



Activity: “To Helen” Guided Reading
Intended Grade/Audience: 4th-8th

<p><u>Overview of the Activity:</u> This <i>guided reading</i> of Edgar Allan Poe’s “To Helen” (1836) focuses on developing student understanding of imagery and other figurative language, strengthening reading comprehension, and strengthening expository and persuasive writing skills.</p>	<p><u>Activity Goals:</u> Provide students with an accessible reading of “To Helen” that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotes a lasting appreciation and interest in Edgar Allan Poe’s work. 2. Strengthens reading comprehension. 3. Strengthens writing skills. 4. Expands vocabulary. 5. Expands knowledge and understanding of literary devices. 6. Demonstrates the impact of an author’s style on a work. 	<p><u>Student Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will use context clues to understand the poem. 2. Students will identify figurative language and analyze the impact of it on the work. 3. Students will identify the theme of the work and analyze how voice affects it. 4. Students will understand allusions made in the work.
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<p><u>Virginia SOLs addressed and/or met:</u></p> <p>For 7th grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading - 7.4 The student will read and determine the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases within authentic texts ● Reading - 7.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fictional texts, literary nonfiction ● Writing - 7.7 The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective with an emphasis on expository and persuasive writing <p>For 8th grade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading - 8.4 The student will apply knowledge of word origins, and figurative language to extend vocabulary development within authentic texts ● Reading - 8.5 - The student will read and analyze a variety of fictional texts, literary nonfiction, poetry, and drama ● Writing - 8.7 The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective with an emphasis on expository and persuasive writing 	<p><u>Common Core standards addressed and/or met:</u></p> <p>CCSS Grade 7 Reading Standards for Literature: - 1, 2, 4, 5</p> <p>CCSS Grade 7 Writing Standards: - 1b, 1c, 7, 9a</p> <p>CCSS Grade 8 Reading Standards for Literature: - 1, 4</p> <p>CCSS Grade 8 Writing Standards: - 1b, 1c, 7, 9a</p>
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Resources provided in this document:

- Structured text of “To Helen” by Edgar Allan Poe
- Link to unstructured text

Guided Reading: “To Helen” (By: Edgar Allan Poe)

Directions: In this guided reading you should read through the text once on your own. Then use the text to answer the questions that follow. You will be answering comprehension questions in complete sentences. Make sure to use supporting evidence (i.e. quotes) from the text to support your responses.

Text: <https://poemuseum.org/to-helen/>

1 Helen, thy beauty is to me
 Like those Nicean barks of yore,
 That gently, o’er a perfum’d sea,
 The **weary** way-worn wanderer bore
5 To his own native shore

 On desperate seas long wont to roam,
 Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
 Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
 To the beauty of fair Greece,
10 And the **grandeur** of old Rome.

 Lo! In that little **window-niche**
 How statue-like I see thee stand!
 The folded scroll within thy hand—
 A Psyche from the regions which
15 Are Holy land!

Vocabulary Check: Using context clues, what do you think these words from the text mean?

Weary:

Grandeur:

Window-niche:

Allusions: Using the Internet or other reference material, find the meaning of these allusions to Greek mythology in the poem.

Nicean:

Naiad:

Psyche:

Reading Questions: Use the above text to answer the following questions.

Comprehension:

1. What is the relationship between the narrator and Helen? How does Helen make the narrator feel? Use text from the poem to support your answer.
2. Compare and contrast how the narrator described Helen's beauty in the second stanza and third stanza? Which do you think is a more accurate depiction of Helen?

Style:

1. Underline two examples of alliteration in this poem.
2. Identify one simile and one metaphor in the poem. How does Poe's use of figurative language help showcase Helen's beauty?
3. Identify the rhyme scheme of the poem. How does the rhyme scheme impact the feeling of the poem?

Theme:

1. What is the tone of this poem? How does the author use descriptive words to set the tone?
2. Why do you think Poe choose to reference ancient Greece and Rome in this poem? Does this poem provide accurate portrayals of these ancient civilizations?

Research:

1. Poe wrote "To Helen," about his friend's mother, Jane Craig Stanard. Research and list three facts about Jane Stanard. Research and list three facts about Poe's childhood in Richmond, Virginia. Why might have young Poe written this story about Jane?

2. The character of "Helen" refers to Helen of Troy, a figure of Greek mythology. Using books, the internet, and other reference materials, research Helen of Troy. How does your understanding of the poem change after researching Helen of Troy?