

ELA: Grade 7, Lesson 15, “The Railway Train”

Lesson Focus: This lesson focuses on determining the central idea of “The Railway Train” and analyzing how it is developed over the course of the poem

Practice Focus: Students will consider the main message in each stanza and jot down notes to determine what Emily Dickinson is saying about trains.

Objective: Students will reread “The Railway Train” to find its central idea about the railroad’s effect on society and analyze how Dickinson develops that idea in the poem.

Academic Vocabulary: central idea, prodigious, supercilious, Boanerges, omnipotent

TN Standards: 7.RL.KID.1, 7.RL.KID.2, 7.RL.KID.3, 7.RL.CS.4, 7.RL.CS.5, 7.RL.CS.6

Teacher Materials:

- The Teacher Packet for ELA, Grade 7, Lesson 15

Student Materials:

- Paper, pencil, surface to write on
- The Student Packet for ELA, Grade 7, Lesson 15 which can be found at www.tn.gov/education

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 7th graders out there, though everyone is welcome to tune in. This lesson is the 5th and final one in this week’s 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 lessons, you can find them 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>Today we will be learning about determining the central idea in Emily Dickinson’s “The Railway Train” and writing about how she develops and conveys this central idea. Before we get started, to participate fully in our lesson today, you will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper, pencil, surface to write on• The Student Packet for ELA, Grade 7, Lesson 15 which can be found at www.tn.gov/education <p>Ok, let’s begin!</p>	<p>Students gather materials for the lesson and prepare to engage with the lesson’s content.</p>
<p>Intro (2 min)</p>	<p>Students recall they have been studying “The Railway Train” by Emily Dickinson.</p>

<p>This week we have been reading and rereading a poem by Emily Dickinson in order to "peel back the layers of meaning" and discover all of what the author is saying.</p> <p>Today our goals are 1) to learn how to determine the central idea and how it develops across the text by examining words and phrases in each stanza and summarizing the message they convey, and 2) to write a paragraph about the central idea.</p> <p>We will begin with me showing you what that looks like, and then there will be time for you to practice on your own with my support. Finally, I will assign you independent work you can complete after the video ends.</p> <p>"The Railway Train" is a poem written by Emily Dickinson about the development of the train in the 1800s, which is when Dickinson wrote the poem.</p> <p>We are going to be looking for the poem's central idea or message, which isn't typically given away to the reader right away. Rather, it develops, or blooms, like a flower blooms, over the course of the poem through details about the subject such as descriptions about how the subject looks and behaves in different circumstances. With each new description, the reader gets a fuller picture of the subject.</p>	<p>They prepare to work on determining and analyzing the central idea.</p>
<p>Teacher Model/Read-Aloud (16 min)</p> <p>Here is our focus question for today: How does Dickinson convey and develop the central idea about the railroad's effect on society? [Show Slide 1.]</p> <p>In order to find the poem's central idea, we are going to follow these steps. [Show Slide 2.]</p> <p>First, we are going to read through the first few stanzas and ask ourselves, "What is the author's message about the subject in each stanza?" We'll read the last stanza, underlining words and phrases that describe the subject. We'll ask ourselves, "How is the author's description of the subject different at the end of the poem?" Finally, we'll look at the poem as a whole and ask ourselves, "What central idea does the author convey about the subject of the text?"</p> <p>Remember, we'll be following these steps as we look at the whole text in order to answer the question: How does Dickinson convey and develop the central idea of the railroad's effect on society?</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> <p>Students will identify the message about each stanza and determine how the description of the train evolves over the course of the poem.</p> <p>Students will use a graphic organizer to jot down notes they will later use to articulate the central idea and to write a paragraph explaining the central idea and how it is conveyed in the poem.</p>

[Show Slide 3.] **First, we are going to read through the first few stanzas and ask ourselves, “What is the author’s message about the subject in each stanza?” We will jot that down in a graphic organizer that looks like this.** [Show Slide 3.] **Please take minute to make this graphic organizer on your paper.** [Pause to give students time draw the graphic organizer.]

