



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Cultural Distinctions of the Central Themes in *Romeo and Juliet*

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Rationale

As an English teacher at Wilbur Cross Annex High School in New Haven, Connecticut, an alternative, urban setting for students who are unable to sustain adequate high school credit for a myriad of reasons, I find developing curriculum presents a unique challenge. These at-risk students lack both fundamental skills and the motivation to learn. They are, however, very capable intellectually, possess tremendous "street smarts" and, if presented with the right hook, can learn. They are visual learners and work well when there is a finished product or visual representation that they can actually hold with pride. Working under eight regular education teachers, the approximately 150 students are not separated by grade level but rather are grouped according to specific course credit needed. There are two 90 minute block periods and three single class sessions within the day. I teach across all grade levels, 9 through 12, within a single class period with inclusion students as well. Absenteeism is a major problem.

Shakespeare is part of the required high school curriculum. The world of Shakespeare and the world in which my students live, would appear, at first glance, to be 180° apart. My students are products of the "hood" where crime, drugs, guns, and teen pregnancy are a way of life. They fear leaving their homes during the evening hours. I asked myself if anything could be more incongruous than their experiencing the world of Shakespeare. "Shakespeare is poetry with men in tights" the students would respond. Then I took a hard look at the story of *Romeo and Juliet*. There are warring family gangs, murder, teen sex, and death by drugs. Presented in this light, it is my firm belief that they can read and view Shakespeare and other quality stories with great interest and excitement.

Because my students lack so many of the fundamentals of learning, it is necessary to provide them with activities that both instruct and provide basic skills. Within this unit I need to promote engagement with text and film for the purposes of reflection as well as basic recognition strategies such as context clues, literary conventions and structural analysis. There will be assignments in technology usage and research investigation. Cooperative learning will help counter classroom strife that exists in the diverse population within our school setting. Finally, incorporating a variety of "back door" assignments, my students will be encouraged to write and respond, skills that they are clearly missing. They would balk at a straight up essay assignment.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, I will hook my students into Shakespeare who is relevant to a broader cultural investigation of dating, teen love, parental blockage, and marriage. Using a series of well thought-out and designed lesson plans, my students will explore ideas centered in the following three domains: analytic, introspective, and interactive. They will act and interact with each other; express their feelings, values, and attitudes; and see, hear, imagine, and connect to larger social understandings. This interaction is crucial when dealing with students who live in turmoil and where they are convinced that education has little value in their lives. There will be specific projects that will result in finished products that the students can take pride in. These experiences fall squarely into Gardner's nine intelligence profiles: *bodily/kinesthetic; interpersonal; intrapersonal; logical; naturalist; verbal; visual; and existential* . Using this approach will provide my students the hands-on experience that they so desperately need.

Strategies

Knowing that my students enjoy the "drama" of a good love story as well as the sub plot of warring families, I chose to consider the central themes in *Romeo and Juliet* as the basis of my unit. Social and cultural mores will be central to our discussion. The difficulty involved in presenting the "language of Shakespeare" will be circumvented through the use of *Folger's Romeo and Juliet*, where an up-to-date version of the lines is provided alongside Shakespeare's original lines. Since the poetic language of Shakespeare will present certain resistance, certain scenes will be chosen for reading. This, coupled with the use of films where the aural presentation by professional actors helps to eliminate lack of understanding, will round out the basic presentation of the central themes.

The films chosen offer a variety of experiences, from a traditional enactment, Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* , to a setting in "the hood," Baz Luhrman's *Romeo and Juliet* . I have also included the film, *West Side Story*, as a way of appealing to the Hispanic population in my classes. Through discussion, journal writing, group collaboration, and the use of graphic organizers, I will ask my students to investigate how these central themes are handled in different cultures.

Computer technology will be the vehicle used as the students begin the unit. Doing a web search on the background of "The Bard" will introduce or re-enforce computer skills necessary for my students to succeed in today's fast moving society. Through a series of guided exercises, they will develop skills in researching. After investigating the Globe Theatre on the internet, the students will be asked to construct a model of it as a way to strengthen comprehension skills taught through direction reading and interpreting. Re-enforcement of these skills is critical and necessary to my students.

Throughout the unit, graphic organizers will be used to provide structure for the presentation of new or review ideas or concepts. Using graphic organizers will help students to actively isolate, process, and reorganize key information at the same time allowing them to approach the themes cognitively. They will be able to see relationships as well contrasts which sometimes they will record as a journal writing exercise.

