

Really Rude Mechanicals: A Route into Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream (Theatre)

Grades 5-8

Designer Elizabeth M. Adams

Five-week Unit, 3 classes per week, 55 minutes per class

Unit Overview: Students will use improv scenes, timing exercises, sense memory exercises, and mimed clowning as an introduction to the comedy of Shakespeare's "rude mechanicals." Students will then work with contemporary rhythmic language to prepare for work with Shakespeare's text. They will finish with short performances in small groups of the play-within-the-play.

WEEK 1, LESSON #2

Lesson Topic: Shakespeare Insults

Stage 1 – Desired Results	
Enduring Understandings: Students will understand that differences in delivery can change the perception of a line. Students will understand that they can make meaningful acting choices.	Essential Questions: How do different acting choices change meaning? What elements of Shakespeare's language make sense to a modern audience? How can an actor's performance contribute to an audience's understanding?
Student objectives – skills and knowledge: Students will be able to deliver Shakespearean insults. Students will be able to compare the effects of different performance choices. Students will be able to begin to make sense of Shakespeare's language. Students will know that Shakespearean language is easier than they might have thought. Students will know that they can change the perceived meaning of a line by changing their performance. Students will know that they can create comic (or tragic) effects using speed, repetition, strong physical choices, and/or contrast.	
Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence	
Performance Tasks: Students perform one-line insults for the class. Students will assess the effects of classmates' performance choices.	Other Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students will work cooperatively in pairs.
Stage 3 – Learning Plan	
Learning Activities: Warm-up: <ul style="list-style-type: none">breathing exercise: breathe in to a count of 4; hold to a count of 4; breathe out to a count of 4; hold to a count of 4. Repeat 4 times.tongue twisters: "red leather, yellow leather", "rubber baby buggy bumpers", "unique New York" Body of Lesson: Shakespeare insults: Students work in pairs with a list of 5 insults taken from Midsummer Nights Dream (attached). Students deliver each insult at least three different ways to their partners.	

Sequence and script: "Here's what we're doing today. You will each get a list of 5 insults taken from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Take one and pass them around, everyone. First, you will pair up and work with a partner. Each of you will say each insult from the list to your partner at least three different ways. See what happens! Second, figure out what your favorite insult is and favorite way of doing it is with your partner. You can say the insult in whatever way you want. Last, we'll come back together and watch each pair do their favorite insult." Pause for questions. If they ask if they can repeat the insult, respond that they can. "Pair up [there may be one group of three], everyone, and let's go. You have five minutes." [They will have more than five minutes.]

Check in with each pair at least once as the students work; be sure to clarify words if needed.

"Everyone ready?" Allow more time if needed. "All right, let's see what you've got. [Student name], let's start with you and [student name]."

Closing: Each pair shows the class their funniest (or favorite) insult/delivery combination. Applause after each pair, thank each pair for their work. Once all pairs have presented, ask "What worked for you with performing these insults?" Let the question sit if necessary. If any of the performances were serious, ask "What made [students' names] insult look serious instead of funny?"

Insult list:

Thou cat, thou burr!

You juggler! You canker-blossom!

You counterfeit, you puppet, you!

Thou painted maypole!

You dwarf, you bead, you acorn!