

Don Giovanni

Lesson 6

Looking at *Don Giovanni* through different “lenses.”

Objective

Students will comprehend the drama of *Don Giovanni* through various literary theories. (It’s suggested that this lesson follow some other preliminary work on the story of *Don Giovanni*.)

Materials

“*Don Giovanni* through the lenses” worksheet and rubrics (**one copy per student**) (*see following pages*)
Various costumes and props for student presentations

Procedures

- (1) Break class into smaller groups and assign each group a “lens” in which to analyze *Don Giovanni*.
- (2) As a class, read through the “*Don Giovanni* through the lenses” worksheet. Give additional explanation as needed, to the class describing the various perspectives.
- (3) Assign worksheet and possible class time for work.
- (4) Create a space for the student groups to present their work. Students not presenting will serve as an audience taking notes on each presentation. These notes will be used in the assessment.

Assessment

Each student will be assessed individually and as a member of their assigned group. Value given to group participation and class presentation will follow the “*Don Giovanni* through the lenses” worksheet rubric. Upon the completion of all presentations, each student is to compose a persuasive essay supporting one of the lenses as superior to the others. All lenses are to be used and sighted as supporting material of the argument.

Look at *Don Giovanni* through different “lenses” Worksheet & Rubric

Lesson 6

NAME _____

Directions:

Read through each description of the various literary theories or “lenses” used to understand literature. In your small group, read through your assigned lens and find examples of this perspective in the libretto of *Don Giovanni*. After your group has collected enough examples in the libretto, create a 10 minute presentation explaining your position. Use a short example of the libretto to act out (with appropriate costumes and props) to demonstrate your position. During the other class presentations, take notes on how each lens is represented in *Don Giovanni*. These notes are to be used in a final persuasive essay supporting one theory. Follow the checklist and rubric to help you complete all the tasks.

Marxist Literary Theory

Assumptions

1. The German Philosopher Karl Marx argued that the way people think and behave in any society is determined by basic economic factors.
2. In his view, those groups of people who owned and controlled major industries could exploit the rest of the population, through conditions of employment and by forcing their own values and beliefs onto other social groups.
3. Marxist criticism applies these arguments to the study of literary texts.

Strategies

1. Explore the way different groups of people are represented in texts. Evaluate the level of social realism in the text-how is society portrayed.
2. Determine the ideological stance of the text-what world view does the text represent.
3. Consider how the text itself is a commodity that reproduces certain social beliefs and practices. Analyze the social effect of the literary work.

Reader-Response Criticism

Assumptions

1. An author’s intentions are not reliably available to readers; all they have is the text.
2. Out of the text, readers actively and personally make meaning.
3. Responding to a text is a process and descriptions of that process are valuable.

Strategies

1. Move through the text in super slow motion, describing the response of an informed reader at various points.
2. Or describe your own response moving through the text.
3. React to the text as a whole, embracing and expressing the subjective and personal response it engenders.

Postcolonial Literary Theory

Assumptions

1. Colonialism is a powerful, destructive historical force that shapes not only the political futures of the countries involved, but also the identities of colonized and colonizing people.
2. Successful colonialism depends on a process of “othering” the people colonized. That is, the colonized people are seen as dramatically from and lesser than the colonizers.
3. Because of this, literature written in colonizing cultures often distorts the experiences and realities of colonized people. Literature written by colonized people often includes attempts to articulate more empowered identities and reclaim cultures in the face of colonization.

Strategies

1. Search the text for references to colonization or current and formerly colonized people. In these references, how are the colonized people portrayed? How is the process of colonization portrayed?
2. Consider what images of “others” or processes of “othering” are present in the text. How are these “others” portrayed?
3. Analyze how the text deals with cultural conflicts between the colonizing culture and the colonized or traditional culture?

Feminist Criticism

Assumptions

1. The work doesn't have an objective status, an autonomy; instead, any reading of it is influenced by the reader's own status, which includes gender, or attitudes toward gender.
2. Historically the production and reception of literature has been controlled largely by men; it's important now to insert a feminist viewpoint in order to bring to our attention neglected works as well as new approaches to old works.
3. Men and women are different: they write differently, read differently, and write about their reading differently. These differences should be valued.

