

Preparing for Othello: Frontloading Meaning (Part 1)

Pre-Reading Strategies

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Published by *K20 Center*

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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	2- class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	90 minutes
Course	A.P. Literature and Composition, British Literature, World Literature		

Essential Question

(Why) is it important to think about a selection before reading it? How is reading a Shakespeare tragedy an active process/activity that starts before you turn to the first page of the play?

Summary

This two-part lesson includes a variety of pre-reading activities to prepare students to actively read Shakespeare's tragedy, "Othello." Students first rely on prior knowledge as they research Shakespeare as a playwright and his writings in a K-W-L activity. Then, they consider theme statements from the tragedy, ultimately agreeing or disagreeing with opinion statements and providing a rationale via an "Anticipation Guide." Finally, students reflect on the process of participating in pre-reading activities and what they learned about both the playwright and the play itself. This lesson leads into second part, which takes students through even more pre-reading strategies before they dive into the text itself. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 10th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in 9th through 12th grades, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students begin by reflecting on their experiences with pre-reading strategies. Then, using a K-W-L chart, students consider and discuss what they already know and what they want to know, the "K" and "W" columns, regarding Shakespeare and his writings.

Explore

Students research relevant information about Shakespeare and his works, noting new ideas they learned and adding to the "L" column of their K-W-L chart.

Explain

In a Four Corners activity, students consider theme statements relevant to the Shakespeare tragedy "Othello" and collaboratively discuss their opinions and reasons.

Extend

Students complete an Anticipation Guide for "Othello," stating levels of agreement in relation to theme statements and providing a rationale.

Evaluate

Transitioning to the second part of the pre-reading process, students use the Parking Lot strategy to reflect on what they have learned about Shakespeare and "Othello" throughout the lesson's pre-reading activities.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

CLR401: Locate important details in somewhat challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

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.
9.3.W.2: Compose informative essays, reports, or technical writing that:

- objectively introduce and develop topics
- include a defensible thesis
- incorporate evidence (e.g., specific facts, details, charts and graphs, data)
- maintain an organized structure
- use sentence variety and word choice to create clarity and concision
- establish and maintain a formal style
- emulate literary devices from mentor texts

9.6.R.2: Synthesize relevant information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, following ethical and legal citation guidelines.

Attachments

- Anticipation Guide—Preparing for Othello - Frontloading Meaning, Part 1 - Spanish.docx
- Anticipation Guide—Preparing for Othello - Frontloading Meaning, Part 1 - Spanish.pdf
- Anticipation Guide—Preparing for Othello - Frontloading Meaning, Part 1.docx
- Anticipation Guide—Preparing for Othello - Frontloading Meaning, Part 1.pdf
- KWL Chart—Preparing for Othello - Frontloading Meaning, Part 1 - Spanish.docx
- KWL Chart—Preparing for Othello - Frontloading Meaning, Part 1 - Spanish.pdf
- KWL Chart—Preparing for Othello - Frontloading Meaning, Part 1.docx
- KWL Chart—Preparing for Othello - Frontloading Meaning, Part 1.pdf

Materials

- K-W-L chart (attached; one per student)
- Anticipation Guide handout (attached; one per student)
- Computer/Internet access for student research (Laptops, Chromebooks, tablets, smart phones, etc.); alternatively, a variety of relevant books/articles/fact sheets on Shakespeare
- Post-it notes
- Writing materials: paper, pens, pencils, etc.

Engage

To begin this lesson, students will participate in a 2-3 minute Quick Write activity. For this activity, students need only a writing utensil and a piece of paper.

Before posing the prompt to students, inform them that a Quick Write involves 2-3 minutes of continuous writing without regard to grammar, usage, or mechanics; "correctness" is a non-issue. Instead, the goal is for students to get their ideas down on paper.

Once students have an understanding of quick writing, pose this prompt: *"What do you usually do before you read a text? How are pre-reading strategies useful?"* Then, set a timer for 2-3 minutes and allow students to write.

