The Scarlet Letter

WebQuest Description:
The prickling pinch of the scarlet letter upon Hester Prynne

Grade Level: 9-12
Curriculum: English / Language Arts
Keywords: Theme, Motif, Symbolism
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Introduction

You are ASHAMED!!!
You are an ashamed citizen in puritan Boston where Hester Prynne lives. In public like most in the town you berate and treat Hester and her daughter Pearl poorly, however in private you are ashamed of your actions. Much in the same fashion that reverend Dimmesdale privately shows shame over his part in Hester’s “sin,” you privately feel shame over your humiliation of Hester and her daughter.

Tasks

The task: To write a three page journal entry in which you relate your secret sense of shame in treating Hester Prynne and her daughter poorly. The journal entry must reflect an understanding of one of the following literary elements.

- Theme
- Motif
- Symbolism

Example: Today I sneered and insulted Hester and her child when I saw them in town. I feel badly because of the way I have treated them both; however many in town act this way and I felt pressured to behave in this fashion. Hester is segregated from the rest of us because of her sin, and the ‘A’ she wears is a representation of her crime. However the scarlet letter on her breast almost seems to empower Hester. She often walks in town boldly and seems to revel in the fact that she is different.

This example is obviously too short, but as you may notice it reflects an understanding of an important symbolic element in the novel the scarlet letter. The author has identified how the scarlet letter seems to be a tool of empowerment for Hester thereby showing the irony Hawthorne has created - while the letter is a symbol of shame as the story progresses it develops into a symbol of power.

Process

Steps to succeed in this assignment
Below are the steps which students need to do in order to complete this lesson.

First, you must review the novel “The Scarlet Letter.” The novel should already have been read before this webquest is started however in order to make certain the material is fresh in your minds, you will review as a home learning activity the novel as well as be given time to review in class (10 minutes).

After we go over the three literary elements being addressed in this lesson (theme, motif, symbolism) as a class, you will be given time to identify these elements in the text independently. (10 minutes of review as a class - 10 minutes of independent identification of literary elements in the text).

You will then be given time to write a rough draft of your mock journal entry (30 minutes).

After you have written a rough draft you will be divided into groups of four. In these groups you will work on reviewing the work of your peers and offering them suggestions and possible corrections (20 minutes).

Students will then re-write their mock journal entries based on the suggestions made by their peers and proofread their work (40 minutes).

Finally students will submit the assignment for teacher assessment.

Teacher Information:
This assignment includes both independent and groups learning. The total time for this lesson is 2 hours. This lesson is intended for a classroom that has block schedule, if however you do not have this opportunity you can divide the lesson into two days.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on four primary points; the ability to write an organized essay, the ability to reflect understanding of one of the literary elements being studied, the ability to write grammatically correct, the ability to reflect creativity and understanding of story elements. Each of these four points being evaluated will be worth a max of twenty-five (25) points.
After the lesson is complete the learners will be able to distinguish important literary elements of the novel "The Scarlet Letter." This lesson provides as well a good opportunity for students to explore their expository writing skills as well as further develop essay organizational skills. Teachers may in order to close the lesson on a reflective note ask the following:

Why did you choose the literary element (theme, motif, symbolism) that you wrote about? What did you learn about this element?
Why do you think literary elements are important to the overall fabric of a story? Furthermore, questions like these can serve as a good way of ending a lesson or even expanding the lesson to a home learning activity.

This lesson has various sections in which the objective is for students to work independently. For SPED or ESOL learners a teacher may want to allow this assignment to be overall completed in a group setting. By doing this a teacher may ensure that students who are having complications completing the assignment due to their learning needs, get the help necessary to finish the learning task. Other accommodations/modifications a teacher may want to give to struggling learners:

More time to complete the assignment, perhaps have them complete the essay as a home learning activity.
A reduction in the number of pages they must write. (This assignment requests that students write a three page essay), perhaps have them write a two-page essay. Furthermore, teachers may be required to give students who are having a difficult time with this assignment private instruction and explanation.

Standards

Credits

Other