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| <p>Title of Lesson Plan</p> | <p>Irish Eyes: Taking a Look at the Past and Present Through a Poem by Seamus Heaney</p> |
| <p>Learning Objectives</p> | <p>By studying “Personal Helicon” by Seamus Heaney and using the poem as inspiration for an original work, students will achieve the following Indiana objectives:</p> <p>9.4.1, 10.4.1, 11.4.1—Discuss ideas for writing with classmates, teachers, and other writers and develop drafts alone and collaboratively.</p> <p>12.4.1—Engage in conversations with peers and the teacher to plan writing, to evaluate how well writing achieves its purposes, and to explain person reaction to the task.</p> <p>11.4.4, 12.4.4—Structure ideas and arguments in a sustained and persuasive way and support them with precise and relevant examples.</p> <p>11.4.5, 12.4.5—Enhance meaning using rhetorical devices, including the extended use of parallelism, repetition, and analogy [...].</p> <p>11.4.6, 12.4.6—Use language in creative and vivid ways to establish a specific tone.</p> <p>12.4.9—Use technology for all aspects of creating, revising, editing, and publishing.</p> <p>9.4.3, 10.4.3—Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, and appropriate modifiers.</p> <p>9.4.7, 10.4.7—Integrate quotations and citations into a written text while maintaining the flow of ideas.</p> <p>9.4.10, 10.4.10, 11.4.10—Review, evaluate, and revise writing for meaning, clarity, content, and mechanics.</p> <p>9.4.12—Revise writing to improve the logic and coherence of the organization and perspective, the precision of word choice, and the appropriateness of tone by taking into consideration the audience, purpose, and formality of the context.</p> <p>10.4.12—Provide constructive criticism to other writers with suggestions for improving organization, tone, style, clarity, and focus; edit and revise in response to peer reviews of own work.</p> <p>9.5.8, 10.5.8—Write for different purposes and audiences, adjusting tone, style, and voice as appropriate.</p> <p>11.5.3, 12.5.3—Write reflective compositions that explore the significance of personal experiences, events, conditions, or concerns by using rhetorical strategies, including narration, description [...].</p> <p>11.6.2, 12.6.2—Produce writing that shows accurate spelling and correct punctuation and capitalization.</p> <p>9.6.3, 10.6.3—Produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.</p> |
| <p>National Standards</p> | <p>The following lesson contributes to students’ ability to meet the following standards promoted in <i>Standards for the English Language Arts</i>, sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. • Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. • Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics). |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. • Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts. • Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. • Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. • Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles. • Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities. |
| Materials Needed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A computer with speakers and Internet access • Copies of the poem “Personal Helicon” by Seamus Heaney • Writing materials for each student (computers or pens and paper) |
| Time Needed | <p>At least two class periods are needed for this lesson: one in which to study Heaney’s poem and one in which to write, revise, or read to the class the resulting student poems.</p> |
| Introduction Activity | <p>Teenagers are transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and Seamus Heaney’s poem, “Personal Helicon” from <u>Death of a Naturalist</u>, certainly creates a poetic bridge, using images of joy and near-danger from the speaker’s past to explain his reasons for writing poetry today.</p> <p>As students enter the classroom, display the first lines of the poem: “As a child, they could not keep me from wells / And old pumps with buckets and windlasses.” (Note: A <u>windlass</u> is the crank mechanism that helps lower and raise the filled bucket of such wells.)</p> <p>Invite students into a lively brainstorming session in which they create a list of items or areas to which they were drawn as children. Ask them how they, like the speaker in Heaney’s poem, sometimes skirted danger. Were there places, for example, they were told not to go alone? (...near a neighbor’s swimming pool, across a particular road, etc.) Were there elements of the Midwestern landscape they found especially magical or appealing when they were children? (...fields, fences, train tracks, grain silos, cityscapes, a particular building or houses in a particular style, etc.)</p> <p>Arrange for students to listen to Heaney’s reading of the poem</p> |

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| | <p>“Personal Helicon” available at http://www.ibiblio.org/ipa/heaney/personal.html.</p> |
| Main Lesson | <p>Ask students what they as readers see or hear as they read Heaney’s poem. Lead students in a discussion of the poem, helping them note elements of the poet’s craft that make the work especially effective. (...sensory details and visual imagery, the use of poetic devices such as alliteration, personification, active verbs, etc.)</p> <p>Lead students to note the contrast in the last stanza. Ask, “As a child did you have a kind of permission to explore or to indulge yourself in delights you aren’t allowed as a teenager because of time constraints or because it is somehow ‘beneath all adult dignity’ as the speaker says?”</p> <p>Display the culminating lines of the poem, “I rhyme / To see myself, to set the darkness echoing.” Ask students to connect the items or areas to which they were drawn as children with actions and desires they have as young adults. How are they still pushing the envelope, exploring new boundaries, expressing or learning about themselves and their world just as they did as children?</p> <p>Discuss the word <u>helicon</u> and the connotation of inspiration implied by the word’s association with Apollo’s sacred mountain on which muses were said to live. Ask students what images from their childhood still provide inspiration for them today—as writers or, perhaps, as athletes or students, as a member of a family or as a friend, or simply as a decision-maker bombarded by choices on a daily basis.</p> <p>Encourage students to write a poem in which they celebrate a joy from their childhoods and connect it to a task they engage in today. To jumpstart their poems, students might create a web or map to collect sounds, pictures, or other scenes and memories associated with the item or action from their childhood.</p> |
| Conclusion Activity | <p>Teachers may wish to display students’ writing or to host a coffeehouse style reading during which the teenagers share their poems with other members of their class.</p> |
| Enrichment/Extension Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers may wish to guide students in a revision of their original poems by starting with a viewing of Heaney’s own work at http://www.grolierclub.org/ExDarknessEchoing.htm. The site, advertising a 2002 exhibit devoted to Irish poets, features a picture of an early form of the poem, “Personal Helicon,” on which the poet has made a title change and rewritten the last stanza. • Teachers may wish to have students take a digital picture or create another piece of art featuring the item or area that is the subject of their poem and collect the resulting poems and images to create an online anthology. • Students might interview their parents and grandparents about their memories of the student as a child. They might ask questions, such as, “Where did I play? What did you have to |

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| | <p>tell me again and again <i>not</i> to do? What things did I especially like? What were my favorite places?" Their findings may be recorded in journal writing or in newspaper-style accounts, using a variety of quotation styles (direct quotations with attribution at the beginning, middle, and end of sentences; paraphrased; partial).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers may wish to assign brief bibliographical research projects, using as subjects Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley, the Irish poet to whom Heaney dedicates "Personal Helicon." |
| <p>Supplementary Materials</p> | <p>Teachers may wish to consult the following for additional resources, speaker ideas, or other information about Irish culture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Indiana Irish Cultural Society, P.O. Box 534, Carmel, IN 46082-0524 or http://www.indyirish.org/ • The American Irish Historical Society, 991 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10028 or http://www.aihs.org/ • Photographs of Irish Poets by Darragh Casey at http://www.darraghcasey.com/ • The Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at the School of English, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland or http://www.qub.ac.uk/heaneycentre/ |
| <p>Other Notes</p> | <p>The lesson may be adapted for students with special needs by offering simple "prompts" based on Heaney's poem:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) "As a child," I liked to.... (2) "I loved" the sound of.... (3) "I loved" the taste of.... (4) "I loved" the feel of.... (5) Now, though, I like to.... (6) [The two activities] are the same because.... |