

Wherefore Art Thou So Difficult, Shakespeare?

Understanding Shakespeare

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Grade Level	9th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	180 minutes
Course	A.P. Language and Composition, A.P. Literature and Composition, British Literature, World Literatur		

Essential Question

How does language change over time?

Summary

While Shakespeare is the king of the British play, Shakespearean language is often difficult for students to understand. In this lesson, students employ music and critical thinking strategies as they learn to better understand the language of the Bard. It would be best to teach this lesson when starting a Shakespearean play.

Snapshot

Engage

Students listen to a Medieval interpretation of a popular song.

Explore

Students compare and contrast the lyrics between the interpretation and the actual song.

Explain

Students Why-Light portions of Shakespeare's plays for areas of difficulty in understanding.

Extend

Students "translate" their highlighted text into modern language.

Evaluate

Students create Blackout Poetry to highlight the key meaning of their script passages.

Standards

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

CLR404: Paraphrase some statements as they are used in somewhat challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.3.R.7: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics, using textual evidence to support their claims and inferences.
9.4.W.2: Select language to create a specific effect in writing according to purpose and audience.

Attachments

- Jolene-Lyric-Comparison-Teacher-s-Notes-Wherefore-Art-Thou-1.pdf
- Jolene-Lyric-Comparison-Teacher-s-Notes-Wherefore-Art-Thou.docx
- Jolene-Lyric-Comparison-Wherefore-Art-Thou - Spanish.docx
- Jolene-Lyric-Comparison-Wherefore-Art-Thou-1.pdf
- Jolene-Lyric-Comparison-Wherefore-Art-Thou.docx
- Julius-Caesar-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou - Spanish.docx
- Julius-Caesar-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou-1.pdf
- Julius-Caesar-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou.docx
- Lesson-Slides-Wherefore-Art-Thou.pptx
- Macbeth-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou - Spanish.docx
- Macbeth-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou-1.pdf
- Macbeth-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou.docx
- Romeo-and-Juliet-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou - Spanish.docx
- Romeo-and-Juliet-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou-1.pdf
- Romeo-and-Juliet-Handout-Wherefore-Art-Thou.docx

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Paper
- Pen/pencils
- Jolene Lyric Comparison handout (attached, one per student)
- Jolene Lyric Comparison Teacher's Notes (attached, one copy)
- Julius Caesar Handout, Macbeth Handout, or Romeo and Juliet Handout (attached, enough copies to give each student one of the four numbered pages from the handout you choose plus extra copies as needed for Why-Lighting and Blackout Poetry)
- Highlighters
- Sharpies
- Speaker

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Standards

While this lesson is currently aligned to ninth grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in any grade that covers Shakespeare. The standards can be realigned accordingly. This lesson could also work for understanding Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Display **slide 2.** Cue the Bardcore video as students enter the classroom, but don't let them see it—they will be listening to the audio only. Explain to students that they will be listening to a popular Medieval ballad, and then play the video.

Embedded video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugqQlB5fpuc

After students finish listening, some might realize that the song is not actually a "Medieval ballad." Ask for student responses about the song and give them time to share out.

Teacher's Note: Dolly Parton's "Jolene"

If you or your students are unfamiliar with the original version of the song, consider viewing the video below, which is also included on **slide 3**.

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

Ask students to consider this question: "If you had never heard this song before in any form, would you have found it difficult to understand all of the lyrics?" Allow students time to respond.

Show **slide 5** to share the essential question for the lesson and **slide 6** to share the lesson objectives.

Explore

Give students a copy of the **Jolene Lyric Comparison** handout with the medieval and original versions of the song lyrics side by side. Display **slide 7** to share the instructions for a Stop and Jot activity using these lyrics.

Students will begin by working on their own to mark the areas of the lyrics that changed between the original and the Medieval version.

Display **slide 8** and ask students to work with an Elbow Partner to note any trends in the translations that they notice. Ask partners to also write down any areas of translation that seem familiar.

Sample Response

Refer to the **Jolene Lyric Comparison Teacher's Notes** for an example of what students might identify as they analyze their comparisons.

Ask pairs to share what they have noted and identified in their comparisons.

Display **slide 9.** Ask students: "If you were reading a passage only in Middle English or Shakespeare's English, how would you work out what was being said?"

Give students time to consider their answers individually and discuss with a partner. Allow time for student responses.

Explain

Display **slide 10**. Assign students numbers 1-4 and have them form groups according to their numbers. Using the handouts for your selected play (**Julius Caesar**, **Macbeth**, or **Romeo and Juliet**), give each student a copy of the passage that corresponds to their number. (Students in the same group should all have the same passage.)

Teacher's Note: Extra Copies?

Consider printing extra copies of the handout if you want students to have clean copies for Why-Lighting, translations, and Blackout Poetry. You can also have students reuse the same copy for multiple activities.

Differentiation Opportunity

Each set of handouts includes one shorter passage to support differentiated instruction.

Working individually, students will use Why-Lighting to call out areas of their passage that they find to be particularly difficult to understand or areas that contain words they have never seen before. As students highlight areas, ask them to make notes in the margins to hypothesize what they think these words might mean.

When students have finished, have them discuss with their groups what they highlighted and what the phrases and words they selected might mean.

Teacher's Note: Listen and Guide

While the groups discuss, walk around the room to listen. If students are too far off course from the actual meaning of the text, make suggestions to help steer them in the right direction. Encourage students to use inferencing skills as they work through their passages.

Extend

Display **slide 11** and ask students to form new groups, where one student with each passage 1-4 is represented.

Give students time to work together and use contextual clues, inferences, and dictionaries or thesauruses to "translate" their excerpts into student-friendly language.

When they are finished translating, ask students to reconsider the essential question, "How does language change over time?" Give students an opportunity to share their thoughts with the class.

Teacher's Note: Online Resources

If students use online resources, they should proceed with caution. There are a multitude of "Medieval language translators" available online, but not all of them are reliable sources.

Once students have finished translating their passages display **slide 12**. Ask them to read their translations in passage order within their groups. Reading these translations aloud will give students a chance to "hear" whether their translations are correct. If students read through their passages and parts of their translations do not make sense, encourage them to go back and re-translate these portions.

Evaluate

After students have translated their passage to modern English, have them compare their translation with the original passage.

Display **slide 13** and pass out black markers. Have students create Blackout Poetry that summarizes the gist of their passage.

Optional Tech Integration: Highlighting in Google Docs or Microsoft Word

To save paper, consider providing students with a digital copy of their passage and having them use the highlighter tool in Google Docs or Microsoft Word. Students will need to change the highlighter color to black, and then highlight the portions of the text that they want to black out.

Students can turn in their translation and Blackout Poetry for evaluation. Consider displaying students' poetry in the classroom or hallway or finding another way to share it.

Resources

- BBC. (2014, June 29). Dolly Parton performs Jolene at Glastonbury - BBC [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwBNBcFAFso
- Buaidh. (2016). File: William Shakespeare sq.jpg [Image]. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Shakespeare_sq.jpg
- Hildegard von Blingin'. (2020, July 9). Jolene, By Dolly Parton (Bardcore/Medieval style) [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugqQlB5fpuc
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Blackout Poetry. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/84
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow Partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Stop and Jot. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/168
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- Paradigm Education, LLC. (2019). My Shakespeare. https://myshakespeare.com/