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Macbeth: Gender and Gender Authority

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Introduction

The tragedy of *Macbeth* tells the story of an honorable soldier who turns into a brutal assassin of Duncan, his king, Banquo, his friend, and Macduff's wife and children. His murderous acts seem to be instigated first by his encounters with the Weird Sisters, three women with masculine beards, and his wife, Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare presents a man who is torn by fear, greed, the desire to be king – and by the power of women that is evoked by the feminine presences. The differences between man and woman loom throughout the text. Gender differences cross the boundaries and prove ambiguous. The unit will analyze and discuss the gender identity of those influencing Macbeth and the authority of gender on Macbeth's ethics.

In this unit, the students read the tragedy *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, excerpts from "The History of Sexuality" by Michele Foucault, excerpts from "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" by Judith Butler, excerpts from "Sexual Transformation" by Gayle Rubin, and excerpts from "Female Masculinity" by Judith Halberstam. Students analyze the theories on gender and possible visions of masculinity and femininity in the excerpts above mentioned without excluding the students' personal knowledge they can build through research of more contemporary texts like lyrics, newspapers articles, movies/performances, or visual texts. They also learn how to close-read shorter passages focusing on how the literary devices used by the author characterize or convey meaning. Every lesson plan includes in-class discussions and written reflections. The goals are to make students understand, reflect about, and discuss how Shakespeare sees gender, its influence on decision-making, and the reactions it might provoke, and to help students frame their independent visions of gender and gender authority through a variety of texts.

Students have the opportunity to study the characters of the witches, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Macduff, and Malcolm in specific scenes and learn various visions of what masculinity and femininity mean. They learn to distinguish gender as societal construct from sex as biological given and to be sensitive to the consequences; they reflect on what authority gender really has. This unit teaches students to appreciate and understand a canonical text, and to use the text as a source of knowledge to argue about their own vision of gender.

The unit starts with the following essential questions: "What are the social constructions of gender? What are the conventions that people associate with being male or female? What do people expect to see as manly or feminine? Can gender identity affect how a person makes moral choices? Does gender identity have the

authority to override personality?” It can be taught in grade ten and eleven classes, and in the AP English Literature class.

Rationale

Students tend to approach any Shakespearean play with reluctance and many of them do not appreciate Shakespeare’s works. The language is certainly the first factor they blame but they also believe that the message is obsolete and so distant from their present life. This unit major goal is to change this negative attitude and lead students to appreciate the tragedy of *Macbeth* .

Students learn when they feel motivated and when they have personal interest in what they study. Societal issues raise their interest because they feel to have something to say and this can be a powerful vehicle to appreciate Shakespeare’s work. One issue that students like to discuss is gender and its authority in personality, and *Macbeth* presents very interesting characters, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Malcolm, or Macduff, who struggle with their own gender expectations. Students will certainly have a positive reaction if the unit starts with questions that focus on the identity issues of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. They will be challenged with concepts of masculinity and femininity and asked to discuss what it means to be an alternative man – whether masculinity means being bloody and ruthless, or whether the presence of an apparently strong and merciless Lady Macbeth contributes to Macbeth’s cruelty and greed. They will also try to find an answer to why Shakespeare introduces the witches and the role that their feminine presence plays in Macbeth’s masculinity. For instance, they could discuss whether Macbeth’s masculinity enables him to escape the female power of his wife and of the witches. The students read the text with the specific goal to investigate the identity of the character and this will give them the opportunity to appreciate Shakespeare’s work because this different perspective will give them the incentive they need. All lessons, however, will include the traditional tasks to understand, interpret, analyze, and evaluate written texts but these lessons will be presented as gender investigation. Since the District Curriculum requires the reading and analysis of a variety of texts that include fictional and informational works, the students will also read some theoretical texts.

My own students reflect a very diverse population with different needs. They all need a strong connection between the text and their reality and this is the main reason for studying gender in this play. At the same time, their specific needs require a highly differentiated instruction and teaching plans. All students can reach the objective of the unit but they have to follow different pathways. Therefore, the unit contains a specific teaching plan and strategies for the AP students who will also read more complex theoretical text and a different one for the sophomores and juniors who lack motivation and need continuous modeling and scaffolding – a useful combination of “I do” (the teacher shows them how to write or what strategy they need to follow for reading and understanding), “we do” (the teacher and the students repeat the same writing or reading together so it becomes more familiar), and “they do” (the students have learned and can write or read proficiently).

Teaching Plan: AP Students

The students in the Advanced Placement class begin this unit with some personal reflections in response to the unit's essential questions. This initial activity is going to prepare them to understand what gender, the main theme of the unit, is and how it is perceived in today's society. The other goal for this initial activity is to give students the opportunity to express their present vision and/or interpretation of gender before reading and discussing Shakespeare's tragedy and the theoretical sources on the same topic. To begin with, the teacher writes the essential questions on the board - What are the social constructions of gender? What are the conventions that people associate with being male or female? What do people expect to see as manly or feminine? How can gender identity affect how a person acts in non-sexual situations? Does gender have the authority to override personality? - and gives them some minutes to think and write their responses. The teacher may choose to assign just one question, give them few minutes to think and respond, and then assign another one. This method helps students not to respond quickly and incompletely. Students will then share their responses and the teacher will prompt them to further reflect what has contributed to their understanding and definition of gender.

