

Active Shakespeare

Making Shakespeare Accessible

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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	100 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	1-3 class period(s)
Course	British Literature		

Essential Question

How can we connect to archaic language?

Summary

Students will be introduced to Shakespeare's language through a hands-on approach. First, students will read the prologue of "Romeo and Juliet" and translate the text into their own words. Then, students will think of present-day examples of art and media with similar themes to connect with Shakespeare's words in the prologue. By doing so, students will feel more comfortable with Shakespearean language and make real-world connections as they read the play.

Snapshot

Engage

Students complete the first portion of the I Used to Think But Now I Know handout with their initial thoughts on Shakespeare's language. Then, they read dialogue from two scenes of *Romeo and Juliet* while performing actions and complete a reflection about the activity.

Explore

Students choose a handful of words and begin to translate Shakespeare's script into modern terms.

Explain

Students translate the Act 1 prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* into their own words.

Extend

Students list movies, books, or songs with themes that are similar to the themes that the prologue reveals about *Romeo and Juliet*.

Evaluate

Students finish the second portion of the I Used to Think But Now I Know handout and discuss their findings.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

V.4: Students will expand and apply their spoken and reading vocabularies to speak, read, and write effectively.
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.R.3: Use word parts (e.g., affixes, Anglo-Saxon, Greek, and Latin roots, stems) to define and determine the meaning of increasingly complex words.

Attachments

- Act 1 Prologue—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.docx
- Act 1 Prologue—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.pdf
- Act 1 Prologue—Active Shakespeare.docx
- Act 1 Prologue—Active Shakespeare.pdf
- Action Strips—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.docx
- Action Strips—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.pdf
- Action Strips—Active Shakespeare.docx
- Action Strips—Active Shakespeare.pdf
- I Used to Think But Now I Know—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.docx
- I Used to Think But Now I Know—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.pdf
- I Used to Think But Now I Know—Active Shakespeare.docx
- I Used to Think But Now I Know—Active Shakespeare.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Active Shakespeare.pptx
- Reflection—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.docx
- Reflection—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.pdf
- Reflection—Active Shakespeare.docx
- Reflection—Active Shakespeare.pdf
- Scene Scripts—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.docx
- Scene Scripts—Active Shakespeare - Spanish.pdf
- Scene Scripts—Active Shakespeare.docx
- Scene Scripts—Active Shakespeare.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- I Used to Think But Now I Know handout (attached; print one-sided; one per student)
- Action Strips (attached)
- Scene Scripts (attached; print one-sided; one per student)
- Reflection handout (attached; print one-sided; one per student)
- Act 1 Prologue (attached; print one-sided; one per student)
- Brown paper bag or something similar
- Paper
- Pencil or pen

10 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Preparation

Before beginning this lesson, make sure to read through the actions and scripts beforehand. Doing so will make the activity more comfortable. Additionally, complete the following steps:

1. Using the attached **Action Strips**, cut out each of the different actions listed. Fold each action strip and place them into a brown paper bag.
2. Print out a copy of the attached **Scene Scripts** for each student. There are two different scenes, but each student will need their own copy to read with a partner.

Using the attached **Lesson Slides**, introduce students to the essential question on **slide 3** and the lesson objective on **slide 4**.

Display **slide 5**. Have students use the I Used to Think . . . But Now I Know instructional strategy to share their thoughts on Shakespeare's language. Pass out the **I Used to Think But Now I Know** handout or have students prepare a sheet of paper.

For the "I Used to Think" portion of the handout, students should fill in the left-hand column with their current understanding on Shakespeare's language.

Sample Student Responses

Possible responses may include words like "boring" or phrases like "hard to understand." Also, students may list specific works such as *Romeo and Juliet* or even quotes like *Hamlet*'s "To be or not to be."

After students have completed the first half of the I Used to Think . . . But Now I Know handout, ask them to put the paper aside to use later in the lesson.

Display **slide 6**. Next, have students read dialogue from one or two scenes of *Romeo and Juliet* while performing actions.

1. Pair up students and pass out the **Scene Scripts**. Assign each pair one scene to read.
2. Have each pair draw one of the **Action Strips** out of the brown bag.
3. Student pairs should read their assigned scene while performing the action at the same time.
4. After students have completed one round, have them switch roles or scenes and draw again.

Teacher's Note: Lesson Goal

Students should play several rounds so they get a feel for the language. This also will help them realize they can have fun while reading Shakespeare. The end goal here is to debunk the myth that Shakespeare is serious all the time and cannot be fun. The point of the activity is to show students that anyone can appreciate Shakespeare.

To enhance this activity, pass out the attached **Reflection** handout with questions. As students read, ask them the reflection questions to build meaning and expand their understanding of the dialogue. As you read each question, call on a few students to voice their thoughts on the activity. For example, on number 3, you could ask which parts specifically they found funny and why.

At the end of this activity, make sure students hold on to their scripts and take out a sheet of paper to complete the next portion of the lesson.

25 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 7**. Have students start to translate Shakespeare's words from the two scenes into modern terms.

Using their scripts and a sheet of paper, students should choose five words to translate into modern language.

Optional Extension

You may have students choose more words, depending on the amount of time you want to spend on this portion of the lesson. To extend for an entire class period, you may ask them to choose 15–20 words. Alternatively, students may simply highlight the words they wish to look up, then write the definitions in the margins of their scripts.