Next, we are going to read the first 3 stanzas and ask ourselves, “What is the author’s message in each stanza?” We will jot our ideas in the corresponding box on your graphic organizer. Let me demonstrate.

[Show Slide 4 with the first stanza.] **When we reread the poem, we think to ourselves, “What words or phrases help me determine Dickinson’s message?”**

**I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks,
And then, prodigious, step**

When I take a look at the first stanza, the phrases “lap the miles” and “lick the valleys” stand out to me, saying the train is very fast. I know the word prodigious means enormous, so it seems the message in here is that the train is impressively fast, big, and in general, powerful. Now I am going to jot these down in my graphic organizer in the box that says “First stanza.” [Go back to slide 3 to show the blank graphic organizer.] **Since this is an organizer, I’m not going to write complete sentences, just enough to remember my idea. I don’t need to write the word “train” anywhere because I already know that is my subject. I will write “impressively fast, big, and powerful” in this box that says “First stanza.”** [Show Slide 5 to show the graphic with “impressively fast, big, and powerful” in the first box.] **Now, you write this idea on your graphic organizer.** [Pause.]

[Show Slide 6.] **Let’s move on to the second stanza.** [Read the second stanza.]

**Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare**

When I look at the second stanza, I see Dickinson continues the idea of the train being amazingly large when she describes it stepping “around a pile of mountains.”

Remember we figured out this meant the train could go through mountains easily, unlike a horse and wagon. [Show Slide 7.] But she also describes it as supercilious, which means arrogant. [Show Slide 8.] This idea is made clearer when she says the train “peers in shanties.” [Show Slide 9.] It seems as though Dickinson is saying the train is arrogant and can’t be stopped by nature or people. Now I’m going to write down this idea in the box that says “Stanza 2.” Remember, I only need to write phrases, not complete sentences in the graphic organizer. I’m going to write “arrogant & unstoppable by nature or people.” You can jot this idea down, too. [Show Slide 10, which now has the first and second stanza notes and pause to give students time to record the ideas.]

Let’s move on to the third stanza and reread it. [Show Slide 11.]

To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down hill

Which phrases stand out here? [Pause for students to think.] I agree, in the third stanza, the lines “complaining all the while” and “chase itself down hill” stand out. What is Dickinson saying about the train? What do you think? [Pause for students to think.] Yes, it does seem like Dickinson is trying to say the train is young, energetic, and new, like how kids sometimes complain and play games. Where will I write this idea? [Pause.] Yes, I will write these words in the box for “3rd stanza”: young, energetic, & new. Please write down this idea. [Show Slide 12.]

Now, we will look at the last stanza, underlining words and phrases that describe the subject. [Show Slide 13.]

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop-docile and omnipotent-
At its own stable door.

As we look at this stanza, we will ask ourselves, “How is Dickinson describing the train?” In the first line, she compares the train to Boanerges. [Show Slide 14.] Earlier this week, we learned that Boanerges is a type of horse, but it also means “passionate preacher,” someone who urges others to accept an idea or action. Hmm. I think the train is the preacher. What do you think it could be saying to

everyone? [Pause.] You could be right. Dickinson may be trying to say the train is bringing some sort of message about the effect of the new technology. [Show Slide 15.] Let's make sure you write this down on your graphic organizer. [Pause.]

How else does Dickinson describe the train in this stanza? [Pause.] Yes, when she says "punctual as a star," she is saying the train is reliable. [Show Slide 16.] Notice, though, that she compares it to a star, which is out of this world. I wonder why she does that. Hmm, I think she really means the train is more reliable than anything that came before it. I'm going to make sure that idea goes on my graphic organizer, too. You write that too, at home. [Show slide 17 and pause to give time to write.]

[Show Slide 18.] Finally, this word omnipotent is important in describing the train. Do you recall what omnipotent means from our other lessons? [Pause.] Great! It means "all-powerful," or "god-like." So, she is saying the train is almost god-like in how reliable it is. I'm going to finish this graphic organizer by writing "god-like" in the appropriate box. [Show Slide 19.] You can finish any boxes you didn't quite get to earlier. [Pause to give students time to write "god-like" and a few seconds more.]

