

Character to Icon: The Image of Dracula in Popular Culture

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 9-12

Curriculum Focus: Literature

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Student Objectives

- Understand that the universal appeal of certain fictional characters is so great that they become cultural icons
- Work with a group to create a board game based on the novel *Dracula*.

Materials

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Great Books: Dracula*
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Dracula Through the Years: From Creation to Popular Icon
- Count Dracula Travels to England and Makes a Vampire of Lucy, Harker's Fiancee
- The Race to Save Mina, Dracula's Next Victim
- The Demise of Count Dracula
- The novel *Dracula*
- Sheets of cardboard, oak tag, or some other stiff material to be decorated as game boards and to be cut up into cards for the games
- Pairs of dice for each group
- Multiples of various small objects—buttons, coins, bottle tops, and so on—for students to use as playing pieces
- Markers to decorate game boards
- Old magazines to cut up for illustrations on game boards

Procedures

1. Tell the class that fictional literary characters become so famous that they enter popular culture in other forms, such as movies, games, and toys. Ask students to name some of the different places or products that use the character of “Dracula.”
2. As a class, brainstorm some favorite board games.
3. Discuss with your students features that are common to board games:
 - A starting point and an ending point
 - Playing pieces
 - Dice or a wheel with spinner
 - Cards with directions
 - Places on the board that if landed on provide a shortcut or force backward movement for a playing piece
4. Ask students to come up with some ways in which the story *Dracula* can be viewed in terms of a board game. For example:
 - How do the characters in *Dracula* “advance”?
 - What obstacles get in the way of the novel’s characters’ progress?
 - What gives the novel’s characters strength? What weakens the novel’s characters?
 - What symbols in the novel can be used in some way – if only for decoration – in the board game?
 - How does Bram Stoker’s story end? What alternative endings can students conceive of?
5. When the discussion is complete, organize students into groups, and give each group the assignment to create an illustrated game board, game pieces, and written rules for its version of The Dracula Game. Hand out the materials to each group so they know what they’ll have to work with.
6. When the games are still in a draft stage, have each group run a product test by explaining the work-in-progress to another group and asking for feedback. Then the groups should go on to revise their games.
7. When the games are finished, ask each group to give an oral presentation on how the product reflects the assignment. Then rotate the games around the room so that groups play one another’s games.
8. Finally, conduct a class discussion in which students evaluate the pros and cons of the games they’ve reviewed.

Discussion Questions

1. What elements of the gothic genre are found in *Dracula*? Consider characters, conflicts, setting, tone, and symbols.
2. Describe Dracula as a simple tale of good versus evil. Which characters or ideas does Stoker depict as “good”? Which does he depict as “evil”? How do these characters and ideas conflict within the story?
3. What did Dracula represent within the context of Stoker’s story? Explore the question in the context of the following assertion: Dracula is all things to all people.
4. Evaluate the effects that Dracula has on the various characters he encounters in the story. How does he bring out their best and most noble instincts? How does he bring out their worst or least attractive qualities?
5. What is the significance of blood in *Dracula*? What is its value to humans? To the vampire? Explore the literal and symbolic meanings of blood in the story.
6. Explain some ways Dracula remains an icon in today’s popular culture. Compare and contrast the different ways Dracula is portrayed in movies, television, and other books. Is Dracula’s power as a symbol increased or diminished when he is “rewritten” into new texts?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students showed strong collaboration skills, participating actively, with cooperation and the ability to compromise; gave highly organized oral explanation of the game, with very clear articulation.
- 2 points: Students showed satisfactory collaboration skills, participating, with cooperation and the ability to compromise; gave organized oral explanation of the game, with adequate articulation.
- 1 point: Students showed weak collaboration skills, did not participate, had difficulty cooperating and compromising; gave disorganized oral presentation; unclear speech.

Vocabulary

alienation

Definition: A withdrawing or separation of a person or a person’s affections from an object or position of former attachment.

Context: After being rejected by her friends, the girl was overwhelmed with a feeling of alienation.

anxiety

Definition: Painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind, usually over an impending or anticipated ill.

Context: Dracula's persistence in attacking Mina filled John with anxiety.

appropriation

Definition: Taking for one's own use.

Context: Popular culture's appropriation and distortion of Dracula's image would have enraged Bram Stoker.

contagion

Definition: A contagious disease.

Context: The deadly contagion wiped out an entire population.

exotic

Definition: Strikingly, excitingly, or mysteriously different or unusual.

Context: The unfamiliar people appeared exotic to John.

icon

Definition: Emblem; symbol.

Context: Dracula has become an icon representing evil.

mundane

Definition: Characterized by the practical, transitory, and ordinary.

Context: Eating the same meal three times a day can become very mundane.

transfusion

Definition: The process of transfusing fluid into a vein or artery.

Context: The accident victim is in dire need of a transfusion.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Language Arts—Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts.



- Language Arts—Writing: Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.
 - Language Arts—Reading: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.
 - Historical Understanding: Understands the historical perspective.
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [Discoveryschool.com](http://school.discovery.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>