After this initial activity, the students start building more knowledge of this topic through research. Specifically, they can begin distinguishing the denotation of gender and biological sex. They can use the Oxford dictionary and they also have to determine whether the meaning of the two terms has always been the same in the course of the century or whether the denotation of these words has changed and if it has, when it occurred. They will be prompted to discuss the OED definition(s) and the use of the word in the dated examples. This first step clarifies the basic meaning and gives students the chance to learn how to use this source and to understand that the meaning of words can be different according to the time period.

Immediately after, students will read a brief excerpt on "The History of Sexuality" by Michel Foucault. ¹ Since the language of this excerpt is quite complex and the concepts can also be difficult to understand, students can be divided in groups. Each group can read a couple of paragraphs and to help them understand, they are to take notes of what they understand and what they do not understand so they can clarify the meaning with the teacher. They also need to briefly write few sentences summary of their passage and share with the other groups. It is also possible that some students, even in this Advanced Placement group, may encounter more serious problems of comprehension. The teacher may give them a simplified version of the same excerpt or they can be encouraged to search the web for a more comprehensible paraphrase. They can read what Wikipedia says and the teacher can also suggest to watch some videos on You Tube that clearly explain Foucault's main ideas in this text.

Students will also read an excerpt of "Sexual Transformation" by Gayle Rubin because it can help students clarify the difference in meaning between gender and biological sex before they begin to read and discuss this thematic ideas in Shakespeare's tragedy (see the Lesson Plan section for details on the reading strategies). ² This excerpt will clarify how the lives of gays and lesbians have changed over the past several years as western culture has started to be more tolerant and open to accept different interpretations of the gender/sex system. For this document, too, the students who find it difficult to comprehend can research easier versions of the same text on the web so they can fully participate to the class discussion that will follow. It is also important for them not to give up in front of the first difficulty the text presents. Easier versions clarify meaning and concepts but also build the student's self-esteem as it is suggested by pedagogical theory such as Woolfolk's. ³

At this point, students begin to have enough knowledge to revise their responses to the essential questions, “What are the ways in which gender is socially constructed? What are the conventions that people associate with being male or female? What do people expect to see as manly or feminine? Can gender identity affect how a person acts? Does gender identity have the authority to override personality?” The revision has to include specific textual supports from one or more of the documents they have examined. During the class discussion, the teacher can first let students freely share their thoughts and then divide them in two groups to debate the eventual differences that may emerge from the initial sharing. The debate strategy is quite useful to reinforce the structure of an effective argument (the students’ final assignment is an argumentative essay.)

After these “warming-up” activities, the teacher will assign the reading of *Macbeth*. While they read Shakespeare’s text, the students have to:

1. Take notes on the main characters and events in every act
2. Briefly summarize each scene
3. Write brief reflections on the major and minor characters
4. Note difficulties they may wish to clarify in class or any other annotations they deem important.

In class, every day, the teacher begins with a brief review of the reading. If it is necessary, students can reread the most difficult parts in groups and discuss the meaning. The students should also learn to identify the most difficult words and learn to determine the appropriate meaning in context. They are also encouraged to use the Oxford dictionary on line because Shakespeare’s words may also have different meanings from today’s denotations.

Selected Scenes

Once students have read and comprehended the text, they can now analyze specific scenes. The teacher will suggest some specific scenes but the students will also have the opportunity to choose others before completing the study of the entire text. Students in this Advanced Placement group are not homogeneous and in order to learn it is important to consider their different learning experiences. For this reason, group work is helpful because stronger learners can lead and teach to struggling students. In this environment the independent choices and differentiated assignments are very helpful. ⁴

Macbeth’s First Encounter with the Witches

In class the students will reread Act 1, Scene 3 when Macbeth and Banquo meet the weird sisters. Before starting the specific analysis of these scenes, the students have to look up the denotation of “witch” in the OED so they can see when witches were first assumed to be female. They also have to compare the OED first definition to the second one, and discuss why the OED gives these two denotations as separate entries. The teacher will ask the students to analyze what the witches say first and whom they address. After this initial activity, students will analyze the relationship between knowledge and gender as it is suggested by Anna Maria Cimitile in “Macbeth: Criticism, Gender and the Tragedy of Macbeth.” Students will read the excerpt from Cimitile’s study and then will discuss:

1. What does Macbeth learn from the witches?
2. Who tells him that he will be “king hereafter”? Why is that important? Does “being king” make him masculine? Does power make a person feel masculine?
3. What are the societal expectations for the masculine and the feminine?
4. How ambiguously or unambiguously do you think Shakespeare gendered the witches? Why?

5. What kind of knowledge do the witches share with Macbeth? Is it absolute or conditional? Is it clear or equivocal?
6. Does this knowledge contribute to gender them masculine or feminine?
7. Compare the knowledge Macbeth receives from the witches and Lady Macbeth's knowledge.
8. Does Macbeth's idea of feminine and masculine correspond to your idea of feminine and masculine? Explain.

