

Setting and Plot in "The Devil's Arithmetic"

Resource ID#: 29360 Primary Type: Lesson Plan

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This four-day lesson plan, days 2-5 in a unit, is centered around the question of why and how the shifting setting in the novel, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, affects both the characters and the plot.

Subject(s): English Language Arts	Grade Level(s): 7
Intended Audience: Educators	Suggested Technology: Computer for Presenter, Interactive Whiteboard, LCD Projector
Instructional Time: 4 Hour(s)	Freely Available: Yes
Resource supports reading in content area: Yes	Instructional Component Type(s): Lesson Plan
Keywords: setting, characterization, plot, conflict, Holocaust	
Instructional Design Framework(s): Direct Instruction , Writing to Learn , Cooperative Learning	
Resource Collection: CPALMS Lesson Plan Development Initiative	

ATTACHMENTS

[research paper rubric.pdf](#)
[Raft Rubric.2.doc](#)
[Plot Mountain.list.doc](#)
[Plot Mountain.JPG](#)
[Deductive Reasoning GO.doc](#)
[BLANK Plot Mountain.jpg](#)

LESSON CONTENT

Lesson Plan Template: General Lesson Plan

Learning Objectives: What should students know and be able to do as a result of this lesson?

The students will know the text elements of plot and characters which allow students to comprehend a novel to a greater depth.

Guiding Questions: What are the guiding questions for this lesson?

Why and how does the shifting setting in the novel affect both the characters and the plot?

Prior Knowledge: What prior knowledge should students have for this lesson?

- Discuss time travel.
- The idea of vocabulary in context.
- Any information about characterization and plot. -Since the novel is about the Holocaust in World War II, the students will need to know certain concepts: genocide, perpetrator, bystander, bias, propaganda, scapegoat, ghetto, and others. As the teacher presents the idea of the novel, and to build student interest, he/she should teach these concepts as vocabulary words, and show how they relate to the present. The teacher can contact the United States Holocaust Museum or the Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg and obtain a large variety of material.

Teaching Phase: How will the teacher present the concept or skill to students?

1. Mini-lesson on setting: Setting consists of two parts, time and place.

This novel begins in/or around the present/1990s. The place is New Rochelle, New York.

Put the two parts, time and place in the middle of the Interactive Whiteboard. Put the 1990s one, on the left, as the class reads Chapter 2 of the novel.

As the teacher does a Read-aloud with Chapter 3, have the students tell the new setting at the end of the chapter, both time and place, and list it on the right side of the board. (Setting is now a green field with someone dressed in old clothes, so it must be an earlier time.) (This allows the students to see how setting, both time and place, can shift within a story/novel.)

As they begin the next section, they will see the setting shift more clearly. Ask the students questions like, "What does setting do for a story/novel?" "Why is it important to the story line to know the setting?"

Summarize: One-sentence summary-What are two parts of setting and how does the setting shift at the end of Ch. 3? (Have students write this and turn in for a quick check for understanding.)

2. Using the picture book, *Rose Blanche*, by Roberto Innocenti, do a read-aloud, having the students follow the pictures closely, not just the words. Yes, this book is of low text complexity because it is a picture book, but the story line is very important to the study of the Holocaust, and it shows such an important point of view, that of a child, that it fits into this study very well; *The Devil's Arithmetic* is also about children and the Holocaust. I have used *Rose Blanche* with both middle and high school

students and both their responses to it are phenomenal. Therefore, I believe it is important to this lesson.

The teacher can have the students do a journal response on Rose Blanche's reasons for doing what she does in the book, or an artistic response (cut and paste) with construction paper or a drawing on the meaning of the book, or on the ending. All three of these type responses fit into this novel study, by using the standards for either plot or historical account.

Summarize: Collaborative pairs-What are 2 ways to understand characters?

Guided Practice: What activities or exercises will the students complete with teacher guidance?

- Using an Advance Organizer for Plot Mountain (please see uploaded file titled "Plot Mountain") with most of the information (not setting) filled in, teach Plot. Use the Interactive Whiteboard and help students fill in any blank slots (this will be notes about what each part of plot is). When finished, review the entire Organizer together, being sure all students grasp the concepts of Plot and its individual parts. Using the completed organizer and a blank sheet of paper, have the students list the first parts of plot and fill it in for the first 3 chapters of the novel.

