Wisdom Teeth and Understanding Poetry

Book: Wisdom Teeth
Author: Derrick Weston Brown
Grade Level: 9-12
Lesson Type: Close Text Analysis

Concept: Poetry in context of culture
Primary Subject Area: English
Secondary Subject Areas: Creative Writing / Close Text Analysis

Common Core Standards Addressed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details</strong></td>
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<td>o Determine a theme or 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.</td>
<td>o Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.</td>
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<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comprehension and Collaboration</strong></td>
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<td>o Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.</td>
<td>o Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</td>
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Overview:

This class will discuss *Wisdom Teeth* and Brown’s poetry in the context of his culture and also poetry in general.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Understand effectively how Brown’s background affected his poetry.
- Reflect on what the words “poetry” and “poet” mean in a cultural context.
- Understand the difference between simply reading a poem and hearing it spoken by another/the writer.
- Write a certain type of poem.

Warm-Up Activity:

- Ask students to discuss their idea of what “true” poetry should be and list them on the board.
- Hand out Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 18” and have students write the traits of the poem (e.g. structure, rhyme scheme, tone, etc.) and how that fits into their idea of “true” poetry.
- Have students read “Hourglass Flow” (p. 3).
- Give students a few minutes to discuss how their ideas of “true” poetry have or have not changed and list any changes on the board.
- Have students then discuss how Brown views poetry.
  - Is it negative or positive? Examples.
  - Is his view solely about poetry or about writing/writers in general?
  - How does the style of the poem (line breaks, rhyming, etc.) affect the overall meaning of the poem? Does it add to it? Why or why not?
  - Is language important?
- Have students discuss how Brown’s poem differs from Shakespeare’s.

Materials:

- Copies of *Wisdom Teeth*
- Computer/Internet access

Other Resources:

- Vocabulary
- Discussion/Comprehension Questions
- Text References
- Supplemental Materials Chart
Wisdom Teeth and Understanding Poetry

Short Lecture & Partner Activities

- Discuss the different aspects of a poem and how they affect the overall understanding of the poem:
  - Tone/voice
  - Diction
  - Imagery
  - Line structure
    - Meter – poetic measure; arrangement of words in regularly measured, patterned, or rhythmic lines or verses.
    - Line Breaks – can make you linger on a sound, an image, or make one line mean two things.
    - Repetition – the repeating of words and/or phrases to emphasize a specific idea, value or emotion.
    - Rhyme – identity in sound of some part, especially the end, of words or lines of verse.

- Have students break into groups, assign them a poem, and ask them to dissect and analyze it:
  - “Till’s Skin” (p. 55)
  - “D&D: A Confession” (p. 59)
  - “In the Car” (p. 101)
  - “To Be Published” (p. 85)
  - “Missed Train” (p. 28)

- Have students do a close reading of their assigned poem to answer the following questions:
  - How does this poem correlate to their now refined definition of what poetry should be?
  - How do the poems’ line breaks, rhyme scheme, language, tone, etc. further enhance the students grasp on the poem’s meaning? Site examples.
  - Delve into the language: how does his use of language affect the overall message? Based on the language, to whom is he speaking? Is it formal? Why or why not?
  - Does this poem have multiple layers of meaning?

- If time allows, have the groups read their assigned poem aloud and share their findings with the rest of the class.
Discussion Wrap-Up:

- Ask students to discuss and debate what makes Derrick Weston Brown a “traditional” poet based on the list that was made at the beginning of class
- Do his poems accurately portray contemporary life in DC?

Writing Activities/Evaluations:

Analytical:
In a short essay, two to three paragraphs, have students discuss and analyze how it felt after reading/hearing the poem they were assigned in class instead of simply reading it on paper. Has it changed their view of the poem? Why or why not?

