Experience is the Teacher of All Things:
Character and Theme in *Julius Caesar* through Analysis and Writing

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INTRODUCTION

I teach Pre-AP English II in a small school setting. My school is made up entirely of Gifted and Talented (G.T.) designated students, and our program is designed to prepare these students for college level courses. In specific, my course is designed to ready students for the more rigorous AP English III and IV courses they will enter in the coming years. The students are studying world literature, with a focus on texts that have appeared on the AP Literature and Language tests. They are required to write papers that focus primarily on analysis of literary technique and connecting those techniques to abstract literary elements such as theme. Students spend a good deal of class time writing in order to develop style and to discuss their understanding of works read outside of class. There is also class time devoted to group and whole class discussion activities as building blocks for writing activities. The focus of this unit on close reading and analysis fits perfectly with the requirement that my students be able to write complex literary analysis on high-level texts. At the same time, the synthesis and application skills involved in the culminating project offer an opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning through varying and creative outlets, a necessity for gifted students.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives for this unit are based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for 10th grade English and Language Arts, to be implemented in the school year of 2009-10.

Reading

While students are expected to read widely in varied genres, this unit focuses primarily on the genres of poetry, drama, and fiction by examining the play from the standpoint of an actor or director and as an analytical reader. Students will analyze the literary and rhetorical devices found throughout the play as well as the poetic devices used in the creation of the blank verse. They will connect the use of these devices to abstract elements such as character, tone, and theme. In addition, they will connect the events and themes of the play to those of their own life and experience.

Writing

The primary writing focus of this unit is application of skills observed in the writing of masters. Students will be expected to analyze devices and then prove understanding and mastery of the devices identified by producing a text that uses those devices in a purposeful way. Students are expected to use elements of story, poetic forms and techniques, and explicit and implicit thematic statements. In addition, they will have to write a brief, organized, analytical piece about their own written product that contains appropriate evidence and commentary.

Listening and Speaking

Students will be expected to work cooperatively in a group, contributing usefully to the group and incorporating peer suggestions to the final product. Students will incorporate listening and

speaking skills by responding constructively to peer suggestions and contributing their own ideas and suggestions during group meetings.

RATIONALE

In the mythos of the modern high school English classroom, Shakespeare looms large, terrifying or delighting students and teachers alike with his pithy, inverted, archaic language and syntax, defying definitive critical interpretations… and appearing on every book list from eighth grade until twelfth. Teachers can either delight or despair in introducing students to the complex language of Shakespeare, but if students fail to grasp the rhythms and structures of Shakespeare's poems and plays, they often fail at it every year in that stretch. The difficulty, however, is not always in teaching students those rhythms, but in interesting them. Through Shakespeare, students can learn the beauty of a sound rhetorical or syntactical structure, the elegance of a construction that communicates both meaning and intent. They can read and examine the play for its structural craftsmanship or for its complex characters and resounding themes. But in order for teachers to open this world to students, they must be *willing* to read and see it.

Our seminar "This Rough Magic: Teaching Shakespeare's Plays" seeks to examine the plays with a director's eye, revealing character and theme through the writing structure and rhythm rather than simply through interpretation of word and line. My unit will seek to combine the two approaches and show students the many possible ways to approach a work of literature—for the examination of structure and instruction is as important to a novel as to Shakespeare's plays, and any author has his or her methods for revealing character and theme to the discerning reader. Additionally, I will attempt to draw students into this process through the use of an interactive group project that will be the culmination of all their analysis and reading: students will work with their groups to produce a parody of a modern reality show that imitates the writing styles and accurately portrays the characters of both Shakespeare and other authors read throughout the year. As a class, we will examine *Julius Caesar*, the required tenth grade Shakespeare. Some students may also choose to read an additional play as part of self-selected independent reading. Students will analyze both the Bard's use of structure in his playwriting (iambic pentameter and its variations, prose versus poetry, and rhetorical structures) and the importance of word choice and figurative language to characterizations and themes. Often these two different analytical approaches will produce similar conclusions; when they differ, students will be asked to explain why and form their own conclusions about character and theme. In their final project, they will be asked to display their understanding of these approaches by imitating the writing they have analyzed.

While several different approaches to reading Shakespeare will be introduced to students during this unit, the focus will remain on the importance of language in determining character and theme. Throughout all of the activities that will be used to help students enter the world of the plays, the idea that the language, structure, and style—including not only the versification, but also the diction and imagery—are the backbone of abstract literary elements such as character and theme will drive instruction and student understanding. During the culmination of the unit in the final project, students will display their understanding of these ideas by employing some of the various techniques developed during the unit.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Differentiating Curriculum for Gifted Students

