

American Stories

"The Mask of the Red Death" by Edgar Allen Poe

Lesson Plan

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode "The Mask of the Red Death" by Edgar Allen Poe.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

American Stories lesson plans are based on the CALLA approach. See the end of each lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach.

CALLA has five lesson elements:

Prepare: Engage students in the topic and identify objectives for the lesson. Find out what students already know about it and motivate them to learn more. Teach new vocabulary.

Present: Present new information. Explain the target learning strategy for the lesson. Model what the students are asked to do. Discuss connections to students' prior knowledge.

Practice: Give students an authentic, active task that they can do in a small group or in pairs. Remind students to use the target learning strategy.

Self-Evaluate: Question students so they will reflect on their own learning. Ask students to evaluate their own learning rather than wait for the teacher to assess them. Find out if using the learning strategy helped students' understanding.

Expand: Guide students on how to apply what they learned to their own

lives. Point out other contexts where the learning strategy may help. Make connections between content and language or to the student's first language. When appropriate, request that parents contribute to learning.

Prepare

Introduce the story: "Today, we will read 'The Mask of the Red Death' by Edgar Allen Poe. It is a story about a king and his palace, and a disease that everyone is afraid of catching. Think of the last time you got a cold. Tell your neighbor about how you got better. What did you or someone else do?"

Allow students time to share their answers with the person sitting next to them.

Continue to explain: "When you get a cold, you can *predict* that you will get better in about one week. You know this because you usually get better in that length of time. Today, we're going to learn to use the strategy ***predicting***. First, let's learn some new vocabulary."

Teach the new words for the lesson. Use images or classroom items for visual aids. (Note the image of a masquerade mask toward the end of this lesson.)

masquerade - *n.* a party at which people wear masks and often costumes

yard - *n.* a unit of measurement equal to 3 feet (0.9 meters) or 36 inches

palace - *n.* the official home of a king, queen, president, or other ruler

purple - *adj.* a color that is between red and blue

violet - *adj.* a color that is between blue and purple

grave - *n.* a hole in the ground for burying a dead body

horror - *n.* a very strong feeling of fear, dread, and shock

perhaps - *adv.* possibly but not certainly

Present

Hand out the transcript of the story and the predictions chart. Introduce the task to students: "As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy ***predict*** to help us understand the story. I'm going to begin reading and predict, or guess, what will happen next in the story. I'll show you how to do this."

Play or read aloud to: "They would leave the outside world to care for itself."

Model the strategy: "The first part of the story describes the Red Death, a terrible disease. It also describes Prospero, the ruler of the land, and his beautiful palace. Prospero invites a thousand of his healthy friends to live in one of his palaces. I am going to predict what will happen next. I think Prospero and his friends may have some troubles." The story says that Prospero's friends heated the iron gates "to make them close so firmly that nobody could open them." The author is giving us a clue that maybe being locked *inside* the palace will not keep them safe.

Make a chart like the one on the next page on the board or shared screen. Tell the students that the story gives us hints about what will happen. To stay engaged with the story (you may say "interested" or "involved" if you like), we can predict what will happen, based on the facts of the story.

Tell students, "For example, in the second paragraph, we read that Prospero's palace, 'was a large and beautiful stone building' and that 'a strong, high wall circled it. We also read that his palace wall 'had gates of iron.' Prospero believes he is safe from bad things. We can guess that he might not be safe from the Red Death."