Once time is up, ask students to pair up with an elbow partner and read their responses. After both partners have shared, ask for a few volunteers from the class to share aloud.

Teacher's Note

It could be likely that students do little before reading. They just start reading! If this is the case, ask them what they *could* do before reading. The goal is to get them thinking about pre-reading strategies and if/how they might be useful.

Inform students that this lesson involves pre-reading activities before diving into William Shakespeare's "Othello." Make students aware that the goal of this lesson is to help orient and situate their knowledge and understanding of important aspects of the text.

The first pre-reading strategy involves a K-W-L chart. Distribute a copy of the handout to each student. (See "KWL Chart" under Attachments.)

For the K-W-L activity, students will describe what they know, what they want to know, and (after research) what they learned about Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello."

- Ask students to take a few minutes individually to complete the K column, what they already know about "Othello," encouraging them to rely on prior knowledge and experiences (in and out of school) as they list information they already know.
- If students struggle initially, they could certainly work with a partner to brainstorm what they already know.
- Then, ask students to create a list of questions under the W column, what they want to know. Encourage students to come up with questions that would help them learn more about "Othello." At this point, it would be beneficial to generate a list of these questions on the board. Ask students to share out their questions and add to their lists as you act as scribe.

Teacher's Note

Be sure that, as students move from the K column to the W column, they connect what they want to know to what they already know. As Kylene Beers states, "linking the unknown to the known is crucial" (2003, p. 86).

Differentiation Option

You could add one more column between the W and L columns: an H column that asks students to consider HOW they can find the information they want to know (this column is already mentioned in the linked K-W-H-L instructional strategy guide). If you have multiple types of research/sources, students could complete this column before the begin researching in the next part of the lesson. Consider your students' strengths and challenges and your classroom resources before adding this column.

Explore

- Now, students will conduct informal research in an attempt to answer their questions.
- If technology is available, allow students to search the Internet for pertinent information. If not, consult with your school librarian and locate books, encyclopedia articles, etc., and have those available for students to use. Alternatively, you could research as a whole class, using your own computer to search and locate relevant information while displaying it on the projector.
- (The research portion of this activity will depend on your classroom materials and technology. What matters most is that students are somehow finding information in relation to the questions they asked.)
- As students research, be sure they fill out the L column of their K-W-L chart. If students are researching independently or in groups, float the room to assist as needed.
- This activity should culminate in a whole-class discussion in which students share out what they learned during the research process. Again, compile a list of what students discovered on the board, and ask students to add to their list during the conversation, too.

Teacher's Note

While this activity is not centered on research strategies, it might be helpful to discuss locating reliable sources with students. For instance, it might not be ideal to click the first link from a Google search and get all information from there. In all, you won't want to spend too much time on this activity; students should be able to get some generic information, but they aren't expected to know a plethora of information about "Othello."

At the end of this activity, explain to students that they can refer to their K-W-L charts while reading the play if they need to clarify information.

Explain

Moving from Shakespeare as a playwright to one of his specific works, *Othello*, students will now participate in a Four Corners activity.

This activity requires a bit of prep work. Create four signs with the following labels:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Place one each of the signs in four separate corners of the room. Inform students that each corner represents a different opinion.

Teacher's Note

You can also simply verbalize what each corner represents, but having signs posted results in fewer (or maybe even no) questions about which corner is which. For a hassle-free option, grab four sheets of copy paper, write SA, A, D, and SD on them, and tape them up around the room.

Explain to students that you will read an opinion statement aloud. Once you've read the statement, students are to go to the corner that best represents their own stance. Once in corners, groups should discuss reasons why they feel the way they do. Each corner will then share out their thinking.

Teacher's Note

The rationale discussion, both in groups and as a whole class, is a key part of this activity. Students should be explaining why they feel the way they do. While there is no such thing as a "wrong" answer here, all answers must be justified.

