

AML Media Part 1 Lesson Plan: *The Power of Narrative*

This Grade 11 NBE3U1 lesson by J. Duong explores how stories and objects convey meaning across cultures and media. Students begin by writing narratives about everyday objects, then compare their stories with the cultural and historical contexts of the same objects in *The Witness Blanket*. Through group sharing and discussion, they reflect on how personal experience, media, and cultural background shape meaning ([Media Key Concepts 3, 5, 6](#)). The lesson integrates [Indigenous Story Work](#) Principles and highlights how texts include symbolic and material forms, connecting personal narratives with Indigenous perspectives, cultural memory, and social-political messages.

1. Writing personal object narratives and comparing them with *The Witness Blanket* fosters awareness of how personal experience, culture, and media shape meaning.
2. Applying Indigenous Story Work Principles to both personal and cultural narratives deepens understanding of relational and ethical dimensions of storytelling.

Unpacking *The Witness Blanket* as text engages students in critical reflection on objects as carriers of political, social, and historical meaning.

NBE3U1

Curricular Expectations	<p>A1.6 compare multiple perspectives on themes, ideas, and issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identities, relationships, and self-determination, sovereignty, or self-governance, as reflected in various texts from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources</p> <p>A2.5 describe a range of issues related to attempts to apply Western cultural criteria to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit text forms, including cultural text forms</p> <p>C1.5 extend their understanding of texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, including increasingly complex or difficult texts, by making rich connections between the ideas in them and in other texts and to their own knowledge, experience, and insights</p> <p>C2.2 identify a variety of features of texts from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and, as appropriate, relevant texts from non-Indigenous sources, and explain, with increasing insight, how they help communicate meaning or reflect a world view</p>
Media Connections	<p>Teaching about media</p> <p>Key Concept 3: Audiences negotiate meaning.</p> <p>By how students negotiate meaning based on their own biases and understanding when creating their “story”</p>

	<p>Key Concept 5: Media communicate values messages.</p> <p>The biases and values inherent within their stories, for example what value or stories did they create (was it rooted in their experiences, or by virtue of the course?) which shaped their story.</p> <p>Key Concept 6: Media communicate political and social messages.</p> <p>When students read the narrative behind the various objects from the Witness Blanket, consider its role in sharing knowledge of Residential School Survivors, and the underlying political & social messages.</p>
Teaching Strategies & Learning Opportunities Differentiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Think-Pair-Share - Lecture - Group work - Discussion - Movement - Creation
Success Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I can make connections between literary lenses and perspectives and how they are represented in the texts I read. - I can apply elements of the <i>Story Work Principles</i> in the texts I read. - I understand how texts extend beyond words on a page.
Resources	
Learning Activities	
	<p>Independent Reading 10 Minutes: During which I circulated the classroom and had students pick their “top 3 choices” without context for the next activity.</p> <p>Minds On (7 minutes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a text? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ What is a word? ◦ What is a symbol? <p>(the above two are likely follow-up/continuing questions)</p> <p>What is a narrative?</p> <p>What characteristics make it a narrative?</p> <p>Action (PP & Activity): Students were assigned an object.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door • Bowl • Skates • Tree Branch • Braided Hair <p>Individual Freewriting (7+13 minutes)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students to freewrite for 7 minutes to create a story about the object

2. Small group sharing of their stories
 - a. Similarities/differences with their stories
 - b. Discussion of biases -> What shaped their understanding that contributed to the stories?
 - i. Key concepts 3 & 5
3. Some volunteers shared their story with the class
 - a. Whole class discussion of their group discussion

Context 20 minutes

Students now explore the ‘context’ behind the 5 objects.

These objects are part of [The Witness Blanket](#) (an online and physical art exhibit containing artefacts from Residential Schools).

Group discussion of meaning & comparison with their own stories

Group discussion of political and social meaning of objects & curation (KC #6 - Media texts communicate political and social messages.). Making personal connections between how objects can convey meaning to different peoples.

Consolidation (5 minutes):

Debrief/Connections of what entails a story

Exit Ticket/Wonderings

Possible Extensions	Object Narratives Creative Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students might create a narrative/story for an object that is significant to them with a reflection to connect their experience to the Witness Blanket project.
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Reflections & Next Steps:

In drafting this lesson, I was torn with what exactly to include, as this AQ spurred my interest in creating an entire media unit (with various media-rich tasks including movies, documentaries, short film (archival footage from [NFB](#)), discussions of [the media triangle](#), and studying through and about media through plays. For example, in *Education is Our Right*, we read about the production notes and discussed intertextuality in *A Christmas Carol*. Discussing how the production notes influence the underlying narrative in conjunction with one’s expectations of the story (from a *A Christmas Carol*) allowed students to not only study the “content” of the play, but how other texts and contemporary issues are represented through creative works.

I developed and ran this lesson twice in the prior semester without strong consideration or familiarity with media key concepts. I had the opportunity to run this lesson with the addition of media pedagogy back-to-back (as I taught 2 sections of this course). The changes included increased personal reflection, which arose from this media course, to consider the underlying narrative and what shaped their stories. Increasing the focus on their stories and where they came from informed how they negotiate meaning with texts.

The discussion prompt, “What shaped their understanding that contributed to their story?” spurred increased insights as students made connections about media. For example, the group that wrote a story about “doors” discussed how they mostly included elements of horror because of their familiarity with horror movies. The connection to popular media (and horror) thus collectively influenced the stories they wrote.

Likewise, the stories about Skates centred a diverse set of experiences depending on their background. For example, a student who is a *hockey player* focused on hardship and perseverance of winning a game with their special pair of skates. A *newcomer* story centred on new experiences in unfamiliar lands, thus how they incorporated their backgrounds into their stories. This connects to key concept 5, as students discovered and unpacked their own biases through their narratives.

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Some changes for the future might be to space the lesson out, potentially across 2 or 3 days. I would have the creative writing element, sharing and discussion last longer and then incorporate the [Story Work Principles](#), with students applying it to their own stories. This allows a stronger connection to the Indigenous *Story Work Principles* theory.

The second day might focus on unpacking the Witness Blanket and considering how these stories reflect the *Story Work Principles*. More time unpacking the witness blanket is crucial as I have never heard more silence in my classroom than while students unpacked the contexts of the objects. This would also allow students more time to explore the other objects they did not write about, and to consider the narratives of objects without additional background.

Follow-up questions may focus on the political, social and cultural meaning behind objects and the roles they play. If texts are words, letters, symbols that convey meaning, are these objects texts (for students to ponder)? Depending on the timing and order of concepts, discussion of treaties and Wampum belts are appropriate (Wampum as textual objects, etc), to further illustrate the textual nature of objects.

The third day may be the creative writing extension, where students select their own object and create a meaningful narrative from it, with potential to create a personal media production to augment/feature it.

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Next steps, I may consider how I might incorporate other related [media key concepts](#) to expand the ‘object as narrative’ or unconventional text forms to strengthen student understanding of texts across media forms and cultures. Likewise, I am considering incorporating the notion of curation (what gets curated and by whom) and archival records, to expand students’ critical thought about how works are compiled (linking to NFB short films like “Mobilize”). Moreover, it fits well with the nature of the creative extension as students curate their own narrative through an object.