



The Outsiders: Robert Frost and Extended Metaphors

Overview:

Students will read an excerpt from *The Outsiders* book that refers to Robert Frost's poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay." They will then analyze the poem's extended metaphor and discuss the author's use of nature themes in his writing. Possible activities include writing their own extended metaphors, illustrating the poem, and discussing life cycles in the garden.

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

-  **Define** a metaphor.
-  **Analyze** the extended metaphor of changing seasons in "Nothing Gold Can Stay."
-  **Write** their own short poem using an extended metaphor.
-  **Describe** how themes of natural life cycles are often referred to in literature.

Materials:

- γ Handout 1: "*The Outsiders*"
- γ Handout 2: "Nothing Gold Can Stay"
- γ Clipboards for each student
- γ Colored pencils
- γ Visual Aid: "Life Cycle of a Butterfly"

On the Board:

- γ Vocabulary
- γ Student Reflection Questions

Suggested Snack:

- γ Fresh corn
- γ Corn tortillas with salsa
- γ Popcorn

Preparation:

-  Prior to this lesson, students should have read through at least Chapter 9 of *The Outsiders*, by S.E. Hinton.

Vocabulary:

 hue
 subside

 Eden
 dawn

 extended metaphor

Learning Activities:

- I. Warm-Up: "Staying Gold" (5 min.)
 - A. Distribute Handout 1: "The Outsiders" and have students read the passage.

- B. Ask students to locate Johnny's last words: "Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold..."
 - A. Ask students what they think Johnny might mean when he says "stay gold."
2. Presentation: Reading "Nothing Gold Can Stay" (15 min.)
- A. Tell students that Johnny could have been referring to the poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost.
 - B. Distribute Handout 2: "Nothing Gold Can Stay."
 - Read the poem aloud to the students.
 - Break students into pairs and have them read the poem to each other.
 - Instruct them to take notes in the sidebar of the handout as they read.
 - C. As a class, ask students to define *extended metaphor*: when an author uses one metaphor at length or throughout an entire poem or story. The subject of the metaphor is repeatedly emphasized, discovered, and rediscovered as the story progresses.
 - D. Ask students what they think might be the extended metaphor in this poem. Students can certainly have different interpretations, but the four seasons and the circle of life are commonly thought to be referenced in the poem.
 - Read the poem line by line, analyzing it with the class. Have them identify which season each line might be referring to.
 - "Nature's first green is gold, / Her hardest hue to hold." = Spring
 - "Her early leaf's a flower; / But only so an hour." = Summer
 - "Then leaf subsides to leaf." = Fall
 - "So Eden sank to grief, / So dawn goes down to day. / Nothing gold can stay." = Winter
 - E. Possible discussion questions:
 - What might Frost mean by "her hardest hue to hold"?
 - Why does he bring up Eden from the bible?
 - What might Johnny have meant when he told Ponyboy to "stay gold" on his death bed?
 - Does "gold" represent age in the poem?
 - Do you think Johnny is referring to physical age or being strong?
 - Why do authors so often use nature as a metaphor in their writing?
3. Garden Activity (20 min.) *Note: This can be expanded to multiple lessons to incorporate more than one activity, or more time to do an in-depth analysis of the poem.
- A. Option 1: Have students sit in the garden and create an illustration for the poem.

- B. Option 2: Have students sit in the garden and choose a plant, animal, insect, or some other inspiration. Give them time to write their own poem using an extended metaphor. This can be continued for homework or as an Assessment Question.
 - C. Option 3: Discuss different life cycles in the garden, e.g., corn (see below under 4. Snack).
 - Discuss the life cycles of different animals, plants, or insects. Refer back to the poem, by comparing the different stages of life to the different seasons.
 - Reference the garden's compost pile. If this is the "winter" season for most plants, representing death, does it still have value? (It is essential for improving the soil's health and the birth of new plants.)
4. Snack: Serve snacks that illustrate the life cycle of a plant. For example, corn on the cob, corn tortillas, and popcorn. (5 min.)
5. Have students answer the Reflection Questions in their garden journals. (5 min)

Student Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever lived in a place that has very cold winters? If so, do you like the season? Or does it create a feeling of grief, like the poem says?
2. Do you think the poem speaks the truth, that nothing gold can stay? Why or why not?

Assessment Questions:

1. What is an extended metaphor?
 - **An extended metaphor is a comparison between two things that continues throughout a series of sentences in a paragraph or lines in a poem.**
2. Read the following extended metaphor, from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players. One man in his time plays many parts." In this metaphor, what does Shakespeare compare all the men and women in the world to?
 - **Players (or actors)**

Standards:

Common Core State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.3

Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

Acknowledgements:

The Outsiders. S. E. Hinton. Penguin Group, New York, NY: 1967.

Nothing Gold Can Stay. Robert Frost.

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/nothing-gold-can-stay>



The Outsiders

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

“We gotta see him,” Dally said, and flicked out Two-Bit’s switchblade. His voice was shaking. “We’re gonna see him and if you give me any static you’ll end up on your own operatin’ table.”

The doctor didn’t bat an eye. “You can see him, but it’s because you’re friends with him, not because of that knife.”

Dally looked at him for a second, then put the knife back in his pocket. We both went into Johnny’s room, standing there for a second, getting our breath back in heavy gulps. It was awful quiet. It was scary quiet. I looked at Johnny. He was very still, and for a moment I thought in agony: he’s dead already. We’re too late.

Dally swallowed, wiping the sweat off his upper lip. “Johnnycake?” he said in a hoarse voice. “Johnny?”

Johnny stirred weakly, then opened his eyes. “Hey,” he managed softly.

“We won,” Dally panted. “We beat the Socs. We stomped them— chased them outa our territory.”

Johnny didn’t even try to grin at him. “Useless... fighting’s no good...” He was awful white.

Dally licked his lips nervously. “They’re still writing editorials about you in the paper. For being a hero and all.” He was talking too fast and too calmly. “Yeah, they’re calling you a hero now and heroizin’ all the greasers. We’re all proud of you, buddy.”

Johnny’s eyes glowed. Dally was proud of him. That was all Johnny had ever wanted.

“Ponyboy.”

I barely heard him. I came closer and leaned over to hear what he was going to say.

“Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold...” The pillow seemed to sink a little, and Johnny died.

You read about people looking peacefully asleep when they’re dead, but they don’t. Johnny just looked dead. Like a candle with the flame gone. I tried to say something, but I couldn’t make a sound.

Dally swallowed and reached over to push Johnny’s hair back. “Never could keep that hair back... that’s what you get for tryin’ to help people, you little punk, that’s what you get...”

Whirling suddenly, he slammed back against the wall. His face contorted in agony, and sweat streamed down his face.

“Damnit, Johnny...” he begged, slamming one fist against the wall, hammering it to make it obey his will. “Oh, damnit, Johnny, don’t die, please don’t die...”

He suddenly bolted through the door and down the hall.



Nothing Gold Can Stay

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

Read the poem. Make notes in the sidebar about what you think the poem is about. If you have time, create an illustration for the poem below

Nothing Gold Can Stay*by Robert Frost*

Nature's first green is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf's a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.

Nothing gold can stay.

Your notes:

In the garden, create an illustration for this poem:



egg

①

adult monarch butterfly

④



The Life Cycle of the Monarch Butterfly



larvae (caterpillar)

②



pupa (chrysalis)

③

