

Creating Literary Timelines

Grade level: 9-12

Introduction

Education research groups have suggested that background knowledge is a key component to student learning; that is, what a student knows prior to learning new content can have a profound impact on future understanding. With this research in mind, it is important to build a student's knowledge of an author's life and experiences before reading the author's work in order to facilitate the interpretation of the literature at hand.

Before starting a new unit in your English classroom, you can use Literary Reference Plus to find important biographical information about a plethora of significant authors. The following is an example of how educators can utilize the authoritative and accessible biographies – using the *Critical Insights* series in particular – to create a lesson plan that will foster reading comprehension. Teachers can modify this lesson to match any grade level.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Evaluate the importance of specific events within an author's life
- Create a detailed visualization of an author's life and experiences
- Make inferences as to what the assigned reading will be about
- Make connections between the author's personal life and the literary work studied

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6
- NCTE 1, NCTE 3, NCTE 9

Materials

- Computer/laptop/tablet
- Access to Literary Reference Plus
- Print copy of the literary work
- Access to Popplet (via internet or downloadable app)

Procedures

Educator:

1. Sign in to Literary Reference Plus to ensure you can access and save to your folder.
2. Click on the “Publications” tab at the top of the page.
3. In the “Browse Publications” field, type *Critical Insights* and click “Browse.”
 - a. The resulting list will give you a number of different titles to choose from. Find the *Critical Insights* title with either the author you’re looking for or the work you will be reading (e.g. ***Critical Insights: Brave New World***), and click the title, highlighted in blue.
4. Click on “Search within this publication.” This will populate the search field on the main screen.
5. Click “Search.” This will give you a list of all the articles available in that title.
6. Locate the following two resources to differentiate instruction:
 - a. For stronger readers: Locate the article entitled “Biography of [Aldous Huxley]”. Stronger students will get more out of this prose-style biography. Click on “PDF Full Text” link to view the complete article(s).
 - b. For struggling readers: Locate the article entitled “Chronology of the Life of [Aldous Huxley]”. Students who need more support may benefit from an article that is broken up by date.
 - c. Locate any additional resources you may wish to use after completing the literary work being studied. Click on “PDF Full Text” link to view the complete article(s).
7. Add the desired resources to OneDrive, Google Drive or your MyEBSCO folder and share with the class or provide students with materials via your school’s LMS (Schoology, Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle or Desire2Learn).
8. Provide assignment instruction to students.
9. Extend by having students complete the “Summative Assessment” (see below).

Student:

1. Access resources provided by your instructor.
2. Individually, read and annotate the biography of the author whose work you will be studying.
3. Make a list of the ten most important details about the author’s life and work. For each detail, write a 1- 2 sentence explanation for why you chose that specific life event.
4. In groups, discuss and decide on the ten most important life details of the author in question, based on your own individual assessment of the author.
5. Using the app **Popplet** and your final selections from step 4, work with your group to create a visually stimulating timeline of your author’s life and work.
 - a. Either use the Popplet app, or create a free Popplet by signing up on their website (www.popplet.com)
 - b. Be sure to include the reasoning behind your selections in your Popplet!

6. Analyze the cover illustration of the book you are about to read. For books with many different illustrated versions, it may be beneficial to look at and interpret the different editions online.
7. Based on your knowledge of the author's life and your analysis of the book's illustration, make three predictions as to what the book will be about. Create a separate section in your Popplet to include these three predictions.
8. Share your Popplet with a partner and discuss the similarities and differences between your selections.

Assessment

Formative Assessment

Have each group present their Popplet to the class, explaining their choices and predictions for the upcoming read. Evaluate each group's presentation skills and demonstrated understanding.

Summative Assessment

After the unit is completed (and the book assigned is read!), have students read another article from the *Critical Insights* title used during this activity. Then, have them write an essay in which they use two sources (preferably, the biographical article and the supplement) to evaluate the extent that the author's personal life informed his or her literary work.