**Roman Theatre**

by Beth Lloyd Lowe

**Unit Objective:**

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of Roman society, *The Manaechmi*, and PSA structure by performing in a PSA they wrote in groups using the dialogue in *The Manaechmi* and their own words as well.

**Learning Level:**

Varied, mostly intermediate.

**Previous Experience:**

Some scenes performed in class. No previous experience with Roman theatre specifically.

**National Theatre Core Standards:**

TH: Cr1.1.II.a. Investigate historical and cultural conventions and their impact on the visual composition of a drama/theatre work

b. Understand and apply technology to design solutions for a drama/theatre work.

TH:CR2-II. a. Refine a dramatic concept to demonstrate a critical understanding of historical and cultural influences of original ideas applied to a drama/theatre work.

b. Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

TH:Pr6.1.II. a. Present a drama/theatre work using creative processes that shape the production for a specific audience.

TH:Re9.1.II. a. Analyze and assess a drama/theatre work by connecting it to art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines using supporting evidence and criteria.

c. Verify how a drama/theatre work communicates for a specific purpose and audience.

**Big Idea:**

Theatre and English are naturally connected.

**Essential Questions:**

* What is the role of literary devices in the theatre?
* How effective are PSAs?
* What do we want to go back and tell the Romans?

**Key Knowledge and Skills:**

* Definition and recognition of portmanteau, homophone, and allusion.
* Use of video technology (if chosen).
* Structure of a PSA.
* Roman theatre consists of more than just drama, and those popular entertainments effected the structure and content of their plays.
* Roman society was brutal and violent and that effected their plays.

**Authentic Performance Tasks:**

* Explanation: Lectures by class members and discussions
* Interpretation: Discussing the PSAs and why we use so many mythological allusions
* Application: Performing PSAs, creating PSAs, and finding their own portmanteau and homophones
* Perspective: Looking at Roman culture in connection with our own
* Empathy: Recognizing the similarities in our culture with the Romans and using that to avoid making judgment calls
* Self-understanding: Discussing the PSA creation and performance process

**Lessons:**

**Day 1: Bridge from Greek to Roman/Why we should care**

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of how prevalent Greek/Roman culture is in our current day by finding as many mythological allusions in today’s society as possible.

**Day 2: Roman “Lecture”**

**Objective:** Students will be able to understand and teach one aspect of Roman theatre to the class.

**Day 3: Starting to Read *The Manaechmi***

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of how playwrights use the English language to create humor and meaning by raising the correct card at the correct time while reading *The Manaechmi*.

**Day 4: Continue *The Manaechmi***

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the play *The Manaechmi* by holding up the correct signs at the correct moments while reading the play as well as discussing the plot.

**Day 5: Stock Characters**

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of Roman Stock Characters by deciding which characters in the play are which stock characters.

**Day 6 – Finish the play and start the PSA**

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the play *The Manaechmi* and Roman comedy by creating a list of aspects of Roman society and beginning to create a public service announcement to the people of Rome about it.

**Day 7: Practice**

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of Roman society and PSA structure by creating a PSA for the Romans in groups.

**Day 8: Final Assessment - PSA**

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of Roman society, *The Manaechmi*, and PSA structure by performing in a PSA they wrote in groups using the dialogue in *The Manaechmi* and their own words as well.

**Day 1: Bridge from Greek to Roman/Why we should care**

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of how prevalent Greek/Roman culture is in our current day by finding as many mythological allusions in today’s society as possible.

