Romeo and Juliet Unit Plan

Unit Overview

Unit Title

Romeo and Juliet: Insight into Ourselves

Unit Summary

Students research the historical background of *Romeo and Juliet* as well as Shakespeare's time to better understand the play. After reading the play, students apply the themes and issues within the play to modern life, and they work on solutions to age-old problems, such as communicating with parents, combating hate crimes/violence, and preventing suicide. Students work in teams to make plans and products targeting their chosen issues to positively impact their communities. Each team researches the current needs and resources of the community, and determines a course of action.

Subject Area

Literature

Grade Level

8–12

Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Problem Solving, Evaluating, Analyzing

Approximate Time Needed

4 weeks for the unit, plus 2–4 weeks for the culminating project, depending on the amount of time provided in class, depth/complexity of the student projects, and availability of the audience to whom students will present

Unit Foundation

Targeted Content Standards and Benchmarks

California State Standards

Reading

3.3 Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text (such as internal and external conflicts, motivations, relationships, and influences) and explain the way those interactions affect the plot.

3.7 Recognize and understand the significance of various literary devices, including figurative language, imagery, allegory, and symbolism, and explain their appeal.

Writing

1.5 Synthesize information from multiple sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information and the different perspectives found in each medium (such as almanacs, microfiche, news sources, in-depth field studies, speeches, journals, and technical documents).

1.6 Integrate quotations and citations into a written text while maintaining the flow of ideas.

Listening and Speaking

2.2 Deliver expository presentations:

a. Marshal evidence in support of a thesis and related claims, including information on all relevant perspectives.

b. Convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources accurately and coherently.

Student Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Understand and interpret the use and purpose of figurative language, imagery, and wordplay in *Romeo and Juliet.*

- Analyze the relationships among the main and supporting characters of *Romeo and Juliet* and how their interactions affect the plot.

- Analyze the actions, themes, and social issues of the play in order to identify issues that are still relevant today.

- Conduct research on issues of concern to the community and gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience

- Use a variety of electronic and print resources to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge to a specific audience

Curriculum-Framing Questions

Essential Question	How does literature help us better understand ourselves?
Unit Questions	• Does fate control people's lives? • How does Shakespeare still speak to a 21st century audience?
Content Questions	• What is imagery, and what are some examples of how Shakespeare uses imagery in Romeo and Juliet to present a compelling and powerful message? • What are the themes and issues in Romeo and Juliet that are relevant to today?

Student Assessment Plan

Assessment Summary

Use questioning throughout the unit to assess students' understanding of the Curriculum-Framing Questions as well as other important questions about the play. Determine students' background knowledge and help them think about what they already know about Shakespeare and *Romeo and Juliet* with the Venn diagram and the K-W-H-L chart. As students complete character blogs while studying the play, ask them to use the blog rubric to guide their work. Review the reading response periodically to assess students' understanding as well as redirect teaching if necessary.

Ask students to use the action plan to help guide them through the stages of brainstorming, planning, and implementation of their plans as well as part of a final assessment of their work. Students also use the project scoring guide to support the creation of their presentations.

Hold teacher and peer conferences to provide feedback before the final presentations are completed. Have students use the peer feedback form to record feedback and assist in improving their projects.

Use the project scoring guide to assess the culminating projects, with adjustments to the group scores based on individual efforts and contributions. Assess students' contributions to the final discussion regarding the Essential Question, *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?*

Assessment Timeline

Before project work begins		Students work on projects and complete tasks		After project work is completed	
• Questioning • K-W-H-L Chart • Venn Diagram	• Reading Response Journals	• Questioning • Reading Response Journals • Blog Rubric	• Action Plan • Teacher Conferences • Peer Feedback Form	• In-class Essay • Scoring Guide	• Reading Response Journals • Reflections

Unit Details

Prerequisite Skills

- Basic research
- Internet
- Computer skills

Instructional Procedures

Beginning of the Year

Introduce a discussion about why people like a good story. *How does writing about characters help them "come alive" off the page? What kind of characters can students identify with? What do stories do for us anyway?* Next, introduce and discuss the Essential Question that will be used all year, *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?* Talk about how the units that will be studied this year will help the class answer the Essential Question.

