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## **Shakespeare on the Cell Phone: Texting Romance**

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### **Introduction**

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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 the 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. But what does that have to do with Shakespeare? Text messaging has become a worldwide form of communication for our students. 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. In view of this transformation of communication, 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learners together but 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".

### **Overview**

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After twenty-five years away from Shakespeare, I have reignited my curiosity, determination, creativity, and desire to understand the humor and tragedy within Shakespeare's plays through the topic of communication. In order for my students, as well as myself, to be motivated and connected to Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream, I have designed a unit that sees these plays as studies of the problems and media of communication.

Keeping this in mind, I note a recent statement in a publication of the San Francisco Unified School District strategic plan which is called, "Beyond the Talk: Taking Action to Educate Every Child Now". In a statement, by Superintendent Carlos Garcia, he said, "The San Francisco Unified School District sees the achievement gap as the greatest social justice/civil rights issue facing our country today, there cannot be justice for all without

closing the gap". Within this plan, there are three goals:

- Access and Equity-making Social Justice a reality.
- Student Achievement-engage high achieving and joyful learners.
- Accountability-keep our promises to the students and families.

As a sixth grade teacher at Alice Fong Yu K-8, Chinese Immersion School, with twenty-two years of experience, one who teaches Language Arts, Earth Science, and Social Studies to sixty students, how do I plan to attempt to meet the goals of my student and school by teaching this unit? First of all, with the guidance of Paul Fry, I will target the two plays of Shakespeare and discuss the plight of the young lovers in each as a set of communication problems. The nine-week unit will include Technology, Art, English, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts. Within this integrated unit the students will learn about Shakespeare and his plays through a wide variety of project-based learning embedded with technology, literary circles, self-guided lessons and a scaffolded writer's workshop.

The student populations that attend schools in San Francisco are diverse in academics, economics, and languages, and ethnicities— which include Chinese, African American, Filipino, Vietnamese, Japanese, Latino, Korean, American Indian, Russian, and Caucasian. Even though many students may have been born and raised in San Francisco, the families tend to remain in their neighborhoods, thus never experiencing the cultural opportunities offered by the arts, from the museums, to the plays, to the opera. Within my school community, Ms. Szeto, the principal, has formed partnerships with the DeYoung Museum, Palace of Fine Arts, Asian Art Museum, and San Francisco Opera, to give our students the opportunity to be introduced to and experience the arts. These experiences offer a different means of educating the students.

The students that attend Alice Fong Yu K-8 Chinese Immersion learn Cantonese as a first language and Mandarin in the Middle School. To the outside world, this school is the first Chinese Immersion School in the nation, but many people are not clear what Immersion means. The students—African American, Latino, Pacific Islanders, Chinese, and Caucasian—attend this program without the ability to read, speak, and write in Cantonese and Mandarin.

The students that attend the elementary division develop a competency in the Cantonese language and use the two languages to actively and successfully access the California State curriculum. As entering elementary students, they learn to read, write, and speak Cantonese through the curriculum. On the first day a student enters kindergarten the student experiences 90% of the day in Cantonese, with only 10% is in English. The California State curriculum is taught primarily in Chinese during grades K-3, with an increase in English instructional time during the Fourth and Fifth grades. As the students move through the grade levels, the amount of time allotted to Cantonese decreases without sacrificing the format in which the immersion program has been successful. The Alice Fong Yu students can effectively communicate and are literate in both English and Cantonese by the Fifth grade. When the students enter the Sixth grade, they continue to learn Language Arts and Social Studies in English, whereas this is the first time that the students have had Science in English. I have the flexibility to teach in a block schedule, which is about 110 minutes long, and allows depth and detail in the curriculum. Language Arts in sixth grade are on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The Chinese component in Sixth grade includes Math, and Language Arts taught in Cantonese. Keeping that in mind, the students receive an additional language, Mandarin, which means that they are learning to grasp three languages at one time. The fortunate part of this process is that Mandarin has four tones, whereas Cantonese has eight tones, but they both use the same characters that the students have been learning since kindergarten. The daunting part for the students is that the English alphabet has twenty-six characters,

whereas the Chinese language has over 3,000 characters.

Current conditions at our school show that our students are achieving at a high level academically, with the 2008 (API) giving us a 948 Academic Performance Index, and a ranking of a 10—compared to other schools with the same criteria— by the State of California Department of Education, thus demonstrating to our school community and our school district that our program is meeting at least two of the goals set forth by our superintendent. Our African American students have met and exceeded the targeted district scores, but compared to their peers within our community, are lacking in some areas of Language Arts and Math.

