



We the People Programs
Lesson Plan
Monster
By Walter Dean Myers
We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution
Foundations of Democracy
Middle and High School



Lesson Purpose: The purpose of the lesson is to use the book *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers to examine due process of law as established by the United State’s Constitution and to assess the issues of authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice.

Expectations / Goals:

- The student will be able to explain the meaning of due process of law.
- The student will be able to define and discuss procedural rights.
- The student will be able to use examples from the book that demonstrate an adversarial system of justice.
- The student will be able to take and defend a position relevant to the guilt or innocence of the main character in the book.
- The student will be able to cite examples in the story that demonstrate the concepts of authority, responsibility, and justice as defined in the Foundations of Democracy curriculum.

Book Summary: While on trial as an accomplice to murder, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and in the courtroom in the form of a film script as he tries to come to terms with the course his life has taken.

Essential Questions:

- Is “due process of law”, as defined by the United State Constitution, clearly demonstrated in the story?
- What amendments to the United States Constitution are specific to the story?

Activities:

Teachers Note: Before the lesson the teacher will read *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (2-3 hours reading time) to:

- ✓ Become familiar with the text,
- ✓ Choose vocabulary words to be examined,
- ✓ Identify where you will stop and ask for predictions,
- ✓ Determine background knowledge required to fully understand the story,
- ✓ Develop questions for the read aloud, and
- ✓ Anticipate student responses.

Note: Before the reading students should have basic background knowledge of the United States judicial system. Background knowledge can be obtained through readings in the *We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution* text, through research with primary and secondary resources, and selected Internet sites.

Social Studies:

- ***We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution***
 - a. Review with student lessons and activities related to the Bill of Rights.
 - b. Lesson 18: How Has the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment Changed the Constitution? Students should be familiar with and understand the “terms and concepts” found at the beginning of the lesson and be able to connect the terms and concepts to the characters and events in the book *Monster*.
 - c. Lesson 31: How Do the Fourth and Fifth Amendments Protect Against Unreasonable Law Enforcement Procedures? Students should be familiar with and understand the “terms and concepts” found at the beginning of the lesson and be able to connect the terms and concepts to the characters and events in the book *Monster*.
 - d. Lesson 32: How do the Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments Protect Rights within the Judicial System? Students should be familiar with and understand the “terms and concepts” found at the beginning of the lesson and be able to connect the terms and concepts to the characters and events in the book *Monster*.
 - e. Lesson 27: How Does the Constitution Protect the Right to Due Process of Law? Students should be familiar with and comprehend the “terms to understand” found at the beginning of the lesson and be able to connect them to the characters and events in the book *Monster*. (Middle School text only)

- ***Foundations of Democracy***
 - a. **Authority:** What are some sources of authority in *Monster*? Give examples of characters using power without authority. How is the authority of the Constitution used to protect individual rights and freedoms in *Monster*? Give several examples how the costs and benefits of authority are demonstrated in *Monster*.
 - b. **Privacy:** Are there issues related to privacy in *Monster*? Did government and law enforcement affect the individual privacy rights of the main character? Give specific examples. What are the costs and benefits to the community when government or law enforcement violates an individual’s privacy rights? Other than the main character do you think others in the story had their privacy rights violated?
 - c. **Responsibility:** Give several examples of how issues related to responsibility are demonstrated in *Monster*. Make a chart of the important characters in the story and list their responsibilities and the source of their responsibility.

- d. **Justice:** How are distributive, corrective, and procedural justice demonstrated in *Monster*? Give an example of how the principal of similarity is presented in the story. The issue of corrective justice is a critical part of *Monster*, what wrongs and injuries were observed in the story? What characters in the story were affected by the wrongs or injuries and how were they affected? What do you think the proper response(s) should be to the wrongs and injuries described in the story?

Reading:

- Before reading discuss how the novel is written in a screenplay format and journal entries from the point of view of the main character. Discuss with the class how they want to do a reading of the book. The screenplay format lends itself to having students share the reading by taking on the role of the various characters in the story. For a complete list of the characters go to <http://www.wetheteachers.com> or see the list at the end of the lesson plan.
- Give each student a few post-it-notes and ask them to write down questions they have about the story for discussion after the reading or to be posted in the room for discussion at the next or a later class period.
- Suggested discussion questions can be found in a Readers Guide found on the Harper Collins *Publishers* website at <http://www.harpercollins.com/author/authorExtra.aspx?isbn13=9780060280772&displayType=readingGuide>

Writing:

- Stop reading at page 238 where it says “O’BRIEN, Harmon rests”. At this point ask the students to think about all of the witnesses testimony and the evidence that they heard during the trial.
- Students are asked to consider the evidence and testimony and write a “closing argument” for either Sandra Petrocelli, the Prosecutor or Kathy O’Brien, the Defense Attorney for Steve Harmon. Describe what is meant by a “closing argument”. Students can use any notes that have taken during the reading but NOT the book for the writing assignment. Students can either choose either the Prosecutor or the Defense Attorney or you can randomly assign them to the students. There should be some balance between Prosecutor closing arguments and Defense closing arguments.
- Discuss with the class the criteria and expectations for the closing arguments and the writing process that the students will use to complete the assignment.
- Before continuing the reading have the student vote on the guilt or innocence of Steve Harmon and James King. The class can act as a jury and discuss the case before voting. The voting should be done by secret ballot. Make a chart or graph of

the results of the ballots on each defendant. Compare the class decisions to the jury decisions in the book.

