Páginas de Caras: Willa Cather’s Characters in the Twenty-First Century

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Unit Title: Páginas de Caras: Willa Cather’s Characters in the Twenty-First Century

Grade Level: Eighth grade

Subject/Topic Area(s): English, annotating a text, close reading, analysis of elements of a story, analysis of writer’s stylistic techniques, realism

Designed By: Amy Taffet

Time Frame: 6 weeks

School District: Diocese of Dallas

School: Christ the King Catholic School

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Brief Summary of Unit (Including curricular context and unit goals):
To prepare our eighth grade students for their interdisciplinary eighth grade trip to Taos, New Mexico, students read Willa Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, which narrates the adventures of two priests, Father Latour and Father Valliant, who attempt to evangelize the peoples of New Mexico. To enrich this cross-curricular experience, our initial goal is that the students develop an appreciation for Cather’s novel. Not only will they have the opportunity to visit the church, homes, and missions of Cather’s characters in Taos while learning about this period in history, science, and religion classes, but also students will be able to witness individuals who risked their lives to share their faith. This will invite students to grapple with the idea of faith and their daily expression of their beliefs as they prepare for Confirmation.

In addition to developing an appreciation for the characters, historical period, and themes in Cather’s novel, students will learn to annotate and analyze a text. In class, students will close read and annotate the text for the author’s mechanical tools (what is said—elements of a story) and stylistic tools (how it is said—the author’s writing style). Students will acquire the essential skill of annotating a text to help them unpack Cather’s purpose in writing.

To bring Cather’s nineteenth-century characters to life, our eighth graders will collaborate in small groups to create a larger-than-life social media page “Páginas de Caras” (a spinoff of a “Facebook” page) about one main character from *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Students will create conversations between their character and other characters, form a timeline of the character’s experiences, post statements about their opinions and themes, and gather photographs from Taos that the character might have taken (if a camera existed at the time). Students will compile and apply their “evidence” from their annotation and expedition to construct a compelling social media page to bring the character to life in the twenty-first century.

In short, students will acquire the tools to unpack a challenging text and think about the characters and themes within a familiar frame-of-reference, the social media page. The juxtaposition between contemporary technology and Cather’s nineteenth century narrative will encourage students to think critically about past and present forms of communication and self-expression.
## UbD Template 2.0: **Páginas de Caras**

### Stage 1 – Desired Results

#### Transfer

**Students will independently use their learning to...**

Create a social media page “Páginas de Caras” (a spinoff of a “Facebook” page) for a character in Willa Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Students will use evidence compiled from annotating a text and apply it to construct a compelling social media page to bring the character to life in the twenty-first century.

#### Meaning

**Understandings**

**Students will understand that...**

- The author communicates his message by using elements of a story purposefully to develop the framework for “what is said/happens” in the text.
- The author uses stylistic tools to create layers of meaning and reinforce the elements of a story to communicate his message.
- Faith is the belief and trust in someone or something without having seen complete proof.
- We exercise and develop our faith through the ways we live our lives. We express our faith by our deeds and words.

**Essential Questions**

- How does an author use elements of a story to communicate his message?
- How does the author use stylistic tools to communicate his message?
- How do you express your faith? Is there a correct way?

#### Acquisition

**Knowledge**

**Students will know the...**

- What are the elements of a story, the mechanical tools of a writer?
  - Characters: static vs. dynamic; major v. minor; purposeful character development
  - Setting
  - Plot Curve: (1) introduction/problem, (2) rising action, (3) climax, (4) falling action, (5) resolution/conclusion
  - Conflict: internal vs. external, man vs. man, man vs. society, man vs. nature, man vs. self
  - Point of View (first person, third-person limited, third-person omniscient)
  - Mood
  - Theme-message, social commentary, and context

- What is a literary period and how does it influence an author’s writing style?
  - Genre
  - Literary Periods: sentimentalism, realism, regionalism, and the way the periods “work” together.
  - Writing/sharing stories allows us to express our ideas, feelings, etc. to connect with others.
  - Literature provides insight into our lives—this insight helps us better understand ourselves and the world around us.

