 – Emma as a royal figure (social standing)

Page 24 & 27 – Contrasting images of Mr. Martin of Harriett’s perspective vs. Emma’s (social standing)

Page 59 – The roles that Emma can play outside of being married (identity)

Page 66 – Mr. Elton’s letter (romantic gesture / love)

Page 107 – Jane and Emma’s reaction (jealousy)

Page 165 – Mrs. Elton (social standing)

Page 179 – Emma pining for love – inset flower (love / gender identity)

Page 256 – Emma, Harriett, and Mr. Knightly – note the roses (romantic love / jealousy)

Page 289 – Harriet and Mr. Martin – note the roses (social status / romantic love)

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:

Students should choose a section from the graphic novel and explore the use of visual imagery as a means of illustrating a major theme and connect it with the same scene from the original text. They will write a short compare and contrast essay where they look at how each medium depicts this information and which one they see as most effective. If the instructor chooses, a film or stage production of the story could also be included in this mix.

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