Plays are meant to be acted, seen on a stage instead of in a book, rather than cause an instructional difficulty for those who desire to examine such works from a literary standpoint; however, they offer a unique opportunity for analysis and interpretation: students can act out text. Without adaptation or rewriting, students can use actions to speculate on meaning. This same

opportunity can open a door into the text for students who do not normally excel with written curriculum and texts. The sort of "concrete connectives" provided by activities such as acting out the pieces of a literary text (drama or fiction) can allow *all* readers to "fully comprehend the power of language," rather than simply those with the highest verbal and linguistic skills (Simeone 60). This is an important point of note, both because differentiated instruction, aimed at different learning styles and intelligences, can reach students who may normally seem underperforming, and because this sort of instruction is necessary for gifted students such as those I teach, who require "opportunities for independent, self-directed learning; for gaining experience in problem-solving; for developing effective study skills; [and] for working at higher cognitive levels" (Cropley 127). The use of lessons specifically aimed at kinesthetic learners has the advantage of involving "one or both of the other modalities as well. Not only does the strategy then relate in some way to each individual, but it also encourages development of all the learning styles in students" (Gage 54). Because the sort of lessons that most benefit a kinesthetic learner also often serve other populations of learners, it is perfect for adaptation to any classroom, be it gifted or remedial. In the case of this unit, a self-directed group will devise a project that involves application of learned skills to solve problems of staging and character in a specific drama. In another classroom, a kinesthetic project might look different, such as acting out scenes from the play, creating a video translation or documentary, or even doing research on authors and creating a talk show to "host" these personages (Gage 54).

Richard Gage, in his article for *The English Journal*'s *Multiple Intelligences* issue, cites research that describes kinesthetic learners as students who "learn better when they touch or are physically involved in what they are studying," who want "to be busy with their learning" by producing something physical and concrete or by getting up and engaging with material in an active manner (52). Such students may have trouble entering into the textual world of Shakespeare, the lines on the page that purport to express rhythms, images, and experiences that are accessible only through black and white words on paper. Teachers can provide these students with a way to visualize such text through the physical medium of acting and staging—which is, after all, how Shakespeare is meant to be expressed and is best understood—and these students suddenly understand and express the play in ways that enlighten classmates and teachers alike.

Elizabethan Drama

To determine how to stage and act a play by Shakespeare is to move "away from literary criticism towards theatrical study" (Brown 3). The producer or director of a Shakespearian play must consider not the style and language of the text as much as the directions that text gives for character and action; the audience will get the benefit of the former because of the skill of actors and directors at portraying the latter. Cécile de Banke clarifies that it is necessary to have knowledge of three things to properly produce one of the plays: that the plays were written for one type of theater, one group of actors, and a known, popular audience that could be expected to attend in satisfactory numbers (viii). To understand these things, and to understand each of these categories, is to understand what the playwright intended and what will both work in modern production and keep that intention alive. Students can benefit from these understandings as they work through the text in performance and write their own scripts, which are necessarily for a modern stage, but still must use the directive techniques of Shakespeare's texts.

The Stage

One of the most important understandings about the staging of Elizabethan drama is that of the construction of the stage. If students understand the construction and possibilities of the Elizabethan stage, particularly the Globe Theater designed by Shakespeare and other cooperating actors on the basis of James Burbage's theater, then they will understand some possibilities of staging for which a modern production must account. Specifically, students should understand the

basic fact that an Elizabethan stage, rather than being a flat line drawn between the audience and actors, a scene missing its fourth wall, into which viewers peek, the Elizabethan stage was an octagonal platform projecting into the audience (de Banke 10). In addition, the stage had three acting levels, created by the three floors from which viewers could regard the action. Each level was repeated on the stage, in the form of balconies and windows out of which or atop which actors could appear. Taking these possibilities into account allows for a quicker tempo and more dynamic staging of a play, as characters can appear in groups across different areas of the stage and not just the projecting platform. In addition, the seating of the audience around most of the stage necessitated a lively interaction between audience and actors. Those standing closest to the stage, in the yard, would also be those who had paid the least to see the performance (de Banke 14); it is not surprising that these patrons might participate in a lively dialogue and interaction with the play occurring before their faces. Suggesting to students the type of scenes that might take place on certain parts of the stage allows them to envision the play in ways that their knowledge of a modern theater would not: imagining scenes in a bedroom occurring on the balcony stage, or envisioning the opening scene of Hamlet literally played aloft on a castle wall will open their eyes to the action and dynamics of the play (de Banke 40-1). Additional consideration can be given by students to the lighting conditions, sound and visual effects, and other conventions a modern audience takes for granted. These conventions are often represented most strongly only in the imaginations of the audience, though the staging and scenic properties available to Shakespeare's company, along with the "splendor of costuming" possible, "must not only have compensated for the lack of actual scenery, but have provided a spectacle of wonder and beauty" to the audience (de Banke 54). Further kinesthetic opportunities await students as they address problems of lighting and scene and consider the production of effects and props called for in the scripts.

