



Thoughts, Words, and Deeds: Methinks Much Ado with Language, Character Motivation, and Theme in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet

Language, Character Motivation, and Theme



Jane Baber, Jane Fisher, Gage Jeter
Published by K20 Center

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Grade Level	9th Grade	Time Frame	3-4 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	150 minutes

Essential Question

How do language and character motivation influence thematic aspects of a text?

Summary

In this lesson, students will interactively explore Acts 3 and 4 of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Students will engage in various strategies, focusing on thematic elements of the play in consideration of language and character motivation. Students will engage in during-reading strategies designed to support comprehension and analysis of language, character motivation, and theme. As a culminating activity, students will create thematic posters connected to characters and plot.

Snapshot

Engage

Prior to the lesson, students complete a pre-survey. Then, to begin days 1 and 2, students participate in a variety of Four Corners iterations as they engage with thematic and textual prompts.

Explore

As students read Acts 3 and 4, they collaboratively engage in during-reading strategies designed to promote literal and figurative understandings of the text.

Explain

As students read independently and in groups, they annotate the text using provided templates, focusing especially on language, character motivation, and theme.

Extend

Working collaboratively, students create thematic character posters.

Evaluate

Students reflect on their learning experiences and complete a post-survey.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.1.S.1: Work effectively and respectfully in diverse groups by showing willingness to make necessary compromises to accomplish a goal, sharing responsibility for collaborative work, and recognizing individual contributions

9.1.S.2: Follow agreed-upon rules as they engage in collaborative discussions about what they are reading and writing, expressing their own ideas clearly, building on the ideas of others, and respectfully disagreeing when necessary in pairs, diverse groups, and whole-class settings.

9.4.R.2: Use context clues, connotation, and denotation to determine or clarify the meaning of words or distinguish among multiple-meaning words.

9.4.W.2: Select language to create a specific effect in writing according to purpose and audience.

Attachments

- [Annotation Graphic Organizer—Thoughts Words and Deeds.pdf](#)
- [Blank Annotation Template—Thoughts Words and Deeds.pdf](#)
- [Four Corners Romeo & Juliet Quotes—Thoughts Words and Deeds.pdf](#)
- [Four Corners Signs—Thought Deeds and Words.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—Thoughts Words and Deeds.pptx](#)
- [Romeo & Juliet Thematic Character Posters—Thoughts Words and Deeds.pdf](#)

Materials

- Highlighters
- Markers and colored pencils
- Post-It tabletop easel pad
- Sticky notes
- Notebook paper
- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Four Corners signs (attached)
- 3.1 Annotation Graphic Organizer (attached)
- Blank Annotation Template (attached)
- Four Corners Quotes (attached)
- Thematic Character Poster assignment sheet (attached)

Engage

Teacher's Note

This lesson will begin with a pre-test survey.

DAY 1: Begin class by introducing the essential question for this lesson: "How do language and character motivation influence thematic aspects of a text?" Display **slide 3** and pass out an index card to each student. Give students a few minutes to write down their response, encouraging them to consider prior knowledge and experiences with analyzing texts (not specifically Romeo and Juliet).

While this is merely an introduction, remind students that this essential question will be continually revisited and assessed throughout the lesson.

Teacher's Note

For the upcoming Four Corners activity, display the attached **Four Corners signs** in four different areas of the room. To eliminate a disruption in class flow, consider having these signs already posted in the room before class begins. These signs display four dominant themes that can be found in Romeo and Juliet: LOVE, HATE, FATE, AND FREEWILL. Although these signs will be displayed prior to reading Act 3, do not tell students that these signs can be connected to the text; they will surely come to this conclusion on their own in time, though.

After introducing the essential question, introduce students to the Four Corners strategy. After alerting students' attention to the [Four Corners](#) signs, direct them to read and think about the quote displayed on **slide 4**. This quote from *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* reads, "We've all got both light and dark inside us. What matters is the part we choose to act on. That's who we really are." Consider asking for a student volunteer to read the quote aloud. On **slide 5**, there are directions for an associated [Quick Write](#). Using either composition books or notebook paper, students will reflect on the Harry Potter quote by responding to the following prompt: "To which aspects of your personal character does this quote connect?" Move to **slide 6** to display the quote again.