Bringing Shakespeare into the mix with a connection to everyday life has many advantages. Just for example, Romeo and Juliet are young adults, or teenagers, whose parents do not want them to associate with each other. At one time or another, a child has gone through the same issue, being forbidden to play with a child of another ethnicity, economical background, or gender. These common connections make the play relevant to the students.

In many classes across the United States, technology at times becomes the ultimate carrot for students, but should it seem so special? It should be an automatic part of the curriculum. As I know from past experiences in my classroom, technology enables the student take on an active role rather than a passive role. At times they become the facilitator, and I become the student. That process alone can be quite empowering for the student who does not play with anyone at lunch, or goes home right after school without participating in a sport.

As with many schools, at Alice Fong Yu there are tremendous roadblocks facing a project like this: using cell phones for text messaging, twitter, You Tube and Facebook, are considered off limits. It states in the SFUSD School Handbook: "no cell phones", and many websites and social networks are unavailable. One would have to have a conversation with the superintendent, the parents, and the SFUSD School Board to allow the introduction of text messaging to the classroom. But if that is not to be, there are ways around this ban. For one, (IMS) instant messaging: many students have their own email account and are presently instant messaging each other. Another way around this would be to include a blog on my school loop website that students could interact with. Another concern is with the language of text messaging. Presently online there are a variety of lists that prescribe a common language for texting. Designing an appropriate list of terminology will be essential in this unit, to be shared with the parents, to whom it will also be necessary to explain why communication today and communication in Shakespeare can be mutually illuminating.

## Objective

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The goal of this unit is to strengthen student comfort level reading Shakespeare as well to enhance their skills and confidence in writing essays and learning sentence structure, together with elements of a story, word usage, and reading comprehension. The other focus is to realize and demonstrate that the communication of language comes in many formats. What do we identify as communication? What is sometimes lost in translation? Using technology for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners will enhance and provide motivation for students to be active participants. Guidelines for students to use technology will be introduced to facilitate technology-based curriculum. The students will have the opportunity to read and discuss Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream, using various strategies from a Literary Circle to enhance their comprehension of the plays. Within the unit, the students will participate in project based art units. The projects will give the students the

opportunity to see the application of content to an abstract art piece. Along that path, this unit will help the students to develop and write a compare and contrast essay using the two plays of Shakespeare. Then the students will read a novel, *The Wednesday Wars*, by Gary Schmidt and integrate a literacy circle approach to demonstrate various strategies aligned to comprehension and writing. This piece of literature demonstrates the timeless relevance of Shakespeare's words to adolescence, as well as the uproar of the Vietnam War. Last but not least, the students will participate in a station driven unit on all of the content areas that are taught in sixth grade, with a connection to Shakespeare and the plays that were used in the classroom.

## Strategies for across-the-curriculum teaching

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### Literary Circles

When setting up a literary circle, one needs to first address the student makeup within a group. Some teachers prefer to have the students identified homogeneously, while others prefer to have their students mixed heterogeneously and other teachers like to give the student the choice of literature and group members. Personally, I set up five groups with six students, and I prefer heterogeneous grouping. I divide up the groups by using standardized testing as well as some informal testing. Each group decides on a group name, along with a color for the Literary Circle Booklets. Monday is the day I assign a reading in their book, usually Chapter 1 to 2. But when reading Shakespeare, I may read Act I, Scene 1 in class, then assign for homework Scene 2. Using the strategies for generating words and questions, they will be scaffolded into their literary circles. Each student receives a journal entry form, to summarize, as well as an evaluation sheet. Each Monday, the students select a job (discussion director, artful artist, passage picker) that they will do in relationship to the play. The students meet back on Wednesday, and share their jobs. On Friday, the students may do a project-based activity in their group, or they may choose to work independent from their group. The students rotate their jobs, and they share jobs within their group. These jobs enable the student to connect their reading comprehension and writing to the plays. It also enables the student to enjoy interacting with literature.

### Generating Words and Questions through Literature

Over the years, I have been using the book *Strategies at Work*, which demonstrates great strategies or what I would call best practices that are aligned for ELL (English Language Learners) students. As the student reads say Act I, in *Romeo and Juliet*, I would have the reader write all the unfamiliar words on a yellow post-it. Along with that task, I would have the student use a blue post-it to generate questions he or she may have. When the student meets with his or her group of five other students, each would share their words and questions. Using guided "Word-Question" form, the students would list the words and questions that they have in common. Along with that, they would try to clarify words and questions they did not have alike. The students would give the "Word-Question" form from each of the six groups to the teacher; these forms would guide the discussion of vocabulary for the day. In addition, these strategies would enable a student to write a summary for the Act that they had just read. The words are placed on the "Word Bank" wall to be used during the school year. This strategy enables students to use context clues to enhance their vocabulary and reading comprehension.

