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| **At a Glance – “His eyes glowed a deep, deep red”**   * **Lesson Objective**: Consider how Asimov’s views on science fiction influence his narrative choices. * **In the Story:** Mr. Weston proposes a new idea to Mrs. Weston: if they bring Gloria to the factory that makes robots, she’ll realize Robbie was never alive and might not miss him any longer. At the factory, Gloria spies Robbie. She runs to him without realizing she’s in the path of a huge tractor, and Robbie acts immediately to save her. While Gloria and Robbie reunite, Mrs. Weston realizes this was Mr. Weston’s plan all along and reluctantly agrees that Robbie can stay. * **Key Questions:** Questions 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9 are the most important questions of the day and should not be skipped. * **Words to Watch For:**  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Page** | **Word** | **Meaning in Context** | **Page** | **Word** | **Meaning in Context** | | 19 | **complacence** | a feeling of smug self-satisfaction | 21 | **contempt** | disrespect or disapproval | | 20 | **conscientious** | careful | 21 | **incredulous** | unwilling or unable to believe something | | 20 | **pince-nez** | eyeglasses that clip to the nose | 22 | **formidable** | impressively powerful or intense | | 20 | **advent** | the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event | 22 | **tremulous** | shaking or quivering slightly | | 20 | **dislocation** | disturbance or disruption from a proper or usual place | 22 | **asphyxiated** | killed by depriving of air | | 20 | **discomfiture** | a feeling of embarrassment or awkwardness |  |  |  |  * **Homework Options:**   + “Don’t Fear the Robot Overlords—Embrace them as Coworkers” reading and questions (attached)   + Questions from the lesson that were skipped for time   + Knowledge Organizer or vocabulary review |
| **Agenda:**   * Do Now (10 minutes) * Retrieval Practice (10 minutes) * Cycle 1 – AIR: Pages 19-20 (20 minutes) * Cycle 2 – Read Aloud or FASE Reading: Pages 20-23 (20 minutes) * Cycle 3 – Read Aloud or FASE Reading: “A Conversation with Isaac Asimov” (15 minutes) * Summative Writing (15 minutes) |
| **Lesson Plan**  **Do Now (10 minutes)**   * Give students 5-6 minutes to read the article and answer both questions, then review using **Cold Call, share out,** or a **brief discussion**. * **Q1:** **Where have we seen evidence of these Three Laws of Robotics in “Robbie”? Brainstorm as many examples as you can.**    + Multiple possible responses: Robbie must follow Gloria’s orders, Mr. Weston tries to reassure Mrs. Weston that the First Law prevents Robbie from ever harming Gloria, Robbie treats Gloria gently and carefully at all times * **Q2: How have Asimov’s Three Laws influenced other writers and scientists?**    + The Three Laws helped to change the narrative around robots, moving past the idea of “violent metal monsters.” They are also used by engineers who are dealing with ethical questions regarding actual robot behavior. |
| **Retrieval Practice (10 minutes)**   * In advance, answer these questions yourself, using previous lessons and the Knowledge Organizer. * Review these questions (see student packet) with your class using **Cold Call**. * ***Note****: You may opt to not ask all the questions we’ve listed. Prioritize as you see fit.* |
| **Cycle 1 (20 minutes) — Pages 19-20**   * **Read:** Ask students to use **AIR** to read pp. 19-20, from “That evening, George Weston left” on p. 19 through “‘Follow me please’” at the bottom of p. 20. While reading, students should **annotate** any evidence of George Weston’s new plan and consider both what he wants to do and why he thinks it will work.   + **Potential Annotations**   + *“The whole trouble with Gloria is that she thinks of Robbie as a person and not as a machine. Naturally, she can’t forget him. Now if we managed to convince her that Robbie was nothing more than a mess of steel and copper in the form of sheets and wires with electricity its juice of life, how long would her longings last? It’s the psychological attack, if you see my point.”* (p. 19)   + *“I persuaded Robertson of U.S. Robot and Mechanical Men, Inc to arrange for a compete tour of the premises tomorrow.”* (p. 19)   + *“The three of us will go and by the time we’re through, Gloria will have it drilled into her that a robot is* not *alive.”* (p. 19) * **Write:** Ask students to respond to **Q1a-Q1b** in writing when they finish reading, and then **Turn and Talk** to respond to **Q1c.** * **Discuss:** Lead a brief discussion of **Q1.** You might **Cold Call** or **Show Call** strong responses to support pacing.   + **Q1a: Mr. Weston says, “Naturally, she can’t forget him.” The word natural refers to what is found in or produced by nature as well as what’s normal or expected. Why might he think it is “natural” for Gloria to be unable to forget Robbie?**      - Mr. Weston thinks it’s “natural” for Gloria to long for Robbie because she thinks of him as a person. It’s normal and expected to care for other people and miss them when they are gone from us. Because she thinks of Robbie as someone living (a “natural” being as opposed to a manufactured or artificial one), her “longings” for him are also natural or occurring in the normal course of life.   + **Q1b: Explain the “psychological attack” Mr. Weston is proposing. How will this attack change what is “natural” for Gloria? Challenge: Why might he use the word “attack” rather than a word like “approach” or “strategy”?**      - Mr. Weston is planning to “attack” Gloria’s mental picture of who Robbie is. He wants to reveal that Robbie is “nothing more than a mess of steel and copper,” or an artificial, non-living being. Love for another person is natural; love for a machine, however, is unnatural and would (in Mr. Weston’s view) quickly end once Gloria sees Robbie in this new way. He knows that Gloria cares deeply for Robbie as a person, so he plans to give her irrefutable proof that he is merely a machine.     - The word “attack” is more violent and aggressive than a more neutral word like “approach” or “strategy.” Mr. Weston knows that Gloria will be resist to this change in her thinking and he might have to overwhelm her with this information (“Gloria will have it drilled into her that a robot is not alive”).   + **Q1c: Do you think this “attack” will be successful? Why or why not?**      - Responses will vary. * **Write**: Ask students to respond to **Q2** using the embellishment on labor unions. ***Note****: For pacing, you may wish to make this a Turn and Talk rather than a written question.* * **Discuss:** **Share out** responses to **Q2.**    + **Q2a: What is Mr. Struthers referring to when he says, “the unions would never let us”? Who does the pronoun “us” refer to? What will the unions “never let” them do? Challenge: How might he finish his sentence??**      - Mr. Struthers means that the union would never let the robotics factory use only robot labor (in place of human workers). He might have completed the sentence by saying, “The advent of the robot, while involving some dislocation to begin with, will inevitably benefit humans in some way.” (Responses may vary)   + **Q2b: Why might the unions be so opposed to robot labor? Consider Mr. Struthers’s use of the word “dislocation.” Who or what might be dislocated by the “advent of the robot”? Challenge: What broader attitude toward new technologies might the labor unions be exemplifying?**      - Robot workers would replace human workers, disrupting their usual place in factories or other workplaces. The labor unions would likely be opposed to robot labor because their role is to protect the interests of the workers who would be eventually replaced. The unions are opposed to new technology that disrupts the status quo or changes the way things have usually been. |
| **Cycle 2 (20 minutes) – Pages 20-23**   * **Read:** **Read Aloud** or use **FASE Reading** to finish the story, reading from “He was comparatively quiet” on p. 20 through “‘until he rusts’” on p. 23. * **Write:** Ask students to **Turn and Talk** to respond to **Q3**, then write responses to **Q4-Q5**. * **Discuss:** **Share out** responses to **Q3**, and lead a **brief discussion** of **Q4**, and **Show Call** responses to **Q5**.   + **Q3: Explain the story’s twist ending. What was Mr. Weston’s actual plan?**      - Mr. Weston arranged for Robbie to be working at the factory they were visiting (even though he wasn’t designed for that kind of work) so Gloria could see him again on this tour. While he didn’t expect him to save her life, he was planning their reunion all along.   + **Q4a:** **Consider the moment when “one of the robots about the table faltered and dropped the tool he was holding.” What might Asimov be indicating about Robbie with this action?**      - A purely mechanical being would be unlikely to “falter” or drop something at the sound of a familiar voice. This seems to indicate an emotional response in Robbie at the sound of Gloria’s voice.   + **Q4b: How might this scene contradict Mr. Weston’s perspective? Is there “more” to Robbie than a “mess of steel and copper”? Explain your thinking.**      - In this scene, there does seem to be “more” to Robbie than just “a mess of steel and copper.” Despite the materials of which he is made, the attachment/bond between Gloria and Robbie seems to be reciprocated. Their relationship goes beyond the obedience of the Three Laws. He is “her Robbie,” not just a nameless, faceless mess of parts.   + **Q5: In one artful sentence, describe Robbie’s rescue of Gloria. Begin your response with the word “As.” Challenge: Include the phrase “only human” from p. 21.**      - As the huge tractor rumbles down the track toward Gloria, only Robbie reacts quickly enough, immediately sprinting to her side and sweeping her out of danger, while the people who are “only human” look on in fear. * **Write**: Ask students to respond to **Q6a-Q6b** in writing, then **Turn and Talk** to respond to **Q6c**. * **Discuss**: Lead a **brief discussion** of **Q6**.   + **Q6a: Annotate the parenthetical statement in the excerpt above. Why might Asimov have chosen to include the parenthetical information in this moment?**      - *capable of bending a bar of steel two inches in diameter into a pretzel*     - Asimov may have included this parenthetical information to emphasize the contrast between Robbie’s strength and power (the aspects of robots that have always frightened us) with his gentleness and care as he holds Gloria in his arms.   + **Q6b: Contrast Gloria’s grip on Robbie with the way Robbie holds Gloria. What might this juxtaposition be meant to convey?**      - Gloria is holding Robbie so tightly her grip “would have asphyxiated any creature but one of metal.” Only a robot could be held so tightly. In contrast, despite the strength of his “chrome-steel arms,” Robbie has them “wound about the little girl gently and lovingly.” The juxtaposition of Gloria’s desperate grip and Robbie’s delicate touch emphasis the depth of connection they both feel. Gloria is holding Robbie as tightly as she can, and Robbie holds Gloria as gently as possible because each one cares so much about the other.   + **Q6c: Why might Mrs. Weston have mentioned “rust” in her final line?**      - Even though she’s agreed that Robbie can stay, she’s emphasizing that he’s still made of metal and will one day “rust” or grow obsolete/fall apart. Her reaction to the emotional intensity of the moment between Gloria and Robbie is to reiterate his role as machine rather than person. |
| **Cycle 3 (10 minutes) – “A Conversation with Isaac Asimov”**   * **Read:** **Read Aloud** or use **FASE Reading** to read the article. * **Write:** Ask students to **Turn and Task** to respond to **Q7**. * **Discuss: Share out** responses to **Q7.** You may wish to **Show Call** strong annotations**.**   + **Q7: Annotate any evidence of Asimov’s attitude toward changes in technology and society. How would you describe his perspective?**      - Asimov seems to see change as inevitable; even though we may not like it, machines and technology will continue to play a larger role in society. Rather than trying to stand in the way, he thinks it’s best to confront changes head on and decide the best course of action. * **Write**: Ask students to write responses to **Q8**. * **Discuss**: Lead a **brief discussion** of **Q8**. You may wish to **Cold Call** or take hands to draw out the key ideas.   + **Q8: What does Asimov see as the role of science fiction? Explain your thinking.**      - To Asimov, science fiction is a way for people to process and think through the impact of potential changes in society so that they can figure out the best path forward. He thinks change is inevitable and that as a society, we must “look these changes boldly in the face” to that we can make decisions about which changes are desirable and which are undesirable. Science fiction is a way to learn about or experiment with those changes to help us “choose which one is for the better.” |
| **Summative Writing (20 minutes)**   * **Prompt: How does Isaac Asimov’s story “Robbie” reflect his perspective on the role of science fiction in society? In a 1-2 paragraph response that includes evidence from both the short story and the article, explain:**    + **Asimov’s perspective on technological change and science fiction**   + **The ways in which “Robbie” reflects that perspective** * **Target Response:** Asimov sees science fiction as a way for people to come to terms with potential changes in society before they happen, working through possible futures to determine the best course forward. In “Robbie,” Asimov rejects the idea of destructive, menacing robots to portray a loving, emotional relationship between a robot and a little girl. Rather than treating robotic technology as something to fear, Asimov portrays the robots as creatures of “soul and emotion,” evoking reader sympathies and presenting a more optimistic view of human/machine interaction**.** (Evidence may vary) |
| **Homework Answers**   1. The first three paragraphs describe the interactions between one robot and its human engineer to disrupt our expectations of what might happen. 2. While robots excel at tasks that require strength, speed, or repetitive motion, they struggle with fine manipulation or unpredictable environments. |