Sample Student Responses

Possible student replies may include something like: "I see myself as an optimist, so I really connect with the part of the quote that says we have light inside us. However, I also have days where I am more in tune with the darker, moodier part of me. Don't we all have days like that? But 'what matters is the part we choose to act on'. Even when I have those gloomy days, I can make the choice to be my optimistic self and look on the light side".

After students have had a chance to write (around 3 minutes), move to **slide 7** and give them time to share their responses with an [Elbow Partner](#) sitting next to them.

Now display **slide 8**, directing students to examine the [Four Corners](#) signs (LOVE, HATE, FATE, FREEWILL) posted around the room. Ask them to take a minute to decide which of these terms/themes they see best fitting with the quote displayed. After giving students enough time to connect the quote to one of the signs (no more than a minute), direct them to move to their chosen sign.

Once students have divided into four groups, one group for each of the four signs, give students time (two minutes, max) to justify the connection they have made. Before starting this time, tell students that they will need to elect a speaker for the group who justifies why the quote displayed best fits with the theme they have chosen. After two minutes have passed and groups are ready, ask each group to share out one at a time.

Teacher's Note

For future class periods using the Four Corners strategy, consider adding extra rounds if time allows. For example, you can open the space for students to change corners if one group has a persuasive enough justification for their choice. For this lesson, however, keep it short and sweet.

Now that students have been engaged in connecting a piece of text to a theme, it is time to segue to a meatier portion of text by focusing on *Romeo and Juliet*. Students will need to return to their seats and get out their class texts of Shakespeare's play.

Teacher's Note

In this three day lesson, this is the end of the Day 1 Engage. Move to the Day 1 Explore.

DAY 2: Day 2 will begin similarly to Day 1, with another engagement in the Four Corners strategy. See **slide 9**. Like the day before, post the attached Four Corners signs (LOVE, HATE, FATE, FREEWILL) in four different areas of the room. Today though, rather than displaying a quote on the board, each student will receive a different quote from one of the scenes read for homework (Scenes 3.2-3.4). These quotes are provided in the attached **Four Corners Romeo and Juliet Quotes** and can be passed out in no particular order.

Once students have all received their quote (and there will be four different pieces of the text going around, so they will most likely not have the same quote as the person sitting next to them), keep slide 9 displayed and recap the method for Four Corners, giving them a minute to reflect on which of the four posted themes best suits their quote. Next, students should move to the posted theme that best connects to their assigned passage.

As with the previous Four Corners engagement, once students are groups according to their theme, they should discuss with each other about the justification for why their quote fits the theme they have chosen. This should lead to interesting discussion, as surely not all students with the same quote will have grouped according to the same theme. For this round of Four Corners, allow students the time and space to change their minds about the theme they have chosen once they have heard their peers' justifications for their own choice.

Now that students have had the chance to form an opinion about their quote from Romeo and Juliet and revise their original thematic choice, open the space for a whole group discussion about the connections students formed about their quotes and connections to theme. Before segueing into the Day 2 Explore part of the lesson, ask students what, if any, rich language or elements of character motivation are in their passage.

Teacher's Note

In this three day lesson, this is the end of the Day 2 Engage. Move to the Day 2 Explore.

DAY 3: The final day of this lesson will begin with the [First Turn/Last Turn](#) strategy. See **slide 17**. Students will have already prepared for this strategy by reading through 4.3 and annotating accordingly. To begin, students should form the same reading groups as yesterday (based on their assigned character). Here's how First Turn/Last Turn will work in this lesson:

1. Once students are in the appropriate groups, ask each group to select one group member to begin.
2. That student reads aloud a particularly relevant or meaningful phrase, line, or direct quote from the assigned reading without provide any commentary.
3. Then, in a clockwise manner, group members one at a time respond to the phrase/line/quote.
4. Once all group members have responded, the initial speaker shares why he/she found that text evidence to be particularly interesting or important.
5. This procedure continues until all group members have begun the conversation.

Explore

DAY 1: Now that students have started to get into the vibe of the essential question by exploring different themes, they will dive into the text by beginning Act 3. Ordinarily students would turn to their Romeo and Juliet text; however, in this lesson there is a modified version of Act 3, Scene 1 provided. Using the attached **3.1 Annotation Graphic Organizer** handout, students will not only read 3.1, but also engage in the [Stop and Jot](#) and [Why-Lighting](#) strategies.

