“Acquainted with the Night” Robert Frost

Grade Level: 12  
Subject(s) Area: AP English  
Materials Needed:  
- Copy of Frost’s poem  
- Smartboard for annotating as class if needed  
- Student notebook paper for notes

Standards:  
- 12.2.4. Read for a variety of purposes and intents; e.g., to become life-long readers, to model forms of writing, etc.  
- 12.2.5. Interpret author’s use of figurative language including allusion, imagery, and symbolism  
- 12.2.6. Interpret author’s use of syntax and word choice/diction  
- 12.2.7. Critique literary merit of a work of literature  
- 12.2.8. Use technical language/jargon to decipher meaning  
- 12.4.4. Use critical listening responses, such as refutation and commentary, to critique the accuracy of messages  
- 12.6.2. Apply figurative language; i.e., allusion, analogy, hyperbole, irony, personification, oxymoron, and paradox  
- 12.6.3. Interpret the use of language in different literary forms; i.e., satire and parody

Objectives:  
- TLW annotate a work of poetry individually.  
- TLW collaborate with other students to determine literary conventions.  
- TLW practice prior knowledge of literary conventions through note taking and class discussion.

Learning Activities:  
1. Students will be introduced to “Acquainted with the Night” by Robert Frost (included below). I will share a brief background on the piece.  
2. I will ask a student volunteer to read the poem out loud.  
3. Students will take about 5 minutes to annotate the poem individually.  
4. I will pair students according to where they are seated because, in this AP class, the students seem fairly comfortable and at ease with each other to begin with and they will most likely be willing to share and discuss their thoughts.  
5. Think-Pair-Share: I will read a series of questions out loud, one at a time, and students will take about 30 seconds to think on their own and take notes; then about a minute to discuss their answers with a partner near them; and then we will come back as an entire group and students will share thoughts as a large group. If I have anything to add, I will at this time.  
6. Students will turn in their notes.
Assessment:

- The amount of student participation and the caliber of student discussion will be a key indicator for informal formative assessment in this lesson.
- The notes that students will turn in at the end of the lesson will show their individual investment in the poem and understanding of the literary conventions utilized.

Reflection:

The lesson went well. I was lucky to be able to use this lesson in a class of students who had been working with poetry already and were confident in their abilities. They were more than willing to participate in class discussion and to volunteer their thoughts. Dr. Werner, my coordinating teacher, had established a sense of community among the students and their knowledge of literary devices was already sound. I was unable to make it through all of my “Think-Pair-Share” questions, but, although I had to spontaneously choose which questions of the ones I planned were important, the student discussion was extremely productive and they definitely moved into the realm of higher order thinking, which was the ultimate goal. The students dominated the classroom discussion in this case, but I understand that I may have to encourage and facilitate the discussion in order to move it in the right direction with a different group of students if I use this lesson again.
“Acquainted with the Night”

Robert Frost

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain – and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane,
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right
I have been one acquainted with the night.

Poetryfoundation.org
Think-Pair-Share Questions

These first few questions you guys should be familiar with…

1. What is being dramatized? What conflicts or themes does the poem presents, address or questions?

2. Who is the speaker and who is the intended audience?

3. Why does the speaker feel compelled to speak at this moment? What are his intentions/motivations?

4. Plot: What happens? Where is the speaker? What time of day? Etc

5. When does the action occur and how is it presented (i.e. conflict, theme, etc)?

6. What kind of poem is this in terms of its form? (Will follow up with lengthy discussion, below.)

   • Rhythm (spoken word), meter (written word, beat), rhyme scheme. At this point, we can annotate these aspects on the smartboard when the entire class regroups in the think-pair-share activity if it is needed

   • Terza rima: Dante, traditionally iambic pentameter, Holy Trinity, Baccaccio, Petrach, Dante interested in unifying effect, used by Chaucer and Percy Shelley in English, suggests a continual progression,

   “Twentieth-century examples of terza rima come in two different forms: poets who have written in the form and scholars and poets who have translated Dante. Those who have written in terza rima usually employ near and slant rhymes, as the English language, though syntactically quite versatile, is rhyme poor. "The Yachts" by William Carlos Williams and "Acquainted with the Night" by Robert Frost are two examples. More recent works written in terza rima include "The Sow" by Sylvia Plath and the eponymous "Terza Rima" by Adrienne Rich.” Poets.org

   • Untraditional sonnet. Iambic (unstressed, stressed) pentameter (five feet in each line)

   • How does rhyme contribute to the meaning?
• What does the grouping accomplish? (Determine the “point” of each stanza)
• How does the structure enhance the poem? (What are sonnets most often, traditionally, about? Love.)

7. What are the prominent literary devices used in this poem?
   • Anaphora: repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses.
   • Imagery
   • Repitition, alliteration, and other sound devices
   • Symbolism: clock – real or metaphor? What kind of time? what does it suggest?; night – destination of inner life, self-knowledge, and alienation from others, no “light”, light=knowledge

8. Where does the speaker use specific, intentional vocabulary? Why these words?

9. What does the syntax (subjects, verbs, objects) reveal about the speaker?

10. How do the syntax and diction influence the theme and tone?

11. What is the significance of the title?
   • Poet as acquaintance with the night is “the glue that holds the poem together” enotes.