## **Management of Technology**

Using laptops in the classroom needs to be addressed in two areas. The first strategy concerns equity. For some schools, a mobile lab is not feasible. The school may already have a computer lab at which the teacher would need to sign up to schedule a class. The second is in the overall management of using laptops or even using a computer lab. Some suggestions that I have are associated with keeping track of which student used which laptop or computer. Always use the student's textbook number that he or she was assigned in the beginning of the school year. This way, if an incident arises, you as the teacher can manage the situation with the student that was assigned to the computer.

When passing out the computer to the student, look it over to see if it has been left on or damaged by previous users. This prevents any misunderstandings between the facilitator and the student. I like to give out a guided check off sheet that the teacher and the student sign. When using laptops, it is a good idea to have a LCD projector set up so the students can follow the teacher's lesson.

After using the laptop, or computer, make sure that it is turned off. Make sure that the students dump any trash. If the student needs to start a file, label it with their initials and textbook number, which were previously assigned. If they are using a junk drive, make sure that the student correctly discharges the drive. I have the students return the laptop, with the guided check off sheet, to sign off.

The second area of concern when using laptops with Sixth grade students is whether they are PC users or Apple users. Really there is no difference, but I do still find students who struggle with the computer. If the student does not have an email account, I contact the parent to see if they will let their child have one, and explain how to monitor it. For my Non-English speaking parents, I have at times had to guide both children and parents to set up an email account.

The third area is dealing with ipods. We use ipods at our school to help with the languages. Again, this item is addressed in the SFUSD handbook, but we send a release form home telling the parents why we will be using the ipod. The Chinese teachers in Cantonese and Mandarin make audio for the students to practice their tones. I am planning to have the students download, free of charge, "Shakespeare". This will give the students an opportunity to listen to various plays they may become interested in that may not be addressed in the class. To maximize the use of ipods, I plan to use an assessment tool that will be used for a writing reflection piece.

## **Introducing Technology**

Knowing that I am going to embed technology with this unit, I should not assume anything. The first strategy is to send a letter home, as well as a survey to the parents, to introduce the concepts and outcomes I see for the students. I am going to go over this approach with the staff at Alice Fong Yu. At one of the staff meetings, I'll explain the unit, the goals and outcome, and I would ask my colleagues how tech savvy they truly are. This process could be informal, or even done in a manner that enables me to collect information through a survey. With that in mind, I to am going to give a survey to the students. With this information, I will have a base line to design the technology component of the unit.

The strategy to move forward is to write the following on the board: WTIL (What time is lunch?)—followed by guided questions to set the tone of either instant messaging (IMS), or text messaging. I am going to use the following questions:

- What am I saying?
- Why did I write this in this format?
- Is this a form of communication?
- Do you use this type of format with others?
- In what ways do you use it?

Then I would give the students a copy of the Text Messaging Chart (Appendix D). This chart demonstrates common types of symbols of text messaging and the meanings. As the students work with their neighbors, they will identify the familiar text, I would then have the students generate other texts that are known to them, but are not on the chart. Through a whole group discussion, I would lead the students to the following text message from the quote from Juliet, (II, ii, line) O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? ORRW4ATR. Through this discussion, and strategy I would introduce Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream to the class.

### **Elements of Writing**

When using the San Francisco Unified School District's Middle School Writer's Workshop, one finds a wealth of knowledge, clarity, and strategies to develop writers. The program breaks down the various parts of an essay by using graphic organizers that are aligned to various types of essays, from sentence structure, to topic sentences, to identifying and developing evidence. The writer's workshop brings depth to writing a narrative essay, persuasive essay, expository essay, poem, or even a letter. Along with formal writing, the students will also do quick writes, exit responses, journal writing, and short summaries. When writing either formally or informally, using a connection to everyday experiences enables the student to feel motivated and empowered. For example, we all know how frustrating it is when a message fails to reach its destination, as when Friar Lawrence's message fails to reach Romeo.

One of the strategies in writing I am going to introduce to the students is a persuasive essay. Connecting the topic of technology, I will have the students write a persuasive letter to the San Francisco Unified School District Board of Education about the practices of using cell phones, ipods, and laptops for educational experience. Using a guided lesson plan, the students would brainstorm in a pair-share about which technology they would like to address in the letter. Then within their group, the whole group could discuss the type of technology that they want to address, using the strategies, and write the essay.

