

Thomas Wolfe: Family, Friends and Folklore

The following will serve as a pre-visit lesson in preparation for a visit to the Thomas Wolfe Memorial. There are two parts to the lesson. Part One provides information about Thomas Wolfe, his family and his book *Look Homeward, Angel*. Part Two provides information about Julia Wolfe and North Carolina Folklore. Each part has attachments.

Learning Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- ... name Thomas Wolfe as an author from Asheville who wrote *Look Homeward, Angel*.
- ... list angels and ghosts as themes from the works of Thomas Wolfe and North Carolina folklore.
- ... identify Julia Wolfe, Thomas Wolfe's mother, as an influence on his writing.
- ... compare a Cherokee legend to Julia Wolfe's story about heaven.
- ... describe William Oliver Wolfe, Thomas Wolfe's father as a stonecutter who made and sold monuments for cemeteries, including stone angels.

North Carolina Standards and Common Core Standards

Social Studies

- 8.C.1.2- Summarize the origin of beliefs, practices, and traditions that represent various groups within North Carolina and the United States (e.g. Moravians, Scots-Irish, Highland Scots, Latinos, Hmong, Africans, and American Indians).

English Language Arts

- 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.
- CCSS.ELA.Literacy.RL.8.9- Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns or events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

Vocabulary:

Folklore - traditional customs, beliefs, stories, and sayings. Ideas or stories that are not true but that many people have heard or read.

Mysticism - a religious practice based on the belief that union with or absorption into the Deity is possible through prayer and self-surrender.

Spiritualism - a belief that the spirits of dead people can communicate with living people.

Pre-determination - the establishment of events, or formation of a purpose beforehand, such as before birth.

Ghost - the soul of a dead person thought of as living in an unseen world or as appearing to living people.

Angel - a spiritual being that serves especially as a messenger from God or as a guardian of human beings.

Resources

The websites below provide additional information about Thomas Wolfe, angels, and folklore.

- The Thomas Wolfe Memorial State Historic Site- <http://wolfememorial.com/>
- The Thomas Wolfe Society- <http://www.thomaswolfe.org/>
- UNC Thomas Wolfe Collection- <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/ncc/ref/tw/bio.html>
- NC Historic Sites Wolfe Memorial Information Page
<http://www.nchistoricsites.org/wolfe/wolfe.htm>
- North Carolina Encyclopedia, “Thomas Wolfe”- <http://ncpedia.org/biography/wolfe-thomas>
- North Carolina Encyclopedia, “Angels”- <http://ncpedia.org/angels>
- North Carolina Encyclopedia, “Folklore”- <http://ncpedia.org/folklore>