**Unit Title:**

**“Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!” Shakespeare for Beginners**

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**Unit Objective**:

Student will demonstrate an understanding of Shakespearean Texts by scanning and performing William Shakespeare’s Crispian Speech and cold reading a Shakespeare scene.

**Learning Level:**

Junior High Advanced or High School Beginning

**Student Prior Experience:**

Students have completed basic units in movement, voice, scriptwork, and acting technique. Students have had no prior experience with Shakespeare.

**Standards:**

High School Proficient

TH:Pr5.1.I.a. Practice various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

TH:Pr6.1.I.a. Perform a scripted drama/theatre work for a specific audience.

TH:Re8.1.I.a. Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in multiple drama/theatre works.

TH:Re9.1.Ic. Formulate a deeper understanding and appreciation of a drama/ theatre work by considering its specific purpose or intended audience.

**Essential Questions:**

How can art transcend culture and time?

Why should we investigate old performance techniques?

What human experiences never change? Why?

**Enduring Understandings:**

Universality of Art

Human Experiences

Decoding & Encoding

**Authentic Performance Tasks**:

Translate a Shakespearean Scene into Modern Slang

Scan a Sonnet for Iambic Pentameter

Perform Crispian Speech using Inflections and Dramatic Build

**Lessons**

**Lesson 1**: It’s All Shakespeare to Me! Part One

**Lesson Objective:** Students will become familiar with common Shakespearean language by creating their own Shakespearean dialogue with a partner.

**Lesson 2:** It’s all Shakespeare to Me: Part Two

**Lesson Objective:** Students will continue to understand and decode Shakespearean language by translating the original Shakespeare scenes into a modern vernacular.

**Lesson 3**: Multiple Interpretations

**Objective:** Students will recognize and demonstrate the ability to analyze and interpret Shakespearean scripts by analyzing several versions of *Romeo and Juliet* and then creating an original interpretation of their assigned scene.

**Lesson 4:** Straight Outta Shakespeare or Iambic Pentameter

**Objective:** Students will be able to grasp basic iambic pentameter by scanning and rapping a Shakespearean sonnet.

**Lesson 5:** ?! or Inflections

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of dramatic inflections within Shakespeare by notating inflections on the Crispian Speech.

**Lesson 6**: For Freedom... Frodo… and Narnia! or Dramatic Build

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate the use of dramatic build by writing notes on their Crispian Speech and by performing a dramatic build for the class.

**Lesson 7:** Practice & Preview

**Objective:** Students will be able to prepare and improve their final performance of the Crispian speech by completing a rehearsal bingo assignment.

**Lesson 8:** Performance Day

**Objective:** Student will demonstrate an understanding of Shakespearean text by performing Shakespeare’s Crispian Speech and a Shakespearean Cold Read.

**Lesson 1**: It’s All Shakespeare to Me! Part One

**Lesson Objective:** Students will become familiar with common Shakespearean language by creating their own Shakespearean dialogue with a partner.

**Materials**

● Drama Journals

● Shakespeare Sentence Index Cards

● Troublesome Words Handout *Found: http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/performance/lessonplan.html*

**Introductory:** Passing Notes

Pair students sitting next to one another. They are going to pass silent notes. The first student writes a one sentence note. Then the second student responds with a one sentence note. For convenience students should write notes on the same piece of paper. Each student should write at least 5 sentences. Students should not have this conversation out loud, it should be passed in their notes. They can talk about anything.

For example:

a. Are you ready for the math test this afternoon?

b. I totally forgot!!!!! What am I gonna do?

c. Relax, I will explain everything at lunch.

d. Is it hard? I did really bad on the last test!

Have students hold onto these conversations for later.

**Activity:** Shakespeare Sentences

Split students into groups of 4, perhaps combine two partnerships from the first activity. Give each group a set of index cards that have each word to a Shakespearean Line written on them. The cards will be purposefully out of order.

a. A glooming peace this morning with it brings.

b. That handkerchief did an Egyptian to my mother give.

c. Thy shape invisible retain thou still.

Students should try to put the sentence back together. They can check it with you. If they don't have it completely correct have them try again a few times. Before revealing the correct order ask students to tell you what they think their sentence is about. They should be able to decode the main topics or ideas in the sentence. Tell students the correct order. Point out how students were close to interpreting the sentence just by spending time looking at the words and their possible relationships. We can understand difficult passages by examining the words.

