

A Unit Plan on...

Macbeth

By William Shakespeare

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Rationale

This unit for grade eleven English students will focus on Shakespeare's Macbeth. The assignments that are allocated are ones that each student will be able to work on individually. This provides the students a chance to challenge themselves and their abilities to complete the given assignments with their best effort. Students who have learning disabilities and students who are gifted will receive the same assignments but my expectations for the students will vary according to each individual.

My goal for this unit is for students to be able to appreciate the work of Shakespeare. I realize the language can be difficult but if we are able to overcome that, then students will be able to realize how much Shakespeare has to offer. A lot of projects, lessons, and assignments will be enjoyable so hopefully students will be able to make sense of Macbeth and enjoy the process while learning at the same time.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes as adopted from the BC Ministry of Education

Students will be able to

- consciously use and evaluate a wide variety of strategies before, during, and after reading, viewing, and listening to increase their comprehension and recall
- use efficient note-making and note-taking strategies
- explain the effects of a variety of literary devices and techniques, including figurative language, symbolism, parody, and irony
- demonstrate an understanding of the main ideas, events, or themes of a variety of increasingly complex Shakespeare plays
- synthesize and report on information from more than one source that they have read, heard, or viewed to address a variety of topics and issues
- make connections between the ideas and information presented in literary and mass media works and their own experiences
- demonstrate a willingness to take a tentative stance, tolerate ambiguity, explore multiple perspectives, and consider more than one interpretation
- support their opinions or respond to questions and tasks about the works they have read or viewed
- make connections among the themes and ideas expressed in various materials
- clarify and focus their topics to suit their purposes and audiences
- apply various strategies to generate and shape ideas

Unit Overview of assignments

This unit is a portfolio unit. All work is to be kept in a portfolio and handed in on the due date. If the work is not neat and collated, marks will be deducted. The following things should be complete when the portfolio is handed in: Vocabulary sheets, life and times of Shakespeare, character sketches, resume, obituary, coat of arms, and précis.

Lesson one

Objectives:

Students will be able to demonstrate their writing ability and their willingness to share their thoughts.

Students will be able to put their thoughts into well-structured paragraphs.

Students will be able to use efficient note-taking strategies.

Materials:

Copies of Macbeth

Hook: (15 minutes for part one, 20 minutes for part two)

This introductory activity has been designed to allow students to explore themes and ideas in Macbeth before they actually read the text. By having the students think about their own situations where they have faced guilt, they will be able to relate themselves to the play once they read it and perhaps will understand it more since their prior knowledge has been activated. Hopefully, because of this activity, the play will make more sense for them.

Individual writing assignment and sharing

1. Have students write about whether or not they have ever gotten away with doing something wrong. Did they feel guilty about it? Would they rather have been caught?
2. Have students share their response with the class if they are willing. Elaborate on each response by asking them how they felt, what they would do if they were in that situation again and whether or not they had any outside influences other than their own intuition. (This foreshadows Lady Macbeth's role in her influences on Macbeth)

Lesson: (20)

1. Give a short lecture about Shakespeare's life: where he was born, when he was born, his life outside of playwriting (his marriage, his children), his 37 plays.
2. Talk a little bit about the play itself.

Conclusion: (20)

1. Give them an overview of the unit and time for questions. Have students silent read while I call up students individually to assign copies of the text.

Lesson two

Objectives:

Students will expose themselves to the language of Shakespeare. They should understand the context in which Macbeth takes place and be able to realize how important the beginning scenes are to the rest of the play.

Materials:

Text

Handouts for first portfolio assignment

Folders to make the portfolio

Hook: (10)

Ask a few students to volunteer reading the opening scene of the play where the witches are making their brew. Look for the student who can imitate a witch's voice best. Give prizes for brave volunteers!

Lesson: (20 to read, 35 to discuss)

1. Read Act I of the play out loud to the class. The first two scenes can be briefly skimmed through but Scene III is very crucial to the play.
2. Talk about Macbeth's first soliloquy. What is he contemplating? What are the risks he needs to consider?
3. Have a class discussion of what the students thought about the first few acts. It would be interesting to see where they think this play will go.
4. Ask the students to discuss the questions: how can Macbeth become Thane of Cawdor if the Thane of Cawdor lives? How will he become King? What do the witches mean by "Lesser than Macbeth, and greater?" and "Not so happy, yet much happier?" Does Macbeth take these witches seriously?

Conclusion: (10)

Hand out first portfolio assignment. This work can be done in three paragraphs.

