Description
This lesson assesses students’ knowledge and skills at the end of a unit on Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. To demonstrate understanding of the work and producing a dramatic performance, student pairs will create a director’s proposal for their own production of a scene from the play. This authentic assessment will require students to consider and apply several drama devices and literary analysis.

Objectives
Students will be able to:
- Approach difficult text with informed and critical literacy in order to analyze and interpret the text.
- Create their own interpretation of a Shakespearean text, using concrete textual evidence to support their own argument.
- Control a wide variety of the essential elements of drama through an authentic lens.
- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the ability of a Shakespearean text to entertain a wide variety of audiences.

Enduring Understanding(s) & Essential Questions

1. In order to engage and entertain a diverse audience, playwrights and screenwriters center their works on universal concepts and find ways to artfully address audience members’ needs.
   - What is the relationship between purpose and audience? (c)
   - What type of entertainment were Shakespeare’s plays considered during his time? (f)
   - How do Shakespeare’s plays connect to universal themes? (c)
   - How does a writer or performer know if their product appeals to their audience? (c)

2. Effective readers succeed in accessing antiquated or challenging language through the consistent practice of critical literacy and patience.
   - What are some examples of texts you struggled to comprehend in the past due to the diction or syntax used? And what was the nature of the difficulty of the language? (In an ancient, foreign, or fictitious language; employed scientific or a specific professional jargon; etc.) (f)
   - What did you do when you encountered that difficult diction or syntax while reading? What strategies do you typically employ in such moments? (f)
   - What is ‘critical analysis’? (f) What’s the relationship between critical analysis and comprehension? (c)
   - How can variations in a word or phrase affect the meaning of a scene? How can they affect characterization? (c)
   - Why is it important for a reader to make an effort to independently interpret the language of text, even when it’s difficult? (p)
Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Target standards)

English I, grade 9:

(4) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain how dramatic conventions (e.g., monologues, soliloquies, dramatic irony) enhance dramatic text.

(12) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts.

(A) compare and contrast how events are presented and information is communicated by visual images (e.g., graphic art, illustrations, news photographs) versus non-visual texts;
(B) analyze how messages in media are conveyed through visual and sound techniques (e.g., editing, reaction shots, sequencing, background music);
(C) compare and contrast coverage of the same event in various media (e.g., newspapers, television, documentaries, blogs, Internet); and
(D) evaluate changes in formality and tone within the same medium for specific audiences and purposes.

(20) Research/Research Plan. Students ask open-ended research questions and develop a plan for answering them. Students are expected to:

(B) formulate a plan for engaging in research on a complex, multi-faceted topic.

(23) Research/Organizing and Presenting Ideas. Students organize and present their ideas and information according to the purpose of the research and their audience. Students are expected to synthesize the research into a written or oral presentation that:

(C) uses graphics and illustrations to help explain concepts where appropriate.

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills

- Basic knowledge of drama terminology, including act, scene, line, character, dialogue
- Completion of Shakespeare’s Romeo & Juliet text and corresponding comprehension of the play’s plot and characters
- Viewing of selected scenes from the Zeferegli and Luhrman film productions of the play
- Critical reading skills, especially in terms of comparing and contrasting texts
- Collaboration and communication skills

Vocabulary

- Script, folio, quarto
- Set design
- Costume design
- Adaptation
- Variation
- Proposal
- *Additional vocabulary in context within multiple scenes*
Time Required

Four lessons of 90 minutes each (360 minutes in total)

Materials Required

- Electronic access to or print copies of multiple variations of *Romeo and Juliet* as seen in
  - Shakespeare’s First Folio and Quartos ([available at](http://goo.gl/ZLzF11), or at [http://goo.gl/xG0Ek2](http://goo.gl/xG0Ek2) if seeking to view two quartos side by side) and
  - Garrick’s adaptation ([Kemble’s rev. version available online at](https://goo.gl/Zc2Ghv))
- Laptop or smartphone access for students to online scripts, stage designs, costumes, production video recordings, etc. (*Can be adapted if necessary.*)
- Projector and computer to project selected images of set designs, staging, and costume designs for *Romeo and Juliet* found in the HRC. Contact Lori Hahn at the UTeach-LA office to request an electronic copy of each of the following PDFs: “R&J Director’s Proposal, Set Design” and “R&J Director’s Proposal, Costume Design Resources.”
- Copies of the “R&J Director’s Proposal” assignment, include the “Set Design” template
- Blank paper for costume design
- Copies of a costume design template if needed for differentiation
- Art supplies

Procedural Note

Teachers may choose to assign student pairs in advance or to allow students to self-select their partners.