First, pass out copies of graphic organizer handout to each student. In addition to the copy, students will need two different colors of highlighters. After passing out copies, move to **slides 10 and 11** to briefly review aspects of character motivation and language prior to reading so that moving forward, students have a general understanding of the focus of their reading.

Teacher's Note

For reading Scene 1, you may choose to have students read out loud in turns or read aloud to the students yourself.

Whichever option you choose, students will be engaged in active reading. The handout that students are working with will have three columns: in the middle is the text of 3.1, on the left is space to take notes about language, and on the right is space to take notes about character motivation.

Instructions to post for in-class reading are found on **slide 12**.

Before starting the handout, the teacher will divide students into four groups. Assign each group a different character on which to focus (Benvolio, Mercutio, Tybalt, or Romeo). Students will circle their assigned character at the top of their handout and only focus on that character while they read 3.1.

For the Stop and Jot strategy, as the text is read aloud, pause periodically. When the text is paused, students will jot down notes in the margins regarding language (left column) and character motivation (right column). For the character motivation column, students will refer back to the themes presented in the Engage stage. As instances of character motivation are found, they should be labeled with an L, H, F, or FW to correspond with a connecting theme.

Teacher's Note

Notice that although up to this point students have been focusing solely on theme, now the elements of language and character motivation are being used as a way to understand those themes.

Instruct students, based on their assigned character, to look for examples of unique and/or figurative language use from their character, as well as instances of thoughts, words, and deeds that hint at that character's motivation for their decisions. All notes will be jotted down in their respective margins.

While students are participating in the Stop and Jot strategy, they will also be engaged in the Why-Lighting strategy. These two strategies fit seamlessly together. For Why-Lighting, students will use two different colors of highlighters, one for language and one for character motivation. Each time an example of each is found for their character of focus, they will highlight it in the appropriate color, then in the margins justify their highlighting (this may be as simple as identifying highlighted language as a simile or a pun). A sample of this handout that has been annotated using the Stop and Jot and Why-Lighting strategies can be found on **slide 13**.

Teacher's Note

As you are reading and pausing with students, ask them to share what they are jotting down on their handouts. Since students will have different characters of focus, this can lead to a rich discussion while reading where students are offering unique perspectives and textual examples to illuminate the plot and content of 3.1. As clarifying questions as needed. For example, "Why did you label that quote by Mercutio as character motivation? And how did you decide that he is motivated there by freewill?"

As far as time is concerned, the goal for this first day is to get through 3.4. While discussion and student questions will certainly affect how far the lesson proceeds. Depending on how much of the text gets read in class, the rest of 3.1 through 3.4 will be homework. See the Explain stage below for a breakdown of the homework for DAY 1.

Teacher's Note

In this three-day lesson, this is the end of the Day 1 Explore. Move to Day 1 Explain for the homework assignment.

DAY 2: After completing the Day 2 Engage strategy, students should move back to their desks and get out their copies of Romeo and Juliet. As the homework from the previous night was to read to 3.4, the goal for in-class reading today is to read from 3.5 to 4.3.

Today students will be annotating the assigned reading with the same focus on language, character motivation, and theme. In anticipation of the final project for this lesson in the Extend stage, the teacher will again assign students a character on whom to focus. For the remaining portions of the play to be read for this lesson, divide students into the following character groups: ROMEO, JULIET, FRIAR LAWRENCE, NURSE, and CAPULETS (both Lady and Lord).

Display **slide 14** for the directions for today's annotation activity. Students will use the same templates that were used for annotating the previous night's homework; pass out a template to each student (they are printed front and back) and ask students to move into their character groups. Once students are in their groups, they will do the following:

- In their assigned groups, students will read collaboratively, focusing especially on their group's character (Romeo, Juliet, Friar, Nurse, or Capulets).
- As students read together, fill out the annotation template (similar to the previous night's homework).
- Students' goal is to get through 4.3. Whatever reading they don't complete in class is homework.
- Remind students to label their annotations at the top with their name and Act/Scene. Remember to include citations for direct quotes.

