



Unit 1: Greek Tragedy: Sophocles'
Oedipus Rex and *Antigone*

8
Days

In this unit, students will learn the basic elements of Greek tragedy, according to Aristotle. In discussing the characteristics of a tragic hero, students will apply both plays to modern society. Students will also understand the tension between moral law and state law and how the pursuit of knowledge has positive and negative outcomes. Along the way, students will become familiar with the physical layout of the ancient Greek stage and important terms such as dramatic irony, catharsis, anagnorisis, hamartia, and hubris.



Unit 2: Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*

10
Days

In this unit, students will understand the literary significance of naturalistic writing. They will understand how the imagery and symbolism are driving forces in the novel that connect with characterization. In analyzing the arguments proposed by the text, students will also discuss the effectiveness of the narrative structure. Thematic exploration of cycles, sickness, death and seasons will help students better comprehend the situational irony in the novel. Most importantly, students will come to appreciate how characters serve as extensions of their environment (Wharton's notion of "granite outcroppings").



Unit 3: Shakespearean Tragedy: *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*

20-25
Days

In this unit, students will be able to critically discuss and write about both works of drama. They will learn about the evolution of the Shakespearean stage in Elizabethan England. They will understand the form of verse in terms of rhythm, iambic pentameter, and blank verse. In terms of comparative content within the plays, students will analyze the roles of Othello and Shylock as racial “others” in Christian Venice. They will interpret the social and cultural values of those in power within the plays. For both plays, students will discuss and analyze the role of patriarchy and gender. In drawing a connection to the ancient world, students will compare the Greek stage to the Elizabethan stage.



Unit 4: Milton's *Paradise Lost*

20-25
Days

In this unit, students will be able to identify and explain the elements of epic poetry that comprised Milton’s epic poem. They will learn about John Milton’s background and the tremendous anxiety he felt—and overcame—as he wrote *Paradise Lost*. Students will become familiar with the term *theodicy* in interpreting Milton’s motive for authorship. Along the way, students will revisit the question posed in the Greek tragedy unit: What pitfalls come with the pursuit of knowledge? William Blake once argued that Milton was “a true poet and of the Devil’s party without knowing it.” Students will evaluate Blake’s sentiment through the actions of Satan, God, Christ, Adam, and Eve.



Unit 5: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

20
Days

In this unit, students will fully understand the significance of intertextuality. Without *Paradise Lost*, there could be no *Frankenstein*. Students will understand the elements of Romantic Literature that make the novel an exemplar for this time period. Students will also compare and contrast Victor Frankenstein and God as creators. Along the way, students will analyze and discuss the conflict between nature and nurture in the novel. A timely novel, students will compare and contrast *Frankenstein* to modern scientific controversies.



Unit 6: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

20
Days

In this unit, students will fully understand the importance of multi-cultural literature. They will see the significance of Hurston's contributions to the African-American canon of literature. Because the vernacular of the novel is so important, we will spend time discussing the importance of language. Students will research the socio-historical background of the literature in order to discuss Hurston's motives for authorship. Vital to understanding the novel will be an analysis of metaphor, symbol, and symbolic gesture. As the novel is a *bildungsroman*, students will trace Janie's growth as a character and her lack of roots.



Unit 7: Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

20
Days

In this unit, students will fully understand the significance of a struggle between an individual and a powerful system of authority. Keeping with the spirit of 1960's America, students will draw parallels between the events in the novel and events in the nation during this time period. Students will fully analyze the conflict between Nurse Ratched and McMurphy in order to develop an original argument for the novel. Along the way, students will discuss and interpret the importance of nonconformity in the novel. Ultimately, students will compose a literary analysis that asks them to answer the central question of the novel: Who wins the battle between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched and what does the victory reveal?



Unit 8: Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*

20
Days

In this unit, students will read the culminating work of the class. The pursuit of knowledge—and distortion thereof—comes full circle in this postmodern novel. Students will understand the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War and the My Lai Massacre. In turn, they will delve into the life of controversial literary character John Wade. Students will look at the conflation of magic, war, and politics in his life in order to determine whether or not he killed his wife. The course concludes with an ambiguous ending as students come to realize that not everything in life is black and white, but sometimes a frustrating shade of gray.