EXAMPLE:

Plot Mountain Exposition - Setting: Time-begins in 1990s/Current time-shifts to about 1942 during Holocaust Place:-begins in New Rochelle, NY-shifts to a small shetle (village) in Poland, then to a concentration camp, also in Poland (could be Auschwitz) Meet main characters: Hannah (1990s) becomes Chaya, others as they appear

Rising Action -Conflicts:

- Hannah doesn't want to celebrate Passover
- Hannah time travels to 1942 to a small shetle in Poland when she opens the door for the prophet Elijah at the Seder for Passover in the 1990s-confuses her.
- Hannah begins to lose her memories as Hannah and "becomes" Chaya.
- The Jews in the group are put on a train for a concentration camp.
- Problems in the concentration camp. (covers most of the book)
- Chaya "becomes" Hannah.

Actions:

- Hannah argues with family about celebrating Passover.
- Once Hannah becomes Chaya, she goes to concentration camp and tries to help others because of her Hannah memories.
- Chaya works in concentration camp and meets Rivka.
- Chaya tries to warn others before her Hannah memories leave her.
- This continues and students should fill in as they read.

They can work with their partner or partner with another reading pair. Give about 20 minutes. Then, continue listing Rising Action and conflicts as the pairs begin to read Chapter 4.

Give time to finish Chapter 4, continuing to work on plot.

Summarize: 3-2-1 (3 things you learned today; 2 things you were especially interested in today; 1 thing you think you need to review).

Independent Practice: What activities or exercises will students complete to reinforce the concepts and skills developed in the lesson?

- Before beginning the Independent Practice, review the Deductive Reasoning strategy and attached Graphic Organizer. Remind the class that this is like an "If, then" statement, like, "If a rock goes up in the air, then it must come down." This concept of deductive reasoning will deepen the students' understanding of the idea of the shifting setting and how it affects/connects to the characters and the plot-discuss.

Using the attached Graphic Organizer, concentrate on how the setting shift affected Hannah/Chaya in the first four chapters of The Devil's Arithmetic. Fill in the two ovals at the top of the Graphic Organizer. Predict what you feel will happen in the next few chapters. As you do so, consider how the shifted setting has affected Hannah/Chaya and the Rising Action. Leave the rectangle blank for now. You will complete it as you read the next few chapters.

Summarize:Write a one-paragraph summary on what you put into your prediction and the reasons you did so.

Closure: How will the teacher assist students in organizing the knowledge gained in the lesson?

The teacher will constantly be watching for students who need differentiation in the assignments, like the summaries, help with the graphic organizer, the plot work, or as a partner. As the students finish this 4-day lesson, they should easily be able to know the answer to the Guiding Question. This can be accomplished in collaborative pairs or as a summary to the 4 days.

ASSESSMENT

Formative Assessment:

-To assess prior knowledge, students will do a think-ink-pair-share in collaborative pairs with the topic of the Holocaust. Once they have shared with their partners, they will share with the entire group, and the teacher can list what the students know on chart paper. As the teacher lists each idea, or after the list is complete, the class should discuss the topics. This allows the teacher to assess the prior knowledge of the class.

-During the 4-day lesson, the teacher will use "Checks for Understanding," like journal entries (on the picture book, and others the teacher can assign), summarizing activities assigned at breaking points, a vocabulary foldable, the Deductive Reasoning worksheet, and assessing how students work in their small groups. The teacher will use each assessment to see if the students are learning the information. If some review is needed, the teacher will need to review the material just covered and re-assess.

Feedback to Students:

After each "lesson" the students will do a summarizing activity and the teacher will grade this and write feedback on their papers. This distributed summarizing method helps students see how they are doing throughout the lesson. The day the students use the Advanced Organizer on Plot (see attachment titled "Plot Mountain"), the teacher is basically giving feedback throughout the entire lesson. When the teacher differentiates the assignments for certain students, he/she needs to give feedback. The students should then, whenever they are given feedback, apply it to the next summary they do, the next organizer, or assignment.

Summative Assessment:

This 4-day lesson ends as the students answer the essential question, "Why and how does the shifting setting in the novel affect both the characters and the plot?" Since the

students have been working with their Plot Mountain Graphic Organizers (see uploaded file), in pairs, to assess this, each pair would split and go with their number of another pair. In that new pair, have the students answer first the "Why" of the essential question, share with the class, and have a class discussion. Then do the same with the "how." Then, have all students write the answer to the essential question in 2-4 sentences and turn it in. In this way, the teacher can assess who does and does not understand the essential question as a summative assessment. (See closure for Rubric for longer writings.)

ACCOMMODATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Accommodations:

The teacher should be very careful how he/she pairs the students to do paired reading. Pair the students the Kagan way: high with medium; low with medium; high with high. Never pair low readers with low readers, because the students will not learn.

Use non-verbal cues to keep special needs students on task, and be sure to circulate constantly.

In discussions, call on special needs students first, so their ideas are delivered to the class before the answers are given by other students.

Have the better reader in the pair read more during the paired reading, if necessary. The same goes when the pair is discussing what to write for an assignment.

Extensions:

This lesson can be extended in a variety of ways:

- Once the students learn plot, discussions on conflict can go a variety of ways, and the teacher can see where the discussions lead.
- Some of the Hebrew/Yiddish words (content words) may need to be looked up in a dictionary, but some can lead to interesting discussions.
- There are some great discussion questions the teacher could write.
- I like to have the students (all grade levels) do an art project depicting the story of Rose Blanche.
- The culminating activity for this unit will be after the students finish the entire novel, and it will be in a Higher Order Thinking Lesson. It can be done in a variety of ways, but must be done with one of the top three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, which are Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. Design your own activity by looking up Bloom's Taxonomy and design a project or product which you feel will best show your students have learned the material and the novel, including what the Holocaust is about. I have used several: something to build, something to write a paper on, art work, a skit, etc., or my favorite--a Parent Night, showcasing student art work, student skits, papers, poems, etc. You can include food of the time period, 1941-1945, and add your own ideas. This is always a great success.

Suggested Technology: Computer for Presenter, Interactive Whiteboard, LCD Projector

Special Materials Needed: Art materials if you do an art project for [Rose Blanche](#), and I would probably do so.

Further Recommendations:

- The teacher should read the novel before beginning to teach it. He/she should understand how the novel fits into the context of the Holocaust and how a novel can be used to teach something like the Holocaust.
- Downloading a set of transparencies/pictures from the Internet would be good, and could be shown at the appropriate spots in the unit.
- Use the Internet for other resources, also.
- The novel begins with Hannah in the 1990s in New York who time travels to a small village in Poland in 1942 and becomes Chaya. She is swept into the Holocaust. This lesson plan deals with teaching the students about plot, including conflicts, and has the students work in pairs to develop the plot line up through Chapter 4 of the novel. By including the reading of a picture book to the students, the teacher teaches characterization, and extends that to this novel. The students also do a Higher Order Thinking Activity (Extending Thinking) on Deductive Reasoning on all 3 things to be learned in this lesson: setting, characters, and plot.
- The quantitative ranges suggested by CCSS for the sixth to eighth grades-band are 925L - 1185L (Lexile) and 7.00 - 9.98 (ATOS) book level ranges. The ratings for the text complexity of this book, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, appear too low for seventh grade. According to Lexile, the book is 730L and according to ATOS the book is 4.6. Similarly, the second book, *Rose Blanche*, has been rated for text complexity as 430L and 3.2 ATOS. *The Devil's Arithmetic* is not a book that is considered complex text for seventh grade. If you just look at the words, no, it is not, but...you must look at the complexity of the information, what you want the students to learn and comprehend, which is the Holocaust during World War II. This is a complex issue, and it is presented in this book in such a way that seventh graders will be able to grasp the concepts while reading a novel they can understand and in which they can become interested. To me, this is important, and makes it alright to read somewhat below your level if you can comprehend a subject which otherwise many students could not comprehend at this level. Therefore, my rationale is that this novel is appropriate for this grade level, based on the students, especially low readers, being able to comprehend the complexity of the subject in this novel.

PUBLIC REMARKS

By Author/Submitter

This lesson plan leads to great discussions. I love teaching this Holocaust novel. My culminating activity for the unit is usually a major project. A second thing I have done at the end is a Parent Night, where we display student work, including writings, reports, projects, artwork, journals, etc., do skits written, directed, and acted by the students, poetry the students write and read, and much more. Teaching tolerance and how to recognize prejudice of any kind is always important.

SOURCE AND ACCESS INFORMATION

Name of Author/Source: Amy Blocher

Is this Resource freely Available? Yes

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Related Standards

Name	Description
LAFS.7.RL.1.3:	Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
LAFS.7.RL.3.9:	Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.
LAFS.7.RL.4.10:	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.