The teacher also suggests analyzing the difference between the knowledge that comes from reasoning and the knowledge that in the case of the witches may come from the supernatural, hallucinations or imagination. It is also interesting to discuss whether there can be relevant differences in the status knowledge that derives from the faculty of reason and the knowledge that is induced by imagination, or some external power. Students may also debate whether Macbeth surrenders to imagination and whether this makes him more or less masculine. To respond to this question, students can reread "Female Masculinity" by Judith Halberstam.⁵

Students should discuss why the witches also tell Banquo, "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none" and the possible effect of this statement on Macbeth. Does this irritate Macbeth? Why? Do the witches suggest something about Macbeth's masculinity? Why? Students have to discuss the effect of the witches' prophecy on Macbeth and the possible repercussion. They might want to consider whether the witches represent Macbeth's imagination or fear of the future. If it is fear, they may discuss the role that it plays in Macbeth's decision to kill Duncan and become king. Also, they have to analyze whether becoming king means being masculine and whether Macbeth, who does not have power to beget kings, feels devalued or less masculine.

Before concluding the analysis of the witches in Act 1 and Act 4, the students will have an in-class discussion of their gender analysis and of the effects or influences that it may have on Macbeth's personality. To better understand the witches, they also have to analyze the second encounter between Macbeth and the witches and compare the knowledge they share with Macbeth in this scene to the knowledge they share in the first encounter. They can also consider rereading the theories of Judith Butler, or Judith Halberstam, or Anna Maria Cimitile. They can also take into consideration whether Lady Macbeth is or is not a real, independent character because she plays the role of Macbeth's weaknesses as Freud suggests.⁶ Does Lady Macbeth represent what Macbeth does not have? Similarly, the witches might play the same role and if they do, students have to discuss how or whether this role reflects their feminine identity or their bearded, masculine gender.

Lady Macbeth's Reaction to the Letter from Macbeth

Act 1, scene 5 introduces Lady Macbeth and her long monologue after receiving her husband's letter. Students will reread this scene and will first discuss their initial understanding and reaction to this character. Some questions will lead them in their analysis:

1. How does Lady Macbeth present herself?
2. What is the most important aspect that stands out of her? Or what is the tone that she conveys?
3. Does she reflect the image of femininity or masculinity? How and Why?
4. What is she trying to teach to her husband? Why?
5. Is she the instigator of Duncan's murder or does she only play a supportive role? Explain.

After this initial conversation, the teacher will ask students to take into consideration the idea that Shakespeare has given Lady Macbeth the role to represent Macbeth's nightmare of what masculinity should be. Students have to explain the vision that support this concept by analyzing the evilness of Lady Macbeth. For instance, they can consider whether Lady Macbeth as a woman represents a real threat to the man and

his necessary independence.

1. Does Lady Macbeth represent a projection of part of Macbeth's own psyche? How? Explain.
2. Does she represent independence and authority? What kind of authority? How does she do that?
3. Does she represent Macbeth's primitive fears about male identity? What would support your assertion?
4. Since Macbeth murders Duncan as suggested by Lady Macbeth and the witches, do you think that the feminine power is inherently poisonous? If it is, explain how. Compare Lady Macbeth's power to the feminine power of today.
5. Why didn't she murder Duncan? What does her behavior suggest?
6. What does it tell you about the extent of feminine power?
7. Is she feminine or masculine? What part or parts of the monologue support the idea of the feminine or the idea of the masculine? Explain it.
8. What do you think is Shakespeare's vision of femininity and masculinity?

Students also have to analyze whether misogyny contributes or creates the idea of the evil woman and if it does, they have to revisit what are the underlining ideas or concepts and how they have developed or have not. Another possible aspect that students can choose to examine is whether Lady Macbeth in this monologue or in the other interactions with her husband shows any desire of self-determination and whether Shakespeare wanted to represent a form of woman's transgression. Students may want to analyze why, aside from the witches, Shakespeare created only two female characters, Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff, in the entire tragedy. Students first discuss in groups and then write a paper with their detailed analysis. The recommendation is to support their argument with specific textual references to Lady Macbeth's monologue and the theoretical texts that they have previously read.

Lady Macbeth in Other Scenes

At this point students continue their investigation of Lady Macbeth's gender and her influence or authority on her husband through other scenes that they can choose independently. Some of the most relevant scenes that the teacher would suggest are the following:

1. Lady Macbeth and Duncan in Act 1, scene 6,
2. Lady Macbeth and Macbeth in Act 1, scene 7,
3. Lady Macbeth and her husband after the assassination of Duncan, Act 2, scene 2
4. Lady Macbeth and her Husband in Act 3, scene 2 (this dialogue is quite interesting because both husband and wife express their unhappiness and Macbeth does not tell her about his plan to assassinate Banquo and his son)
5. Lady Macbeth's insanity in Act 5, scene 1 (students analyze the role and possible gender associations of her madness).

Students will choose two scenes and will write their analysis of Lady Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's gender role in this tragedy.