The Actors

Shakespeare wrote his plays for performance by a very specific group of men and boys, and this is evident in the actual grouping of the plays: depending on the "type" of each actor available, which actors were rising from apprenticeship, who left the company or died, *etc* (de Banke 102-3). In addition, Shakespeare wrote his leading parts for a specific leading man or men. Because he had a known and trusted group of actors, with the strengths of whom he was familiar, he could write demanding and subtle parts in complete confidence that they would be appropriately filled. Even the "hired men" who played small parts and often doubled in as many as four parts were skilled actors, often from rival troupes that had failed (de Banke 116). Students, then, understand that the text of Shakespeare, written for a friend or someone with whom he worked on a day-to-day basis, has no need to explain to an actor how or when to move and speak; the actor is intimately familiar with the style of the playwright and understands the clues and direction inherent in the text. Shakespeare wrote for his actors, not for a non-existent director or producer (of course, making the job of today's producers and directors more difficult). This provides the key to the use of verse as textual guide: without staging directions, a director or actor must take his cues from requirements of delivery whenever possible.

Another important detail of the acting of the Elizabethan period is that of gender. With no women in the theater during this period, Shakespeare's women were all played by boys, usually those closest to graduation from apprenticeship (de Banke 114-5). It was, therefore, paramount that the idea of sexual intimacy was de-emphasized in the plays and that the female parts were portrayed without "femininity [or] uncontrolled emotion" and as "exquisitely tuned [instruments] sounding with simplicity and fidelity the loveliest poetry in the English language" (de Banke 116). A modern student does well to remember that these parts were portrayed by boys, and while Shakespeare played with the sexual ambiguity of this convention (the women in comedies not infrequently disguised themselves as men, resulting in a boy who was playing a woman who

was pretending to be a man), it was not the most important element of the play. Students can experiment with this sort of ambiguity in their own scripts, including parts for specific group members that may ignore the conventions of gender, or address other concerns of acting, such as doubling.

The Audience

Shakespeare's audience was captive. An audience that could be expected to return to the theater again and again (although perhaps not his), and an audience that would surely engage with the play happening literally in its midst, an audience that understood the cues of the verse as surely as the actors, they required a dynamic play. His viewers were content to stay at the theater for a much longer time, though their attention span may not have been any longer: Shakespeare writes repetitively, presumably to give the audience a chance to catch up from distractions or trips to outer parts of the theater mid-play. This was also an audience made up of common and high, and the plays are written to appeal to both, assuring their enjoyment and return. Surrounded by the audience, the writer and actors could never be unconscious of them in the way a modern production company can be. While all playwrights hope for success and appreciation, the survival of an Elizabethan troupe demanded it: through every part, from writing to staging, the audience is present in Elizabethan drama. Students should understand the presence of the audience in these plays and see the interaction between actor and audience in the sly asides and presumed soliloquies of the plays: the characters tell the audience their plans and hopes, allow them onto the stage in a way that no modern production can hope to completely match with the invisible fourth wall separating audience from story.

This understanding of the play as a communication between actor and audiences both common and high again opens students to new interpretations and allows them to engage with the play in novel ways. In their own scripts, students might include a staple of "reality television," the diary, or one-on-one in which the character addresses only the camera—and the audience of people who will watch the shot. While the medium of video does not allow for complete removal of the fourth wall, it does mimic the complicity the audience feels with a character who turns to let them in on the plan. Using this and other understandings of the audience and conventions of Elizabethan theater will help students obtain a feel for the play that would be lacking otherwise.

Versification in Shakespeare

Of the ideas expressed throughout our seminar, probably the most important is that of Shakespeare's text as not only writing, but direction. By examining the line and verse of the play, both teachers and students can get a clear idea of timing and delivery of lines that can lead to character and theme analysis. We explored this idea of built-in direction fully in class through discussion of the versification, the use of iambic pentameter and its variations, in various texts of Shakespeare.

Every English teacher worth his or her salt, and most students past the 9th grade, can identify the language of Shakespeare as iambic pentameter. Not many can go much further, however. As one teacher described it, many teachers experience meter as "immediately apparent yet extremely elusive," meaning that they either avoid explicitly teaching students to identify and analyze meter, telling them instead that it must be "appreciated" through hearing, or they teach it *too* explicitly, as a set of rules and measurements (Anderson 259). Either method suffers from a disconnection from the actual text—it is textual examination for the sake of textual examination, without any connection to meaning. In order to avoid this pitfall, teachers must attempt to help students identify variations in the iambic pentameter of Shakespeare's text and then explain the appearance of those variations in terms of character analysis and action. By introducing students to variations such as short lines, shared lines, trochees and spondees, and others, teachers can help students recognize the way Shakespeare uses meter variations to control tempo, create emphasis,

and direct actors on the stage. For example, a series of lines delivered as shared lines indicates a quick exchange of give-and-take, while those same lines delivered as short lines indicate extra metrical space that is filled by silence—and action. Take for example these lines from Caesar:

> *Brutus*
> Well, to our work alive. What do you think
> Of marching to Philippi presently
> *Cassius*
> I do not think it good.
> *Brutus* Your reason?
> *Cassius* This it is:
> Tis better that the enemy seek us.

As they appear in David Bevington's editorial edition (IV.3.195-8), these lines denote a tri-partite share that creates an Alexandrian (a six foot line). The characters speak one after another in rapid succession in order to complete the full metric line. The effect is that of two commanders speaking briskly and in a business-like fashion. In the context of the play, Cassius and Brutus have been fighting, and Brutus has admitted that he is easily provoked because he has just learned of his wife's suicide; this exchange shows a change of tone, as the two friends return to the business of making war against Mark Antony and put the personal tragedy behind them. Should the lines instead be written as they appear in the Folio, with no accounting for shared lines, as below, the implications of the action change:

> *Brutus* Well, to our work alive. What do you think
> Of marching to Philippi presently?
> *Cassius* I do not think it good.
> *Brutus* Your reason?
> *Cassius* This it is:
> Tis better that the enemy seek us.

Here, the lines are kept as short lines, requiring the actors to fill the missing feet. The tone of the lines changes to reasoned, carefully-considered planning. Each character pauses to think about his answer, and as Cassius disagrees with the plan to march to Phillipi, Brutus almost seems to slip back into anger, pausing in what might be disbelief or confusion that Cassius would argue the plan. Clearly, the choice made here should depend on an overall interpretation of Brutus' and Cassius' characters, and the responses here must be faithful to that overall interpretation. The first interpretation fits best within the context of Brutus stepping away from the emotion that has momentarily swayed him and thus prompts most editors to write these as shared lines, despite the extra foot. Thus, the importance of lineation to interpretation; the net consideration is the importance of interpretation to edition and text selection.

The importance of text to interpretation necessitates that the teacher make choices about the text before delivering it to students. The first of these choices is to decide on a responsible edition of the text that meets the needs of the class. The key to selecting this text is to understand the origin of the editorial choices, i.e. how closely it adheres to the folio and quarto editions, what decisions were made by the editor, and how those choices fit into an interpretation. In his series of lectures *On Editing Shakespeare*, Fredson Bowers points out that "from the point of view of editing it is necessary to proceed on consistent assumptions," in order to achieve a text that makes critical sense (6). In addition to the decision of play edition, the teacher must also determine the importance of various pieces of text and how the iambic variations affect characterization and theme. Take the following example from Caesar, analyzed by Carol Marks Sicherman in "Short Lines and Interpretation: The Case of Julius Caesar." Sicherman gives both the printed text from

the First Folio, including her interpretation of the placement of metrical pauses, and the version of the line as it is often printed in edited text, combining the short lines:

> (Flourish and shout)
> *Brutus* 00 00 00 What means this shouting?
> 0 I do fear, the People choose 0 Caesar
> 0 For their King.
> *Cassius* 00 Ay, do you fear it?
> Often printed as:
> *Brutus* What means this shouting? I do fear the people
> Choose Caesar for their king.
> *Cassius* Ay, do you fear it?

The 0 marks indicate half a metrical foot each, and Marks has placed them to indicate spaces of silence (and possibly action) filled with tension and non-verbal communication between the characters. In the second version, lines that are short in the Folio (but can be combined to form normal pentameter *and would fit on the Folio lines as pentameter*) are combined to form whole metrical lines. Marks argues that the short lines should instead be filled with silence (her choices are indicated, but a director might insert these gaps where s/he feels it more pertinent) or the indicated stage directions, which themselves appear in the Folio (186). In Marks' version, the silences place emphasis on the word "Caesar" and the phrase "for their king" respectively. Brutus indicates his fear of Caesar's ascendancy, and Cassius allows the tension to build before answering. The pauses indicated by Marks last long enough to fill in the metrical spaces left by the short lines. In the editorial version, however, the lines are combined, and the last line is spoken as a shared line, requiring Cassius to pick up the line quickly. Rather than full silences that indicate tension and understanding between Brutus and Cassius, the lines are spoken quickly, each with an extra, unstressed syllable at the end—feminine endings that make the characters sound nervous and unsure. In one case, the characters are calculating and wary, in the other hesitant and indecisive.

This example gives evidence not only of the importance of choosing a text carefully but also of the variation in pentameter that can produce new meanings in the text. In the first example, Shakespeare seems to have given some evidence of direction to the actors; in the second, that direction has been revised and is subject to more directorial judgment. In either case it becomes clear that the teacher must share with students the tools for deciphering the code of iambic pentameter to discuss characterization and other textual implications. Teachers and students must be familiar with the Folio and the implications of editing in a specific play; it is not enough to be aware that editing occurs, but to also understand where and why it occurs.

Teaching Julius Caesar

"The language of [*Julius Caesar*] is the language of dialogue, not soliloquy; of speech-making, not day-dreaming; of argument, not meditation; of sarcasm, not gentleness; of public passion, not sour mutterings" (Ryerson 2). The focus on rhetoric and the use of historical figures as main characters in this play often causes students to consider the play as "a dry historical play about politics and war. Yet the drama behind politics and war is generally anything but dry… audiences are drawn to the stories surrounding assassinations" (36). It is thus the teacher's challenge to draw students into the play, and it is perhaps even more challenging in the case of this play than in others more fanciful and full of imagery.