**Skills**

**Students will be able to...**

**[LOWER-LEVEL USE OF KNOWLEDGE]**

- What is annotating text? What do you look for?
- Identify the elements of a story in short stories; explain the purpose of each element and how the element enhances the story
- Identify evidence of the literary period’s influence on the writer’s text
- Identify examples of diction and literary devices; explain how an author creates meaning through stylistic tools (diction and figurative language)
- Identify the author’s themes or messages for the reader
- Close read a text and annotate it while reading for evidence of the author’s mechanical and stylistic tools.

**[HIGHER-LEVEL SKILLS]**

- What does annotating a text help me understand?
- Apply knowledge from reading, annotating, and “dissecting” a text for author’s mechanical stylistic tools particular to one character and the one theme of faith.
- Compile this evidence to create a compelling social media page to bring the character to life in the twenty-first century.
- Examine the examples of faith for...
Stage 2 – Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE (M or T)</th>
<th>Evaluative Criteria (for rubric)</th>
<th>Performance Task(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T (and M)</td>
<td>See Rubric</td>
<td>What if the Archbishop had a Facebook page? What would his last status post read before he dies? Your task is to create a compelling social media profile for your group’s <em>Death Comes for the Archbishop</em> character. In your groups, you will collect and create the components for your profile page as we read Cather’s work. Your final assignment will be to construct a larger-than-life profile poster for your character (using 1-2 flat poster boards). The poster will count as two test grades; the whole group will receive one grade. The posters are due on ----- and you will present your posters to the class.</td>
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Formative Tasks: annotation checks and application, reading quizzes, tracking charts, “Facebook chats” among characters, reading guide checks, group mini-presentations, jigsaw among trackers, group discussions about characters, whole-class discussions

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE (A, M, T)</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Learning Activities</th>
<th>Progress Monitoring</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| A             | How will you check students’ prior knowledge, skill levels, and potential misconceptions? | 1. **Why do we tell stories?**
  - Pre-assess sub-EQs, elements of a story, and stylistic tools. Discuss author’s purpose: to persuade, inform/teach, entertain (PIE); stories are our windows and our mirrors.
  - Think about your favorite book; how was the story your window and mirror.**
| M             |                  | 2. **What is a story?**
  - Boiled down to the essentials, a story consists of a plot and characters. Create foldable of parts of a plot curve.
  - Watch/read “The Three Little Pigs” and identify the exposition, rising actions, climax, falling actions, and resolution of this story as a class.
  - **Assess plot curve:** read story and put together plot curve.**
| A             |                  | 3. **Besides plot, what are the other elements of a story and what are the stylistic tools a writer uses to communicate his message? Why does the writer use these tools?**
  - Create a foldable to define the elements of a story; discuss elements. An author uses the elements of a story purposefully and creatively to develop the framework for “what is said” in the text to build his message for the reader.
  - Flipped Classroom: Theme: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4qME64SkxM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4qME64SkxM)
  - Pre-reading guide about technology about thematic statements from “The Veldt”
  - Read Ray Bradbury’s “The Veldt;” stop and discuss elements of a story and plot curve as a class; add an example of each element to our foldable.
  - Create plot curve for “The Veldt”
  - Pick a character and complete character chart: illustrate, wear, say, do, etc.
    - **Assess elements of a story**
  - Refer back to stylistic tools: simile, metaphor, symbol, imagery
  - Return to Bradbury’s “The Veldt;” find examples as a class of imagery, simile, metaphor, symbol; find examples individually and discuss **|
| A,M           |                  | **Formative A.** | **Formative Assessment** |
1. Work on Heads Up activity in pairs to identify theme. Theme post-it note bar graph activity and assessment; discuss theme and how the Bradbury uses the mechanical and stylistic tools to communicate his message.

