

LESSON PLAN: "FAR AHEAD OF ITS TIME"

OBJECTIVE: To teach students to use "anachronism" as a literary technique.

<p><u>KEY TERMS:</u></p>	<p>Anachronism – Placing something (an event, expression, object, or person) in the wrong historical context. Point of View – The perspective from which an author reveals events and ideas in a story.</p>	
<p><u>STANDARDS:</u></p>	<p>Virginia 9.1 C, 10.1 D, 9.4 A, 9.4 H, 10.4 H, 11.4 E, 9.7-12.7 E</p>	<p>Common Core</p> <p><i>Reading</i> Grades 6-8: 2, 4, 6 Grades 9-12: 2, 4</p> <p><i>Writing</i> Grades 6-8: 3.b-d, 4, 5 Grades 9-12: 3.a-d, 4, 5</p> <p><i>Speaking and Listening</i> Grades 6-8: 1.b-d Grades 9-12: 1.c-d</p> <p><i>Language Standards</i> Grades 6-8: 3, 5 Grades 9-12: 3, 5</p>

<p><u>INTRODUCTION:</u></p>	<p>Many definitions of anachronism will describe the term as an "error" in chronology. For example, in William Shakespeare's <i>Julius Caesar</i>, Brutus says, "Peace! Count the clock," but mechanical clocks did not exist in Caesar's time. However, anachronisms are not always mistakes; they can be used deliberately for artistic effect in order to attract the attention of an audience. The cavemen in the old Geico commercials are examples of a deliberate anachronism used for a humorous effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have you seen any examples of anachronisms in TV shows, movies, or literature?</i> <p>Here are some more examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doughnuts in "That 70's Show" were shown in a Krispy Kreme box, but the company didn't come to Wisconsin until the 2000's. • The modern movie adaptations of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> contain numerous examples of deliberate anachronisms. • Numerous anachronisms exist in the movie <i>Lincoln</i>, especially in the language they use. Read the following excerpt from Benjamin
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	<p>Schmidt's article entitled "Did Anyone Say 'Racial Equality' in 1865? The Language of Lincoln." The link to the rest of the article can be found under Additional Materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Mary Todd complains about Thaddeus Stevens's "prosecutorial" interest in her accounts, but the word wasn't used at all until 1934, and not widely until Watergate. As others have noted, everyone said "sneaked," not "snuck," until the 20th century, and the "barrage" of artillery Edwin Stanton plans for Wilmington only entered English around 1900. And the "bipartisanship" at the heart of the movie's narrative? The dictionary says the term only entered the language in 1909, although I've found a few occurrences from the 1890s.</i>
<p><u>STEP ONE:</u></p>	<p>Read the excerpt from Jane Yeh's "Double Wedding, 1615." Obviously, people did not talk like that in the 1600's. But the language used wasn't a mistake on the poet's part; rather, the use of modern language was purposefully anachronistic for effect.</p>
<p><u>STEP TWO:</u></p>	<p>Next, read what she had to say about her writing (beneath the excerpt under Additional Materials).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How can anachronism be used as a literary technique based on what she had to say?</i> • <i>How is it symbolic of the merging of two time periods?</i>
<p><u>STEP THREE:</u></p>	<p>Pick one of the following prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pick a person, real or fictional, from a time period different than your own. Write about the world around him/her using your voice/vernacular. - Pick a person, real or fictional, from the past or future. Place him/her here in the middle of present day society. Write from his/her perspective. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do they see?</i> • <i>How do they feel about our advancements?</i> • <i>Do they see them as advancements?</i> - Pick a famous personality, real or fictional, from history or literature, and set him/her in another time period. Write from his/her perspective. <p>Write for 15 to 20 minutes and share.</p>

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

“Double Wedding, 1615” by Jane Yeh

Afterwards we will bear the strange marks
Of another house, gold arms on a gold collar,
But for now no other jewels hang about our necks
Than these: pearls knotted with string, clasped
With velvet, and fitted just the length
To choke us. This day will slip from us
Shedding marquissette, point d’esprit, zibelline, trailing
Taffeta and broché behind it; it will leave us bare-
Handed and desperate to remember what we were
Before it . . .

* Yeh said the following about her writing during an interview for *New Welsh Review*:

“. . . these characters were (rather inevitably) anachronistic, i.e. the product of me, a twentieth-century American woman, trying to imagine the voice and thoughts of someone in very different circumstances in the past. The same could be said of writing in the voices of animals, which I also tend to do – that they’re overly anthropomorphised, hence inauthentic. But what’s important to me is trying to access the language of these characters, rather than trying to create ‘realistic’ simulacra. Their language, and their situations, are much more interesting than my own.”

Link to “Did Anyone Say ‘Racial Equality’ in 1865. The Language of Lincoln” by Benjamin Schmidt:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/01/did-anyone-say-racial-equality-in-1865-the-language-of-i-lincoln-i/266990/>