The key to accomplishing the goal of drawing students into such a play is best accomplished by emphasizing and delighting in the language, not hiding or fearing it. In "Teaching *Julius Caesar*," Edward Ryerson asserts that "this is a play to be spoken out loud, standing up straight, looking your friend or enemy straight in the eye no matter what private wars you may attempt to

conceal… For the student reader…the difficulties can be resolved when the speech is made public" (2). Ryerson means that the language of this play is direct, straightforward, and clear, even in concealment. Even as Brutus argues with himself over his course, his language is careful and logical; as Mark Antony wins the hearts of the plebeians at Caesar's funeral, undermining and ultimately destroying the conspiracy, he does it by saying exactly what he means. It is up to the hearer to grasp the import of his words, and his meaning is so obvious that the Roman people do so easily, as will students. Teachers who delight in Antony's "artful use of… rhetorical devices" in this "pivotal [and] amazing" scene will produce students who also delight and wonder at the use of language to sway hearts and minds, create and break political alliances, and express heartfelt emotion (39).

The skillful and knowledgeable teacher will approach the topic of language at a level appropriate to his or her students. For my students this will include the introduction of classical rhetorical terms and close reading of several speeches to determine argument structure and technique; in another classroom, a teacher might focus on specific word choice or types of rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos). There are several specific sections of speech that invite students further into the play and open up the political world inhabited by the characters. Each of these scenes provides students the opportunity to examine the language of the play, the pattern of iambic pentameter, the motivation and traits of the characters involved, and the themes of the play—all in space of few enough lines to discuss in the space of one or two class periods.

Act I: Cassius

The beginning of *Caesar* is, like much of the rest of the play, about the use of language to manipulate others and form alliances. In scene 2, Cassius lays the groundwork for his calculated subversion of Brutus' loyalties in approximately twenty lines, turning Caesar's rise to power from a personal insult towards the other senators into a disastrous assault on the Roman republic, using subtle imagery and diction, contrastive rhetorical devices, and careful appeals to plant seeds of rebellion in the mind of one of Caesar's closest allies. Cassius begins by evoking the might of Caesar, a "Colossus" (I.ii.136), compared to that of Rome. The image is later reinforced as Cassius describes Caesar as "feasting" on "the meat" that is the citizens of Rome (I.ii.149-50). A subtle shift, however, has Caesar dwarfed by the "wide walks " of Rome, where there is plenty of room for other men (I.ii.155). This shift parallels an appeal to Brutus that begins by grouping Brutus and Cassius with the other senators, then singling Brutus out to wonder why the name of Caesar ought "be sounded more" than that of Brutus (I.ii.143), and finally ends by showing Brutus that he alone has a duty to defend Rome, as did his ancestors (I.ii.159). These paralleling images and appeals are delivered using antithetical or juxtapositional statements that create an economy of language throughout the selection. Students are delighted by the depth in what seems on the surface to be a straightforward speech by Cassius. This is their first step into the play and understanding of the characters, and they see the intelligence and trickery of a Cassius who admits to the audience at the end of scene 2 that "if [he] were Brutus now, and [Brutus] were Cassius,/ [Brutus] would not humor" him (I.ii.314-15). Students understand that Cassius is a smooth manipulator of language, and they agree with Cassius that Brutus is easily duped and, indeed, "seduced" (I.ii.312).

Act II: Caesar

In Act II is Caesar's fate sealed: Brutus has joined with the conspiracy, they have laid their plans, and Caesar, in his pride and ambition, has been persuaded to the capitol. Calpurnia's carefully emotional plea to Caesar that he remain home from the Capitol on this ill-starred day, delivered in perfect iambic pentameter, reveals her understanding of her husband's inwardly superstitious nature, as she attempts to persuade him with a litany of horrifying visions and portents that ought to indicate to Caesar that today is a day to stay indoors. Caesar's answering

syllogism, that no man can avoid an "end…purposed by the mighty gods" (II.ii.28), and that Caesar is but a man and therefore "shall go forth" (II.ii.29), reveals his own desire to be seen as logical and commanding; however, both his wife, who wins the argument initially, and Decius Brutus, who easily subverts Caesar's logic with his own, understand that Caesar is at heart superstitious and easily controlled through his desires. He clearly believes in a fate that "will come when it will come" (II.ii.36), and not one that he himself can change or influence: even his logical argument is based on this emotional, illogical premise. This scene offers insight into Caesar, who is seen but briefly in the play—he dies in the very next scene. It also gives students an opening into a major theme of the play in Caesar's duality and the dual nature of the tragedy itself: students see Caesar make a series of decisions, of his own will, that drive him towards his inevitable death. From ignoring the Soothsayer to brushing off Artemidorous and his letter, each decision has the audience groaning at the blindness of Caesar not to see what we already know. They know the conclusion of the play, and it is completely unavoidable on all sides, yet at every turn, Caesar decides his own fate. Shakespeare comments on the nature of fate and free will, as the play "[suggests] a balance between character and fate, for, though the leaders of Rome have one by one fallen through their own acts and choices, they have also, it seems, fulfilled a prearranged destiny" (Bevington 509).