The final strategy will be dramatic scene writing. This instrument will encourage cooperation, increase writing skills, develop organizational skills, and present my students with a sense of fulfillment and pride of accomplishment. Using dramatic skills and those learned as the result of our discussion on film, the students

will experiment

with scene development. The final will result will be the presentation of the scene complete with costumes and scenery.

Class Activities

Introduction - Questions

The following are a list of questions I would position around the room in the initial stages of the unit presentation. Categorizing these questions into ones for discussion or investigation, as well as ones dealing with literature, geography, cultural mores, or film will help us start to understand the breadth of our unit. Literature, film, cultural mores, and, to a much lesser degree, geography will be the four areas of concentration within this unit.

- 1 Who is William Shakespeare?
- 2 What is the truth of love in *Romeo and Juliet* ?
- 3 Are we similar as humans in terms of "love, relationships, and unions?"
- 4 What are the commonalities between males and females?
- 5 What major events separate you from other people with similar problems?
- 6 Does the location of love make for a different kind of love?
- 7 Where did Romeo and Juliet live?
- 8 How did that impact their love?
- 9 Did Romeo and Juliet want to marry because of or in spite of their family disputes?
- 10 Would living in India make for a different kind of love? Why?
- 11 What are the contributing factors to love?
- 12 How would Shakespeare write today? What would *Romeo and Juliet* look and sound like?

After explaining to the students how the unit will proceed, I will elicit and suggest more questions, specific to the central themes, which the class will add to the question area:

- 1 How is the notion of love and parental blockage resolved in Puerto Rico, Italy, Yugoslavia, or Israel?
- 2 Is love treated as a custom or as chemistry?
- 3 Do the stories of these countries reflect traditions and rituals, or do they show that love is simply hormonal?
- 4 Does love have different meanings in other cultures?
- 5 Are marriages arranged and, if so, does this increase parental interference?
- 6 Is marriage a social institution?
- 7 What do the films of these love stories look like?
- 8 Do we need to understand unseen customs in order to understand the diegesis of the film or do these films "show" us these customs?
- 9 How are music, costumes, and scenery used in the films?
- 10 Is the time period relevant to the story, or can it take place at any time or in any place?

After developing this question board and completing column one of "The Love Connection" worksheet, (**see materials,**) we would begin our exploration of "Will Shakespeare.

A Shakespearean Registry

The students will be asked to maintain evidence of completed assignments within a three-ring binder provided them at the outset of the unit. These binders will remain within the classroom. All notes, graphic organizers, film reviews, and other written assignments should be filed within this binder. This is an essential organizing tool whereby students have concrete visual evidence of task completion. A check list will be provided each student. Copies of all assignments must be kept on hand in the classroom as absenteeism is a major problem with the Annex students. This registry should also contain an attendance sheet so that the students can record their attendance on a daily basis. This visual lets them "see" how attendance can impact their grade.

Glossary

As we begin to truly investigate Shakespeare, I feel it is necessary for my class to review some basic structures of the story. We will spend several days revisiting the elements of a story and creating a working word wall. Students will have a simple graphic organizer with word on the left, definition and notes on the

right.

(table available in print form)

This list would be added to as the unit develops and can later be used in a *Jeopardy* type game. Using Laurence Perrine's *Story and Structure*, we will create this vocabulary wall with definitions and examples that we can refer to as the unit evolves. We will then explore the elements of film as discussed in *The Film Experience* by Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White. The intent of this discussion is to expand the students' viewing ability to more than just plot analysis, although there will not be nearly as much weight levied in this area during discussions of the play and films.

(table available in print form)

It will be worthwhile to note the similarities and differences of these story experiences (Shakespeare's plays versus Film), adding to the vocabulary wall when appropriate and deciding how a story becomes a film, or, in this case how a play becomes a film.

Bard Quest - biographical web search- Who is William Shakespeare Really?

My students need guided research exercises. The information sought will be that of Shakespeare's life, his theater, and the time period in which he wrote. It is my firm belief that the students should get to know William, the man. What made him tick? What was his world like? Would he write differently if he were alive today? See **Lesson Plans** for the details of these assignments. These experiences incorporate exercises that use Gardner's intelligence profiles as a basis for their rationale. The students will be using interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily, logical, logical, naturalistic, and existential skills as they complete this series of lessons.

Shakespeare in Love (1998) film*

The film *Shakespeare in Love* directed by John Madden, tells the story of Will Shakespeare struggling with writer's block as two rival Elizabethan theatres compete for the same audience. The theatre during the days of Shakespeare was more than just for entertainment. It was a tradition. It was the focal point of life in all of England. It was so important that the Queen appointed a Master of Revels whose job it was to oversee, censor, license, and arrange for theatre companies to perform. Because most people were illiterate at the time, they weren't able to read the plays. Shakespeare never meant for these plays to be read. Therefore aural presentation provided a sense of education for the people during this time. This movie "shows" us life as it was in England in the late 1500.

