

Lesson Plan for “Rat Cheer” by Claude Clayton Smith

published in the online anthology [Nobody’s Home: Modern Southern Folklore](#)

CCSS Standard(s): CCS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, 3, 4, 6, 8; SL. 1, 3, 4, 6; L.3, 4 ([ELA Anchor](#))

Objective(s): To examine colloquialisms that exist in particular parts of the South; to consider the beliefs about life that those sayings engender.

Essential Question(s): What are the sayings and euphemisms that are peculiar to certain places within the larger South? What are the nuanced meanings of those sayings?

Preparation for Teacher (Strategy and Purpose): Read the essay “Rat Cheer” to ascertain the author’s themes in discussing his encounters with a new saying. Consider how outsiders encounter new cultures and how newcomers might recognize the particularity of language that others simply take for granted.

Preparation of Students (Strategy and Purpose): Provide students with the essay as an in-class reading or homework prior to the class period when a discussion about their own sayings and euphemisms will occur. Smith’s narrative about trying to understand “rat cheer” should incite their own ideas about how an outsider coming into their lives might struggle to understand sayings that they use regularly.

In-class activities (recommended): After having students read the essay by Smith in advance, the teacher should lead a discussion about sayings in their own local culture that a newcomer might not understand. Students should be allowed to share their own examples and their own experiences.

Lesson Follow-up (Recommendations): The teacher will ask students to consider why they believe the saying came about, e.g. what need did it serve?

Technology: SmartBoard, Elmo, other device for sharing the texts

Tiered Instruction/Intervention/Differentiation: Accommodations per needs, IEPs, or 504s

Assessment: Students should write a dictionary or urban dictionary definition for their saying or euphemism, including a pronunciation key. This definition should serve to explain any or all meanings of the saying.

Homework: See assessment suggestion above.

Comments: This lesson plan could be utilized by some students to bring in sayings that are inappropriate or obscene. Teachers should advise their students in advance about appropriateness, especially when it comes to slang.