Act III: Mark Antony

"*Et tu Brute*? Then fall, Caesar" (III.i.78)! And with Caesar, falls Brutus. As Caesar succumbs in scene 1 of the play's climactic Act, with the simple stage direction, "*Dies*," the balance of power in the play shifts irrevocably: Antony's star is on the rise. Antony has a series of amazingly descriptive and powerful speeches in this Act that reveal a new side of him to the audience (in line with the thematic duality of other characters and the play itself). Until now, he has been a minor character, a shadow at Caesar's side, of such small importance that Brutus considers him no threat to the conspiracy multiple times. He is proven wrong when Antony delivers a carefully-managed speech to the Roman people that turns them into an impassioned mob thirsty for the blood of the conspirators. Antony's speech shows masterful use of rhetorical device and appeal, as he makes clear the conspiracy's butchery and treachery to Caesar, using a combination of careful facts and references, juxtaposition, and rhetorical questions. From the beginning, Antony masters the crowd as Brutus cannot, speaking to them in the language of verse, offering them respect that Brutus fails to show. His famous first line, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears" (III.ii.75), is emblematic of the entire speech: the extra stressed syllables serve to garner the attention of the crowd quickly and simply, and the emotional order of his language, implying that his friendship to the Roman people comes first, and that their status as countrymen is subordinate to it, cement him in the crowd's favor immediately. His subtle use of iambic variation on the words "ambitious" and " honorable" every time they appear (each one disrupts the normal pattern of the verse, the former by omitting a syllable, the latter by changing the stress pattern) emphasizes the very words he means to subvert. By the end of the speech, Caesar's "ambition" is a virtue, and Brutus's "honor" is questionable. This change is accomplished through the logical arrangement of stated facts—he did "thrice refuse" the "kingly crown" (III.ii.98-9)—juxtaposed against rhetorical questions—"Was this ambition?" (III.ii.99). His verse is manipulative and subtle, and students are shocked by the political acumen displayed in the climax of the play.

Act IV and V: Brutus, Shifting Characters and Duality

The final two acts of the play deal with the civil war that embraces Rome after Caesar's death. During the war, power shifts rapidly and characters mistake one another and the status of the war again and again. Antony again reveals a new side to his character, betraying one of his new confederates, Lepidus, in a play for more power. Comparing his supposed partner to a horse (IV.i.29), he tells Octavius not to think of him "but as property" (IV.i.40), language far at odds

with his passionate and high-minded rhetoric of one act before. What seemed to be a reaction born of powerful emotion is revealed fully as a grab for political power. In addition, the ruin of "Brutus's noble revolution" is revealed completely as "rationality gives way to… a struggle for power in which Rome's Republican tradition is buried forever" (Bevington 508-9). Antony admits that Brutus "was the noblest Roman of them all" (V.v.68), but all of his nobility is nothing in the end, as his beloved city is besieged by war, the Republic is finished, and his own life is lost to despair that "[his] bones…have but labored to attain this hour" (V.v.41-2). By this point in the play, students are fully drawn into the story, debating whether Brutus is worthy of pity or only contempt, able to discuss the importance of specific words, lines, passages, or meter, and willing to do it under their own power and leadership.

CONCLUSION

Shakespeare provides a valuable opportunity to address multiple intelligences and differentiated learning styles, including G.T., by giving students the opportunity to address the text through different modes and interpretations. Teachers can use the textual variations in Shakespeare as well as the opportunity to make directorial choices to allow students to make their own decisions about text and defend those decisions in terms of character, theme, verse, and line as a way to draw them deeper into text. In addition, the traditional approaches to teaching Shakespeare, those dealing with themes, language, and characters, combine with a study of the verse to give a more complete picture of the play and its presentation on the stage.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan One: The Structure of Shakespeare

Objectives

The student will connect figurative and structural elements of language in poetry to meaning and theme.

TEKS: (7) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language: Students understand and make inferences about the way an author's use of language creates imagery and meaning in a text.

Materials and Resources

Students will need a copy of "Sonnet 73" or any other sonnet the teacher may want to substitute. Teachers may also want to draw on some web resources, such as literacyworkshop.org, with examples of metric variation.

Procedures and Activities

First introduce students to the terms of iambic pentameter and its variations: iamb, trochee, spondee, pyrrhic. This material can be presented as a warm up activity or in a separate lesson. Provide students with examples of each sort of meter and discuss how to read the meter. The meter is a function of the natural speech in each line, not the other way around. Many students will want to change the pronunciation of words to fit the idealized metric pattern; use the variations to show them that instead the meter exists because of the natural pronunciation of the words. Ask students to identify the syllables that would naturally be stressed and then locate patterns from these stresses. Students will easily discover trochaic and spondaic patterns and different feet of meter.

