

C. L. Tempest

Unit Plan #1

July 12, 1991

Deerfield Beach High School is located in the northeast corner of Broward County, Florida. Although the school is physically in the middle of a lower middle class neighborhood and directly across the street from a government housing project, it also draws from the very affluent communities of Lighthouse Point, Hillsboro Beach, the Deer Run area, and the beach itself. The diverse neighborhoods surrounding the school, augmented by the school's status as a bilingual magnet, give it a very culturally diverse population. Statistically its average enrollment of 1800 is roughly broken down to about 40% white, 40% Afro-American, 20% other. Partially included in the 'other', but not entirely, are recent arrivals to this country from Haiti, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Peru, Nicaragua, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Canada, Vietnam, Brazil, China, Central Africa, Lebanon, Israel, Kuwait, France, Rumania, Spain, Greece.... Actually students of various levels of education from all around the world. Although the dominant language is English; Spanish, Creole, French, Portuguese, and Arabic are not uncommonly heard in the halls. This mixture adds a flavor to all of the classes in the school.

Although my classes in honors English I (or ninth grade) require a high proficiency in the English language, I have, over the last seven years, had at least one representative from each of the countries listed in the first paragraph. This mixture requires a bit of extra care in all class preparation and presentation. It is really an experience calling a student's home, never quite

being sure what language a parent will speak after the initial tentative "Hello." I have occasionally been surprised when calling the home of the blue eyed blond in the third row, who may only have a slight remnant of an accent to find out that no one else in the family speaks anything but Spanish or French or Portuguese or Greek. Students from these homes often have an added burden when studying Shakespeare.

Romeo and Juliet is the standard ninth grade exposure to the Bard mainly because it seems to be in every ninth grade anthology. My theory is that that play is used as an introduction to Shakespeare because some editor, about a million years ago, discovered that Juliet is about fourteen therefore should be in the ninth grade and therefore should be of some interest to other ninth graders. In any case, I use Romeo and Juliet every year to introduce my five classes a day, twenty-five students per class to Shakespeare.

Another statistical fact is needed to get a clearer picture of the Honors English I classes. One of the two middle schools that feeds into Deerfield Beach High School has been flagged as one of the consistently lowest scoring schools on standardized achievement tests in the county, therefore in the country since we are statistically a near average county, from time out of memory. Many students entering my program are often cuter, more polite, more pleasant to be around than scholarly. The reading level of my group extends from about one year below to many levels above grade level. Although the scores on these tests do not always, or even often, reflect the student's ability, the point to note is the diversity of the group.

In this first unit plan I had hoped to come close to the way that I teach Romeo and Juliet, the play I teach. Why? Firstly and primarily it will be easier to complete the assignment due during a very busy week. Although the days and weeks don't seem to be getting any easier or less busy, the future always looks easier than the present. It may also serve as a good place to start in order to measure what I have observed and absorbed during this institute. However, much of what we have already done has been applicable to my curriculum, has been of great benefit to me, and has crept into my unit. My second unit will need to be a play that I do not teach and therefore will lend itself to the novel methods that we have been exposed to. Romeo and Juliet then for now, "t'is enough, t'will serve."

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE: Students will gain understanding and appreciation of drama as both a literary and a performance art form.

SOME SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES: The students will

identify plot elements in the play.

identify elements of style in the play including verse, prose, rhyme, dialogue, etc. and be able to analyze each.

demonstrate their understanding by producing a scene from the play illustrating an understanding of the subtext.

relate situations to other situations found in 'life.'

evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation of the play as a literature and performance.

THE PLAN

DAY ONE. MONDAY

Students will be asked to label the seven most important periods in a persons life on "Ages" handout (see appendix). Under each "Age" they will record an example of something that they think is typical of that age. At the completion of this task the student will illustrate the age that they think is the most important.

30 minutes maximum time allotted. Each student will then display the work and explain briefly what has been done and why he or she made the choice he or she did. Work will be collected for display.

MATERIAL NEEDED: handout, colored pencils or crayons

DAY TWO. TUESDAY

"The Seven Ages of Man"

Using the overhead projector I will expose one line of the poem "The Seven Ages of Man" (from As You Like It). We will then read each line in unison. Each line will be discussed by looking for images, interesting word choice, number of syllables per line, etc.. We will also try to anticipate the next line, the next age, and the next example of that age. When the poem is completely exposed we will read the entire poem in unison.