Macbeth's Masculinity

The students will then study Macbeth's gender, his maleness or lack of maleness. In order to approach this analysis, the teacher will remind students to reread their notes on the theoretical articles of "The History of Sexuality" by Michele Foucault and "Sexual Transformation" by Gayle Rubin. Students need to revisit these concepts so they can better understand and discuss how Macbeth perceives the concept of masculinity. To

begin with, students will analyze act 1, scene 4, lines 55-60 where Macbeth has just learned that Duncan has appointed his son Malcolm Prince of Cumberland. Macbeth aside says, “Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires ... yet let that be Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see”.⁷ Students will first share their initial interpretation and then they will consider the following questions:

1. What does Macbeth fear? Why?
2. Is it fear or the troublesome thought to become king suggested by the witches? Explain your interpretation.
3. Is this a sign of femininity? If it is, why?
4. What does patriarchy expect from a man? What is the patriarchal concept of manliness? Why?
5. How does Macbeth conform or does not conform to the patriarchal idea of masculinity? Explain.
6. What is the idea of the masculine hero? What is different in Macbeth and why?
7. Does Macbeth’s fear represent a primitive fear of male identity or fear of maternal power? Explain.
8. Does Macbeth’s fear reflect a failure of manliness? Explain.
9. Does fear diminish power? How? Why?
10. What does he have to do to become a true man?

Students will discuss and write a reflection paper on the relevance of Macbeth’s fear and how his fear damages or interferes with his masculinity. They can also consider whether this fear is acceptable for a man or whether it diminishes or destroys his concept of being the “man” or to have “power”. Students are also encouraged to consider Macbeth’s hallucinations – the dagger and the ghost of Duncan, the monologue in act 1, scene 7, lines 1-28, and lines 50-52 where Macbeth clearly states that “I dare do all that may become a man”.

Macbeth and Macduff

To further understand Macbeth’s character, it is also interesting to compare him to another character in this tragedy who is obsessed with the idea of masculinity, Macduff. Students will also investigate what makes “a man” or what a person has to do or be to be “a man”. They will analyze Macduff’s reaction when he learns that his wife and son have been killed by Macbeth’s men – act 4, scene 3, line 240 to the end of the scene. Here Macduff uses the word “man” and it is interesting to analyze what Macduff is trying to convey:

1. Does being a man mean being revengeful? Why?
2. Is revenge a necessary attribute to manliness?
3. What does Macduff imply when he states, “dispute it like a man”? Why?
4. What does it mean to be a real man? Explain.
5. What is a masculine reaction to death? Why?
6. What is the feminine reaction or response to death? Why?
7. Compare Macduff’s reaction to his wife’s and son’s death to Macbeth’s reaction to Lady Macbeth’s death.
8. How does Shakespeare represent masculinity in this tragedy? Why?
9. Does Shakespeare try to challenge the patriarchal concept? If he does, how does he challenge the societal expectations for masculinity? If he does not, explain why and how.

Students are also encouraged to reflect how the word “man” is still used in the tragedy by Ross in Act 5, scene 8, line 48. Ross says of Siward’s son who died in the battle, “Your son, my lord, has paid the soldier’s debt. He only lived but still was a man ... but like a man he died”. Ross seems to convey the idea that

masculinity means power, and courage even to die without ever showing any sign of weakness or fear. Students should compare and discuss the use of the word “man” in this context and when Macbeth uses it. They have to reflect on and discuss whether it is possible to think of Shakespeare’s vision of gender rather than one character’s. Students may also discuss how this concept differs or does not from their own concept of masculinity or whether Shakespeare’s vision affects their own idea of what a “man” is.

Before concluding this part, students will analyze act 5, scene 8, lines 32-39. Macduff calls Macbeth “coward,” “shadow ... of time,” and “rarer monster” and Macbeth refers to Macduff as “being of no woman born”. Does this technicality (Caesarian birth) have symbolic value, or was Macbeth deluded into thinking it has?

Students’ Sources

Students are also encouraged to research other sources or scholarly articles to further develop their understanding of Shakespeare’s tragedy, the ambiguity of gender, and the characteristics of the hero/heroine or lack thereof in this tragedy. They can also study misogyny, causes and effects. They are also encouraged to research different versions of *Macbeth*’s performances to better understand how different directors interpret and represent gender (this task is especially encouraged due to the fact that the school is a performing arts school with a well-organized theater and videography department).

Teaching Plan: Sophomore and Junior Students

This group of students is quite different from the AP students and it includes students who have special needs, have difficulty with reading comprehension, and have weak motivation. Gender is also a topic that can raise conflicting positions because some students tend to be very literal and identify the societal construct of gender with biological gender. Some also have no notion of the related differences and implications, and other students may be biased against a liberal construction of gender identity.

Pedagogically, the teacher has to lead students to reading comprehension and critical thinking through visuals, appropriate pre-reading activities, and a series of simple, deductive questions⁸. This strategy will give students the opportunity to share their initial understanding in a free and safe environment, but it will also help them understand the differences between gender and biological sex and overcome their original bias.