**Discussion**

What aspects of Shakespearean Language do you find most difficult to understand? Students will probably say things like this:

● Weird Verb Ending

● Awkward Sentence Structure

● Words like “thee” or “thy”

**Instruction:** Language

Where have you heard Shakespearean Language in everyday life?

a. Old Texts, Bible, Dr. Faust Old Poetry

b. Most Common, Marriage Vows

i. "I, Martin take thee, Jane, as my lawful wife."

ii. "I, Jane, take thee, Martin, as my lawful husband."

Explain Second Person Familiar Pronouns.

Singular Pronouns. Write examples on the board.

a. Thou Subject:

"Thou art my brother."

b. Thee Object:

"Come, let me clutch thee."

c. Thy Possessive

Adjective: "What is thy name?"

d. Thine Possessive

Noun: "To thine own self be true."

Plural Pronouns

a. Ye Subject:

“ye shall know me.”

Those who have studied French or Spanish will recognize that this is the formalizing of English word forms. Ask students to take out their notes and change them to include the singular and plural pronouns.

Explain Verb Inflection usually it just means adding an est or st on the end of a word.

a. "Thou liest, malignant thing."

b. "What didst thou see?"

c. "Why canst thou not see the difference?"

Have students change their notes to include verb inflections. Encourage students to over exaggerate it just for the sake of the activity.

Hand each student a copy of “Troublesome Words”. Ask students to incorporate at least 10 of the words into their notes, they will need to rewrite some of the sentences.

When students have finished rewriting have each pair read aloud what they wrote as a performance. First what they wrote in modern English and then in Old English.

**Assessment**

Listen to the final notes performances. Assess to see if students are getting a rhythm for working with new words and new sentences structure using the context of their own familiar experiences. No formal assessment. This lesson is to help students take their first small step into Shakespeare.

**Lesson 2:** It’s all Shakespeare to Me: Part Two

**Lesson Objective:** Students will continue to understand and decode Shakespearean language by translating the original Shakespeare scenes into a modern vernacular.

**Materials**

● Shakespeare Scene Selections

[*https://www.theatrefolk.com/products/scenespeareshakespeareanscenesforstudentactors/sample.pdf*](https://www.theatrefolk.com/products/scenespeareshakespeareanscenesforstudentactors/sample.pdf)

**Hook:** Gibberish Translator

Introduce your students to the idea of speaking in “Gibberish”. (Gibberish means speaking with silly sounds that don’t mean anything, but still communicate an intention and meaning.) Ask two students to take the stage. One will speak gibberish, and the other will translate the gibberish into English. Give the gibberish student a specific situation to talk about, or take suggestions from the class. (i.e. You have just come back from a walk on Jupiter, and you are telling us, a crowd of reporters, all about it.) The gibberish speaker should speak only one line at a time, using as much physicality and vocal variety as he/she can. Then the interpreter will mimic the motions and ‘translate’ the phrase into English.

OTHER SCENARIOS:

∙ A scientist explaining her recent discovery of a 2nd moon

∙ A pop singer giving a press conference after falling asleep during his concert performance

∙ A child describing what it was like getting her first cavity

∙ A chef explaining how to cook his favorite meal, candy spaghetti (or anything else!)

∙ A farmer explaining how to milk a cow in record time

**Extension Activity: Gibberish Conversation**

Ask two students to take the stage. They will be the actors in the scene. Ask two more students to stand on either side of them. They will be the interpreters. Give the actors a topic. (Or ask for a suggestion from the class.) The first actor speaks a line in gibberish, then his interpreter will translate it into English for the audience. The second actor then responds in gibberish, while her interpreter translates. The translators are there for the audience

Situations:

a. Television interview

b. A job interview

c. A diplomatic meeting

d. Doctors appointment

e. Blind date

Allow several students to try and perform.

**Transition**

Explain to the students that they are obviously expert translators of gibberish so Shakespeare shouldn’t be a problem.

**Discussion**

How do you think professional actors are able to perform Shakespeare and really communicate with the audience?

What is the first thing an actor performing Shakespeare needs to know in order to communicate to the audience?

● They need to know what they are saying before they can say it!!!!

**Group Activity:** From Shakespeare to Slang

Have students sit in a circle with a pencil or pen. Hand out a copy of a Shakespeare Scene to each member of the class. They will go around the circle and each decode a line of Shakespeare and turn it into modern English. They will all write down the new sentence next to the old one. Encourage the students to:

a. just go off their impulses

b. guess on the words they don’t quite understand

c. don’t worry if the translation isn’t perfect.

When you are finished the translating ask two students to read or perform the modern English version of the scene.

**Discussion**

Did we understand the scene? Why?

**Extension**

Ask the same students to perform again only this time they will do the original Shakespeare. Have them focus on using the same intention and communication as they did with the modern English.

