

Creating and Interpreting Shakespeare on Film

James R. Addlespurger

CAPA High School

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Overview

Film is a powerful medium. When reading Shakespeare it is best to see the play. Many film adaptations exist of many Shakespearean plays and many directors take the liberty to often change the setting of the story, yet they still retain the integrity of Shakespeare's plot, themes, and characterization. The popular and well-known Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins's directed *West Side Story* is one classic example of an interpretation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* that changes the setting and archaic language of the original text but retains the plot, themes, and characterization of Shakespeare's play. Another version of *Romeo and Juliet* that keeps the archaic language of Shakespeare's text but sets the play in a futuristic American city is the Baz Luhrman directed version starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes as the star-crossed lovers. I have found that many of my students are familiar with *Romeo and Juliet* through this film.

Although it is always good to have a society who is familiar with Shakespeare's work, I feel that it is equally important to teach my students that Claire Dane's reciting the famous "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo" lines during the balcony scene were not originally written to be delivered after Juliet steps out of an elevator and before she falls into a swimming pool with Romeo. I do feel, however, that this is one of Luhrman's more creative segments of the film, and it gives me an opportunity to show how one director can interpret one scene in his own way, thus emphasizing the intention of this project, which is to have students understand the richness of Shakespeare and interpret the text in their own creative way. Juxtaposing the balcony scene from these two films along with the more true-to-the-text 1968 film adaptation by Franco Zeffirelli allows students to actually see how one can interpret one of Shakespeare's most famous scenes in a variety of ways. This study allows students to gain an appreciation for Shakespeare's plays that goes beyond simply reading the plays aloud in the classroom. Therefore, for maximum appreciation of Shakespeare's plays, I have

found that it is best to supplement the reading with the visual element of film. Likewise, for the intentions of this project, it is equally important to show students a variety of directorial interpretations of text. Another Shakespearean play, *Richard III*, is worth examining on film when the students can compare the critically acclaimed version starring and directed by Laurence Olivier against the more Nazi-like version set in the 1930's directed by Richard Loncraine and starring Ian McKellen as the diabolical Richard. It is important for students to be exposed to a wide variety of interpretations. They should be able to compare and contrast the way characters look, dress, and act on the screen. Although this project requires a tremendous amount of writing in the form of interpreting text, it is equally important for the students to be able to understand setting and characterization. "Words by themselves, no matter how well written, no matter how eloquently spoken, do not make a film... The [filmmaker] always has the responsibility to portray [his characters] or event in a manner that is visually interesting" (Hampe 28). A final set of films worthy of viewing is Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, his interpretation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, along with Roman Polanski's version of *Macbeth*.

Film not only does a good job of showing us what the characters look like and how they deliver their lines, it is also an excellent way of studying how a director makes choices when producing a film version of one of Shakespeare's plays. Except for the more than four-hour excellent Kenneth Brannagh version of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's plays are usually cut to fit the usual time of a motion picture. Therefore, a director has the job of choosing what to leave in and what to leave out. Furthermore, the director must choose which scenes should be emphasized, who would be best as an actor for a particular part, what the setting will look like, and what kind of music will be used to help set the tone of specific scenes. "Sound—narration ... and music—may help the audience to interpret the [film]. But it won't take the place of solid evidence in the form of concrete visual images" (Hampe 54). Therefore, it is just as important that students carefully select their characters to fit the themes and emotions that the film is trying to portray. Just slapping any picture on the page next to a summary will not help the project. In fact, carelessly placed images can often detract from the meaning of the text.