Students begin the unit with a class discussion of the unit theme: gender. The teacher will write the words “gender” and “sex” on the board and will prompt students to write their own definition of these two words. They will share and discuss all the differences while the teacher annotates the students’ definitions on the board. They will also be prompted to think and write what they expect from a man and from a woman. They can be prompted to consider what colors, clothes, and shoes a man and a woman should feel free to choose, but they also have to explain the reasons of their choices. Students can also consider what jobs are or are not appropriate and the reasons for these categorizations. This activity will generate interest but it will also help all students reflect on gender as societal construct. Before concluding this initial activity, students will have to look up the definition of gender and sex. If possible, the teacher can suggest to search the OED website, so that students can also see if the meaning of the two words has changed in the course of the time or has never changed. The teacher will then ask them to answer the following questions:

1. What are the societal expectations for a man?
2. What are the societal expectations for a woman?
3. Can you suggest the reason or reasons for these societal expectations?
4. Do these societal expectations for gender reflect your vision of masculinity and femininity? Explain.

Students write their reflections and support them with specific references to the class discussion, their initial definition, and/or the OED definition.

Students will then work in groups and prepare five to eight questions for an interview on how gender and sex are interpreted. (The students may use the questions modeled in class.) They have to interview a peer, an adult, and a teacher. In class, they will share the responses, discuss, and write a brief reflection. This activity will teach students how to phrase open-ended questions but it will also give them the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of interpretation of the thematic idea before drawing their own conclusion of what gender means. This group, in particular, tends to be very literal in their understanding of subtle concepts and they need all these supporting activities ⁹.

After this initial activity, the students will read the tragedy of *Macbeth*. Since the students in this group have different learning levels and skills, the teacher might choose to use different texts to maintain the interest and motivation in every one. Some can use a simplified English version or a graphic rendition of the text (students can use an unabridged one or a simplified version – the simplified text is appropriate for struggling readers). When students know the plot, the teacher will begin analyzing some specific scenes. The goal is to teach analysis and improve students' critical thinking. Students will analyze and discuss the gender identity of the witches, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, and Malcolm. They will also discuss how gender identity may or may not influence Macbeth in his decisions.

The Witches

The students will analyze the witches in Act 1, Scene 1, Act 1, scene 3, and Act 3, Scene 5. These three scenes can be discussed separately or together to determine what the three witches attempt to teach Macbeth, what he needs to learn or fails to learn. The teacher will reread the specific scenes in class before prompting them with the following questions (depending on the specific learning needs of this group the teacher will lead the conversation with simple to more complex questions):

1. Who are the witches? What are your initial thoughts?
2. Are these human beings? If they are, what makes them human? If they are not, what do they represent?
3. What do you think their gender is? According to our previous discussion of gender and how society views gender, what do the witches represent? Masculinity or femininity? Explain your choice.
4. What knowledge do the witches share with Macbeth? Does it make a difference? If it does, how and what does it tell you about Macbeth's masculinity? Explain.
5. Does Macbeth need to learn anything? If he needs knowledge or emotional strength, does this need identify him as less masculine? Explain.

The students will then discuss whether Macbeth needs to “learn” from the witches – their knowledge - and whether the lack of this knowledge makes him less masculine. The students will also discuss whether knowledge gives power to Macbeth and if it does, they will discuss whether power means being masculine. The scene will conclude with a written reflection on whether Shakespeare's views on what to expect from a man or a woman can be extrapolated from the play.

Before concluding the analysis of this scene, the teacher will ask students to research what sixteenth century witches represented and how society viewed them. They have to research all possible practices connected to witchcraft like the voodoo practices. When they conclude their research, the students might create a more modern interpretation of the encounter between the witches and Macbeth. They will be urged to start by choosing what the witches represent. Do they represent power, or evil, or knowledge? Also, who might be a modern Macbeth? A politician? A simple husband?

Students conclude this scene with two or more pages of reflections in response to this prompt:

1. We have read, researched, and discussed the role and gender of the witches. You have also written your modern version of this scene and we have also discussed at the beginning of the unit about the societal expectations for a man and for a woman. Reread all your notes, Act 1, Scene 1, Act 1, scene 3, and Act 3, Scene 5, and the responses of the person you have interviewed. Also, consider why Shakespeare has introduced the witches. What did he want to prove or say about masculinity and femininity? What gender has more power over the other one? Does Shakespeare challenge the patriarchal concepts of gender? If he does, explain why and how.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

Due to the particular composition of this group of students, the approach to the analysis of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is completely different in order to maintain interest and motivation. In class the teacher will divide students in groups. Each group will use the written text (struggling students use the simplified text) and the illustrated one.

The teacher will first select some scenes from various acts and the students have to choose the one they want to focus on: Act 1, scene 5 (Lady Macbeth read the letter she has just received from Macbeth), Act 1, Scene 6 (dialogue between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth immediately after his first promotion), Act 1, Scene 7 (Lady Macbeth mocks Macbeth's fears), Act 2, Scene 1 (Macbeth reflects on the vision of the dagger), Act 3, Scene (Macbeth's remorse for his murderous actions appears as Banquo's ghost), Act 5, Scene 5 (Macbeth's reaction after his wife's suicide). Students' first activity is to reread the scene that they have chosen, clarify all possible misunderstanding before writing the modern version. The idea to give them choice is very important to maintain interest and motivation and it is strongly recommended by pedagogy ¹⁰.