**Materials Needed:** White board and markers, videos (search on Youtube): Harry Potter with Fluffy, Star Wars set to “I need a Hero,” Hercules Zero to Hero, Ben and Jerry’s Greek frozen yogurt ad from their website, Venus commercial from the 90s, Greek god rap, Monty Python “What have the Romans ever given us?” Fruitsnacks for the winners

**Hook**: Have the words written up on the board

* There are a lot of words in our everyday lives that are from Greek/Roman origins:
  + Words: Titanic – titans, aphrodisiac - Aphrodite, Atlas – held up the earth, nowadays a map, Narcissus – Narcissism
* There are also tons of mythological allusions (do you guys know what an allusion is? It’s a reference) in the movies: Show Harry Potter fluffy clip – Cerberus, Star Wars – the mythic hero, Hercules – Hercules…
* In advertising: Greek ice cream commercial from Ben and Jerry’s website - Zeus, the Venus commercial (the razors) – Venus/Aphrodite
* In music: Venus by Bananorama

**Making Connections:** list as many other mythological references you can think of

* After 20 minutes, ask how many they found. Read over their lists to make sure they are correct, then declare a winner by the group with the most correct connections and give them fruitsnacks
* Discussion: Why do you think we have so many allusions to Greek and Roman mythology in our current culture? Why should we care?

**Lecture: Rome**

* Start with video of Rome from Monty Python (what have the Romans ever given us?)
  + What have the Romans given us? Besides our culture, like we just talked about.
    - Possible answers: The aquaduct, sanitation, order.
* Greek god rap – they stole everything from the Greeks, including their gods. This video will show you the gods again in the silliest way possible…
  + - Zeus = Jupiter
    - Hera = Juno
    - Aphrodite = Venus
    - Dionysus = Bacchus
    - Poseidon = Neptune
    - Cronos = Saturn
    - Hades = Pluto
    - Hephaestus = Vulcan
    - Demeter = Ceres
    - Apollo = Apollo
    - Athena = Minerva
    - Artemis = Diana
    - Ares = Mars
    - Hermes = Mercury
    - Eros = Cupid
* Although ancient Greece and ancient Rome were incredibly similar, Roman theatre was notably different than Greek. We’ll dig into that next time.

**Wrap-up:** Pay attention for the next few days to any Greek or Roman mythology allusions you can find – bring them next time!

**Day 2: Roman “Lecture”**

**Objective:** Students will be able to understand and teach one aspect of Roman theatre to the class.

**Materials Needed:** Copies of the textbook pages on Plautus, Seneca, Terence, Acting, and the Roman theater (from “Living Theater”)

**Hook**: Show a few other examples of mythological allusions:

* Monster’s Inc character Celia – medusa
* My Fair Lady – Pygmalion (the sculpter who sculpted a lady and named her Galatea and she came to life when he fell in love with her)
* The song Icarus by Bastille (Icarus who flew with wax wings too close to the sun and died)

**Discussion:** Have any of you thought of any new allusions since last time? Why does our current culture still revolve around the ancient Greek and Roman cultures?

**Instruction**:

* Pass out the photocopied pages – one per table of 4. Tell the students to read the passage, figure out what the most important parts of it are, and present it to the class in an interesting way.
* Give the students 20 minutes to do this
* Have them all present and make sure the other students are taking notes.
* Interject with more information as needed

**Making Connections:**

* Show them the History Channel clip about the colosseum and the gladiator fights and naumachiniae
* Discussion: What popular entertainments did the Romans enjoy?
  + Gladiator fights
  + Naval battles
  + Animal fights
  + Chariot races
    - What does this knowledge make you think about Roman society?
  + What do we have in our current culture that can connect to these entertainments?
    - Gladiator fights – MMA fights/boxing/WWE
    - Naval battles – war reenactments
    - Animal fights – lion tamers, other trained animals
    - Chariot races – dragster racing
      * Are the Romans really that far away from our current culture?
      * Is violence a natural part of humanity or something we should get rid of?

**Wrap-up:** Next time we will begin reading an ancient Roman play that I LOVE and will help us take a look at Roman culture.

**Day 3: Starting to Read *The Manaechmi***

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of how playwrights use the English language to create humor and meaning by raising the correct card at the correct time while reading *The Manaechmi*.

