

Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum

Unit Plan for:

The Dangers of Confidence and Pride with Mark Twain

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The Dangers of Confidence and Pride with Mark Twain

An Argumentative Writing Unit using Twain's "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once" as the core text.

Concept or Topic:

the dangers of excessive confidence and pride when applying for a job or in the workplace

Suggested Grade Level(s)/Course:

11th or 12th grade, LA III, LA IV, ENG III, or ENG IV (any type of American Literature class in high school)

Subject:

Literature/Writing/American History/Psychology

Suggested Time Frame:

7-10 school days, 50 minute class periods

Objective(s):

12th grade ELA students will:

OBJ 1: identify figurative language (humor, irony, understatement, hyperbole) in Mark Twain's "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once" through identification and annotation of text evidence (@ least 6 supporting examples + analysis of why it is selected figurative language)

OBJ 2: compose a universal theme about humanity &/or life that is supported by the short story and figurative language selections (the student-composed theme must be a complete sentence about humanity and/or life and supported or defended by at least 3 or 4 story examples... students can use figurative language examples from OBJ 1 assessment, if appropriate)

OBJ 3: write an argument essay that analyzes the statement: excessive pride and self-confidence are dangerous in the workplace (essay can be in agreement or opposition)

- using Mark Twain's short story and Psychology Today article as references & text evidence
- Proficient students will score at least 70% on the Essay Rubric

Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. **OBJ 1**

MLS.11-12.RL.1.A

Comprehend and Interpret Texts (Approaching Texts as a Reader) ... Evidence/Inference

Draw conclusions, infer, and analyze by citing relevant and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement). **OBJ 1**

MLS 11-12.RL.1.B

Comprehend and Interpret Texts (Approaching Texts as a Reader) ... Word Meanings

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings, using context, affixes, or reference materials.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. **OBJ 2**

MLS 11-12.RL.1.D

Comprehend and Interpret Texts (Approaching Texts as a Reader) ... Summarize/Theme

Using appropriate text, determine two or more themes in a text, analyze their development throughout the text, and relate the themes to human nature and the world; provide an objective and concise summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1 (A-E)

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (and substandards A-E) **OBJ 3**

MLS 11-12.W.2.A

Approaching the Task as a Writer ... Development

Follow a writing process to produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, style, and voice are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience; self select and blend (when appropriate) previously learned narrative, expository, and argumentative writing techniques.

Besides the above writing standards, the following writing standards and their subsequent writing strands are involved for writing this argumentative essay. OBJ 3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4, 5, 6, 9 are also used when writing an essay

MLS 11-12.W. 1, 2, & 3 are involved when writing an essay

Assessments:

1. Students take annotated notes identifying text evidence in "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once"
 - [Figurative language sheet](#) **OBJ 1**
2. Students compose a universal theme supported by the short story
 - Universal Theme Creation Sheet **OBJ 2**
3. argument essay **OBJ 3**

Vocabulary from short story:**Tier 2: (to be tested)**

solicitude, diffident, esculent, impudent, infirmities, reprieve, rudiments, superfluous

Tier 3: (to be assisted with)

guano, cadaverous, vogue, pie-plant, mucilage, ganders, spawn, spittoon, gooseberry, temperance appeals, polecat, horse-chestnut

Subject Area Integration:

Social Studies (Mark Twain history, 1800s), Psychology (cognitive)

Background Information Required for Unit/Lesson:

The unit would be placed in my curriculum after 12th grade ELA students:

- (1) already had an introduction to Samuel Clemens's life, his transition to the author known as *Mark Twain*, and his forays into journalism and writing.
- (2) reviewed (again for 12th graders) basic figurative language terms & have access to review materials.
- (3) discussed some of Twain's quotes and [maxims](#) and how Twain's works often have a "moral of the story" or a theme.
- (3) already reviewed argumentative essay components.
- (4) reviewed and analyzed tier 2 vocabulary prior to beginning this unit.