1. Shakespeare's life- Summarize the highlights of Shakespeare's life and times. Tell what else he did. Ex: acting. Include an interesting fact or anecdote.
2. Shakespeare's background- Summarize the general background of his times. Ex: what was happening in history that influenced his writing, who was King and Queen at the time, what influence did they have on his writing?
3. Shakespeare's Macbeth- Write a short account of the actual history of Macbeth and note the changes Shakespeare made to it.

Lesson 3

Objectives:

Students will be introduced to the character of Lady Macbeth. They will come to see how big of a part she plays. They will be able to understand how one character can greatly affect another by either influencing or shaping other characters in stories.

Materials:

Text

Hook: (20)

Have a free-writing session where students write about a time in their lives when they have been influenced to do something by someone else. What they ended up doing can have either good or bad results.

Lesson: (20 to read, 25 to discuss)

1. Read Act II of the play out loud to the class. Ask for volunteers, if no one wants to do it, then I will read it. I don't think it is a good idea to assign reading to students for their own time because it most likely won't be done. So it is good to do it during class time together. Besides, it's good to hear Shakespeare out loud. Students can get a sense of how the language is.
2. Discuss the character of Lady Macbeth and her contributions to the play. What is her character all about? Is she a better person than Macbeth? Does she influence Macbeth in his decisions? How do you think she will contribute to the downfall of Macbeth?

Conclusion: (10)

Learning vocabulary specializes in helping to make the reading of the play easier. Have students go home and look through the play to see if there are any vocabulary words they don't understand. Give them some examples: hail, hither, Thane, whence, aside, thus, hath, exeunt, thee, err, herein, whilst, dire, kinsman, soliloquy, doth, minions, unruly, woeful, clamour'd, sovereignty, verities, therewithal, dauntless, malice, prithee, distill'd, valiant. Next day, we will go over the ones that they don't understand.

Lesson 4

Objectives:

Students will be able to understand the power of a prophecy. They will be challenged to critical thought provoking ideas on whether Macbeth was doomed from the start, or whether he had a chance to change the direction of his life.

Materials:

Text

Hook: (20)

Have a free-writing session. Do you believe in fate? Do you believe that a person is born with a destiny that he/she cannot escape? Why do you believe what you believe?

Lesson: (20 to read, 30 lecture and discussion)

1. Read Act III to/with the class.
2. Present a short lecture on what a prophecy is and how it is important to this play. Go back to the beginning of the play and see what, by this point in the play, has already come true. Was there any way Macbeth could have escaped what the witches prophesized for him? Tell them the story of Oedipus in a brief summary. Was Macbeth and Oedipus doomed for a downfall or were there ways of preventing their tragic fate?

Conclusion: (5)

Hand out second portfolio assignment. This work can be done in three paragraphs.

1. Character of Macbeth- give a detailed account of Macbeth, his personality, emotions, background and physical attributes. Use a seminal quote to summarize him.
2. Banquo- give a detailed account of Banquo, his personality, emotions, background and physical attributes. Use a seminal quote to summarize him.
3. The Witches- write a brief synopsis of the opening witch scene. Include any interesting comments you have about their prophetic work.

Lesson 5

Objectives:

Students will be able to get a sense of the mood that Macbeth is set in.

Students will be able to understand the role of the three witches and also the meter their rhyme is presented in.

Materials:

Text

Handouts for portfolio assignment

Hook: (20)

Have students create a recipe using parts of animals and other ingredients to make a brew used for specific purposes. Ex: to cure a disease. These ingredients should be written in the form of a poem, with rhymes, preferably in iambic pentameter. Have the students share with the class or with each other in groups.

Lesson: (15 to read together, 10 to explain, 15 to finish reading)

1. Read Act IV Scene I together where the witches are chanting. Have half the students chant the chorus over and over again and the other half read the lines of each of the witches. This helps set the mood of disturbance and darkness. It's also fun to do!
2. Explain how the opening scenes introduce us to the principle components of the play. The setting with the witches serves to show us the dark and unnatural forces at work within this medieval world. The introduction of Macbeth and Banquo at this point sets the scene for their inevitable involvement with the "dark side".
3. Finish reading Act IV to the class.

Conclusion: (15)

Have students get into groups of three and summarize five important things they learned in the unit so far. I think this is a useful thing to do and it is something I can do whenever I go through the day's lesson too quickly. If I have 15-20 minutes leftover during class, rather than let them go early or allow them to do unproductive things, I can put them into groups and then have them write down questions they have for me, or things they find useful that they have learned. This is also a good assignment because a lot of the time, students will be too embarrassed to admit they don't understand something, and by allowing them this opportunity to clarify things, they can do this discreetly. This will also allow me to see where the students stand. If they all have the same questions, then I will know what I need to go over again.

