

ELA: Grade 8, Lesson 7, *William Blake Part II*

Lesson Focus: The focus of today's lesson will be on William Blake's poetry and argumentative writing.

Practice Focus: Students will analyze one of Blake's poems, "A Poison Tree," in order to determine its meaning. Students will also analyze an argumentative essay on Blake's poem in order to study author's craft in writing arguments.

Objective: Students will use "A Poison Tree" and "Analysis of 'A Poison Tree'" to learn about William Blake's poem and to learn about author's craft in writing arguments.

Academic Vocabulary: wiles, beheld, stole, veil'd, connotation, figurative, personification, symbolism, cohesion, resentment, unexpressed, nurtures, hyperbole, grievance, transitional phrase, literary device

TN Standards: 8.RI.KID.1, 8.RI.KID.3, 8.RI.CS.4, 8.RI.IKI.8, 8.RL.KID.1, 8.RL.KID.2, 8.RL.KID.3, 8.RL.CS.4, 8.RL.CS.5, 8.RL.CS.6

Teacher Materials:

- Lesson script
- Chart paper
 - Will need to write out the TPCASTT template onto chart paper; you only need to include the headings for each section as the commentary will be covered in the script
 - Will need to write the independent practice questions on chart paper so students can see them and copy them onto their own paper

Student Materials:

- Paper, pencil, and a surface to write on

Teacher Do	Students Do
<p>Opening (1 min)</p> <p>Hello! Welcome to Tennessee's At Home Learning Series for literacy! Today's lesson is for all our 8th graders out there, though everyone is welcome to tune in. This lesson is the second in this series.</p> <p>My name is ____ and I'm a ____ grade teacher in Tennessee schools. I'm so excited to be your teacher for this lesson! Welcome to my virtual classroom!</p> <p>If you didn't see our previous lesson, you can find it at www.tn.gov/education. You can still tune in to today's lesson if you haven't seen any of our others. But it might be more fun if you first go back and watch our other lessons, since today we'll be talking about things we learned previously.</p> <p>As a reminder, in this lesson set, we are studying some very well-regarded and widely studied poets. We have already begun learning about William Blake and will continue learning about his poetry today. In upcoming lessons, we will also learn about English poet A.E. Housman as well as an American poet, Emily Dickinson. Poetry has been a powerful</p>	<p>Students gather materials for the lesson and prepare to engage with the lesson's content.</p>

<p>mode of writing in American and British history and our goal is to gain a deeper understanding of some of the most successful poets and how they impacted their respective societies.</p> <p>Before we get started, to participate fully in our lesson today, you will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper, a pencil, and a surface to write on <p>Ok, let's begin!</p>	
<p>Intro (1 minute)</p> <p>Today our goal is to read one of William Blake's poems, "A Poison Tree," and to use the TPCASTT strategy we used in the last lesson to better understand the poem. We will also read an argumentative essay on the meaning of the poem. I will guide you through an analysis of this essay to see how the author crafted his argument.</p> <p>We will begin with me reading the poem as a whole and then we will reread it and pause along the way for deeper understanding.</p> <p>At the end of the lesson, I will assign you independent work you can complete after the video ends.</p>	<p>Students listen to the teacher's introduction.</p>
<p>Teacher Model/Read-Aloud (15 minutes)</p> <p>Now, let's dig in to the first text we will be studying, which is William Blake's poem, "A Poison Tree." Once we have read through the poem, we will reread it and use the TPCASTT strategy we used in the previous lesson to break it down and determine its meaning.</p> <p>Let's read the text:</p> <p>"A Poison Tree"</p> <p>I was angry with my friend; I told my wrath, my wrath did end. I was angry with my foe: I told it not, my wrath did grow.</p> <p>And I waterd it in fears, Night & morning with my tears: And I sunned it with smiles, And with soft deceitful wiles, which means "flattering someone insincerely".</p>	<p>Students follow along, comprehending the text. They use teacher think-alouds and tips (e.g., definitions of words) to support their comprehension, and they think or write as directed in response to prompts and questions.</p>

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld, or “saw,” it shine;
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole, which means he entered without
the speaker’s knowledge,
When the night had veild the pole, which means “when the
sky was covered in darkness”
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

Just like yesterday’s poem, this poem contains layers of meaning. Remember that poetry is communicating meaning both directly and indirectly. It is a difficult genre of literature to analyze, which is why we are going to use a tool to help us do it. Let’s refresh our memory of this tool before we dig into the poem deeper.

