

Common Course Assignment

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Abstract

This project was conducted with an 11th/12th grade English literature class as part of a unit on short fiction, focusing on Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*. The lesson addressed the themes of change, tradition, and societal norms, with a particular emphasis on interpreting literary devices such as foreshadowing and connecting literature to students' own experiences. A five-question pre-assessment was administered to gauge students' comprehension of the story's themes, symbolism, and relevance to personal and cultural traditions. Results indicated that several students struggled to articulate the central themes, interpret figurative language, and connect the text to their own experiences. In response, instruction was developed to target these areas by incorporating guided discussion, interactive activities, and a writing prompt designed to deepen thematic understanding and promote perspective-taking. A post-assessment required students to write from the perspective of one of the stories characters, Bill Hutchinson, to construct an argument regarding the continuation of the lottery.

The statistical analysis revealed measurable improvement in student performance. The class mean increased from 10.3/15 (69%) on the pre-assessment to 14.3/15 (95%) on the post-assessment, with the students' average performance improving by roughly four points. The range in scores narrowed considerably, suggesting that lower-performing students made the greatest progress. The results indicate that the instructional approach was effective in addressing the comprehension gaps identified in the pre-assessment. However, the post-assessment was limited in terms of what it measured, and the results may have been elevated by generous marking. Likewise, despite most students demonstrating mastery of the targeted skills in the post-assessment, the analysis still highlighted areas for continued instruction, particularly in the consistent use of textual evidence and deeper elaboration of ideas.

Learning Environment

The background information did not provide a lot of detail about the school, classroom, culture, and students so I added plausible details or inferences based on the limited information to make this section more comprehensive.

About the School

This measurement project was conducted at Rocky Mountain High School, part of the Poudre Valley School District. The school serves grades 9–12 and draws students from both suburban neighborhoods and rural areas in the surrounding region. The community is socioeconomically diverse, with families ranging from agricultural workers to professionals employed in nearby cities. The school maintains a strong reputation for its academic programs, athletic achievements, and vibrant arts.

Rocky Mountain High School also offers a wide range of extracurricular opportunities, including competitive sports teams, drama productions, and music ensembles. Support staff such as instructional aides, school counselors, and resource specialists are available to meet academic and social-emotional needs. Classrooms are equipped with standard instructional technology, including projectors and internet access, though this unit relied primarily on print-based texts and teacher-created materials to encourage in-person engagement and discussion.

About the Classroom

The lesson was taught in an upper-level English Language Arts classroom, specifically a “Short Fiction” course for Grade 11 and 12 students. The physical layout consisted of individual desks arranged to accommodate whole-class discussions, with flexibility to rearrange seating for collaborative activities. For example, during the “cakewalk” simulation, desks and a front table were moved to create open space in the center of the room for two walking circles.

Students

The class consisted of 17 students representing a range of abilities and backgrounds. The student population reflected moderate racial and ethnic diversity, similar to the broader school community. Most students were proficient in English, though a small number had mild learning accommodations in place through 504 Plans. Students' reading and writing abilities varied significantly with some demonstrating advanced literary analysis skills, while others struggled. Some recurring struggles were difficulties with abstract interpretation and making thematic inferences, which will be discussed later in this paper. Based on an admittedly small sample of three students whose work was analyzed for this paper, the students in this course seemed to have competent literacy skills but could struggle with more abstract critical thinking and deductive reasoning.

Culture

The classroom environment was discussion-driven, with students encouraged to share interpretations, challenge ideas respectfully, and connect literature to their own lives and current societal issues. Class norms emphasized attentive listening, respectful disagreement, and clear communication. Praise was typically given for original thinking, effective use of textual evidence, and meaningful contributions to discussion. Behavior was managed through gentle redirection, maintaining a positive and intellectually curious atmosphere.

Materials

Instructional materials for this lesson included printed copies of Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*, distributed to students prior to the lesson. The pre-assessment, a teacher-created tool consisting of five open-ended questions worth three points each, was designed to gauge comprehension of the story's themes, use of literary devices, and potential text-to-self and text-

to-world connections. Colored note cards were used for the “cakewalk” simulation, with one color representing questions and another representing answers, each coded for correct matching. The post-assessment was a teacher-designed writing prompt in which students wrote a letter from the perspective of Bill Hutchinson to Mr. Summers, articulating their stance on the tradition of the lottery using evidence from the text. Seating charts supported both standard and activity-specific arrangements. Technology played a minimal role in this lesson, as the focus was on in-person interaction, text analysis, and collaborative discussion.

Curriculum

Unit Context

This lesson was part of a larger “Good and Evil” theme unit in Rocky Mountain High School’s Short Fiction ELA course. The selected short story, *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson, was chosen for its rich thematic complexity and opportunities for critical discussion on societal norms, change, and tradition. The lesson’s central focus was to deepen students’ ability to interpret literary devices and thematic elements, while also encouraging them to make personal and global connections to the text.

The story challenges students to confront questions about morality, conformity, and the persistence of outdated or harmful traditions. Through pre-reading activities, guided discussion, and creative writing, students engaged with abstract ideas such as the nature of change, the influence of generational beliefs, and the ethical implications of tradition.

Learning Standards

The lesson addressed the following Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (grades 11–12):

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2** – Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3** – Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4** – Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.

Assessment Tools

Pre-Assessment

For the pre-assessment, the teacher created five short answer questions designed to measure students' comprehension of *The Lottery* and their ability to identify and articulate themes, interpret quotations, and connect the text to personal experience. Each question was worth three points, with partial credit available for partially correct or incomplete answers. For specifics, you can see the list of questions included in the Appendix.

Post-Assessment

For the post-assessment, students completed a writing prompt in which they assumed the perspective of Bill Hutchinson, the widower of the story's victim, and wrote a letter to Mr. Summers arguing for or against the continuation of the lottery tradition. This task was designed to assess students' ability to demonstrate comprehension of the text's events and implications, apply thematic analysis from a specific character's perspective, and construct an argument using

emotional appeal (pathos) supported by textual evidence. Responses were evaluated using a point system that considered both the quality of the content and adherence to the required letter format. The prompt for this post-assessment is included in the Appendix.

Evaluation Criteria

Both the pre-assessment and post-assessment were scored using clearly defined criteria aligned with the lesson objectives and relevant learning standards. The pre-assessment, consisting of five short answer questions worth up to three points each (for a total of 15 possible points), evaluated students' comprehension of "The Lottery," their ability to identify key themes, and their skill in relating those themes to personal or societal traditions. Responses were assessed for accuracy, completeness, and textual relevance, using an answer key to ensure consistent scoring.

The post-assessment, a letter-writing task from the perspective of Bill Hutchinson to Mr. Summers, was scored with a rubric that measured four dimensions: (1) comprehension of the story's events and implications, (2) application of thematic analysis to the character's perspective, (3) construction of an argument supported by textual evidence, and (4) effective use of emotional appeal (pathos). The first three categories were worth four points, while the final category was worth three, allowing for the same maximum total score as the pre-assessment (15 points), ensuring results could be easily compared numerically. A rubric for this post-assessment is included in the Appendix.

Using this point-based scoring system allowed for statistical analysis of student performance, including measures of central tendency and graphical representation of class-wide progress. This approach ensured that growth from pre- to post-assessment could be quantified,

providing direct evidence of progress toward the lesson’s stated objectives and Common Core State Standards.

Learning Segment

Lesson Overview

This lesson, built around Shirley Jackson’s *The Lottery*, was specifically designed to address the areas of weakness identified in the pre-assessment. Those results showed that while some students could recall plot details, many struggled to identify and interpret key themes, connect the story’s message to real-world traditions, and infer meaning from quotes.

To target these gaps, the lesson combined individual reflection, experiential learning, and collaborative discussion to deepen thematic understanding and analytical skills. Following the pre-assessment, students were guided through a symbolic “cakewalk” tradition simulation, including guided discussion and close reading, which encouraged them to critically evaluate the role of tradition in society, recognize and interpret key quotes and plot points, and articulate their own positions on the story’s ethical implications. The lesson concluded with a post-assessment writing task in which students assumed the perspective of Bill Hutchinson, crafting a persuasive letter to Mr. Summers regarding the continuation of the lottery. This task encouraged students to use textual evidence to support their claims as well as take a stance on key themes of the story including change vs tradition.

Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students were expected to:

- Analyze and interpret the themes of change and tradition in *The Lottery*.
- Formulate a personal position on the ethical implications of tradition, supported by textual evidence.

- Apply thematic understanding to a creative, argumentative writing task from a character's perspective.

Materials

The instructional materials included a five-question comprehension and analysis pre-assessment, eight green note cards containing questions, and eight pink note cards containing answers for the cakewalk simulation. Copies of *The Lottery* had been distributed to students in the previous class session. A writing prompt sheet was provided for the post-assessment, and seating charts were used for both the original classroom arrangement and the configuration required for the cakewalk activity.

Instructional Tasks

The lesson began with a seven-minute pre-assessment, during which students completed five questions individually to evaluate their initial understanding of the text's themes, symbolism, and connections to personal traditions. This was followed by the cakewalk, which lasted approximately twelve minutes. Students were divided into two circles, each holding question or answer cards, and instructed to follow a series of prescribed movements. This ritualized process, presented with mock seriousness, served as an experiential metaphor for unexamined traditions. After the activity, students discussed the purpose of the simulation and connected it to the blind adherence to tradition depicted in *The Lottery*.

The guided discussion, lasting fifteen to twenty minutes, invited students to consider their initial associations with the word "lottery" and how Jackson subverts these expectations. They examined the story's setting and tone, paying particular attention to symbolic elements such as the black box, the names of characters, and the gradual loss of ritual details. Finally, students

explored the ethical implications of the townspeople's acceptance of the lottery and considered how these themes might relate to modern society.

Following the discussion, students engaged in a close reading and literary analysis segment lasting eight to ten minutes. They identified and interpreted examples of foreshadowing, analyzing how these moments contribute to suspense and thematic development. The lesson then transitioned to the post-assessment, a fifteen-minute writing task in which students composed a persuasive letter from the perspective of Bill Hutchinson to Mr. Summers, arguing for or against the continuation of the lottery tradition. This task required them to integrate thematic understanding, textual evidence, and emotional appeal.

Following the post-assessment, students revisited key discussion points about change, tradition, and morality as a class. They were encouraged to make text-to-world connections by comparing the fictional lottery to modern societal traditions whose origins may be forgotten or whose purposes are no longer relevant.

A total of 15 students completed both the pre-assessment and post-assessment on Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*. Pre-assessment scores ranged from 2 to 15 points, while post-assessment scores ranged from 13 to 15 points. As shown in Table 1, the average score improved from 10.33 on the pre-assessment to 14.27 on the post-assessment, a gain of nearly 4 points. The median and mode also increased, and the range narrowed significantly—from 13 to just 2 points. Table 1 shows these descriptive statistics and does an excellent job of highlighting each of these improvements to demonstrate the overall uptick in class performance on the post-assessment.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Pre- and Post-Assessments

Assessment	Mean	Median	Mode	Range
Pre-Assessment	10.33	10	10	13
Post-Assessment	14.27	14	14	2

This upward trend suggests that the instructional sequence was successful in supporting student understanding of the story, themes, and use of textual support and connections.

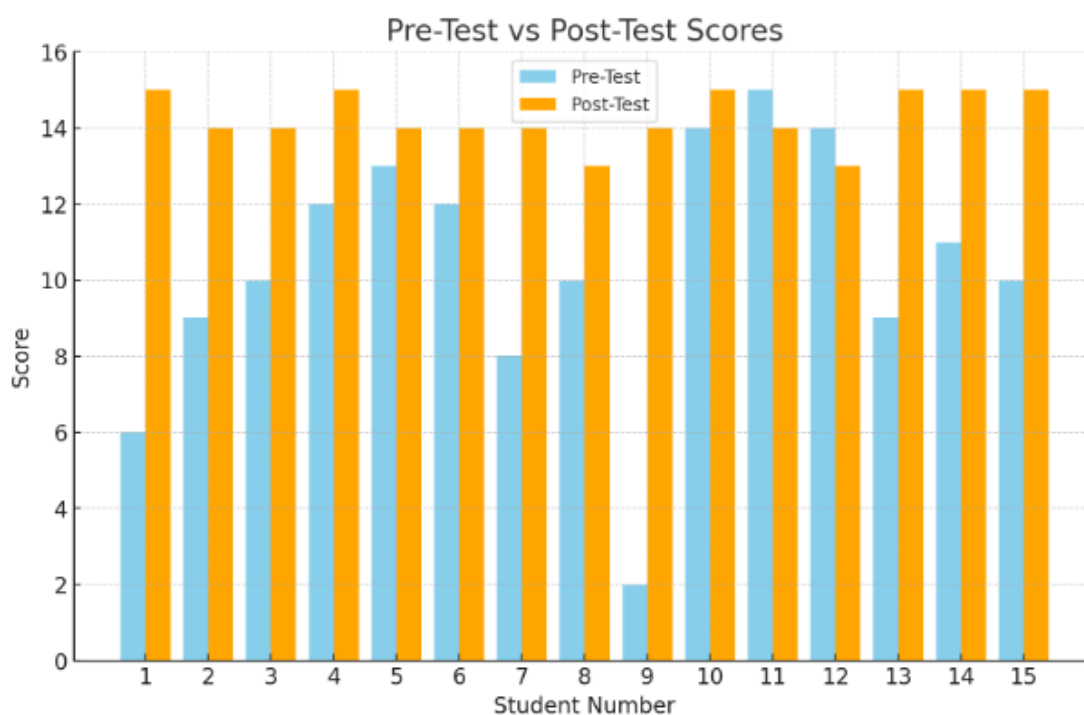
Moreover, the narrowed range implies that performance gaps between higher- and lower-achieving students were reduced, as everyone who struggled on the pre-assessment saw a drastic improvement on the post-assessment.

Interpretation of Results

Overall, 13 out of 15 students demonstrated improvement, with most reaching near-perfect scores on the post-assessment. This reflects not only improved comprehension of the story's content but also greater consistency across the class. The sharp reduction in the range of scores from 13 points to 2 indicates that struggling students made substantial gains, likely due to focused instructional supports.

The only two students whose performances decreased both scored very high on the pre-assessment (15/15 and 14/15) and still did very well on the post-assessment, with their scores only dropping by one point. This data suggest a need for ensuring that high-achieving students are not neglected or overlooked when providing additional support. It is possible they were not challenged enough by the instruction and pre-assessment, causing less interest and desire to continue learning, though this is purely speculation of one possible explanation. Overall, there scores were still strong on both assessments, so this is a minor concern.

Conversely, the largest gains came from students who initially struggled with the pre-assessment. Students 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 13, 14, and 15 scored the lowest on the pre-assessment but each scored at least 13/15 on the post-assessment. Even more notably, the five lowest performing students on the pre-assessment (students 1, 2, 7, 9, and 13) each scored at least a 14/15 on the post-assessment. The scores of each individual student for both assessments are shown in the graph below.



Instructional Implications

The instructional focus on theme identification, critical discussion, and text-to-self/world connections appears to have been effective in improving student comprehension. The use of interactive reading strategies, peer discussion, and scaffolded thematic analysis helped bridge gaps in understanding, particularly for lower-performing students. However, the data suggests that some students may still benefit from differentiated instruction focused on literary analysis

skills, especially in interpreting metaphors and distinguishing between the characters in the story and the author's voice/intended message.

Target Students

Overall, the three student work samples further illustrate the classroom trends in the data. All three students struggled on the pre-assessment to differentiate between the author's message and the views of individual characters when interpreting theme. For example, student 1 had challenges with the first three questions, struggling to differentiate between the stance of characters in the story versus the author's intended message/theme. In questions 1 and 3, he failed to realize that the story's overall message was critical of illogical traditions and in favor of progressive change when it is needed. Instead, he thought that the story was suggesting that it is crazy and foolish to fight for change. He also struggled to interpret the metaphor from the quote in question two, which suggests that he may need some additional support with understanding metaphors and interpreting meaning from them.

Similarly, student 2 really struggled with the thematic questions. While she performed well elsewhere, her answer on question one indicated that they lacked an understanding on the concept of themes and their answer to number three lacked depth and comprehension (see Appendix for details). Finally, student 3 also struggled with the thematic questions. For question one, he had the right ideas but needed to improve his answers by making statements rather than just including key words (he wrote change and human sacrifice, rather than formulating a full sentence that explains the story's stance on these thematic topics). Once again, question three was a challenge, as he also failed to understand the difference between the stance of the characters in the story versus the overall thematic message.

Conversely, on the post-assessment each showed clear improvements in their ability to identify the story's central themes, support their interpretations with evidence, and write in a more persuasive and structured manner. This aligns with the overall improvement in classroom scores on the post-assessment. These sample students used more precise language, referenced textual evidence, and articulated their interpretations clearly. For example, Student 2's post-assessment included a well-developed thematic statement about morality to argue in favor of change. Student 3's writing improved in clarity and structure and demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the story's message.

This next portion will summarize some specifics for each student in terms of their strengths and areas of improvement.

Student 1

Scores: Pre: 6/15 | Post: 15/15

Student 1 began the unit with limited comprehension of *The Lottery's* deeper meaning. Their pre-assessment responses often captured surface-level or generalized ideas (e.g., "Change isn't always a bad thing") without linking them to specific text evidence. They also struggled with interpreting quotes and identifying themes, scoring only 6 points overall.

The post-assessment, however, reflected a complete turnaround. Their letter to Mr. Summers incorporated a clear and persuasive argument for abolishing the lottery, using strong emotional appeals ("we were still forced to participate in the stoning of my beloved wife") and a direct connection to the theme of change ("change is not a bad thing"). The response also demonstrated improved organization and a fully developed viewpoint grounded in textual understanding.

Strengths:

- Improved understanding of thematic analysis after instruction and post-assessment.
- Use of persuasive writing to elicit emotions
- Integration of details from the story as textual evidence

Areas for Growth:

- Restating the question to strengthen short answer responses
- Adding more depth to enhance answers

Student 2

Scores: Pre: 9/15 | Post: 14/15

Student 2's pre-assessment suggested a partial grasp of the text, with some correct interpretations (e.g., correctly explaining Old Man Warner's quote) but other inaccuracies (e.g., describing the lottery winner as being "shot"). They frequently left answers incomplete or used informal responses ("IDK"), indicating either a lack of confidence or insufficient engagement. In the post-assessment, the student crafted a heartfelt plea against the lottery, directly referencing its harmful effects on families ("having them grow up around this will make them think it's okay to kill people"). While the teacher noted a desire for more elaboration on Bill Hutchinson's emotions, the piece showed substantial growth in argument quality, thematic clarity, and real-world connection.

Strengths:

- Strong moral reasoning and ability to connect theme to societal impact.
- Clear stance and persuasive arguments.

Areas for Growth:

- Expand emotional detail to deepen the reader's empathy.
- Maintain accuracy in recounting story events.

- Overall sentence structure and clarity.
- Writing still seems a little underdeveloped for his grade.

Student 3

Scores: Pre: 10/15 | Post: 14/15

Student 3 demonstrated above-average comprehension in the pre-assessment, correctly identifying major themes and interpreting Old Man Warner's quote, though they made small errors (e.g., stating the town might sacrifice for a good harvest without direct textual support). They also misidentified some thematic elements.

The post-assessment letter displayed strong moral argumentation ("It is unethical and morally wrong to kill someone just because it is tradition") and an emotional appeal that enhanced the persuasiveness of the response. The teacher praised the emotional tone and thematic clarity, but noted that letter format conventions could be applied more consistently.

Strengths:

- Overall comprehension and writing seems more advanced than the other samples
- Greater thematic understanding than his peers.
- Use of emotion and pathos for the persuasive letter.
- Strong, concise arguments – using morality and ethics.

Areas for Growth:

- Additional textual evidence could elevate the argument further.
- Can sometimes be a little too concise.

Next Steps

The post-assessment results indicate that students developed a stronger understanding of the themes in *The Lottery* and demonstrated the ability to apply that understanding in a

persuasive written format. However, there are still several areas for instructional refinement to further deepen students' analytical and expressive abilities.

One key area of focus moving forward is the precise citation of textual evidence. While most students were able to articulate thematic ideas, their arguments would be significantly strengthened by more frequent and skillful integration of direct quotations from the text. This aligns with Common Core Standard RL.11-12.1, which emphasizes the use of strong textual evidence in literary analysis. To address this, future instruction will incorporate mini-lessons on embedding and analyzing quotations. Students will participate in guided writing exercises in which they pair thematic claims with carefully selected lines from the story, practicing how to integrate and interpret textual evidence effectively.

Another instructional priority involves developing greater emotional depth in student writing. Several students, such as Sample Student 2, demonstrated emerging moral reasoning but lacked the emotional nuance that enhances persuasive writing. To support this growth, upcoming lessons will include mentor texts that model emotionally resonant language, as well as reflective quick-write activities from the perspective of different characters. These strategies encourage empathy and emotional insight, thereby improving the students' emotional expression.

Likewise, despite showing progress in this area on the post-assessment, there still seems to be a strong need for additional instructional focus on understanding and interpreting themes. This was clearly prioritized in the instruction after the pre-assessment, but the post-assessment was less advanced and specific to testing the students on their ability to interpret and understand themes in general. The students showed that they could now understand the central themes in this story but it's questionable whether that could be replicated to a different story or if they simply learned the themes for this one. In other words, have they mastered the ability to interpret and

understand themes, or have they simply learned this specific theme from this specific story? I suspect the latter, so additional focus on this area could be beneficial.

Lastly, a final whole-class goal is to improve the clarity and diversity of real-world connections. While many students were able to relate the story's themes to modern issues, these connections were often superficial. Instruction will include structured class discussions drawing parallels between *The Lottery* and contemporary societal norms or policies. Students will be encouraged to consider how outdated traditions persist today, allowing them to reflect on the story's relevance to their personal lives and civic awareness.

All of these instructional strategies align with the Vygotsky (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, offering scaffolded opportunities that help students move from guided practice to independent mastery. By targeting skills students are close to acquiring and offering structured, supportive learning opportunities, instruction will continue to elevate both comprehension and performance.

For the three target students, personalized next steps will support their continued growth. Student 1 showed significant improvement but would still benefit from continued reinforcement of comprehension skills through textual analysis. To support this, he will participate in small-group activities that require him to back each thematic claim with at least two pieces of textual evidence. Additionally, assigning tasks that ask him to evaluate multiple characters' perspectives will push him to engage in more complex analysis, further developing his interpretive skills. In general, any form of additional writing practice would be very beneficial.

Student 2 should focus on expanding the emotional and descriptive dimensions of her writing. To do this, the teacher can challenge her to maintain a persuasive journal where she responds to weekly prompts, practicing tone and emotional elaboration. In fact, this would be a

beneficial recurring challenge for the whole class to do weekly, as it would benefit all students for a variety of reasons. Sentence stems such as “This event made me feel ____ because ____” will be introduced to scaffold deeper personal engagement with content.

Student 3 is the strongest writer of this group, but would benefit from targeted challenges designed to refine his strengths and enhance thematic depth. He should be encouraged to take on a leadership role in group work and peer-review sessions, providing feedback on organization and formatting. This peer-review feedback concept would reinforce his own skills and contribute to the class. This would challenge all students to assist in reviewing the writing of others helping them learn from and assist one another. This would be particularly beneficial to an already strong writer like student 3. He will also be given advanced prompts that require the integration of multiple literary devices into thematic arguments, providing opportunities for enrichment and continued engagement.

In summary, the instructional unit successfully improved student scores and narrowed the gap between the high achievers and the lowest performers. All students performed well on the post-assessment, demonstrating a greater understanding of theme, textual analysis, and persuasive writing. Continuing to support areas of growth will help to sustain this improvement and deepen student learning. Particular focus should be placed on themes, textual citation, emotional expression, formal structure, and real-world relevance. Connecting these next steps to educational theories such as Vygotsky’s (1978) ensures that instruction remains both evidence-based and developmentally responsive.

Reflection

The pre- and post-assessments used in this instructional segment provided valuable insight into students’ ability to comprehend and interpret *The Lottery*, connect its themes to

broader societal issues, and apply their understanding in a persuasive writing context. The pre-assessment, composed of five short answer questions, allowed me to evaluate students' initial comprehension of key themes, symbolism, and personal connections to the text. The post-assessment letter-writing task from the perspective of Bill Hutchinson measured students' ability to synthesize their thematic understanding into an emotionally resonant, textually supported argument.

Since the scoring criteria for both assessments were clearly defined and applied consistently, the tools demonstrated moderate reliability (Mertler, 2003). The use of a consistent point scale (three points per pre-assessment question and a rubric-based score for the post-assessment) allowed for comparability across students and time (Popham, 2001). While the open-ended nature of the questions introduced some subjectivity in scoring, clear evaluation guidelines helped mitigate inconsistencies. However, the post-assessment was limited to just one written response and could have been more comprehensive in what it measured. Additionally, I suspect the results of the post-assessment may have been elevated by generous marking, based on the student samples, which were marked as perfect despite still having some areas of improvement. Likewise, despite the scores indicating that the students demonstrated mastery of the targeted skills in the post-assessment, the analysis still highlighted areas for continued instruction, particularly in the consistent use of textual evidence and deeper elaboration of ideas.

In terms of validity, the assessments displayed strong content validity, as both were closely aligned with the lesson objectives and Common Core standards for reading literature and writing. The pre-assessment effectively targeted comprehension and theme identification, while the post-assessment captured students' ability to apply their understanding in a creative and persuasive format. However, construct validity could be strengthened further. While the post-

assessment encouraged higher-order thinking, such as perspective-taking and moral reasoning, it also relied heavily on written expression, which may not have been the most accurate measure of understanding for students who struggle with formal writing skills. Including additional assessment methods could capture a broader range of student abilities, such as oral discussions, graphic organizers, or multimedia presentations.

Potential bias was minimal in the design, but there are still considerations for fairness. The pre-assessment required students to interpret nuanced literary elements independently, which could disadvantage struggling readers or English language learners. Similarly, the post-assessment's letter-writing format may have favored students with stronger composition skills over those who understood the content but struggled with mechanics or structure. According to Mertler (2003), equitable assessments should minimize barriers unrelated to the skill being measured. Incorporating more universally designed elements, such as sentence stems, exemplars, or flexible response formats, could make the assessment more accessible to all learners.

Overall, the results of this project demonstrated measurable growth in students' comprehension and application of complex literary themes. The shift from largely surface-level pre-assessment responses to more thoughtful and persuasive post-assessment letters shows that the instructional activities supported deeper engagement, particularly the discussions and text-to-world connections. This experience has reinforced my understanding of the importance of assessment variety, the need to balance challenging material with accessibility, and the value of aligning both formative and summative assessments to instructional goals (Mertler, 2003). As a result of this assignment, I have further realized that the most meaningful assessments are those that measure not only what students know, but also how they can use that knowledge to think critically, empathize with others, and connect learning to the real world.

Appendix

Pre-Assessment:

Name: _____ Date: _____

“The Lottery” Pre-Assessment

After having read the story, please answer the questions below.

1. State an important theme from the story in a sentence or two.
2. In your own words, describe what Old Man Warner means when he says “First thing you know, we’d all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns.”
3. What does the story say about the concept of change? Use at least one example from the story.
4. Create a new title for the story and give two reasons for why you would change it to that.
5. Think of one tradition that you or someone you know participates in and why you or why you think that person you know participates in it.

Post-Assessment:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Writing Prompt

Pretend you are Bill Hutchinson writing a letter to Mr. Summers. You have just lost your wife and watched as your children participated in her death by collecting stones and then hurling them at her. From this perspective, write a short paragraph explaining your feelings on what just happened to your wife and how you feel about the lottery. How do you think Bill was and is feeling about what happened to his wife? How do you feel now that your wife is gone and your children don’t have a mother? How did you feel participating in this ritual? What do you think of this tradition? Should the town continue it or be like the towns in the north that have stopped

doing the lottery. Build an argument for or against this tradition from how you, as Bill Hutchinson, feel about what's happened and about the lottery. Use examples from the story.

Rubric for the Post-Assessment:

Criteria	Description	Points Available
1. Comprehension	Demonstrates accurate understanding of the events in <i>The Lottery</i> , including key plot points, the role of the lottery in the community, and the emotional/ethical stakes.	4
2. Thematic Analysis	Effectively applies the lesson's central themes (change, tradition, morality) to Bill Hutchinson's perspective, showing insight into how the tradition impacts individuals and the community.	4
3. Use of Textual Evidence	Supports claims with relevant, specific references to the text, integrating quotes or paraphrases smoothly to strengthen the argument.	4
4. Emotional Appeal & Argumentation (Pathos)	Constructs a persuasive argument for or against the continuation of the lottery using emotional appeal, vivid language and logical reasoning.	3
Total Possible Points		15

Student 1 Samples:

Pre-Assessment

After having read the story, please answer the questions below.

1. State an important theme from the story in a sentence or two.

Change isn't always a bad thing

2. In your own words, describe what Old Man Warner means when he says "First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns."

It's something that's always been done, just like the lottery.

3. What does the story say about the concept of change? Use at least one example from the story.

That it's crazy + foolish. Most of the people who talk about the northern village getting rid of the lottery, make fun of them and call them crazy young people.

4. Create a new title for the story and give two reasons for why you would change it to that.

The Little Black Box

That Box rules most of the villagers' life. It also could be easily destroyed and their lives changed forever.

5. Think of one tradition that you or someone you know participates in and why you or why you think that person you know participates in it.

My family and I go camping for a week at the beginning of summer. It's something we've always done and it gives us bonding time.

Post-Assessment

Dear Mr. Summers,

You obviously know that my wife was recently killed in this year's lottery. I can't even begin to describe what life is like without her. My children are not the same without a mother. I am not the same without my wife. And yet despite the strength of our love for her, we were still forced to participate in the slaying of my beloved wife. I beg you now to discontinue all lottery practices. Follow the north's influence. Change is not a ^{good reference to the text} bad thing. The success of our harvest doesn't depend on the lottery. We must ban the lottery. I do not want anyone else going through what I have had to go through recently. If our crops fail again next year then I will volunteer myself to be stoned first. Do we really even know why this tradition was started? Or why we continue to do it? Please closely consider my offer.

Sincerely,

Bill Hutchinson

This was really well done. There were plenty of real emotions as well as plenty of real answers to the - incorporating many answers to the - and text - chances.

Student 2 Samples:

Pre-Assessment

"The Lottery" Pre-Assessment

After having read the story, please answer the questions below.

1. State an important theme from the story in a sentence or two.
Kids are out for the summer and their parents are signing in line to see if they won the lottery.
2. In your own words, describe what Old Man Warner means when he says "First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns." I think it means that if something changed in society then they would have to find something else to eat.
3. What does the story say about the concept of change? Use at least one example from the story.
The concept of change is the change in society and how people and some people are willing to change.
4. Create a new title for the story and give two reasons for why you would change it to that.
Life or death:
1. If you win the lottery then you get shot, but if you don't then you keep your life.
2. IDIC (does this mean "I don't know?")
5. Think of one tradition that you or someone you know participates in and why you or why you think that person you know participates in it. my friend Jared participates in Hanukkah because it's his religion and so he has to do it.

Post-Assessment

Dear Mr. Summers,

Today was very awful my wife is gone! my kids don't have a mother and I'm very sad that I watch her life being taken by the citizens of the town and even my kids, and I couldn't do a thing to help her. I think that this tradition needs to stop because people don't want their loved ones to die. I'm gonna be honest, I don't like participating in this tradition, I'm tired of my family, friends, neighbors giving their lives up to people who don't care. The town needs to stop for the sake of the children, having them grow up around this will make them think it's okay to kill people. That's all I have to say.

Sincerely,

Bill Hutchinson

I like that you brought up a strong argument that the lottery "will make them think it's okay to kill people." I would have liked to see more about Bill and his family's emotions.

Student 3 Samples:

Pre-Assessment

V
"The Lottery" Pre-Assessment

After having read the story, please answer the questions below.

1. State an important theme from the story in a sentence or two.

-1 Change, Human Sacrifice.

Theme is a statement, not just a word or two

2. In your own words, describe what Old Man Warner means when he says "First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns."

That without the sacrifice, town order and community would not be able to function. They might be sacrificing for a good harvest.

3. What does the story say about the concept of change? Use at least one example from the story.

They don't like change. Old man Warner is disgusted to hear that some towns got rid of the lottery.

4. Create a new title for the story and give two reasons for why you would change it to that.

"Get out of there" because the people in that town are dumb if they continue to live there and because they should leave.

5. Think of one tradition that you or someone you know participates in and why you or why you think that person you know participates in it.

-1 My uncle drinks every weekend night to escape his lonely life. He either believes that something good will happen while he is drunk or he just wants the buzz to numb his pain.

Post-Assessment

References

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