At this point, the teacher will ask them to take into consideration the meaning of gender as societal construct and find modern characters for the Shakespearean Macbeth and Lady Macbeth- Macbeth can be a present leader, even a political leader and his wife, but they can also choose a very simple couple; age is not important as well as education or financial status. The students will create four scenes:

1. A dialogue between wife and husband about a promotion he has just received.
2. A dialogue always between wife and husband in which she expects and fantasizes about an even higher promotion for her husband.
3. The husband monologue(s) in which he expresses his fears, hesitation, and insecurity. In the same monologue(s), the husband conveys his deep ambition for more success.
4. A dialogue between husband and wife in which she mocks him for his fears and indecision and pushes him to do something that makes him very uncomfortable.

When they have finished writing, they will share and possibly act out the scenes they have prepared and since we are in an arts school and many students are quite talented actors, actresses, and videographer, they can

also choose to produce a short film of the scene they have written. They will first share and discuss their choices and the content of their dialogue. Before comparing the modern version to the Shakespearean ones, they will write a brief reflection on how they think gender expectations play or do not play a role in the life of the couple. Essentially, they have to reflect whether couples may display problems due to the subconscious concept of gender as societal construct. They have to discuss whether their modern versions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth convey authority and power as masculinity or whether they convey fear and insecurity as feminine and therefore inferior.

Students' next activity will be to compare and contrast the Shakespearean scene that they have chosen to analyze and their own, discussing the differences and similarities in their group and then writing their conclusions. For this final task, the teacher suggests the following prompts:

1. What are the main differences that you notice between expectations of female and male conduct?
2. Is there a Shakespearean idea of masculinity and femininity or can one only speak of particular characters challenging or accepting societal constructs? Explain.
3. Does Lady Macbeth or your modern version represent a threat to the man? How? Why?

Malcolm

Because Malcolm's ascension to the throne represents a return to peace and normalcy, the play invites us to ask whether Malcolm's idea of masculinity is also a representation of normalcy. Students may want to further analyze and discuss this male figure (Act 4, Scene 3) in comparison to Macbeth and even Duncan. The teacher suggests some leading questions like:

1. How would you define Malcolm's response to Macduff's suggestion to attack Macbeth?
2. Do you think that Macduff is testing Malcolm? If he is, is he testing him from an unambiguous standpoint? Explain and support your answer with specific textual references.
3. Compare Malcolm's fear, hesitation, or ambiguity to Macbeth's fears. What is similar or different and why?
4. How does Shakespeare present masculinity or male identity in Malcolm?
5. What is different from your belief of masculinity?
6. How is Shakespeare challenging gender identity?
7. Discuss Malcolm's belief about becoming king (Act 4, Scene 3, lines 91-99) and connect to masculinity or femininity.

Before concluding this part with this group of students, the teacher will encourage them to research three to four sources about societal interpretations or definitions of masculinity and femininity. They should take into consideration how the Elizabethan society viewed a man and a woman. They can also use another fictional text and any other non-fictional text (essay, op-ed, editorial) on the same topic before writing their final work.

Unit Objectives

The objective of this unit is to enhance my students' skills to infer, close-read, analyze, discuss, synthesize, evaluate, and connect the text to their lives. Every lesson plan has specific objectives so that it is possible to measure the students' learning, reflect on the outcome of the lesson, and plan the follow up accordingly -

differentiated instruction. It also includes many plans with models on how to analyze/close read, determine the theme, and synthesize. These daily objectives are stated according to Bloom's taxonomy to easily calibrate the activity from the lowest to the highest intellectual skills. The Bloom taxonomy includes six levels of intellectual behavior connected to learning: knowledge (recall data or information), comprehension (understand the meaning), application (use a concept in a new area), analysis (break down concepts into components), evaluation (make judgments), and creation (create a new product or point of view).

Taking into account the long term goals, the unit implements the following objectives for the daily lesson plans:

1. Read, understand, interpret, analyze and discuss *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare and "The History of Sexuality" by Michel Foucault, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" by Judith Butler, "Sexual Transformation," and "Female Masculinity" by Judith Halberstam
2. Read, understand, interpret, analyze, and discuss non-fictional texts - newspapers articles, and/or video clips/short movies
3. Understand the concepts of specific rhetorical and literary devices like point of view or narrative perspective, diction, allusions, figurative language, tone, syntax, and structure
4. Analyze, discuss, and write how setting, point of view or narrative perspective, diction, allusions, figurative language, tone, syntax, structure, and theme(s) reveal meaning
5. Research information and/or valid sources
6. Discuss, compare and contrast, reflect, and write about the various characters and their gender identity
7. Write argumentative essay(s) and the final creative project.