Materials:Short story links:

"The Petrified Man"

<http://www.twainquotes.com/18621004t.html>

"How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once"

<https://americanliterature.com/author/mark-twain/short-story/how-i-edited-an-agricultural-paper>

YouTube Audio recording of "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z943S3vOfPs> (the short story section is 7:38:23 - 7:51:44)

Student Copy of "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once" for 2nd reading and annotation for humor literary devices: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nsHp9vwpodRBlraD1GmrSsvfBzJJ1MTz/view?usp=sharing>
(Assessment #1)

Theme Creation and Support Sheet:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/169GmzB8qJ_wTU5w4dwGHs_4lqHFw6Sav/view?usp=sharing

(Assessment #2)

Psychology Today Article, "When You Have Too Much Confidence, Expect This to Happen"

Argumentative Essay Rubric:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HC1olb-fVtNVU1JUtmVpSZdrPU3AbDB-/view?usp=sharing>

(Assessment #3)

Technology:

Chromebook/similar device, headphones

Related Twain Quotes/Passages:

"Human pride is not worthwhile; there is always something lying in wait to take the wind out of it."
- *Following the Equator*

“There is nothing that saps one's confidence as the knowing how to do a thing.”

- Speech, 3/30/1901

“The older we grow the greater becomes our wonder at how much ignorance one can contain without bursting one's clothes.”

- *Mark Twain's Speeches*, 1910 ed.

“I would rather have my ignorance than another man's knowledge, because I have so much more of it.”

- Letter to W.D. Howells, 2/10/1875

Quotes Source: <http://www.twainquotes.com/index.html>

Lessons Setup & Sequence:

Lesson 1/Day 1: 1st reading of the short story; introduction of theme

Hook/Intro:

Do a 1st reading of “A Petrified Man”.... 1st as solo and silent after the bell rings (5 minutes)

Lesson Progression after Hook:

- After reading “A Petrified Man” solo, do a 2nd class reading with teacher reading aloud or an audio recording (make sure to act out the position of the man).
 - clarify any unknown parts or questions from students
- Using a 5-minute “stream of consciousness” journal write or paragraph type on Google Classroom, start to talk about a theme of this short story... have them journal write/type to the question “How does this story treat pride, gullibility, or common sense?”
- Class discussion of what the students found and wrote about (try to let the students talk as much as possible).

This introductory >1 page short story is to get the students thinking about Twain and journalism and the themes that will be continued in the short story “How I Once Edited an Agricultural Paper,” which will be the core text for this unit.

Suggested Questions:

- How does “The Petrified Man” story treat pride, gullibility, or common sense?
- When have you experienced a moment where common sense should have won over but didn't?
- OR When have you watched or noticed moments where common sense didn't prevail?

Learning Activity:

From here, with the remaining class time, the teacher needs to start letting the students do the 1st reading for the central short story used in this lesson, “How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once.” Give them instructions to use four annotation tools while reading:

- highlight perceived major points
- circle or underline confusing words or phrases
- put a ? next to wonderings or questions (also leave a note if clarification needed later)
- put an ! next to surprises or sources of shocks

Review/Closure:

Student homework will be just to finish the first reading.

Lesson 2/Day 2: 2nd reading of the short story + figurative language annotations**Hook/Intro:**

Short review of yesterday's information starting with a "Fan N' Pick" or "Quiz, Quiz, Trade" method (strictly surface level questions, not for credit, just to get things started)

Lesson Progression after the Hook:

- Do second reading (2.A) where the teacher reads out loud or uses an exceptional audio for further understanding and emphasis in the correct places. (see [audio resource](#) and notes in materials above)
- Discuss the story and bring up humor literary devices (hyperbole, understatement, irony (3 types), etc.).
- Teacher should then hand out individual [student copies](#) (printed or online versions) of "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once" to annotate and make notes on humor literary devices used in the short story.

Learning Activity:

Second reading (2.B) requirements are students' annotation and identification of humor literary devices used in "How I Wrote an Agricultural Paper Once."