"Psychologically, cinema does indeed affect us as a natural phenomenon. Viewers employ their eyes and ears to apprehend visual and aural forms corresponding to things, beings, and situations in the world. The full machinery of cinema, the cinema as an invention of popular science, ensures that we can see anew, see more, but also see *in the same way*. Most important, this naturalness suggests an attitude for spectators that involves curiosity and alertness within a "horizon" of familiarity. In no other art form are these natural attitudes toward the art material so present."(Andrew, 1984)

Costumes, traditions, scenery, the actual theatre, all make Shakespeare seem more human. A discussion of the elements of movie-making would help students focus on the mise-en-scène. I have used these viewing techniques before and the students have become excellent critical observers. Breaking the film into 10 minute segments will help them fill in a graphic organizer designed to sharpen their viewing eye, allowing them to focus on different aspects of the film: costumes, lighting, blocking, to name but a few.

We turn next to a discussion about Shakespeare, the poet: Is the play actually about the real Will? Was he only able to begin writing *Romeo and Juliet* after he actually fell in love himself? There might be evidence that suggests that the writer of this tragic love story actually based many of the characters in the play on people who had an impact on him personally. This story has just the right combination of prose and verse to allow my students to get a feel for both the language and the man. Why were the two literary forms used? Hopefully my students will come to understand the language, something of the bard, the theatre, and the Elizabethan way of life as they watch this film. This task is made easier because of the recognizable actors, Gwyneth Paltrow, Joseph Fiennes, Colin Firth, and Ben Affleck, who play the leading roles in the film and will draw the students in. I believe this movie will be easy for my students to view and glean valuable information.

*Parental permission would be needed in order for my students to view this film as it is R rated.
See Administration for a copy of file form.

Introductory Skits

Asking for volunteers to perform a dramatic scene is sometimes not easy; saying that credit will be given, always gets responses. Students who volunteer for this assignment will be given one of the following skit assignments written on a piece of paper. After quickly deciding who will play what part, they will present their skit to the class using any props or ideas that can be decided on in a two minute preparation period. One skit will follow another.

1

Several kids from two gangs are insulting each other when two adults, who are not together and who do not like each other, break up the fight. As the group leaves, one young man tells his friend how much he is really into this special chick.

2

A group of kids from one of the above gangs decides to crash a party hosted by the second gang. When they get there, the young man who was really into the first chick sees the most beautiful chick he has ever laid his eyes on. They speak and it is love at first sight. He learns that she is from his rival gang. He doesn't care.

3

This young man leaves the party and sees this young girl outside. They talk about being together in spite of the war between their gangs. They want to marry.

(This will be the prelude that helps my students understand the plot in the opening two acts of *Romeo and Juliet*.) This will bring about an opening discussion of who they think their ideal mate might be and who their parents would choose for them. Several questions from our question wall would also come into play. Students will be asked to choose one of the journal questions below or a question from the question wall to reflect in their Registry during the last five minutes of class.

Response Journal Guidelines for Students (to be used throughout unit)

- Take time to write down anything in relation to the skit (text or film). If you're intrigued by certain statements or if you're attracted to characters or issues or problems, write your response.
- Make connections with your own experience. What did the skit (text) make you think of? Does it remind you of anything or anyone?
- Make connections with other texts, movies, concepts, or events. Do you see any similarities between this skit (text or film) and other texts (concepts, events)? Does it bring to mind other related issues?
- Ask yourself questions: What perplexes you about a particular scene? Try beginning, "I wonder why..." or "I'm having trouble understanding how..." or "It perplexes me that..." or "I was surprised when"
- Try agreeing with the writer. Write down the supporting ideas. Try arguing with the writer. On what points, or about what issues, do you disagree? Think of your journal as a place to carry on a dialogue with the writer or with the text in which you actually speak with him or her. Ask questions; have the writer respond. What happens when you imagine yourself in his/her shoes?
- Write down striking words, images, phrases, or details. Speculate about them. Why did the author choose them? What do they add to the story? Why did you notice them? Divide your notebook page in half and copy words from the text onto the left side; write your responses on the right. On a first reading you might put checks in the margin where the passages intrigue you; on the second reading, choose the most interesting ideas, then write about them.
- Describe the author's point of view. How does the author's attitude shape the way the writer presents the material?
- Who would your ideal mate be? Would your parents pick the same type person? Why might they choose someone different from you? What would you do if they did not approve of your choice?