Have students work in pairs and give them 3–5 minutes to decipher their chosen words without looking them up.

To get them started, you may display **slide 8** and give an example of your own: When Benvolio greets Romeo with "Good morrow, cousin," morrow means morning.

Using the Glossary section of Shakespeareswords.com, have students look up the words and check if they were right. This portion serves as a scaffolding exercise to prepare them to translate the Act 1 prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*. At the end of this activity, have students turn in their scripts with their annotations attached.

Teacher's Note: Technology Considerations

There are a couple of ways this activity can be done. If you are at a school where students have their own iPads or laptops, they may use those devices to check for accuracy. Alternatively, you may have students use their phones to access the website. You also could take the class to the computer lab to complete the activity, or you could pull up the website on the projector and complete the activity as a class.

The goal is for students to engage with the language and build understanding. If you wish, you could assign words that are commonly found in a dictionary. This way, no technology would be necessary, although some student choice would be affected.

30 minutes

Explain

Once students have done some active exploration of Shakespearean language, inform students they will translate the Act 1 prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* into their own words, with you modeling it for the class.

Pass out the attached **Act 1 Prologue** handout to each student. Before you begin the translation, remind students that much of Shakespeare's audience was illiterate, so he included prologues to let his audiences know what to expect in each play. Some students may wonder why the audience gets the entire story right from the beginning, and this explanation will help to clear that up.

Display **slides 9–12** to walk students through the prologue. Alternatively, you can show a physical copy of the Prologue handout using a projector.

As you begin with the first line, "Two households, both alike in dignity," ask students if they have an idea of what this means. The goal here is to facilitate students' efforts to translate Shakespeare's words into their own words, but if they get stuck, you can help them along.

Sample Student Responses

Possible responses for line 1 may be, "There are two families," "Both are alike in status," or "Both families are rich!"

Continue through the prologue. You may consider using SparkNote's "No Fear Shakespeare" to guide you as you help students translate.

Once you have made it through line 14, you may pull up the "No Fear Shakespeare" version and compare for correctness.

You also can ask students if anyone wants to share their version—this is a nice transition into the next portion of the lesson. Make sure students don't put their papers away, as they will use them for the next activity.

Teacher's Note: The Bigger Picture

A helpful tip: Don't always focus on each line individually. You may need to read two or three lines at a time for students to get the gist of what the words mean. Think about lines 5–8, for example: "From forth the fatal loins of these two foes; A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life; Whose misadventured piteous overthrows; Doth with their death bury their parents' strife."

These lines contain enough information that students may need to think about all four lines as a whole before deciphering it. A possible translation may be: "The two enemies had children that fell in love and then killed themselves, which caused the feud to be buried." Students often get stuck on a certain line, so as you model for the class, you can help them power through this particularly tough section.

Optional Pre-AP/AP Adaptation

If students have been familiarized with Shakespeare previously, they may do this activity independently or with a partner.

Extend

Depending on the amount of time needed for translating the prologue, the act of translation may take up the entire class time. If students are ready to go deeper, consider the following extension activity.

Display **slide 13**. Ask students what theme topics are present in the prologue. Possible answers include hate, love, war, money, and parental disapproval. You may refer to students' translations of the prologue to help them make connections about possible themes.

Teacher's Note: Prepare Examples

It's always a good idea to have examples ready before beginning any lesson. Simply looking online and compiling a few examples beforehand could help students if they get stuck on a question.

Then, ask students to think about present-day examples of art and media with themes that are similar to what the prologue reveals about *Romeo and Juliet*. Have students choose five books, movies, or songs with similar themes and list them on the second page of their handout.

Sample Student Responses

A few possible responses may be *Teen Beach Movie*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Twilight*, "Love Story" by Taylor Swift, and many more.

Have students share with an Elbow Partner, then compile a list for the class to see. The goal is for students to make a real-world connection to *Romeo and Juliet*. By seeing how similar events and themes are present in the world around them, students may be more interested in reading the text and connecting with it.

15 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 14**. Have students get out their I Used to Think But Now I Know handouts that they started at the beginning of the lesson and fill in the second column.

This allows students to reflect on what they now know about Shakespeare's language in comparison with their original thoughts. Additionally, it allows you to assess students' progress with the text before you continue through the play.

To conclude the lesson, have a whole-class discussion about how students' thoughts have changed regarding Shakespeare's language. Review how each of them translated Shakespearean words, then an entire prologue, while making real-world connections to an archaic text.

Optional Resource

For more Shakespeare news and scripts, check out www.playshakespeare.com.

Optional Career Connection

Extend students' understanding of career fields in theater with the video *K20 ICAP - Professor of Instruction - Words Before Blows*.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=VXsRzFblGNI

After students watch, have them use the Two Stars and a Wish strategy: ask them to identify two things they liked or learned from the video (stars) and one thing they want to learn more about (wish).

Resources

- Crystal, B., & Crystal, D. (n.d.). *Glossary*. Shakespeare's Words. https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Glossary.aspx
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I used to think . . . but now I know. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/137
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two stars and a wish. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/83
- SparkNotes Editors. (n.d.). *No fear Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet*. SparkNotes. www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/romeojuliet
- Taylor, J. (1610). Chandos portrait of William Shakespeare [Image]. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shakespeare.jpg