

## Teaching *Romeo and Juliet* to ESL Students in Middle School

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### INTRODUCTION

As a teacher at Sharpstown Middle School (SMS), I assume that ESL teachers are always involved in this theatrical world in which our stage is our classroom. The students are our audience and teachers are actors who entertain, by teaching or the reverse.

*Romeo and Juliet* provides an interesting and easy way to introduce drama to adolescents in middle school. Teenagers can relate to its plot, characters, and themes if they are involved in play-acting. On the contrary, if the teacher deals with it just as a piece of compulsory reading for students to read and not to perform, students will refuse to read Shakespeare for their entire life. Since the action can be very easily understood, students can relate their experiences about certain topics in their everyday life to Shakespeare's treatment of love, feud, faith and death in *Romeo and Juliet*. At this stage of adolescence, teenagers start facing unexpected and new feelings of attraction toward a friend, of biological changes, and the loss of a close person by death is deeper for them. Adolescents are growing up and, therefore, their personalities, beliefs, and values about life are being developed. Their rebellious character makes them jump into a fight to defend their peers or their culture without thinking of the consequences. So, the relationship between Shakespeare's topics in the play and the students' own experiences is obvious at this point.

This didactic unit will introduce teachers and subsequently my students to Shakespeare in the classroom. From this starting point, my students and I can learn of the contribution to dramatic literature by different cultures brought in by immigrant students at SMS. It will give teachers and students insights into connections and parallels between Shakespeare's play and a new generation of adolescents. For example, most adolescents considered Leonardo DiCaprio as their Romeo when they first saw him with Claire Danes in the recent film version of *Romeo and Juliet* (directed by Baz Luhrmann in 1997). *West Side Story*, one of the best known twentieth century stage adaptations, sets the feud not between two families in Verona but between ethnic gangs, a theme not unfamiliar to modern youth since they are very close to this problem in my school. These two films would help my students to understand the play better.

Therefore, the accessibility of the play for students will provide discussion on integrating drama into language skill acquisition while they enjoy learning. The role of the teacher at this point is crucial, as a guide, to determine which methods of teaching will be compelling to the students.

We can benefit from Shakespeare's use of language to help our students understand their world better and, therefore, our goal would be to enable them to express their feelings more accurately by giving their personal opinions and treatment to certain topics in their second language.

The final goal of my unit will be to see my students on a school stage performing a condensed 30-minute version of the play. We should bear in mind that Shakespeare wrote the play to be acted, not to be read. They will feel the experience of being actors in front of an audience for the first time and become more self-confident.

### **Shakespeare and ESL Students**

Once "What to teach" and "Why to teach" is set, the next step is to decide "How" and "To Whom" I am going to teach it. According to my students' background, most of them come from immigrant families from all over the world with very low and poor educational levels. We should take into account two facts:

First, only few students have access to computers, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and books at home. This makes it difficult for them to have learning habits at home and to be encouraged by their parents about the importance of learning. It is the teacher's job to motivate and encourage them at school. Some students have no high expectations at this age and most of their future depends on the way that teachers influence them.

The second fact is that English is not their first language. These students will have the most difficulty with Shakespeare's language compared to native English speakers. Teachers know that Shakespeare's language can be an obstacle for many students. I will attempt to make his language more accessible to my students. Only then, students can enjoy the play: the jokes, the archaic and obsolete words, the comedy in the play, and the conflicts. It is language, therefore, that is the focus of this didactic unit. Our students can recite some of the most famous Shakespearean quotations in their own language in order to check if the content and the sound is only what draws the difference. For example, Hamlet's most famous quotation "To be or not to be/that's the question" translated into Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, or Vietnamese. Students will enjoy the content being the same, but also different ways of addressing it in different languages.

I would not introduce Shakespeare's original work to my ESL students from the very beginning, because it will sound very strange to them. I would start by introducing some prose rather than verse by means of narrative summaries of the story about the setting, the plot, and the characters. Consequently, I will make them read Shakespeare's lines at the appropriate time, that is, when they become more familiar with the play and its author. Only then, will they be ready for it without feeling frustrated.