**Discussion**

Could you understand the Shakespeare scene? Why or why not?

**Activity:** From Shakespeare to Slang Partners

Have students find a partner. Hand out a brand new Shakespeare Scene to each partnership. As partners, the students will go through their scene and decode each line into modern slang, just like we did in the group. They will write down the new sentence next to the Shakespearean one. If students get really lost on a line they can ask you for help. Encourage the students to:

a. just go off their impulses

b. guess on the words they don’t quite understand

c. don’t worry if the translation isn’t perfect.

When they are finished the translating explain that we will perform again using our gibberish techniques from the beginning of class.

**Assessment**

1. Each partnership will perform, saying their Slang Line followed immediately by their Shakespeare Line.

**Closing Discussion**

Ask the students, “How does translating the Shakespeare into slang help or hinder your performances?

a. Helps you understand the emotions or the reasoning behind the lines.

b. Helps puts the scene into a meaningful context.

c. Hinders because it’s not always a perfect translation between time periods.

Point out to students that there can be many different interpretations of Shakespeare; no one interpretation is correct.

**Lesson 3**: Multiple Interpretations

**Objective:** Students will recognize and demonstrate the ability to analyze and interpret Shakespearean scripts by analyzing several versions of *Romeo and Juliet* and then creating an original interpretation of their assigned scene.

**Materials**

● Shakespeare Adaptations Worksheet

● *Romeo and Juliet* Synopsis Clip https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnFHtx9Lb8g

● Classic *Romeo and Juliet* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPFzLplSkRc

● Modern *Romeo and Juliet* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Py5YPJGCtpg> (4:576:35)

● Musical *Romeo and Juliet “West Side Story”* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7xTvbFAhQ

● Animated *Romeo and Juliet* “*Gnomeo and Juliet*” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6HpUndEtP8

● Assigned Scenes from last class.

**Hook:** Review *Romeo and Juliet* Plot

Show the video clip synopsis of “Romeo and Juliet”. To give students the context of the play, have them pay attention to the overall story.

**Activity**: Adaptations of Shakespeare

Explain to students they will be watching multiple clips of the same Shakespearean scene and answering questions on a handout. Pass out the *Romeo and Juliet* Handout. Show the *R&J* video clips. Give students a few minutes after each clip to discuss and answer the questions.

**Activity**: Personal Adaptations

1. When the students are finished with the handout, ask them to consider their scene from the last of class. What is a different way it could be interpreted? Have students imagine a different interpretation and write it down.

a. Choose another setting (pool, backyard, fire escape)

b. Choose another time period (Elizabethan, 80’s, WW11)

c. Choose another genre (comedy, mystery, documentary)

Have students share their new interpretations with their scene partners. As a partnership they should choose from the different interpretations and incorporate the changes into their scene. They will practice and perform their modern slang scripts with the new interpretation. Allow students the rest of class to practice. Leave time at the end of class to present the new scenes.

**Closer**

Explain that next class we are going to look further into the way Shakespeare wrote his plays.

**Lesson 4:** Straight Outta Shakespeare or Iambic Pentameter

**Objective:** Students will be able to grasp basic iambic pentameter by scanning and rapping a Shakespearean sonnet.

**Materials**

● Shakespeare Rap = <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSbtkLA3GrY>

● The Hip Hop of Shakespeare = <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ucYtOk_8Qo> (Begin – 7:22)

● James Brown Funky Drummer Beat = <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIQZi3_ON0>

● Sonnet 18

● Sonnet Handout [*http://wwwtc.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/handouts/lnglp\_sonnets.pdf*](http://wwwtc.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/handouts/lnglp_sonnets.pdf)

**Hook:** Shakespeare vs. Hip Hop

Ask the students to raise their hands for either Shakespeare or Hip Hop. Quotes from either plays sonnets or hip hop songs:

a. To destroy the beauty from which one came. (Sean Carter or JayZ)

b. Maybe it’s hatred I spew, maybe it’s food for the spirit. (Eminem)

c. Men would rather use their broken weapons than their bare hands.(Othello)

d. I was not born under a rhyming planet. (Much Ado About Nothing)

e. The most benevolent king communicates through your dreams. (RZA WuTang clan)

f. Socrates, philosophies and hypotheses can’t define.(WuTang)

**Lecture:** The Hip Hop of Shakespeare

Play the Shakespeare Rap (4:268:22). Shakespeare used iambic pentameter to write his plays. They put the words into an intrinsic rhythm; even rap artists can still use his work. Point out that Shakespeare was writing in beats, lyrical beats so we can put them to hip hop beats.

