LESSON PLAN

The Ashes of Madame Blavatsky

GRADES	TIME	READING LEVEL
9+	50 min	4

Lesson flow



5 min

Opening Hook

Begin with a brief discussion about a time when students followed advice or a trend without questioning it. Ask them how that turned out and what they learned from the experience.

15–20 min

Story Exploration

Read "The Ashes of Madame Blavatsky" aloud or have students read it in pairs. Discuss initial reactions and understanding of the narrative.

15 min

Analysis Exercises

Divide students into small groups. Assign each group to analyze a character's role in the story and how they contribute to the theme. Have each group present their findings.

10 min

Application/Reflection

Lead a class discussion on real-life examples of movements or leaders that have misled followers. Encourage students to reflect on the importance of critical thinking in these situations.

5 min

Assessment Strategy

Use a quick exit ticket where students write down one lesson learned from the story and how it applies to their own lives.

STORY OVERVIEW

- **Title and moral/theme**: The Ashes of Madame Blavatsky; The folly of blindly following charismatic figures without critical thinking.
- **Plot summary**: The story follows an Inquiring Soul who seeks knowledge from two prominent figures in Theosophy while being captivated by the ashes of Madame Blavatsky. Ultimately, his misguided beliefs lead to a satirical downfall where he is revered despite his absurdity, showcasing the dangers of uncritical adherence to authority.
- **Key characters and their significance**:
  - **Inquiring Soul**: Represents individuals seeking knowledge but lacking discernment.
  - **Two Theosophical Figures**: Symbolize charismatic leaders whose teachings can mislead followers.
  - **Madame Blavatsky's Ashes**: A metaphor for the remnants of misguided beliefs that can lead to the collapse of ideologies.

LESSON FUNDAMENTALS

- **Learning Objectives**:
  - Students will identify the moral of the story and articulate its significance.
  - Students will analyze the characters' motivations and their impact on the narrative.
  - Students will discuss the implications of blind faith in authority figures.
  - Students will relate the story to real-life scenarios where critical thinking is essential.
- **Discussion Questions**:
  1. What are some characteristics that make someone a charismatic leader? Can these be both positive and negative?
  2. How can critical thinking help in evaluating the beliefs or teachings of influential figures?
  3. What are the consequences of following a belief system without questioning its validity?
- **Required Materials**:
  - Copies of "The Ashes of Madame Blavatsky"
  - Whiteboard and markers
  - Paper and writing utensils for students

✓ Original text available on the story page.