I have mentioned Shakespeare's name to other teachers, and the intention of this project with my ESL students, and it provokes a kind of panic for my colleagues and

maybe for my students. So, it is necessary that my students' first introduction with Shakespeare is easy and entertaining. We can approach Shakespeare in different ways and read him on a variety of different levels, allowing all students to enjoy it.

This project is a challenging task for me. It can be very successful if the teacher designs an organized sequence of activities from the simplest to the most complex ones.

## **TEACHING STRATEGIES**

The following paper provides a nine-week lesson plan on approaches and strategies such as recitation, summaries, journals, discussions, role-plays, and an adapted performance of the play. These activities are varied and carefully designed to establish a kind of communication between students and Shakespeare. We need to be flexible with our students' different needs and abilities to offer them what they need to learn .

### **Pre-reading activities**

#### ***Historical Background***

I will start my unit by introducing some interesting historical tips about the Renaissance by means of a "Did you know" activity. The teacher may get some of the information about the Elizabethan background from an encyclopedia. Students will enjoy learning how life was back in the sixteenth century: why travelling was so difficult, why getting sick was much more dangerous, why wine was safer than water, why they were using heavy perfumes and why there was no bathing. No wearing clean clothes and urinating in corners were something that was usual back in those days.

#### ***Elizabethan Theater***

Next, I will provide students with some information about the Elizabethan Theater and the way plays were performed. Students will realize that our modern facilities are very different from Elizabethan ones. Students will build, with construction paper, their own replica of the Globe with the help of the art teacher if necessary. In the model they will show that the Elizabethan Theater was open-air, circular in shape, with three levels of seating. The stage was surrounded by an audience who generally sat according to social class. A flag in red, black or white was raised depending on the genre of the play, and plays were staged in the afternoon using the daylight. Students will be aware that there was no curtain and no formal scenery, no director and no producer and, finally, that female roles were played by young boys. The plays were performed for two hours without stopping. There was no pause in action and the lack of scenery involved the audience's participation with their own imagination. (Norrie Epstein, 44)

A drawing of the Globe can also be allowed for those students who feel more comfortable with a picture rather than with the model. The picture will be done

individually, however, the model can be made in pairs and all the materials will be provided by the teacher. The teacher will provide web-sites available for students to study the Globe Theater.

### ***Poetry***

Students will wonder why *Romeo and Juliet* was written in verse. The teacher should always have an answer ready for the first obvious questions that students will ask. In earlier times, stories were written in verse because they were recited and easier to remember (Machete Chute, 8). Students will realize that the play was intended to be acted rather than be read. Therefore, we will keep loyal to Shakespeare by following his main goal: performing the play with students rather than just read a play full with archaic words which sound very strange for the modern reader.

I will start reading aloud a poem by Pablo Neruda in Spanish, and another one in English by a different poet. Students can assume that poetry is the best expression for love, feelings and emotions. After discussing them, students will be given a title and they will build their own poems in their own language without any rhyme.

### ***The Verse***

Sean McEvoy states in *Shakespeare: The Basics*, that most of Shakespeare's plays were written in verse. (37) Verse is the language used by the upper class characters to show their social status, as in the case of the Prince Escalus, Lord and Lady Capulet and Montague. Verse is also used to express a more rhetorical view of love, as in the case of Romeo in 1.2., and Mercutio's speech about the Queen Mab (1.4.58-100). However, Shakespeare also uses prose in the play by means of the inferior class characters such as the nursemaid and the servants. He also reserves prose for simple matters such as the list of guests or a letter. In 1.1. the story starts with the dialogue between Sampson and Gregory speaking in prose, joking and behaving as clowns. Students will learn that the use of prose here is to bring comedy about the topic they are talking about.

Shakespeare shifts from verse to prose with a purpose: sometimes to change the mood of a character or sometimes for dramatic effect. (McEvoy, 37) In 1.1.88-94, Mercutio, after the fight with Tybalt, is speaking in prose because of the clumsiness of the unreal fight with his enemy. Mercutio's death is real, he is dying and this is why he is speaking in prose:

Mercutio: No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door,  
but 'tis enough, 't will serve. Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall  
find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A  
plague a' both your houses! . . .

Students should be prepared and be aware of the alternation of verse and prose to understand the real meaning behind the lines.

