

Name: _____ Teacher: _____ School: _____

Grade 8: Lesson 10

Lesson Focus: The focus of today's lesson will be on A.E. Housman and one of his poems, "To an Athlete Dying Young."

Practice Focus: Students will analyze an informational text to determine the main ideas; students will also analyze one of Housman's poems using a strategy for unlocking its meaning.

Objective: Students will use "A.E. Housman, 1859-1936" and "To an Athlete Dying Young" to learn about A.E. Housman and one of his important poems with a focus on determining the main ideas in the texts as well as author's craft for creating meaning.

Academic Vocabulary: rigorous, academia, betimes, laurel, renown, connotation, personification, symbolism

Texts for lesson:

A.E. Housman, 1859-1936

"Born and raised in England, Alfred Edward Housman was primarily an academic scholar and a professor, but he also published two works of poetry during his lifetime. During his college years, Housman established himself as a scholar of the classic texts of early Greek and Roman culture. After college, he went on to become a professor of Latin, first at University College, London, and later at Trinity College, Cambridge.

In his academic career, Housman worked tirelessly to create accurate translations of the classic works he studied. His rigorous, or extremely thorough, work focused on uncovering the words as they were written. Housman took this work extremely seriously and criticized other scholars he viewed as lazy.

When Housman published his first work of poetry, *A Shropshire Lad*, in 1896, he revealed another side of himself, altogether different from his strict views of academia, or academic studies. He wrote most of the sixty-three poems in the collection after the death of a beloved friend. This likely explains why many of the poems focus on the short span of a person's youth and the concept of death.

Although the collection did not receive much attention at first, it became more popular during World War I because many of the poems depicted brave soldiers. *Last Poems*, his second book of poems, on the other hand, quickly achieved success upon its publication in 1922. With this volume, Housman addressed a greater diversity of subjects. It is widely considered superior to his first publication."

To an Athlete Dying Young

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by, And
home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsmen of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes, which means early, away
From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel, which is a leaf used to make a wreath, placed on someone's head after
victory, grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut, which means broken,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown, or fame, outtran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,

The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled, which means covered with a laurel wreath after victory, head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland, or wreath, briefer than a girl's.

TP-CASTT Poetry Analysis

TITLE: Consider the title and make a prediction about what the poem is about.

PARAPHRASE: Translate the poem line by line into your own words on a literal level. Look for complete thoughts (sentences may be inverted) and look up unfamiliar words.

CONNOTATION: Examine the poem for meaning beyond the literal. Look for figurative language, imagery, and sound elements.

ATTITUDE/TONE: Notice the speaker's tone and attitude. Humor? Sarcasm? Awe?

SHIFTS: Note any shifts or changes in speaker or attitude. Look for key words, time change, punctuation.

TITLE: Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level.

THEME: Briefly state in your own words what the poem is about (subject), then what the poet is saying about the subject (theme).

Independent Practice questions:

1. What stood out to you the most regarding A.E. Housman's life and work? After reading his poem, does it change your opinion of what you learned about him? Why or why not?
2. What did you learn the most in our analysis of Housman's poem, "To an Athlete Dying Young"?
3. What are your thoughts about the poem? Is it too dark or something important to consider? Explain your answer.



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