Materials Needed:

- Class set of *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers.
- Class set of *We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution* high school or middle school text.
- Class set of *Foundations of Democracy*
- Post-it-notes.
- Pencils / pens
- Paper for writing assignment
- Scrap paper for verdict

Standards:

Standards: Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations for Civics & Government and Historical Perspective

- C&G 1: People create and change structures of power, authority, and governance in order to accomplish common goals.
 - (a)1-2: Students demonstrate an understanding of sources of authority and use of power, and how they are/can be changed by defining and identifying the nature of authority and sources of power.
- C&G 2: The *Constitution* of the United States establishes a government of limited powers that are shared among different levels and branches.
 - (a)2-1: Students demonstrate an understanding of United States government (local, state, national) by explaining how democratic values are reflected in enduring documents, political speeches (discourse), and group actions.
- C&G 3: In a democratic society, all people have certain rights and responsibilities.
 - (a) 3-1: Students demonstrate an understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities by evaluating and defending a position on issues involving *individual rights* (personal, economic, legal, or political rights reflected in the *Bill of Rights*).

Standards: Rhode Island and New Hampshire LOCAL Grade Level & Grade Span Expectations (GLEs & GSEs) for Written & Oral Communication

- W-10-2 In response to literary or informational text, students show understanding of plot /ideas/concepts by...
- W-10-2.1 Selecting and summarizing key ideas to set context, appropriate to audience (State)
- W-10-2.3 Connecting what has been read (plot/ideas/concepts) to prior knowledge, other texts, or the broader world of ideas, by referring to and explaining relevant

- ideas or themes (State)
- W-10-3 In response to literary or, informational text, students make and support analytical judgments about text by...
- W-10-3.1a Establishing an interpretive claim/assertion in the form of a thesis (purpose), when responding to a given prompt (State)
- W-10-3.2 Making inferences about the relationship(s) among content, events, characters, setting, theme, or author's craft (State)
EXAMPLES: Making links to author's choice of words, style, bias, literary techniques, or point of view; making links to characteristics of literary forms or genres
- W-10-3.3 Using specific details and references to text or relevant citations to support thesis, interpretations, or conclusions n(State)
- W-10-3.4 Organizing ideas, using transitional words/phrases and drawing a conclusion by synthesizing information (e.g., demonstrate a connection to the broader world of ideas) (State)

Standards: Standards: Rhode Island and New Hampshire LOCAL Grade Level & Grade Span Expectations (GLEs & GSEs) for Reading

- R-10-8 Analyze and interpret informational text, citing evidence as appropriate by...
- R-10-8.1 Explaining connections about information *within* a text, *across* texts, or to related ideas (State)
- EXAMPLE: Students are asked to compare information presented in two textual excerpts.
- R-10-8.2 Synthesizing and evaluating information within or across text(s) (e.g., constructing appropriate titles; or formulating assertions or controlling ideas) (State)
- EXAMPLE: How does the title of the article reflect the author's perspective?
- R-10-8.3 Drawing inferences about text, including author's purpose (e.g., to inform, explain, entertain, persuade) or message; or explaining how purpose may affect the interpretation of the text; or using supporting evidence to form or evaluate opinions/judgments and assertions about central ideas that are relevant (State)
- R-10-8.4 Distinguishing fact from opinion, and evaluating possible bias/propaganda or conflicting information within or across texts (State)
- R-10-8.5 Making inferences about causes and/or effects (State)
- R-10-8.6 Evaluating the clarity and accuracy of information (e.g. consistency, effectiveness of organizational pattern, or logic of arguments) (State)

Lesson Plan Developed by
 Barbara Ashby, MLS
 We the People Programs Rhode Island
 Mike Trofi, State Coordinator
www.civiced-ri.org
 September, 2010

Monster

Characters:

- Steve Harmon (on trial for murder)
- Kathy O'Brien (Defense Attorney)
- Sandra Petrocelli (Prosecutor)
- James King (the Thug)
- Richard "Bobo" Evans (the Rat)
- Osvaldo Cruz (member of the Diablos)
- Lorelle Henry (witness)
- José Delgado (found the body)

Misc. Parts

- Stenographer
- Guard 1
- Court Clerk
- Judge
- Briggs (James King's defense counsel)
- Mr. Sawicki (Steve's film club mentor)
- Sal Zinzi (criminal/witness)
- Tony (Steve's old friend)
- Tough Guy
- Wendell Bolden (criminal/witness)
- Peaches
- Johnny
- Jerry (Steve's 11-year-old brother)
- Officer 1
- Officer 2
- Detective Karyl (investigated the crime scene)
- Arthur Williams (black detective)
- Older Prisoner
- Prisoner 2
- Prisoner 3
- Freddy Alou (16)
- Mr. Harmon (Steve's dad)
- Woman 1
- Woman 2
- Newscaster
- Neighborhood Resident
- Mrs. Harmon (Steve's Mom)
- Female Newscaster
- Mayor Giuliani
- Allen Forbes (city clerk)
- Dr. James Moody (medical examiner)
- Cartoon Man
- Dorothy Moore (witness)
- George Nipping (witness)
- Inmate 1
- Inmate 2

Source: www.wetheteachers.com