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ENGL 112B

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FUNDamentals of Fantasy:

The Manifestation of the Impossible & The Enhancement of the Mundane

"Imagination is the real and eternal world of which this vegetable universe is but a faint shadow."

- William Blake

Rationale

It comes to no surprise when I say that one of the most difficult obstacles in teaching is keeping your students attention. This statement is especially true now with the lack of attention span many children and young adults have through the consistent exposure to social media. I was no exception as a child. In class I would often tune out and just do enough to get by. However, no teacher should accept this. As teachers, they want their students to flourish and reach their potential. One of the main problems is that many students don't view school and the work that comes with it as entertaining or worth the effort. Though from my own personal experiences, I was able to see how rewarding learning was through fantasy novels and was able to apply that mindset to the other work that I once dreaded. Fantasies are often seen as inferior to realism, due to having their subject matters often hidden behind exaggerated symbolization and metaphors. However I view it to be a great tool to use to just simply get students open to the idea of reading and receiving information. That is why I want to implement a unit of study on fantasy in novels

in an attempt to hold the students' interest, help them pinpoint the underlying themes and symbols, in addition to displaying some of the writing techniques and elements of fantasy used in the novels.

Introduction to the Unit

Before assigning a novel to students, they will be tasked with writing a one page short story using elements of what they believe fantasy to be. Through this, I'll be able to gauge the prior knowledge that they have on the genre as well as how they are able to apply it to their writing. After they finish writing their short stories, the class will watch a youtube video titled, "Fiction Genres - What is Fantasy," to give them a glance into the genre while keeping the information easily digestible. The homework for that day would be for the students to conduct additional research on the key elements within fantasy pertaining to the themes, characters, settings, etc. Before I send them home, I will also give them a sheet listing some writing techniques used in fiction/fantasy such as active voice, using setting, and sensory imagery. When the students return the next day, I would assign them groups to share their short stories from the previous day and take note of what elements and techniques their fellow classmates had used in their stories. Knowing more than they did before, they will be assigned to write another short story pulling from new information they had gathered at home or through their group sharings and afterwards compare how their stories differ in a class discussion.

After the discussion, I will be assigning the class to read *Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan, which the students will be reading in and outside of class. The novel displays various elements of fantasy such as worldbuilding, a system of magic, otherworldly creatures, as well as relatable themes displayed in an attractive manner to keep students intrigued

during their readings. In addition the protagonist, Percy Jackson, can be a character that young children and teens can relate to by having real problems that they may experience such as dealing with ADHD, being a social pariah, and family trouble. The novel had a film developed in 2010, which will be watched together in class later on in the unit after the novel is completed and reflected on.

Through the Unit

The first item on the agenda for each class lesson in the unit will be for the students to write two paragraphs on what they had read in the chapter from the previous night. Requirements for the passage would include the writing techniques they observe, what differences and similarities they noticed in their readings compared to the real world and the setting in the book. In addition, they will be comparing themselves to some of the prominent characters in the book in terms of actions, personalities, hardships, and goals if applicable. This daily activity will assist the students in their ability to pinpoint writing techniques, discern the differences between reality and fantasy, which will also serve as a tool to assist them in understanding that there are aspects carried over from the real world into fantasy such as adversities, camaraderie, and ambitions, albeit extravagantly modified.

Once a week, the class will read the text together followed by a class discussion on a certain element of fantasy portrayed in the chapter. For example, if the topic of the discussion of the chapter was on setting, the class would discuss how the author was able to use descriptive tools in the text in order to create an environment that is transcendental to the world that we know of. There will be occasional quizzes as well pertaining to the content of the respective

chapters. The purpose of the quizzes will be making sure that the students are keeping up with the class readings as well as comprehending the text.

We will also be exploring Greek mythology and observe how author Rick Riordan alters some of the details to fit into his novel. This will be done by studying portions of *The Greek Myths* by Robert Graves, entailed with a comprehensive collection of ancient Greek myths retold by Graves. The class will examine certain events, characters, or settings in *The Greek Myths*, and compare it to their assigned text, noting if the changes were drastic or minimal, while also searching for the answer to why Riordan made the alterations that he did. Graves' collection of Greek myths can be rather intimidating to students, due to the sheer length of it. Therefore, the text will only be used when seen fit for the lessons throughout the unit.

