Lesson Plan for Educators

Reading and Writing the 1920s: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Flapper Speak

Grade Levels 9-12

Summary:

In this lesson, high school students will explore the historical decade of the 1920s as described through an F. Scott Fitzgerald’s work of literature (Bernice Bobs Her Hair, is one short-story example, though any novel can also be used. The Great Gatsby is also a novel that could be read and then viewed in the filmic version for comparison and contrast).

This lesson will compare the experience of visiting the exhibit Spirited: Prohibition in America and historic fact to fiction writing. While reading the fiction text, students will note Fitzgerald’s use of various slang terms and references to aspects of popular culture related to 1920s historical context to gain a better understanding of the era and compare it to contemporary perspectives. Using the supplemental Flapper Speak definitions included with this lesson and known historical social mores related to the Prohibition era, each student can invent his or her own short story or write a character study that describes and reflects the life of a 1920s teen or young adult using one’s own imagination, inspiration from F. Scott Fitzgerald, historical knowledge gleaned from Spirited: Prohibition in America, and personal contemporary insight.

Objectives:

• Students will read and analyze a work of Fitzgerald fiction written during the Prohibition era and compare and contrast the writing style and descriptions with historic fact known about the era.

• Students will read and comprehend new vocabulary and 1920s-era slang in context.

• Using inspiration from the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald, students will create a short written work incorporating a real or imagined character from the 1920s and insert 1920s slang vocabulary to create an aesthetic of the era.
• Students will present and share their written works using a variety of formats (oral presentation, online, written chapbook etc.).

Materials Needed:

• Texts of a Fitzgerald short story or copies of a Fitzgerald novel for each student. Pencils/paper (or computer access for writing and printing out student work).

• Notes from experiencing the *Spirited: Prohibition in America* exhibit or other historical research from the 1920s.

• (Optional) a filmic version of *The Great Gatsby* to compare the format of the film to that of the novel.

Lesson Time:

• Reading assignment (one to three weeks out of class as desired).

• Visit to the *Spirited: Prohibition in America* exhibit (one class period).

• Discussion of exhibit content and additional research/context about the 1920s era (one class period as desired).

• Discussion of assigned Fitzgerald work of fiction and comparison contrast of historic fact through class discussion and introduction of the writing structure of a short story and creative writing assignment (one class period).

• Writing assignment time or in-class reading/sharing (as desired or needed).

Lesson Procedures:

Assign a Fitzgerald text as an out-of-class reading assignment and/or have students read segments of the text in class. While students are reading the Fitzgerald work, visit *Spirited: Prohibition in America*, and have them make notes about things they didn’t know or that they found interesting about the 1920s era. For comparison between the novel and exhibition content, use a writing prompt for student reflection while they are in the exhibition for use as a later in-class discussion:

Exhibition Writing Prompt: What did you already know about Prohibition and the 1920s era? What do you think life was like for teens and young adults during Prohibition? What did Prohibition teens do for fun? How do you think their lives were different from their parents at the same age? What kind of conflicts do you think teens/young adults faced in their lives during the 1920s? What surprised you most about Prohibition and the 1920s era?
Use one class period to discuss the Fitzgerald story and analyze its plot, character design, etc. Compare and contrast the fiction work to what students have researched or know through experiencing the *Spirited: Prohibition in America* exhibit.

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