Predict Events

(Sample predictions for teacher)

What the story tells me	What I predict will happen
<p>Prospero has a palace with high walls and a high, strong iron gate. "Here, they could forget the sickness, the Red Death," the story reads.</p> <p>His friends heated the iron gates "to make them close so firmly that nobody could open them."</p>	<p>Even the security of the palace will not keep Prospero and/or his friends safe from the Red Death.</p>
<p>One thousand of Prospero's "healthy, happy friends" now live in one of his palaces.</p>	<p>Some of his friends will get sick.</p> <p>(Maybe the author mentioned that they are "healthy" and "happy" as a clue that they won't stay that way.)</p>
<p>There is a lot of good "food to eat and wine to drink" at the palace.</p>	<p>Maybe the food will become poisoned with the illness.</p>

Prepare students for the next part: "Now it's your turn. Let's listen to some more of the story. As we listen, think about what will happen next in the story. Use the information you learn by reading or listening. Write down your predictions in your Predictions Chart."

Play or read aloud to "...there were few of the dancers who dared to step within those dark walls."

Have students sit with a classmate and share their notes and predictions. Tell them to share with their classmate what they think will happen next. Point out that it doesn't matter whether their prediction actually happens in the story: "What's important is thinking about what *might* happen. It helps us to focus as we read."

Give students time to discuss their predictions.

Ask students to share and write predictions on the board or screen as on the following chart.

Predict Events

What the story tells me	What I predict will happen
"Prospero asked his friends all to come together for a dancing party, a masquerade"	Someone will be hiding something behind their masquerade mask.
The glass of the windows in the black room is "blood-colored" and creates a scary visual effect.	Maybe the red color will hide real blood in that room. The people will not know there is blood in the room.
"After another three thousand and six hundred seconds of Time, of flying Time, the clock struck again, and the dancers stopped as before."	The phrase "flying Time" suggests that time is running out. The word "Time" is also capitalized, which may be another clue that time will be important.

Ask students to listen again. "As we read the next part of the story, think about what will happen next."

Play or read aloud to the line that reads, "through the green to the yellow – through this to the white – and then to the violet room."

Ask students to write their predictions and share them with their classmate. Continue to write on a chart as shown on the next slide.

Do not allow them to read the last two paragraphs of the story.

Predict Events

What the story tells me	What I predict will happen
"...he who enters [the black room] hears more deeply the striking of the great black clock"	Something strange will happen with the clock, or with time. Maybe something will happen when the clock sounds.
The crowd saw "a masquerader in the blue room that they had not seen before."	The crowd assumes the strange man (the masquerader) is someone to fear, but maybe they will be wrong.
The masquerader "had made himself to look like the Red Death" and his clothes "were spotted with blood."	The masquerader is not dangerous <i>but</i> he is purposely trying to scare the people at the party. Maybe it is Prospero? (OR)

	<p>The man has the Red Death disease and he wants to (or has already) spread it to others.</p>
<p>"The stranger started to walk toward the second room. He passed within a few feet of Prospero, who stood still, surprised."</p> <p>"[Prospero] held a sharp knife high over his head, ready to strike the stranger."</p>	<p>Prospero knows who the stranger is. Maybe he is an enemy from Prospero's past. Maybe he wants revenge for something.</p> <p>Maybe Prospero wants to kill the stranger to hide a secret.</p>

After the students have finished the third predicting activity, let them finish reading the story.

Self-Evaluate

Explain that "In order to predict what will happen in a story, you can often think about details that stand out or make you curious. These details may be clues from the author about what will happen." Ask students to stay with their partner and ask each other, "What were some details from the story that stood out in your mind (or "were strange and made you think or wonder")?"

Give students time to discuss these details. Remind them that, in order to predict what will happen with in a story, readers need to understand what hints and clues the writer is giving us about what might happen next.

Ask, "Now I'd like to ask: what do you think about using this strategy, ***predict***, when you read? Did it help you understand the events of the story? Write a sentence or two on your paper to turn in about how *predicting* helped you today."

Expand

Ask students, "Are there other times when you can predict things based on what you know?"

Listen to students' responses.

Continue, "This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. *Predicting* helps you focus on information you get from the story. Predicting can help in other school subjects, too. In mathematics we call it estimating. In science we call it making a hypothesis. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!"