Teacher's Note

Before students break out into groups, provide some ideas for group reading options. For example, groups may choose to read silently and chime in periodically when they find a place in the text to annotate about their character, they may read in turns, or they may read in roles. Conversely, the teacher may have a method that they prefers and wants to see implemented.

Teacher's Note

In this three day lesson, this is the end of the Day 2 Explore. Move to Day 2 Explain for the second homework assignment.

DAY 3: Following the same drill as the previous day, students will read 4.4-4.5 while annotating using the provided template. See **slide 18**.

Explain

DAY 1 Homework: Instructions for Day 1's homework are found on **slide 14**. For the first round of homework, students will complete the assigned reading for the day (if not finished in class) and continue through 3.4. At the end of the annotation packet used in class for Scene 1 are both instructions for the homework as well as blank templates to use for further annotation.

For homework, students will continue reading through 3.4 and use the three column annotation template provided. Whereas in class they were reading with a focus of only one character, for homework they will read and pay equal attention to all players in the remaining scenes. In the middle column there is a blank space for direct quotes from the play to be recorded. On the left is space for annotations about unique language, and on the right is a space for annotations about character motivation. As before, each instance of character motivation should be accompanied by the theme coding of L (love), H (hate), F (fate), and FW (freewill).

Teacher's Note

Before students leave, provide a reminder or have a short discussion about how we are seeing language, character motivation, and theme work together. Return to the essential question, provided on slide 7: "How do language and character motivation influence thematic aspects of a text?"

DAY 2 Homework: For the second round of homework, students will complete the assigned reading for the day (whatever was not finished in class) and continue through 4.3. Using the annotation templates given and started in class on Day 2, students will continue to read and annotate in the same fashion, but this time continuing through the lens of their assigned character (ROMEO, JULIET, FRIAR LAWRENCE, NURSE, or CAPULETS). Remind students that they are continuing to annotate for language and character motivation, while still making the same thematic (L, H, F, FW) connections. **Slide 16** has reminders.

DAY 3 Homework: For the last round of homework, students will need to complete their thematic character poster.

Extend

DAY 3: After completing the [First Turn/Last Turn](#) strategy (**Slide 17**) and the day's required reading (4.4-4.5), introduce the cumulative project for this lesson: Thematic Character Posters. A full description and assignment sheet can be found in the attached **R & J Thematic Character Posters** handout. See **slide 19**.

To introduce this project, display **slides 18 and 19**. Slide 19 has two questions for students to consider: "How would Friar Laurence sell love?" and "How might Juliet's nurse persuade us to buy a bit of freewill?" The objective for this project is for students to create an advertisement in which the character of focus is persuading the audience to buy one of the textual themes discussed over the course of this lesson.

Teacher's Note

At this point, the teacher may consider passing out the assignment sheet to each student in order to cover all elements required. Since this poster will be an advertisement, also consider having a discussion with students about what they know to be typical elements of advertising media.

Provided for this lesson in the attachment is not only a breakdown of what is required for the project, but also a space for each student to plan and reflect by answering questions about theme, character motivation, and language. This is a group project, however each student should turn in their own sheet with the information recorded for each question. On the back of the assignment sheet is a blank space for the group to plan how their visual will appear.

Teacher's Note

Although the requirements for this project are included in the attachment, the teacher should be explicit about the specifics. For example, each advertisement should include at least three direct, cited quotations from the play.

Once the teacher is ready for groups to begin work on their advertisement, provide materials including: Big Post-It paper, markers, and colored pencils.

Students will have the rest of the class period to plan and begin executing their advertisements.

Evaluate

As an evaluative closure to this lesson, return to the essential question: "How do language and character motivation influence thematic aspects of Romeo and Juliet?" See **slide 21** for instructions for this exit ticket. Using notecards, give students five minutes to reflect on what they have learned throughout this lesson, including a reflection of how they now understand specific themes through the lens of a character's use of language and character motivation.

This lesson will conclude with a post-test.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). First turn / last turn. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/50>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Four corners. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/138>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quick write. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1127>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Stop and jot. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/168>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-Pair-Share. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128>
- Shakespeare, W. (1993). *Romeo and Juliet*. Dover Publications.