This unit will focus on *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* but can easily be adapted to any Shakespearean play that is taught at the high school level. I am teaching students at CAPA High School, which is a creative and performing arts high school in the city of Pittsburgh. These students must audition to attend the school and are already motivated by music, acting, and creative art. I have, however, also run pilot programs of this project that is essentially a retelling of Shakespeare at my former inner-city high school and found the results to be positive. Simply put, students learn about Shakespeare and his universal themes

without even realizing it by allowing them to have a sense of ownership in this creative project. Because the power of visual images is so alluring, particularly to the teenage student who often spends more time with video games, computer images, and television, than with words in a textbook, I have decided to allow my students to take control and make their own films. The leap from a “scrapbook-like” retelling to the making of film is the transition that I am now involved with as a result of this film class. The objectives of this project are to have the students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare, to be able to retell one of the plays in their own words, and to appreciate how visual images as well as music can enhance the understanding of the play. The retelling of selected scenes allows the students to explore and understand sections of the text that may otherwise be glossed over while simply reading aloud in the classroom. This interpretation of text fulfills two of the entries in the Pittsburgh Public School’s portfolio requirements. The first entry is of “Interpreting Text,” where the students must demonstrate their understanding of the text by summarizing the most important parts of their selected scenes. This segment will also require students to explain one quote per scene and give enough information to show how their selected quotations are good choices to go along with their visuals. The other portfolio requirement is the “Informative Presentation.” When the projects are complete, students will all be required to follow an outline explaining the strengths and weaknesses of their project; what went well and what they had difficulty completing. After explaining the process they went through to complete their film or scrapbook-like interpretation, students will share their project with the class and others will fill out peer evaluations based on the informative speaking rubric.

As long as all five acts of the play are covered, the student may select any twelve scenes that he or she feels should be retained and emphasized. In addition to the written interpretation of the text, the students must also make connections to the real world by choosing images to match their written interpretations. They may, for example, choose musical stars, political figures, or even their friends whom they will have to direct to play the specific parts for their interpretation and ultimate film. Choosing “friends” can be fun yet very challenging. “The whole purpose of directing actors is to get the actors to create a scene the way you want it. Therefore, you have to know what you want” (Hampe 254). This objective cannot be stressed enough. I have always cautioned students who are willing to use friends for their film to be sure they can trust their friends to be there when they need them and to follow their stage directions. Therefore, it is essential that the filmmaker write a script before he begins shooting film. Although filming friends is one of the more challenging parts of having students make this type of film, it is also one of the more rewarding elements. When students view these films with their friends as character actors, they are much more inclined to actually watch and honestly critique the film.

Another component in dealing with the richness of Shakespeare's language is having the students choose one quote from each selected scene. This quote must appear in the film and be part of the written interpretation. Once the student has the twelve scenes, the twelve interpreted quotes, and the twelve images that best represent the written text, he or she will be able to focus on finding music that will serve as a soundtrack to the film. This year, I had one student use one song and she edited her film to fit into the two-minute time frame of the specific song. Her film was a gritty black and white version complete with vertical line scratches that helped give her film an old-time feel. At the other end of the spectrum was a student who selected and edited twelve different songs to enhance her twelve scenes. Where the first student's film used an instrumental orchestral piece to enhance her two-minute film, the second student chose her songs based on how the lyrical content matched her understanding and ultimate interpretation of the text. Both films required the filmmaker to have friends who would dress-up in costume and follow the direction of the filmmaker's vision. In between the spectrum of these two successful films, I also had a few versions that were obviously slapped together in a rushed frenzy. "A common mistake is to look at the script and assume that everyone sees the scene the way you do. They don't. You have to communicate it to the actors" (Hampe 254). These not so successful film versions had students in regular clothes reading their lines from the typed interpretations that were created by the filmmaker. "The more specifically you have blocked out exactly what you want—in your mind and on paper—the easier it will be to communicate it to others involved and to get it in performance" (Hampe 254). In spite of some of these poorly developed films, I was overall pleased with the success of this project and I hope to develop it in the coming years.

This project allows the students to understand Shakespeare, the plots of his plays, the way he develops characters, and his ability to create universal and timeless themes. Watching the different film versions allows all of my students to see the potential that exists in this kind of project. All of my students are very happy with this assignment, even those who did not have access to a camera and chose to simply download visual images from the computer or to cleverly cutout pictures from magazines. The lessons they learn are that Shakespeare can be fun and his plays do contain universal and timeless themes that exist in our world today.