The Red Death had long been feeding on the country. No sickness had ever been so deadly — so great a killer — or so fearful to see. Blood was its mark — the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and a sudden feeling that the mind was rushing in circles inside the head. Then there was bleeding through the skin, though it was not cut or broken — and then, death! The bright red spots upon the body and especially upon the face of the sick man made other men turn away from him, afraid to try to help. And the sickness lasted, from the beginning to the end, no more than half an hour.

But Prospero, the ruler of that land, was happy and strong and wise. When half the people of his land had died, he called to him a thousand healthy, happy friends, and with them went far away to live in one of his palaces. This was a large and beautiful stone building he had planned himself. A strong, high wall circled it. This wall had gates of iron. The gentlemen, after they had entered, brought fire to heat the iron of the gates to make them close so firmly that nobody could open them. Here they could forget the sickness, the Red Death. They would leave the outside world to care for itself.

Prospero had supplied everything they needed for pleasure. There was music, there was dancing, there was beauty, there was food to eat and wine to drink. All these were within the wall, and within the wall they would be safe. Outside the wall walked the Red Death.

It was near the end of their fifth month there that Prospero asked his friends all to come together for a dancing party, a masquerade. Everyone was asked to come dressed in fine clothes and with his eyes, or perhaps his whole face, covered by a cloth mask.

It was a scene of great richness, that masquerade. There were seven rooms in which Prospero's friends danced. In many old palaces the doors can

be opened in such a way that rooms like these seven can be seen all at the same time. In this palace it was different. Little more than one of them could be seen at one time. There was a turn every twenty or thirty yards. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, was a tall pointed window. The windows were of colored glass, of the same color that was used in each room. The first room had blue cloth hangings on the walls — and blue were its windows. The second room had wall hangings of that blue-red known as purple, and here the windows were purple. The third was green, and so was the glass of the windows. The fourth had hangings and windows of yellow — the fifth of white — the sixth of violet. But the seventh room had hangings on the walls made of a rich soft cloth which was black, black as night, and the floor, too, was covered with the same heavy black cloth. In this room the color of the windows was not the same. It was red — a deep blood color.

All the rooms were lighted through the outside windows. The resulting light was strange indeed, as it colored the shapes of the dancers. But the light that fell on the black hangings through the blood-colored glass was the most fearful of them all. It produced so wild a look on the faces of those who entered that there were few of the dancers who dared to step within those dark walls.

In this room stood a great clock of black wood. Gently it marked the seconds as they passed; and when it was time to mark the hour the clock spoke with a loud, clear voice, a deep tone as beautiful as music, but so strange that the music and the dancing stopped and the dancers stood still to listen. And then, after another sixty minutes, after another three thousand and six hundred seconds of Time, of flying Time, the clock struck again, and the dancers stopped as before.

Nevertheless, it was a happy and beautiful masquerade. And you may be sure that the clothes the dancers chose to wear, their costumes, were

strange and wonderful. The dancers looked like the forms we might see in troubled dreams. And these — the dreams — danced softly through the rooms, taking the color of the rooms as they moved. It did not seem that their steps followed the music, but that the music rose from their steps. But into the seventh room the dancers do not go, for the red light coming through the windows, and the blackness of the wall hangings, make them afraid — and he who enters hears more deeply the striking of the great black clock.

But the other rooms are crowded, and in them beats hotly the heart of life. And the dance goes on until at last the clock begins to strike twelve. Again the music stopped. Again the dancers stood without moving while the slow striking sound continued. Before the clock was quiet again, many in the crowd saw that in the first room, the blue room, there was a masquerader who had not been seen before. As they talked softly to each other about him a feeling of surprise spread through all the dancers, then a feeling of fear and of sickening horror.

