

EXPLORING THEMES THROUGH PRINTMAKING

Grade Band: 6-8

Content Focus: VISUAL ARTS & ELA



LEARNING DESCRIPTION

Students will work in groups to analyze a short story, identify one or more themes, and examine how they develop over the course of the text. Each student will design and carve a symbol that represents their group's chosen theme. The group will then collaboratively print their symbols on a single piece of paper, visually representing their analysis through art.

LEARNING TARGETS

Essential Questions	"I Can" Statements
How do authors develop themes in literature?	I can determine and analyze the theme of a literary text.
How can multiple themes emerge in a single text?	I can provide an objective summary of a text.
How can symbols visually represent a theme?	I can design and carve a symbol that represents a theme in a story.
How does collaboration enhance artistic and literary interpretation?	I can collaborate with my peers to create a unified visual representation of a literary theme.

GEORGIA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
Grade 6: ELAGSE6RL2 Determine a theme and/or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. Grade 7: ELAGSE7RL2 Determine a theme and/or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. Grade 8: ELAGSE8RL2 Determine a theme and/or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.	VA.CR.1 Visualize and generate ideas for creating works of art. VA.CR.3 Engage in an array of processes, media, techniques, and/or technology through experimentation, practice, and persistence. VA.PR.1 Plan, prepare, and present completed works of art.

SOUTH CAROLINA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
ELA.AOR.2: Evaluate and critique the development of themes and central ideas within and across texts. Grade 6: ELA.6.AOR.2.1 Analyze how key details contribute to the development of a theme(s) over the course of a literary text. Grade 7: ELA.7.AOR.2.1 Compare two or more themes within a literary text(s) and how each is developed over the course of a text(s). Grade 8: ELA.8.AOR.2.1 Analyze how key details contribute to the development of two or more themes within and across literary texts.	Anchor Standard 1: I can use the elements and principles of art to create artwork. Anchor Standard 2: I can use different materials, techniques, and processes to make art. Anchor Standard 7: I can relate visual arts ideas to other arts disciplines, content areas, and careers.

KEY VOCABULARY

Content Vocabulary	Arts Vocabulary
<u>Theme</u> – The central idea or underlying message in a text	<u>Symbol</u> – A visual representation of an idea or theme

• <u>Symbolism</u> – The use of images or objects to represent deeper meanings	• <u>Printmaking</u> – The art or technique of making prints, especially as practiced in engraving, etching, dry point, woodcut or serigraphy • <u>Brayer</u> – A tool used to roll ink evenly onto the printing plate • <u>Composition</u> – How an artist arranges the Elements of Art (line, shape, form, value, color, space, texture) to create an artwork • <u>Collaboration</u> – Working together to achieve a common goal
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MATERIALS

- Selected short stories
- Pencils
- Copy paper
- Styrofoam sheets
- Ball point pen or dull pencils
- Water based printing ink
- Brayers
- Large sheets of paper for group prints
- Colored pencils or art sticks
- Drying rack or space to lay prints

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Opening/Activating Strategy

Engage (Read & Discuss):

- Divide students into small groups.
- Assign each group a short story to read and analyze (e.g., "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, "Thank You, Ma'am" by Langston Hughes, "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant).
- In their groups, students will discuss and identify one or more themes present in the story.
- Groups will create an objective summary of the text, focusing on how the theme develops over time.

Work Session

Explore (Sketch & Plan):

- Each student will sketch a symbol that represents the identified theme.
- Students will collaborate with their groups to refine their individual symbols to ensure coherence in their final composition.

Create (Printmaking Process):

- Follow the printmaking process below.

- After students have created their symbols on styrofoam plates, they will print their individual symbols onto a shared sheet of paper, creating a collective representation of their theme.
- **Review these printmaking tips with students:**
 - Prepping the styrofoam plate:
 - Use a dull pencil or ballpoint pen to carve designs—press firmly but avoid puncturing all the way through.
 - Encourage students to sketch lightly first before carving to avoid mistakes.
 - Carving techniques:
 - Keep lines simple and bold for clear prints; intricate details may not transfer well.
 - Reverse letters or numbers if including text, as prints will be a mirror image.
 - Vary line thickness for added depth—thicker lines hold more ink, while thinner lines create subtle details.
 - Inking the plate:
 - Roll out a thin, even layer of ink on a tray before applying to the printing plate with a brayer.
 - Make sure ink covers the entire design, but avoid excessive ink, which can cause smudging.
 - Test prints on scrap paper before the final collaborative print.
 - Printing process:
 - Place the inked plate face down on the final paper and press evenly with hands or a clean brayer.
 - Avoid shifting or sliding the plate while printing to prevent smudging.
 - Lift the plate carefully to reveal the design.
 - Encourage students to appreciate the imperfections as part of the artistic process!
 - Final Touches:
 - Allow prints to dry completely before handling.
 - Once dry, encourage students to add color and hand-drawn details.

Classroom Tips:

- *Encourage students to work carefully.*
- *Make sure there is a piece of newsprint under each printmaking station.*

Extension:

- *Virtual Gallery: Upload finished prints to Padlet or Google Sites for peer review.*
- *Video Reflection: Students can record a short video explaining their theme and artistic choices using Flipgrid or Canva Video.*

Closing/Reflection

Reflect (Gallery walk and discussion):

- Groups will present their collaborative prints, explaining their theme choice, how it was developed in the text, and how their symbols represent it.
- Students will write an exit ticket explaining how their symbol represents the theme in paragraph form.
- Facilitate a class discussion on the effectiveness of visual symbolism in interpreting literature.

ASSESSMENTS

Formative

- Group discussions and teacher observation during analysis and sketching phases

Summative

- Final collaborative print with a written reflection on the theme's development and symbolic representation
- Group presentation assessing comprehension and understanding of thematic analysis

DIFFERENTIATION

Accelerated:

- Encourage students to incorporate multiple symbols within their group's composition to represent nuanced themes.
- Have advanced students compare themes across different texts and integrate symbols accordingly.

Remedial:

- Provide graphic organizers to help students track how the theme develops over the story.
- Provide examples of symbols to help students visualize their ideas.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [What Is Printmaking? The Met](#)
- [Printmaking - Tate Museum](#)

This integrated lesson provides differentiated ideas and activities for educators that are aligned to a sampling of standards. Standards referenced at the time of publishing may differ based on each state's adoption of new standards.

Ideas contributed by: Shannon Green

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