As a whole class or in small groups, ask students to think about the differences and similarities between classic and contemporary literature by filling out the Venn Diagram. Conduct a whole class discussion about the value of classic literature and why students read it.

Reading Romeo and Juliet

As a whole class, fill out the first three columns of the **K-W-H-L chart** to help students access their prior knowledge and provide useful information about student attitudes and possible misconceptions. Continue the discussion about where students see Shakespeare's influence in today's world. Read the Passage by Bernard Levin* about the influence of Shakespeare on our everyday speech. Explain how, in this unit, they will work to answer the Unit and Essential Questions, along with learning to appreciate—or at least understand—Shakespeare's most famous play, *Romeo and Juliet.*

Briefly explain that the students will be completing a project where they will apply the themes and issues within the play to address a current-day problem along with real solutions.

Ask students to use the Internet to find information about Shakespeare, his time, and Elizabethan

theater and share what they have learned with the class on chart paper, or through a blog or wiki. Some notable online resources are Shakespeare Resource Center* and Shakespeare's Theatre*.

Introduce the reading response journal to students. These journals give students a place to document reading, record thoughts and responses to important questions, and cite examples of literary terms. Some students may want to keep their response journals in the form of a blog. Students may also choose the option of keeping a blog from the point of view of one of the characters. See Juliet's Blog for an example. Review the blog rubric with students to help guide their work. Collect journals on a weekly basis to assess students' understanding of terms. Use this information to guide and redirect teaching as needed.

Before students begin to read the play, model different strategies for interpreting and understanding Elizabethan language. Assign parts for reading the beginning of Act I of the play aloud with the whole class. Throughout the unit, to engage students and address different learning styles, alternate the methods in which students are exposed to the play: whole class and small group oral reading, individual silent reading, audio recording, and video.

Introduce literary terms, such as pun, foreshadowing, and soliloquy, as appropriate throughout the reading of the play and ask students to record examples and illustrations of these terms in their response journals and discuss them in large and small groups. Model the kind of literary analysis you expect from students as they think about the play.

The following questions can serve as a starting point for discussions about the play:

- How do the metaphors help to paint a picture of characters' states of mind?
- How does imagery and figurative language affect how we judge the intentions or inclinations of characters?
- How does the use of imagery add to the mood of the scene?
- How does the imagery affect the way we respond to the scene?

Periodically, throughout the study of the play, ask students to discuss the Essential Question: *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?* in their journals and in large- and small-group discussion as it relates to their personal interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*.

After students have completed the play, ask students what *fate* is. Pose the question, *Do you believe in fate?* Discuss the idea of fate, as understood in the time of Shakespeare. Ask where fate intervenes in the play. Discuss a quote from another play that shows a different look at fate that admits that what happens to us may have more to do with our own shortfalls than fate:

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

Julius Caesar

Have students record their thoughts on this question in their reading response journals. In small groups, have students discuss their opinions on fate and give examples of fate in their own lives or in other literary examples or movies.

To ensure that students have thought deeply about the play, assign an in-class, open-book essay, in which students reflect on the play and apply their understanding of the characters, plot, and themes of the play to their lives. Part of this essay should address the Essential Question: *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?*

To prepare for the culminating project, ask students to brainstorm a list of social issues which appear in the play that are relevant to contemporary life.

Culminating Project

Review the list of the brainstormed social issues and ask students to rank them by their importance to people of all ages in their community. You may ask students to use the Visual Ranking Tool to create

their prioritized lists and compare their ideas with those of other community members.

Discuss the culminating project in detail in which students apply the themes and issues within the play to modern life and work on solutions to age-old problems. Tell students they will present their findings and solutions to an appropriate audience and create appropriate products to supplement their message, such as a multimedia presentation, brochure, newsletter, flyer, or wiki. Examples include the following:

- Students research community resources for teen suicide and create a brochure of warning signs to look for, where to get help, and so forth. They then create and present their findings to a particular audience—peers, parents, or other community members. Pamphlets go to attendees but also to counselor offices and student centers.

- Students research Internet sites, interview experts, and read books to find ways for parents to communicate better with their teenagers. They create a presentation and skit to be presented to parents at a parent meeting, open house, or other gathering.

- Students research Internet sites and books to find ways to prevent violence in their community. They form a club and create a wiki* to be presented to their peers, parents, and community members at a community meeting.

Assign groups and ask them to brainstorm issues, formats, and audiences for their project. Discuss the components of an action plan and ask students to create an action plan to guide them as they work on the project. The action plan template may help some students with special needs organize their work. Refer to the suicide prevention action plan as an example. Explain that this document is a working document that will help through the brainstorming, planning, and implementation stages of the plan to make a difference in the school, community, or even the world.

During the research phase, have students keep track of their resources while they research the current needs of the community and determine a course of action. Some students may need to use the research form to help them stay organized as they work. Discuss the minimum requirements for research when completing the accompanying products (brochures, presentations, wiki, and so forth). Provide the project scoring guide at the beginning of the project so students can self-assess as they present their message and associated products.

Show samples of student projects to give students a sense of the content, but do not spend too much time on any of the samples. A brochure template is available for students who need extra guidance, but students should be encouraged to develop their own unique ideas to help solve difficult problems. As the project progresses, meet periodically with each group to review their action plan to ensure they are on track. Have each group turn in their completed action plan, which includes an assessment of individual contributions along with any associated materials they created to support their presentation. After student groups meet with you individually, have groups meet with each other to receive feedback. Ask students to use the peer feedback form.

After all teams have presented to their respective audiences, provide a class session—or an evening meeting when parents and administration can attend—for students to discuss their experiences, what they presented, and how their message was received. Finalize the project discussion by allowing students to reflect on the Essential Question, *How does literature help us better understand ourselves?*

Accommodations for Differentiated Instruction

Special Needs Student	• Provide templates for some of the associated products, such as a brochure template • Provide fill-in-the-blank plot worksheets to help the student simplify and identify the characters and action • Allow the student to choose the method and tools for the culminating project that draw upon on the student's strengths
Nonnative Speaker	• Provide a parallel text of Romeo and Juliet in the student's first language whenever possible or use a modern English version of the text • Allow the culminating project to include some content in the student's first language if it meets the needs of the audience the student is trying to reach • Use some of the scaffolds created for the resource student, such as the fill-in-the-blank plot worksheets, if appropriate
Gifted/Talented Student	• Emphasize that the culminating project provides a wide range and choice of community projects and outreach that would specifically draw upon the strengths of the gifted student • Encourage the student to look beyond the obvious and come up with creative solutions for difficult problems

Materials and Resources Required For Unit

Technology – Hardware (Click boxes of all equipment needed)

☐ Camera	☐ Laser Disk	☐ VCR
☒ Computer(s)	☐ Printer	☐ Video Camera
☐ Digital Camera	☒ Projection System	☐ Video Conferencing Equip.
☐ DVD Player	☐ Scanner	☐ Other
☒ Internet Connection	☐ Television	

Technology – Software (Click boxes of all software needed.)

☐ Database/Spreadsheet	☐ Image Processing	☐ Web Page Development
☐ Desktop Publishing	☒ Internet Web Browser	☒ Word Processing
☐ E-mail Software	☒ Multimedia	☐ Other
☐ Encyclopedia on CD-ROM		

Printed Materials	Text of *Romeo and Juliet*, preferably with footnotes to define archaic words
Supplies	
Internet Resources	• Shakespeare's Grammar www.bardweb.net/grammar/04gloss.html* Glossary search • Shakespeare Help www.shakespearehelp.com/romeo/main.htm* Information about *Romeo and Juliet* • American Foundation for Suicide Prevention www.afsp.org* Information, activities, news stories, and policies aimed at preventing suicide
Other Resources	

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