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MSET 365-008

Lesson Plan

**What’s On for Today and Why**

As teachers, we often begin a unit on Shakespeare by explaining why we put so much emphasis on a single author. I simply state that Shakespeare is everywhere. Many authors borrow Shakespeare's plots (*A Thousand Acres* by Jane Smiley, *Mama Day* by Gloria Naylor); children's television reworks his ideas (*Wishbone*, *Duck Tales*); adult television alludes to his work (*Star Trek*, *Frasier*); cartoonists play with the Bard's words ("Calvin and Hobbes," "Garfield"); he is referred to in films (*Renaissance Man*, *Clueless*); and advertisements borrow his snappier phrases for captions and voice-overs. Students miss out on a lot if they are not Shakespeare-literate.

This lesson usually follows a lecture on language and our indebtedness to Shakespeare's creativity with word and phrase. A good source of inspiration is Bernard Levin's amazing pastiche of Shakespeare's famous coinages, "Quoting Shakespeare," in *The Story of English* by Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil (Viking, 1986).

**What To Do**

1. Give students a working definition of allusion.

2. Cite examples of allusions to Shakespeare that you have gathered from newspapers, comic strips, magazine articles, books (including titles), songs, or films. *Star Trek IV: The Undiscovered Country* is a great example. Christopher Plummer's declaration that Shakespeare is best in "the original Klingon" and his wonderful use of *Julius Caesar* as he lets "slip the dogs of war" on the valiant crew of the *Enterprise* show how Shakespeare lives in popular culture.

3. After fielding questions from students, give them three weeks to bring in three allusions to Shakespeare to share with the class. Make a few minutes available each day for sharing examples as they come in. Students with CDs, tapes, and videos need to notify you a day in advance so that you have the necessary equipment. Audio-visual examples must come cued-up.

4. Students must identify the source of the allusion by citing the play, the act and scene, and the speaker for each submission. (A brief lesson on the use of a concordance, a good dictionary, or on-line searching may help here.)

5. The only major rule: credit is given to the first student who brings in a particular example (in other words, the class will not have to watch the same clip from *Clueless* ten times, and only one student will receive credit for discovering it).

**What You Need**

several examples of allusions to Shakespeare; a good Shakespeare concordance

Links:  
[You may direct students to try searching The Complete Works of William Shakespeare](http://www.folger.edu/library.cfm?libid=184)   
  
  
**How Did It Go?**

The evaluation for this activity is simple: students receive full credit for supplying three allusions to Shakespeare whether all of them are shared in class or not. Extra-credit may be given for one or two extra examples.

It usually develops into quite a contest to see who can find the most allusions to Shakespeare by semester's end

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| |  | | --- | | NCTE English Language Arts Standards |   http://www.folger.edu/siteimages/clear.gif | |
| http://www.folger.edu/siteimages/clear.gif | 1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.  2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.  3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).   7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.   8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. |

Source:

Curran, Jim. "Bill's Allusive Nature: An Introduction to Shakespeare." *folger.edu*. Folger Shakespeare Library, Oct. 1998. Web. 27 Sept. 2011. <http://www.folger.edu/eduLesPlanDtl.cfm?lpid=561>.

NM State Standards

**Theatre Standard 6**

Show increased awareness of diverse peoples and cultures through visual and performing arts.

1. Analyze and compare dramatic texts and artists from various cultures and periods of history.
   * 1. Select a theme or idea and compare how it is developed or treated in dramas from a variety of cultures.
     2. Analyze and summarize how contemporary and historic cultural influences affect the content and production elements of a dramatic presentation
2. Construct social meaning from productions representing a variety of cultures and historical periods, and relate to current issues.
   * 1. Reflect and describe how personal cultural experiences have affected a performance in a play.
     2. Assess the social impact of theatre productions, past and present.

**Theatre Standard 7**

Demonstrate knowledge about how technology and invention have historically influenced artists and offered new possibilities for expression.

1. Explore how scientific and technological advances have impacted technical theatre development (set/scenery, costumes, lighting, properties, sound and make-up).
   * 1. Choose playwrights from various cultures during a specific historical period, and compare their lives and works, and how they influenced the society in which they lived.

**LESSON PLAN EVALUATION**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Component** | **Description** | **Max Points** | **Points** |
| Source Information | The authors of the lesson are clearly indicated, as well as the source of the lesson plan. | 5 | 5 |
| Grade level and topic | Is the grade level and general topic of the lesson clearly indicated and appropriate? | 5 | 3- no grade level indicated, but it can be appropriate for all grade levels |
| Standards and inquiry | Is at least one relevant State or National standard clearly identified, and is it substantively addressed in the lesson? | 5 | 5- several national standards are identified |
| Instructional objectives | Is it clear from the statement of the lesson objectives what a **student should be able to do** as a result of completing the lesson? | 10 | 6- although there are several standards mentioned, there are no clear objectives for the lesson |
| Materials, equipment, and set-up | Are the materials and equipment needed for this lesson described clearly enough that another teacher could set it up and carry it out? | 10 | 7- the materials needed are described, but |
| Engagement | Will students’ attention be gained early in the lesson? Will their initial conceptions be solicited? | 10 | 10- students will be able to see how Shakespeare relates to them and the culture they know, so their initial conceptions about Shakespeare being boring and not relating to them will hopefully be laid to rest. |
| Exploration | Can you perceive a clear guiding question/purpose for the lesson? Will the students collect data or retrieve interesting data from elsewhere? Are the instructions for doing this clear? | 15 | 12- I can see a clear purpose for this lesson, which is to introduce students to Shakespeare by relating it to their life. According to the lesson, students will retrieve interesting data on their own, searching for allusions to Shakespeare in modern culture. The instructions could be a bit clearer. |
| Explanation | Will the students be able to make sense of their exploration? Are they asked to report what they learn? | 15 | 10- students should be able to make sense of their exploration, but the lesson is not really linked to anything tangible like a particular play that students are reading or the history of Shakespeare, so it would be difficult to tell whether students get it or not. They are however asked to report what they learn by bringing in allusions they find to Shakespeare in their world, sharing their findings with the class. |
| Elaboration | Are there suggestions for extending the lesson (e.g., for advanced students)? | 10 | 0-There are no suggestions as to how to extend the lesson. |
| Evaluation | Is there a mechanism for evaluating students’ understandings? Does that mechanism match the lesson’s objectives? | 15 | 0-There is no mechanism for evaluating student understanding |
| DISCRETIONARY | Any additional points you wish to assign for especially good treatment in any section of the lesson plan (maximum of 10.) Attach explanation to evaluation form. | 10 |  |

This lesson is a really good introductory lesson to Shakespeare. It helps students see that Shakespeare isn’t just some boring dead guy who wrote plays a long time ago, but that he is very much a part of our culture today. By introducing students to Shakespeare in this way, they are more apt to pay attention for the rest of the lesson on Shakespeare. This lesson plan serves as a good attention getter, and it invites students to look at Shakespeare in a different way.

If I were to use this lesson, I would use it in conjunction with a history lesson on Shakespeare and his times. This would be the beginning of the Shakespeare unit, which would culminate in the students reading one of Shakespeare’s plays and performing scenes from it in groups.