Let’s get started. The tool is called TPCASTT.

[display TPCASTT template for students to see]

Notice that each of the sections begins with the respective letter in the acronym:

T = Title
P = Paraphrase
C = Connotation
A = Attitude/Tone
S = Shift(s)
T = Title (Revisiting the Title)
T = Theme

Let’s create a fresh template for today so you can use it for the new poem. On a clean sheet of paper, sketch 7 sections going down your paper like the one I’m showing you. Don’t worry about labeling yet as I will go over each section individually. Your template does not need to look fancy or perfect. Just give yourself enough room in each section to take notes. It is important to take notes on what goes in each section so you will know how to complete them.

[Pause for 30 seconds]

Now, let’s talk about each section. Each of these sections should be completed in sequential order. Label your first

section “Title.” You may want to make a note that in this section, your goal is to consider the title of the poem and to make a prediction about what the poem is about. Poets are very intentional, or purposeful, about how they label their poems. There are always very important clues to the poem’s meaning in the title, which is why it is a great place to start. For what reasons might the author have chosen the title, “A Poison Tree”? Take a moment to jot down your thoughts about the title of this poem.

[pause for 30 seconds]

Great work! In my notes, I wrote down the title “A Poison Tree” indicates two things. First, poison is obviously bad and I should expect a description of something that is harmful. Second, a tree is something that grows only in time and only with proper nourishment. Remember that at this point we are just making guesses about why he chose it. It takes a careful read of the poem to understand how the title fits in with its meaning.

Let’s read the poem again before we begin the next section. Pay close attention as you will be paraphrasing the poem after we read it.

[read the poem]

“A Poison Tree”

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I **waterd** it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful **wiles, which means “flattering someone insincerely”**.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe **beheld, or “saw,”** it shine;
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden **stole, which means he entered without the speaker’s knowledge,**

When the night had veild the pole, which means “when the sky was covered in darkness”

In the morning glad I see;

My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

Ok, let’s try the next section in TPCASTT, “Paraphrase.” Here the goal is to write *in your own words* exactly what happens in the poem. You are trying to write down what the poem says literally, on the surface, not its many layers of meaning. This is really a simple paraphrase. Take a few moments to paraphrase what you remember in the poem.

[pause for 30 seconds]

Thank you. In my notes, I have the following as a brief paraphrase:

I’m figuring out what to do with my anger. I notice when I addressed my anger openly with my friend, it went away. But when I held inside my anger against my enemy, it grew. And all my fears, sorrow, and fake smiles only made it grow. And it just kept growing until it grew fruit. My enemy decided to steal the fruit that resulted from that anger and he ended up poisoned or dead from it.

Can you see that I kept my paraphrase casual and simple? I am simply trying to capture the literal ideas I find.

Let’s try the next section, “Connotation.” Remember that “connotation” means “an idea or feeling that a word invokes in addition to its literal meaning.” Here is where we start to dig a bit deeper. We’re looking for meaning beyond the literal. Poets use a lot of tools to do this, including figurative language, or non-literal language, imagery, sound devices, word choice, etc. Some of the most common figurative language devices are simile, metaphor, personification, which is when a thing such as an idea or animal is given human characteristics, and symbolism, which is the use of symbols to represent ideas. Did you notice any of these present in this poem on the first or second reads? Let’s read through the poem again. Look for any of these elements and take notes on your paper. You are not trying to capture every single one - only the ones that you think are the most important to understanding the meaning of the poem.

