

LESSON PLAN: THE POETRY OF WALT WHITMAN WITH SMACK DAB IN THE MIDDLE OF MAYBE

Date:	Class:	Unit:
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LESSON TOPIC:	The Poetry of Walt Whitman with <i>Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe</i>
AIM:	In the novel <i>Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe</i> , Miss V's dog Percy loves hearing poems by Walt Whitman. Students can use the book to learn more about Walt Whitman and his poetry.
OBJECTIVES:	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify Walt Whitman as a well-known American poet. 2. Provide information about Walt Whitman's life. 3. Define new vocabulary words used on the "About Walt Whitman" handout. 4. Explain the meaning of the lines: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes." ("Song of Myself") 5. Recognize how Whitman's poetry applies to characters in <i>Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe</i>.
GET STARTED/ DO-NOW:	<p>Read the excerpt of "Song of the Open Road" (Walt's Welcome) in the book <i>Poetry for Kids – Walt Whitman</i> by Karen Karbiener. Instruct students to re-write each line in their own words. Discuss as a class.</p> <p>"Camerado" is a term Whitman made up for "friend" or "comrade." What definition did the students give to the word "camerado"? Why?</p>
MINI-LESSON:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instruct the students to use a dictionary to define the words on the "Walt Whitman Vocabulary" handout. As a class, discuss the words and their meanings. 2. Using a projector or smartboard, show the class a photos of Walt Whitman. 3. Provide the students with the "About Walt Whitman" handout. Read it together as a class. Instruct the students to fill in the blanks with the missing words as you go. Be sure to point out and review the vocabulary words as you come across them.

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MAIN ACTIVITY:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In <i>Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe</i>, Miss V. reads a few lines of one of Whitman’s poems, <i>Song of Myself</i>, to Percy. “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes.” Using a projector or smartboard, present these lines to the class and read them aloud. 2. Discuss the meanings of the words <i>contradict</i> and <i>multitude</i>. 3. Discuss what Walt Whitman meant by these lines. Begin by asking the students what they think he meant. Explain how many people think contradicting yourself is something to avoid. Whitman embraces contradiction. He is large enough to contain contradictory things. He reminds us we are never just one thing, and all the quirks, imperfections, and contradictions help make us who we are. 4. Have the students answer the following questions either in a class discussion or on a sheet of paper: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">In <i>Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe</i>, Miss V. says of Cricket’s mama: <i>What I’m saying is, she probably did the best she could... Whatever those neighbors said about her, that isn’t who she is. Remember the line from that Walt Whitman poem, “I am large, I contain multitudes?” Your mama’s more than what those neighbors think, and you know it. She’s a person like anyone else. She has her struggles and her strengths. Your mama loves you. Leaving you must have been the hardest thing she ever did. She must have had a mighty good reason to do it.”</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Walt Whitman used that line to describe himself. How do the lines apply to Mama?</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Does Miss V. see as a positive or negative quality?</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Do you think these lines apply to Cricket, too? Why or why not?</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Do you think these lines could describe you? If so, why?</p>
CLOSING ACTIVITY:	<p>Walt Whitman is Percy’s second favorite poet. Using what the students know about Walt Whitman, discuss as a class why Percy may have liked his poetry so much.</p>

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EXTENSIONS:	<p>Provide each student with a different excerpt of Walt Whitman’s poetry as found in the book <i>Poetry for Kids – Walt Whitman</i>. Have students write down what they think Walt Whitman meant. Discuss the excerpts and meanings as a class.</p> <p>Have the students create a poster featuring the “contradictions” they see in themselves. Use markers, colored pencils, watercolors, or other media to illustrate these contradictions.</p> <p>Walt Whitman is often called the Father of Free Verse. Define <i>free verse</i> for the students. Have each student write their own free verse poem to share with the class.</p> <p>Research other American writers that were alive during Whitman’s time. What did they think about Walt Whitman and his poetry?</p>
CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING:	Students write a short report about what they learned about Walt Whitman and his poetry.
MATERIALS:	<p><i>Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe</i> by Jo Hackl</p> <p><i>Poetry for Kids – Walt Whitman</i> by Karen Karbiener</p> <p>Computer and projector or smartboard for class discussion</p> <p>Dictionaries or computers for student use to research definitions</p> <p>“Walt Whitman Vocabulary” handout</p> <p>“About Walt Whitman” handout</p> <p>Markers, colored pencils, watercolors, or other media</p>
TECHNOLOGY:	Look up definitions online.
COMMON CORE STANDARDS:	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.1</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.5</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.2</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6-8.1</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6-8.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6-8.5</p>