Now we are going to look at the development of Dickinson's description of the train and think about how the author's description of the subject is different at the end of the poem. [Show Slide 20.] Students, whenever we analyze how an author develops a central idea, we really need to consider how that looks at the beginning of the text, as it continues to the middle of the text, and at the end of the text. This can look many, many different ways, so that's why it is so important to read each text carefully; no two texts will be developed in exactly the same way. It's kind of like how our fingerprints are unique.

When we jotted our notes earlier in this graphic organizer, we were really preparing ourselves to analyze how the central idea was developed. See how the boxes are labeled in order with our notes? I will reread our notes: impressively fast, big, powerful, arrogant and unstoppable by nature or people, young, energetic, new. I ask myself, "What is Dickinson really saying about the train?" I can see from my notes that Dickinson describes the train as fast, powerful, big, unstoppable, arrogant, and energetic. When I look at these notes from the first 3 stanzas some words stand out

more than others. I can identify the more important words easily because I only wrote down the important ideas in phrases.

Now let's look our notes for the last stanza: bringing message of new technology, more reliable than anything that has come before, god-like. Let's look at these phrases side by side with the words from the first three stanzas. What is Dickinson telling us about the train in these notes? [Pause for students to think.] Right, she is saying the train brings the news of a change in society and that it is god-like in its reliability, power, and efficiency.

Please get a blank paper to make a new organizer that has just two boxes like this one. [Show Slide 21.] Take a minute to copy down this organizer.

[Show Slide 22.] How are the two descriptions of the train different? Let's look at the words in the left column that were in the first three stanzas. What do you notice about them? [Pause.] Right, they are all adjectives that describe the train, how it looks and how it acts. What about the phrases in the right column from the last stanza? [Pause for students to think.] Good thinking! These phrases aren't describing the trains, but more about how the train has affected society. So Dickinson moves from describing just the train and its movements and sounds to describing how the train impacts people and the larger society. [Show Slide 23.]. She intentionally uses words like Boanerges and omnipotent that have god-like connotations to show the train is not just a machine that is big and fast, but it is also unlike anything people have ever seen, and it will have a major impact on the country as a whole.

[Show Slide 24.] Finally, we are going to look at the poem as a whole and ask ourselves, "What central idea does the author convey about the subject of the text?" Students, underneath the organizer we just made, make another box for other notes.

First, let's look at a compiled list of our notes. Remember we said the poem evolved from just a description of the train to how the train will affect society. Looking at these notes, I am going to ask myself, "What is Dickinson saying about the train?" When I see the words "youthful" and "energetic," it seems like Dickinson is commenting on the new technology, so I am going to add that phrase in my new box. You can do that, too. [Show Slide 25. Pause.]

<p>What other connections between words do you notice? [Pause.] I noticed that, too! The words fast, powerful (in both sections of my notes), and god-like, reinforce that she thinks the train is impressively powerful. I'm going to add that phrase in my new box. You, too, students! [Show Slide 26.] Hmm, what else do I think? [Pause.] The word unstoppable makes me think about the change the train brings to society. Which words help you infer what Dickinson thinks about this change? [Pause.] Yes, I agree, the words "arrogant" and "god-like" make it sound like she isn't sure whether this change is going to be good or bad. I'm going to write this down, too. [Show Slide 27.] Now you can write down this longer note in your organizer. [Pause.]</p> <p>This is amazing, look at how our thinking and talking has narrowed our ideas from this to just this. [Show slide 28] This is exactly what readers do to get to the central idea.</p> <p>Now we need to put these notes into a sentence that communicates Dickinson's central idea about the train. I think you are able to write a sentence from these awesome notes. I'll get you started. The train is... [Pause for students to write a sentence.] Ready? What did you come up with? Were you able to use most of the words in a complete sentence? Yay. Does your sentence sound similar to this one? [Show Slide 29.]</p> <p>The train is a new technology, which is very powerful, but is creating unstoppable change that may not always be good for society.</p>	
<p><u>Guided Practice</u> (10 min) Now we are going to use this summary of the central idea we just wrote to answer the focus question for today: How does Dickinson convey and develop the central idea about the railroad's effect on society? Make sure you are using a new page. [Pause.]</p> <p>When I start writing an analysis of a text, I want to introduce it the reader so they have a basic idea of the text. So I am going to start with a brief, one sentence summary of the poem. I must include the title of the poem, the author, and the general subject of the poem. Let's see. Ah, I know. I'll write: [Show Slide 30.]</p> <p>In the poem, "The Railway Train," Emily Dickinson describes a train at a time when it was introduced in the 1800s, when she lived. Let's read that together, students, and think about</p>	<p>Students follow along and think and act as instructed, gradually gaining confidence and competence.</p> <p>Students will begin writing a paragraph to answer the focus question about the central idea and use explanations and evidence to support them.</p>

whether it gives enough information about the poem to start writing about the central idea. Ready? [Pause.] In the poem, “The Railway Train,” Emily Dickinson describes a train at a time when it was introduced in the 1800s, when she lived. Ok, we have the title, author, and subject. Great. Now you can write this down in your notebook. [Pause.]

Now, we are ready for our central idea. Let’s reread it. [Show Slide 31.] The train is a new technology, which is very powerful, but is creating unstoppable change that may not always be good for society. Hmm, I think I’m going to change this sentence so it’s more about Dickinson’s’ feelings about the train. Let’s try this new way. We’ll start the sentence with “Through the poem, she tells the reader that she thinks” Then I think it works to continue this sentence with the one we already wrote. So now it look likes: [Show Slide 32.]

Through the poem, she tells the reader the train is a new technology, which is very powerful, but is creating unstoppable change that may not always be good for society. It’s so clear what the central idea is, and I didn’t even write “the central idea is...” I’ll pause so you can add this to your response. [Pause.]

Now we all know writers can’t just make a claim and leave it like that! We have to include ... [Pause.] evidence from the text! Lucky for us we have all of that in our notes with some quotes from the poem.

It makes the most sense to start with evidence from the beginning, since we want to show how Dickinson develops her central idea. So, let’s go back to this organizer. [Show Slide 33]

What did she say in the first stanza? Ah yes, “impressively fast, big, and powerful.” I can make that into my own sentence with a transition.

In the beginning of the poem, Dickinson describes the train like an animal that is impressively fast, big, and powerful. [Show Slide 34.] You write that down, too. [Pause.] Now I need some evidence straight from the poem. Luckily I’ve read this poem so often with you all this week, I remember the phrases “lap the miles” and “lick the valleys up” and “step around a pile of mountains.” And if you’ve been with us all week, then you have these quotes on your paper, too! I have to turn these quotes into complete sentences. Hmm. Let me think. Let me try this:

<p>She writes that it can “lap the miles” and “lick the valleys up.” The train is powerful because it can “step/Around a pile of mountains.” Now, you can write these sentences down to continue your paragraph. [Pause.]</p>	
<p>Independent Work (2 min)</p> <p>Now, we are out of time to complete this paragraph all together. So for independent practice, continue writing your paragraph by following the steps we used. [Show slide 35.] Please write down your next steps. [Pause.]</p> <p>Look at your graphic organizer to spark your thinking about how Dickinson conveys her central idea about the railroad’s effects on society. Remember to follow the order of the poem when you write your sentences and include evidence using quotes from the text. After you are finished writing, remember to share your writing with a family member or a teacher.</p> <p>You guys did amazing thinking today in articulating the central idea. You considered the author’s message in each stanza and how Dickinson’s description of the train changed. That all contributed to you uncovering her central idea about the train!</p>	<p>Students will complete a paragraph explaining the central idea of the poem and how it is conveyed.</p>
<p>Closing (1 min)</p> <p>I enjoyed working on finding the central idea of “The Railway Train” and using evidence to support it 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>	