Lesson Description

Continuing our work with *The Alchemist* as it illustrates the Hero’s Journey/Pattern of Human Experience, students will further consider the influence of surrounding culture on the shaping of performed work. By comparing an original manuscript of Anne Sexton’s “Crossing the Atlantic” to its published, circulated copy, students will explore some possible influences behind the author’s developmental choices.

Objectives

- Students will be able to (SWBAT) thematically relate familiar and unfamiliar texts.
- SWBAT practice poetry analysis and deconstruction.
- SWBAT practice comparative analysis between genres.
- SWBAT both informally and formally write in response to reading, thinking, and talking.

Enduring Understanding(s) & Essential Questions

1. **Surrounding culture, expectations, and societal norms can hinder public sharing of personal discovery, but artists can use those forces to their advantage.**
   - Where can we see this manipulation by authors – of any kind – today?
   - Could this manipulation be considered advantageous if it inspired a creation that could not have been made independently?
   - Do we have control over this effect, or is it so engrained that it’s natural and *not* a manipulation, but instead an essential variable?

2. **Authors revise and edit their work to shape not only their desires, but often to meet the desires and expectations of their potential audience and culture surrounding them.**
   - Why do writers revise? What is the benefit of revision?
   - Who are writers thinking of when they revise?
   - How do we alter our *texts* for our intended audience?
   - Is some of Sexton’s original purpose lost in the changes?
   - How did Sexton’s surrounding culture affect her writing?
   - Should we revise and edit to fit an audience? Why or why not?
Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Target standards)

English IV AP, grade 12th:

(3) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, graphics, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods.

(8) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze the consistency and clarity of the expression of the controlling idea and the ways in which the organizational and rhetorical patterns of text support or confound the author's meaning or purpose.

(13) Writing/Writing Process. Students use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text. Students are expected to:

(A) plan a first draft by selecting the correct genre for conveying the intended meaning to multiple audiences, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies (e.g., discussion, background reading, personal interests, interviews), and developing a thesis or controlling idea;

(C) revise drafts to clarify meaning and achieve specific rhetorical purposes, consistency of tone, and logical organization by rearranging the words, sentences, and paragraphs to employ tropes (e.g., metaphors, similes, analogies, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions, irony), schemes (e.g., parallelism, antithesis, inverted word order, repetition, reversed structures), and by adding transitional words and phrases;

(D) edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling; and

(E) . . . and publish written work for appropriate audiences.

Pre-requisite Knowledge and Skills

- Analyzing and understanding poetry
- Stream of consciousness / internal monologue
- The Hero's Journey / Pattern of Human Experience
- Revision and editing strategies
- Utilizing background context clues
- Intended audience

Vocabulary

- Manuscript v. published form
- Poetic elements

Time Required

90 minutes + homework

Materials Required

- Writer's notebooks or journals
- “OPS Lesson 2, Sexton” PowerPoint document. Contact Lori Hahn at the
UTeach-LA office to request an electronic copy of this PDF.

- Printed copies of “Crossing the Atlantic” and evolutionary documents from the HRC archives
- Printed copies of the “Two-Part Unit Essay Assignment” (see last page)

**Procedure**

Students will have read *The Alchemist* and should have an understanding of the Hero’s Journey / Pattern of Human Experience. This will be used later in the unit to compare the “purified” and “prescriptive” life pattern of Santiago in comparison to the realities faced by Whitman and Sexton (see “Society’s Comfort Zones, Lesson 2”) and how they fit into the Hero’s Journey.

**Engage 10 minutes**

- In pairs, students will share the poems they wrote for homework and discuss together their writing process, specifically the selection of words for the poem and why they made those choices. *(4-5 minutes)*
- Ask 2-3 volunteers to share their poems and corresponding authorial decisions with the class. *(5-6 minutes)*

**Introduce & Explore ~15 minutes**

- Read “Crossing the Atlantic” aloud to students. *(2-3 minutes)*
- Students then will have four to five minutes to respond to the poem independently, including initial similarities between the speaker’s journey and Santiago’s, in their writer’s notebook.
- Share responses in pairs/triads *(3 minutes)*, then briefly as a class *(3 minutes)*.

**Explain 5 minutes**

- Introduce Sexton’s life and context and “Crossing the Atlantic” evolutionary documents using the Sexton PowerPoint. *Provide students with copies of the poem and its source materials to mark up individually. *(5 minutes)*

**Apply & Elaborate 35-40 minutes**

- Independently, students will examine the poem and its evolutionary documents, considering the important features of Sexton’s life *(provided in a handout by printing selected slides from the PowerPoint if desired)* and her cultural context that may have informed the poem’s content and message. *(5 minutes)*
- Students will then work in pairs to unpack and discuss the published work, including possible motivations for its developmental path. *(20-25 minutes)*
  - Teacher will circulate to monitor conversations.
  - Intervene, as necessary, to scaffold with questions or offer explanation if students’ understanding and analysis breaks down.
- Pairs will separate, and students will independently free write their thoughts on the work for ten minutes, considering the important features they would include in an analysis essay of the poem itself as a journey, both in its development and its message. They must also incorporate the comparative issues between the poem and *The Alchemist* discovered...
while writing during the engagement activity.

**Evaluate 20 minutes**
- Students will discuss their findings in pairs for five minutes.
- Discuss as a class for fifteen minutes.
  - What similarities exist in the reached conjectures? What differences?
  - How powerful a force is public culture on artistic performance?

**Closure ~5 minutes**
- Students move forward into a formal essay considering the shaping of “Crossing the Atlantic” through revision as a possible means of shaping a particular public image.
  - If time allows, begin in class as teacher circulates, conferring with students as needed.
  - Complete for homework. Whole-class discussion to occur the following class day.

**Future Lessons**
The final assessment (“Two-Part Unit Essay Assignment,” next page) will follow the discussion of the homework essay, considering the effects of other’s expectations – whether we know it or not or like it or not – on the writing process, and using both Whitman’s and Sexton’s changes as examples.

**Resources:**
- Harry Ransom Center Archives Department, Anne Sexton Collection
Two-Part Unit Essay Assignment:

Part 1: Using Sexton and Whitman’s revision strategies and personal experiences as examples, explore the effect of the public realm on author choice. Does this add to the writing experience, detract from it, or not affect it at all? Incorporate Santiago’s journey and his reactions to others’ expectations in comparison to the writing journey of Sexton and Whitman.

Part 2: Consider your own hero’s journey. Do you protect yourself and your journey from the outside realm by only revealing what you believe others will “like” or appreciate? If so, contrast what you want people to see as your journey versus what it actually is? If not, are you throwing off social constructs or redefining them yourself? Incorporate the use of social media today and the effect of social media on how we present ourselves to the public domain and how this presentation can be inaccurate, molded, or reconstructed, and why. Is anything lost with the manipulation?

Overview: Are you playing the game or changing the rules?