

1. Brief summary (overview and purpose) of the resource

This is a Lesson Plan for teaching *The Charge of the Light Brigade* through discussion and group work. It focuses on the scansion and analysis of meter, and it includes a homework assessment involving the synthesis of metric feet. The ultimate purpose of this Lesson is to familiarize students with different types of meter, delineate the unity of form and content, and open discussion on the thematic elements of duty, fortitude, and the responsibility for (and dignity of) human life.

2. Title of resource

Lesson Plan: Albert, Lord Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*

3. Prepared by (please include your name and position, your high school, and its location)

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4. Click to choose the grade level.

If other, please explain (e.g., Grades 9- 10):

Grades 9-10

5. To ensure correct Catholic teaching, please explain *in detail* Catholic support and/or evidence for your resource. If at all possible, please cite a Catholic document (for example, the [Catechism](#)).

The Charge of the Light Brigade explores the thematic areas of duty, fortitude and the responsibility for human life and dignity.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1808 Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song." [70] "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." [71]

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2199 The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal. It likewise concerns the ties of kinship between members of the extended family. It requires honor, affection, and gratitude toward elders and ancestors. Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it. This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents, instructors, teachers, leaders, magistrates, those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2319 Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.



6. **Common Core standard(s) fulfilled by resource. Please indicate the state (for example, Iowa) and the standard(s). For assistance, click <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>.**

[NC] RL-1,2,4; SL-1.b,c,4

7. **Objective(s) of resource (please specify skill(s)/information that will be learned by the student)**

Students will:

- Identify and label different types of meter in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*
- Identify and assess Tennyson' tone
- Articulate the thematic significance of Tennyson' poem

8. **Assessment(s) or steps to check for student understanding (please indicate if assessment is "formative" or "summative" or both)**

Assessments are formative: group notes, discussion participation, and metrical synthesis assignment

9. **Activity (please describe the activity of this resource)**

- 1) Begin with the following bellwork, written on the board as students enter: "What is fortitude? Does it look the same in everyone? Why or why not?"
- 2) Call on three or more students to volunteer ideas. Discuss the idea of fortitude for a few moments, drawing out the both/and of the second question: fortitude is the same virtue, but individual exercise of this virtue reveals itself differently in the specifics of different vocations and states in life. Ask students to compare and contrast the fortitude shown by a president with that shown by a soldier. What about a student? Highlight the common aspects of the virtue for each.
- 3) Collect the bellwork and ask students to take notes. Then write "Meter" on the board and explain that this is the structural backbone of formal poetry. Before you begin talking about meter, however, review the meaning of a syllable and ask students to count the number of syllables in a few words: apple, generate, alleviate, go, written, etc. Then ask them to identify the syllable which receives the greatest emphasis in the word (ap, gen, lev, (go), writ). This is sometimes challenging for students, but remind them that they can all hear stress because they know that genERate or apPLE sounds weird. No one speaks like that. If they are still struggling, ask them to get up and stamp their feet to the "beat" of the following sentence: "I told the man to take his things and go." It's usually helpful to overemphasize any suspected stresses if a student is unsure. Hearing an exaggerated stress can sometimes do the trick.
- 4) Now move on to meter. Explain to students that provides the number and pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables within the lines of a poem. Remind them of Shakespeare's blank verse, which is iambic pentameter. An identification of meter will involve two words. (Make two columns on the board; head the first one "Feet" and the other "Number.") Explain that the first word will describe the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables involved. Each unit of syllables (usually two or three) is called a foot. (It may be helpful as a mnemonic to draw stick figures in the "Number" column as you go: two for dimeter, three for trimeter, etc. This can help students to remember that the number is for each UNIT (pair or triplet). In parentheses beside this column, you may also want to draw a stick figure with three legs to extend the silly mnemonic and remind students that some feet (including some they will see today) use three

syllables instead of two.) Now fill out the chart, asking students to copy into their notes. On the left (Feet), you should include: iambic, trochaic, spondaic, pyrrhic, anapestic, and dactylic. On the right (Number), you should include: dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, and hexameter. Note that these are not the only, but only the most common types and numbers of feet. Monometer – or anything larger than hexameter – are more rare, as are amphibrachs and other types of longer feet. Show the students the roots in the number column: Di = 2, tri = 3, tetra = 4, penta = 5, and hexa = 6. Then make a key, using scansion marks (u for unstressed, x or ' for stress) beside each type of foot. (iambic foot = u x, trochaic foot = x u, spondaic foot = x x, pyrrhic foot = u u, anapestic foot = u u x, dactylic foot = x u u) Tell students that they are going to practice identifying patterns of stress in a few minutes.

- 5) Now hand out *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Read through the first time (making sure to emphasize the rhythm); then ask for six student volunteers to read it a second time (one per stanza). Ask for first impressions, then facilitate a brief discussion: What stands out on a first read-through? What is going on in this poem? That is, what situation is facing this brigade of men? Do we know what Tennyson thinks of this situation? Of these men? How do we know? Highlight the line “While horse and hero fell.” How is this line different from the others? (It is one of only two lines beginning with an unstressed syllable. (The other is a question.) It trips us up as readers, especially since the other opening stresses are so strong. There is so much momentum to the lines (like you’re charging into them, thundering on horseback) that this one trips you and slows you down with intentional awkwardness. Ask students to imagine running so fast that they trip themselves on nothing – that’s something of the effect here. The line, then, gets extra emphasis by withholding stress at first.) Why might this difference be significant? (Discuss the way the poet equates “horse” and “hero.”) What point might he be trying to make about human dignity and the way in which the leaders and strategists viewed these six hundred men?
- 6) Divide the students into five groups (pairs or sets of three, depending on number), and assign each group to one of the stanzas. Tell each group to elect a scribe and an orator who will be responsible for taking notes and presenting to the class respectively. They will have twenty minutes to do the following: A) Underline any repetition that occurs in the stanza. Double underline repetition that occurs at the beginning of two or more lines (anaphora). Then answer the following question: What is the effect of this repetition? B) Mark the stressed syllables throughout the stanza. Identify the pattern and describe the effect of the rhythm this creates. C) Answer the following questions: What is Tennyson’s tone toward the men? Toward the strategists/leaders who send them in? Connect at least three concrete details from the stanza (one from (A) and two from (B)) to one or both tones. At the end of twenty minutes, regroup and have each orator give one example from (A), one from (B), characterize the mood, and connect these examples to the mood.
- 7) Wrap up the discussion by reiterating the thematic significance of the soldiers’ human dignity and the problematic attitude of the superiors toward their men. Also bring discussion back to the idea of fortitude, asking the students to describe the soldiers’ dutiful courage, even in the face of death.
- 8) The students’ homework is to create their own poem in iambic or trochaic tetrameter or pentameter. The poem should be a minimum of four lines and no longer than eight. (See notes)

10. Materials or other supplies needed (e.g., art supplies, maps, internet access, specific software or APP(s), books, etc.)

Copy of the poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*

11. Additional notes and/or list of supplemental materials (grade rubric, PowerPoint presentation, etc.)

Homework:

[Out of 25 possible points]

Assignment is at least four lines (10)

Assignment is in iambic or trochaic meter (7)

Assignment has eight or ten syllables per line (8)