**LESSON 1**

Engage 10 minutes

“Now that we’ve finished reading *Romeo & Juliet*, let’s think about the ways in which it could be different from how we’ve already seen it done.”

- Present primary sources of different interpretations and discuss how different directorial choices change the meaning.
  - *Romeo & Juliet*, edited by David Garrick - “How would taking out certain scenes change how you see the play or the characters?”
  - Charlotte and Susan Cushman as Romeo and Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet*, c. 1858 - “How would y’all see the play differently if two women or two men played the lead roles?”
  - *Romeo e Giuletta* - Italian version of *Romeo & Juliet* with warring political factions instead of feuding families. - “How does setting the play in a different culture or country change the play?”

Introduce & Explore ~17 minutes

“In addition to different interpretations of Shakespeare’s words, there are different versions of the plays themselves. Shakespeare’s plays were published in quartos, small copies of the individual plays, and then collected in a folio that was first published in 1623. Even 100 years after that first folio,
actors and directors were changing the plays, not just changing the words but changing entire scenes and acts. Scholars study the differences between these different versions incredibly closely and today we’re going to too.”

- Pull up Folio and Quarto versions of Act 3, Scene 1 on projector screen.
- Read through sections of the scene, after reviewing formatting and spelling meanings, and have students start to see how versions are different.
  - Is it just spelling? Are words and phrases different? Are there lines or words missing or added in?
- Highlighting specific sections of the scene, (ex. lines 1445-1465, line 1492) discuss with students what these differences do to the meaning of the scene. With lines 1445-1465, how do the different versions of Mercutio’s speech change his character and our idea of him?
- Discuss with students which version they would like to read or see better, and which version of the scene makes more of an impact on the audience.

**Explain**

10 minutes

After having discussed the different versions of *Romeo & Juliet*, present to students their assignment for the next 3 days. Students will work with a partner to prepare a director’s proposal for the staging of a version of one of four scenes from the play.

- Students will choose or be assigned a partner at this time.
- After choosing a script and forming their reason for choosing that version, students will make note of variations between versions of their scene.
- Students will also choose a thematic concept for their production, and design a costume and set for their scene. (Elaborated on during Day 2 lesson.)

**Apply**

~40 minutes

Students will use computers to look through online Shakespeare script resources and analyze scenes using class model of analysis. Directions for today:

Look at four scene options in different versions, choose a scene and version, write short description why you and your partner chose that scene and version.

**Evaluate & Close**

~3 minutes

Pairs will have identified their chosen scene and script version to work with for assignment and written their rationale for this choice on scrap paper or a notecard. Pairs will share their selection and rationale in groups of 4-6 (two or three pairs).

Collect these written responses as exit tickets at the end of class to assess students’ selections and rationales.
LESSON 2
Choose an Audience

Engage
~3 minutes

To initiate class discussion, ask students:

- How would you describe this class? Who are you, independently and collectively?
  - How old are you? What is the average age of the class?
  - What is your gender?
  - Where are you from?
  - What are your personal interests? What are some common interests?
  - Where are we? What is our locale from micro to macro perspectives?
- How does this information, or how should it, change how I teach you?

Introduce & Explore
~15 minutes

Discuss the concept of audience with students. (~10 minutes)
Include the following questions.

- What movies/TV shows have you watched recently?
  - Who was the target audience for the show?
  - Who was watching / did the producers want to watch?
  - Why was that the audience?
  - How did the producers/directors attempt to appeal to that audience?
- What was the last conversation you've had?
  - Who was your audience? (Who did you talk to?)
  - How is the dynamic between you and your audience different from that of the producers/directors of and audience for the visual texts we just discussed?
  - How did you change what you said and/or how you acted because of your audience?
- Who was Shakespeare’s audience?
  - How did he appeal to his varied audience members?

This information will have been included as background information before beginning the play, so this question serves as a quick review and segue into today’s focus. However, if students have not received or do not remember this contextual background information, include it here.

Independently in writing, brainstorm a potential appropriate audience for your scene. (3-4 minutes)

Be specific, making sure to include:

- Age range
- Location
- Gender
- Education Level
- Profession
- Interests

Explain 1
~3 minutes

Announce students’ task for the day: Identifying an appropriate audience for their scene.
• The identified audience must be specific and logical/feasible for a current production. Students will need clarification on these terms.
  o For example, their audience cannot be “everyone” or “Pilgrims.” It could be a group of 6th graders attending a play during summer camp. In this way, students will be required to demonstrate understanding of the rhetorical triangle (audience/purpose/author) while being permitted some creative license. In addition, this will help differentiate groups from one another.
• In the next few minutes, student pairs will decide on an audience for their production. This decision will directly influence the rest of their decision-making for the production.

Apply & Elaborate 1
10 minutes

Students will meet in pair partnerships to identify an audience for their scene. (~8 minutes)
• Encourage students to brainstorm a variety of audiences and not to settle on the first one they like if they still have time to discuss.
  Not every group’s audience should be “High school students in Austin, TX, in English class.”
• Once they’ve reached a decision, pairs will compose a 1-2 sentence written description of their audience.
Pairs may share their written descriptions in small groups (two-three pairs joined together) or as a whole class, depending on time available. (~2 minutes)

Explore & Explain 2
5 minutes

Use questioning to scaffold students toward understanding of the idea of a guiding thematic concept for a performance. Ask students:
• How was the Zeffirelli version of Romeo & Juliet different from the Baz Luhrmann version of Romeo + Juliet?
  o Why? How did the director try to appeal to his audience?
  o How would you describe the concept of each of the films?
• What are some different depictions of Romeo & Juliet that you’ve seen?

Explain the assignment:
• The differences in these two versions of the play were determined by the directors’ differing thematic concept of, or guiding idea for, the performance and by their intended audiences. It could be said that these directors each saw the same play through a different lens.
  o Consider the difference between the Zeffirelli version and Gnomeo & Juliet, for example. Each of these directors convey different thematic messages through very different styles, but they began with the same plot and characters.
  o A director’s vision of and commitment to a particular thematic concept of a text influences many performance decisions, large and small, in the course of a theatrical production. And a director correspondingly makes several performance decisions in service of communicating his message in way that appeals to his target audience.
In fact, professional screenwriters, playwrights, and directors often begin by focusing on relevant messages that would appeal to a specific target audience and use that information to form a vision for a piece. It’s vital, after all, that people go to see and appreciate your films or plays if you wish to continue making them.

Think about the ways in which the director/producer of Gnomeo & Juliet appealed to children. Deciding to bring this piece to such a young audience would no doubt impact a director’s concept for the play as whole and treatment of any of the scenes that could be deemed inappropriate for kids.

• Today, in addition to deciding your audience, you and your partner will determine the guiding idea for your selected scene and how to communicate that concept in a way engages and appeals to that audience.
• With your partner, discuss your identified audience, appropriate thematic lenses for your selected scene, and how to both communicate this vision and appeal to this audience.

Students will meet with their partner to identify a thematic concept for their scene. (~8 minutes)
• Pairs need to ensure that their vision aligns with their scene and the text as a whole.
  o According to Eric Colleary, the Performing Arts Curator at the Harry Ransom Center:
    “Your vision needs to come from the texts, not just your imagination. Your interpretation of or argument for the production of the text needs to come from textual evidence.”
    Therefore, students can be creative within the reasonable boundaries of the text, their identified audience, and feasibility.
• Students must also focus on their audience as they consider their concept.
• What will appeal to your identified audience?
• Students must compose 2-3 sentences describing their thematic concept or vision for the scene and how it will appeal to their selected audience.

Pairs may share their written descriptions in small groups (two-three pairs joined together) or as a whole class, depending on time available. (~2 minutes)

Distribute copies of the “Director’s Proposal” assignment and go over the format of the assignment, including sentence stem structure. (~5 minutes) These supports may be removed as applicable to student need/skill level.

Student pairs will work to accomplish the following tasks: (~25 minutes)
• Read or re-read the scene
  o Develop a thorough understanding of the scene, including plot points, characterization, themes, figurative language, etc.
Evaluate
~5 minutes
Pairs will present their overall concept in small groups. Each pair must ask each other pair at least one question. *Teacher may choose to collect, stamp, or check students’ progress.*

Closure
~3 minutes
Discuss how Shakespeare’s thematic concepts appealed to his audience.
- How did Shakespeare’s writing and production appeal to his audience?
- How does the work you have done change how you view *Romeo and Juliet*?

**LESSON 3**

Engage
~10 minutes
**Set Design**
Show students various set designs and stagings of *Romeo & Juliet.* *Use resources from those listed at the end of this lesson plan and/or the PDF titled “R&J Director’s Proposal Resources.”*

Introduce & Explore
~10 minutes
**Quick Write and Share Out**
- Quick Writing: What will your scene look like on stage?
  - Where does your scene take place?
  - What will the background be?
  - What structures or furniture will be on stage?
  - What colors will you use?
  - What props will be on stage?
- Share out: Students may share just with their partner, in a small group, or as a whole class.

Explain
~15 minutes
**Explain an overview of stage design and the template**
- Return to III.i and model on the document camera how to design a set.
- Facilitate student suggestions and decisions. Include
  - Structures,
  - Furniture,
  - Background,
  - Entrances and exits, and
  - A short description of the scene.

Apply &
**Elaborate**

*35-40 minutes*

In pairs, students will work to design their sets.

- Encourage students to approach their products as professionals.
  - Use rulers, draw in pencil, label everything.
- Fully consider the scene before designing the set.
  - Reread the entire scene to consider all of the action that must be performed.
- Attach final version of set design to back of their “Director’s Proposal” and complete explanation of set design within the “Proposal” document.

**Evaluate**

*15-20 minutes*

Students present designs on document camera.* Ask students to provide feedback to each other, offering both specific affirmations and critical feedback.

Ask students to pay special attention to groups that have chosen the same scene.** Students can start to appreciate how different people may see the same scene in different ways.

*If some pairs aren’t prepared to share in the last 15-20 minutes of class after working diligently for 35-40 minutes, they must have a finished and clearly labeled set design by the end of the school day. **In this event, the teacher is advised to save any set designs for the same scene and share all designs for a single scene at the start of next class.

**LESSON 4**

**Engage**

*~7 minutes*

**Costuming**

Ask student pairs to share out the thematic concepts they have chosen for their productions and write them down on document camera. As a class, select and brainstorm complementary costume ideas for two to three of these thematic concepts. For each thematic concept used, ask students to answer the following questions:

- “What might the characters’ clothes look like in performance for this concept?
- How might a director employing this concept help her audience recognize the difference between the two families?
- What colors might be best to use?”

After brainstorming to practice generating ideas for how to use costuming as a stylistic device, ask students:

“How does the selected thematic concept help us determine what our characters should be wearing? Why are the costumes important?”

**Introduce & Explore**

*~10 minutes*

Branching out from student examples of costumes, present primary sources of different costume interpretations of *Romeo & Juliet* over time to keep emphasizing to students the importance of directorial choice. *Call students’ attentions to how old/young the different costumes make Juliet look, the use of color, and from what time period each costume looks like it comes.*

- Pictures of William Henry Matthews sketches. See the PDF titled
“R&J Director’s Proposal Resources.”

- “And what about the versions of the play we’ve already watched?
  - Why did Baz Luhrmann have everyone wearing Hawaiian shirts?
  - What did that make you think of the characters?”

**Explain**

~5 minutes

As students have worked on their proposals for the last three block periods, this will be the last class for pairs to complete their assignment, turning it in for review just before the end of the period. Students will submit all four sections of the “Director’s Proposal” written document (handout), along with their set and costume design visuals.

**Apply & Elaborate**

~50 minutes

Students will work in their pair partnerships, using any art supplies and computers, if available, to research costume interpretations and form their own costume designs. The requirements for the costume visual are a detailed costume for a specific character, a general costume for the general look of their staging, or a written description of the costume design for their staging.

*Teacher will use this time to check in on each section of the proposal to check for students’ understanding and work with their partner.*

**Evaluate**

~10 minutes

Student pairs must have completed Director’s Proposal by this time in the class period.

Pairs will review all their materials and make a ~3 minute presentation of their proposal to their small desk groups (two to three pairs total).

* A teacher could alternatively schedule time for all students or volunteers to present their proposals and designs during the following class day.

**Closure**

~5 minutes

Students will write down one positive comment and one question in response to their small group presentations on an exit ticket and turn this ticket in with their final “Director’s Proposal.”

**Future Lessons**

These skills gained in this set of lessons can serve as a foundation for future drama units or further archival research into multiple drafts/versions of a single text.
Resources:


Prints of Charlotte and Susan Cushman playing Romeo and Juliet, 1885, engraving prints on paper. Box 26, Folder 66, Prints Collection, 1669-1906 Series I. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.


Shakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet: A tragedy as it is acted at the Theatres-Royal in Drury Lane and Covent-Garden, containing an additional scene by David Garrick. London, 1778. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

Shakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet, a tragedy; adapted to the stage by David Garrick; revised by J. P. Kemble; and published as it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden. 1811. John P. Robarts Research Library, The University of Toronto. Web. 08 July 2016.