Shakespeare's plays are mainly written in **blank verse**, that is, unrhymed lines with ten syllables long alternating an unstressed and a stressed syllable. These lines are divided into five feet, each foot consisting of two syllables. This pattern is called **iambic pentameter**. (McEvoy, 40) The rhythm of this pattern is de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM de-DUM as in Benvolio's speech in 1.1.59-60:

Benvolio: I DO but KEEP the PEACE. Put UP thy SWORD  
Or MANage IT to PART these MEN with ME.

Students will learn that those words with stressed syllables are the most meaningful words in the line. As students are reading some exchanges, they will notice that Shakespeare deviates from the regular pattern by varying the stress or by writing lines longer or shorter than ten syllables. Some of these variations are called **short lines, shared lines, long lines, alexandrine, feminine ending, trochee, spondee** among others. These patterns have a purpose in Shakespeare. (McEvoy, 45) These variations will be explained to students as they appear in the lines. For example, let's analyze one of these variations and the way we will deal with it with students: the shared line.

A **shared line** is a pattern used in the play. It is a metric line which is shared by two actors and they can not breath or pause till it is completed. In all their speech in 1.2, Romeo and Juliet are almost sharing lines since they share their thoughts of love. This is the purpose in here: they are so close in love that they can even share the lines together. Romeo is at the Capulet's orchard watching a light at Juliet's window:

Romeo: He jests at scars that never felt a wound  
But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?  
It is the east and Juliet is the sun . . .  
That I might touch that cheek.

Juliet: Ay me.

Romeo: She speaks. (2.2.1-25)

In this speech Romeo is talking to the audience by means of regular iambic pentameter lines because he is out of control and crazy about what he is feeling. He is too immature for love and does not know how to deal with it, so he speaks in a rhetorical and sophisticated way.

### ***Rhyme***

Apart from the unrhymed poetry, in Shakespeare there is also an extensive use of rhyme. Rhyme is used to indicate the end of a scene or to stress some emphatic lines that

Shakespeare wants the audience to remember. In *Romeo and Juliet* there are even whole scenes in rhyming couplets to give a sense of completeness to the action. (McEvoy, 49)

Students will notice **rhyme** in Shakespeare's lines with a purpose. We find rhyme when Mercutio is trying to tease Romeo on their way to the ball:

Romeo: I dream'd a dream to-night  
Mercutio: And so did I  
Romeo: Well, what was yours?  
Mercutio: That dreamers often lie. (1.4.53-56)

Shakespeare is not only using rhyme for dramatic effect but he is also using a shared line between Romeo and Mercutio, which is difficult to play but sounds beautiful. There is also rhyme in Paris' speech when he is telling Juliet that she will be his wife that Thursday:

Paris: Happily met, my lady and my wife !  
Juliet: That may be, sir, when I may be a wife.  
Paris: That may be must be, love, on Thursday next.  
Juliet: What must be shall be. ( 4.1.18-21 )

The rhyme is also mixed with a trochee, which is an alteration of the iambic pentameter pattern. This moment is very ironic since Paris does not know anything about what is happening between Romeo and Juliet. He is behaving very arrogant and the rhyme here gives the play some ironic connotations. The audience has a right to laugh at Paris for his lack of knowledge but the music of these lines makes it beautiful. As a love story, rhyme conveys the emotions of love in the play.

### ***Imagery***

Students will also realize that in poetry and in the play the use of poetic language is present in some lines. Figurative language is another characteristic Shakespeare uses by means of the use of metaphors and images. The students should be aware of the contribution of these devices to convey the meaning of what they are reading. According to Caroline Spurgeon in her article "The Imagery of *Romeo and Juliet* ", the most remarkable images are those of light, sunlight and starlight, which convey the meaning of love between the young lovers in a dark, artificial and superficial world. (72-78)

For Juliet, Romeo is "day in night". For Romeo, Juliet is "the sun rising from the east". We can ask our students to find these images and relate them to vocabulary activities for the study of the play.

Norrie Epstein claims that much of Shakespeare's poetry relies upon oxymoron, that is, two contradictory words together to make a striking expression, for example, "loving

hate". (320) We can ask our students to look for these opposed pairs of words in 1.1.167-72 in Romeo's speech and Juliet has also a few in 3.2.75-79:

Romeo: Here's much to do with hate, but more with love:  
Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,  
O anything of nothing first create!  
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,  
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms  
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,  
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!.