Break down Iambic pentameter for the students.

a. Iambic = 2

b. Pentameter = 5

c. So 5 sets of 2

d. 2 is a foot, Stressed and unstressed, or a heartbeat or a gallop. Dee Dum

e. Using syllables not words.

**Activity:** Scanning the Sonnet

Show Sonnet 18 on the projector and hand each student a copy of sonnet 18. Show the breakdown of the first line into Iambic Pentameter.

a. Shall I/ compare/ thee to/ a sum/ mer’s day

Have different students come to the board and break down a line. They can have help from other students, those sitting in their seats should try scanning the work themselves on their own paper. Have the class read the sonnet out loud using the iambic pentameter rhythm.

**Activity: Group Scanning**

Give each student a sonnet handout and divide them into 3 groups. Each group will choose one of the sonnets and scan it for iambic pentameter to the best of their ability. Have each group recite the sonnet in unison based on their scanning.

**Activity: Meter vs. Communication.**

Point out to students that sometimes the iambic pentameter makes communicating the text awkward. There is going to be a tension when performing between wanting to follow the rhythm but also wanting to communicate the text using word stress. It is okay to lose the iambic pentameter occasionally when performing as long as you keep the beat as your backbone.

Show the Hip Hop of Shakespeare video clip, until 7:22. Point out that sometimes the rap artists aren't exactly following Iambic pentameter but they always go back to the beat to guide them. Play the Funky Drumline video clip and let student practice rapping their sonnet to the beat. Have several students who are comfortable try rapping their sonnets for the class.

**Closer:**

Point out to students that you don’t want them to abandon communicating for the meter, but use the beat to help you communicate.

**Lesson 5:** ?! or Inflections

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of dramatic inflections within Shakespeare by notating inflections on the Crispian Speech.

**Materials**

Copies of Crispian Speech

**Hook** : Inflections

Draw four shapes on the board representing different inflections

a. Upward ⤴

b. Downward ⤵

c. Sustained →

d. Caesura or Circumflex􀀀

After you draw them on the board, point to one and speak to the students, making sure all of your sentences end in that inflection. After a few minutes, let them guess what all of the different symbols mean. Have a brief discussion about why those different inflections would be important in theatre, especially Shakespeare.

● Helps you know when thoughts are ending, when there is more, what is emphasized, and allows the actor to build tension.

Let them try each vocal inflection, and have them repeat the sounds a few times until they have it.

***A. Circumflex*** emphasis on a certain word. Ex. Mom! When you are whining.

***B. Sustained*** makes you feel like there is more coming, no punctuation. Ex But...ummm... well….

***C. Upward* Inflection** change in pitch going from a lower to a higher note within the vowel. Means there is more to this. Examples: Raise the pitch at the end of these words, keeping in mind what they convey with a upward inflection. “Wow! Really?”

***D. Downward* Inflection** This is when there is a change in pitch going from a higher to a lower note within the vowel. Most often, this change in pitch indicates confidence, finality, power and certainty. Examples: Lower the pitch at the end of these words. keeping in mind what they convey with a downward inflection. “Done, No, Go”

**Activity**: Inflection Improv

Have four volunteers come to front. Tell them to improvise a scene, but that each person may only use one of the four inflections. Get suggestions from the audience for the scene location and situation. Let a few groups go.

**Activity**: Inflection Scenes

Split the class into 4 groups. Tell them to create a rehearsed improvisation titled, “Studying Shakespeare,” but that their group may only use the assigned vocal inflection. Allow for rehearsal times, then watch the scene.

**Discussion**

Have a brief discussion again about why it is important to use a variety of inflections in theatre.

● Keeps the audience engaged

● Expresses emotion and meaning.

**Activity:** Crispian Speech: Part One

Give everyone a copy of the Crispian speech and display it on the projector. Go through the speech with them one line at a time, deciding which inflection each line should end on or where inflections should be used in the middle of a line. Afterward, have everyone say the speech out loud a few times and take time to answer any questions students may still have.

**Closer**

Tell the students to keep their papers with them, and that they will all be performing the speeches for a grade later in the unit.

**Lesson 6**: For Freedom... Frodo… and Narnia! or Dramatic Build

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate the use of dramatic build by writing notes on their Crispian Speech and by performing a dramatic build for the class.

**Materials**

● Drama Journals

● Crispian Speech Handout

● Insulting Conversation Handout [*http://wwwtc.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/handouts/prflp\_shakesconversations3.pdf*](http://wwwtc.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/handouts/prflp_shakesconversations3.pdf)

● Lord of the Rings Clip https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXGUNvIFTQw

● Braveheart Clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr_OpFxCxA>

**Hook**

Show *Lord of the Rings* Clip and then the *Braveheart* clip. What did these two characters do to rouse their men?