Two-Part Destructive Behavior

In small groups of two to four students, rank the following behaviors (**Column 1**) from 1-14, number 1 being the most destructive. This sheet should appear separately.

After reading the play, use (**Column 2**) to rank the behaviors. What, if anything, has changed? Why? This should first be a class discussion followed by a journal entry.

Column 1

Planning to trick someone

Lying to parents

Killing someone for revenge

Advising someone to marry for money

Two families having a feud

Selling poison

Killing someone by mistake while fighting

Swearing

Killing someone in self-defense

Committing suicide

Going to a party uninvited

Marrying against parent's wishes

Giving the finger

Starting a fight

Column 2

Friar Laurence planned a trick

Juliet lied to her parents

Romeo killed Tybalt

Nurse advises Juliet to marry Paris

Capulets and Montagues feud

Apothecary sold poison

Tybalt kills Mercutio

Mercutio cursed both families

Romeo kills Paris

Juliet commits suicide

Romeo goes to Capulets' party uninvited

Romeo/ Juliet marry against parent's wishes

Sampson bit his thumb at Abraham

Tybalt started a fight with Romeo

Romeo and Juliet, a play by William Shakespeare

Folger's Romeo and Juliet, a version that includes the original text, side by side with a modern version, will expedite my student's understanding of unrhymed iambic pentameter and often difficult language found in the play. The play's storyline provides us with the themes of parental interference, teen marriage, fate, and love. As Shakespearean verse was meant as an aural experience not one of reading, I will make this experience one of speech rather than silent reading. *Shaking Hands with Shakespeare* by Allison Wedell Schumacher provides hints that will certainly help in this process. As the play's scenes are read, I will ask my students to fill in the graphic organizer, **So What Do We Know**, found in the material section, to help them identify the basic elements of the story.

Synopsis

As this tragedy is the basis of the entire unit, a plot delineation is sketched out.

The play opens with a prologue that warns us early on of "starred-crossed lovers" being "death-mark'd" a tragedy that is inevitable from its inception. We are told that these young lovers have little to do with the fate that will come to them. This opening proclamation would be good fodder for a discussion on a typical parental warning, "That boy is no good for you. I'm telling you, that boy is no good for you. I just know it." This foreshadowing statement is often expressed in class by my students and would be a good segue into beginning the comparison graphic organizer mentioned above.

The opening act finds the two feuding family servants at odds with each other in the streets of Verona. Hot tempered Tybalt and Benvolio enter and end up embroiled in the brawl. The houses Capulet and the Montague have been in this state for years and have affected the entire city. The Prince warns the heads of each family that death will be the punishment if there is another incident. This scene is one that my students will relate to as gangs are prevalent in the "hood".

Benvolio leaves and comes upon Romeo who is told of the decree from his friend. Benvolio notices that Romeo's mind is elsewhere brooding over Rosaline, the unrequited love of his life. Romeo is in love with the idea of love (as are many of my students). After learning that Juliet's father has promised Paris, a nobleman of Verona and a cousin to the Prince, Juliet's hand in marriage, he invites him to the family party that evening. This arrangement is made without Juliet's consent and she is expected to obey her father's wishes. Do we in America have such arrangements? Are they spoken of? Why would marriages be arranged? These are questions that appear on our question wall and will be answered below. The students should also consider what benefits Paris would offer the family if the two were married.

Learning of the Capulet feast from a servant off to invite other guests on the list to the festival, Romeo agrees to attend in hopes of seeing Rosaline. Once inside Romeo forgets Rosaline when his eyes fall upon the beautiful Juliet. They are immediately swept off their feet. After kissing, Romeo learns from the nurse that she is the daughter of his enemy and she, that he is the son of hers. The contrast of puppy love with true love is complicated by family feuds, secrecy, and youth. Are their actions the result of true love, or are they acts of defiance?

It is later, while hiding in the garden, that Romeo hears Juliet profess her love for him. For a second time, we hear that they are starred-crossed lovers, being born into the two warring families. This balcony scene is one very familiar to many. It is an easy scene for students to read and discuss in terms of the fatalism of their union. The two plan marriage the next day. Romeo rushes to see his friend, Friar Laurence, who, though

reluctant to marry the two so young, decides that this marriage might actually bring peace to the feuding families. What blinded the Friar into this action? These acts of desperation and interference will provide for healthy discussion and journal responses.

