

Activity Plan

<i>Title</i>	Performance Essay
<i>Subject</i>	Theatre: Connecting
<i>Author</i>	ArtsEdge: Erinn Harris Editors & Producers ARTSEGE [AB]
<i>Grade level</i>	Grades 9-12
<i>Time duration</i>	60-120 mins
<i>Overview</i>	<p>Plays were meant to be performed. By investigating Shakespeare through both an analytical and theatrical lens, students achieve a much deeper understanding of his work. While this lesson was originally intended for a study of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, teachers can adapt it for any of Shakespeare's works, as well as for other dramatic works.</p> <p>Students will read the play, paying particular attention to character motivation and Shakespeare's use of language. Students will perform daily in small groups, leading up to the culminating activity: a performance essay in which groups (6-7 students each) create a script that analyzes an aspect of the play (theme, character development, imagery, or other language usage).</p> <p>In these productions, students will act out the scenes that serve as "evidence" for their thesis, as well as student-written scenes that serve as a frame story for the essay as a whole.</p>
<i>Objective</i>	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn to annotate passages in order to discover the meaning behind Shakespeare's language.• Actively participate in all aspects of theater: acting, directing, script writing, stage directions, blocking, set and costume design, etc...• Think analytically, creating an overall thesis statement and using text to support that thesis.• Understand iambic pentameter and its uses.• Discuss universal themes and connections to contemporary lives.

<p><i>Materials</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections between Shakespeare and other works studied throughout the year. • Identify, analyze, and create allusions. <p>Resources</p> <p>Printable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romeo and Juliet Handout • Prompt Book • Costumes • Thesis Deciding Day • Outline • Props • Script • Set Design <p>Video</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Essay • Director Tip • Memorization Tip • Actor Tip • Thesis Tip <p>Required Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DVD Player • Television
<p><i>Activities and procedures</i></p>	<p>ENGAGE</p> <p>1) Students should view the Zeffirelli version of the play prior to study. Some teachers may find this an unusual first step to studying the play, but many teachers believe that a play is meant to be performed, and thus it makes sense to view the play before reading it. For younger students, this helps tremendously with studying the language of the play as they read, as well as with their analysis.</p> <p>2) Teacher should print a copy of Performance Essay Final for each student. It will be referenced throughout the lesson.</p> <p>BUILD KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>1) Before reading begins, the teacher will introduce the acting mini-project (see pages 7-8 of "Performance Essay Final"). In order to begin preparing for the performance, students will be put into small groups for acting "mini-projects." Students will sign up for scenes to perform.</p>

2) At the beginning of each class period, 1-2 groups will perform their mini-project. The performances will correspond to the previous reading assignment. Students should pay attention to motivation, interaction between characters, pronunciation, and blocking in preparation for this assignment. They do not have to have their scenes memorized for this performance.

3) After each performance, the audience will act as the "director." Audience members will watch the performance and, based on their own understanding of the night's reading, give the actors suggestions on blocking, delivery of lines, and motivations.

4) Throughout the unit, teachers have the freedom to teach lessons specific to their individual school's curriculum in addition to these acting projects to further students' understanding of the play.

NOTE) These steps are one way of studying a play. This lesson is built around what to do to unpack a work after your students have studied a play. Use your own methods of teaching the play to your students.

APPLY

1) Once students have finished studying the play, the teacher should explain the final assignment: the Shakespeare Performance Essay (see pages 1-3 of "[Performance Essay Final](#)"). Teachers can either give the students information during the acting projects, or during the explanation of the culminating performance.

2) Students will put themselves into groups of 5-7 students. In groups larger than seven, many students feel that there is not enough to do. Each student will then choose a specific troupe responsibility to complete in addition to their acting. These responsibilities are: script editor, director, property manager, set designer, and costumer (see pages 2-3 of "[Performance Essay Final](#)").

3) In these groups, students will create a thesis statement based on the play. This thesis can be based on character development, theme, Shakespeare's style, or any other idea that can be supported by evidence from the text. Teachers can use "Thesis Models" in the "[Performance Essay Final](#)" packet, the [Thesis Deciding Day](#) worksheet, or a combination of the two.

4) Following teacher approval of the thesis, students will create an outline for an essay revolving around that thesis. Students will not actually write the essay; instead, they will find scenes in the text that support their thesis and with bullet points, explain WHY these scenes can be used as supports (see "[Outline](#)" resource). This ensures that

	<p>students are selecting meaningful scenes to perform.</p> <p>5) Once the outline has been approved, students begin writing a script for their performance. This script (see "Script" resource) should be crafted in the form of a frame story. For example, the scenes should not be performed one after another, but rather as a play within a play. See videos for samples.</p> <p>6) Students will complete troupe specific assignments. While each of the assignments will be somewhat collaborative, individual students will be in charge of completing a prompt book, a costumes list, a props list, a final script, and a set design (worksheets and further instructions available in "Resources").</p> <p>7) Students will spend five class periods in rehearsal. Students may use this rehearsal time to revise the script, build sets, put costumes together, memorize lines, or anything else that needs to be completed for the final performance.</p>
<i>Conclusions</i>	<p>REFLECT</p> <p>1) Both prior to and following the final performance, students will complete a peer evaluation and a self-evaluation. These evaluations (see page 5 of "Performance Essay Final") will serve as one part of the students' final performance grade. Students will complete a pre-and post-performance evaluation to ensure fairness. Often times someone can work more than anyone in their group, but forget their lines; all the group seems to remember in that instance is that this particular member forgot his or her lines.</p>
<i>Adaptations</i>	<p>Accessibility Notes</p> <p>Students with visual disabilities may need modified handouts or texts. For film clips, it is helpful for all students to show film clips with closed captions enabled</p>
<i>Links and Websites</i>	<p>Teacher Background</p> <p>Teachers should have knowledge of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (or whichever play is being studied) and Shakespeare in general.</p> <p>Teachers should familiarize themselves with the performance aspects of Shakespeare (i.e. Lack of stage directions, iambic pentameter, etc...)</p> <p>Prior Student Knowledge</p>

Students will most likely be familiar with *Romeo and Juliet*; some may have even studied it in previous years.