

An Introductory Lesson for The Prologue of Romeo and Juliet

Designed by Jeff Garver for 9th grade English Language Arts

Contentions:

If a student can read and understand the works of William Shakespeare, that student can read and understand just about anything.

A study of drama must include Shakespeare since he is the best known playwright in the world.

Teacher modeling is one of the most powerful forces in the writing instruction. Teachers need to write with students. A teacher needs to model writing strategies and the process of writing to make his or her students stronger writers.

In order to maximize learning, a teacher must create a classroom environment that reinforces the understanding that reading and writing can be risk free and enjoyable.

Positive interdependence facilitates learning. When students collaborate, students learn more.

Students need to move around the room and talk to each other before they write. Talking is the first step in the writing process.

Students need time to brainstorm before they start writing.

Students should have numerous writing invitations and should be able to self-select their own topics. Student writing is better when it is personally meaningful.

Using mentor texts can inform our students and inspire our students to write better.

When students are challenged by rigorous text, they will rise to the occasion.

Writing is a very deliberate process.

Lesson Development:

Greet students as they enter. Distribute our first poem and review our essential question: To what extent do we control our own destiny?

Explain to the students that today we are going to review choices- what they mean, who makes choices and how those choices can impact future options.

Introduce a poem by Tupac Shakur, "In the Event of My Demise". Review the concept of theme in writing journals and using poster scaffold. Remind students that the theme

is the central message or idea in a piece of writing, a message in a bottle thrown out on the sea of time, delivering a universally meaningful message to a reader.

Discuss the word demise. Encourage student responses and reference the definition under the poem.

Read the poem aloud. Invite students to annotate, marking confusions and taking notes on ideas they generate regarding the poem. Complete the Walk Around Survey facilitating a walk and talk activity answering and recording responses to the following questions.

What is the message that this poem has thrown in the bottle?

How does this poem look different from other poems you have read this year?

What line in this poem has the most meaning to you?

Engage the students in a whip around response.

With the essential question in mind, invite students to write for 10 minutes on one or more of these suggested topics:

What do you think Tupac wanted to accomplish before his demise? What kind of person was he? What were his hopes and dreams? How would he like to be remembered?

Make a list. What is your bucket list? What are the things you would like to do before you die? Alternately, compose an anti-bucket list. List things you would never care to experience.

What is different about this poem? What sets this poem apart from other poems we have examined this year?

Shoulder partner pair share.

Distribute copies of The Prologue. The purpose here is to immerse the students in the sound, rhythm and content of the Shakespearean sonnet. The features of a sonnet (quatrain, couplet, *abab* rhyme scheme and iambic pentameter) will appear on the sonnet handout. Other literary concepts (metaphor and motif) are review and should appear in the student's writing journals and poster scaffolds from previous lessons.

Reading One: Read it aloud to the students. Students circle words they do not understand. Discuss these unfamiliar words and model placing them on three dollar words page in writing journal.

Reading Two: Read the poem in unison, addressing the following questions: What is the setting of the play? What is the main conflict in the play? What are the consequences of this conflict?

Reading Three: March and stomp around the room while reading the poem, illustrating the effect of iambic pentameter. Show the students the iambic pentameter model. Explain that we will be studying iambic pentameter in a future lesson.

Guide the students into recognition of quatrain, couplet and rhyme scheme patterns. Reference the definitions on *The Prologue* handout and enter definitions in writing journals.

Break the students into groups. Read aloud "My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun". Have students reread the poem and complete the following tasks:

Circle each quatrain.

Put a box around the couplet.

Mark the *abab* rhyme scheme.

Write a theme for this poem on the bottom of the page.

Ask for a volunteer to share this on the document camera.

Distribute handout, "The Most Important Thing". Have students complete independently and assess for understanding.

View 10 minutes of the DiCaprio version of *Romeo and Juliet*, noticing the choices being made by the characters in the story. How do those choices limit options for the characters? Discuss at the end of the video and brainstorm a list of themes. Scaffold both choices and themes on the on posters or whiteboard.

Writing invitation:

Ask students to keep the essential question in mind: To what extent do we control our own destiny?

Experiment with composing a sonnet. Start an idea from today's writing or use something else you would like to develop from your writing journal. Start at the end. Brainstorm a couplet and use the rhyming dictionaries to develop quatrains.

Write a news article relating chronological events from the video. Tell the story. Remember to incorporate a lead that incorporates who, what, where and when in the first sentence of the article.

Affect:

Praise students generously by lifting out individual thoughts and ideas during discussions.

Demonstrate genuine enthusiasm for the reading and writing process while delivering the lesson.

Set students up for success by paraphrasing and questioning.

Build a community of sharing where individual thoughts and ideas are honored.

Engage students by making connections to real-life, personal experiences.

Encourage students to share ideas and learning in a safe, comfortable environment.

Briefly share personal experience and stories to facilitate learning.

Provide constant invitations to participate using student's names.

Best Practices:

Post essential question and continuously spiral back to essential question.

Post anchor charts and use writing journals to review the concepts of theme and motif.

Provide handouts illustrating easy to follow steps.

Provide graphic organizers to break apart steps and provide for visual reinforcement.

Encourage collaboration through use of small groups, large groups and pair-sharing.

Include students in distribution of materials using complement model.

Provide modeling, think aloud and repetition to practice and reinforce concepts.

Encourage higher order thinking, questioning and connecting.

Plan for movement activities to allow students to stretch and move about the room.

Provide choices when designing writing invitations.

Lead students gradually from simple writing invitations to the more complex writing invitations.

Attempt to connect modern themes to Shakespearean themes in order to establish relevancy for students.

Outside Influences:

RL.9.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text, and analyze in detail the text. Provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.9.9 Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.

RL.9.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text.

RL.9.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning.

RL.9.7 Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem.

RL.9.10 By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend poems with scaffolding as needed.

SL.9.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.9.3 Apply knowledge of language and how it applies in different contexts.

L.9.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of words.

L.9.6 Acquire and use domain specific language.

W.9.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences.

W.9.4 Produce clear and coherent writing that was appropriate to the task.

W.9.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question.

W.9.9 Draw evidence from literary text to analyze, reflect, and research.

W.9.10 Produce clear and coherent writing, in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to the task and purpose.

W.9.10 Write routinely over extended time frames, and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, or audiences.

Extensions and Adaptations:

Invite kids to write rap songs.

Research "fallen stars" who have been lost too soon: MLK, Kurt Cobain, etc.

Do performance poetry with this.

Publish an anthology of sonnets.

Create a digital story based on student sonnets.

Connect this lesson with teaching young kids a math lesson on syllables.

Publishing sonnets.

Perform sonnets.

Compare Tupac's texts to Biggie Smalls' or other of his contemporaries.

Research and report out on feuds and the cultural phenomena of guns, gangs, and violence.

Interview community members about underlying differences in points of view on contemporary issues.

Participate in the Bay View Shakespeare activities.

Facilitate a film study regarding Shakespeare texts.

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