

Lesson Plan: Wartime Poets

Subject

Horrors of war through poetry: the Japanese invasion of China, the Spanish Civil War, the Battle of Stalingrad

Estimated Time

One class period

Grade Level

9-12

Essential Question

How did 20th century poets express the horrors of civilian deaths in wartime (the Battle of Shanghai, the Spanish Civil War, the Battle of Stalingrad)?

Materials

1. Handout 1A and 1B : Wing Tek Lum, *A Village Burial*, *Golden Lotuses* - copies for ¼ of the students
2. Handout 2A and 2B: Wing Tek Lum, *Inside Her Wooden Chest*, *Our Actress* – copies for ¼ of the students
3. Handout 3A and 3B: Federico Garcia Lorca, *Casida of Sobbing*; Cesar Vallejo, *Mass* – copies for ¼ of the students
4. Handout 4: Carlos Drummond de Andrade, *Letter to Stalingrad*
5. Computer, projector and screen for PowerPoint historical reviews of the Spanish Civil War and the Battle of Stalingrad.

Objectives

- Students will appreciate the power of wartime poetry.
- Students will compare the experiences of civilians who suffered in 20th century wartime in China, Spain, and Stalingrad.
- Students will connect civilian tragedies to more recent events in Vietnam and Syria.

Main Activity

- Plan with history teachers whose classes have watched *Shanghai 1937: Where World War II Began*. This is a companion lesson for Language Arts teachers.
- Show the PowerPoints on the Spanish Civil War and the Battle of Stalingrad. Discuss: What do they have in common with the Japanese invasions of Shanghai and Nanjing? Why did the author of the book that inspired this documentary use the descriptor “Stalingrad on the Yangtze?” (15 minutes)
- Divide students into groups of four. (If numbers do not come out evenly, separate the double 1A and 1B poem handouts and/or the 2A and 2B handouts, the poems by Wing Tek Lum.) Distribute poem handouts. If there is a Spanish speaking group member, assign to her the Garcia Lorca and Vallejo poems. (5 minutes)
- Each student reads his assigned handout and answers the questions on it. Each chooses a single line or phrase from one of the poems that most affected him. (10 minutes)
- Students share in their groups summaries of poems that they read and the answers they gave to the questions on the handouts. (10 minutes)
- Students make a large circle around their desks and then create a choral reading, each student adding the single line or phrase she chose, as they go around the circle. (5 minutes)
- At the closing of the class, take a minute for students to reflect quietly on their own answers to the Essential Question.

Extension Activity

Poetry is one of the arts that commemorates these tragedies. Painting and sculpture of the events are equally powerful. The teacher can show:

- http://m.chinadaily.com.cn/en/2015-08/28/content_21731038.htm 10 monuments in China commemorating the Japanese invasion
- Pablo Picasso, <https://www.pablocicasso.org/guernica.jsp>
- *The Motherland Calls*, 172 foot high monument in Volgograd (Stalingrad) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Motherland-Calls>

Standards

National Council for the Social Studies

Standard VI C Power, Authority & Governance: Give examples of how government does or does not provide for needs and wants of people, establish order and security, and manage conflict.

Standard IV Individual Development & Identity: compare and evaluate the impact of stereotyping, conformity, acts of altruism, and other behaviors on individuals and groups.

Standard VI Power; Authority, & Governance: Explain the purpose of government and analyze how its powers are acquired, used and justified. Analyze and evaluate conditions, actions, and motivations that

contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations.

National Council of Teachers of English

Standard 1: Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

United States History Standards for Grades 5-12

Standard 3: The causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs.