

Celan (lesson plan)

Objectives:

- Students will be able to place these texts in a literary context of holocaust literature (and place holocaust literature in the context of other literary movements we've studied)
- Students will practice interpreting the poems and their highly visual language
- Students will analyze form vs. content in the poems and think about how that relates to musicality

(8 min) Celan introduction with power point: biography, important works, major themes, holocaust literature, questions for discussion.

(3 min) Listen to Celan reading Todesfuge

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVwLqEHDCQE>

(10 min) Bring back pp slide with discussion questions. Clarify comprehensions issues with the text. In groups, students discuss their thoughts about the text, first their own then in response to the following questions. Discussion questions:

- 1) Which images stand out to you in particular and how could you interpret them? (make sure to talk about: Margarete, Sulamith, der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland, Schwarze Milch)
- 2) How does Celan's reading of the poem change the way you think about it?
- 3) What does the poem's form add to its content? How can you compare its form to the form of other poems we've read?

(5-10 min) discuss in plenum

(15 min) Talk about musical themes in Fuge and Engführung. Play Bach Fugue in C Major (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFhKVCb8FeA>) and clarify some musical terminology- Fuge, Engführung, die erste/zweite/dritte Stimme, das Thema, der Führer, Kontrapunkt. Discuss in groups:

- 1) In what ways could Todesfuge be seen as a fugue? How can Engführung be seen as a "stretto"?
- 2) What associations do you have with music during WW2 and music in German culture generally?

(5 min) Listen to Celan read Engführung

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2Bk9G4G0Y4>

(10 min) Bring back pp slide with discussion questions. Clarify comprehension issues with the text. In groups, students discuss their thoughts about the text, first their own then in response to the following questions. Discussion questions:

- 1) Which images stand out to you in particular and how could you interpret them?
- 2) How does Celan's reading of the poem change the way you think about it?
- 3) What does the poem's form add to its content? How can you compare its form to the form of other poems we've read?

(5-10 min) discuss in plenum

(15 min) Group discussion on broader topics raised by the poems. These will each be on a separate power point slide:

- Is it possible (or respectful) to write poetry after Auschwitz? Adorno vs. Celan as ways of handling post-holocaust literature
- Linguistic and cultural breakdown- how does the Hitlerzeit color Germany's conception of itself? Its culture? Its music?
- Exilliteratur- writing as an outsider. How does this poem compare to other Exilliteratur we've seen so far? (Lasker-Schüler, Heine)
- Compare Celan with Dadaismus (sound for sound's sake) and Expressionismus (end of the world?)

(5 min) Introduction to *Jakob der Lügner*