Encourage students to practice active listening and speaking skills during this activity, and let students know they can certainly change corners if a classmate persuades them.

Depending on the amount of time you'd like to spend on this activity, you can select as few or as many of the statements below to use. However, keep in mind that these statements appear on the Anticipation Guide, which is included in the next activity. So, ideally, you will only want to go through two or three rounds of Four Corners so as to not reveal and discuss all of the statements.

- The consequences of jealousy are often destructive to a relationship.
- It can sometimes be difficult to determine the honesty of a friend.
- A person's honesty cannot be determined by his/her physical appearance.
- When a person's reputation has been tainted, it is difficult to regain respect.
- Sometimes parents know what is best for their children.
- A person's love can be gained through material wealth.
- Secondhand information is usually reliable.
- Revenge is sometimes justified.
- Rumors usually stem from some truth.

Teacher's Note

These opinion statements will appear again in the next portion of this lesson, when students complete an Anticipation Guide for *Othello*. The Four Corners activity is designed to get students thinking about thematic issues of the play. Be certain students understand this is not a pro/con argument or a debate. Students are simply voicing their opinions and, more importantly, providing a rationale to explain why they feel the way they do. Students should be open and receptive to a variety of perspectives. This conversation may need to occur before the activity begins.

After a few rounds, ask students to return to their desks in preparation for an extension of this activity: theme statements in an Anticipation Guide.

Differentiation Options

Because groups could get very large in the Four Corners activity, students could respond in a Fold the Line activity. This would allow pairs (instead of larger groups) to discuss their opinions. Students could also respond to one of the questions in writing.

Extend

Transitioning from the Four Corners activity, distribute copies of the **Anticipation Guide** for *Othello* (attached).

Initially, each student will respond to each statement individually by deciding whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree—just like Four Corners.

Allow students a few minutes to go through each statement and note their level of agreement.

Then, number students off 1-10. Each student's number corresponds to that numbered statement. For the number the student receives, that student should provide a written rationale (on the back of the paper, perhaps) justifying why they answered the way they did.

Assuming your class has at least 20 students, ask students to then form pairs/groups with like numbers. They should compare their answers and rationales, making adjustments if necessary but not feeling obligated to change their opinions.

End this section of the lesson with a whole-class discussion where each pair or group gets a minute or so to share out their reactions. Make students aware that these themes will show up in the text, so they should be on the look out for them.

Teacher's Note

During and after reading, ask students to identify where in the reading they found the textual evidence to support their thinking (e.g., page number, paragraph, or line).

Evaluate

To end this lesson, give each student two Post-it notes (different colors if possible).

On one note, have students write down one thing they learned about Shakespeare as a playwright and/or his tragedy, *Othello*.

On another note, have students write down what they learned/thought about pre-reading strategies in general. For this note, pose the essential questions to your students: *(Why) is it important to think about a selection before reading it? How is reading an active process? How is reading a Shakespeare tragedy an active process/activity that starts before you turn to the first page of the play?* Ask students to rely on their original Quick Write from the beginning of the lesson and their experiences during this lesson as they answer. Encourage students to consider if and how their answer now differs from the original Quick Write response.

As students complete their notes, ask them to post their notes on a wall or the door, engaging in the Parking Lot instructional strategy. Let students know you will address these notes at the beginning of the next part of this lesson.

The student's K-W-L chart and Anticipation Guide can serve as formative assessments. Have students turn these in and can check for their understanding of ideas related to Shakespeare and *Othello*. Students can consult their K-W-L charts as they read, and they will revisit their guides after reading the text in its entirety.

Resources

- Anticipation Guide. (2012, February 22). driddleAHS. Othello anticipation guide. 10H Wiki. http://driddle10h.wikispaces.com/file/detail/Othello+Anticipation+Guide.doc
- Beers, K. (2003). When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
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