The second strategy includes the following terminology; elements of a story, setting, plot, character, theme, metaphor, pun, climax, conflict, and simile. The terminology will be scaffolded in through the literary circles and the writer's workshop. Shakespeare's plays are full of puns. One strategy I want to teach is, what is a pun? I plan to address this question through everyday puns, for example the word lettuce (let us), or when it rains it pours, and then within the plays have the students identify examples of puns. I think this strategy of connection of text to everyday will be beneficial in comprehension of various parts of the plays.

### **Classroom Management**

Reflecting on station driven curriculum, there are factors that need to be addressed. The first of course is classroom management. As the facilitator, do you have a structure? What are your expectations? The personnel in the facilitator's class also need to be considered. Honestly, there are times when no matter how the teacher tries to train the students to work independently, as well move within a classroom, it just does not work. There is also the time frame of the curriculum to consider. As a teacher who has a block schedule, I have found that using station driven activities, computers, and labs has been successful for the students. This

teaching strategy fosters independence and leadership, while giving the teacher more flexibility to interact with the students.

## **Art**

The cost, organization, and promotion of creativity in art assignments can be daunting. The two art activities that are designed for this unit can be done in two different ways. First, the I Own This Word-Glove could be part of the Shakespeare Station Unit. This art activity is designed to be inexpensive. The strategy is to use recyclable items found in everyday life and incorporate a word, for example—from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—the word vile. This word appears numerous times in the play. The student would use various means of research from the internet, the dictionary, and the play to design the glove.

The second art piece, a mask, could be also done as a station within the Shakespeare unit. Using clay and having a kiln may not be feasible for you. I also have an art consultant who works closely with me to help integrate art into the curriculum. She and I design and trouble shoot, prior to the students actually making an item out of clay. When working with clay, we demonstrate to the students the proper way to add pieces of clay so the item does not get destroyed in the kiln. Last but not least, masks could be made out of materials other than clay.

Keeping that all in mind, the opportunity to include the historical connection of Peking or Beijing Opera would be beneficial to the community in which I teach. (In this upcoming school year I have formed a partnership with Cal Shakes and the San Francisco Opera Guild.) Changing faces is a difficult technique in operatic performance. It is considered to be a stunt that can only be mastered after extensive training. Face changing is also a special technique used to exaggerate inner feelings of characters, portray their dispositions, set off the atmosphere and improve effects. Facial changes expressing sudden changes in a character's feelings are done in the four main characters, and students could learn a great deal from this experience about creating their own masks.

## **English Language Learners**

There are many strategies used in the classroom to guide English Language Learners through literature. The most powerful are the literary circles, strategies aligned to the context clue for words, and questions from within the plays. Using the jigsaw vocabulary game, pair-share, prediction matrix, and collaborative poster are just a few more great strategies that can enhance the comprehension and writing of the English Language Learners. Having the technology component from laptops, instant messaging (IMS), and text messaging will enable many English Language Learners to feel that they are on the same playing field.

## **Shakespeare Overview: Theme to be taught**

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### **Communication**

Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process requires a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating. In today's world students identify communication as text messaging, email, twitter, face book, instant messaging, or by a blog.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, if Friar Lawrence's emissary (V, ii) were to have used a text message rather than a fallible person, suppose the message were still to prove unintelligible because it was badly or ambiguously written? Suppose there was no AT&T service at its destination? Maybe Romeo receives a text from Juliet while he is dueling with Tybalt, answers it, and is still killed?

When parents so no, and in this case when the two families forbid Romeo's and Juliet's relationship, the young still ignore their families and follow their hearts. That premise is not lost today: love will conquer all. After they elope, does Juliet try to persuade her family that they are wrong about Romeo—that he is not the enemy—through a long email?

Common sense might indicate that the plays of William Shakespeare would be the last literary resource for English language learners, especially for 6th grade students attempting to make the transition from Chinese. In Chinese there are over 3,000 characters that students need to master, with different tones, and a unique grammatical system. Yet even though most native speakers of English themselves face enormous obstacles in the comprehension of 400 year-old texts in a world where word meanings evolve from one day to the next, many features of the lines offer unique and pertinent insights that can help these very students with the formidable obstacles of their second language adoption.

Finally, close interaction with Shakespeare's text, written originally in longhand with quill pens, will allow students who either now are or (depending on the structures existing at home) poised to become speed-of-light communicators via texting, twittering and whatever will be coming down the pike that their relatively elderly classroom teachers can't foresee, will provide marvelous opportunities to both study and build skills in effective communication. Youngsters can observe the depth of the philosophical question posed in Juliet's poignant and succinct question: "What's in a name?" and the poignant and humorous suggestion that the entire plot would change had she had access to a cellphone whereby she could have informed Romeo that she was "Fak'n death."

### *Connection*

It is a relationship or association between things, events, or a person who is influential and to whom you are connected in some way (as by family or friendship).

