

Animating History

Educational Resources

English



Lesson

The Art of Storytelling

Teaching Creative Writing with The Diary of Michael Shiner

Overview:

Students will be able to analyze an animatic to gain background information about Michael Shiner and understand how images, words, and sounds work together to tell his story.

Objectives:

- » Analyze an animatic to gain background information on Michael Shiner (historical figure, African American Navy Yard worker, etc) and predict what his diary might include.
- » Understand basic definition and components of animatic.
- » Analyze visual media to gain a deeper understanding of how to tell a historical narrative.
- » Draw connections between the animatic and Michael Shiner's story.

Standards:

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[click here](#)

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

[click here](#)

Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

[click here](#)

Activities:

1. Watch a short clip of [an animatic without sound](#). Discuss with a partner what story they think the animatic is trying to tell based on images alone.
2. As a class, define what an animatic is and its purpose. Discuss the components of an animatic: images, words, and sounds. Clarify the difference between animated videos and animatics.



3. Students will view the animatic: [The Diary of Michael Shiner](#). While viewing, have students record notes on a [graphic organizer](#). After viewing have a brief discussion where students share their initial thoughts. What components of the animatic did they notice? What story is the animatic telling? What does sound add?
4. Show the animatic again, have the students analyze a specific scene in the animatic, focusing on how images, words, and sounds work together to convey a message.
5. Teacher will share [slides](#) that summarize the information in the “Preface” and “The Education of Michael Shiner” to provide students with context of Michael Shiner and his life.
6. Show animatic a third time. Students will take notes on how the filmmakers chose to tell the story of Michael Shiner. Scaffold questioning from simple to complex, allowing students to make connections between the visuals, audio, and the story.
7. Students will write a short paragraph analyzing the animatic, identifying key images, and explaining how the different elements work together to tell Michael Shiner’s story.

Materials:

[Animatic Analysis Graphic Organizer](#)

[Michael Shiner Preface & Education Slides](#)



Lesson

Exploring Different Diary Formats

Overview:

Students will be able to analyze and compare different formats of diaries, including digital diaries, social media, collage, and sketchbooks.

Objectives:

- » Understand the characteristics of different diary formats: digital diaries, social media, collage, and sketchbooks.
- » Compare and contrast the various formats of diaries and their benefits and limitations.
- » Understand how to express thoughts and record ideas in a diary format in objective and subjective ways.

Standards:

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[click here](#)

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

[click here](#)

Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

[click here](#)

Activities:

1. Engage students by asking: "What type of diary format do you use and why? How do different formats influence the way we express ourselves?"
2. The teacher will provide examples of different diary formats for students to analyze and facilitate discussions on the unique aspects of each format.

[Where We Are](#)

[The Diaries Of Franz Kafka](#)

[The Pillow Book of Sei Shônagon](#)

[Keith Haring Journals - Tumblr](#)

[Jack Whitten: Notes from the Woodshed](#)

[5 Artists Whose Diaries are as Inspiring as their Art](#)



3. Students can take notes on a graphic organizer, noting the unique features, benefits, and limitations of each format.
4. The teacher will facilitate a discussion on the examples and discuss the different diaries: their features, characteristics, and purpose. The teacher will emphasize the diverse ways in which individuals can express themselves through diaries and why they might choose this format of communication.
5. Students will then consider the context of Michael Shiner's diary and how it recorded both his personal experiences and significant historical events.
6. Have students to create a diary entry about their day/week using a format of their choice or a hybrid diary combining elements of two different formats.
7. Close the class by having students reflect on their experience and sharing an advantage or disadvantage of their chosen format.

Materials:

Diary Comparison Graphic Organizer



Lesson

Create a Current Event Diary

Overview:

Students will be able to create a detailed diary entry reflecting on a current event by incorporating facts from research and personal reflections, while utilizing one of the formats discussed in class.

Objectives:

- » Use diary creation as a way to analyze Shiner’s diary entries
- » Conduct research to gather relevant facts about a current event
- » Reflect on the significance of the current event personally
- » Incorporate images and words to enhance the diary entry
- » Demonstrate creativity and critical thinking in diary writing

Teaching Standards:

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

click here

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

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Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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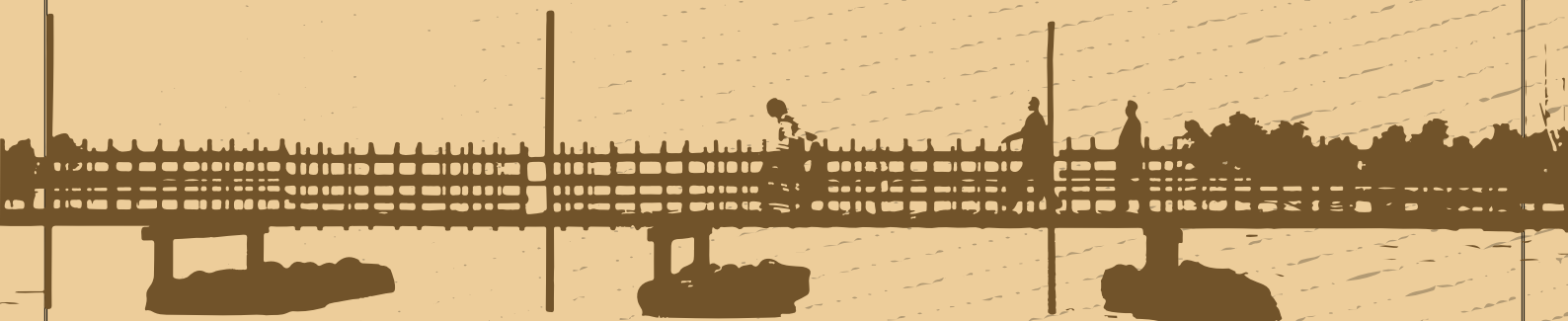
Activities:

1. Provide structured time for students to research a current event and begin drafting their diary entry. Students can take notes on the [graphic organizer](#) which scaffolds questioning from asking students to list facts about the event to guiding them to reflect on its implications.
2. Instruct students to individually create their own diary entry about the chosen current event in a format of their choice. Diary entries should incorporate both researched facts and personal reflections.