**Materials Needed**: Copies of *The Manaechmi*

**Hook**: Have the following written on the board:

* Homophone
* Rhyme
* Alliteration
* Portmanteau
* Pun

**Discussion:** Ask the students which of these words they know

* Rhyme – words that have the same ending sound
* Pun – plays on words that are meant to be amusing
* Alliteration – repeated beginning consonants
  + Ask the students to define the terms and give examples
* Ask what they think a homophone is – look at the root words “homo” and “phone”
  + Words that sound the same but are not spelled the same
  + Such as: to, two, and too; their, there, and they’re
    - Ask students who don’t usually participate to define to, two and too (to is the preposition – I’m going TO the store, two is the number 2, and too is also or an over-abundance of something) and their, there, and they’re (their is belonging to them, there is a place, and they’re is the contraction of they and are)
* Portmanteau – I’ll just tell you what this one is because let’s be honest, nobody knows.
  + Words that are combined to create a new word, not a contraction:
    - Brunch (breakfast and lunch)
    - Motel (motor hotel)
    - Smog (smoke fog)
      * Can you think of any others?

**Transition**: Have the students take out two pieces of paper

* Cut/rip them in half
* On one, write rhyme on the front and alliteration on the back
* On the other, write portmanteau on the front and homophone on the back
  + This play is full of all of these things. When we read a line that fits into one of these categories, hold up the corresponding sign!
  + You’ll notice we don’t have one for puns – that’s because the only appropriate response to a pun is to groan or force a fake laugh.

**Assessment**: If time, assign parts and begin reading *The Manaechmi.*

**Wrap-up:** Are you ready for the homework assignment that will make your friends and family hate me? Make as many puns, portmanteau or homophones as possible before the next class period. Write down your best one-liners and bring them in next time!

**Day 4: Continue *The Manaechmi***

**Objective:** Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the play *The Manaechmi* by holding up the correct signs at the correct moments while reading the play as well as discussing the plot.

**Materials Needed:** Scripts, signs from last time

**Hook**: “Veggietales Schoolhouse Polka” video. Ask the students what homophones they didn’t think of before this video

**Discussion:** Why do we care about literary devices in a theatre class? What are they adding to the play that we would miss if we didn’t understand them? Why do playwrights often use literary devices such as metaphors and puns?

Continue reading the play, holding up signs, and groaning at puns. Stop after each scene and ask the students: What just happened? To assess their understanding.

**Wrap-up:** 5 minutes before the bell rings, stop the reading and ask the students what they know about Roman society now that they are some ways into the play.

**Day 5: Stock Characters**

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of Roman Stock Characters by deciding which characters in the play are which stock characters.

**Materials Needed:** Scripts, signs from last time, stock characters powerpoint, stock characters worksheet

**Hook**: Show powerpoint from Prezi - Roman Stock Characters and pass out worksheets: <https://prezi.com/vgh3wb4m5n3q/roman-comedy-stock-characters/>

* The Parasite - parasitus
  + Leeches off the main characters by emptying their tables
* The Tricky Slave – Servus Callidus
  + Always finds a solution to the young master’s love problems (often humiliating his young master’s father) and tends to earn his freedom for doing so
* Young Lover - adulescens
  + Falls in love with a courtesan he cannot have, master of the tricky slave. Thinks of nothing except the girl he is in love with
* Courtesan - Meretrix
  + Serves little more than as an object of the young lover’s affection, leading figure in love with the young lover. Sometimes she is bought by the young lover, sometimes she turns out to be freeborn, discovers this, and marries the young lover.
  + OR greedy and older
* Or Virgo – a young maiden
  + Love interest of the adulescens, doesn’t get much stage time, beautiful and virtuous with little personality. Treated as a prize
* Old man - Senex
  + Often the father of the young lover, authority figure who gives wisdom to the young man and is very traditional – this view often contrasts with the young lover’s, causing conflict that is usually resolved by the old man giving in to the young lover.
* Braggart Soldier – Miles Gloriosus
  + Loves himself more than anything else
  + Very stupid, cowardly, and gullible
  + Interested in the same girl as the adulescens most of the time
* Maid/nurse – Ancilla
  + Minor character used as a tool and messenger
* Matrona – Mother
  + Lover her children but is tempermental towards her husband
  + Does not have to be devoted and loyal, but sometimes is