Juliet: Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical!  
Dove-feathered raven, wolvis-ravens lamb!  
Despised substance of divinest show!  
Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st,  
A damned saint, an honorable villain!

These contradictory words in Romeo's speech show how love confuses and may turn stability into chaos. However, in Juliet's case, she learns that Tybalt is dead and starts accusing Romeo of a beautiful appearance but acting vilely. A few lines below, she shifts her mood and feelings to a high praise for Romeo.

Oppositions, contrasts, and images are present in the play. Some of the images are associated with death, night, and sex, so we will avoid to study them deeply at this stage. Students will study the play again in ninth grade, therefore, they will feel more mature to deal with the sexual meaning of some of these images:

Juliet: Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night  
That runaways' eyes may wink, and Romeo  
Leap to these arms untalked of and unseen. (3.2.5-7)

Give me my Romeo, and when he shall die,  
Take him and cut him out in little stars,  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night  
And pay no worship to the garish sun.  
Oh, I have bought the mansion of love  
But not possess'd it; and though I am sold  
Not yet enjoyed. (3.2.21-28)

### **While reading the play**

Once students have learned about the background of the play, we can start studying the play more in detail regarding the setting, the characters and the

plot. First, I will prepare for students a brief summary of the play to familiarize them with the story. After reading it, we will work on our bulletin board named Verona, and the students will create pictures of the city and the characters for the board. The bulletin board will be used from now on to add all the new information we will learn throughout the next couple of weeks. Students will add the different places the action is taking place, character traits, and the different personality of the characters as they appear.

The next step will be to complete a character web chart in which students add the relationship among them. Characters' names are in the web but students need to complete the relationship between the character and some important details.

### *The Prologue*

The first two acts of the play open with a Chorus which bring lines, all in rhyme, introducing us to the action. (Robert Fallon, 105) Students are now ready to start reading the original Prologue in 1.1: first individually, then one line at a time by each student. The play starts with a Prologue in a sonnet form. Shakespeare uses several sonnets in the play. A Shakespearean sonnet is a fourteen-line poem, each line containing ten syllables. The sonnet has three quatrains (four lines each) and a couplet rhyming: ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.

From the very beginning, students will know that the story is a tragedy since it is the story of a pair of "star-crossed lovers". The plot is not what is important in the play since readers know what will happen at the end by just reading the Prologue. The most important aspect is the way that characters are going to develop their path in the play.

We will explain that it is a sonnet which introduces the story and students can underline the clue words which are important for the plot. There is another sonnet later on in the play: when the lovers met in the party. Shakespeare wanted to structure their first encounter using the basic characteristics of the sonnet 1.5.94-107. The sonnet is a response of the lovers to the passion that they are feeling. This sonnet structure emerges from a dialogue between the lovers. Their speeches are linked by rhyme as a symbol of the recreation of love they are involved in. The final couplet is shared; one line is Juliet's, and the other is Romeo's. (Robert Fallon)

Students can also rewrite a narrative version of the Prologue so that the teacher can check if they understand what it is about. For more advanced students, the teacher may ask them to rewrite the Prologue changing the words from the original one and setting it in their city between two rival schools in which they can be the characters of their own Prologue.

At this point we will start reading the play act by act, scene by scene including debates, journals, discussions, and activities. As we are reading the story, students will read first a summary of each scene to make it easier to understand. We will read an adaptation of the play for middle school but I will introduce, as much as possible, selected key speeches from the original work. I will avoid reading the longest scenes of Shakespeare's work because I know my students' limits. To make it easier, we will assign students short readings for homework and will allow them to work in pairs or groups to help each other. The student's participation and involvement in the assignments and in the development of the activities is imperative for this unit. The teacher and the activities will be only a guide for them to discover. The teacher will give students clues through the entire unit: to let them discover through the language all the mysteries locked in Shakespeare. We will ask questions so that they can find out and follow the clues to find the treasure, as a detective.

### *Sequence of Activities*

To start dealing with the main topics of the play, we just need to read Act I. In the first act, students learn of the feud. We can guide an open debate about students' experiences with arguments, insults, gangs in the school and the way they feel when they are involved in a fight. We can ask them for homework to write a journal about the reasons why people fight. I might ask questions like:

1. Do any of your parents dislike the parents of one of your friends?
2. How do you behave?
3. Are you more inclined to side with your parents?
4. Do you defend friendship above your parents' decisions?

