



Shakespeare on the Cell Phone: Texting Romance

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2BONT2B? That is the question. This message is better known as, "To be or not to be"; from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, written around 1600. It is considered to be one of the most famous quotations in world literature and the best known of this play. The form of language, 2BONT2B is better known as text messaging, or instant messaging. On any given day, or place, one can see children with their cell phones sending messages. The messages could be, Can you meet me? What day is our math test? As we witness this transformation, we know that there are and have been many types of communication: talking on the phone, writing a letter, talking one on one, twittering, signing, blogging or emailing on a computer.

But what does that have to do with Shakespeare? Presently, text messaging has become a worldwide form of communication for our students. Teachers need to embrace this new form of technology. In what better way can a teacher bring the words of Shakespeare and the tech-language of 21st century learners together than through an aspect of life that begins to preoccupy many students by the sixth grade—romance in the lives of young people? This unit is called "Shakespeare on the Cell Phone: Texting Romance".

When reading and discussing *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, the sixth grade students have the opportunity to be introduced to Shakespeare. At Alice Fong Yu, the students learn Chinese as a first language. The language that is used is Cantonese with eight tones. As the students are educated in reading, writing and the speaking of Cantonese, they are also at the same time learning English. This unit also gives the students the opportunity to use the visual arts to apply their understanding and comprehension of the plays. The main purpose of the unit is to strengthen student's comfort level reading Shakespeare as well as to enhance their skills and confidence in writing essays with good sentence structure, learning the elements of a story, word usage, and reading comprehension through text messaging.

(Developed for Language Arts, grade 6; recommended for Language Arts, grades 5-8)

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