

## The Nose by Nikolai Gogol

### Introduction

This lesson is designed for Kansas high school or home school classrooms grades 9-10 based on the English Language Arts standards for grades 9-10.

The goals of the lesson are to introduce students to a text from another culture (Russia), identify and analyze the story's themes, setting, plot, and characters, understand the author's intent based on the context of the culture and time period during which the story was written, and make comparisons and connections between this culture/time and modern American culture. Students should gain an understanding of satire and, at the end of the lesson, create their own work of satire in small groups.

Instructors are encouraged to contact the KU Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (CREES) if they would like the CREES outreach coordinator to visit their classroom and present about Russian, East European, and/or Eurasian culture. You can contact CREES at [CREES@ku.edu](mailto:CREES@ku.edu)

### Standards

- RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development.
- RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
- RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise
- RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature.
- RL.9-10.10 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading.
- RL.9-10.13 Read and comprehend high quality dramas, prose, and poetry of appropriate quantitative and qualitative complexity for Grades 9-10.

### Lesson Objectives

- Learn about Nikolai Gogol and the aspects of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian culture that his story "The Nose" satirizes.
- Discuss the setting, plot, characters, and theme of the story, how they change, and how they are interrelated.
- Define satire and compare Gogol's satire with modern American satires.

- Students create their own short work of satirical literature

### **Materials**

- Nikolai Gogol's "The Nose." Suggested translation: Gogol, Nikolai. *The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Vintage Books, 1999.
- Nikolai Gogol PowerPoint. There is helpful information in the notes section for the slides.

### **Learning Plan**

1. Give the students some biographical background on Nikolai Gogol as well as a brief historical overview of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia including an overview of the table of ranks using **Nikolai Gogol PowerPoint**. You can also show them the drone view of St. Petersburg video in the PowerPoint so they can have a sense of the city before reading.
2. Have students read "The Nose" at home. While they read at home, have them keep a reading journal in which they identify the setting, narrator, characters, major plot points, and themes. Go over these concepts in the beginning of your class discussion of the story. Discuss how the themes are reflected in other elements of the story. Are the characters simple or complex? If complex, what makes them so? Are the characters static or do they develop?
3. As you go over the short story in class ask your students these questions to spark discussion: How does the setting relate to other story elements? What hierarchies exist in the story? How do they influence the characters? Why do you think Gogol chose to write such an absurd story? What does the nose represent? Is it something specific to 19th century Russian society or to human nature in general?
4. During the class discussion of the text, ask them to think about what genre they would use to describe this story. Make sure they can define satire. What are some contemporary examples of satire, perhaps from television, that they can name?
5. Have students identify some of the main ways an author could critique contemporary American society.
6. In 4 groups have the students create their own satires to critique culture at their school. Make sure they include elements seen in "The Nose" such as social hierarchy, exaggeration, and/or the absurd. As an extension of the lesson, the instructor could have the students read each of the 4 student-created satires and vote on their favorite and determine which best captured the aims of Gogol's "The Nose."

### **Assessment Suggestions**

Use the suggested discussion questions to gauge how well the students understood the characters, plot, themes, and setting of the story. Use their examples of American satire to gauge their understanding of what satire is. Use their short works of satirical literature to see how well they understood the ways that the story elements interrelated and affected each other, as well as the goals of satire, and Gogol's use of style to achieve social commentary.