[read the poem]

“A Poison Tree”

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I **waterd** it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful **wiles**, which means “flattering someone insincerely”.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe **beheld**, or “**saw**,” it shine;
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden **stole**, which means he entered without the speaker’s knowledge,
When the night had **veild the pole**, which means “when the sky was covered in darkness”
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

I will pause a moment to allow you to finish your notes.

[pause 1 minute]

Great, thank you. Here are some things that I noticed. First, I noticed the author moves from speaking of his anger more literally in the first stanza to speaking about it more figuratively as we go through the poem. He uses natural terms like “waterd,” “sunned,” and “grew...til it bore an apple bright.” It’s almost as if his anger has become something separate from him. I also noticed the use of language of night and morning and day and night through the poem, which seems to imply that his anger is consuming him like a poison. Those are just a couple of examples that I found to be important to the meaning of the poem.

Let’s take a look at the next section of the TPCASTT tool, “Attitude.” In this section, we are trying to figure out the speaker’s attitude or tone of the poem. Is it humorous? Sarcastic? In awe? Jot down on your paper some adjectives that you think capture the speaker’s tone in this poem.

[pause 30 seconds]

I wrote down in my notes, “reflective,” “convicted,” and “certain.” Remember the tone is an important tool the poet uses to affect how you as the reader are interpreting the poem.

Let’s look at the next section, “Shift.” Most poems have a shift, though it may be subtle. It is the moment there is a realization or a change in something. Look for key shift words like “but,” “however,” “though,” or “although.” There could also be punctuation changes such as commas, periods, ellipses, semicolons, line breaks, etc.

Let’s read the text once again to see where we can identify a shift.

[read the poem]

“A Poison Tree”

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I **waterd** it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful **wiles**, which means “flattering someone insincerely”.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe **beheld**, or “**saw**,” it shine;
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden **stole**, which means he entered without the speaker’s knowledge,
When the night had **veild the pole**, which means “when the sky was covered in darkness”
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

As you hear the text, where do you hear a shift? Take a few moments and write down on your paper where the shift happens and what you think it means.

[pause 1 minute]

Good thing! In my notes, I marked I think the shift happens right after the wrath becomes an apple bright. That is when his enemy sees the apple, sneaks into the garden late at night, and eats it, only to find himself poisoned or dead by the morning. The first part of the poem was the buildup and reflection on wrath; after the shift, everything comes to a head as the enemy takes action against the speaker's wrath, only to find himself poisoned.

Let's consider the next section, "Title, revisited." Here, we are looking at the title again to see if it has taken on new meaning after our deeper analysis. Take a moment to write down on your paper any changes from your initial thoughts regarding the title.

[pause for 30 seconds]

After a deeper analysis, I thought the title "A Poison Tree" really seemed to emphasize the result of anger. The speaker does not address his wrath very well; in fact, he feeds it through neglect, he fails to address it. He ignores it and things get worse. In many ways, "anger breeds anger." This seems very clear at the end of the poem when the enemy attempts to steal it, only to be poisoned and potentially dead himself.

We've reached the final section, "Theme." In this section, we are bringing everything together to determine the underlying message of the poem. What does it say about humanity or the world we live in? Take a moment and write down your thoughts on your paper.

[pause 30 seconds]

Excellent job! In my notes, I believe this poem really emphasizes the danger of anger. If we address it directly, it most often goes away. If we let it fester, or linger, we just make things worse. The more time goes by, the more it not only affects ourselves, but it affects other people too, much like poison.

I hope you find this TPCASTT tool useful. Keep in mind that is all it is intended for - a helpful tool to assist you in uncovering a poem's meaning.