When Romeo proposes that he and Juliet start a new life in a new city together, displacing her from her family, culture, and the economic security that she has known all her life, it is much like an immigrant family that comes from a village in China, to start a new life in San Francisco, in past cases leaving a daughter behind in China and deciding to bring the son to experience the American dream. Juliet comes from an aristocratic family, and purposes now to start over, with no connection to family or familiar culture. Could she have survived? Would she have missed her lifestyle so much that she would have deserted Romeo? From the play, we see that she was a down to earth individual, suggesting that she may not have had any difficulty in starting anew.

Another connection that is quite apparent is that Tybalt is what we would call today a school bully. In the play he is constantly taunting Romeo. Numerous times, Romeo tries to walk away to no avail, but during one of these confrontations, suppose Romeo had received a text message to meet Juliet?

When considering the connection of the attitude of authority to youthful behavior in general, these lines from Act II, Scene II, 33-36, in *Romeo and Juliet* jump out:



O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name, Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Not only do these lines demonstrate an outward form of disobedience, but also demonstrate that feeling that "I" would do anything to be with "you", including die for you. The forbidden love.

## **Love/Romance**

It is an intense feeling of tender affection, admiration, devotion, and compassion. It tends to be described as a strong love affair, with emotional attachment. Clearly, it requires both communication and connection.

In the beginning of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo first fancies Rosaline the niece of Capulet, and goes to a party he was not invited to attend. In everyday life, we hear of students crashing a party that they were not invited to attend. What if Romeo had texted Rosaline to meet him and he never went into the event? Would he have had another opportunity to see Juliet?

In A Midsummer Night's Dream, the wilderness scenes involve four young lovers. What if two or all of the young lovers had cell phones? Would they find each other? Would their messages go astray or be misinterpreted? Would they get the messages but ignore them because they'd suddenly fallen in love with someone else? Puck with his love-in-idleness, circling the globe in forty minutes, could be understood as the spirit of bad communication, as in the email romance of Governor Sanford, "Ur so hot". He demonstrated this when he placed the drops on Lysander's eyes instead of Demetrius's. Who's to say that he could even have the ability to use text messaging? In short, what does it take to communicate a good message? It truly takes skill in using words, including words in the languages of people who are different from us, but in addition to that it takes honest and steadfast intentions.

## **Character**

The definitions of character are the attributes, traits, and abilities of a person. Students, identify character through appearance, challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and major accomplishments. Throughout Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream, we can clearly identify internal and external conflicts. One great example from Romeo and Juliet is with the families, the Montagues and Capulets, who have a standing feud, yet their children have a chance encounter and fall in love. In Act 1 Scene 5, we are introduced to their first encounter, when Juliet has a conversation with her nurse:

Nurse: His name is Romeo, and a Montague, The only son of your great enemy.  
Juliet: (aside) My only love sprung from my only hate! Too early seen unknown, and known too late! Prodigious birth of love it is to me, That I must love a loathed enemy. [I.v.138-140]

Thus, Romeo and Juliet wanting to be together, but defying their families' feud,] make decisions that seal their fates. Another area in which Shakespeare demonstrates character is the exploration of motive. In these lines from A Midsummer Night's Dream, we clearly see this exhibited:

Oberon: (he squeezes flower juice on Titania's eyelids) What thou seest when thou dost wake, Do it for they true love take. Love and languish for his sake. Be it ounce or cat or bear, Pard or boar with bristled hair, In thy eye that shall appear, When thou wakest, it is they dear. Wake when some vile thing is near.

[II.ii.33-40]

Oberian seeks to punish Titania's lack of obedience, by asking Puck to help him apply a magic juice on her eyelids while she sleeps. When Titania is awakened, she falls in love with the first creature she sees, which turns out to be Nick Bottom, who has had a spell placed on him to make his head look like a donkey's.

In the classroom, at times, students demonstrate this lack of control, and it can be measured by a moment of poor judgment—whether it is in a note, a whisper, or an email that lashes out a person or an event.

## Classroom Activities

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### Literary Circles

One area I plan to integrate into my unit on "Shakespeare on the Cell Phone: Texting Romance", is through a Literary Circle, using the novel *The Wednesday Wars*, by Gary Schmidt. This novel will enable me to use it as a springboard into the study of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Each nine weeks the students read a novel, which is integrated and connected to everyday life. It demonstrates the elements of a story, it gives the students an opportunity to analyze, identify and demonstrate word usage through context clues, and last but not least to exhibit comprehension. This book demonstrates the timeless wisdom of Shakespeare's words, with adolescence as well as the connection to the uproar of the Vietnam War. Throughout the novel, Schmidt references various Shakespeare plays. The various connections will help bridge the entrance into *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Each class of thirty students will be divided into five groups with six students. The reading level is heterogeneously derived from the student's reading comprehension scores from the California State Assessment Tests as well from an informal assessment. Each student receives a booklet that includes a summary sheet, vocabulary guide, and evaluation, as well as a job. These jobs are separated out by groups, which would include, a discussion director, a passage picker, connector, vocabulary enricher, literary luminator, artful adventurer, travel chaser, word wizard, and others. Over a period of time, the students will have participated in every job.

