

Concepts:

How to analyze literature for meaning and our role in society's problems.

Goals:

Students will be prepared to delve into *Anthem* through discussion and historical perspectives on the work. Students will recognize the importance of culture and society on an author's work. Students will understand the themes and essential questions to be explored through *Anthem*.

Standards:

Develop critical reading, listening and viewing strategies; develop the skills of close and contextual literary reading; use knowledge of literary history, traditions, and theory to respond to and analyze the meaning of texts; examine mass media, film, series fiction, and other texts from popular culture; use a variety of reading, listening, and viewing strategies to construct meaning beyond the literal level.

Specific Objectives:

Students will grasp that analyzing literature for meaning is a multi-step process involving current culture, past events and their personal/present culture and society. Students will be aware of historical Russian events that played a role in message of *Anthem*. Students will evaluate how these events could have affected Ayn Rand and her philosophy.

Materials:

White board, white board markers, historical information on Russia while Rand lived there, T.V. with DVD player, the movie *V for Vendetta*.

Prep:

1. Students should be instructed the day before this class to begin reading pages 17–58 of *Anthem* (17 or whatever page your particular version of *Anthem* begins with). They will have two days to complete pages 17–58. They should read up to page 38 by the time this lesson begins.
2. Write essential questions and themes to be explored through this unit on the board: What is identity? Cultural identity? What are our responsibilities to others based on this identity?; What role does society play in crafting identity?; How does current events and society influence our perspectives?; What are our responsibilities to

society and how can culture play a role in these responsibilities?; and What is the current system of governmental ideology in America? Is this system any more valid than other systems?

3. Write the following quote from Ayn Rand on the board: “Free will means the choice to think or not.”

Anticipatory Set:

Ask students to take out a pencil and a piece of paper. Tell students that while watching the following clip they should be considering the following: “What is V’s message to the populace?” Begin playing the movie clip.

Step-By-Step Procedures:

1. Start class off by instructing students to watch a clip from *V for Vendetta*. The particular clip to be used is V’s public address after hijacking the TV station. In this speech he speaks of public accountability for the state of the nation and the citizens’ role in allowing government to take control of their lives. Students will be asked to write down their observations about this clip and what the main message is. (10 mins).
2. Students will come back together as a class and a whole group discussion will ensue. Students will be asked to volunteer what they have taken from the clip shown. Make sure the idea that citizens bear responsibility for the current shape of society/government due to lack of action or apathy is covered. (10 mins).
3. Compare what they have watched on *V for Vendetta* with the following quote by Ayn Rand “Free will means the choice to think or not” (5 mins)
4. Transition aforementioned idea into the main themes explored by Ayn Rand in *Anthem*. Introduce the book and the themes on the board that will be explored during the unit. Remind students that while they read the book they should be looking for ideas about the essential questions on the board. (5 mins).
5. Explain to students the three quests for finding meaning when analyzing a piece of literature: the historical quest; the quest for the author’s meaning; and the personal quest (write the quests on the board). Inform students that they will be using these three quests to address the essential questions and themes. Reinforce the idea that historical events which occurred in Ayn Rand’s formative years greatly shaped her perspectives (5 mins).
6. Transition students into thinking about the role of society and historical events on an author’s perspective. Divide students up into groups and give each group a slip of paper describing one component of Russian events occurring before Ayn Rand left Russia. Explain to students that as a group they should explore the possible effects of these event or movements on Ayn Rand. They need to have at least two possible

ideas of how this event could affect Ayn Rand and her work as an author, written down and ready to share with the class. The events to be explored are: Bloody Sunday/tsar Nicholas II, the preliminary government of 1917 after the abdication of the throne, the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, and the transformation into communism during 1917–1918. (10 mins).

7. Students come back together and a whole class discussion follows about their findings. Each group will share their ideas and explain why they came to that conclusion. Teacher will write up historical events in chronological order on the board as students share them. (15 mins).
8. Before students leave make sure to instruct them to finish reading pages 17–58 of *Anthem* for the following class. If the time-line isn't complete then tell them to bring back their group findings tomorrow so they can finish the discussion. (1 min).

Closure:

Relate Ayn Rand's purpose in writing *Anthem* back to V's speech from *V for Vendetta*. Briefly explain that like Rand, V's society experienced numerous hardships which instigated the populace to remain silent in the face of tyranny. These events caused the fictional V to speak out just as Ayn Rand's book *Anthem* is a way for her to speak out against tyrannical governmental systems.

Assessment:

Teacher will assess student understanding of the topics to be addressed through whole group discussion. Also, their analysis of historical influences on Rand's writing can be assessed by collecting the group answers as well as through class discussion.

Adaptations:

The essential questions and themes to be addressed through-out the unit are presented in multiple ways. These points will be explained by the teacher and written on the board. The talking points to be addressed during class (including the three quests) should be copied and handed out to students for deeper understanding. The class time is designed to move in short bursts with transitions which helps keep the interest of all students. Also, those who might otherwise have trouble focusing on the same activity for extended periods of time are facilitated through these methods.

Extensions:

Those students that wish to delve further could do the following: Consider your identity and how it is shaped through societal events. Think of at least two political or cultural events that occurred and how they influenced your perspectives. Write about the understanding gained

from the events and their influence in one of the following formats; an editorial page, or a graphic novel excerpt.

Possible Connections to Other Subjects:

This lesson would work in collaboration with a world or American history teacher. If taken from the world history perspective, the history teacher could focus on Russian history at the same time. If taken from an American history perspective, the teacher could address the events in Russia that influenced American politics and thinking about communism (also connecting to the “red” scare). This lesson would also work in conjunction with a political science class which investigated the politics of the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, tsars, socialists, or communists.