3. Students will share their diary entries with a partner or in a small groups and discuss common themes and ideas that emerge.
4. End class with a discussion that emphasizes the importance of using writing as a tool to process current events and personal experiences. Additionally, discuss how these tools might show up in Shiner's diary entries.

Materials:

Current Event Diary Research Graphic Organizer



Lesson

Exploring the Diary of Michael Shiner: An Analysis

Overview:

Students will be able to analyze and annotate a diary entry from Michael Shiner's diary to gain insights into historical events and perspectives from the 19th century. Students will be required to research historical content in the diary entry and provide a hyperlink to an image, article, or map that adds context to their annotations.

Objectives:

- » Understand the historical context of Michael Shiner's diary
- » Analyze primary source documents for valuable insights
- » Identify key themes and events in Michael Shiner's diary
- » Reflect on the importance of preserving and studying historical documents

Standards:

The standards section features four decorative boxes arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each box has a dark brown background with a white border and a scalloped edge. The text inside each box is white and underlined. Below each text block is a white button with the text 'click here' in dark brown. The boxes are separated by a dotted line.

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
click here

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
click here

Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).
click here

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
click here

Activities:

1. Explain the significance of diaries as historical artifacts and ask students to think about why personal diaries are important for understanding history.
2. Introduce Michael Shiner's diary and its significance as a primary source documenting the experiences of a free Black man during the 19th century.
3. Distribute excerpts from Michael Shiner's diary for students to analyze in pairs. Students will rewrite/paraphrase the entry in their own words.
4. Facilitate a group discussion to explore different interpretations of the diary entries.
5. The teacher will guide students through the process of annotation and explain its purpose in enhancing comprehension. They will model how to analyze a diary entry from Michael Shiner's diary focusing on identifying and understanding historical or cultural references.
 - a) [Diary Entry Analysis Student Example](#)
 - b) [Paraphrase Shiner's Diary + Annotations](#)
6. Students choose content from the diary entry that they find interesting or challenging, and research the content to add context or explain its significance. Students should choose another primary source (e.g., a letter, newspaper article, or speech) related to the same time period as Michael Shiner's diary and provide hyperlinks to the resource and an explanation of it.
7. Have students write a short reflection on the importance of personal narratives in understanding history, citing examples beyond Michael Shiner.
8. It may be helpful to pick out diary entries for students to analyze to adjust reading levels and to find ones that are easier for students to understand. The following diary entries were used in the making of the film.
 - 2nd paragraph of section 52 (ignore the 3rd paragraph section 52: "there were a sad accident...")
 - Section 53
 - Section 54
9. Additional entries that work well for analysis:
 - Total eclipse (page 40)
 - "Snow Storm of 1835" (page 60)
 - President Lincoln visits the WNY (page 177)
 - Shiner describes being the first black man to take the oath of allegiance (page 178)

Materials:

[Diary Entry Analysis Student Example](#)

[Paraphrase Shiner's Diary + Annotations](#)

Lesson

Mastering the Art of Screenwriting

Overview:

Students will be able to define screenwriting terminology and be able to format and write a screenplay based on Michael Shiner’s diary.

Objectives:

- » Understanding the structure of a screenplay
- » Formatting dialogue and action descriptions
- » Incorporating descriptive details to enhance storytelling
- » Understand screenwriting vocabulary and formatting using The Diary of Michael Shiner screenplay as a model.

Standards:

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[click here](#)

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

[click here](#)

Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

[click here](#)

Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

[click here](#)

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

[click here](#)



Activities:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking students if they have ever watched a movie and wondered how it was written.
2. Show a short clip from a movie and discuss with students why the script is important in the filmmaking process.
3. Present the [Screenplay Formatting Slides](#), and explain the key components of a screenplay: scenes, dialogue, and stage directions.
4. For each slide, have students find an example in the [Screenplay: The Diary of Michael Shiner](#) for the different components.
5. Watch [The Diary of Michael Shiner: Rough Cut](#) from the beginning until 1:39 with the guiding question: What have the filmmakers done to make the movie engaging and captivating? Discuss student responses as a class and guide them in identifying the dialogue, action descriptions, and scene transitions.
6. Read through the screenplay from Scene 02 - 05. How does the screenplay formatting reveal the filmmaker's vision? How did the images and words work together in the rough cut? Why do you think the filmmakers began with a voice-over narration and key facts of Shiner's life?
7. Rewatch the clip and discuss the following questions to help students understand how to effectively tell a story.
 - What visual storytelling elements were used in this digital story?
 - How did the multimedia elements enhance the overall narrative?
 - What storytelling techniques were used to make this digital story engaging?
8. Instruct students to choose a section from Michael Shiner's diary and adapt it into a screenplay format. Emphasize the importance of capturing the tone and mood of the diary entry in their screenplay. Encourage students to be creative with their dialogue and descriptive details.

Materials:

[Screenplay Formatting Slides](#)

[Screenplay: The Diary of Michael Shiner](#)

[Rough Cut: The Diary of Michael Shiner](#)