On Mondays, the students are assigned to read two chapters at a time, identify vocabulary words that are unfamiliar to them, and on a post-it generate any questions they may have on their assigned reading. Along with the reading, they are to summarize the chapters, and do the job that they have selected.

When Wednesday arrives, the students meet with their assigned literary circles, which are named for a character in one of Shakespeare's plays. Within the circle, they share their questions, and vocabulary words that may have caused uncertainty. Then they generate the questions and vocabulary that they are unable to address on a guided reading form, and give this sheet to the teacher. From that point the discussion director for the day leads his or her group through the various jobs. From that point, the class moves from small group setting to a whole group setting, where the teacher begins to use the guided reading form to lead a whole group discussion. As this process evolves, the students will be constantly looking at vocabulary, using context clues to help them. At the end of the two-hour block, the student has an evaluation sheet that identifies their strengths and weaknesses in a small and a large group setting. The evaluation form also has a place for the

teacher to evaluate the student's work, and participation for that given day.

As the students move into reading *Romeo and Juliet* as well as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, they will follow the format for a Literary Circle. The repetition as well as the comfort zone over time has resulted in engaged students.

### **Stations on Shakespeare through content areas**

The second concentration of this unit will be a station driven unit on Shakespeare. These stations will include Language Arts, Social Studies, Technology, Art, Drama, and Science. For many of the sixth grade students in my class, this will be their first opportunity to be introduced to Shakespeare. Since I teach three content areas, this is my opportunity to integrate the depth of content I received through my seminar on Shakespeare and Human Character, by Paul Fry. Some of the stations are designed to be individual, paired, or whole group interaction.

One area that the students will be focusing in on is, who was William Shakespeare? Station-A will give the students the opportunity to use resource books, laptops, and children's books to generate facts about the person, and his life in relationship to his plays. At this station the students will design a timeline of William Shakespeare's life. The timeline will include dates, visuals and synopsis of key dates and events. This station will also give the students the opportunity to look at the concept of character.

Then the group would rotate to Station B, Social Studies. This station will have an emphasis on geography and government. The plays were written during a period of time called the Renaissance, yet some plays reflect another period of time that the sixth grade students study, which is Ancient Rome, and Greece. Using maps pertinent to the various plays, the students are going to identify the places of interest with the literature. The second part of this station will be to identify the differences among monarchy, feudalism, democracy, dictatorship, and tyranny. The students are going to use this terminology, and illustrate the words in drawings. Last, the students are going to design their own coat of arms. The students will be given examples of various coats of arms. The student will be given a pocket that is used in the back of library books to decorate. They will be given an opportunity to discuss with their families any key factors that they would like to include in their own personal coat of arms.

Station C will be associated with technology. At this station, using the computers' already bookmarked sites about Shakespeare, the students will be doing a scavenger hunt. On this guided sheet they will also make connections to the author of *Wednesday Wars*, Gary Schmidt. Along with the computers, the students will use their ipods to learn how to download Shakespeare. This opportunity would allow students to use this device as another learning tool in Shakespeare. Last but not least, the students will have more practice time to work on IMS as well as text-messaging activities to enhance the academic relationship of Shakespeare to technology.

Station D, Character and Lines, will be associated with a variety of lines from various plays of Shakespeare. There are pre-typed lines of Shakespeare. The group will use a piece of butcher paper, and have one of the students lie on the paper to be outlined. The purpose of this station is to analyze the lines of a main character of one the plays using the following; thought, action, heart, etc. The lines that the group receives will be placed on one of the main characters of the play, as outlined on the butcher paper. The character analysis of the lines will be revisited as we read and discuss the plays. The students will have the opportunity to revisit and readjust their placement of the lines. The characters and lines will be placed on the walls in the multipurpose building for our "Shakespeare in a Pocket" day.

Station E, Theater, will focus on theater in relationship to Shakespeare and the Peking Opera. The students will focus on various parts of what makes each of these programs unique, along with the ability to compare and contrast. The students will be able to identify the various characters of the Peking Opera that are alike or different from the characters in the Shakespeare plays.