When dealing with the topic of love in 1.2 and 1.3, the same strategies can be used. Students can express their own experience about love, feelings and relationships, and connect it to Shakespeare's treatment of love. I will choose some questions to attract student's attention avoiding any kind of embarrassment. In 2.2, the balcony scene, we can ask students for another journal to express their opinions and reasons to believe or not in love at first sight. With this particular scene, students will try to perform the scene for their first time with their script and experience the romantic love felt in Shakespeare's times.

In 1.5 the setting is the masquerade in Capulet's mansion. I will suggest a contest in the classroom to reward the best mask. Students will create their own mask in the classroom and prizes will be given according to their creativity and their effort. We can relate this scene to the Mardi Grass Parade in Galveston since students are very familiar with it.

For students that need more of a challenge, we can give them an extra activity after reading 1.5 to search for some imagery in the original work and name the items Juliet has

been compared to. For example, Juliet is “The sun” (2.2.3), “A bright angel” ( 2.2.26). For less able students, we can ask them just to underline those words which are related to day and night in the text and why they are used.

Students can prepare an interview for Romeo and Juliet about the way they are feeling. In groups, one can design the questions, another can answer them as if he was Romeo or Juliet, another student can record the interview on a tape recorder or even on a video-camera.

When reading Act III, students can write a letter to a friend telling him or her about the conflicts of the story at that moment and ask the friend for some advice. Since this act is about the power of anger, I can also ask students to write a journal about a time they were angry and how they acted and what the consequences were.

In 3.4 students will learn of the proposed marriage between Paris and Juliet. Students are going to make an announcement for a Renaissance magazine or newspaper about the wedding. They will design the wedding attire for both bride and groom and the wedding invitation to be sent to each family in Verona. Students will use magazines to write the heading of the announcement cutting off letters from different magazines.

For Act IV students can write a letter to Juliet to advise her not to take the poison and suggest other alternatives. The climax of the play is getting very close now and the students are getting excited. They already know that it ends in a tragedy with the death of both lovers. The day we finish reading the story, I will seat all students in a circle and we will discuss tragedy.

They should justify their answers to questions like: Why did the lovers die at the end?, who is to blame?, our destiny depends on us or on the stars?, fate rules life or life rules fate?. . . among others.

While reading the different scenes or speeches from the original work, students will notice that Shakespeare used rare forms of personal pronouns and sometimes verbs. So, I will review some of these forms with students by making flash-cards with those forms and their meanings. For example, forms such as: hath, art, (verbs); or thee, thou (pronouns) or some phrases like anon, soft , among many others .

Sometimes to check students’ understanding of the plot, I will give them some independent sentences and they need to guess or identify who said it. For example, “I defy you stars” (by Romeo) or “I will have this poison” (by Juliet).

As we read the story, I will give students some closed passages to fill in with the right information; vocabulary activities in which words need to be matched to their definitions; sequence and orders of events-activities in which students will put some events in the correct order, they can match characters with the correct actions etc.

The variety of the activities by which we can study the play is so wide that the teacher just needs to observe the students. With some diagnostic exercises we can confirm their needs and their weaknesses and provide instruction for students at levels appropriate to their experiences in order to be successful.

### **Post-reading activities**

Finally, students are ready for the rehearsal and they will perform an adaptation of the story for middle school students. They will use all their efforts and all that we have been learning for the 9-week period for a successful performance.

Performing is not only a wonderful way to involve the whole class and work together as a group but also to get some social skills since many people from the school will be involved in this performance. Finally, the words by Shakespeare will emerge from their own expression and they will feel everything in their own soul. Students will realize that what makes Shakespeare alive is his dramatic power and his remarkable language.

### **LESSON PLANS**

All the lesson plans will be designed for the area of Language Art and Literature for seventh graders.

#### **1. Let's get into the action: characters and plot.**

##### *Overview*

After knowing the story about Romeo and Juliet, the teacher will check that the students know who is who in the play and their actions for the contribution in the plot.