Later, Romeo comes across Tybalt who had recognized Romeo at the masquerade. They exchange words but Romeo does not want to fight knowing that Tybalt is now family. Mercutio, instead, becomes provoked, not knowing the truth, and challenges Tybalt. As they duel, Romeo steps between them and Tybalt stabs Mercutio under Romeo's arm. Enraged, Romeo kills Tybalt and flees to Friar Laurence where he learns that he has been banished from the city. Juliet is distraught over the murder of her cousin, Tybalt. The Friar arranges for Romeo and Juliet to spend the night together, then sends Romeo to Mantua. Have any of my students experienced this rage, this violence, this confusion? More journal responses and discussion will be in order here.

Juliet's father now wants to console Juliet, so he arranges for her marriage to Paris in three days. Because she objects so strongly, her father threatens to disown her. She seeks advice from the good Friar. The good Friar gives her a potion that will mimic death until the return of Romeo. Her father moves the wedding up, but Juliet is found dead by the nurse. The family is again in mourning. Instead of hearing of Juliet's apparent death, Romeo hears of her actual burial in the tomb. He rushes to Juliet's side with poison of his own and ends up killing Paris who believes that Romeo is there to deface the tomb. When Romeo sees Juliet, he drinks the poison and dies. Friar Laurence returns and, seeing Romeo, tries to rush Juliet out, but Juliet spots Romeo, grabs his sword and stabs herself. When both families arrive and hear the story, they promise the Prince to finally end the feud.

*** Suggested scenes to be read: The prologue, Romeo and Benvolio discussion about Rosalind, Father's consent for marriage to Paris, the nurses speech about her daughter and Juliet, The crashing of the party, the balcony scene, Mercutio's speech to Tybalt, the wedding scene, the death scene.

Romeo and Juliet (1968) film

(a traditional presentation: costumes, scenery, etc; watch only certain scenes)

This film was heralded by many as brilliant back in 1968. It captured the hearts of viewers who could fall in love because the characters were so youthful. This version of the film is noted as having cast actors who are similar in age to the characters in the original play: 17 year old Leonard Whiting, as Romeo, and 15 year old Olivia Hussey as Juliet. Today, my students might become bored but, if guided, will be able to appreciate how well done the movie is. This film remains true to the language and plot of the play itself and provides us with beautifully framed scenes shot in Italy. Parental defiance and passionate love scenes will allow for discussion of the central themes in the play. Although some of the scenes are a little difficult to follow in terms of the verse, the scene with Michael York as Tybalt and Whiting as Romeo is very strong. This film will provide for a well round dialogue on the central themes of the play.

After an initial discussion of what *Romeo and Juliet* would look like today, we would view the following film.

Romeo and Juliet (1996) film

Set in today's world, this version of *Romeo and Juliet* might strike a chord with my students. "It's Phat," they might say. One of the questions posed at the beginning of the unit was, "How would Shakespeare write today?" This film might provide us with a plausible answer to this question. The play itself is said to be

timeless, yet the thought of placing *Romeo and Juliet* in 1996 raises the hairs on the backs of English scholars. The verse is still spoken, which might turn the students off at first, but since this movie will be seen after reading the play, I am hopeful that it will succeed. Providing my students with a comparison sheet, I will ask my students to list what Shakespeare wrote into the play versus what Baz Luhrmann used: City of Verona/ Verona Beach, the anchor woman verses the narrator, guns versus swords, and gangs versus family rivals. I would also ask what was added where no comparison can be made i.e. the use of hallucinogens. This is a film that I would just let run from start to finish as it is a film that the students could appreciate.

*Parental permission should be sought due to violent and sexual content.

1 After reading the play and viewing film of the play, the students will be asked to determine what role Romeo and Juliet played in their own downfall. (Journal Entry)

2 They will also be asked to complete the second and third column on "The Love Connection" graphic organizer.

Romeo i Julija (1984)

An 11 minute, animated comedy, this film would be fun to watch, and as the students would say, "Not too painful." To ready the students, I would ask them to draw a comic strip depicting any scene from the film using a "blank box" comic strip provided them. I would also ask them to provide the verse.

West Side Story (1961)

This musical, based on *Romeo and Juliet* , takes place on the west side of New York City in the 1950s. It is filled with song and dance, a notion that is hard to swallow for high school students. But it also includes the gangs, White ("Jets" as the Montagues) and Puerto Rican ("Sharks" as the Capulets). Just as in the original play, the two families (gangs) are warring. Just as in the play, Romeo (Tony) falls madly in love with Juliet (Maria) as they are gathered to celebrate. The film has a fatal ending but also gives us a ray of hope much as in the play. This film is very important because many of my students are Puerto Rican and I believe it would play well to them.