At Station F, the students will focus on various forms of communication. The activities will include body language, role-playing through voice, and text messaging. The students will select an actor or actress from the play that we are focusing on. They will use familiar snippets from everyday conversation to incorporate all of the above practices.

Station G, Science, will include topics that are dealt within the plays of Shakespeare—such as epidemics, overdose, and environment. Using various resources the students will select one of these topics that are related to the plays that we are reading in class or to the time frame in which Shakespeare lived. The students will use the information they have been gathering in their interactive notebook to write a poem incorporating Shakespeare and science.

### **Art with Shakespeare**

The third area of concentration will be entirely focused on the visual arts. The first piece of art is aligned to a glove and the origin of a word. William Shakespeare's father was a master glover and tanner. In many of the plays the actors wore gloves. The students will bring an old glove from home. The glove will be stuffed with newspaper, and attached to a shape that will enable the glove to stand upright freely. The teacher, along with the help of the students' generated vocabulary words that connect to either *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then have each student select a word out of an envelope. The student is to research the origin of the word, its antonym, a synonym, and the definition, demonstrate its part of speech in the play, and include a visual of the word. Using recyclable items from the classroom, display the information about the word on the glove. This activity will demonstrate word usage, etymology, and creativity, along with the student's ability to work independently. The assessment that will be aligned to this project is a quick write and a rubric.

The second piece of art will include working with the art consultant to design a mask. In many ancient and Far Eastern plays, a mask is used to disguise or change a character. The student will design the mask out of clay, which will be fired in the kiln. There are two ways in which to approach this project. The first mask could be designed so that one side of the mask would represent the student and the other side a character from either *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with which they identify. Before they actually make the mask, the students would use a guided character analysis sheet to identify the similarities.

The second mask could also be designed so that one side of the mask represents a character from either *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* along with one of the Chinese characters of the Beijing or Peking Opera. At Alice Fong Yu Chinese Immersion School, our students learn in Mandarin Ancient Chinese History. Peking Opera performers mainly have two types of facial decorations: masks and facial painting. The frequent on-stage changing of masks or facial makeup (without the audience noticing) is a special technique known as changing faces. This will enable the students and I to tie in the cultural aspects of the plays.

Once again, the students will use the guided character analysis to help guide their selection. In the Beijing or Peking Opera the roles fall into four categories: Sheng, Dan, Jing and Chou. The roles have the natural features of age and sex, as well as social status, and are artificially exaggerated by makeup, costume and gestures.

The first male role is Sheng, considered civil and military. Lao Sheng is the old man with a beard: dignified, polished, official, a scholar. Xiao Sheen is a young man, shrill of voice, a warrior of social stature, elaborately dressed. Last but not least, Wu Sheen who is an acrobatic male, extremely agile and physically skilled.

The first female role is Dan: Qing Yi, who is modest and virtuous. The second female role is Hua Dan, who is flirtatious and playful. Gui Men Dan is a young married girl. Dao Ma Dan is a strong woman who classifies as a leader. The character, Wu Dan is the female acrobat. Last but not least, Lao Dan is the old woman. The painted face male is Jing. Many audience members are startled by the appearance of the Jing. His facial colors symbolize the type of character. The color red signifies strong will, whereas white signifies treacherousness, and yellow signifies ambition and cool headedness.

The comedy actor or clown is Chou. He is considered dim-witted, amusing, a rascal, and occasionally slightly wicked. Many believe he has the ability to drive away wicked spirits. After the masks have been fired in the kiln, the students will use glaze, and fire the mask again in the kiln. Once the masks are cooled, the students will have the opportunity to add scraps of cloth, wire, and other materials to their mask. Once completed, the students will write a sonnet using their guided character analysis to be attached to the mask.

### **Shakespeare in the Pocket-Text-Messaging**

The overall project-based activity is called, "Shakespeare in a Pocket". This project would be the end result of the unit on Shakespeare. Every spring in New York City, the school district along with artists and political officials participate in "Poem in the Pocket". Last year, at Alice Fong Yu, the middle school students shared their favorite Chinese Poem, as well as a favorite poem in English. Keeping that in mind, each child would select a character and a line from Shakespeare. Taking the line of their choice, the students would rewrite it to be communicated as a text message. The student would be given a pocket that is used in the back of a library book. On this pocket, the student would place their own personal coat of arms (that they made at Station-B) in relation to the period of the play that they have chosen. Then the student would place their lines inside the pocket. The student would swap their pockets with another classmate. The other student would try to decode the text message, identify the character that said the line, identify the setting, and the play.

