

LESSON: Multimodal Historical Analysis of a Poem

GRADE LEVEL: Grades 11-12

SUBJECT: U.S. History/Current Events/ELA

TIME REQUIRED: 120-180 minutes

This lesson creates a summative activity that prioritizes analytical thinking and the tying of historical concepts to a current literary piece.

RATIONALE

This activity is designed to be a summative lesson that allows students to both think critically and creatively about a piece of literature and connect the themes of the poem to the desegregation era and content that has been covered in class.

NOTE: This multimodal activity may be conceptually difficult for some students who have not been asked to think this way. Make sure the brainstorming is given enough time and is deliberately attended to.

This lesson plan and materials needed to teach it can be found at the Thurgood Marshall Institute: <https://tminstitutelfd.org/>

OVERVIEW

This lesson sets up a cumulative, summative assessment that encourages both analytical and creative thinking for students. After reading “The Hill We Climb” by Amanda Gorman, students will have a structured brainstorming session where they will search the poem, their notes, and the internet to look for connections and symbols that marry the poem with themes and events from desegregation and the history of *Brown v. Board*. The final project will be a visual essay and breakdown of the poem that integrates history, current events, and language arts to demonstrate student thinking and understanding.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How does art imitate life?

OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

After the lesson, students will...

Have created a product that demonstrates their understanding of desegregation in American history and the lasting impacts of *Brown v. Board* through a visual essay.

PREPARING TO TEACH

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This should come at the end of a desegregation and civil rights unit. While some of the resources listed in the lesson can be used for the brainstorming section of the lesson, hopefully most of them will have been touched on before so students have familiarity with them ahead of time.

SCAFFOLDS AND ACCOMMODATIONS TO SUPPORT LEARNERS

Reading support...

Reading the poem together should help with reading support. Potentially having the project done in pairs could be another form of reading support.

Differentiation...

Adjusting the amount of analysis or text examined could be a form of differentiation. Another form of differentiation could be to curate some of the ideas, themes, or sources so students have a more visible jumping-off point for their ideas.

Adjusting for middle school grades...

This assignment can be scaled to middle school by reducing the number of requirements and removing the research element by providing curated examples and places they can look to for guidance from earlier in the unit.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES SEQUENCE

Begin with a quick reflective writing piece. Have students respond to the question, “Why do we still study desegregation and *Brown v. Board of Education* today? Is it still important?” This should begin to prime students’ thinking about the impact of *Brown* on the modern day. This can also be a formative assessment to see if students remember some of the basic elements of *Brown* and desegregation.

Next, introduce their final project by reading with them “The Hill We Climb” (a PDF copy is linked below). This project can be done individually or in pairs, which is up to the teacher. After reading it once through, have students, using a highlighter, highlight the 10 most important or impactful parts of the poem. This could be single words or entire lines, but students need to be able to explain why they think it is important. Next, give students the instructions sheet and graphic organizer. After reading the instructions with students and answering any clarifying questions, have them write down the 10 highlighted portions of text from the Gorman poem in the organizer.

Now students will have time to brainstorm ideas. This should be a lengthy process allowing students to look back through notes, research using the internet, and be

encouraged to collaborate to think about what they want in their presentations. Once they have completed the graphic organizer, give them the Idea Mapping worksheet to have them visualize and articulate what their presentation should look like. While this is a rough sketch of what it could look like, teachers will collect this and the graphic organizer to help check student thinking and provide any feedback if necessary.

After feedback is given, make sure students then have time to create their presentations, preferably both during class and for homework if able. Finally, for the presentation day, students will present in a gallery format with half the students walking around and seeing others' work and the other half presenting, and then switching roles halfway through class. We also encourage you to invite other classes and teachers to see this work so students feel that the effort and creativity get to be seen and acknowledged by others, not just their own teacher.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment will be the multimodal presentation. Below are the instructions that should be given to students so they understand the expectations of the assignment:

You will be creating a multimodal presentation to show your thinking about our last unit. "Multimodal" means several different modes, and in this case modes mean forms of presentation. In an essay, the mode is writing. In a podcast, the mode is speaking. In painting, the mode is visual. For this presentation, you will use as many "modes" as possible to show your thinking around Amanda Gorman's poem "The Hill We Climb."

*After we read the poem together, you will pick out **10** elements of the poem that you think are most impactful. They could be as short as a single word or as long as a collection of lines, but you will identify 10 that you want to examine and connect with more deeply. After picking the 10 parts of the poem, you will begin to pair and connect them with events, themes, people, and emotions from our last unit on Jim Crow, desegregation, and Brown v. Board. Not only should you try to connect Gorman's poem to history, but also think about the modern day and how both civil rights and "The Hill We Climb" relate to our current world.*

All of this thinking will first be put into a graphic organizer to help connect your ideas, then will be mapped onto a mock presentation to help you begin to visualize your presentation. Remember, you are expected to have writing, visuals, audio, video, moving text, any form of communication to let those watching your presentation understand how the poem connects to history, reality, and your own thinking. I will collect your graphic organizer and idea mapping and will provide feedback before you start creating your presentations. Presentations are most easily made in Slides or PowerPoint,

however, if you want to use Prezi, Canva, or some other presentation software, that is fine.

