
Unit 6: Westward Expansion

Unit Overview:

This unit covers the period between the Civil War and the turn of the century. It focuses specifically on the rise of women in literature during this time period.

Lesson 6:1: Day 1

Objective(s):

Students will be introduced to background information needed to be able to understand what was happening in literature during the Westward Expansion.

Skills attained:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of naturalism, local color, regionalism, and realism.

Topics:

Westward Expansion

Vocabulary:

Naturalism	Local color
Regionalism	Realism

Procedure:

1. Give the lecture over the notes on Westward Expansion.
2. Introduce Mark Twain. Begin reading the selection from *Life on the Mississippi*.

Motivation:

To motivate students for this unit, I try to bring in information concerning the treatment of women at that time, including what careers they could have, what their jobs were in the home, and what position they held in society. Students have a difficult time imagining the way women were treated at that time. I use this information throughout my lecture over the time period. I also bring in information concerning the “Wild West.” Students really enjoy learning about some of the outlaws of the time.

Content Background:

For content background information use chapter one in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Fourth Edition, Volume II*. You will also be able to find information concerning women’s rights and the “Wild West” on the Internet.

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Suggested Teaching Strategies:

Remember to use stories throughout your lectures to keep the students interested.

Assessment:

None

Wrap-Up Assignment:

None

Homework:

Read the selection from *Life on the Mississippi* and complete activity 6:1.

Lesson 6:2, 6:3: Day 2

Objective(s):

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the literature of Mark Twain and Kate Chopin.

Skills attained:

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the elements of autobiography, as well as characterization in a local color story.

Topics:

- Mark Twain
- *Life on the Mississippi*
- Kate Chopin
- "A Respectable Woman"
- Local Color

Vocabulary:

Local color	Regionalism
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Procedure:

1. Quiz 6:1. Correct in class.
2. Review activity 6:1. Focus on the elements of autobiography in the selection. Is this an unbiased account of his life, or is it biased? How does this compare to the slave narratives of Equiano and Douglass, and the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, and history written by Bradford?
3. Introduce "A Respectable Woman." Begin by discussing what the role of marriage was in the late 19th century. How were women treated in marriage? What were their roles in the home, family, and community? How might a woman become unsatisfied in her marriage?

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4. Read “A Respectable Woman.” Complete activity 6:2 and correct in class. Discuss the following:
 - a. The role of the title in the story
 - b. The marriage of the Barodas, and why Mrs. Baroda is never given a first name
 - c. The feelings Mrs. Baroda has for Gouvernail. Does she act on them?
 - d. What is the role of marriage in the story?

Materials List:

1. Copies of Chopin’s “A Respectable Woman” (available on the Internet)
2. Copies of “The Story of an Hour” (available on the Internet, as well as in most literature textbooks)

Motivation:

The stories of Chopin are usually interesting to students. By discussing the basic themes that Chopin investigates (marriage, love, attraction, and women’s roles in society), students gain a strong understanding and appreciation for what Chopin was saying.

Content Background:

For content background information, you may use the first chapter of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Fourth Edition, Volume II* and *The Idiot’s Guide to American Literature*.

Suggested Teaching Strategies:

In terms of Mark Twain, there are a couple of areas you could add to this unit. The first is to watch the A&E Biography ® of his life. At this point, you could certainly complete a mini-unit on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. I have found this novel is a difficult one to teach as the students have a very hard time with the different dialects. Be sure that if you try this novel, you provide a great deal of background information as well as dialect support. I also find that, if I am a little ahead at this point, I allow the students to watch the Disney version of *Huckleberry Finn*, starring Elijah Wood. While it is only loosely based on the novel, the students do enjoy watching it, and it provides a nice break from the literature intensive work we have been doing.

Assessment:

Quiz 6:1

Wrap-Up Assignment:

None

Homework:

Read “The Story of an Hour” and complete activity 6:2.