

True Life: Shakespeare Didn't Have the Whole Picture
Working with "Point of View" in *Romeo and Juliet*
By Molly Harrison

Context: This lesson would be taught towards the end of a *Romeo and Juliet* unit, in preparation for the culminating assessment for a 9th grade class. It would be the second addition in a set of two lesson plans, where my lesson would build on prior lessons of "characterization", which would help students to better understand the personalities and motives of pivotal characters in the play. At this point, students would be finishing the play together in class, and would have had several opportunities to act/read scenes out-loud with their peers and in front of their peers.

Objectives: Students will be able to (SWBAT):

- Students will be able to interpret character's point of view, and be able to analyze how point of view changes the plot in the play.
- Students will be able to apply their prior knowledge of characters/character analysis and demonstrate how "point of view" can change the outcome of events specific to *Romeo and Juliet* through acting.
- Students will be able to perform and read Shakespeare in front of their classmates. This will include students being able to apply emotion and action to their scenes.
- Students will be able to work cooperatively with their peers to discuss and debate scene direction in performing their scenes.

Rationale:

Objectives: Students will be able to perform and read Shakespeare in front of their classmates. This will include students being able to apply emotion and action to their scenes. And students will be able to work cooperatively with their peers to discuss and debate scene direction in performing their scenes.

Standard 1.3 Communicate in speech, writing, and multimedia using content, form, voice, and style appropriate to the audience and purpose.

→This standard comes from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/ELA_9_167747_7.pdf and is supported by the fact that students will have to communicate through both speech and writing, while keeping in mind "content, form, voice and style".

→Designing "appropriate speech" through content, form, voice and style is a very important ability throughout anyone's life experiences. In practicing this through acting, students will be cognizant of the audience they are addressing, and how they convey their own speech.

→This activity will also be important for students to develop their use of communication while working with others; in group activities (in high school, future schooling, future careers, and future relationships), it will be important that students recognize how they represent themselves through language.

Objective: Students will be able to apply their prior knowledge of characters/character analysis to demonstrate how "point of view" can change the outcome of events specific to *Romeo and Juliet*.

Standard 2.1 Develop critical reading, listening, and viewing strategies.

→This standard also comes from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/ELA_9_167747_7.pdf and supports the goal that students will be able to re-interpret a text (critical reading), and will be able to judge/rationalize their judgments of their peers performances (which will be both a listening and viewing strategy).

→Acting scenes out from dramatic literature will help students with a visual and auditory sense of understanding. Listening to the words from the text, coupled with paying special attention to emotions and actions, will help students better understand what is happening in that particular scene.

→Re-interpreting and making "meaningful/probable" predictions outside-of-text is a good way to see if students understand the material they are working with. They must understand who the characters in the

story are and how the events play out before they can predict what will happen in the future. This skill is helpful in all reading areas; to be able to pick out what is “meaningful” in a text, and to predict what may come next/be a repercussion of the reading allows students to connect events in a text to real-life situations, giving the students a better understanding of the content.

Objective: Students will be able to apply their prior knowledge of characters/character analysis to demonstrate how “point of view” can change the outcome of events specific to Romeo and Juliet.
 -Students will be able to interpret how one’s point of view can alter how a particular event appears.

Standard 3.1 Develop the skills of close and contextual literary reading.

→This standard comes from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/ELA_9_167747_7.pdf, and supports the prior characterization work students would have to do to understand the assignment. Characterization allows students to do a close reading of the text, as does making predictions.

→Being able to identify and understand “point of view” is a very important part of communicating in society, not matter what the context of the situation. Through this activity, focusing on the point of view will demonstrate to students how actions and events might look differently from someone else’s eyes; this represents a universal understanding and measure of sympathy that is important for all person-to-person communication and understanding.

Objective: Students will be able to perform and read Shakespeare in front of their classmates. This will include students being able to apply emotion and action to their scenes.

Standard 3.2 Read and respond to classic and contemporary fiction, literary nonfiction, and expository text, from a variety of literary genre representing many time periods and authors.

→This standard comes from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/ELA_9_167747_7.pdf and supports the use of Shakespeare as a text in the classroom through the means of variety of genre and time period.

→Understanding and interpreting Shakespeare is a good goal for students of many ages, but particularly for 9th grade students; through accessing Shakespeare’s language in a constructive, meaningful way, students will build confidence and security when working with “difficult” texts (helping prepare them for continuing progress in school).

Preparation for Classroom Interaction

Room arrangement:

- Students’ desks would be arranged in small pod-circles in the back of the room to allow them to discuss and practice their scenes in small groups.
- Student groups will be made up of 4-5 students.
- The front of the room would be clear to allow students room to perform their skits.