<p>Guided Practice (15 minutes)</p> <p>Now that we've had an opportunity to analyze the poem ourselves, we're going to look at a professional review of the poem called "Analysis of 'A Poison Tree.'" This is an argumentative essay that is designed to convince the reader of his/her interpretation of the poem. This is by no means the "correct" or "accurate" interpretation as there can be several valid interpretations of poems, as we have mentioned before.</p> <p>Let's pause and think a moment before we read the article. This is not the first time you have read and analyzed argumentative texts. What are some of the most important elements of an argumentative essay? What does an author need to include in his/her argumentative essay for it to be successful in persuading the reader? Take a moment and write your answers to these questions on your paper.</p> <p>[pause 90 seconds]</p> <p>Great job, I heard some really smart thinking out there. Let's discuss some of the things that you may have written. We will not discuss every element of argumentative writing but only the most important ones. Perhaps the most important piece is it is very clear as to what the writer is arguing. This is usually represented in a thesis, or argument statement. It is also important that an author includes evidence to support his or her claim. The stronger the evidence is to support the claim, the stronger the argument. The author also needs to do an effective job of providing analysis that connects the evidence to the claims. If this analysis is not effective, there is too much work to be done on the audience's part to fit the pieces together. Without good analysis, the audience is usually not persuaded. Perhaps another critical element to arguments is "cohesion," or how effective the ideas connect together. It's important to be able to clearly follow the author's ideas.</p> <p>Now, we've talked about arguments enough. Let's read an argument from an unnamed author on his or her interpretation of the poem we read earlier in the lesson, "A Poison Tree." We will read the argument in its entirety first so you can get the big picture. We will then revisit the argument and analyze it for its effectiveness.</p> <p>Let's read:</p>	<p>Students follow along and think and act as instructed, gradually gaining confidence and competence.</p> <p>Students will be able to use the TPCASTT tool to analyze poetry.</p> <p>Students listen as teacher reads aloud.</p>
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Analysis of "A Poison Tree"

The poem "A Poison Tree" by William Blake is about a person who holds onto anger and resentment, which is anger at having been treated unfairly, until it grows into something poisonous to be used against an enemy. Through an extended metaphor of a tree that is nurtured by the poem's speaker until it yields a deadly fruit, the poem suggests that when anger goes unexpressed, or unspoken, it festers and grows and can have very negative consequences.

Throughout the entire poem, Blake uses a metaphor of a growing tree to develop this central idea. Just as one would water a tree to keep it alive, the speaker nurtures, which means to provide food and nourishment to, his anger until it takes root. In the first stanza, the speaker compares how he dealt with anger in two situations: first with a friend and then with an enemy. When he was upset with a friend, he told the friend, and his anger went away. But in contrast, he held on to his anger against his enemy, and his "wrath did grow."

In the second stanza, Blake introduces the metaphor of the speaker's wrath as a living, growing thing. The speaker says, "And I watered it in fears, / Night and morning with my tears." The speaker's anger is now likened to a growing seed, "sunned" with his fake smiles and "deceitful wiles." In other words, he nurtured his anger in secret rather than expressing it honestly and directly. His feelings are very strong, yet he keeps them hidden from others.

Also in this stanza, Blake's use of the similar phrases "night and morning" and "both day and night" suggests that he never stops thinking about his anger. This exaggeration, or hyperbole, effectively conveys to the reader that the speaker's wrath has become an obsession.

Finally, the speaker's hidden feelings take on the form of a shiny, bright apple. The enemy steals and eats the apple without the speaker's knowledge. In the last stanza, the speaker is happy to find his enemy sprawled out under the tree, poisoned by the apple he has eaten. The speaker says, "And my foe beheld it shine. / And he knew that it was mine."

This part of the metaphor shows that the speaker has deceived the enemy by hiding his true feelings. Similarly, the false attitude that the speaker portrays toward the enemy is

represented by the beautiful bright apple that “shines” on the surface, but is deadly inside. Just as there are negative feelings behind the deceptively nice treatment of the enemy, there is poison inside the apparently perfect piece of fruit.

In “A Poison Tree,” William Blake uses figurative language to dramatic effect as he explores what can happen when a person refuses to let go of a grievance, or a grudge, against another person. Through the use of an extended metaphor that compares unexpressed anger to a tree that bears deadly fruit, Blake seems to be warning readers that when resentment is “watered” with fears and negative feelings, the situation can have very negative consequences. The speaker suggests a better alternative in the first stanza: “I was angry with my friend: / I told my wrath, my wrath did end.”

