Title: *The Highwayman*

Suggested Time: 4 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.3, RL.7.4, RL.7.5; W.7.2, W.7.4, W.7.5, W.7.9; SL.7.1; L.7.1, L.7.2, L.7.4, L.7.5

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings:

Students should learn the defining characteristics of what makes someone a hero and that doing the moral or “right” thing may not always be considered heroic and is not always the choice you want to make.

Synopsis:

The highwayman is an eighteenth century thief, who promises to return to his love Bess, the landlord’s daughter. Tim is a stableman who is also in love with Bess. He overhears the lovers and betrays his rival to the authorities. The next night, soldiers tie Bess to her bed with a musket beneath her breast and wait for the highwayman. Bess hears her lover’s horse on the road. She pulls the trigger to warn him and gives up her life to save his. The highwayman gallops off. When he learns of Bess’ death, he returns in a rage and the soldiers shoot him. Legend suggests that the two are together in death.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| “The wind a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees”. What does this reveal about the setting? Find other evidence from the text that supports how the author portrays the setting of this story. | Alfred Noyes portrays the story to have a dark, gloomy, or frightening setting. The wind, darkness, and clouds supports this as well as “there was death at every window and hell at one dark window” later in the story. |
| Based on context clues, what does the word *cobbles* mean? | Using the words “clattered” and “clashed” and knowing he is riding a horse, you can infer that cobbles mean a bumpy stone road. |
| What can you infer when the highwayman tells Bess, “Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day, Then look for me by moonlight”? | It says the highwayman is after a prize of gold. Since he is a robber and stealing this gold, students can infer that he may get caught or harassed and if so may not be able to come back for Bess until later when he slips away in the moonlight. |
| What does the highwayman promise Bess? | He tells her he will come for her by morning. “But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light”. |
| It is implied in the poem that Tim told the redcoats of the highwayman’s love for Bess. What is Tim’s motive, or reason for betraying Bess? | It is said, “but he loved the landlord’s daughter”. This shows that Tim is also in love with Bess and is jealous of the relationship she has with the highwayman. |
| Comparing the descriptions given of Tim and the highwayman, what can you infer about each of their characters? | Tim is described as “his face is white and peaked. His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like moldy hay,” which are negative qualities. You also learn that he is spying on the highwayman and Bess. You immediately feel like there is something wrong with the character and can tell his will be a villain. On the other side, the highwayman is described as having a hat, lace, a velvet jacket and doeskin breeches and jewels, which shows he is well dressed and likeable. He is described as loving Bess and promising to return to her, which makes the reader sympathize with him. |
| It says “now keep good watch, and they kissed her.” What does this action reveal about the redcoats? | This action of kissing her reveals that they are mocking her. It says earlier, they are making sniggering jests, which implies they know of her love for the highwayman and are making fun of it. These actions show they are heartless and being cruel when doing their job. |
| “Her musket shattered in the moonlight, Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.” Who is Bess warning and why? | Bess is warning her love, the highwayman, of the redcoats waiting to kill him. “There was death at every window” and “For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that *he would* ride,” shows the danger the highwayman is in when he arrives and how she is waiting and watching for him. |
| “Back he spurred like a madman, shouting a curse to the sky.” What caused the highwayman to be so angry? | He found out Bess was dead. “Not till dawn he heard it, his face grew gray to hear,” which suggests his anger of hearing the news that his lover was shot. |
| What literary device is used in the last two stanzas of the poem and how does it affect the plot? | The last two paragraphs are using both repetition and italics. It is repeating what the highwayman said to his love Bess at the beginning of the poem and is implying that the two are together in death. |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | “ribbon of moonlight”  highwayman  breeches  dawning  musket  spurred | cobbles  scarce  redcoat  bound  writhed  muzzle |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | torrent  moor  doeskin  shutters  sable  sniggering  refrain  rapier  brandished | bar  strive |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*In the poem, Tim is being a good citizen by turning in the robber; however, is portrayed as the villain. Why does the reader sympathize with the highwayman as opposed to the “Good Samaritan”?*

* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should remind students to use any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions.