Next, present students with Shakespeare's "Sonnet 73." An easy segue exists in the fact that the first line is perfectly iambic. Students will read the poem aloud and annotate it for specific literary elements such as diction and imagery in order to postulate a theme or meaning for the poem. If students are familiar with the TPCASTT method of annotation, it may be helpful to use

this method, or if students are unfamiliar, to introduce it. [There are numerous websites that explain TPCASTT (title, paraphrase, connotation, attitude, shifts, title, theme).] In pairs, allow students to discuss the diction and imagery of the poem for a set period, and then ask students to identify important pieces of text. Help them identify patterns of diction or imagery and arrive at a theme for the poem. This should be an analytical method with which the students are familiar. Now bring students back to the metric pattern of the poem, scanning it as a class, and determining what, if any, variations in the meter occur. Students should discover metric variations that coincide with some patterns noted in the diction or imagery earlier. For instance, one of the most powerful images in the poem, that of "Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang" is spondaic:

/ / ^ / ^ / ^ / / /

"Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang"

The line has three iambic feet bracketed by two spondaic feet, and it is also one of the strongest juxtaposed images in the poem, leading students to discussion of youth and age and what aging means to those who were once youthful lovers. The fact that this image leads students to theme and is also emphasized by metric variation is no accident, and leading students to this discovery will open their eyes to further discoveries of variations and their connections to meaning. They will connect these variations to possible themes, showing a similarity between the uses of structure and image in the poem.

Assessment

Discussion offers the chance for informal assessment of student understanding. Students can be assessed on the basis of their participation in class discussion. For a more formal assessment teachers can collect the annotation of the poem and notes taken.

Lesson Plan Two: The Verse in Action

Objectives

Students will connect verse structures in Elizabethan drama to character development and meaning.

TEKS: (4) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama: Students analyze and make inferences about how structural elements of drama contribute to the character and plot. TEKS: (5)(A) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction: Students analyze the contribution of isolated plots to character and plot development.

Materials and Resources

Students will need copies of selected scenes from the chosen play. Teachers may choose to use a play students have read in past English classes, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, which has several excellent examples of iambic variations, or to use early Acts of *Julius Caesar*. The selected scenes should each present one clear element of variation for students to identify and analyze.

Suggested scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* (chosen because it is read by my students in the ninth grade year) are as follows:

I.i. 32-72 (Prose and verse)
I.i.156-70 (shared lines)
I.iv.40-52 (shared lines)
II.ii.2-65 (shared lines and perfect pentameter)
II.iii.55-94 (rhyme, shared lines)

Also allow students the challenge option of choosing their own lines and interpreting the verse.

Procedures and Activities

First introduce students to iambic lineation variations such as short lines, shared lines, feminine ending, or use of different meter, such as trimeter. This can be done as a warm up activity or during a separate lesson. For this assignment, students will work in groups for two 50-minute lessons. During the first 50-minute lesson, each group will choose a different selected scene. They will work together to analyze the scene and identify lineation patterns and changes. Each selection has a different emphasized variation, as noted above. As groups work, circulate to each group, checking their analysis and offering guidance when necessary. Students should identify the variation and then explain why the variation might exist within the scene and how it would affect the actual action of the scene. Groups will prepare to present their scene with action and correct reading. They will present the scene and explain how they arrived at their conclusions about characters and actions on stage, citing metric variations, during the second 50-minute lesson. Offer alternative explanations or corrections to group scenes when necessary, and encourage student commentary on performances. All student choices must be justified explicitly through the text.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on the basis of their performance and the explanation of that performance. Teachers can choose to record a grade for any of several parts of this activity: participation in group discussion, performance of the scene, or ability to explain and answer questions. This should be regarded as a formative assessment rather than formal and graded as such.

Lesson Plan Three: Poetry vs. Prose: Antony and Brutus Speak to the Crowd

Objectives

Students will analyze the use of rhetorical devices and poetic elements, including rhythm and meter, to create character in a drama.

TEKS: (3) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry.

TEKS: (4) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama: Students analyze and make inferences about how structural elements of drama contribute to the character and plot.

TEKS: (5)(B) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students analyze differences in the characters' moral dilemmas in works of fiction across different countries or cultures.

Materials and Resources

Students should receive a copy of both speeches ahead of time. Brutus' speech occurs in III.ii.13-34; Antony's, in III.ii.75-108. All lines referenced in *Procedures and Materials* come from these speeches. Teachers might want to provide a separately printed copy of each speech with extra spacing for annotation.

Procedures and Activities

Students will read and analyze each speech separately for rhetorical structure and literary devices. They should also have read the entirety of Act III beforehand to provide the appropriate context for the speeches. As a class, students will complete an analysis of the two speeches that includes a metric explanation of the speech as well.

Students should notice specific rhetorical devices and literary devices on their own; ask them to identify these periodically as they participate in a discussion of argument structure and versification—they should fit their observations into the explanation being built by the class. Begin with the obvious difference between the two speeches: one is in prose, the other in verse.