Creative:
Have students watch a short clip:

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5myRyPSSpiE&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5myRyPSSpiE&feature=related)

This clip is Brown reading his poem “Misdirected,” which is a Bop. Using their newfound knowledge of the style of poetry, have students select a song and create their own Bop. It can be long or short, rhyme or no rhyme, etc.
• Based on your discussion in class, has your definition of poetry changed? Why or why not?
• How can hearing a poem read aloud affect your understanding of the poem?
• How does sound create meaning in poetry? What about rhythm?
• How can your culture and background affect how you write poetry? How does it affect Derrick Weston Brown’s poetry?
• How does Brown use form to give additional meaning to his poems?
• Brown quotes other writers in his poems frequently—Junot Diaz, Q-Tip, and Toni Morrison, to name a few. Why does he do this? What does it add to his work?
• Discuss the differences between Shakespeare’s poem and Brown’s poems. How are they the same?
• In Brown’s poem “Poem about running into you on the street after not seeing you for a while,” (p. 107), he uses a really strong metaphor. State what it is. What does he mean?
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<th>Word:</th>
<th>Definition:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prose</td>
<td>The ordinary form of spoken or written language, without metrical structure, as distinguished from poetry or verse.</td>
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<td>Form (poetic form)</td>
<td>The way that a poem is written; or the way a piece of writing is organized.</td>
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<td>Bop</td>
<td>A three stanza poem; the first stanza is six lines long and presents a problem, the second stanza is eight lines long and explores/expands the problem, the third stanza is six lines long and presents a solution or failure. Each stanza is followed by a refrain. Each stanza is followed by a refrain.</td>
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<td>Tone</td>
<td>A particular quality, way of sounding, modulation, or intonation of the voice as expressive of some meaning, feeling, spirit, etc.</td>
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<td>Diction</td>
<td>Refers to a poem’s entire word choice, or the overall effect, creating the tone or mood of the poem.</td>
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<td>Meter</td>
<td>Arrangement of words in regularly measured, patterned, or rhythmic lines or verses; the number of beats in a given a line.</td>
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<td>Sonnet</td>
<td>A poem of 14 lines, usually in iambic pentameter, with rhymes arranged according to one of certain definite schemes divided into a major group of 8 lines (the octave) followed by 6 lines (the sestet) — 3 quatrains followed by a couplet.</td>
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• (p. 55): V. I don’t remember the/taste of her cake the present/I wrapped myself. I remember laughter./The brown ebb and flow of the/lake shore./My toes wiggling near/white ones in dark sand. I don’t/remember how I get home./I taste metal hug Mama./Throw up in the bathroom.

• (p. 28): I smelled you at the Metro stop/Tasted you on the Yellow/Glimpsed you on the Green/Caught you on the Orange/Loved you on the Red/Lost you on the Blue,/ Now I need a transfer/or at least exit fare,/cause no one deserves/to take such a ride,/and end up being taken/for every dime.

• (p. 59): Surrounded by a crew of stone faced/white boys who’d survey my roll/with hopeful glances, I’d watch/the die twirl and settle,/check the numbers, then/proceed to slaughter. Open to/their bloodthirsty suggestions./Dude, you’re a third level/Elf Paladin. Use your broadsword/on the Orc battalion./No way dude. If I want to wear/down their hit points I gotta/use my mace. Geez man I only/get one turn per round. And what/happens when it’s their turn to attack?/I lost my enchanted shield to the Bugbear/a few turns ago, and all I have is this/chain mail, one flask of healing potion/and a prayer.
Sonnet 18
William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest;
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.
<table>
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<th>Category of Resource</th>
<th>Description of Resource</th>
<th>Potential Educational Uses of Resource</th>
<th>Link to Resource</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>YouTube clip</strong></td>
<td>Derrick Weston Brown reciting his poem “Misdirected”</td>
<td>Watching and listening to the poet recite his work may change the way the student views the poem; the student will gain knowledge of a different and contemporary form of poetry and will learn how to write a poem using this style.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5myRyPSSpiE&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5myRyPSSpiE&amp;feature=related</a></td>
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<td><strong>Poem</strong></td>
<td>William Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 18”</td>
<td>Students will learn the differences between different types of poems (sonnet vs. contemporary)</td>
<td><a href="http://classicpoetryaloud.podomatic.com/entry/2007-06-09T08_45_01-07_00">http://classicpoetryaloud.podomatic.com/entry/2007-06-09T08_45_01-07_00</a></td>
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