I would used this film to encourage my students to discuss what role ethnicity plays in love relationships. We would review who they thought their ideal partner might be (mentioned in the introductory skits) and who they thought their parents might choose. I would also ask my students to develop a dance routine that could be used in the dance scene from the film. (I taught my students the Charleston last year by offering them extra credit. The entire class got up and we taped it. Later in the year, several students got up again and showed some new students how to do it. It can be done if you put a light spin on it. AND they have fun!) They may actually want to do more, perhaps choose more modern musical numbers. This film might be shown in part.

Romiette and Julio by Sharon M. Draper

This novel will be a hit with the student in my classes. Parental dissatisfaction and racial discrimination, coupled with urban violence and love, are themes which this modern day twist on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* explores. Romiette Capella is an African-American girl from a prominent black family in Cincinnati, Ohio and Julio Montague is a handsome Latino, new to town from Texas. They meet in a chat room on the internet

as "Afroqueen" and "Spanish lover." Soon they realize that they attend the same school and know some of the same kids. There is just one problem: she is black and he is Hispanic. Julio's friend, Ben Olsen (Benvolio), tries to balance Julio's passions and his anger. Unfortunately, the gang, the Devil dogs, continuously antagonizes them because they don't like the interracial relationship. Their parents and grandparents also object. This distrust between the two racial groups is experienced each day in my school, so the discussion could be very interesting. This would be good fodder for journal entries.

The voices of the youth, the ideas and attitudes expressed by them, and the parental dissatisfaction shown, are all realistic and believable. The gang violence is something that will be very recognizable from my students' perspective. What the gang does to the two lovers is "just" from a gang point of view. My students will want to read quickly to "find out" what happens at the end. Does this book end in tragedy as *Romeo and Juliet* does? The social and racial implications will be the primary reason to consider the use of this book.

Dramatic Scene - Culminating Activity

As the unit winds down, the final piece would be assigned, that of writing a new scene into *Romeo and Juliet*. After revisiting the format of a play in terms of stage direction, blocking, and pacing (all of which are usually italicized) and the actor's written lines, I would ask teams of two to complete this assignment. After brainstorming on possible story lines, I would allow the class to begin writing on the computer. A discussion of appropriate length would be necessary. As I have already written full three act play with one of my classes, I know this is a great assignment. They really enjoy writing in this genre. Allowing them to use both prose and verse will help move the project along. In their journals, they would also have to account for costumes, lighting, etc. We will choose several scenes to act out in class.

Lesson Plans - "The Bard" - Tasks I-IV

Assignment: (Divide the class into groups of three)

You have been looking through an old history book in the library when you come upon a copy of a torn note about a brawl in the courtyard. "Bring your weapons" part of it says. It was signed, Will Shakespeare, "the Bard." You are curious. You must try to find out as much information about the note as possible and who Will Shakespeare, the Bard, was. Using the internet, you and your two partners must investigate and report back on following four tasks.

"The Bard" - Task I

Materials: Computers with internet access, Web sheet (graphic organizer), Time-line sheet, Shakespeare Registry.

Objectives: Through the use of the internet, students will gather biographical information on the life and times of William Shakespeare. Using Bloom's Taxonomy as a basis for categorizing the level of competency, my students will demonstrate skills in each of the structure levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Each member of your team must find a different biography of Will Shakespeare on-line. Using a graphic organizing web, your team must fill in as much information about the Bard as possible, making sure that "The Bard's Bio" is placed in the middle. Each member must record what information they contributed by initialing the bubble. Place this sheet in your Registry. The time-line should also be included within the Registry.

1. List six facts that all three bio's agree upon.
2. List two claims that are unique to each piece
3. Complete the time-line provided
4. Write a short biography of William Shakespeare
5. *Question for thought* : What would the Bard be like today?

"The Bard" - Task II

Materials: Computers with internet access, graphic organizer for recording the "Globe" information.

Objectives: To demonstrate the ability to gather information, then develop questions that use Bloom's Hierarchy.

Your task here will be to search the internet for pictures and information on the Globe theatre. Place information in Shakespeare's Registry.

1. Print several pictures of the theatre, including architectural plans if possible.
2. List 10 facts about the history and building of the theatre.
3. Develop 5 Questions using information gathered for use on quiz.

"The Bard" - Task III

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Materials: Modeling kit of "The Globe," scissors, pencils, plywood, paints.

