



## ***Little Shop of Horrors***

Lesson Plan Title: 1. The Art and Science of Plants 2. The Lifecycle of a Plant 3. Creating a Botanical Creature

Authors: Ashley Gunter, Jack Pritt and Tricia Patrick

Grade Level: 4-12

### **Introduction:**

- Synopsis
  - *Little Shop of Horrors* is a musical that tells the tale of Seymour, a humble flower shop assistant, who discovers a mysterious plant he names Audrey II after his coworker crush, Audrey. Audrey II, while resembling a Venus flytrap, is a different species of carnivorous plant from unknown origins. As Audrey II's insatiable appetite grows, Seymour finds himself sacrificing the needs of others to satisfy his own.
  
  - This lesson plan provides students with an opportunity to create their own plant inspired by nature. Based on research found on the U.S. Botanic Gardens website and the worksheets provided, students will select a plant and explore its life cycle, conduct a character study of its personality traits and objectives and conclude with designing of their own unique botanical creature.

### **Curricular Connections:**

CCRA-R.7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**Art**



- Character study and development
- Artmaking
- **ELA**
  - Character study and development
  - Visual Storytelling
- **Science**
  - Biology and plant life cycles
  - Carnivorous plants

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Students will learn how the natural world can serve as inspiration for artistic expression.
2. Students will research plants and, through scientific and artistic inquiry, transform them into a new species with unique qualities.
3. Students will perform a character study using the template provided to inform the design and creation of their new plant.

### **Guiding Questions:**

1. How does the natural world inspire artistic exploration?
2. How does science fiction allow us to explore, reflect and/or face what's happening in our real world?
3. How does practicing an artform help us learn about other people and ourselves?
4. How do artists choose tools, techniques, and materials to express their ideas?
5. How influential or important is the role of someone's environment or life circumstances in how they make decisions and face consequences?

### **Classroom Activities:**

- Lesson One: The Art and Science of Plants (40-55 minutes)
- Lesson Two: The Lifecycle of a Carnivorous Plant (30-45 minutes)
- Lesson Three: Creating to Destroy: The Makings of a Plant (40-50 minutes)



## Lesson One: The Art and Science of Plants (10-15 minutes)

### Introduction:

One doesn't have to think too hard to come up with a list of movies, TV shows, books or stories that have been heavily inspired by nature.

Icebreaker Activity: The educator can challenge the students to a quick icebreaker by having them call out pop culture references that feature characters or plot lines based on the plant world.

Whether it is the feature animated film *A Bug's Life*, an action-adventure movie like *Jurassic Park*, or characters like Groot in *Guardians of the Galaxy*, Poison Ivy from the *Batman* comics or the "Vines" in the Upside-Down from *Stranger Things*, plants continue to fascinate human beings.

In the musical *Little Shop of Horrors*, the character Seymour is a plant enthusiast. One day, while shopping for new flora, Seymour was about to give up his search, when a plant appeared on the shelves after a sudden solar eclipse. Although the plant resembled a Venus flytrap, it had some unique qualities that set it apart, making us question whether it had other worldly origins.

### Learning Activity - Research and Plant Selection (15-20 minutes):

1. Using the [United States Botanical Gardens](#) website, instruct the students to select and research a carnivorous plant that they would like to transform. When selecting the plant, students should document the following information:
  - a. The botanical name.
  - b. If the plant's existence is threatened.
  - c. The plant's natural environment.
  - d. Describe the physical attributes in as much detail as possible.
  - e. List the first five words that come to your mind when looking at your plant.

\*If students would like to explore other types of plants, for our purposes, the teacher can encourage students to research invasive, exotic, endangered plants or those local to their region.



2. Students can print, trace or make a rough sketch of their selected plant.

### **Learning Activity - Chronicling Life Cycle of a Plant (15-20 minutes):**

In *Little Shop of Horrors*, we see Audrey II start in her pot at the beginning of the show and gradually grow large enough to take over the stage. In this lesson, students will briefly explore the life cycle of a plant and will use biology to inspire its transformation.