Lesson introduction:

-The lesson would begin with a short journal asking students to reflect on personal experiences; this would aim to get students thinking of point-of-view and multiple sides to stories.

Some questions that might be posed are listed below.

Ex: Have you ever been accused of something when your accuser didn’t know the whole story? Have you ever seen someone jump to conclusions when they haven’t taken another person’s point of view into account? What did that look like? How did it make you feel?

Lesson development/description of activities:

Part I:

-Students will be given scenes (previously selected by the teacher) to focus their interpretation on. The specific scenes that I will have students focus on would be:

Act 1, scene 5 lines 68-103 (Tybalt and Capulet fight scene). 2 groups will each do this scene: one group will represent Romeo’s perspective, while the other represents Tybalt’s.

Act 3, scene 5 lines 116-175 (Capulet telling Juliet about marrying Paris). 2 groups will each do this scene: one group will represent Capulet’s

To bridge the idea of their journal and the lesson, I would then explain that we are going to be working with the idea of point-of-view in Romeo and Juliet, and how looking at each character's perspective on scenes may change the way the scene plays out. I would then provide students with a model handout of a sample "script" from two character's perspectives. This sample script would introduce ideas of adding monologue to characters to show emotions and internal thoughts, as well as "cues" of emotions/actions to model how the scribes and actors should work together in creating their scripts. I would choose not to model the actual acting portion of the lesson, because the context of the lesson allows my students prior experience in acting scenes out in front of the class.

perspective, while the other represents Juliet's

-Students would first start by reading their scenes out-loud as a group.

-After they have read their scenes, they would need to identify key characters and actions in the scene. Some questions that might be posed on the board/overhead could be:

- Who is speaking? Who are they speaking to?
- What is the "feeling" of the scene? How do you know?
- What actions are happening?

-After addressing key characters and actions (more surface-level understanding), students would then refer to their character maps (completed in the previous "characterization" lessons) and see how it compares to each characters' actions/thoughts in that scene.

Example: Students will need to further identify what the characters are thinking and feeling in these scenes. It should also be stressed that scribes and actors should be communicating their ideas about characters' emotions/actions/thoughts so that the scribes can document cues for the actors (these roles are further explained in "rules for participation").

-Students will then work as a group to re-create the scene from both characters' perspectives. (This will include re-working some of the language to incorporate personal monologues or thought explanations and adding physical cues to show emotional changes and actions).

-Students will then perform their acts one-by-one, in correspondence to the group that shares their scene (For example, Romeo's perspective in Act 1 scene 5 could go first, then Tybalt's perspective in the same scene).

-Post-acting (of both perspective on one scene), the audience will be asked to identify which character's perspective each scene was from. They will also be asked *how* they could tell (i.e. Romeo's monologue describes ____, this ____ body language shows Tybalt was angry etc.)

Rules for participation:

-Each group will be required to analyze a scene from one character's perspective and act it out, and this will include the following work:

- Each group will have 1-2 "scribes" who take notes on how their group is changing/adapting the scene. These scribes will then help their group mates make note cards for their acting **This will include "cues" that describe actions and emotions that each character should be providing, and *why*.
- Each group will have 2-3 "actors" who present their scene to the class
- The entire group will have to be able to field questions/support their point-of-view performance to their class.

-The scribes will act as an option for students who are not entirely comfortable with long speaking parts in front of their peers. However, their fellow actor group mates must still give mutual input to the scene development, as well as the scribes must be in the scene somehow (supporting actors/props/introductions etc.)

Teacher's plan for facilitating interaction:

-For this lesson, the teacher will be circulating the room to help students understand their scenes. In a non-threatening way, they will take the roles of "directors". For example, the teacher should be paying attention to how the students are acting the scenes out (are they clear-cut emotions, or are they ambiguous? Can we tell which point of view it's coming from?), and be able to probe students on how they can evoke emotions and personalities of characters.

The teacher should ask probing questions such as:

- Why are you having this character do ____
- What is the emotion in this scene? How can you display this emotion?
- How do you think this character is feeling right now? Why? Etc.

Assessment tools and procedures:

-Informal assessment can be done during collaboration time, where the teacher can listen to each group's discussion/negotiation of scenes to see if they understand what is happening in the scenes they are working with.

-Formal assessment can be conducted by collecting the written "scripts" students produce. By having students turn in note cards as rationale (their rationale would be the support they provide by their description of actions and emotions in relation to their chosen dialogue), this produces a written assessment.

-Informal assessment could also take the form of performance (can their classmates/I understand the point-of-view from the scene provided?)

Materials:

- Enough copies of *Romeo and Juliet* for each group
- Note cards//markers for script cards
- Handouts of sample scripts and directions for each group