

2002 National Teacher Training Institute

Grades 8-11

Children's Media and Censorship

Master Teacher

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Time Allotment

Two 45-minute class periods

Overview

In 1981, Stephen King published an essay about children and television censorship. In his essay he compares his writing to the violence found in children's fairy tales. He also discusses television censorship. Using an informal tone, King makes himself seem trustworthy. Even though most of his argument is opinion rather than fact, he establishes credibility as a parent and author. King appeals to both emotion and logic to produce his essay.



Through activities presented in this lesson, students will be able to form and express an opinion on children and television censorship. After examining video clips of a fairy tale and reading King's essay, students will produce an essay on the author's motivation and credibility, which includes an opinion on violence in children's media. Activities in this lesson will stimulate class discussion and promote those skills used when writing a persuasive essay. This lesson may also be used as an introduction to lessons on fact and opinion, evaluating media, and creative writing.

Subject Matter

English/Language Arts

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

-  evaluate an author's motivation and credibility
-  compare and contrast a literature selection with other media

South Carolina Standards

(These Standards can be found online at <http://www.myschools.com/offices/cso/StandardsDocs/ELA/ELA.doc>)

Reading/English Language Arts – Grade 10

- I. A. 4.
 - A. The student will read and critique literary works from a variety of eras in a variety of cultures.
 4. Examine a literary selection from several critical perspectives.
- II. C.
 - C. The student will listen critically and ask appropriate questions to clarify the view point of others, to develop new understandings, to view findings from various perspectives, and to make learning personally relevant when participating in discussions or interviews.

Media Components

Video

From the Brothers Grimm, Lesson 3, "Hansel and Gretel"

Audio

CD: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, copyright 2000: *Elements of Literature Fourth Course*—Disc 15, Track 4

Materials

Teacher's Edition of *The Elements of Literature Fourth Course*; Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, copyright 2000
whiteboard and markers

Equipment

television
videocassette recorder
CD player

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Prep for Teachers

- ✎ Request video and preview segment.
- ✎ Cue video to first segment beginning with the title “Hansel and Gretel: An Appalachian Version.”
- ✎ Cue audio CD 15 to track 4.
- ✎ When using media, provide students with a **Focus for Media Interaction**, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video segments, Web sites, or other multimedia elements.

Introductory Activity

Step 1: Assign the students the following journal topic: What do you remember about watching, or not being allowed to watch, scary movies and television shows when you were little? After about five minutes, ask the students to share their experiences. Guide the discussion by asking students their opinion about children’s exposure to violence. Students must reinforce an opinion with a reason.

An example of such a dialogue is—

Student: “I think little kids should be able to watch what they want.”

Teacher: “Why do you feel that way?”

Student: “Little kids only want to watch cartoons . . . they wouldn’t care about watching that gory stuff anyway!”

Step 2: As a class, make a list on the board of movies and television shows that might be inappropriate for young children. Start the list with the movie *Scream*. As the students contribute, add in movies or television shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*. Conclude the list by adding “Hansel and Gretel.” Inform the students that the violence in this fable is as bad, or worse, than some of the examples.

Learning Activities

Step 1: Inform students that they will be watching a video presentation of one version of “Hansel and Gretel.” Provide your students with a **Focus for Media Interaction**, explaining that as they view the video segments, they are to note each example of violence and/or scenes that could be considered inappropriate for small children. The video will be broken into three parts so that they may record their observations.

Step 2: Insert *From the Brothers Grimm*, Lesson 3, “Hansel and Gretel.” START the tape at the beginning. PAUSE the tape when the stepmother says, “You kids stay right there. Come on honey.” The father pats the children on the head and he leaves. Ask the students to finish recording observations. Ask students to read aloud some of their examples. (*Examples could include the mean stepmother, poverty, abandonment, and loss of a parent.*)

Step 3: Ask students to continue recording their observations and PLAY the tape from the previous pause point until you hear the narrator say, “. . . especially for human flesh.” PAUSE the tape. Again, ask students to read aloud some of their examples. (*Examples could include mentions of the devil, witch’s appearance, and plans to eat the little boy.*)

Step 4: Again, ask students to record their observations and PLAY the tape from the previous pause point until the narrator says, “. . . in that little house in the forest.” STOP the tape. Ask students to read aloud some of their examples. (*Examples could include starvation, child labor, murder, and stealing.*)

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Culminating Activity

Step 1: Make a class list of some of the worst things viewed in the video. Ask students why a parent would make a story like “Hansel and Gretel” readily available but keep other shows from their children. (*Answers will vary.*)

Step 2: Have students open their textbooks to page 480 “Now You Take ‘Bambi’ or ‘Snow White’—That’s Scary!” (**Note to Teacher:** If you are not using the *Elements of Literature*, ask your librarian to obtain a copy of Stephen King’s essay on censorship.) Explain that Stephen King is a famous author who is known for his horror stories. He is discussing the need for violent and frightening programs to be broadcast during later evening hours, and for parents to limit their children’s intake of such programs.

Provide students with a **Focus for Media Interaction** by asking them as they listen to the CD to think of reasons why King would write this essay. (*A possible response is in response to critics of his work.*) PLAY the audio CD of the essay and have students follow along in their textbooks until the end of the essay.

Step 3: After listening to the essay, ask students to think about what Stephen King could gain by emphasizing violence in a familiar fairy tale. Discuss possible reasons. (*He may plan to argue that violence in television is no worse than violence in fairy tales. The violence in the fairy tales may make his work seem less shocking.*)

Step 4: As an assessment of the lesson, ask students to write a short essay discussing Stephen King’s views. Encourage students to include information from the essay and video, as well as things from their own experiences. The essay should be graded with a teacher-made rubric.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

Sociology/Psychology: Research the effects of violence on children citing scientific studies.

Social Studies/History/Geography: Find the origin (country) of some of the fairy tales King mentions. Compare those with others from the same country. Students can detail their findings in a report.

Math: Take an opinion poll of another class. Ask students their views on violence and media in relation to children. Calculate the data and produce a graph.

Community Connections

- ✍ Visit a library and interview the librarians about popular children’s stories. Prepare a list of the top 20 children’s stories.
- ✍ Visit an elementary school and read some of the most popular children’s stories to a class. Report on students’ reactions.
- ✍ Write a class fairy tale without violence and publish it.

Student Materials

pencil and paper

The Elements of Literature Fourth Course, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, copyright 2000.