Objectives: To develop a sense of cooperation. To read floor plans. To problem solve. To use fine and gross motor skills to construct a model.

Using the *Globe* modeling kit, purchased from www.heritage-models.co.uk, or www.rdg.ac.uk/AcalDepts/In/Globe/siteinfo/Globeinfo.htm have students construct the actual model. Set up several teams who will read floor plans, cut forms, construct the model, and design the model bed upon which the completed theatre will sit.

"The Bard" - Task IV

Materials: Film: *Shakespeare in Love*. Comparison graphic organizer. Shakespeare Registry with biographical information. Word Wall strips.

Objectives: To analyze information from the film.

To compare factual information to that which is presented in the film.

To separate fact from fiction.

To verify evidence.

Have students watch the movie, *Shakespeare in Love*. Using the graphic organizer provided, students will enter facts from "The Bard"- Task I, then compare what aspects of the movie reflect the facts uncovered in the biography and which do not.

Additionally, new words will be added to our word wall. These may be:

(table available in print form)

Materials

Through the use of the following organizing instruments, the students will obtain information useful to them as they complete the unit. These materials will be used in the exercises mentioned above.

The "Love" Connection

Traditional America Elizabethan times Your personal circle Other

What are the dating rituals?

Are partners chosen or arranged? Is love hormonal or custom?

Wedding day customs

Outfits/dress on wedding day

Why do youth marry?

Parental interference

So What Do We Know (Elements)

Plot

Conflicts

Theme

Mood

Settings

Point of View

Symbolism

Irony

Types of Characters

Voice

Metaphor

- Additional columns, questions, and countries can be added.

Bard Information Chart

(image available in print form)

Time Line

_____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ >

Content and Performance Goals and Standards

One of the most important goals of the Language Arts program is for the student to learn to read, write, speak, listen and view so as to decipher meaning of the written, visual, and oral texts used in the classroom. They should be able to read and respond to questioning, communicate ideas clearly, apply strategies that enhance the fluency and proficiency of their language, as well as understand and appreciate literary work and become life long learners. These are the stated goals of the Connecticut Language Arts Program. The unit I present contains exercises in the following areas:

Content Standard One – Reading and Responding

1. generate questions before, during, and after reading, writing , listening and viewing.
2. reflect on the text to make judgments about its meaning and quality
3. select and apply efficient and effective word recognition strategies, including contextual clues, phonics, and structural analysis.
4. make inferences about ideas implicit in narrative, expository, persuasive, and poetic texts

5. interact with others in creating, interpreting, and evaluating written, oral, and visual texts.

Content Standard Two – Producing Texts

1. engage in writing, speaking, and developing visual texts through frequent reflection, reevaluation, and revision.
2. gather, select, organize, and analyze information from primary and secondary sources

Content Standard Three - Applying English Conventions

1. proofread and edit for grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization.
2. develop fluency and competency in the English language arts by using the building upon the strengths of the learner's language and culture.

Content Standard Four – Exploring and Responding to Texts

1. explore and respond to classic literary text that has shaped Western thought.
2. examine the ways readers and writers are influenced by individual, social, cultural, and historical context.
3. recognize literary conventions and devices and understand how they convey meaning
4. demonstrating an understanding that literature represents, recreates, shapes and explores human experience through language and imagination.

Technology-safely and effectively uses resources, processes, concepts, and tools of technology.

Written, oral, and visual texts will help students achieve phonemic awareness and improve meaning and language fluency when reading unrhymed poetry written in iambic pentameter.

On a **word level**, students will understand layers of meaning. On a **sentence level**, students will integrate speech, reference, and quotation as well as mark trends over time (how Shakespeare created "new" words which are now part of our everyday vocabulary). On a **reading level** students will understand the author's craft, his standpoint, rhetorical devices, as well as analyze different cultural contexts. On a **writing level**, students will use exploratory writing, formal essay, and poetic form to present an effective argument using balanced analysis and citing textual evidence. Finally, on a **speaking and listening level**, students will use drama techniques to convey character interpretation, voice, and mood.

CAPT: Connecticut Academic Performance Test

As it is essential that the students in my classes prepare for the Connecticut Academic Performance Test in English, I would use the following questions taken from the actual test.

- What are your thoughts and questions out the story? You might reflect upon the characters, their problems, the title, or other ideas in the story.
- Copy what you think is the most important passage in the story. Write about what the quote means and why it is important.
- With which character, event or events in the story can you most closely relate? When have you or someone you know needed to make similar decisions or been able to make a similar realization? Use examples of the specific actions, reactions, or feelings of one of the story's characters and connect them to your own experiences or other experiences you may have read about or seen.
- Evaluate this story. What qualities make it effective or ineffective for you as a reader? Give specific examples from the story to support your reasons for your evaluation.

