

Sample Lesson Plans

50-minute Comparative Literature class on Rachilde's novel *The Juggler*.¹

Objectives for student learning:

Students will be able to ...

1. Place the novel and its protagonist within the context of Rachilde's life and literary career.
2. Identify and analyze the "decadent" connections between Baudelaire and Rachilde.

On board:

Rachilde: Marguerite Emery Vallette (1860-1953)

"Mademoiselle Baudelaire"

Over 60 published works:

Monsieur Vénus (1884); *La Jongleuse/The Juggler* (1900, 1982 reprint, 1990 translation)

1. Announcements and reminders (5 minutes)

2. Introduce the novel (10 minutes)

2.1. Prompts (5 minutes):

Poll: "How many read the introduction to the novel?" "Has anyone heard of Rachilde before?"

If many students have read it:

- "What was interesting, curious, or unexpected about the author?"
- "What are some connections between Rachilde's life and what you have seen in the novel so far?"

If just a couple or no one has read it:

- "The novel is said to be somewhat autobiographical: from reading the first fifty pages, what can you surmise about Rachilde's life?"
- "Why do you think she was called 'Mademoiselle Baudelaire'?"

2.2. Connect novel and author through a short lecture on Rachilde's biography (5 minutes)

3. "Decadent" connections between Baudelaire and Rachilde (20 minutes)

3.1. Discussion: "What are some key images we have seen in Baudelaire's poems that also appear in the novel?" (list images on board; e.g. make up, costumes, hair, Creole...) (5-7 minutes)

3.2. Group activity (5 minutes):

Split class into groups of 4 or 5; assign roles: one note taker, one reporter. Assign one image to each group and ask them to look for specific examples in the text of that image and answer the question: "How is Rachilde using this Baudelairean image in the text? And to what effect?" (write questions on board)

3.3. Class debrief of group work (8-10 minutes)

4. Check for understanding (10-12 minutes)

4.1. Discussion: "So how can we understand Rachilde's nickname 'Mademoiselle Baudelaire'? As praise, irony, condemnation?" (If no time, ask students to write for a minute, then discuss answers next time.)

5. Sum up main points and preview next class (the question of love in the novel) (3-5 minutes)

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