Now that you have heard the argument in its entirety, let us revisit the argument paragraph by paragraph to determine whether it is effective. Let’s read the first paragraph again. You’ll notice this paragraph is two sentences long, although they are long sentences. I’ll pause after the first sentence to let you know I’m beginning the second sentence. As I read, let’s see which one you think is the thesis statement. Be prepared to defend your answer.

“The poem “A Poison Tree” by William Blake is about a person who holds onto anger and resentment, which is anger at having been treated unfairly, until it grows into something poisonous to be used against an enemy.

[pause]

Through an extended metaphor of a tree that is nurtured by the poem’s speaker until it yields a deadly fruit, the poem suggests that when anger goes unexpressed, or unspoken, it festers and grows and can have very negative consequences.”

Now, take a moment and write on your paper which one you think is the more effective thesis statement. Explain why.

[pause 60 seconds]

Once again, there is not necessarily a “correct” answer as both sentences could arguably be considered a valid thesis statement. Both statements accurately capture the theme of the poem. Keep in mind, although a thesis statement

frequently occurs in the first sentence of an argument, it does not necessarily have to be placed there. The author can place a thesis statement anywhere in an argument, so long as it is clear and effective in communicating the argument.

Let's take a look at the second paragraph again. As I read, pay attention to the transitional phrases the author uses. Transitional phrases are phrases that typically occur at the beginning of a sentence and assist in clarifying relationships among ideas in the passage. As I read, I will pause after each transitional phrase to indicate where it is. As I read, try to determine the importance of including these phrases for these author's argument.

"Throughout the entire poem,"

[pause]

"Blake uses the metaphor of a growing tree to develop this central idea. Just as one would water a tree to keep it alive, the speaker nurtures, which means to provide food and nourishment to, his anger until it takes root. In the first stanza, "

[pause]

"the speaker compares how he dealt with anger in two situations: first with a friend and then with an enemy. When he was upset with a friend, he told the friend, and his anger went away. But in contrast,"

[pause]

"he held on to his anger against his enemy, and his "wrath did grow."

Now, take a moment to write on your paper what you consider to be the significance, or importance, of these phrases to this paragraph and the argument presented.

[pause 30 seconds]

Thank you. The importance of these phrases is they help guide the reader through the steps of the argument. They help indicate when the author is speaking about the poem as a whole or the first stanza. They also help the reader understand when he is talking about contrasting ideas within the poem.

Notice the author has begun to present evidence to support his argument. These transitional phrases guide us in understanding his evidence. Let's take a look at the 3rd paragraph again. As I read, look specifically for how the author uses words or phrases from the text as evidence and then connects it to his claim. Let's read:

"In the second stanza, Blake introduces the metaphor of the speaker's wrath as a living, growing thing."

Notice this is a key claim. Let's continue:

"The speaker says, 'And I watered it in fears, / Night and morning with my tears.' The speaker's anger is now likened to a growing seed, 'sunned' with his fake smiles and 'deceitful wiles.'"

Now, the author has presented evidence directly from the text to support his claim. There is still one more element the author is missing to tie all this together. We discussed it earlier. Write down on your paper the word that names what is missing.

[pause for 10 seconds]

Yes, it's analysis! Let's see if the last sentence qualifies as analysis:

"In other words, he nurtured his anger in secret rather than expressing it honestly and directly. His feelings are very strong, yet he keeps them hidden from others."

Ok, what do you think? Does this qualify as analysis? Write on your paper "yes" or "no" and explain why.

[pause 30 seconds]

The answer is that yes, this does qualify as analysis because he restates and interprets his evidence in a way that ties it back to his claim. Now, does that mean it is perfect? No, writing can always be improved so if you noticed room for improvement, that is good work!

Let's read the 4th paragraph. As I read, note the key transitional phrase at the beginning as well as another claim, supporting evidence, and analysis.

"Also in this stanza,"

[pause]

"Blake's use of the similar phrases "night and morning" and "both day and night" suggests that he never stops thinking about his anger."

Let's stop here. Notice the author includes both evidence and a claim in the same sentence here. The author quotes the text and says it suggests the speaker never stops thinking about his anger. Let's see what the author says in analysis.

