Wartime Poems

How do writers use language to present war as a destructive force?
War Poetry of Dickinson

Learning Targets

❖ I can use resources to gather word knowledge when needing a word important for comprehension and/or expression. (L6)
❖ I can use context clues to figure out word meanings, verify what I think a word means by using reference materials. (L4)
❖ I can interpret figures of speech in context, analyze the role of a figure of speech in a specific text. (L5)
❖ I can analyze nuances (connotations) in the meaning of words with similar denotations. (L5)
I can use **resources** to gather word knowledge when needing a word important for comprehension and/or expression. (L6)

| Resources--Dictionary OR cellphone to go to a dictionary page OR thesaurus to figure out alternative words OR Google for an expression/allusion |

I can use **context clues** to figure out word meanings, **verify** what I think a word means by using **reference materials**. (L4)

| Context clues- hints that an author gives to help define a difficult or unusual word. The clue may appear within the same sentence as the word to which it refers, or it may follow in a preceding sentence. |
| Verify- make sure that something is accurate/true |
| Reference materials- see resources above |

I can interpret **figures of speech** in context, analyze the role of a figure of speech in a specific text. (L5)

| figures of speech- This can mean figurative language (SHIPMAST), sound devices at times (alliteration, onomatopoeia), or any other literature terms. |

❖ I can analyze nuances (connotations) in the meaning of words with similar denotations. (L5)

| Nuances- a subtle difference in meanings/uses of a word. (Interesting example) |
| Connotation- the emotional tag or feeling of a word (usually as a starting point decide if the words used are positive or negative. |
| Denotations- the dictionary definition of a word |
“Success is counted sweetest” by Emily Dickinson
Close Reading

1. Make a list of words you don’t know and figure out what you think they mean in context and then look them up. Choose which definition is best suited to the context of the poem.

2. Make a stanza-by-stanza list of all the ways that war is presented as a destructive force in the poem. Remember to cite the lines.

3. Break the lists into categories (suggestions: social events, family events, daily life, commerce, school, rural areas, urban areas, and the legal system).
Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need

Not one of all the purple Host
Who took the Flag today
Can tell the definition
So clear of Victory

As he defeated--dying--
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Burst agonized and clear!
Before you leave put this in my hand!

After your lists and charts answer the following questions
❖ Did the poem present war as a literal destructive force or metaphorical destructive force? Provide a short list of quotes that support your stance. (No you don’t have to explain yet, but you already know the longer writing is coming)
❖ In one word, what is the author’s tone regarding war? Provide a short list of quotes that support your stance. (No you don’t have to explain yet, but you already know the longer writing is coming)
War Poetry of Whitman

Learning Targets

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**Verify**—make sure that something is accurate/true  
**Reference materials**—see resources above |

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❖ I can analyze nuances (connotations) in the meaning of words with similar denotations. (L5)

| **Nuances**—a subtle difference in meanings/uses of a word. (Interesting example)  
**Connotation**—the emotional tag or feeling of a word (usually as a starting point decide if the words used are positive or negative.  
**Denotations**—the dictionary definition of a word |
Beat! Beat! Drums! by Walt Whitman
1. Make a list of words you don’t know and figure out what you think they mean in context and then look them up. Choose which definition is best suited to the context of the poem.

2. Make a stanza-by-stanza list of all the ways that war is presented as a destructive force in the poem. Remember to cite the lines.

3. Break the lists into categories (suggestions: social events, family events, daily life, commerce, school, rural areas, urban areas, and the legal system)
Beat! Beat! Drums! By Walt Whitman

Stanza 1

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! Blow!
Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying,
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.
Beatin' beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must
sleep in those beds,
No bargainers’ bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they
continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.
Beat! Beat! Drums! By Walt Whitman
Stanza 3

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
Let not the child’s voice be heard, nor the mother’s entreaties,
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie
awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.
Before you leave put this in my hand!

After your lists and charts answer the following questions

❖ Did the poem present war as a literal destructive force or metaphorical destructive force? Provide a short list of quotes that support your stance. (No you don’t have to explain yet, but you already know the longer writing is coming)

❖ In one word, what is the author’s tone regarding war? Provide a short list of quotes that support your stance. (No you don’t have to explain yet, but you already know the longer writing is coming)
War Poetry of Dickinson and Whitman

Learning Targets

❖ I can determine the figurative and connotative meaning of words and phrases based on how they are used in a text.
❖ I can analyze the impact word choice on the meaning or tone of a text.

Write a short essay that explains (with evidence from the poem) discussing the author’s tone regarding the subject of war. Remember to address how both poems present war as a destructive force either literally or metaphorically.
A little about the Poet

While several generations of critics have read Dickinson’s war lyrics as either personal reflections on her own inner turmoil or a response to the popular political ideologies that provided theological justification for the war.
A Little about Walt

During the Civil War, Whitman worked as a clerk in Washington, DC. For three years, he visited soldiers during his spare time, dressing wounds and giving solace to the injured.