**Discussion/Transition:** What about our characters in the play so far? Who is the Parasite? (Peniculus) The Tricky Slave? (we don’t know yet) The Adulescens? (Manaechmus I or II? We don’t know yet!) The Meretrix? (Desiree) Virgo? (Wife) Senex? (Old Man – we haven’t met him yet) Miles Gloriosus (There is none) Ancilla (The Maid) Matrona (none).

* Why do playwrights use stock characters?
* What stock characters do our modern playwrights and screenwriters use? (possible answers: The valley girl, the cheerleader, the jock, the nerdy girl who takes off her glasses and she’s beautiful, etc.)

Continue reading, following the same pattern as before.

**Wrap-up:** 5 minutes before the end of the class, stop the reading and ask the students which character they identify with most so far in the play and why.

Roman Stock Characters Worksheet

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Stock Character | Description | Manaechmi Character |
| Parasitus |  |  |
| Servus Callidus |  |  |
| Adulescens |  |  |
| Meretrix |  |  |
| Virgo |  |  |
| Senex |  |  |
| Miles Gloriosus |  |  |
| Ancilla |  |  |
| Matrona |  |  |

**Day 6 – Finish the play and start the PSA**

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the play *The Manaechmi* and Roman comedy by creating a list of aspects of Roman society and beginning to create a public service announcement to the people of Rome about it.

**Materials Needed**: Copies of the play *The Manaechmi*, examples of PSAs, PSA Assignment Sheet

* Hook: Go over the stock characters again now that we know who they all are
  + - Peniculus = parasite
    - Desiree = Meretrix
    - Old Man = Old Man ☺
    - Tricky Slave = Messenio
* Activity 1: Finish The Manaechmi
  + After finishing: Remind me from your notes how the Romans acted?
* Videos: Show examples of PSAs – The Selfie Stick PSA, the Girls are the World PSA
* Final Assessment: Pick a scene from this and make it into a PSA about an issue found in this play
  + Make a list of aspects of Roman society we learned from reading the Manaechmi
  + PSA – find a scene from here that you think the community needs to know about: examples – Peniculus’ gluttony as a PSA about how America is becoming fat, the Old Man’s words as a PSA about how women can be strong and decision-makers and equal partners, the treatment of the maid, telling twins apart, etc.
    - Must use at least two pages of dialogue from the script, and be 3-5 minutes long.
    - You can perform it live, or film it
    - Everyone has to be a part of the PSA, but not everyone has to play a character in the section with the text from the Manaechmi – you can just play the announcer who comes on to say this is all wrong.
    - Can be just two pages of dialogue, then rewritten to be better, OR a lot of dialogue and then someone comes on to say that was all wrong, OR a little dialogue and then a lot of explanation of why it’s wrong, OR a little dialogue and then examples from other things
      * Should be 3-5 minutes long
      * Give them the rest of this class period and next to practice
      * Make sure to let them know they are performing two class periods from now

**PSA for Roman Society Assignment**

Step 1: Identify a social issue in Roman society that is addressed by *The Manaechmi*

Step 2: Choose at least two pages worth of dialogue from the script that illustrate this social issue – these may be two consecutive pages or bits of dialogue from all over the script as long as combined they equal 2 pages

Step 3: Write in any additional dialogue – you may want a narrator who explains “what went wrong” or you may want to add in lines to seamlessly stitch together pages of dialogue that did not originally follow each other. Anything you need to add to make the text more like a PSA falls under this category

Step 4: Practice your PSA!