Lesson Plans

Both groups of students, the AP students and the sophomores and juniors, read Shakespeare's tragedy in class and at home. To help them understand the text, the characters, Shakespeare's style, and the literary techniques that Shakespeare uses to convey meaning, students will take notes on a worksheet that can be used as reference for a closer analysis. Specifically, they will take the following notes:

1. Title, author, time when the text was written or produced
2. Biographical information about the author
3. Historical information about the period of publication
4. Genre and its characteristics
5. Plot summary
6. Memorable quotations and significance (each quotation has to be analyzed for significance)
7. Description of Shakespeare's style
8. Specific examples that demonstrate the author's style
9. For each character students have to write
 1. Name
 2. Role in the story
 3. Significance
 4. Adjective (this request of find an adjective that defines the character is important to improve vocabulary and analysis)

10. Setting - place and time (time in this tragedy is the most relevant aspect of setting)
11. Symbols and their significance and/or relevance to better understand the characters
12. Internal conflicts and significance
13. External conflicts and significance
14. Significance of opening scene
15. Significance of ending-closing scene
16. Possible themes

Modification for Struggling Students

1. Title, author, time when the text was written or produced
2. Biographical information about the author
3. Historical information about the period of publication
4. Genre and its characteristics
5. Plot summary
6. Memorable Quotes and why this quote is important
7. Name of each character and role
8. Setting - place and time
9. Symbols
10. Conflicts
11. Significance of opening scene
12. Possible themes

Modified Reading Strategy to Address Struggling Students

This strategy is appropriate for those students who are not motivated and are struggling readers. The teacher should NOT model it because “not knowing how to do it” triggers more thinking.

1. Select ten to fifteen phrases from the scene or excerpt of scene that the students will read as homework or in class and will analyze (if the activity takes place in class, divide the students in groups and assign different phrases from the same scene or excerpt of the scene to each group)
2. Give them ten minutes to discuss what they think the phrases refer to. The teacher can ask to identify the character’s traits, conflict(s), symbol(s), or theme that each phrase may convey
3. After ten minutes, ask students to write their reflections/conclusions/ wonder why questions and possible answers
4. Share the students’ responses
5. Read the scene or excerpt of the scene aloud
6. After reading the text, compare and contrast the students’ predictions and the text.

Analysis or Close Reading Strategy

This teaching strategy is appropriate for AP students but it may be used with students who do not struggle with reading comprehension.

1. Read the assigned scene or excerpt of the scene
2. Annotate it (the teacher decides the purpose of the annotation; the students may be expected to annotate for diction, or figurative language, or syntax, or theme)
3. Write a brief summary (just two or three sentences)
4. Read the scene or the excerpt a second time and add other annotations for the specific literary

techniques that the teacher suggests

5. Discuss the various interpretations as a class and take notes of the different views
6. Write two or more pages analysis of how the author uses the indicated literary technique to convey meaning, or characterize a specific character, or theme.

Character Analysis

This teaching map can be used to analyze Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, the Witches, Duncan, and/or any other characters in the tragedy. It is appropriate in this unit too because it allows students to decode the hidden thoughts and feelings of the character leading them to the discussion of gender identity. The teacher should use this strategy immediately after reading the selected scenes and characters so that students can easily respond to the leading questions included in the Teaching Plan Session. The various body-parts represent the external clues that open the character's mind to the reader. It can be used with all students, AP students and regular sophomores and juniors, to understand and discuss the gender identity of the character.

1. Head: intellectual side of the character. What are his/her dreams? Visions? Philosophies he/she keeps inside?
2. Eyes: seeing through the character's eyes. What memorable sights affect him/her? How?
3. Ears: hearing through the character's ears. What does he/she notice and remember others saying about him/her? How is he/she affected?
4. Mouth: the character's communication. What philosophy does the character share? What arguments/debates? What images would symbolize his/her philosophy?
5. Arms: working - for the tragedy of *Macbeth* 'work' refers to 'ruling' and "being the king or leader of a nation." What is the character's relationship to 'work/being king' in general?
6. Hands: the practical side of the character. What conflicts does he or she deal with? How?
7. Heart: the emotional side. What does he/she love? Who? Whom? How?
8. Torso: the instinctive side of the character. What does he/she like about himself/herself? What does he hide? What brings the character pain? What does he/she fear?
9. Legs: the playful side of the character. What does he/she do for fun? If the character does not have a playful side, then students have to pay close attention to determine the motivations behind this fact.
10. Feet: the character's mobility. Where has he or she been (literally/figuratively)? How has he been affected by time - setting and/or travel?
11. Wings: the character's future. Where is he/she going?

Modification

The AP students have to identify four to five meaningful quotations for each body part and write an evaluation/analysis of each quote. The college students have to identify two important quotations for each part followed by commentaries. The weakest students have to identify one quotation for each body part followed by commentary. Also the struggling students can even draw the image of the quotation they are referring to.