"This exaggeration, or hyperbole, effectively conveys to the reader that the speaker's wrath has become an obsession."

And there it is, the analysis statement. It names what literary device, or tool, the author uses and restates the author's conclusion about the evidence.

Let's take a look at paragraph 5. Notice the continued use of transitional phrases and the presentation of evidence. But you'll also see the author does not include claims or analysis in this paragraph. He saves those pieces for paragraph 6. Let's read:

"Finally, the speaker's hidden feelings take on the form of a shiny, bright apple. The enemy steals and eats the apple without the speaker's knowledge. In the last stanza, the speaker is happy to find his enemy sprawled out under the tree, poisoned by the apple he has eaten. The speaker says, "And my foe beheld it shine. / And he knew that it was mine."

Like I said, the author really only presents evidence in that paragraph. Let's read paragraph 6 to see if he uses that evidence to make claims and ties all together in analysis. Let's read:

"This part of the metaphor shows that the speaker has deceived the enemy by hiding his true feelings. Similarly, the false attitude that the speaker portrays toward the enemy is represented by the beautiful bright apple that "shines" on the surface, but is deadly inside. Just as there are negative feelings behind the deceptively nice treatment of the enemy, there is poison inside the apparently perfect piece of fruit."

<p>Wow, that's an interesting interpretation! That didn't stand out to me as much when I read the poem. I had not really noticed that "shines" actually shows the apple was the speaker's wrath wrapped up in an attractive package, ready to deceive the speaker's enemy.</p> <p>Let's take a look at the last paragraph of the essay, the conclusion. As I read, pay special attention to see if the author summarizes all of his claims and wraps them up in such a fashion that the conclusion effectively supports the thesis we found in the introduction. Let's read:</p> <p>"In "A Poison Tree," William Blake uses figurative language to dramatic effect as he explores what can happen when a person refuses to let go of a grievance, or a grudge, against another person. Through the use of an extended metaphor that compares unexpressed anger to a tree that bears deadly fruit, Blake seems to be warning readers that when resentment is "watered" with fears and negative feelings, the situation can have very negative consequences. The speaker suggests a better alternative in the first stanza: "I was angry with my friend: / I told my wrath, my wrath did end."</p> <p>What do you think? Does the conclusion provide a good ending to his argument and support his thesis? Take a moment to write your thoughts on your paper.</p> <p>[pause 60 seconds]</p> <p>Thank you. Although the author's argument as a whole is short, the conclusion does do a good job of wrapping everything up. Again, could it be improved? Always! But this was a good paragraph.</p> <p>Overall, this was an effective argument that presented a clear interpretation of Blake's poem. I hope you enjoyed learning the elements of an effective argument.</p>	
<p><u>Independent Work</u> (1 minute)</p> <p>[Teacher - will need to write the independent practice questions on chart paper so students can see them and copy them onto their own paper]</p> <p>Let's reflect on today's lesson. Today we learned about William Blake's poem, "A Poison Tree," and we analyzed an argumentative essay to determine effective components for</p>	<p>Students will respond to a writing prompt that synthesizes their knowledge from today's lesson.</p>

<p>argumentative writing. For your independent work, please respond in writing to the following prompts:</p> <p>[teacher - display paper for students to read]</p> <p>Students, please write these questions down on your notebook paper so you will have them handy for when you are responding in writing.</p> <p>1. What stood out to you the most regarding William Blake’s poem, “A Poison Tree”? What are some lessons you can learn from it that you can apply to your own life?</p> <p>2. What did you learn the most in our analysis of the argumentative essay? Although it can seem a bit tedious to learn the components of good argumentative writing, why do you think it is important? In what ways could it help you be an effective communicator?</p>	
<p><u>Closing</u> (1 min)</p> <p>I enjoyed working on analyzing William Blake’s poetry and studying an argumentative essay with you today! Thank you for inviting me into your home. I look forward to seeing you in our next lesson in Tennessee’s At Home Learning Series! Bye!</p>	



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