Your final presentation will be given to the class in a gallery walk, where classmates will get to walk around and see your presentation. In your presentations, each poem element that you chose to examine must use multiple modes of analysis, meaning you must have a video, audio, written, or visual explanation and connection. For example, maybe you tie a line back to Jim Crow segregation and have a picture of segregation with audio of bus noises to make people think about bus segregation being a big element of the Civil Rights Movement. That would be an example of multiple modes. Your presentation must also include our initial text, "The Hill We Climb," with the parts of the text you will be examining identifiable. Much of this task is up to your interpretation. Be as creative and thoughtful as you can be.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ENRICHMENT

[The Hill We Climb.pdf \(uvm.edu\)](#)

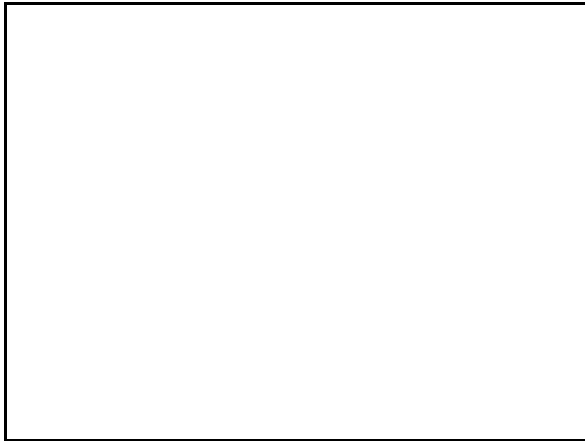
Poem Line	Why it's impactful	Connection to Jim Crow, Desegregation, Brown v. Board, and/or Civil Rights	Multimodal Component (modern image, piece of art, sound clip, moving text, pictures, anything!)

Idea Mapping

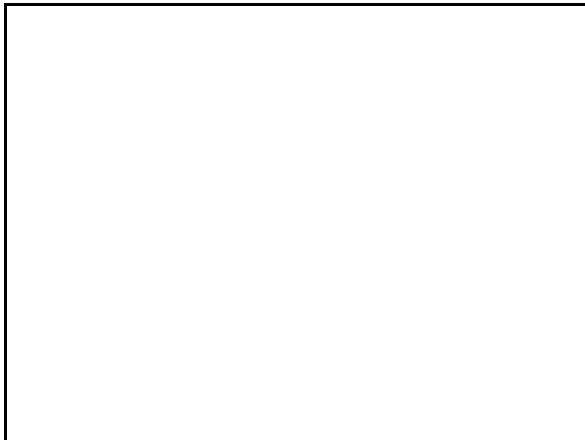
Below, you have space to begin mapping your presentation, like a storyboard for a movie or TV show. Imagine the boxes below are slides in a presentation. How do you want to format and lay out your poem and the important lines? What will the connections to history look like? How will you incorporate multimedia and multimodal information for viewers?

On the left is your mock slide, and the blank space to the right is for any notes or text to help guide your vision. This will be turned in before your final presentation so feedback can be given.