2. How does the literary period influence the author’s writing?
   - Vocabulary Word Wall; define words & present; display on wall.
   - Preassess: What is an author’s writing style? What is a literary period? What is sentimentalism? What is realism? How does the literary period influence the author’s writing?
   - Listen to “If I Die Young” and discuss how it embodies the sentimentalism period.
   - Redefine an author’s writing style
   - Discuss context from Cather’s novel (PowerPoint)
   - Define realist period and predict characteristics of Cather’s novel.
   - Assess literary period

3. Why annotate a book?
   - Introduce DCA groups. Establish team norms, expectations & points system!
   - Preassess main three EQs and discuss. Read a segment from Paul about faith & discuss.
   - Introduce the process of reading Cather’s novel; explain expectations
   - Introduce characters and read summary of prologue; discuss
   - Introduce basic annotation bookmark—for setting, characters; define and review both terms
   - Listen to audio of Book 1: Chapter 1 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate together, stop and discuss as a class.
   - Listen to audio of Book 1: Chapter 2-4—annotate for setting, characters, comments about faith
   - Reading quiz to identify major points and ideas and annotation abilities!
   - Introduce individual jobs—time tracker, setting specialist, friends fan, character master—to students
   - Students review annotations and notes about Book 1 and complete individual jobs for Book 1. (If character has not appeared yet, students select a character and write a message to another character.)

4. How does an author use elements of a story to communicate his message? How does the author use stylistic tools to communicate his message? How do you express your faith? Is there a correct way?
   - Introduce imagery: Use your five senses to describe an object; share; you just painted a picture with your words; this technique is called imagery
   - Read imagery example from Panera Bread bag and discuss use of senses.
   - Listen to audio of Book 2: Chapter 1 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate for character, job, and imagery; annotate and discuss in pairs and as a class.
   - Assess imagery annotation and content
   - Introduce diction: Three Corners: Explain game: left of room is (+); center is neutral; right of room is (-)—call out words and students decide if word is positive, negative, or neutral, and they move to place in room to identify decision.
   - Define diction—the author’s word choice—and discuss more examples (powerpoint)
   - Students are given groups of words to organize from most positive to least positive; stand to identify most positive word in each group; discuss
   - Listen to audio of Book 2: Chapter 2 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate for character, job, and DICTION; annotate and discuss in pairs and as a class.
   - Reading quiz/dialectical journal to identify major points, ideas, and diction; then
compile information to individual role.

- Listen to audio of Book 2: Chapter 3 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading; annotate for **character, job, and comments about faith**; annotate and discuss in pairs and as a class.
- Vocabulary Word Wall; define words & present; display on wall.
- Listen to audio of Book 3 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate individually, stop and discuss in pairs and as a class.

**Reading quiz/create a facebook conversation to identify major points, ideas, and annotation, AND INDIVIDUAL JOBS**; then compile information to individual role.

- Listen to audio of Book 4 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate individually, stop and discuss in pairs and as a class.
- Reading quiz/create a facebook conversation to identify major points and ideas; then compile information to individual role.
- Vocabulary Word Wall; define words & present; display on wall.
- Listen to audio of Book 5 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate individually, stop and discuss in pairs and as a class.

**Assess main three EQs and discuss. Faith reflection.**

**Reading quiz/create a facebook conversation to identify major points, ideas, and annotation**; then compile information to individual role.

- Listen to audio of Book 6 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate individually, stop and discuss in pairs and as a class.
- Reading quiz/create a facebook conversation to identify major points, ideas, and annotation; then compile information to individual role.
- Vocabulary Word Wall; define words & present; display on wall.
- Listen to audio of Book 7 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate individually, stop and discuss in pairs and as a class.

**Reading quiz/create a facebook conversation to identify major points, ideas, and annotation**; then compile information to individual role.

- Timed writing about faith (Entrance Exam format)
- Listen to audio of Book 8 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate individually, stop and discuss in pairs and as a class.

**Reading quiz/create a facebook conversation to identify major points, ideas, and annotation**; then compile information to individual role.

- Listen to audio of Book 9 (give summary to differentiate for lower students before reading); annotate individually, stop and discuss in pairs and as a class.
- Reading quiz/create a facebook conversation to identify major points and ideas; then compile information to individual role.

- **Faith reflection.**
- **Vocabulary assessment**
- **Work day to plan social media poster**
- **TAOS TRIP**
- **Work Days to create social media together**
- **Present posters to the class**
- **Reflect on experience and revisit EQs; discuss.**

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**content & diction**

**Formative A:** content, annotation, individual jobs

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**Formative A:** content, annotation, individual jobs

**Summative:** EQS

**Summative:** vocabulary

**Summative:** character, content, theme, EQs