

Lesson Plan for Henrico 21 Awards

Lesson Title: **Edgar Allan Poe Archivist Activity**

Lesson Submission Number:

Target Grade/Subject: 8th Grade

Length: 2 90 minute class periods

Summary: The students will complete a Performance Task about Edgar Allan Poe's life using primary sources. A Performance Task requires the students to use critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills to answer open-ended questions about a hypothetical yet realistic situation. This Performance Task also has an accompanying document library that includes a range of information sources (such as articles, photographs, letters, and an obituary). The students are instructed to use these materials in preparing their answers to the Performance Task's questions within the allotted two 90 minute class periods. The students will also use critical thinking and problem solving skills to construct a timeline of the events in Poe's life based on the historical documents.

Essential questions: *How do experiences influence perspective?*

Lesson Development:

Process/Tasks/Assessment:

Opening Activity:

- The teacher will ask the students, "What is the difference between primary and secondary sources?"
- If not addressed previously, the teacher should inform students about the purpose of a brainstorm. In a brainstorm, all possible responses are accepted at first and are not judged or discredited. After a period of time, students can analyze responses, look for trends, chunk similar ideas, and determine which responses seem to be the most worthwhile or worth investigating. For more information on brainstorming techniques, visit [The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#).
- Using Popplet, the students will work with a partner to brainstorm about primary and secondary sources; students should draw from background knowledge.
- The teacher will provide examples of primary and secondary sources using the National Archives website.
- Resources:
 - [Popplet](#)
 - [National Archives](#) (examples of primary sources)

Learning Activities:

- The teacher will provide the Edgar Allan Poe Performance Task to the students through [Blendspace](#).
- The students will review the [Scenario and Questions](#) document first.
- The students will read the following Scenario:
 - While exploring downtown Richmond with your History class during a field trip, you arrive at St. John's Church, the historic landmark where Patrick Henry gave his famous "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death!" speech. After wandering away from the rest of the group, you notice a loose floorboard in the corner of the church that seems out of place. When you remove the loose floorboard, you realize there is an old wooden box with the letters **ERS** engraved on the lid. Upon opening the box, you discover that it contains a number of old photographs and letters about literary icon Edgar Allan Poe! You cannot believe your eyes! This is just what you need to secure your internship this summer at the Virginia Historical Society.

In a letter to the Virginia Historical Society, analyze the documents from the box as you answer the questions below. You must also conduct additional research using two outside sources. Explain the reasons for your conclusions, and justify those conclusions by explicitly referring to the specific documents. Your answers will be judged not only on the accuracy of the information you provide, but also on how clearly the ideas are presented, how effectively the ideas are organized, and how thoroughly the information is covered.

While your personal values and experiences are important, you should base your response on the evidence provided in the documents, as well as your own two researched items. You must cite your sources using MLA format.

After you write your letter, **arrange the events of Poe's life in sequence** using Dipity. Ensure that your timeline is based on the documents you've reviewed. Compare your timeline with a timeline of Poe's life from the Poe Museum, and answer the following question as the conclusion paragraph in your letter: *How did the events in Poe's life influence his writing?*

- The students will then create questions about Poe to help them guide their research and analysis.
- The teacher should monitor student groups as they create questions. The students may need individual or group guidance. Some potential questions to consider to promote student idea generation include:
 - What were the significant events and people in Poe's life?
 - How is Poe's personality reflected in his writing?
 - What do the letters reveal about Poe's personality?