Each student should have [his or her own copy](#) (printed or online per teacher or student's preference). The purpose of this activity/assignment is to show comprehension and analysis of literary devices in Mark Twain's short story (this 2nd reading activity will lead into the writing assessment). **OBJ 1**

Review/Closure:

Before class is over, the teacher should answer any questions or issues and make sure students know to finish the annotation examples for tomorrow.

Lesson 3/Day 3: beginning essay work/3rd reading work with creating a theme**Hook/Intro:**

Group sharing of different humor literary device examples from reading and homework.

Lesson Progression after the Hook:

- Students need to compose a universal theme or lesson for humans based on "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once." **OBJ 2**
- Depending on the group and the teacher's preference, a teacher can use different generating activities like "think/pair/share" or supplementary materials like [theme suggestions](#) to help get ideas flowing.
- Share theme ideas as a class in some way, but teachers can lead students (if it's not already

progressing that way) toward the idea of pride vs. common sense and how dangerous pride can be to your work performance/job security/employability, etc.

- It is important to make sure you follow the claim > evidence > warrant/reasoning path, with theme chosen, just to make sure the students understand the theme has to be backed by evidence and explanation (and to reinforce that type of thinking).
- Because Twain uses so much humor and satire writing to get his point across, the figurative language selections should, in many ways, help support the theme.

Suggested Questions:

- What components are needed to make a universal theme statement about humanity in literature?
- How do the humor literary devices/figurative language examples connect to your universal theme?

Learning Activity:

Use the [Theme Creation and Support Sheet](#) to compose a theme and practice selecting text evidence for the theme.

Review/Closure:

Student homework would be to work on the Theme Sheet for tomorrow.

Lesson 4/Day 4-5: introduction of writing prompt and supplementary reading of Psychology article and how it ties to Mark Twain's "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once"

Hook/Intro:

Share theme among class just to see similarities. Teacher can select share method (go write on the whiteboard, use Padlet, respond to a Google question in Google Classroom, etc.). The point is to see similarities or shared themes - there is a point to the similar themes (they connect to the short story) or to show where the student examples do not work. Try to lead into themes of confidence or pride being dangerous (in preparation for the essay prompt).

Lesson Progression after the Hook:

After sharing the themes among classmates, pass out/send out the essay prompt and let the students read over for a little while. **Beginning OBJ 3**

After adequate perusal time, students need to share out "next step thoughts" for the teacher to formatively assess what to address before moving on and reading the Psychology article.

Possible Questions to ask students:

- What do you need to do after reading the prompt?
- What do you need to decide on?
- What is the purpose of this essay?
- What are your required sources to support your essay?

Suggested Questions:

- What supports the theme from the short story?
- How is this still relevant today?
- Why would this be an important short story to read for senior students in 2019?

Learning Activity:

Using a setup similar to the Theme sheet, students need to read the Psychology Today Article, **“When You Have Too Much Confidence, Expect This to Happen”** and gather/record text evidence that will help them write their argumentative essay.

Review/Closure:

Work on essay.

Lesson 4/Day 6-8: essay creation/work/conference time/submission

For a few days, it's writing and conference time. Depending on the students' work and their writing progression, teachers will need to review different concepts and show student examples to help.

I have found that these student samples (after the students have started their essays) are very important. The ability to use a real student sample to “live grade” and critique in front of the students is helpful for the students because they often make similar mistakes. It is easier on the teacher to use an already-made sample to critique and help students, but it is also more authentic because it is truly students' writing (and not something that the teacher has had to make up for this stage of the writing assignment). Teachers can review and critique any aspect of the writing assignment (content, transitions, citations, grammar, etc.).

Strategies for Exceptional Students (for the unit):

Exceptional students can use additional sources or Mark Twain stories besides the 2 sources provided to add more context, research, and authority to their essay.

Suggested Follow-Up Activities (for the unit):

Students can try to write their own humorous portrayal of a time that they “goofed” or made an error, but they learned from it. Students can try to find a work or school example. Focus should be on the error they learned from, but include humorous writing passages just like Twain did.