In such a group as this, only a very strange masquerader could have caused such a feeling. Even among those who laugh at both life and death, some matters cannot be laughed at. Everyone seemed now deeply to feel that the stranger should not have been allowed to come among them dressed in such clothes. He was tall and very thin, and covered from head to foot like a dead man prepared for the grave. The mask which covered his face — or was it really a mask? — the mask which covered his face was so much like the face of a dead man that the nearest eye could not see the difference. And yet all this might have been acceptable — but the masquerader whom nobody knew had made himself look like the Red Death itself! His clothes were spotted with blood. And the mask over his face was covered with the terrible red spots...or perhaps it was indeed his face!

When Prospero looked upon this fearful form he was first filled with terror — and then with anger. "Who dares?" he cried. "Take him! Seize him! Pull off his mask so that we may know who we must hang at sunrise!"

Prospero stood in the blue room when he spoke these words. They sounded through the seven rooms, loud and clear. At first, as he spoke, some of the dancers started to rush toward the strange masquerader. But they stopped, afraid, and no one dared to put out a hand to touch him. The stranger started to walk toward the second room. He passed within a few feet of Prospero, who stood still, surprised. And while the dancers moved back from the center of the room, the stranger moved quietly, without being stopped, with a slow and measured step, through the blue room to the purple room — through the purple room to the green room — through the green to the yellow — through this to the white — and then to the violet room.

As the stranger was entering the seventh room, Prospero suddenly and angrily rushed through the six rooms. No one dared to follow him. He held a sharp knife high over his head, ready to strike the stranger. When he was within three or four feet of the strange masquerader, the stranger turned and stood silent, looking firmly into Prospero's eyes. There was a cry — and the knife dropped shining upon the black floor, upon which a minute later Prospero himself fell, dead. The dancers then rushed into the black room. The strongest of the men tried to hold the masquerader, whose tall form stood beside the black clock; but when they put their hands on him they found inside the grave-clothes no human form, no body — nothing!

Now they knew that it was the Red Death itself that had come in the night. One by one the dancers fell, and each died as he fell. And the fires died. And the clock stopped. And darkness and decay and the Red Death ruled forever over all.

Predictions Chart

(two pages)

What the story tells me	What I predict will happen

What the story tells me	What I predict will happen



masquerade mask

About the CALLA Approach

This lesson is based on the CALLA approach. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.

CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.

A list of CALLA learning strategies follows. These strategies were researched by J. Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot.

See a list of language learning strategies below.

METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

Plan / Organize

Before beginning a task:

Set goals.

Plan the task or content sequence.

Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies).

Preview a text.

Monitor / Identify Problems

While working on a task:

Check your progress on the task.

Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem?

Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?

Evaluate

After completing a task:

Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task.

Assess how well you have used learning strategies.

Decide how effective the strategies were.

Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.

Manage Your Own Learning

Determine how you learn best.

Arrange conditions that help you learn.

Look for Ways to Practice.

Focus your attention on the task.

TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE WHAT YOU KNOW

Use Background Knowledge

Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task.

Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge.

Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.

Make Inferences

Use context and what you know to figure out meaning.

Read and listen between the lines.

Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.

Make Predictions

Anticipate information to come.

Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text.

Make an estimate (math).

Make a hypothesis (science).

Personalize

Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.

Transfer / Use Cognates

Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language.

Recognize cognates.

Substitute / Paraphrase

Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.

TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE YOUR SENSES

Use Images

Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information.

Use or draw a picture or diagram.

Use Sounds

Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding.

Sound out/vocalize.

Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.

Use Your Kinesthetic Sense

Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language.

Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.

TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Find/Apply Patterns

Apply a rule.

Make a rule.

Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules.

Identify patterns in literature (genre).

Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.

Classify/Sequence

Categorize words or ideas according to attributes.

Classify living things; identify natural cycles.

Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies.

Sequence events in history.

Take Notes

Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading.

List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing.

Use Graphic Organizers

Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.

Summarize

Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.

Use Selective Attention

Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES

Access Information Sources

Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials.

Seek out and use sources of information.

Follow a model

Ask questions

Cooperate

Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.

Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)

Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.