A final project will be assigned to the students after they have completed the novel where they will independently manifest their own world of fantasy. This will help students test their own imagination as well as their efforts to make their ideas come as close to reality as possible. They will be able to portray their world through a shoebox, where they will fit as much of their world as they can onto their project. The project will be titled, "You Don't Need Shoes Where We're Going." In addition, they will be tasked with writing a three to five paper on their world, using elements of fantasy and techniques they've observed, with contents such as but not restricted to:

- Inhabitants Of The World
- The Environments/Setting
- History/Culture
- Governing System (if any)

- Magic/Power System (if any)



After the final project, the students will watch the *Percy Jackson & The Lightning Thief* film and take notes on the similarities and differences that they observe in comparison to the novel. Examples of this can be the physical attributes of the characters, their interactions and personalities, the environments, the action sequences, etc. When the film is finished, students will write a three to four page paper on the accuracy of the film to the novel, including the strengths and shortcomings that came of it as well as which one did they prefer with supporting claims.

Beyond the Text

In terms of YA literature, I would reference these texts to teach for the same unit of study on fantasy if not assigning *Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief*. While *Found* is classified as Science-Fiction, it still holds true to some of the key pieces that we are able to find in fantasy novels such as imaginative elements such as highly-advanced technological progression and otherworldly abilities. Students are also able to learn a portion of history through the reading, though slightly altered in the novel. In *Pahua and the Soul Stealer* students will see author Lori M Lee implements Hmong mythology in her novel while using great descriptive imagery tools to keep the readers invested. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling deeply explores the concept of a world filled with magic while also having some of the most determined efforts to worldbuild any chance that Rowling sees fit.

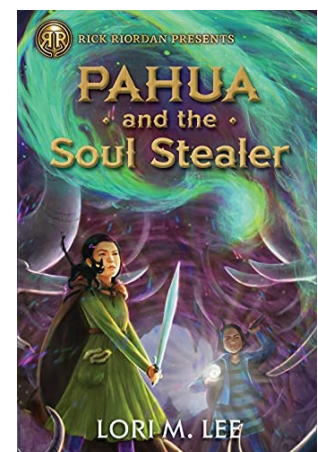
Found by Margeret Peterson Haddix (read in 2013)



A thirteen year-old kid by the name of Jonah, his sister Katherine, and their neighbor Chip get involved in a mystery soon after Jonah and Chip start receiving cryptic letters stating, “You are one of the missing,” and “Beware! They’re coming back to get you.” They get caught up in more than they anticipated as the FBI, people that appear and reappear at will, and a large smuggling ring come into play.

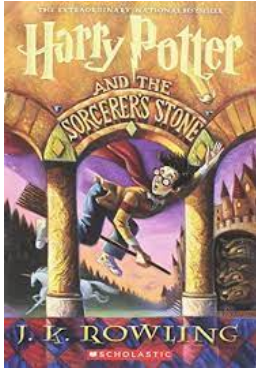
Pahua and the Soul Stealer by Lori M. Lee (read 2022)

11 year-old Hmong American Pahua Moua has always had the ability to see spirits. Through an unfortunate incident, she lost her brother's soul to a spirit and must retrieve it in the Spirit Realm in three days or else her



brother may never return to what he used to be. She must struggle against her fears and venture into the unknown with two allies by her side, a shaman-warrior in training by the name of Zhong and her free roaming cat spirit Miv.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling (read in 2013)



Harry has lived with his aunt and uncle for 10 years who blatantly favor their son which causes a less than desirable home situation. One day, a man towering in size by the name of Hagrid appears at his door and states that he earned a scholarship to attend The Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. There he is surrounded by the world of magic, where he feels more comfortable than he does in the muggle world. Though fate is not too

kind to Harry, as he has a destiny to fulfill, or die trying.

Works Cited

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