From the poem the students will construct another "Age" tree using the ages found in the poem. If time permits they will again pick the age that they think is the most important or interesting and illustrate it. This may be finished at home and collected first thing the following period for the display.

MATERIALS NEEDED: handout, colored pencils or crayons, transparencies, textbook for reference

TERMS REVIEWED: scanning, meter, image, metaphor, simile, rhyme....

DAY THREE. WEDNESDAY

Act Three, Scene One

The class will be divided into three groups of about eight students per group. I will then distribute a bundle of acting parts to each group. The bundles contain individual acting parts of Romeo and Juliet which have ~~been~~ separated the scene into roughly three equal sections, labeled A, B, and C. The members of each group will choose at random a characters part to read. With as little discussion as possible we will read the scene three times following ^{this} ~~the following~~ chart.

READING	first			second			third		
GROUP #	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
SCRIPT SECTION	a	b	c	b	c	a	c	a	b

We will of course read the scene in its correct order for each reading. At the completion of the third reading the students will be asked to turn in their textbooks to the scene. Questions and discussion will follow.

Students will be given the assignment of somewhat polishing their reading and planing movements to be presented on Friday.

MATERIALS NEEDED: handouts (distributed and collected), textbook

DAY FOUR. THURSDAY

COMBAT

Weather permitting--and it usually does unless I plan a day outside--we will work on the front lawn of the school. We will attempt Michael's stage combat class done Tempest style. The introduction to the class, safety rules, teams selected, and rational will all be held in the classroom. On the lawn

the class will first warm up by walking in a circle using different size steps and different parts of their feet. This will be followed by learning the stance, level headed movement, and practicing that movement. Working in groups of three, one student as the moderator, they will learn five attacks and parries. Students will practice for very short, slow, and safe fights to be presented with their scenes on Friday.

The last ten minutes of the period will be for discussion and 'cool down' in the classroom.

MATERIALS NEEDED: wooden"swords," handout (A Safe Fight), textbook for reference

DAY FIVE. FRIDAY

REHEARSAL AND PRESENTATION

Fifteen minutes will be given for the groups to somewhat polish their scene. Each group then will present its version of Act III, scene i, of Romeo and Juliet. If time permits discussion will follow.

DAYS SIX THROUGH FIFTEEN

ROMEO AND JULIET, LINE BY LINE

By Monday I will have completed two cast lists for the play, the RED and the GREEN cast. By using two casts some continuity of the play can be achieved and most of the class will have more opportunity to read. The two casts will alternate reading days beginning with the RED cast. This two cast system also helps fill in the holes created when a student scheduled to read is absent. The students who are reading a specific scene will sit in front of the class, moving to the front when the script calls

for their characters to enter. Only a limited amount of discussion will take place during these reading days. The amount of discussion will depend on the students understanding of the material being covered. Understanding will be determined by administering simple comprehension checks (quizzes) throughout this process.

DAYS SIXTEEN AND SEVENTEEN

DISCUSSION

These two days will be reserved for discussion of the play as a whole. Day Sixteen's discussion will be centered around the play itself, Day Seventeen around its implications and 'meaning.' Although these days will be lead by the teacher, hopefully the students will be able to keep it going with questions. To facilitate student participation on these days, discussion was kept at a minimum on reading days. My students are always encouraged to read with a notebook next to their reading material to jot down any questions or comments on what is being covered.

DAYS EIGHTEEN AND NINETEEN

EVALUATION

The last day of the unit (day nineteen or perhaps day twenty) will be reserved for a formal evaluation in the form of a comprehensive test. This test will consist of objective questions covering plot, character, style, line identification, poetic devices, etc. and a formal essay concerning motivation, subtext, and meaning. I also like to include an optional teaching and/or learning essay to give the student an opportunity to respond to my method of presentation.

The days between the end of discussion and the formal evaluation

will be filled with the presentation of projects. Students would have been assigned an outside of class project around Day Ten to be completed at this time. These may include individual work such as a comic book version of an important scene, costume designs for at least seven characters, set designs or a set model, or if (absolutely positively) necessary a paper about the play or Elizabethan period. Small group work may also be possible if a group would like to present a scene to the class. Students presenting a scene would be strongly encouraged to memorize their parts (some prompting would be permitted), costume themselves, and use the appropriate props. All projects presented on these days will be discussed in class and either evaluated by the teacher in the case of a scene or collected for evaluation and display.

THE AGES OF A MAN