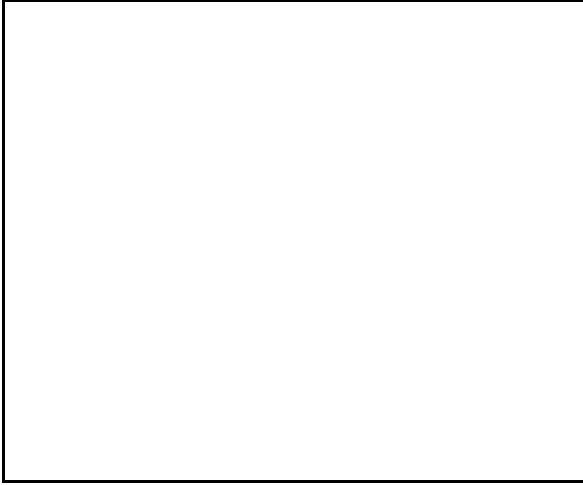
Idea 1 Slide



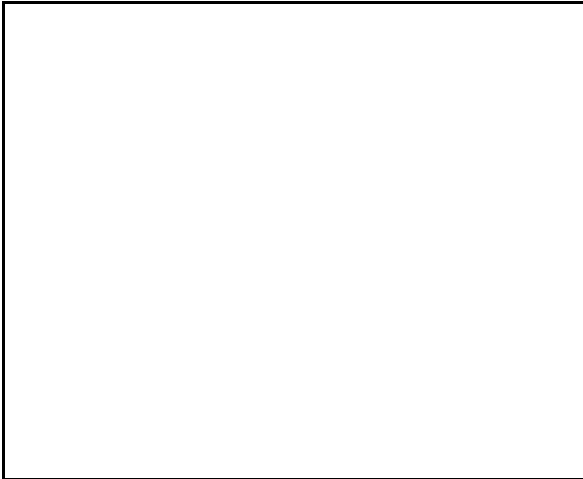
Idea 2 Slide



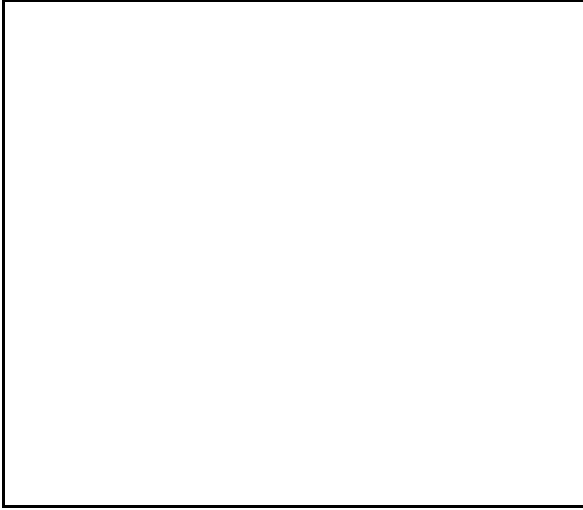
Idea 3 Slide



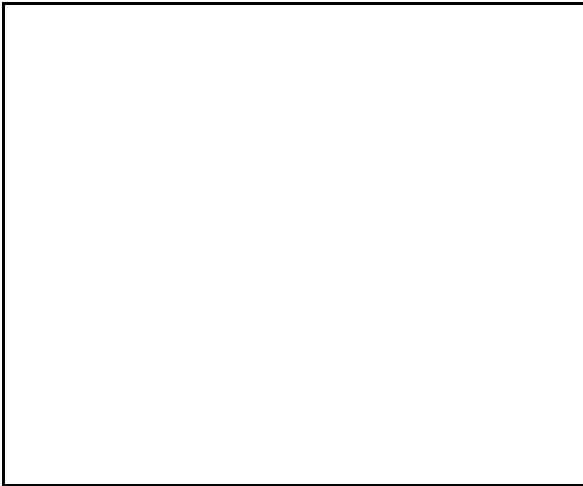
Idea 4 Slide



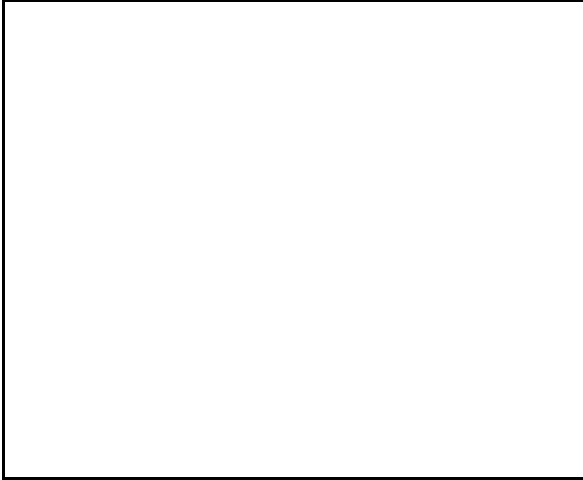
Idea 5 Slide



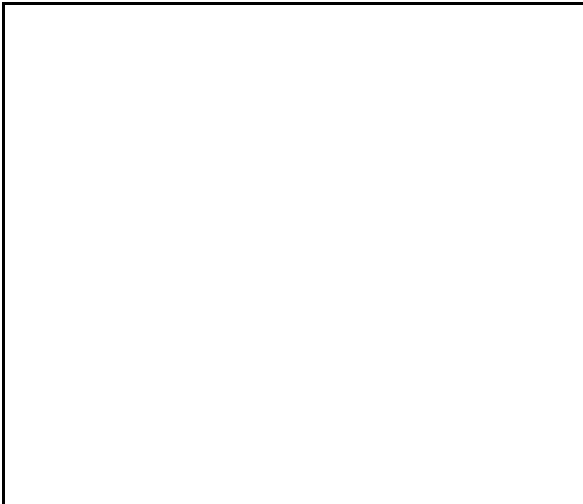
Idea 6 Slide



Idea 7 Slide



Idea 8 Slide



Idea 9 Slide



Idea 10 Slide