- What do the letters reveal about Poe's reputation with other writers?
 - How did the events in Poe's life influence his writing?
- The students will then read and analyze the accompanying document library that includes a range of informational sources (such as photographs, letters, a certificate, an obituary, and book review) to answer the following questions in their letter to the Virginia Historical Society:
 - Who knew Poe with the initials ERS? Why would this box be hidden in St. John's church? What significance does it hold specifically for Poe? What else can you learn about the city of Richmond from the sources in the box? What specific information in the documentation led you to this conclusion?
 - Who were Maria and Virginia Clemm? What is Poe's relationship with these two women? What can you infer about Poe's relationship with his foster father? Be sure to cite the information in the documentation, as well as any other factors you considered, that led you to this conclusion.
 - What do you learn about Poe's career and the other writers with whom he interacted? What role did Rufus Griswold play in his life and death? What specific information in the documentation and any other factors you considered led you to this conclusion?
 - What do these letters and other sources tell you about his personality? How is his personality reflected in his work? What specific information in the documentation led you to this conclusion?
- The students will also conduct additional research about Poe's life using two outside sources.
- Because the students are using a variety of search engines to conduct additional research, they should be encouraged to determine the accuracy and authority of the information sources.
 - [Online Resource Evaluation](#)
 - [Digital Research Tip Sheet](#)
- Working in partners, the students will utilize these materials to prepare their answers to the questions in a letter to the Virginia Historical Society.
- The students will collaborate on the letter using a Google Doc.
- The students will also use critical thinking and problem solving skills to construct a timeline of the events in Poe's life based on the historical documents using [Dipity](#).
- The students will then compare their timeline with this timeline of Poe's life events and answer the following question as the conclusion paragraph in their letter:
 - How did the events in Poe's life influence his writing?
- Resources:
 - [Blendspace](#)
 - Google Docs
 - [Dipity](#)

Closing Activity:

- Using a teacher-created Google Docs survey form, the students will complete a reflection. The students will address the following topics in their reflection:
 - their experience completing the Performance Task
 - their role as a communicator and collaborator
 - using critical thinking skills to evaluate the relevancy of the primary sources in the document library, as well as internet sources
 - problems they faced and solved during the Performance Task
 - their role as critical thinkers and how it connects with their goals in the future
 - Resources:
 - [Reflection Rubric](#)
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TIP Chart Assessment:

Categories:

Research and Information Fluency: *Ideal/Target (6) - The assignment prompted the analysis of primary sources located in the document library, as well as secondary sources they found while conducting online research. Information fluency was applied by the students as they conducted their additional research by referring to their Online Resource Evaluation and Digital Research Tip Sheet. These research materials encouraged the students to recognize objectivity, authority, and reliability when analyzing information on the internet. The students then synthesized the information from the document library (as well as their additional sources) in order to address the authentic task (described in the Scenario) of assessing the historical items in the box. The students then made several accurate claims about the historical evidence by assembling the information in a formal letter to the Virginia Historical Society and in the creation of a timeline.*

Communication and Collaboration: *Developing (3) - The students communicated and collaborated with their partners to reach a common goal. They interacted with the digital tools as they completed the letter to the Virginia Historical Society and the timeline. Finally, the students communicated in a reflection through the use of a Google Doc Survey to discuss the following:*

- *their experience completing the Performance Task*
- *their role as a communicator and collaborator*
- *using critical thinking skills to evaluate the relevancy of the primary sources in the document library, as well as internet sources*
- *problems they faced and solved during the Performance Task*
- *their role as critical thinkers and how it connects with their goals in the future*

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: *Ideal/Target (7) - The students engaged in critical thinking and problem solving through the following authentic tasks:*

- *generating questions to guide their analysis of the primary sources and their additional research*

- *collaborating with a partner to reach a common goal*
- *incorporating strategies to gain insights about the events and influences in Poe's life*
- *arranging the events of Poe's life and creating a timeline through the use of a digital tool*
- *justifying their decision-making in regards to which sources are most relevant*

Analyzing the documents allowed the students to think critically about the documents' relevancy to the specific questions. The students exhibited problem solving skills while explaining the reasons for their conclusions, and the justification of those conclusions by explicitly referring to the specific documents. Critical thinking is not only evident in the accuracy of the information they provided, but also in how clearly their ideas were presented, how effectively the ideas were organized, and how thoroughly the information was covered. Finally, the students applied problem solving skills through Dipity by creating interactive timelines.

Creativity and Innovation: *Approaching (5) - In this Performance Task, the students utilized the digital tools to generate a letter on Google Doc based on their analysis and insight. The students also created a digital timeline using Dipity in which they collaborated on visually engaging timelines by integrating images, texts, and links. The students made connections between the historical content and the ideas presented in the Performance Task questions.*