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “And he rode with a jeweled twinkle, his pistol butts a twinkle, his rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jeweled sky.” | This quote is showing the positive description of the highwayman. He is portrayed as a shining knight-- someone the reader likes and wants to succeed. |
| “Where Tim the ostler listened. His face was white and peaked. His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like moldy hay, but he loved the landlord’s daughter” | This quote shows the negative description of Tim and why as a reader we begin to dislike him. It also reveals his love for the daughter and his reason for jealousy. |
| “As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast; And he kissed its waves in the moonlight.” | This quote shows the love story between the highwayman and the daughter. As they kiss in the moonlight you realize they love each other, so begin to rally for true love to win even though the highwayman may be breaking the law. |
| “They tied her up to attention, with many sniggering jest; They had bound a musket beside her, with the muzzle beneath her breast! Now keep good watch!” They kissed her.” | This quote is showing the results of Tim betraying the highwayman. As readers, we like the daughter and it is upsetting how they are treating her to get the highwayman. The reader blames Tim for this mistreatment. |
| “Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.” | This quote is showing that the daughter loved the highwayman so much she sacrificed her life for him. This again makes us be on the side of the highwayman because he must be a good guy if she is willing to give up so much to try to save him. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

In the poem *The Highwayman* there is a reversal of roles and a question of morality and what makes someone a hero. The character Tim is technically a Good Samaritan, but he is portrayed as a villain because his law-abiding actions were out of jealousy not righteousness. This makes him the antagonist of the poem even though he turned in a robber.

When Tim is first introduced, he is spying on his crush, the daughter of the landlord. He is portrayed as an outsider and as having eyes of “hollows of madness”. Then, “but he loved the landlord’s daughter.” This is showing that not only is he crazy, but he is obsessively watching the daughter. Instantly, the reader does not trust him. In contrast, the highwayman is described using glowing adjectives. “And he rode with a jeweled twinkle, his pistol butts a twinkle, his rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jeweled sky”. He is like a knight in shining armor coming to rescue the daughter, who obviously loves him when she kisses him. “As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast; And he kissed its waves in the moonlight”. The reader prefers the highwayman because he is not only described in a more flattering light, but also because the daughter prefers him.

Unfortunately, for Tim, his jealousy led him to make a poor choice in turning in the highwayman. “Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say… But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light.” From this quote, the reader infers that Tim is going to turn in the highwayman. And interestingly, even though the highwayman is the robber, you begin to feel sympathy for him. You want him to be able to love the daughter even though he is a thief because at least he is not crazy like Tim.

The hatred of Tim increases as the result of his action of turning in the highwayman is revealed. The military comes and harasses the daughter as they wait to kill the highwayman. Out of his jealousy, Tim is not hurting not only the highwayman now, but also the daughter. The red coats “tied her up to attention, with many sniggering jest; They had bound a musket beside her, with the muzzle beneath her breast! Now keep good watch! They kissed her”. The poor daughter has to endure taunting, being tied up, and forced to wait for her lover’s death.

The final blow against Tim comes in the daughter’s suicide in her attempt to keep the highwayman alive. “Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death”. By taking the ultimate sacrifice for her love, the reader dislikes Tim even more for making her do it. The purity of her sacrifice compared to the petty, jealous reason for turning in the highwayman outweighs any “good” that was to be found in Tim. The overall impression is that Tim is the antagonist because his actions led to the deaths of both the highwayman and the daughter.

Additional Tasks

* *Research redcoats and highwaymen. Does the research change your perspective that the highwayman is a good guy?*

Answer: Students will discover that the redcoats were in fact the soldiers of the British army and in charge of keeping the peace and laws of the land. Then, on the other side they will discover that the highwaymen were lawless men who would go rob and steal, so perhaps might not be as innocent as the poem makes him out to be.

* *Rewrite the poem from the perspective of Tim. Change it to the first person point of view and reveal his thoughts as the plot unfolds.*

Answer: The entire meaning of the poem will change if it is written from Tim’s point of view because it is no longer about true love, but rather an unrequited lover’s revenge. For example, the flowery description of the highwayman will change to an unflattering description of him as a thief.

Note to Teacher

* Line 7-10: It might help to discuss where the highwaymen get his fancy clothes and how he is so rich. This will help them answer question 6 and better understand what a “highwayman” does for a living.
* Line 20-24: From this section, students need to infer that Tim turned in the highwayman. Some students might need some scaffolding to make this assumption.