Rationale

I created this curriculum in an effort to constantly find a way to serve Shakespeare to my students in a more palatable manner. Whenever I introduce Shakespeare there always seems to be a level of tension that arises in the classroom just at the

mention of his name. Even some of my best readers and writers will let out a breath of air and release their tense feelings about what is to follow. Shakespeare is never easy. Those of us who have taught his plays year after year realize the difficulty in dealing with the archaic language and his use of blank verse and iambic pentameter. It is important to understand that Shakespeare is not only telling a story but he is also writing in a particular formula. My students are very familiar with popular rap music and the way rappers sing their flows. I like to compare the way a rapper such as Eminem raps his song lyrics with the way he sounds when he speaks. Although the street slang is still present in his acceptance speeches (You Know what um sayin' Yo?), his delivery is not as flowing and poetic as his song lyric delivery. My point of emphasis is to teach my students that like Eminem, Shakespeare is creating his "flows" by using the formula of blank verse and iambic pentameter. People in Shakespeare's time did not speak the way the characters in his plays speak, any more than people today speak in the way that rappers flow when they are expressing their art. Understanding this concept I believe is important for students to be able to read the words and not get so frustrated with the awkward syntax.

Therefore, "Shakespeare's plays are verse dramas, plays in which the dialogue consists almost entirely of poetry. Generally, Shakespeare wrote his verse dramas in blank verse, or unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter" (McDougal 686). I want my students to gain an understanding of these techniques so they can avoid getting hung up in the sometimes confusing web of awkward syntax, and focus instead on the plot, characterization, and themes that exist in the play.

Because I also believe that it is important for one to be able to visualize the setting and characters, I have my students practice the art of visualization several times throughout the course of the year by having them read lines of imagery in a text and draw a visual interpretation. These drawings are always accompanied by a written interpretation that explains the visual and shows how it is a representation of the imagery and themes within the text. I never thought that I could have high school students drawing pictures and coloring with crayons, but I learned to try this activity when I was working on my National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. I am now a believer in the concept of visualization. This activity of visualization allows even the shyest student to point to his or her visual and use it as a crutch when discussing literary devices and elements of a text. I have found it to be a tremendously awarding teaching tool. Therefore, this curriculum unit is designed to allow students to tap into their childlike imaginations and create visual and written interpretations of complex material that would otherwise be very difficult to digest.

By taking this film class, I learned that film directors have a major influence on how an audience perceives things to be. For example, this class

focused on the way people's perceptions of American culture is based on viewing films created by directors and movie producers who sometimes had their own agendas that they were able to propagate by using film as their medium. What we see on film and what is really true are not always the same. Rather, the film is one director's interpretation of a retelling of a particular event such as World War II and the American reaction to the soldiers who fought in the war. Understanding the power of film allows me to share this medium with my students, many of whom for example only know Shakespeare's famous balcony scene as being delivered when Juliet steps out of an elevator and walks towards a swimming pool. I wanted my students to understand and interpret Shakespeare and still have a creative and fun opportunity of handling what might otherwise be a dull and daunting task. In the end, they still fulfill the requirements of writing in a focused manner, with specific contextual references, and they still show their understanding of plot, characterization, and theme in a creative project that allows them to have ownership of their own learning.

This activity allows students to focus on the diction, imagery, and figurative language of Shakespeare without even realizing it. By choosing quotations from the text and interpreting them in their own words, the students are ultimately dealing with these aforementioned literary devices and making them part of their own interpretive film.

This seminar taught me for example how film can have a powerful influence on the viewer's perceptions of history. The way we see reality is often clouded by the filmmaker's presentation of what he feels to be truth. Therefore, it is critically important for my students to be able to see different film interpretations of the same text to gain an appreciation and understanding of the power of film as well as the creativity of the individual directors. Viewing how three different directors show the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* is one such example of this. It is important to be able to create an environment in the classroom where film can be viewed and discussed in a fruitful manner. During the seminar it was also exciting to see the power of silent films like *The Great Train Robbery*. Silent film is another approach that my students can experiment with when deciding on how to create their interpretations of text. The silent film medium will give students the opportunity to add their quotations and summaries on the screen in a true silent film style.

The skill base for these students can range from a mainstream class all the way to an accelerated or gifted class. I have successfully had 9th grade students, 10th grade gifted students, and 12th grade mainstream students complete this project. The medium at first was a scrapbook-like retelling. It later developed into PowerPoint and CD slide shows, and now I am in the stages of getting more of my students to attempt to create film. Students with low level reading skills

have still been able to sink their teeth into the plots and themes of Shakespeare's plays by working with one another and watching a variety of selected film clips that supplement the readings. The more gifted students accept the independent challenge of using their creativity with this project. I have had equal amounts of success with all levels of high school students who must read Shakespeare's plays, therefore, it is my belief that all high school students would benefit from this approach to understanding Shakespeare.

This newly created document will fit nicely into the Pittsburgh Public School's existing curriculum that requires all English students to read Shakespeare's plays. The Pittsburgh Board of Education requires that all students maintain and create a portfolio that will show their skills as a reader, writer, speaker and listener. This portfolio used to also require an entry that would show the students' proficiency in the category of viewing, and although this entry has recently been eliminated, it still exists within the framework of my curriculum unit. Therefore, students involved in this project will fulfill two of the ten portfolio requirements: ("Interpreting Text" and "Informative Presentation") as well as strengthen their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing skills. This project is time consuming yet it fulfills several state standards and district portfolio requirements while still maintaining both fun and educational.

This curriculum unit will allow students to make informed judgments about the films they view. It will also allow them to interpret Shakespeare's words, images, and use of figurative language by examining selected scenes and quotations from the text. Furthermore, students will be able to complete a self-evaluation that allows them to examine their strengths and weaknesses while completing the project. They will also complete peer evaluations and ultimately learn from sharing, listening and viewing what the other students have created. All students will present their film or visual interpretation in the form of an information speech. This will allow students the opportunity to fulfill another portfolio requirement, but more importantly, it will allow students the opportunity to share information they have gathered through the reading, planning, outlining, and creative processes. This speech will demonstrate the student's ability to respond to questions of others, paraphrase and summarize selected Shakespearean quotes, explain their choice of characters and setting, speak audibly, and share the overall joys and challenges of creating this project. Fulfilling these above requirements will enable the students to show their proficiency in the existing standards that are provided by the Pittsburgh Public Schools. But above all, my goal is to promote Shakespeare and allow the students to feel a sense of comfort while dealing with his rich language, complex metaphors, and sometimes syntactically confusing sentences. I want my students to go away knowing that they are more comfortable with Shakespeare than when they entered my class and let out that first breath of anxiety and frustration at the very sound of his name.

After all, what's in a Name? I want the name "Shakespeare" to bring a more comforting and joyful response to my students' ears the next time they hear his name mentioned.

Objectives

This unit seeks to achieve a love of Shakespeare and a deeper understanding of how his universal themes are applicable in any time period. Students will also gain an understanding of the images, figurative language, and techniques of Shakespeare's writing style, including his use of blank verse and iambic pentameter. I want my students to become familiar with the structure of a five act Shakespearean play that follows the patterns of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. I also want students to recognize his use of iambic pentameter, and his ability to create rich ambiguities through the use of figurative language. Students should go away from this project with a greater appreciation for the work of William Shakespeare and a sense of understanding that will allow them to engage in deep divergent thinking about his plays. They should ultimately understand how a five act play is patterned, how characters are developed (characterization), how Shakespeare's themes are universal and timeless, and how his words, images, and metaphors can come alive in the form of visualization that ultimately focuses on the power of Shakespeare's choice of words.

Other objectives will be to have students complete a written and visual interpretation of one of Shakespeare's plays. They will be required to retell the entire story by selecting and summarizing twelve scenes. In addition to the scene summaries, students will be required to locate and explain twelve quotations from the text. They must also explain how these selected quotes match the visual images of their final project.

Selecting the appropriate visual images will enhance the students' understanding of characterization. There must be a brief explanation of why the main characters were selected and how the choices are appropriate to the retelling. Students who are able to make the film will also be required to locate music that fits the tone of the selected scenes. There should be a brief written explanation of why the songs were selected and how they best fit the scenes that they were selected to accompany.

Strategies

Students will be able to reach the standards and objectives in a variety of ways. First, students will be able to identify and understand Shakespeare's use of blank verse and iambic pentameter by memorizing a selected quote from the play being studied. This works best if you can locate a passage from the first part of the text.

For *Romeo and Juliet*, students can memorize the prologue of “Two households both alike in dignity...”(4). This memorization exercise allows them to become familiar with the use of iambic pentameter and it also allows the class to explicate the words that are being memorized. For *Richard III* one can start with a large chunk of the opening of the play: “Now is the winter of our discontent...”(3). For *Julius Caesar* I chose the opening scene where Marrulus is scolding the crowd for celebrating Caesar’s victory. My students memorized the passage that starts with “Wherefore rejoice? What conquests brings he home?” (8). Students may moan at first and feel that this is an impossible task, but I have found that they can memorize a passage within a few days as long as you are serious about the task. When I first introduced this idea to a gifted sophomore class, one of my students (he later turned out to be the Valedictorian) challenged me and said, “I’ll bet you can’t recite it without looking.” He had caught me. I was on the spot and it was clear that I didn’t have the passage memorized so I made a deal. The class agreed that they would all memorize the passage two days after I could come in and recite it for them. I spent a great chunk of my evening memorizing the opening prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* and jumped on my desk to recite it the next day. Within two days I had all of my students line up and recite the memorized passage. I have since learned many other passages from Shakespeare and now whenever I assign this memorization activity to my students I make sure that I can recite it myself. Memorizing text is a good exercise for the brain and it gets the students’ ears tuned up to the flow of Shakespeare’s use of iambic pentameter. I feel that it is important to begin the study of one of Shakespeare’s plays by holding students accountable and making them memorize a portion of the text.

Another strategy is selecting or having students select a passage that is rich in figurative language and imagery. This passage will allow the students to practice the concept of visualization. This visualization is a way of promoting discussion of the text. A student creates a drawing, colors it with crayons or colored pencils, and explains to the class the images, figurative language, and themes that are portrayed in the visual. I have found that even students who say they cannot draw are able to tap into their child-like imaginations and create a visual that will help them express some of the literary devices within the text. This year I have made some modifications to allow some students who are proficient in playing a musical instrument to create their “visualization” by writing a musical score, playing it for the class, and describing how it is a reflection of the words, images, and themes of the text. Because I am at a school for creative and performing arts students I am able to get a variety of creative musical scores. However, this visualization project always worked well at my other inner-city high school and it is a very good tool for getting students to think deeply and talk about the words and images of the text.

Viewing selected film clips will allow students to achieve the objectives of this curriculum unit in regards to the concept of characterization. Students learn that the development of characters is known as characterization. “There are four basic methods of characterization: physical description; a character’s own speech, thoughts, feelings, and actions; the speech, thoughts, feelings, and actions of other characters; and the narrator’s comments” (McDougal 17). In the case of Shakespeare, we will focus on everything except the narrator’s comments. After reading some of the text, students will discuss their interpretations of key characters. Students usually have fun trying to pick people who they would select to play the parts of key players. We have classroom discussions about their choices and learn characterization through these discussions. For example, we discuss the characteristics of Cassius from *Julius Caesar* and most students agree that he is the main manipulator in the conspiracy to kill Caesar. Then I ask students if they can think of any person, real or fictitious, who would be a good pick to play the part of such a character. This leads into conspiracy theories that run the gamut from the assassination of Abraham Lincoln to the killing of Tupac (a popular rapper who myth has it may still be alive). Students are passionate about discussing such controversies as the killing of Tupac and Biggie Smalls, the involvement of Puff Daddy and other controversial figures. When the topic of politics enters the classroom, we usually have a rich dialogue about current political leaders and their philosophies. Who likes them and who dislikes them? We discuss who might be considered a Cassius in today’s political arena, or who would make a good pick to play the part of Julius Caesar and why. The purpose of these rich discussions is to get students comfortable with the art of classroom discussion that involves speaking as well as active listening. These discussions also allow students to share ideas and make connections with the real world in an effort to come up with characters that they will pick to play the parts of the characters in Shakespeare’s play. Once these characters are selected and the interpretations of the quotes and scenes are written, the student will lay-out the project in a scrapbook-like manner that will give essential information about each scene along with the appropriate scene and act written at the top of the page, as well as a specific quote and visual that matches the student’s written interpretation.

These individual pages can then be transferred to film in either a Ken Burn’s documentary style-that utilizes still photography- or in a student generated moving picture where friends of the student will wear specific clothing and act in ways that are directed by the student. This latter version is very difficult and time consuming and requires that the student have reliable friends who will be there when needed and take the project seriously. At first, this was an independent project because I did not want one student to do all the work while others reaped the rewards. I have found, however, that this can be a project created by two students as long as each student is responsible for the same amount of work. For

this to occur, I make it a must that students select music to fit the scenes. One student must be responsible for an MLA citation of all of the music as well as a written response explaining why the songs were selected and how the lyrics or melody helps to promote the specific tone that is trying to be conveyed in every scene. Adding this component to the project justifies having two students working together. The scrapbook-like projects that still make up the majority of assignments that students create for this unit do not require music.

Another way of assisting students in being able to achieve the expressed objectives and standards is to allow class time to work on the project. If students come to me with a written script that shows who will be playing specific parts, what lines will be delivered, and where they plan on shooting the film, I will allow class time for students to create their film. This year, at my creative and performing arts high school, many of the students who made film were able to utilize some of their time during their major art classes that actually provided them with cameras and editing skills. This also allowed them to have students at their disposal to shoot specific scenes. Still, it was obvious to the viewers who took the extra time to create and edit their film and who slapped it together in the last minute.

Classroom Activities

One of the activities that allows students to see how one famous scene can be interpreted in a variety of ways by different directors is to show students the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. One way to start is to have students memorize the 16-18 lines that are delivered during Juliet's soliloquy: "O Romeo, Romeo..." (37-8). Memorization will force students to look closely at the text and extract meaning from all of the words. A class discussion can follow the initial reading of these lines to understand some of the language and images. For example, most students think that Juliet is asking "Where" are you Romeo. This allows the students to learn the archaic meaning of "wherefore" as being "why" rather than where. This of course is the key to understanding the rest of the soliloquy as Juliet ponders the ridiculousness of not being able to see Romeo simply because his name is Montague, a rival enemy of her Capulet family.

After discussing the meaning of the text and having students memorize and either rewrite or recite the passage (approximately two days), we talk about the setting and positioning of the two star-crossed lovers in this scene. I give the student a series of questions that allow them to explore the possibility of setting, costume, positioning of Romeo and Juliet, and the choice of music to enhance this critical and classic scene. Students enjoy coming up with different song lyrics to fit the scene and they must justify their choices by explaining how the song lyrics match the scene or how the melody enhances the tone of the scene. They also

enjoy selecting actors, singers, or popular movie stars who they feel would make a great couple playing the part of Romeo and Juliet. All of these discussions are designed to get the students thinking about characterization and the importance of music in film.

After these discussions I show the students three very different film adaptations of this scene. While watching these film adaptations I have students make notes about the directors choices in setting, costumes, positioning on the stage, and music. The discussions that follow prove to enhance the student's desire to create their own retellings of the Shakespearean text that we are reading. We view the balcony scene from the following films:

West Side Story directed by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins

Romeo and Juliet directed by Franco Zeffirelli

Romeo and Juliet directed by Baz Luhrman

After viewing and discussing the similarities and differences of these three film versions along with the initial choices made by the students, students are ready to embark on creating their own projects and interpretations of the play that we are reading as a class. For this year, my sophomores read *Julius Caesar* and my seniors read *Macbeth*. In past years I had freshman and gifted sophomores reading and interpreting *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III*.

A second activity that allows students to bring the unit to fruition is to have them create the visualization project. This project occurs after a good portion of the text has been read and discussed. For *Julius Caesar* I introduced this activity after the killing of Caesar. Students were able to look back at the text and locate a passage that they felt contained language with vivid imagery, figurative language, and at the same time evoked a specific theme within the play. The following are two possible visualization projects that will enable students to look deeper into the text:

NAME _____

Julius Caesar Visualization Project

1. This is an ABSTRACT drawing using only symbolic colors and shapes. These colors and shapes should create images that evoke your reading of a specific character or scene in the text.
2. You must include a “color code” and a “shape code” on the back of your drawing to explain the reasons for your choices.
3. One thematic word must appear somewhere on the drawing.
4. Include selected quotes from the passage and give the name of the speaker.
5. You will write a separate typed paragraph that will help explain your drawing to the class. This will explain the images and figurative language found in your selected passage. This will also explain the quotes you selected.

NAME _____

BLOCK ____

INFORMATIVE WRITING
Shakespeare Visualization Project

1. Choose a key scene in this play and create a drawing that depicts the meaning or theme of your scene.
2. You must include a title for the audience to be able to understand your drawing.
3. One thematic word must appear somewhere on the drawing.
4. You will create a point of view and write a separate three-paragraph response that will help explain your drawing to the class and include

appropriate facts and details from the story. (This could be in the voice of a 3rd person narrator or a character from the text).

- a. The first paragraph of this paper must include two quotations from the text with proper parenthetical citations. You should also explain the significance of each quote.
 - b. When citing your lines simply include the act and scene followed by the line number(s) inside the parenthesis. All punctuation follows the parenthesis.
 - i. For Example: "... But I am as constant as the Northern Star, / of whose true fixed and resting quality / there is no fellow in the firmament" (Act 3.1 1.60-62) is an example of Caesar's arrogance and self pride.
 - ii. In an effort to show the arrogance or self pride of Caesar he tells the senators that, "I am as constant as the Northern Star, / of whose true fixed and resting quality / there is no fellow in the firmament" (Act 3.1 1.60-62).
5. The second paragraph should guide your reader's eyes with specific words like: in the bottom-left corner.... In the top of the drawing is.... This paragraph will focus on how the images of your drawing are a specific visualization of specific words from the text
6. The final paragraph should compare and contrast the theme(s) of this scene with something in the real world. Another way to approach this final paragraph is to analyze the subject(s) in a symbolic way and suggest deeper meaning beyond the literal level.
7. Be sure that your paper is focused, clearly written, organized, has textual references of support, and establishes a solid beginning, middle, and conclusion that goes well with your visualization.

The following is the assignment given to my students before we begin reading the play. It also helps to show them successful student models from previous years. For first time teachers who would like to attempt this project it is a good idea for you to create your own interpretation to set the tone for the type of quality you are expecting. It is a long and tedious process but well worth the effort. When students see an example of a finished product they are more motivated to meet the standards that have been set forth. It may also be a good idea to create a project that is from a Shakespearean play that differs from the one being read in your class. This way, students will get the visual idea and not feel the urge to mimic what the teacher has created.

Julius Caesar: INTERPRETING TEXT

There are many different ways to interpret a Shakespearean play. Each new production can be a reflection of the ideas, feelings and political and social climate of its particular time and culture. Consider the Baz Luhrman version of *Romeo and Juliet* starring Leonardo DiCaprio. This film adaptation moves from Shakespeare's original setting into a futuristic American society where people are walking around with guns instead of swords.

Where will you set your production of *Julius Caesar* and how will you present your characters?

CRITERIA: A proficient interpretation should

- * Demonstrate your understanding of the text by *summarizing* the most important parts of *twelve selected scenes*.
- * Make *connections* to the real world by using images of your choice. See *visual* below.
- *Recognize* the richness of Shakespeare's language by choosing one quote for each selected scene and interpret the quote as part of your summary.

THE ASSIGNMENT

DUE DATE _____

1. Choose twelve scenes from the play and *summarize* them *in your own words*. Each summary must be at least **five fully developed sentences**. These summaries should match the visual images on each page.
2. Include a **quotation** for each scene. Choose one that best fits the image(s) of your scene. In your own words, interpret the meaning of each quotation and explain how this quote fits the visual image(s) on the page. This interpretation of the quote is separate from your summary.
3. Each scene must have a **visual** that works nicely with the summary you will write. See the samples from other classes. Choose one of the following:
 - draw your characters and scenery
 - * take photos of friends and pose them in costumes in positions that will help tell the story.
 - * download images from the internet (be sure your main characters are the same throughout)
 - * cut pictures from magazines (be sure your main characters are the same throughout)
 - * create a film

* design a computer project

4. **All five acts must be used!** Identify your twelve selected scenes as **Act 1.2**, and so on. Organize this in the correct chronological order.
5. Create an opening page that identifies your selected characters and gives a brief explanation of why you made these choices. *For example: Hager the Horrible will play Julius Caesar because he looks like a king who is arrogant and proud.*

The next item is a rubric that contains the five criteria for writing in Pennsylvania. The point value can be adjusted to fit your particular needs. Giving this rubric to the students before they begin the project allows them to stay focused on the task.

NAME _____

RUBRIC FOR SHAKESPEARE RETELLING
400 possible points
INTERPRETING TEXT

12 typed summaries in your own words. (20 pts each/ 240 total pts)

- * focus _____
- * content _____
- * organization _____
- * style _____
- * conventions _____

total point _____ X 12=

12 well done visuals that match your summaries.

(5 pts each/ 60 points total)

12 quotes separate from summary. Interpretation of quote is separate from the summary and explains how the quote matches the visual image. Include name of character after each quote. (5 pts each/ 60 point total)

Act and scene typed and located at the top of each page. (2 pts each/ 24 total)

Time and Effort. Class time was used wisely. Much time and effort went into the planning and design of the project. It is clear the student worked at home as well as at school.

4,3,2,1 X 4 (max points = 16)

Grade Scale:

360-400= A 320-359=B 280-319=C 240-279=D

COMMENTS:

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Teacher Bibliography

Hampe, Barry. *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos*. Henry Holt and Company: New York, 1997.

Kurosawa, Akira. *Throne of Blood*. Toho International Co; Japan, 1958.

Loncraine, Richard. *Richard III*. MGM: Santa Monica, CA, 1995.

Luhrman, Baz. *Romeo and Juliet*. Twentieth Century Fox: Hollywood, 1996.

McDougal Littell. Comp. McDougal Littell. Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Littell Inc., 2002.

Olivier, Laurence. *Richard III*. Vista Vision: British, 1955.

Polanski, Roman. *Macbeth*. Todd: British, 1971.

Wise, Robert and Jerome Robbins. *West Side Story*. Mirisch Pictures, Inc: Santa Monica, CA, 1961.

Zeffirelli, Franco. *Romeo and Juliet*. Paramount Pictures: Hollywood, 1968.

Student Bibliography

McDougal Littell. Comp. McDougal Littell. Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Littell Inc., 2002.

Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. Bantam Books: New York, 1988.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Bantam Books: New York, 1988.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Bantam Books: New York, 1988.

Appendix – Standards Communications

- C1. Students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
- C2. Students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
- C3. Students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
- C4. Students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform and persuade, in all subject areas
- C5. Students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
- C6. Students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
- C7. Students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.
- C8. Students compose and make oral presentations.

Arts and Humanities

- AH1. Students describe the meanings they find in various works from the visual and performing arts and literature on the basis of aesthetic understanding of the art form.
- AH2. Students evaluate and respond critically to works from the visual and performing arts and literature of various individuals and cultures, showing that they understand important features of the works.
- AH3. Students relate various works from the visual and performing arts and literature to the historical and cultural context within which they were created.
- AH4. Students produce, perform or exhibit their work in the visual arts, music, dance or theater, and describe the meanings their work has for them.