

Script for WWI Poetry Lesson

- Actions
- ❖ Speaking

INTRODUCTION OF STEELE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY (1 minute)

- ❖ “(NEED TO INSERT TEXT)”

ANTICIPATORY SET (2 minutes)

- Show a poppy flower to the students.
- Pass them out to each student.
- ❖ “Do you know what this flower is?” (Wait for response)
- ❖ “Have you ever read anything that changed the world?” (Wait for response)
- ❖ “Two simple poems, written during World War I, brought about the worldwide use of poppies to remember the dead.”

5 Minutes

- Pass out the poem.
- Have students read it with a neighbor or two.
- ❖ “Share with their small group what you think the poem means and how it makes you feel. Answer the questions along the right side of the page. Leave the bottom of page alone for now. We’ll cover that in moment.”

2 Minutes

- ❖ “Does anybody want to share their ideas with the group?”
(If no one willingly shares, ask one or two of these questions)
- ❖ “Is this a happy or a sad poem?”
- ❖ “What do you think about the author?”
- ❖ “What words do you not use or recognize?”

1 Minute

- Refer to the screen with the PowerPoint up.
- ❖ “What do you see here?”
- ❖ “Do you know where this picture was taken?”
- Click the screen
- ❖ “This is a picture of poppies? The Tower of London had an art display of more than 888,000 poppies called *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*. Great Britain created it in 2014 and placed a poppy for each person of Great Britain killed in WWI. So each one of those flowers represents an individual person.”

4 Minutes

- Go through the poem on the screen, explaining points as going.
- ❖ “Please write the definitions on the space provided on your sheet.”

3 Minutes

- ❖ “Who was John McCrae? Based on his words, what were his feelings?”
- Show picture of John McCrae on screen.

3 Minutes

- ❖ “Following the death of a close friend, John McCrae wrote a poem about war and death. His friend had died during the Second Battle of Ypres [pronounced Ee-prah], where more than 100,000 men died in April and May of 1915. A popular magazine published his poem and it connected with many people. One of them was Moina Michael, a college teacher. She wrote a poem in response. She vowed to keep the memory of these men alive and chose poppies to make that happen.”
- On the screen, click through the maps to show where Ypres is in Europe

5 Minutes

- Click to the next poem.
- Read the poem and the definitions for each word.
- ❖ “What is Moina’s poem saying?”
- ❖ “What does she want the reader to do?”
- ❖ “What similarities are there between the two poems?”
- ❖ “How did McCrae inspire the second poem?”

3 Minutes

- ❖ “Poppies are small red flowers that can grow in poor conditions, much like weeds. In soil that had been churned up and mixed with rubble, the soil did not grow much else. Thus, shortly after a burial, poppies quickly appeared on the grave. Moina Michael sold small, silk poppies to raise money for veterans after the war. Soon it became a symbol of remembrance and honor.”

2 Minutes

- ❖ “The Owatonna American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary were both founded after the war. An ‘Auxiliary’ gives extra support. The Auxiliary raised money and spent it on soldiers and those in need. Simple things like the bathrobe and slippers they sent to George Peterson or the presents they sent to men in a Minneapolis hospital made a big difference. When the veteran Harry Krier died at just 24, the Auxiliary sent flowers to his mother.

Commented [1]: Do we want to mention that at the time the Auxiliary was made up of women because they did not fight in the war...or not?

- ❖ Most of the war was fought in France. People experienced many hardships. More than 1.5 million French people died during the war and from the Spanish Flu. That's as if everyone in Minnesota outside the Twin Cities died. Everyone here, in Rochester, Mankato, Duluth.... They had a lot of problems. To help raise money for French children, the French started making poppies for sale in other places like the US and even Steele County.

4 Minutes

- Share the first two stanzas of “The To-be Forgotten.” Warn the students about forgetting sacrifices.
 - ❖ “What are the dead afraid of?” Wait for response and discussion.
 - ❖ If it doesn’t come easily, prompt with “What is the second death?”
 - ❖ “How can they be afraid of dying again?”
 - ❖ “Their second death is being forgotten by all the living.”
 - ❖ “All their actions, words, sacrifices—everything they did will be forgotten.”
 - ❖ “The best way we can honor those who sacrificed for us is to remember them. You all live within a few miles of people who have served. Ask them if they’d like to tell you about their experiences. The worst thing you can do is forget entirely that other people have made sacrifices for you.”
- 9 Minutes (or remaining time)

End with a discussion about how they can honor the dead. What can they do? Why should they do it? What does respect look like? What does the poppy they’ve each had throughout the lesson mean? What response should they have to it?

Assignments and Reminders

- Could an individual writing assignment be offered to the students (in conjunction with classroom teacher’s support. Poems could be collected, graded (?), and sent to the SCHS for posting. Offer a free-admission day to SCHS on November 11 (or nearest prior business date) to all accompanied by a sixth grader.
- Event could also include anonymous posting at American Legion and a popular vote could be attained for an annual prize. Could ask Legion color guard to judge as well.
- What would such an assignment look like. Perhaps present a short write-up of a Steele County veteran’s war experience with short write-up on his family.

Materials and Equipment

Projector, computer, PowerPoint, embedded video of song, box of poppies. Handouts of poems and discussion questions

Accommodations for Students with Special Needs

The students have the poem in front of them to read along if they have trouble reading. Teacher will vary questions from individual response to all-call questions to help inclusion. The flower will also work as a “fidget” to help dispel nervous energy throughout the lesson.

Assessment of Student Learning

Discussion sheets include a section to record their response. The classroom teacher may use this to assess if the students understood and participated in the lesson.

Reflective Evaluation

Suggestions for Revision