Horror Tales: What Makes Them Spooky?

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Title/Role: Professor
Organization/School Name: University of Hawaii
Location: Hawaii

Grade Level: 7
Type of Lesson: Lesson in a unit
Type of Schedule: Flexible
Collaboration Continuum: Moderate
Content Area: Language Arts
Content Topic: Horror as a sub-genre of fiction

Standards for the 21st-Century Learner

Skills Indicator(s):
4.1.3 Respond to literature and creative expressions of ideas in various formats and genres.

Dispositions Indicator(s):
4.2.4 Show an appreciation for literature by electing to read for pleasure and expressing an interest in various literary genres.

Responsibilities Indicator(s):
4.3.1 Participate in the social exchange of ideas, both electronically and in person.

Self-Assessment Strategies Indicator(s):
1.4.1 Monitor own information-seeking processes for effectiveness and progress, and adapt as necessary.

Scenario: Language arts teachers in a middle school setting want to encourage critical reading of literature. They realize that horror tales is a popular literary sub-genre. At the same time, students haven’t spent much time seriously thinking about what makes a quality horror story. In this unit, they not only read many horror stories but they critically analyze what makes a horror story particularly effective. The teachers design the unit and enlist the help of the LMS to identify selections that might be read by the students. The LMS not only introduces the literature; but she also assists the teachers in designing an assessment tool to rate and analyze the fiction. In addition, she suggests that students create digital posters of their findings that become part of a huge Halloween display in the library. NOTE: This particular unit is an adapted composite of strategies and lessons successfully used at several different middle schools in Hawaii.

Overview: The teachers and LMS tap students’ prior knowledge about horror fiction, why they read it, and what they particularly find fascinating about this sub-genre. Building on this prior knowledge, the LMS selects a wide range of fiction and promotes the stories through face-to-face booktalks and VoiceThread presentations. As students select stories to read and rate, they focus on the following essential question: What makes a powerful scary story?

Final Product: This particular unit is scheduled before Halloween. Students contribute to a special
Halloween display in the school library that includes chilling scenes from the best stories they have selected. They create digital posters for this display.

**Library Lesson:** Students in grade seven each read at least three scary fiction stories and work on the following: (1) identify criteria to judge the ?scariness? of the fiction they read, (2) use a ?Scare-O-Meter? to rate the fiction read, (3) share stories with classmates and explain their ratings. Finally, they each select one of the stories to add to a ?Scare-O-Rama? Halloween display in the school library. They create digital posters for the display that includes chilling scenes from the stories along with their ratings. In this particular lesson, the students use the ?Scare-O-Meter? to rate the fiction they have read. This lesson takes place in two sessions, each about 60 minutes.

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 120 minutes

**Assessment**

- **Product:** Students use the rating scale to analyze the fiction they read.
- **Process:** Students discuss their ratings and reflect on what makes selected titles of horror fiction particularly effective.
- **Student self-questioning:** What makes a story especially powerful? What makes a horror story suspenseful?

**Instructional Plan**

**Resources students will use:**
- Dataset (ie. lists, tables, databases)
- Event (ie. exhibition, webcast, conference, workshop, performance)
- Still image (i.e. paintings, drawings, plans, and maps)
- Interactive Resource (i.e. webpages, multimedia learning objects, chat services)
- Software
- Sound (i.e. music playback file, audio compact disc, recorded speech or sounds)
- Text (books, letters, poems, newspapers, etc.)

**Interactive Resource URL:** http://

**Resources instructor will use:**
- Projector
- Laptop
- Smart board

**Instruction/Activities**

**Direct instruction:** (Session 1) The LMS distributes copies of the ?Scare-O-Meter? and explains that this is a rating and analysis instrument to assess the quality of horror fiction.

**Modeling and guided practice:** (Session 1) The LMS reads aloud a short story and asks students to listen attentively with the assessment criteria in mind. After the reading, the LMS and students rate the story using the ?Scare-O-Meter.? The LMS uses the Smart board to capture the ratings. The LMS also challenges students to provide details from the story to support their ratings.
Independent practice: (Session 2) The LMS reviews what was done in the previous lesson. Students work independently to use the ?Scare-O-Meter? on one of the fiction titles they have already read.

Sharing and reflecting: (Session 2) Students convene in small groups to share their ratings and supporting reasons. They offer feedback to one another. They continue this activity as homework with the other two stories that they will be reading.

Have you taught this lesson before: No

Strategies for differentiation: The teacher and LMS allow students to read a range of stories based on their reading levels and interests. Students also help one another to critically support their ratings.

AASL/Common Core State Standards Crosswalk

English Language Arts:

CC.7.SL.1.b » English Language Arts » Comprehension and Collaboration » b. Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed. (7)

CC.7.R.L.4 » English Language Arts » Craft and Structure » 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama. (7)

CC.7.R.L.5 » English Language Arts » Craft and Structure » 5. Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning. (7)

CC.7.R.L.6 » English Language Arts » Craft and Structure » 6. Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text. (7)

CC.7.R.L.7 » English Language Arts » Integration of Knowledge and Ideas » 7. Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film). (7)

CC.7.W.9.b » English Language Arts » Research to Build and Present Knowledge » b. Apply grade 7 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g. "Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims"). (7)
Scare-O-Meter to Rate Spooky Stories

Rating criteria:
√ √√ Will freak you out!
√√ Some parts are scary
√ It’s predictable and not scary

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<td>Sinister setting: location of the story created a feeling of suspense</td>
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<td>Support for rating</td>
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<td>Plot twists: events kept me guessing about what would happen next</td>
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<td>Support for rating</td>
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<td>Spooky characters: characters behaved mysteriously or looked strange</td>
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<td>Support for rating</td>
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<td>Surprise ending: ending is not what I expected</td>
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<td>Support for rating</td>
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AASL/Common Core State Standards Crosswalk

Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts:

CC.7. RL3. >>English Language Arts. Reading. >>Key Ideas and Details: 3. Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact.