

When We Die Lesson Plan

Written by Tamara Rutenber, 2007

Step One: **Activate Prior Knowledge – Before Lesson**

Give students copy of **When We Die Brainstorm Worksheet**. Brainstorm with them and give them examples for each thing...if they need more information, ask some of the questions below or others you know will help them. It is up to you as to whether you want to tell students this is a song that they will hear later. Some teachers like to save it as a surprise at the end or wait for a student to say it sounds like it could be a song.

- **What reasons would there be to end a friendship?** Teens can come up with many reasons why a friendship may end. Have them list some: verbally or written on board, overhead or other.
- **Situations?** Have students read the situations on the worksheet. You can have them read aloud too and discuss any questions they have for clarification.
- **Complete the tables in the worksheet.** Have students complete the three sections of the worksheet. Discuss as a group.
- **Potential Problem.** As you know, there will be some students who try to use this opportunity to be cruel to others who they do not like. Decide on how you will handle this beforehand. Perhaps a class discussion.
- **The Chance to Make it Right?** Often, we find that we are presented with a chance to right the wrongs that we have done and that have been done to us. The line in the song that best represents this is: *Nothing's worth losing, especially the chance to make it right*. Talk about the importance of showing our love and appreciation for those around us. You never know when the chance you are given is your last.

Step Two: **Read the Poem/Song**

Distribute the poem/song and have students read it silently by themselves. They should try to read it a couple times and get the rhyme and rhythm set.

Review any unfamiliar words.

You can then do one of the following: (Independent or Cooperative Group Work)

- If working independently, have volunteers recite the poem.
- If in groups, have students recite to those in their group.
 - Extension activity: each group can elect to have one member recite to the class. The important thing here is to have it read aloud several times to allow time for students to process the meaning and to hear different inflections as different people recite.

In the area to the right of the poem, have students jot their thoughts as to what is happening. They can do this by themselves or in small groups. Share and discuss.

Now think about the brainstorming sheet topics. Ask some of the following questions and ask students to prove their answers by using the poem as their evidence. This addresses critical thinking skills, application of background/prior knowledge, and making inferences.

- Who is the speaker and who are they talking to? What is going on throughout the story telling stanzas?
- Are there really broken empty bottles in the sink or are they a metaphor for the relationship? (Of course they are, but try to get the kids to come up with that.)
- Why is this line important enough to repeat and why? *'Cause nothing's worth losing, especially the chance to make it right.*
- Why is this stanza important enough to repeat and why? (Maybe talk about tattoos and how they fade and become muted or smudgy)
And I know that we're gonna be fine.
And the tattooed mistakes are gonna fade over time.
As long as we live, time passes by
And we won't get it back when we die.
- Talk about the last two lines in the stanza above. Teens especially do not pay attention to time. They don't think about death either. You might poll the class on how many of them tell the special people in their lives that they love them. I personally tell my loved ones that every time I speak with them. You just never know when health problems or an accident will take them from you. Time passes by, we will never get it back. Do what you need to now.
- What tone does the speaker have in these lines? (They sound a bit sad and desperate to me. As if they fear time will run out...)
Come over
Come over
'Cause I gotta know, if I am doing this all on my own.
Come over
Come over
How can I show you if you're not here?
- The writing style is informal, using colloquial speech like gotta and 'cause. The speaker begins sentences with "well" and "and". Discuss formal versus informal writing and how this is meant to convey actual speaking on the part of the narrator.

Step Three: **Listen to Song**

Tell students that, indeed, it is a song written by Jaret Reddick and Butch Walker, and performed by the band, Bowling for Soup. (Album: The Great Burrito Extortion Case Available from local CD shops or Amazon.com for around \$10.00. The song you can buy as a single from Walmart.com for .88c. If using the whole CD, be aware that other songs have some explicit lyrics)

Play song at least twice, with students following along on worksheets.

- Does hearing the song verify the findings of the class?
- Do you think you were correct in your evaluation of the author's words?
- Were you wrong about anything?
- Do the music and lyrics go together for you? Why or why not?
- Was word choice appropriate/original/creative/etc?
- What other music styles could be used?

View the Video

After all of this done with the written and spoken/sung poem, view the video! Then, re-discuss the above questions. Did "seeing" it help those who may have had problems understanding it?

Step Four: **Wrap Up / Extension Activities**

Let students recite a few more times with inflection from hearing how it was used in the song. Listen to song a few more times. Have students write opinion/reflection on back of lyric page or brainstorming page. Extension: Have students adapt lyrics to another style of music such as country/hip hop/big band/broadway musical style/etc

Education Standards

Below you will find the language arts standards that can be applied to this poetic selection for both Florida and Texas. Use those which fit best in your individualized lesson plans.

Sunshine State Standards for Language Arts, Grades 9 – 12

A .pdf copy of this document can be downloaded from the [Sunshine State Standards](#) web page.

Though there are many other SSS under social studies here (psychology and peer counseling for example), we are concentrating on reading. Here are the main SSS associated with this lesson plan.

Reading

Standard 1:

The student uses the reading process effectively.

(LA.A.1.4)

1. selects and uses pre-reading strategies that are appropriate to the text, such as discussion, brainstorming, generating questions, and previewing, to anticipate content, purpose, and organization of a reading selection.
2. selects and uses strategies to understand words and text, and to make and confirm inferences from what is read, including interpreting diagrams, graphs, and statistical illustrations.
3. refines vocabulary for interpersonal, academic, and workplace situations, including figurative, idiomatic, and technical meanings.
4. applies a variety of response strategies, including rereading, note taking, summarizing, outlining, writing a formal report, and relating what is read to his or her own experiences and feelings.

Standard 2:

The student constructs meaning from a wide range of texts.

(LA.A.2.4)

1. determines the main idea and identifies relevant details, methods of development, and their effectiveness in a variety of types of written material.
2. determines the author's purpose and point of view and their effect on the text.

Listening, Viewing, and Speaking

Standard 1:

The student uses listening strategies effectively.

(LA.C.1.4)

1. selects and uses appropriate listening strategies according to the intended purpose, such as solving problems, interpreting and evaluating the techniques and intent of the presentation, and taking action in career-related situations.
2. describes, evaluates, and expands personal preferences in listening to fiction, drama, literary non-fiction, and informational presentations.

Standard 3:

The student uses speaking strategies effectively.

(LA.C.3.4)

1. uses volume, stress, pacing, enunciation, eye contact, and gestures that meet the needs of the audience and topic.

Writing

Standard 1:

The student uses writing processes effectively.

(LA.B.1.4)

1. selects and uses appropriate pre-writing strategies, such as brainstorming, graphic organizers, and outlines.

Standard 2:

The student writes to communicate ideas and information effectively.

(LA.B.2.4)

1. Writes text, notes, outlines, comments, and observations that demonstrate comprehension and synthesis of content, processes, and experiences from a variety of media.

3. writes fluently for a variety of occasions, audiences, and purposes, making appropriate choices regarding style, tone, level of detail, and organization.

4. applies oral communication skills to interviews, group presentations, formal presentations, and impromptu situations.

Language

Standard 2:

The student understands the power of language.

(LA.D.2.4)

2. understands the subtlety of literary devices and techniques in the comprehension and creating of communication.

3. recognizes production elements that contribute to the effectiveness of a specific medium.

Literature

Standard 1:

The student understands the common features of a variety of literary forms.

(LA.E.1.4)

1. identifies the characteristics that distinguish literary forms.

Standard 2:

The student responds critically to fictions nonfiction, poetry, and drama.

(LA.E.2.4)

1. analyzes the effectiveness of complex elements of plot, such as setting, major events, problems, conflicts, and resolutions.

2. understands the relationships between and among elements of literature, including characters, plot, setting, tone, point of view, and theme.

3. analyzes poetry for the ways in which poets inspire the reader to share emotions, such as the use of imagery, personification, and figures of speech, including simile and metaphor; and the use of sound, such as rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and alliteration.

4. understands the use of images and sounds to elicit the reader's emotions in both fiction and non-fiction.

5. analyzes the relationships among author's style, literary form, and intended impart on the reader.

6. recognizes and explains those elements in texts that prompt a personal response, such as connections between one's own life and the characters, events, motives, and causes of conflict in texts.

7. examines a literary selection from several critical perspectives.

8. knows that people respond differently to texts based on their background knowledge, purpose, and point of view.

Chapter 110. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading, Subchapter C. High School.

This document can be accessed online at the [Texas Education Agency](#).

Though there are many other skills under social studies here (psychology and peer counseling for example), we are concentrating on reading. Here are the main skills associated with this lesson plan. I am using the ninth grade list of skills as it is that which subsequent skills are built upon.

110.42 English I

Section B: Knowledge and skills

(1) Writing/purposes. The student writes in a variety of forms, including business, personal, literary, and persuasive texts, for various audiences and purposes. The student is expected to:

(A) write in a variety of forms using effective word choice, structure, and sentence forms with emphasis on organizing logical arguments with clearly related definitions, theses, and evidence; write persuasively; write to report and describe; and write poems, plays, and stories;

(B) write in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose

(2) Writing/writing processes. The student uses recursive writing processes when appropriate. The student is expected to:

(A) use prewriting strategies to generate ideas, develop voice, and plan;

(B) develop drafts, alone and collaboratively, by organizing and reorganizing content and by refining style to suit occasion, audience, and purpose;

(6) Reading/word identification/vocabulary development. The student uses a variety of strategies to read unfamiliar words and to build vocabulary. The student is expected to:

(A) expand vocabulary through wide reading, listening, and discussing;

(B) rely on context to determine meanings of words and phrases such as figurative language, idioms, multiple meaning words, and technical vocabulary;

(E) use reference material such as glossary, dictionary, thesaurus, and available technology to determine precise meanings and usage; and

(F) identify the relation of word meanings in analogies, homonyms, synonyms/antonyms, and connotation/denotation.