Students should be able to connect this difference to knowledge from the previous lessons in versification, that prose is often used to denote rank or quality (though this is not the only use). This information contradicts the knowledge of the relative status of Brutus and that of Mark Antony. In order to explain this contradiction, lead students in a discussion of each speaker's purpose. Brutus is speaking to explain something to those he feels are beneath him; Mark Antony is speaking purposely to discredit Brutus without seeming to do so and to distance himself from the conspirators, also without seeming to. Help students connect these purposes to the style of each speech—Brutus is speaking down to those who are beneath him; Antony is raising up those he wants to trust and follow him blindly. Continue the discussion by examining the rhetorical appeals and structures used by each speaker. Brutus relies on logic and ethics—arguments he feels are clear and simplified (and thus worthy of prose), but which are actually pompous and condescending. Antony relies on appeals that seem logical, but are actually highly emotional, designed to sway a mob. Students should, at this point, be able to identify rhetorical devices that build each of these arguments. Help them connect each to purpose and argumentative structure. Finally, connect the meter of Antony's speech to these arguments. His verse serves to reinforce specific pieces of his argument subtly, for instance:

/ / ^ / ^ / / ^ ^ /

Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears

This line has very irregular verse that serves to capture the attention of the people to whom Antony speaks; in contrast, Brutus must yell forcefully to them to, "Be silent that you may hear." In addition, Antony emphasizes his main points with words that subtly

/ ^ / / ^ ^

vary the meter: "ambitious" (results in a line short by half a foot) and "honorable." These variations subtly enforce the argument he makes by emphasizing the two words that will slowly transform throughout the speech. Antony finalizes his decisive victory over Brutus with an emotional feminine ending on "My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar," firmly tying the audience to his side with his overwhelmed, emotional reaction to the death of Caesar, who was "faithful and just" and certainly not "ambitious."

After concluding the class discussion, students will use the annotations and analysis made to describe the characters of Antony and Brutus. This can be done as homework or during a separate class period. Students should consider personality, attitude towards the plebeians, each character's view of himself, other characters' views of them, *etc*. Students can design the character including physical aspect—costume, facial expression, stance—and traits and possible actions. All assertions about character must be based on text. Students will have to build on these character descriptions throughout their reading in order to accomplish the final project.

Assessment

This activity asks students to effectively annotate, take notes, analyze concrete literary elements, and support assertions with textual evidence. They can be assessed on the basis of any of these activities. At this point in the unit, they should be held accountable for the depth of their interpretations. They will be formally assessed on their success at articulating character during the culminating project.

Lesson Plan Four: Top Chef Shakespeare

Objectives

Students will demonstrate understanding of the connection between literary and rhetorical devices, metric variation and characterization, by applying these concepts to writing an original script that follows teacher guidelines.

TEKS: (14) Writing/Literary Texts: Students will:

(A) write an engaging story that uses the conventions of fiction (plot, character, literary elements and devices

(B) write a poem using a variety of poetic techniques and forms

(C) write a script with an explicit or implicit theme and details that contribute to a definite mood or tone.

TEKS: (15)(D) Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts: Students will produce a multimedia presentation with graphics and sound to achieve a specific purpose

TEKS: (26) Listening and Speaking/Teamwork.

Materials and Resources

Students will need a project description sheet that details the requirements and expectations of the project as described in this lesson. They should also receive a rubric describing the importance and weighting of each component. To accomplish the project, students will need access to a video camera and editing materials. The project can be modified to produce a play rather than a video if this is not possible. Each group should brainstorm a list of necessary supplies, as well. The teacher may want to provide some of these supplies if possible.

Procedures and Activities

This project will provide the bulk of evidence of student comprehension of all the concepts and skills presented during this unit. It should be an ongoing project, introduced early in the play with specific milestones throughout reading and the majority of writing done after Act III has been completed.

Students will work in groups to write a script that inserts specific characters from *Julius Caesar* into a modern day "reality show." The students will use the construct of the show to display their understanding of the characters and language of the play. Students should focus on displaying the correct characterization of Antony, Brutus, Caesar, or Cassius, or some combination of these main characters, based on notes taken in class and during reading. In addition, students should strive to match the language usage of Shakespeare and of the characters themselves. Shakespearian characters in the segment (students will write only a small portion of the larger show, producing something between 5-15 minutes long) will speak in iambic pentameter, and students will use iambic variations such as those discussed throughout the class (prose, rhyming, trochaic or spondaic meter, feminine endings, short lines, shared lines, *etc*.) for purposeful effect within their scripts. They will then film the script segments, with the iambic variations directing their actions and character. Each group will, in addition, produce a commentary segment or written addition that explains their usage of variations and the connection between script and action.

The complexity of this project demands frequent milestones and in-class direction. Students should be given internal deadlines, such as the selection of show and characters, writing the script, filming specific scenes, editing, and writing commentary. By breaking the assignment into these smaller chunks, the students can be kept on track and produce a successful film. Different classrooms may differentiate this activity by providing more steps. The teacher will check in with each group frequently during in-class group sessions and between sessions.

Supplemental activities might include offering extra credit to imitate specific speeches studied during class, such as inserting an original imitation of the rhetorical structure in Mark Antony's funeral oration.

Assessment

This project calls on students to synthesize information and skills from across the unit. They should be graded on their success at working with a team; the level of character analysis they perform, in terms of their attempt to portray and their success at portraying a character; and understanding and application of rhetorical and literary devices. The teacher should develop a rubric to cover all of these topics and provide specific feedback and skill sets to students. This is a major assessment and should be counted as such. The teacher may choose to include several grades of smaller weight for intermediate steps of the project as well.

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