##### *Objectives*

Students should be able to:

- discuss the plot of the play with their peers in the second language.
- show understanding of a piece of literature from the sixteenth century.
- get to know the main characters by their actions.
- put in order a sequence of actions.
- match characters and actions.

##### *Materials*

Narrative summaries of the play, character web chart, hand-outs and exercises provided by the teacher.

### ***Procedures and Activities***

1. The teacher will give the students a character web chart with the names of the characters but with some blank information.
2. In groups of four, students will fill in the blank in the chart with information about the relationships between the characters.
3. Then, students will be given a hand-out in which students have to match each character with the correct action.
4. Next, students will put some events that the teacher will provide, in the correct order for sequencing.

### ***Evaluation***

The teacher will evaluate the accuracy in arranging the events, the filling of the information in the character web, students' participation and effort to work in groups.

## **2. Elizabethan magazine: Juliet's wedding.**

### ***Overview***

Since students know some tips about the sixteenth century background, students will design an Elizabethan magazine in which they will announce the wedding between Juliet and Paris.

### ***Objectives***

Students will be able to:

- know the different parts and organization of a magazine as a piece of writing.
- write for the purpose of entertaining and use that register.
- write with accuracy in the second language following the rules of capitalization and punctuation.
- show some knowledge about life in the Elizabethan times.

### ***Materials***

All the materials will be provided by the teacher such as magazines, construction paper, glue, scissors, highlighters, white papers, color pencils, stickers, glitter, crayons, etc.

### ***Procedures and Activities***

1. In groups of three, students will bring magazines from home. They will look for photos, pictures, models, fashion to include it in their own magazine.

2. They will write three advertisements related to the Elizabethan times about an inn, a dentist, about pasta or the performance of a play in the Globe as a suggestion. Different groups will advertise different items.
3. They will prepare their magazine which will be headed by a name, for example, the Veronians. They will include the announcement of Juliet's wedding in Verona with Paris.
4. They will advertise some shops for the bride and the groom to buy everything related to the wedding.

### ***Evaluation***

Creativity, participation, and organization of the parts of a magazine will be rewarded.

### **3. Love letter.**

#### ***Overview***

Students will discuss the topic of love. They will compare their own experiences with Shakespeare's view of love in the play.

#### ***Objectives***

Students will be able to:

- know the elements of a letter.
- express their opinions about the topic of love in the foreign language.
- write a letter following an organized structure regarding paragraphs.
- discuss with their peers some topics about everyday matters showing respect towards other people opinion.

#### ***Materials***

Text of *Romeo and Juliet*: Act II, scene 2, the balcony scene in the play.

#### ***Procedures and Activities***

1. Students will read at home the scene as an assignment
2. All students will seat in a circle on the floor and the teacher will ask some questions to guide the discussion:
  - Have you ever been in love?
  - How do you feel when you are in love?
  - Do your parents know about your relationship?
  - Do they agree?
  - If not, what do they tell you?

- Do your parents disagree with the relation of any of your friends?  
Do your parents or relatives have any brawl with another family?  
Do you believe in love at first sight?  
Are you romantic?
3. Then, students will discuss the balcony scene and express their opinions about the love between Romeo and Juliet.
  4. They will write a letter to a friend expressing their opinion about love at first sight. Students should justify their opinions with details.

### ***Evaluation***

The students' participation and involvement in the debate will be important for the assessment as well as the accuracy in the writing process. Students will use all the steps in the writing process: drafting, evaluating, revising, editing and publishing. They will also be assessed for the final product for using a well-organized writing.

### **CONCLUSION**

We will take into account that this project has been designed for ESL students, that is, students who need a little bit of special help with English as a second language. The evaluation of these students will not be based only on accuracy but will also be graded on production. We will teach grammatical rules as the need arises. However, so as not to overwhelm the student, the teacher will not mark all the grammatical mistakes that students commit on their papers. We will mark papers by circling a few errors. The teacher can train the students to correct their own papers and put them into a portfolio. In this portfolio, students can keep their writing assignments so that they can see their own improvement throughout the entire year.

At the beginning of this project, the homework assignments will be short paragraphs of writing, and short reading scenes of the play. As students start improving, the assignments will be longer in length and the teacher will encourage students to expand the assignments and take risks by adding new patterns to the sentence structure.

