

Technical Theatre and Organization

Summary

This lesson provides the critical opportunity for students to develop an historical context for Shakespeare and his work. Understanding Shakespearean texts is largely dependant on an understanding of Shakespeare's world. Much of student confusion when dealing with Shakespearean texts can be attributed to a general ignorance concerning the Elizabeth period. As *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains scenes dealing with theatre production (the mechanical scenes) it is essential that students know something about theatre production of the era in order to put these scenes in the appropriate context. This lesson attempts to close or lessen the gap between history and literature by acquainting students with the costuming, physical theatre elements, and acting company practices of the Elizabethan era. Rather than having students learn the information in a lecture, this lesson gives students the opportunity to use on-line resources to build their own power point slides containing information regarding theatre production of the era. Instructors should be aware that this lesson requires students to have access to computers equipped with power-point and internet access and should therefore be prepared to make the necessary arrangements. It is hoped that this on-line research will put students at the center of the learning process and promote active engagement with the material.

Time Frame

2 class periods of 90 minutes each

Group Size

Individual

Materials

- * Edited and cued tape of clips from "Shakespeare in Love"
- * TV and VCR for video
- * Student's individual copies of "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*"
- * Worksheets for group text analysis
- * one computer per student(internet access and power point)
- * LCD projector and classroom computer for assignment description

Student Prior Knowledge

This lesson plan is intended for use with intermediate-advanced theatre students who have a working knowledge of the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Students should, at this point, have a general understanding of Shakespeare's language, the plot and character relationships within the play. Students will also have a working understanding of power-point, including text layout, application of design templates, and copying and placing image files from internet or other file locations. Students will also have the skills and experience needed for a self guided tour of the on-line sources provided.

Intended Learning Outcomes

- * Students will gain a general understanding of Elizabeth physical theatre elements including costuming, theatres, and acting companies, as will be demonstrated through individual technical projects
- * Students will demonstrate their awareness of Shakespearean physical theatre and organization through a group text analysis of "the mechanicals" in "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*"
- * Students will make use of critical and analytical thinking as demonstrated through participation in

group activities and completion of individual projects.

* Students will demonstrate the ability to use online resources for research purposes through completion of individual tech projects

* Students will demonstrate the ability to condense and communicate information creatively in an authoring environment such as power-point.

Instructional Procedures

1. "Hook" -- Excerpts from "Shakespeare in Love" (25 min)

Students watch edited clips from the movie "Shakespeare in Love" dealing with the physical theatre or theatre organization during Shakespeare's time. Students are told to take note of the "technical aspects of Shakespeare's theatre and the theatres are "run" as they watch the movie clips. What do the theatres look like? Who runs them? How are they lit? What do the costumes look like- etc...

Students are advised to keep track of their thoughts and observations by writing them down as they watch the clips. (10 min)

After the clips- Students are arranged into groups for a discussion of what they observed in the video. Each group compiles a list of observations to be used during the whole class discussion to follow. (10 min)

Groups are brought back together for a general recap of class observations. (5 min)

**It should be noted that some districts do not allow use of clips from R-rated films- permission should be obtained, or an alternative video should be used.

2. Group Text Work: An Analysis of the Mechanicals (25 min)

Students analyze act I scene ii and act III scene i of A Midsummer Night's Dream (mechanical scenes) for clues about Shakespeare's theatre. Students work as groups with the aid of a worksheet (attached) to guide their analysis. Worksheet is to be completed and turned in by the end of the allotted time. (20 min)

Groups are brought back together for a short discussion about findings. (5 min)

3. Individual Tech Projects (45 min)

Students are given the opportunity to use on-line resources to create power-point slides containing information about Elizabethan costuming, theatres and acting companies. Students will be referred to a web-site (link attached) containing full assignment details, web links, and images appropriate for use in their projects. This project requires that all students have access to computers with internet access and equipped with power point.

Remainder of class time is given to students to begin work on tech projects

4. DAY 2: In-class work day (90 min)

Students are given the class time to work on their projects. Students should work with the expectation that this is their last time to work and that the project is due at the end of class.

Additional class time may be required.

Strategies for Diverse Learners

Students with ADHD or similar learning disabilities may benefit from the variability of learning events present in the first half of the lesson plan. However, these students may have difficulty focusing for extended periods of time during the in-class work sessions for the individual technical projects. In order to meet these student needs, it may be necessary to integrate structured class breaks.

Structured breaks may consist of a short class game of eraser tage-or the like, a quick session of jumping jack etc... If instructor is uncomfortable disrupting the whole class- accommodations for the exceptional students may be made by allowing these students individual breaks and extra time to complete project.

Assessment Plan

Informal assessment will be conducted through in-class participation in small group/ class discussions and through the completion of the group text analysis worksheet.

Formal Assessment will be conducted through evaluation of the individual technical projects as they align with project grading rubric. Student projects will be evaluated on a basis of project completeness, historical accuracy and presentation.

Bibliography

lesson written by: Tiffany Rowland

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Authors

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