Prompt for the AP Final Assessment

After reading and discussing the tragedy of *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, excerpts from Michel Foucault's "History of Sexuality," Judy Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," Judith Halberstam's "Female Masculinity," and any other texts, both fictional or non-fictional, that you have read in the course of this unit, write a twenty page essay in which you discuss how Shakespeare conveys the gender identity of his major

characters and the relative implications. Your argument has to discuss the complexity and ambiguity of gender identity, the societal construct that affects the characters' identity in Macbeth. You should also discuss whether Shakespeare wanted to challenge the societal constructs for gender or whether his representation reflects the weaknesses which derive from the same societal expectations. Is Macbeth weak because he does not comply with the societal expectation for masculinity? Does he murder Duncan because he is under the strong and negative malevolence of the witches and Lady Macbeth?

Prompt for Sophomore and Junior Students' Final Assessment

After reading Macbeth, interviewing peers and/or friend, researching about gender identity, write an essay in which you discuss Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's gender identity. Support your argument with specific references to the Shakespearean tragedy and any other texts you have analyzed or read in the course of this unit. Students can also choose to write an editorial or an Op-Ed instead of the essay.

Modification for Struggling Students

After reading the tragedy of Macbeth and the various class discussions on gender identity, write a monologue, or a scene, or a lyric/poem, a brief short story, a documentary and/or short film (this is appropriate for struggling students and those who have any kind of special needs as indicated by Strassman in the article, "Differentiated Instruction in the English Classroom"), ¹¹ in which you convey your own interpretation of Macbeth's gender identity.

Appendix: Implementing State and District Standards

The teaching implemented in this unit reflects the Common Core State Standards for Reading Fictional and Informational texts, Writing, Speaking and Listening, the College Board requirements for the AP English Literature and Composition course, and the Language Arts Curriculum for the New Haven Public District - our Language Arts Curriculum adheres to the CCSS standards. Specifically, this unit teaches students to analyze complex ideas and sequences of events in fictional and informational texts (play, poems and non-fictional texts on gender identity), explain how specific events or ideas interact and develop, and read and analyze complex thematic ideas, structures, and other literary techniques. It also focuses on the analysis of multiple interpretations of gender made by the author and its effects on the thematic idea(s), the overall meaning of the text, and its aesthetic impact. The unit teaches argumentative writing supported by valid reasons and relevant and sufficient evidence, informative/explanatory writing, and narrative writing (monologues, short story, and lyrics/poems). Both the argumentative and the informative/explanatory writings will be sufficiently supported with evidence from literary and/or informative texts. The narrative writing will be the result of the student's personal research and /or the analysis of the texts presented in the unit. Throughout the entire unit students will initiate or present and discuss in groups and/or as a class. The application of differentiated instruction with flexible groups and modified strategies facilitates the achievement of the above-mentioned standards.

Annotated Bibliography: Resources for Teachers

Adelman, Janet. "Born of a Woman. Fantasies of Maternal Power in Macbeth." *Cannibals, witches, and Divorce. Estranging the Renaissance*. Ed. Marjorie Garber. Baltimore: Hopkins University Press, 1985.

The study discusses the maternal power in Macbeth evoked primarily by the figures of the witches and Lady Macbeth. It discusses the primitive fears of male identity and autonomy, and the threat represented by the female presence.

Beers, Kylene. *When Kids Can't Read What Teachers Can Do*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003.

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In-depth study of Macbeth in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Centuries.

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Farstrup, Alan E., Samuels S. Jay. eds. *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction*. Newark: International Reading Association, 2002.

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A compelling chapter where the authors analyze, compare and contrast the validity of various strategies teachers use for an effective reading comprehension.

George, Paul S. "A Rationale for Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom," *Theory into Practice*, 44, no. 3 (2005): 185-193, www.jstor.org/stable/3496997.

Based on the theory of differentiated instruction, the article evaluates the benefits of heterogeneous classrooms and differentiated instruction.

Strassman, Barbara K, Jersey Ewing. "Differentiated Instruction in the English classroom: Content, Process, Product and Assessment," 48, no. 4 (2005): 358-359, www.jstor.org/stable/40016933.

Useful suggestions of methods and strategies to effectively teach in a differentiated classroom.

Woolfolk, Anita. *Educational Psychology*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001.

An essential text in educational psychology based on the theories of some of the most important scholars like J. Piaget and L. Vygotsky. It prepares for teaching, counseling, speech therapy, or psychology.

Annotated Bibliography: Resources for Teachers and Students

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 900-911.

The study discusses how gender is a neurotic imitation, a desire on the part of women to be men. The author also argues that gender identity is formed as an imitation of the norm or of an ideal.

Faucault, Michel. "The History of Sexuality," *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 893-899.

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Rubin, Gayle. "Sexual Transformation," *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 889-891.

The study provides an account of how the lives of gays and lesbians have changed over the past several centuries as the western culture moved from intolerance to tolerance regarding homosexuality.

Halberstam, Judith. "Female Masculinity," *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 935-943.

The essay discusses the cultural forms of gender multiplicity, explores different gender possibilities, and the manifold formulations that gender performances can assume.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Ed. B. Mowat, P. Werstine. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992.

The unabridged text of the tragedy contains an interesting introduction about Shakespeare's language, life, theater, and plays published during the playwright's lifetime.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Ed. Sylvan Barnet. New York: Penguin, 1998.

The book contains the unabridged text with an overview of Shakespeare, a revised bibliography, and very interesting critical essays.

Endnotes

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