Students will be given more independence throughout the didactic unit than at the beginning so that they can discover new aspects of the story by themselves. Once more, the engagement, participation and the involvement of the students in the assignments will be crucial for their assessment in the learning process. Peer interaction can enrich the environment in our classroom since students develop responsible learning behaviors: attendance to the class without fear of failure, increased motivation, participation, more effective social interaction and self-esteem.

Once the nine-week lesson plan has been developed in class with the students, the teacher will give students a questionnaire with items they need to evaluate. The teacher will get feedback from the students to improve those areas that may have some

weaknesses in the development of this project. In this way, the teacher can be helped by students' own experiences with the unit to adapt it to their own needs, levels, interests, etc. Students' opinion toward the project is crucial for the teacher's success in his/her teaching process. If the goals of the didactic unit have been fulfilled at the end, all the efforts made during the school year with the students (and all the staff involved on the performance) will be worthy.

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McEvoy, Sean. *Shakespeare: The Basics*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Includes several chapters about Shakespeare's use of verse, variations from the regular pattern and his language, among other aspects.

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Analyzes the imagery in the play to discover some of the meanings of the images used by Shakespeare to unlock his language.

### Teacher Resources

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Is an adapted version of the play for children.

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Provides us with narrative summaries of the scenes of the play including some sketches with Shakespeare's original words.

Haley, Gail E. *Costumes for plays and Playing*. Methuen, Inc., 1978.

Contains information about the elements involved in the theater and the acting.

- Kurtzberg, Richard L, Terri R. Kurtzberg, and Molly C. McGannon. "Bringing Shakespeare to middle school students." *Middle School Journal*, 32 (Sept 2000), 7-14.
- Lamb, Charles, and Mary Lamb. *Tales from Shakespeare*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Puffin Books, 1987.  
Contains twenty of Shakespeare's plays, including both tragedies and comedies, retold in prose.
- Macrone, Michael. *Brush up your Shakespeare!* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1990.  
Presents several hundred of the most famous lines and newly minted words from Shakespeare including background notes and explanations.
- Maynard, Mack. *Everybody's Shakespeare*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.  
Deals with some of the ambiguities we find in the play.
- Morley, Jacqueline, and John James. *Shakespeare's Theater*. New York: P. Bedrick Books, 1994.  
Tells the story of the famous Globe Theater in which many of Shakespeare's works were performed.
- Onions, C.T.A. *A Shakespeare Glossary*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1919.
- Robin, May. *Looking at Theater*. Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 1989.  
Gives us some clues about the elements involved in Theater.
- Roseblum, Joseph. *A Reader's Guide to Shakespeare*. Salem Press, Inc. together with Barnes and Noble Books, 1999.  
Discusses the plot, character, and historical background of the play.
- Rowse, A. L. *Shakespeare The Man*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.  
Contains interesting information about Shakespeare's background and the Globe Theater.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Parragon, 2000.  
Contains most of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets.
- Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett, 1988.  
Discusses the plot, character, and historical background of the Shakespeare play.
- Stanley, Diane and Peter Vennema. *Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare*. New York: William Morrow, 1992.

A brief biography of the world's most famous playwright.

Wells, Stanley. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Is a collection of essays on different subjects about Shakespeare.

### **Videos:**

***Romeo and Juliet***. Movie.1996. 120 minutes. Directed by Baz Luhrmann. Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes stars as Romeo and Juliet.

***Romeo and Juliet***. Movie.1968. 152 minutes. Directed by Franco Zeffirelli.

This is probably one of the most popular film versions of the play. Zeffirelli cast a beautiful Romeo, Leonard Whiting, Juliet, Olivia Hussey.

***Shakespeare: The man and his times***. Videorecording. 47 minutes. Chicago, Ill: Clearvue/eav, 1991.

This program presents a student-oriented approach to learning about Shakespeare's life and Elizabethan theatre. Included is a live footage of significant places in Shakespeare's life, archival illustrations, quotations from his plays, and comments from historians.

***West Side Story***, one of the best-known twentieth century stage adaptation of the story.

This film sets the feud between two ethnic gangs in New York.

### **Web-sites:**

<http://www.edhelper.com>

<http://www.shakespeare.com>

<http://www.elizreview.com>