(7) Reading/comprehension. The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies. The student is expected to:

(A) establish a purpose for reading such as to discover, interpret, and enjoy;

(B) draw upon his/her own background to provide connection to texts;

- (C) monitor reading strategies and modify them when understanding breaks down such as rereading, using resources, and questioning;
- (D) construct images such as graphic organizers based on text descriptions and text structures;
- (E) analyze text structures such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, and chronological ordering;
- (F) identify main ideas and their supporting details;
- (G) summarize texts;
- (H) draw inferences such as conclusions, generalizations, and predictions and support them from text;
- (I) use study strategies such as skimming and scanning, note taking, outlining, and using study-guide questions to better understand texts;

(8) Reading/variety of texts. The student reads extensively and intensively for different purposes in varied sources, including world literature. The student is expected to:

- (A) read to be entertained, to appreciate a writer's craft, to be informed, to take action, and to discover models to use in his/her own writing;
- (B) read in such varied sources as diaries, journals, textbooks, maps, newspapers, letters, speeches, memoranda, electronic texts, and other media;

(9) Reading/culture. The student reads widely, including world literature, to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements across cultures. The student is expected to:

- (B) compare text events with his/her own and other readers' experiences.

(10) Reading/literary response. The student expresses and supports responses to various types of texts. The student is expected to:

- (A) respond to informational and aesthetic elements in texts such as discussions, journals, oral interpretations, and dramatizations;
- (B) use elements of text to defend his/her own responses and interpretations; and
- (C) compare reviews of literature, film, and performance with his/her own responses.

(11) Reading/literary concepts. The student analyzes literary elements for their contributions to meaning in literary texts. The student is expected to:

- (A) recognize the theme (general observation about life or human nature) within a text;
- (B) analyze the relevance of setting and time frame to text's meaning;
- (C) analyze characters and identify time and point of view;
- (D) identify basic conflicts;
- (E) analyze the development of plot in narrative text;
- (F) recognize and interpret important symbols;
- (G) recognize and interpret poetic elements like metaphor, simile, personification, and the effect of sound on meaning; and
- (H) understand literary forms and terms such as author, drama, biography, autobiography, myth, tall tale, dialogue, tragedy and comedy, structure in poetry, epic, ballad, protagonist, antagonist, paradox, analogy, dialect, and comic relief as appropriate to the selections being read.

(12) Reading/analysis/evaluation. The student reads critically to evaluate texts. The student is expected to:

- (A) analyze characteristics of text, including its structure, word choices, and intended audience;
- (B) evaluate the credibility of information sources and determine the writer's motives;

(14) Listening/speaking/critical listening. The student listens attentively for a variety of purposes. The student is expected to:

- (A) focus attention on the speaker's message;
- (B) use knowledge of language and develop vocabulary to interpret accurately the speaker's message;
- (C) monitor speaker's message for clarity and understanding such as asking relevant questions to clarify understanding; and
- (D) formulate and provide effective verbal and nonverbal feedback.

(15) Listening/speaking/evaluation. The student listens to analyze, appreciate, and evaluate oral performances and presentations. The student is expected to:

- (A) listen and respond appropriately to presentations and performances of peers or published works such as original essays or narratives, interpretations of poetry, or individual or group performances of scripts;
- (B) identify and analyze the effect of artistic elements within literary texts such as character development, rhyme, imagery, and language;
- (D) evaluate artistic performances of peers, public presenters, and media presentations;

(16) Listening/speaking/purposes. The student speaks clearly and effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences. The student is expected to:

- (A) use the conventions of oral language effectively;
- (B) use informal, standard, and technical language effectively to meet the needs of purpose, audience, occasion, and task;

(18) Listening/speaking/literary interpretation. The student prepares, organizes, and presents literary interpretations. The student is expected to:

- (A) make valid interpretations of literary texts such as telling stories, interpreting poems, stories, or essays; and
- (B) analyze purpose, audience, and occasion to choose effective verbal and nonverbal strategies such as pitch and tone of voice, posture, and eye contact.

Source: The provisions of this §110.42 adopted to be effective September 1, 1998, 22 TexReg 7549.