

IRONY AND THE WALDORF ASTORIA

LESSON PLAN

In this lesson, perhaps to the dismay of teachers and parents everywhere, T&W teaching artist [Sarah Porter](#) brings sarcasm to sixth-graders. Based on Langston Hughes' poem "[Advertisement for the Waldorf Astoria](#)," this lesson plan teaches students about irony as a literary technique in order to develop voice in nonfiction writing. Though Porter's lesson was developed to coincide with study of the Great Depression, it works equally well as a stand-alone piece.

Grade(s) taught: 6th

Genre(s) taught: Nonfiction, poetry

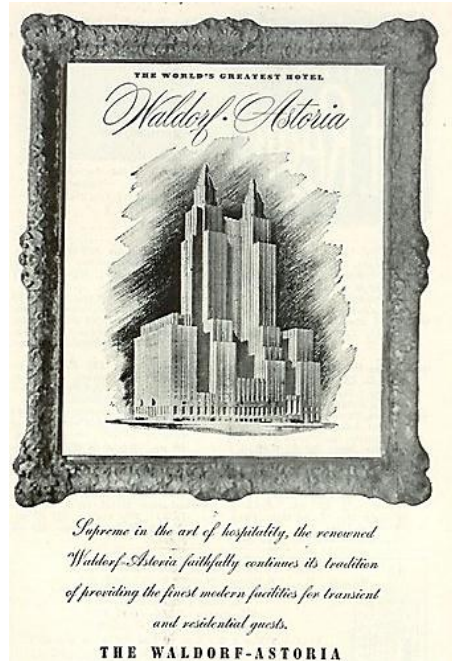
Common Core State Standards: ([Refer to the Anchor Standards for Writing at ELA > Writing > Grade 6](#))

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone

Guiding Questions: How is Langston Hughes' voice and point of view expressed through this poem? Do you get the sense that you know what kind of person he is?

What lines or phrases in the poem communicate Hughes' point of view? Is he saying what he actually means?

Are the social conditions he's describing during the Great Depression comparable to problems we see today? What are the problems in our society that you feel deserve this kind of criticism?



[via typophile](#)

LESSON

Introduction:

- Read and discuss [“Advertisement for the Waldorf Astoria”](#) in the context of the students’ study of the Great Depression. If the class is not familiar with the Great Depression, pbs.org offers a [timeline](#) that provides a brief but in depth overview.
- Discuss irony as a literary technique, having students point out the most blatant examples of irony in the poem.
- Brainstorm similar ironic treatment of contemporary social and economic issues. These can be examples of ironic treatment, or simply the issues themselves.

Writing Activity:

Ask students to write individual “Ironic Advertisements” for social problems of their choice. They can draw from the class-generated brainstorm list, or pick a topic of their own. In my class, popular topics included bullying, hunger, racism, addiction, and poverty.

Closing:

Volunteers share and discuss their advertisements.

Materials:

[Langston Hughes' "Advertisement for the Waldorf Astoria"](#)

Vocabulary:

Irony, sarcasm, voice, point of view, à la carte

Multimodal Approaches to Learning:

This lesson incorporates aspects of **interpersonal** learning during class brainstorm activity; **intrapersonal** learning during the individual writing assignment, in which students choose a topic that resonates with them; and **linguistic** learning, as students must focus on the changed meanings of words that rely on the voice of a piece.

Tagged:

Hughes, irony, voice, nonfiction, cross-curricular