

SHAKESPEARE'S WORDS AND IMAGES

AGES: Middle School, High School

DESCRIPTION

Give students tools and opportunity to approach unknown verse text with confidence

MATERIALS

An image laden monologue/soliloquy (preferably verse) from a Shakespeare play, large sheets of blank paper, pencils, 3 tri-colored scattered soliloquies, and a Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary. For the Scatterbrained Soliloquies: You will need to cut up 3 separate speeches into at least ten sections, an copy each speech on a separate colored sheet of paper. Feel free to create a breaks in mid-line or mid-sentence. (and use more or less of the longer speeches.) When you have broken up the passage into at least ten sections, you are ready to go.

FULL LESSON PLAN

STEP 1 – 15 MINUTES

* Explain that in Shakespeare's culture, people went to hear plays. Our culture is increasingly concerned with visual media—we go to see movies, plays, and concerts. Our fast-paced world is filled with quickly changing images. This exercise seeks to open students' ears and “image”-inations and help them hear what is happening in Shakespeare' language.

* Give everyone a sheet of paper, and a pencil. Have students close their eyes, and listen while teacher reads (and rereads several times) aloud the text simply and quietly. (Let the words speak for themselves.) Have the students draw (with eyes closed) any images they hear. Explain to them that this is not a “drawing” exercise – they should not try to make a “coherent” picture – rather they should try to capture all the images that they hear, on paper. Keeping the eyes closed loosens the imagination – if their eyes are open they will be tempted to draw “correctly.” When finished reading, gather the group together and have them compare their drawings. Lead a discussion that focuses on common images, and interesting differences.

STEP 2 – 10 MINUTES (Optional)

Divide into 3 groups and have the students pick one “reciter” for each group. As the reader recites the monologue, have the other students find ways to bring the images to life. Instruct them to use their bodies to give the images 3 dimensional shapes. Side coach and encourage their individual responses to the words. Have them present to each other.

STEP 3 – 15 MINUTES

Have the students remain in their teams. Take out your scattered soliloquies, mix them together for a rainbow effect, and throw them up into the air, in two or

three dramatic tosses

Once the pieces of paper settle to the floor, assure the students that you have not gone crazy... and assign each group a color. Ask each group to pick up all the pieces of that particular color. Each group should end up with the same number of pieces. Ask them to put the speech in order, laying out the papers on their desktops or on the floor. How can they accomplish this task, they wonder, not knowing many of the words or expressions? Easy, you tell them...

Create a word bank on the blackboard, noting unfamiliar words, phrases, and concepts. Ask a few probing questions that might help them figure out the meanings for themselves. If students get stuck on a particular word or phrase, have the students refer to dictionaries or Shakespearean glossaries. Armed with this new knowledge, they can put the various pieces of paper in order. As the students work to reassemble their scrambled passages, they will become more aware of sentence structure, meter, meaning, characterization, and vocabulary.

When the groups are finished...

STEP 4 – 5 MINUTES

* Have each group read its assembled passage aloud, in choral fashion. At the end of class, each team may consult a copy of that text to check the order of the speech.