**Description**

Through whole-class, small-group, and individual study, students will become acquainted with the poetry of Walt Whitman. Then they will analyze primary and secondary sources to determine how the Civil War altered Whitman’s writing style. Students will share their findings in a written, short answer response.

**Objectives**

After reading and analyzing Whitman’s poetry as a class and in pairs, students will work independently to craft a paragraph that explains how Whitman’s poetry changed as a result of his involvement with the Civil War.

**Enduring Understanding(s) & Essential Questions**

Texts reflect a writer’s personal life and opinions and convey emotions that the author feels.

- How is Whitman’s early life reflected in his writing?
- How does the Civil War impact Whitman’s writing?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Target standards)</th>
<th>English Language Arts, grade 6:</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| (3) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:  
  (A) infer the implicit theme of a work of fiction, distinguishing theme from the topic;  
  (B) analyze the function of stylistic elements  
  (C) compare and contrast the historical and cultural settings of two literary works. |
| (4) 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 explain how figurative language (e.g., personification, metaphors, similes, hyperbole) contributes to the meaning of a poem. |
| (8) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain how authors create meaning through stylistic elements and figurative language emphasizing the use of personification, hyperbole, and refrains. |
| (9) 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 compare and contrast the stated or implied purposes of different authors writing on the same topic. |
| (17) Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts. Students write expository and procedural or work-related texts to communicate ideas and information to specific audiences for specific purposes. Students are expected to:  
  (C) write responses to literary or expository texts and provide evidence from the text to demonstrate understanding; |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close-reading / analysis of poetry</td>
<td>Tone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing</td>
<td>Theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing in short-answer response format</td>
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| Time Required | Two and a half to three 50-minute class periods (125-150 minutes in total) |
Materials Required

- Writer’s Notebooks or another place to record reflections
- Doc Cam / Smart Board for modeling poem analysis
- Projector and computer with internet access
- “Whitman and the War Resource” and “Whitman and the War Jigsaw Materials” documents. Contact Lori Hahn at the UTeach-LA office to request an electronic copy of each of these PDFs.
- Copies of the following poems by Whitman:
  - “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”
  - “Beat! Beat! Drums!”
  - “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim”
  - “A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown”
  
  If you don’t have your own copies of these, contact Lori Hahn at the UTeach-LA office to request an electronic copy of the “Whitman Poems” PDF.

Procedure

- Consider grouping students of mixed abilities for jigsaw activity.
- For 504/SpEd/ESL accommodations, a paragraph frame with sentence starters may be provided.
- If teacher has concerns about young middle school students’ maturity level and ability to work with particular documents or images included in the lesson, consider swapping material for other examples or excerpts from within the cited resources (ex. Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the War, “Our Wounded and Sick Soldiers…” article, Specimen Days & Collect).

LESSON 1

Engage

10 minutes

Think back to when you moved from elementary to middle school:
- How did your mind-set change?
- Could others tell you had changed? If yes, how? If no, why not?

It would also be acceptable for students to reflect on any other activity where they experienced a change in their mind-set, (ie. moving, etc.)

Students should complete this as a Quick Write and then share with their table group.

Introduce & Explore

30 minutes

- **Frame the lesson.** Let students know that following their exploration, they will answer this question:

  *How did Walt Whitman’s poetry change as a result of his involvement with the Civil War?*

- As a class, students will read “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” by Walt Whitman.
  - This poem was written in 1860 before the Civil War. *Teacher will lead students through an analysis of the poem, using document camera or Smart Board for modeling.*
  - Analyze the following:
    - Vocabulary (unknown words)
    - Punctuation
    - Paraphrase

Rachel Croci & Jennie Tidwell

2016 UTeach-LA Teaching From the Archives

Edited by J. Haug, UT-LA
Teacher will provide information on Walt Whitman’s background:
- Born May 31, 1819 in West Hills, Long Island, New York
- Died March 26, 1892 in Camden, New Jersey
- Printer, Journalist, Editor, Walker, Observer, School teacher, Poet,
- Known for writing *Leaves of Grass*, considered a milestone in the history of American literature.

View Civil War - Brain POP video, length 5:07 minutes (also linked in “Resource” PDF).

*Note: If necessary due to time constraints, begin lesson 2 with the BrainPOP video.

Ask students to pair/share to quickly remind each other of the tone and message of the Whitman poem they read last class and of the information shared about Whitman and in the Civil War video. Call on 2-4 students to share the content of their partner discussion with the class; guide students toward correcting misinformation if needed.

*If unable to view the BrainPOP video in lesson 1, quickly refresh the previous class day’s content as a whole class and then watch the video.

I. Civil War Photograph and Whitman Document Jigsaw (~20 minutes)
- In small groups, students will view and analyze one photograph and one written piece of Civil War documentation from the “Whitman and the War Jigsaw Materials.”
  Directions: Analyze each document using the following guiding statements / questions:
  1. Describe what you see in the document.
  2. What is the tone of this document?
  3. What did you notice about the visual presentation of the document? Was it handwritten? Was it stained? Was it worn? Was it well preserved?
  4. How does this enhance your understanding of the Civil War?
- Follow-Up Conversation as a whole class: What did you notice?

II. Guided Analysis of chosen poems in pairs. (~25 minutes)
- Students will form pairs and select one poem by Whitman to analyze with a partner. *The following poems represent works that were directly inspired by the Civil War:*
  - “Beat! Beat! Drums!”
  - “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim”
  - “A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown”
- Students will work in pairs, but the teacher will guide them through the analysis steps previously modeled.
LESSON 3
Evaluate
25-30 minutes

*If necessary, student pairs will complete the poem analysis assignment started the last part of lesson 2 before moving into this task.

Individually, students will answer the following question in paragraph form:

*How did Walt Whitman’s poetry change as a result of his involvement with the Civil War?*

Teacher may wish to guide their students on accepted short-answer response formatting, including appropriately citing supporting evidence.

Closure
5 minutes

Students will share paragraphs with a partner who read a different poem than they did in order to compare findings.

Future Lessons

- Explore and analyze other poems that were written in response to war, for example:
  - “The Charge of the Light Brigade” by Alfred Lord Tennyson,
  - “The Last of the Light Brigade” by Rudyard Kipling, and
  - “Grass” by Carl Sandburg.
- Conduct research to determine how a revered author’s life experience has influenced his or her literary works.

Resources:


Gardner, Alexander. Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the War. New York: Dover, 1959. Plates 35, 39, and 100. (This is a reproduction of Gardner’s original book published in 1866.)


Whitman, Walt. Note fragment “Note: *Of course the hospitals and the wounded and sick, of the southern soldiery…” n.d. Container 1.5, Walt Whitman Collection,1846-1965, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Whitman, Walt. Poem of Triumph manuscript fragment--rejected passage with revisions and notes. n.d. Container 2.1, Walt Whitman Collection,1846-1965, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.


Whitman, Walt. Specimen Days & Collect (see also "For hospital article...") , composite manuscript with handwritten corrections and addition, with letter to Whitman from William Vandermark, 1863. Container 2.5, Walt Whitman Collection, 1846-1965, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.