

Shakespeare Interpretation Unit Assessment

Did you know? Many television shows and movies are modern interpretations of Shakespearean plays. For example, The Office aired an episode which featured Dwight as Macbeth, Angela as his wife Lady Macbeth, and Michael as the king. The following is an English project that uses this episode, as well as a few others, to fuse together the Macbeth storyline.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyzK6UJzKxM>

Students often view Shakespeare as stuffy, meaningless, and old. However, Shakespearean comedies and tragedies are timeless stories that transcend the boundaries of time. In fact, many allusions to Shakespearean plays reveal themselves repeatedly in our modern culture. Understanding the core elements of Shakespearean comedies and tragedies helps students better understand the world around them.

While working in this unit, you will gain experience in what it might be like to be a playwright, actor, and literary critic.

In addition, you will be challenged to answer the essential questions:

- “How can Shakespeare’s work still be relevant today?”
- “How can modern language demonstrate the original intent and meaning of Shakespeare’s plays?”

This unit will include 3 student tasks:

1. Create a glossary of important Shakespearean quotations
2. Craft and perform a modern adaptation of a Shakespearean comedy/tragedy
3. Provide a written reflection on your specific choices in creating your modern adaptation script

Task 1: Glossary of Shakespearean Quotations

Due date:

Students will produce a glossary of **10-15** quotations and/or examples of figurative language from the Shakespearean tragedy or comedy they read in class. Each quotation should be initially translated into standard English; each glossary entry should also include a modern example for each quotation and/or a modern figurative language example. **In addition, as one way of exceeding proficiency, students may include a paragraph of explanation with each glossary entry, analyzing Shakespeare’s original wording and intent and comparing that wording and intent to the student’s modern example.**

For example (quotation example):

(This is a quotation example which demonstrates skills BELOW proficiency.)

Shakespearean Quotation: “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (I.iii.38).

Initial Translation: I’ve never seen a day so foul and fair.

Modern Example: I’ve never seen a day so horrible and wonderful.

Honors English 10
Shakespeare Interpretation Assessment

Explanation: We don't use words like "foul" and "fair" anymore, so I changed them to words we do use.

For example (quotation example):

(This is a quotation example which demonstrates proficiency.)

Shakespearean Quotation: "What, you egg! Young fry of treachery!" (IV.ii.80-81).

Initial Translation: Hey, kid, you're as disloyal as your father!

Modern Example: Are you kidding me?! You're such a traitor! The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, eh kid?

For example: Figurative Language example

(This is a figurative language example which demonstrates skills exceeding proficiency.)

Shakespearean Term: Hyperbole (figurative language)

Example from text: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red" (II.ii.60-63).

Initial Translation: Would the entire ocean wash this blood off of my hands? No, I think my hands would turn the entire ocean red instead.

Modern Example: I'm sweating buckets over this thing man. I can't even believe I did that. What was I thinking?!

*Explanation of figurative language: Here, Shakespeare uses hyperbole—an obvious exaggeration—to show the magnitude of guilt Macbeth feels after the murder of King Duncan. For Macbeth, no amount of water—not even an entire ocean—can remove the blood from his hands, this blood being a symbol of the guilt he feels for what he's done.

*Instead of providing an even more modern example of the Shakespearean quotation, an explanation is included of Shakespeare's use of figurative language: in this case, his use of hyperbole in the characterization of Macbeth's feelings after the killing of King Duncan.

Requirements (for proficiency):

- Choose Shakespearean quotations which we no longer use in typical conversations (If the quotation seems too easy, it is, choose another one.).
- Initially translate each quotation in your own words. You can use a dictionary or translation book for guidance, but translate the quotation into your own words. (Do not simply copy a translation from the book.)
- Make sure the modern example is meaningful to you and is truly something you would say in conversation today.
- Make sure your glossary entries demonstrate your understanding of Shakespeare's intended usage of these words.

Task 2: Written Script and Presentation of Modern Shakespearean Scene

Due date: _____

Students will produce a written script for a modern adaptation of one scene from a Shakespearean comedy/tragedy. Students will present their modern adaptations of scenes from a Shakespearean comedy/tragedy. The presentation should include blocking and evidence of preparation.

For example:

Romeo and Juliet II.ii (Original Text):

JULIET

My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of that tongue's utterance, yet I know the sound:
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

ROMEO

Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.

JULIET

How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO

With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these
walls; And what love can do that dares love
attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.
For stony limits cannot hold love out,

Modern Translation (Student Script):

Act II

JULIET

I've seen you around, haven't I? You're
Romeo, right?

ROMEO

I'm whoever you want me to be.

JULIET

How did you get in here? Seriously, the walls
are like, *really* high. And if my dad catches you
in here... he's going to totally flip out.

ROMEO:

I climbed over the wall, it's no big deal. But
seriously, you think a wall is going to keep me
out? Girl, I'm like your Edward, nothing's going
to keep me from my Bella.

Requirements (for proficiency):

Requirements:

- Each group will consist of 5-6 people.
- The script must be typed and a copy must be provided at the time of performance.
- Use school appropriate language that is commonly used today.
- The play does not need to be translated line for line; however, make sure the important lines and details are translated into your script.
- Each group member must contribute to the translation of the script, as well as the performance of the scene.
- A program for the performance must be made which includes who is playing each role, the scenes listed, and a page that describes the production and its specific elements.

Task 3: Written Reflection on Script and Presentation

Due date: _____

Students will write at least a one-page reflection and analysis of their script and presentation. In the reflection and analysis, students will examine and analyze their word choices, uses of figurative language, and choices for structuring the scene, and compare them to Shakespeare's word choices, uses of figurative language, and original intent of the scene. Students should reflect on the choices they have made in order to modernize the concept of the original scene while maintaining some aspects of Shakespeare's original intention for the scene.

For example:

Possible excerpt from a student reflection:

...in this scene Romeo and Juliet are meeting for only the second time. After Juliet's **soliloquy** on the balcony, Romeo makes his presence known. However, instead of Romeo professing his love for Juliet by stating, "With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls" (II.ii.66), our Romeo takes a more modern approach to his courtship. We did not think that a modern Romeo would express his love in such an obvious manner. Instead our Romeo makes an **allusion** to what might be one of the modern Romeo's favorite books, *Twilight*. We chose this allusion specifically because we felt that Edward and Bella are themselves a modern-day Romeo and Juliet...

Note: The words in bold are examples of students demonstrating knowledge of Shakespearean and figurative language terms previously unknown to them. To exceed proficiency, students may demonstrate improved language skills by including both Shakespearean and figurative language terms in their reflection.

Requirements (for proficiency):

- The reflection must be at least two pages in length.
- The reflection should analyze at least 3 different choices made in the adaptation of the scene.
- The mechanics of the reflection should not interfere with reader understanding.