Strategies

1. Consider the gender of the author, the characters: what role does gender or sexuality play in this work?
2. Specifically, observe how sexual stereotypes might be reinforced or undermined. Try to see how the work reflects, or distorts, or recuperates the place of women (and men) in society.
3. Imagine yourself as a woman reading the work.

Psychological Criticism

Assumptions

1. Creative writing (like dreaming) represents the (disguised) fulfillment of a (repressed) wish or fear.
2. Everyone's formative history is different in particulars, but there are basic recurrent patterns of development for most people. These patterns and particulars have lasting effects.
3. In reading literature, we can make educated guesses about what had been repressed and transformed.

Strategies

1. Attempt to apply a developmental concept to the work (Or the author or the characters). For example: the Oedipal complex, anal retentiveness, castration anxiety, gender confusion.
2. Relate the work to psychologically significant events in the author's life.
3. Consider how repressed material may be expressed in the work's pattern of imagery or symbols.

Biographical, Historical, New Historical Criticism

Assumptions

1. Meaning is contextual.
2. The context for a literary work includes information about the author; his or her historical moment; the systems of meaning available at the time of writing.
3. Interpretation of the work should be based on an understanding of its context.

Strategies

1. Research the author's life, and relate that information to the work.
2. Research the author's time (the political history, intellectual history, economic history, etc.) and relate that information to the work.
3. Research the systems of meaning available to the author, and relate those systems to the work.

CHECK LIST

- Individually read the *Don Giovanni* libretto. Make citations in the text when you find examples of your theory.
- In your small group, discuss your findings.
- Prepare a 10 minute presentation* that includes the following:
 - An explanation of the purpose of your lens in general
 - A thorough analysis of how *Don Giovanni* can be seen through your lens including at least 5 quotations found in the libretto supporting your theory.
 - An explanation of how the imagery is used to explicate/illuminate your lens's interpretation.
 - Identify a small portion of one or two scenes from *Don Giovanni* which demonstrate how the lens can be used to interpret the action/characters. Assign the roles to the groups members to be acted out during the presentation. Use appropriate costumes/props for the presentation.
 - An explanation of which themes are highlighted through the use of your lens

**Follow the Presentation Rubric for parameters of the presentation.*

- Take notes on the other presentations. Highlight how each lens can be identified in the libretto.
- Write a persuasive essay supporting one theory as the best way to describe the opera *Don Giovanni*. Use your notes from the presentations to cite examples either for or against your position. Follow the Essay Rubric for parameters for your writing.

PRESENTATION RUBRIC

CATEGORY	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaching Standards	1 - Below Standards
Collaboration with Peers	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Often is not a good team member.
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.
Speaks Clearly	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, and mispronounces no words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, but mispronounces one word.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most (94-85%) of the time. Mispronounces no more than one word.	Often mumbles or can not be understood OR mispronounces more than one word.
Props	Student uses several props (could include costume) that show considerable work/creativity and which make the presentation better.	Student uses 1 prop that shows considerable work/creativity and which make the presentation better.	Student uses 1 prop which makes the presentation better.	The student uses no props OR the props chosen detract from the presentation.
Stays on Topic	Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.	Stays on topic most (99-90%) of the time.	Stays on topic some (89%-75%) of the time.	It was hard to tell what the topic was.
Collaboration with Peers	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others in the group. Often is not a good team member.
Listens to Other Presentations	Listens intently. Does not make distracting noises or movements.	Listens intently but has one distracting noise or movement.	Sometimes does not appear to be listening but is not distracting.	Sometimes does not appear to be listening and has distracting noises or movements.
Score				

ESSAY RUBRIC

CATEGORY	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaching Standards	1 - Below Standards
Position Statement	The position statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.	The position statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.	A position statement is present, but does not make the author's position clear.	There is no position statement.
Evidence and Examples	All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.
Accuracy	All supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Almost all supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Most supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Most supportive facts and statistics were inaccurately reported.
Grammar & Spelling	Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distracts the reader from the content.	Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distracts the reader from the content.
Capitalization & Punctuation	Author makes no errors in capitalization or punctuation, so the essay is exceptionally easy to read.	Author makes 1-2 errors in capitalization or punctuation, but the essay is still easy to read.	Author makes a few errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader's attention and interrupt the flow.	Author makes several errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader's attention and interrupt the flow.
Score				