Instruct the students to use the **Life Cycle of a Carnivorous Plant Worksheet** to document and illustrate the life cycle of their chosen plant. Students can continue to explore the [United States Botanic Garden](#) website or additional online or school library sources to chart how their plant grows and changes over time.

As their plant goes through each life stage, students should note how the color, texture and other characteristics emerge and change over time. These will be important factors in determining how they will transform the plant into one of their own design.

### **Exit Ticket:**

Students can share their worksheets highlighting the phase in which the plant goes through the most dramatic changes. Students can also share how long the plant remains in each phase and what conditions or circumstances may affect a plant's development.

## **Lesson Two: Every Plant Has a Story**

### **Introduction (3-5 minutes):**

When writing a script, play, TV show, short story or novel, writers will create a thoroughly crafted study of each of their major characters. Storytellers do this to ensure that they are writing from distinct and clear perspectives for each character. They paint a complete picture for each character which requires thoughtful planning and attention to detail.

In *Little Shop of Horrors*, Audrey II is a character that goes through different life cycles, has distinct physical features and has a manipulative and persuasive personality. In this lesson, students will create the backstory or lore of their own imagination and then design a transformed anthropomorphic plant.

### **Key Vocabulary and Inciting Incident (15-20 minutes):**



As students enter the classroom and settle in for the activity, they can work in groups or pairs to review or define the following words if needed.

- Attribute
- Characteristic
- Invasive
- Anthropomorphic
- Antagonist
- Protagonist
- Personification

There are many occurrences, earthly or otherwise, that can trigger a biological transformation. After all, Seymour discovered Audrey II after a solar eclipse.

In preparation for completing the character study, have students review their **Life Cycle of a Carnivorous Plant Worksheet**. Next, instruct them to decide what is the cause of their plant's transformation. Like the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, was there something toxic in the environment? Is the plant from outer space? Was the transformation the result of a scientific experiment gone wrong – or right? Then students should identify at what stage of the plant's development this change occurs and how does that impact how the plant develops physically. After answering these questions, then the students can move on to character study.

**Learning Activity: Character Study Worksheet (10-15 mins):**

Have students answer the questions in the worksheet and discuss with a partner or in groups once finished.

**Exit Ticket (3-5 minutes):**

On a sheet of paper, students identify what triggered their plant's transformation, what life stage it occurred and what physical and personality traits it possesses as a result.

Time allowing, students can sketch or describe their transformed plant in detail.



## Lesson Three: Creating to Destroy, The Makings of a Plant (30-45 minutes)

### Artmaking (20-30 minutes)

In their exit ticket from the previous lesson, students have already identified which life cycle their plant was in, when the transformation began. They should proceed to select materials that best bring to life their new creation. Remind students that their material selection should tell us more about their plant, where it comes from and if it is a protagonist or an antagonist.

### **Possible media and material to depict their plant:**

- Paper, cardstock, watercolor paper, mixed media paper
- Pencils, color pencils, markers, oil pastels
- Collage, magazines and newspaper
- Comic strip
- Watercolor, watercolor pencils
- Drawing, illustration
- Painting
- Digital media, digital illustration
- Sculpture using found, recycled materials
- Sculpt or air-dry clay
- Scissors, glue, glue sticks

### Exit Ticket (10-15 minutes):

Option One: Students can place their artwork on the wall or at their desk so everyone can view it. Giving each student three sticky notes, conduct a gallery walk in which students can provide [warm and cool feedback](#) about their classmates' artwork.

Option Two: Complete the Reflection Questions

What influenced the choice of materials you used in creating your plant?

What do you want the audience to notice first, second and third about your plant? How did you accomplish that in your material selection?



How does the background or setting of your plant tell us more about their personality or their way of surviving?

What surprised you about making your plant?