Lesson 6

Objectives:

Students will be able to see how much fun Shakespeare can be.

Students will be able to experiment with different tones of voices and see how tone can convey meaning.

Materials:

Text

Hand out- List of Shakespearian insults

Hook: (15)

1. Have students get into pairs. Give them the hand out with the lists of Shakespearian insults. Have them shout out different combinations of names to their partners.
2. They can all create a favourite one and when we go around the class, they can present it to everyone. We can also play around and have the students say these insults in different tone of voices. This way, they can see how much of a difference it makes just to say something in a different tone.

Lesson: (50)

1. Read Act V with/to the class.
2. Discuss ending of play. How does Lady Macbeth die? What lead Macbeth to his downfall?
3. Hand out third portfolio assignment. Have students create a resume for Shakespeare. He is applying for a job as a playwright for Globe Theatre Productions. Write up in a regular resume format. Include Shakespeare's date of birth, address, work experience, objectives and other interests.

Conclusion: (10 or more, or none at all depending on how the hook and lesson went)

1. If there is time left over, allow students class time to work on their portfolio assignments. They should be able to start the most recently assigned one. This class time allows them to catch up on their work if they are behind.
2. Ask students to bring a shoebox for next class.

Lesson 7

Objectives:

Students will be able to define the two parts of a character: the way others see them, and the way they really are.

Students will be able to explore their creative side with the Ya-ya box assignment.

Materials:

Example of a Ya-ya box

Hook: (25)

Have a free-writing session where students write a happier ending to Macbeth. How would the story be altered? Where would you have the characters end up?

Lesson: (40)

1. Assign the unit project for Macbeth. This project will complement the portfolio assignment and will take more of a creative stance.
2. Explain the Ya-ya box: Each student will pick a character from the play. From this, they will create a Ya-ya box for this character. The outside of the box is to be decorated to define the character as others see him or her. The inside of the box is to be decorated to define the character as he or she reveals him or herself to the reader. For this, evidence from soliloquies are to be used and information on how the character reacts to certain situations as well as relationships with other characters are to be analyzed. Shoe boxes will suffice. Due date will be one week after the Macbeth unit is complete. Some class time will be allowed for the remainder of this class and other classes.

Conclusion: (10)

Give the students time to ask questions about the project. I will also provide them with time to decide on which character they would like to do the project on. I'd like to have a range of characters so there can be a variety when they are presented to the class.

Lesson 8

Objectives:

Students will be able to get a feel for the character they are playing when they are in role. By doing this, they will feel more inclined to pay attention to the details to see how their character acts in terms of emotions.

Materials:

Text

Props for the role play (I can talk to the drama teacher beforehand about this)

Handouts for the portfolio assignment

Hook: (15)

1. Begin by asking students for feedback on what their favourite scenes are. Jot these down on the board or the overhead. Ask them to back it up with why they selected these scenes.
2. I will select the six most popular favourite scenes for their next task.

Lesson: (55)

1. Break the class up into six groups of five. Assign a particular scene for each group and have them act it out. They can act it out as it is or they can be creative and have variations such as documentaries, soap operas, comedy, melodrama, etc. Each scene should take roughly seven minutes.
2. I will allow them this class to get prepared and next class, these scenes will be presented to the class.

Conclusion: (5)

Hand out fourth portfolio assignment. Write an obituary for one of the characters which dies in the play. You can use quotes from the play in your obituary.

Lesson 9

Objectives:

Students will be able to explore the creative side of their minds. They will also be able to see the different variations Shakespeare can take. Shakespeare does not always have to be acted out as it is set up to be acted out, but rather, can take place in almost any context. Students will be able to explore multiple perspectives of Shakespeare's play.

Materials:

Text

Props for role play

Hook: (5)

The students will receive five minutes to finish last minute details for their role play which they have prepared yesterday.

Lesson: (67)

1. We will see each role play scene chronologically as the play progresses. The scenes will take approximately seven minutes but I will give each group ten minutes all together for setting up and presenting. Transitions should take no more than one minute.
2. Next class, I will give them time to discuss the role plays because we will not have time to do that today.

Conclusion: (3)

I will give prizes for all those who participated. (Hopefully it was everyone.)

Lesson 10

Objectives:

Students will be able to clarify and focus their topics to suit their purposes and audiences. Students will be able to write a truthful account of the play, showing their understanding of the ending while taking a creative stance to suit the readers of the newspaper.

Materials:

Text

Handouts for portfolio assignment

An example of a coat of arms

Hook: (15)

We will spend the first 10-15 minutes of class discussing the role plays from last day. Students will want time to talk about their favourite one and how they chose the roles for their group members.

Lesson: (50)

1. I will bring in a newspaper to provide an example of a good editorial about something that has happened recently. I will go through this article pointing out why it is good and explain what the writer has done to catch the attention of the readers but yet, still incorporates the truth in it.

2. I will then give them an assignment:
As a newspaper reporter, write the story of what has happened at the end of Macbeth. The readers will want an exciting read. Your editor wants an accurate, truthful account.

Conclusion: (10)

Hand out fifth portfolio assignment:

Using what you have learned in the play create a character coat of arms to represent one of the characters in Macbeth. Each section of the shield should represent: the character's goals, the character's worst fear, the character's essential nature in symbolic form, preferably as an animal, and a Latin phrase (motto) representing the character. Each section should contain a picture and a quote from the play.

Lesson 11

Objectives:

Students should have a better understanding of the play because seeing it acted out always helps the students see which emotions are used in which scenes and how soliloquies are portrayed on screen.

Materials:

Video tape of Macbeth, Mel Gibson version

Since Shakespeare wrote his 37 with the intent of having them acted out on stage for people to view, I will be showing my class the movie of Macbeth. The version I have chosen is the one with Mel Gibson as Macbeth. The reason why I decided to show this version even though there are better and older versions is because they will all know who Mel Gibson is and when students can relate education to pop culture, they will definitely be more interested in paying attention. At the end of the movie, students should have a better understanding of the play because seeing it acted out always helps the students see which emotions are used in which scenes and how soliloquies are portrayed on screen. The plot is better outlined in the movie as well because the movie flows straight through from the beginning to end while reading the play, there are acts and scenes to consider.

Lesson: (75)

Students will be viewing the movie which will take all of today's class and the beginning of the next class.

Lesson 12

Objectives:

Students will be able to produce comparative writing after reading the play and watching the movie.

Materials:

Video tape of Macbeth

Handouts for last portfolio assignment

Hook: (30)

1. Finish watching movie
2. Have students write a review for the movie voicing their opinion on whether they enjoyed reading the play or watching the play better.

Lesson: (35)

1. Hand out last portfolio assignment.
Search for a critique of Shakespeare's Macbeth on the internet and produce a summary of what the author writes. Your summary should be 1-2 pages double spaced. Include the source of the site you use.
2. Give students class time to work on either their portfolio assignment or their unit project. By providing this time for students, I will be able to circulate the classroom and see where students are at with their projects. I will be able to offer help if I see that students are not on track or if they need clarifying in any area. Also, by providing class time, this lessens their homework load.

Conclusion: (10)

Wrap up the class and the Macbeth unit by going over the due dates for the portfolio and for the unit project. Tell them to be prepared to start their next unit.

Assessment and Evaluation

The grade for this unit will be broken down into several different percentages:

1. Participation- Criteria includes:.....20%
 - a. Regular attendance is required of students. Absence for any cause in no way relieves a student of the responsibility for completing the work to my satisfaction. Students who are unavoidably absent due to illness or some other reason are responsible for class work or assignments missed.
 - b. Students are expected to participate in class discussions and group work. However, it is understandable that some students can be uncomfortable doing this so in all cases, students are expected to stay on task and be respectful of others at all times.
2. Portfolio- Criteria includes:.....30%
 - a. All six assignments for the portfolio must be handed in by the due date. Each assignment is worth 5% of the portfolio mark. Assignments will be marked out of 20.
 - i. Shakespeare's Life and Times
Three paragraphs on Shakespeare's Life, Background and Macbeth
 - ii. Character Sketches
Three paragraphs on Macbeth, Banquo and the Witches
 - iii. Resume
Resume must include Shakespeare's date of birth, address, work experience, objectives and other interests
 - iv. Obituary
Obituary of any character in the play, approximately 200 words
 - v. Coat of Arms
Must include character's goals, fear, symbol and motto
 - vi. Précis
Site source to be included and summary should be 1-2 typed double spaced pages
3. Ya-ya Box20%

4. Other assignments: (which will receive completion marks).....25%
 - a. In-class free-writing
 - i. Pre-writing exercise on guilt
 - ii. Free-writing on influence
 - iii. Fate
 - iv. Altered Ending
 - v. Newspaper editorial
 - b. Witches' Brew
5. Role Play.....5%

Ideas credited to:

“Fifty Nifty Ideas for Teaching Shakespeare”- Presented by Sheri Field of Salmon Arm Secondary School

Some ideas borrowed from Bill Davison’s LLED 449 class

Portfolio assignment ideas borrowed from Tim Newman of Centennial Secondary School

Unit hook idea borrowed from previously completely unit plan found in LERC