Step 5: Film your PSA – you may film all, a portion, or none of your PSA, but know that it must be 100% memorized.

Step 6: Burn your PSA to a DVD that will work in any DVD drive or put it on a flash drive that can be inserted into a USB port.

Requirements:

* PSA should be 2-4 minutes long
* 2 full pages of dialogue from the play *The Manaechmi*
* Must identify and address an issue in Roman society
* All lines memorized
* All group members must participate

**Day 7: Practice**

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of Roman society and PSA structure by creating a PSA for the Romans in groups.

**Materials Needed**: 30 Rock Homonyms clip

**Hook**: Watch 30 Rock Homonyms clip

* Here is an example of this kind of literary humor still being used today
  + What’s a homonym?
    - 2 words that sound the same AND are spelled the same
  + Were these all actually homonyms??
    - NO they were homophones!

**Rehearsal**: Give the students the rest of the class period to work on their PSAs. Walk around and offer help and guide them back on task if necessary.

**Wrap-Up:** 5 minutes before the bell rings, bring them all back together and ask how it is going – do they have any questions? Is there anything they need from me next time?

* Remember we are performing these next class period!
* If you are filming, be sure to bring your film in a playable format
  + On a DVD
  + On a flashdrive
  + Email or google share it with me

**Day 8: Final Assessment - PSA**

**Objective**: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of Roman society, *The Manaechmi*, and PSA structure by performing in a PSA they wrote in groups using the dialogue in *The Manaechmi* and their own words as well.

**Materials Needed**: A computer that can hook up to the projector, any files emailed or shared with the teacher, copies of the rubric

**Hook**: You’re performing today! Do you think you can be ready with 15 minutes of rehearsal time?

**Preparation:** Give the students 15 minutes to prepare by rehearsing or making sure their technology is working.

**Performance:** After 15 minutes are up, bring the class back together

* Ask for volunteer to go first
* Have each group perform and grade them based on the rubric, being sure to write comments at the bottom for each student
* After each group has performed, move on to discussion

**Discussion**: What did you see?

* What problems in Roman society were exposed and addressed?
* What was this whole experience like?
* Would you make a PSA again? Was it an effective mode of communication?

**Quiz**:

* Now get out a piece of paper for a pop quiz!
  + Group them in 3s based on where they are sitting
  + These are your groups for the quiz
    - Write down as many Portmanteau as you can come up with
    - Then as many homophones as you can come up with
    - Then as many words pertaining to Roman theatre as you can come up with
    - Then list all of the stock characters you can remember
  + Give them 20 minutes to do so
* When 20 minutes is up, call for pencils down. Have one group read out their portmanteau and tell the class this is *Scattergories* style – if you have that word, say that you have it and both groups have to cross it out. Have each group tell their portmanteau.
* Repeat with homophones.
* Repeat with Roman theatre words
  + Have the students turn their quizzes in
    - Grade them out of 12 points – 3 points per category
    - If they found at least 5 per category, they receive full credit
    - 3 or more is 2 points
    - 2 or more is 1 point

Roman Theatre PSA Performance Rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Score: /20

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | | 5 points | 4 points | 3 points | 2 points | 1 point |
| Social Issue Identified | A clear social issue in Roman society is the focus of the scene | A clear social issue in Roman society is in the scene | There is a Roman social issue present | There is a social issue but it is not Roman | There is no social issue |
| Social Issue Addressed | Social issue is explored, and resolved | Social issue is explored | Social Issue is present | Social issue is barely there | There is no social issue |
| Roman Dialogue | 2 full pages of dialogue are used | Almost 2 pages are used | About 1 ½ pages are used | 1 page is used | ½ page is used |
| Memorization | All lines are memorized! | All lines are memorized, but there is a pause or stumble caused by forgetting a single line | A few slip ups | Most lines are memorized, but clearly not all | Very few lines are memorized – scripts are in hand with a few moments of looking up (if there are none, then it is a 0 for this category) |