*These questions, along with the Olson and Probst prompts, provide daily examples for excellent probative inquiry.

Annotated Bibliography - Resources for Teachers and Students

Aliki. *William Shakespeare and the Globe*. New York, N.Y.: Harper Collins, 1999. This is a good biographical resource with good information on the Globe Theater.

Hillegass, Cliff. *Cliff Notes on Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*. Lincoln, Nebraska: Cliff Notes, 1995. A supplemental aid for high school students providing evaluation and interpretation as a starting point for discussion. Complete with summary, commentary and review questions.

Draper, Sharon. *Romiette and Julio*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004. Modern *Romeo and Juliet* theme with a twist. Perfect to use in a diverse urban classroom. Easy-read level.

Perrine, Laurence. *Story and Structure*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. 1966. Great teacher resource for understanding the elements of literature.

Schumacher, Allison. *Shaking Hands With Shakespeare*. New York: Kaplan Publishing. 2004. This "make sense out of Shakespeare" book is an excellent resource for teachers and students alike. Interesting facts are included and wonderful classroom exercises are the key to this source. Hilarious and demystifying; allowing students a better understanding of why Shakespeare was and still is important.

Schuon, Karl. *The First Book of Acting*. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc. 1965. An excellent, complete, and understandable book about how to take a script and turn it into a workable play. Learning to act, stage direction, costuming, and even opening night are all included.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdette, 1998. Discusses the elements of the play as well as the historical background.

Films

Romeo and Juliet, Dir. Baz Luhrmann, Twentieth Century Fox, 1996 (120 min. VHS/DVD)

If Shakespeare were alive today and making films, this *Romeo and Juliet* might very well look like what he would have created. Urban youth will definitely relate to this film as setting and costumes are relevant to their lives. Luhrmann has managed to visually update the play for the screen yet keep the Bard's language intact.

Romeo and Juliet, Dir. Franco Zeffirelli, Paramount Pictures, 1968 (138 min. VHS/DVD)

A visually sensual film which might be used to allow students to "see" Verona as it might have been when Shakespeare wrote the play. The leading characters are played by very youthful actors which help in the believability department.

Romeo i Julija, Dir. Dusan Petricic, Dunav Film, 1984 (11 min. VHS)

A very short, comedic film used to help create a cartoon drawing in the exercise above.

West Side Story, Dir. Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, MGM Home Entertainment, 1961 (151 min. VHS/DVD)

Winner of many academy awards, this musical film was the 1961 version of *Romeo and Juliet*. My students will identify with the "gang-like" approach between the Hispanics and the Whites.

Websites

www.cliffnotes.com/romeo/welcome.html

Web address to aid students in interpretation of this play.

www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/bloom.html

Bloom's taxonomy provides a structure for the classroom teacher with Skills Demonstrated column. Clear and concise representation.

www.dramaticpublishing.com/patricca.html

A discussion of the "suppressed Italian connection" represented in *Shakespeare in Love*, the film.

http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?ID=303

This lesson plans complements the reading of *Romeo and Juliet* by focusing on the lyric forms and conventions of the play.

www.folger.edu/education/teaching.html

Folger's site on teaching Shakespeare.

www.homepages.dordt.edu/~lantinga/social_culture.htm

Relationships across cultures is the focus of this site.

www.imdb.com

A wonderful internet movie database useful for locating films for the classroom.

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/resources/shakespeare/webguide.html

A teaching guide to use with play.

www.saskschools.ca/curr_content/constructivism/where/knoll/eng9/romeojuliet

Objectives to use with planning a unit: speaking, listening, writing, and reading

www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/mla/julie.html

A sample unit that addresses love and loyalty in *Romeo and Juliet* and provides the teacher with workable strategies for teaching a unit on this play.

www.shakespeare.palomar.edu/

This site provides an annotated guide to scholarly Shakespeare resources available on the internet.

www.sourcetext.com/sourcebook/essay/inlove.html

A lengthy discussion of the authorship of *Romeo and Juliet* and how it relates to the real Shakespeare in love. This reading will offer a wonderful opportunity to see another side of the controversy.

www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/romeojuliet/study.html

Complete rundown of the play including themes, motifs, symbols, character analysis, as well as scene by scene explanation. The study questions and quiz are very useful.

www.webenglishteacher.com/shakespeare.html

This site helps to clarify the Shakespearean language for the high school student.

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

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