1. Built in intensity

2. Reasoned with them

3. Appealed to their emotions

How do the characters use their bodies and voices to rouse their men?

1. Increased volume and pitch.

**Activity** Personal Speeches

Have each student write 5 basic things about themselves in their drama journals. After they all have had time, demonstrate how to read the information they just wrote with dramatic build (going up in pitch and volume). Give them a chance to practice all at the same time reading their lists with dramatic build. . Be sure to point out that they do not need to rush through the speeches, and they don’t need to yell. They need to project.

After they all feel more comfortable with dramatic build, ask each student to read their information to the class with dramatic build. Encourage the students to cheer for each other at climatic moments.

**Activity**: Shakespearean Insults

Hand out “An insulting conversation”. Divide the class in half and assign each half either part A or part B. Let the students look over their lines and sound out troublesome words. Have the students form two lines facing each other. They are now each one household in *Romeo and Juliet*: The Montagues and the

Capulets. They really don’t like each other. They are going to hurl insults chorally. Meaning you will all say your line as a team together in unison.

However you should deliver the insults using dramatic build. They should start low in volume and pitch and end high in volume and pitch. They should not rush or yell, but they should definitely be projecting. Let the insults be hurled! When students are finished ask if two volunteers will perform the lines again solo using dramatic build.

**Transition**

Explain that students will revisit the Crispian Speech from last class.

**Activity**: Crispian Speech Part Two

Have students pull out their Crispian speech. Explain that we will decode the lines as a class to get a basic sense of translation but each student may write their own interpretation on their paper. When students are finished give them a couple of moments to practice the dramatic build of the speech. Before the end of class ask the students to all perform the speech chorally but with the inflections and the dramatic build they decided on.

**Closer**

Next class we will practice and preview the speeches for each other and then the class

after that we will perform them as our final for the unit.

**Lesson 7:** Practice & Preview

**Objective:** Students will be able to prepare and improve their final performance of the Crispian speech by completing a rehearsal bingo assignment.

**Materials**

● Drama Journals

● Crispian Speech Performance Rubric

**Hook:** Review Techniques

Split class into 3 groups. Assign each group a term/tool Shakespeare used in his writing. They are responsible for review and teaching the class the technique.

a. Iambic pentameter

b. Inflections

c. Dramatic build

**Discussion**

Ask students why we translate the speech into modern English?

● It helps us get the context or the meaning of the words

**Activity** : Translations

Translate the Crispian Speech into Modern English. Each translated line should be written next to the Shakespearean Line. This will be handed in for points for the final.

**Transition**

1. Explain to students that they will be doing a rehearsal bingo to prepare for their performances next class.

**Activity**: Rehearsal Bingo

Have students copy the bingo chart into their drama journals. They should aim for a blackout of the chart using bingo lines.

a. Show Teacher = Perform for the teacher and receive feedback.

b. Show 2 Peers = Perform for at least two peers and receive feedback.

c. Inflections = Mark the inflections on your hardcopy speech and practice them.

d. Perfect Run = Run your performance until you feel you have accomplished a perfect run.

e. Dramatic Build = Practice dramatic build and dramatic moments.

f. Iambic Pentameter = Mark the Iambic Pentameter on your hardcopy speech and practice the rhythm.

For the final students will be required to perform their speeches and hand in their written work.

5 points for written inflections, 5 points for Iambic Pentameter, and 5 points for Translations

Allow students the rest of class to finish their bingo charts.

**Closer**

Allow time to go over the performance rubric before the end of class.

**Lesson 8:** Performance Day

**Objective:** Student will demonstrate an understanding of Shakespearean text by performing Shakespeare’s Crispian Speech and a Shakespearean Cold Read.

**Materials**

● Crispian Speech Performance Rubric

● Shakespeare Cold Read Scene Selections

**Introduction:** Rubric and Warm Up

Review the rubric with students. Allow them several minutes to warm up their voices and ready their speeches.

**Assessment:** Crispian Speech

Have students perform their speech one at a time for the class. Give them written feedback on their growth over the unit on their personal rubric.

**Discussion**

Ask students to discuss how their attitudes about Shakespeare have changed? What were some discoveries they made about Shakespeare in the unit?

**Post Assessment**

Hand out fresh copies of Shakespearean Scenes and give the students five minutes to look over it. Ask them to do a cold reading for the class. Discuss with the students how their ability to encounter Shakespeare has changed? Point out how students will most likely have grown more comfortable with the words rhythm and structure.