We would set aside a day at our school called "Shakespeare in a Pocket". This day could include the parents of the students and school officials, along with the friends of Cal Shakes. The character analysis forms that the students made in Station D would be placed on the wall of the multipurpose room. The students would be able to share and view all of the character forms with each other. The students would have the opportunity to invite their parents to participate in this activity. Because many parents speak Chinese as a first language, the parents would have the opportunity to share a quote from one of the Shakespeare's play in either Cantonese or in Mandarin. The students would have the opportunity to work with their parents and help guide them to rewrite their lines in a text-messaging format. The entire sixth grade class would be able to discuss the lines and the setting of the play to share with another student or adult. The event would take place in our multipurpose room.

Throughout *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the connection, communication, character, and romance have been intertwined within the content. There is direct evidence to support each main theme, and give rise to the opportunity to reach the goals of this unit. The main theme is to strengthen student's comfort level reading of Shakespeare as well as to enhance their skills and confidence in writing essays, sentence structure, learning the elements of a story, word usage, and reading comprehension through text messaging.

## Appendix A

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California Sixth Grade-Reading:

1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development-

Students use their knowledge of word origins and word relationships, as well as historical and literary context clues, to determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level-appropriate words.

- Word Recognition-
- Vocabulary and Concept Development-

2.0 reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)-Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate materials.

-Structural Features of Informational Materials-

-Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text-

-Expository Critique-

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

-Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text-

California Sixth Grade Writing:

1.0 Writing Strategies

-Organization and Focus-

-Research and Technology-

1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions

Students write and speak with a command of Standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

-Sentence Structure

California Sixth Grade Listening and Speaking:

1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies-

Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and

relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.

-Comprehension-

-Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication-

-Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications-

2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)-

Students deliver well-organized formal presentations employing traditional rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, exposition, persuasion, description). Student speaking demonstrates a command of standard American English and the organizational and delivery strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0.

-Using the speaking strategies of grade six outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard

California Sixth Grade-Basic Theatre & Concepts Theatrical Forms Identify Tools: action/reaction, sound projection, text, subtext, context, theme, mood, design, production values, stage crew, vocal/ facial expression, monologue, dialogue, setting plays, improvisation, cultural sets, lighting, costumes, props.

-Artistic Perception-

1.0 Processing, Analyzing, & Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Theatre Development of the Vocabulary of Theatre; Comprehension and Analysis of the Elements of Theatre. Creative Expression-

2.0 Creating, Performing, & Participating in Theatre Development of Theatrical Skills; Creation/Invention in Theatre.

Historical & Cultural Context-

3.0 Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Theatre

Role and Cultural Significance of Theatre; History of Theatre.

California Sixth Grade-Visual and Performing Arts: Visual Arts Content Standards.

2.0 Creative Expression-Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Visual Arts. Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art. Skills, Processes, Materials, and Tools Communication and Expression Through Original Works of Art.

## Appendix B

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Famous A Midsummer Night's Dream Quotes:

"The course of true love never did run smooth." (Act I, Scene I)

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind." (Act I, Scene I)

"O, hell! to choose love by another's eyes." (Act I, Scene I)

"I am slow of study." (Act I, Scene II)

"That would hang us, every mother's son." (Act I, Scene II)

"I'll put a girdle round about the earth In forty minutes." (Act II, Scene I)

"My heart is true as steel." (Act II, Scene I)

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows, Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine, With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine." (Act II, Scene I)

"A lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing." (Act III, Scene I)

"Lord, what fools these mortals be!" (Act III, Scene II)

"The true beginning of our end." (Act V, Scene I)

"For never anything can be amiss, When simpleness and duty tender it." (Act V, Scene I)

Famous Romeo and Juliet Quotes:

"Is love a tender thing? it is too rough, Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn." (Act I, Scene IV)

"If love be rough with you, be rough with love; Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down." (Act I, Scene IV)

"For you and I are past our dancing days." (Act I, Scene V)

"O! she doth teach the torches to burn bright." (Act I, Scene V)

"It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." (Act I, Scene V)

"O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?" (Act II, Scene II)

"But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!" (Act II, Scene II)

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose, By any other word would smell as sweet." (Act II, Scene II)

"Good Night, Good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say good night till it be morrow." (Act II,



Scene II)

"See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand! O that I were a glove upon that hand, that I might touch that cheek!" (Act II, Scene II)

"Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast." (Act II, Scene III)

"O! I am Fortune's fool!" (Act III, Scene I)

"Not stepping o'er the bounds of modesty." (Act IV, Scene II)

"Tempt not a desperate man." (Act V, Scene III)

"For never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo." (Act V, Scene III)

## Appendix C

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Examples of text messaging meanings and abbreviations:

Abbreviation	Meaning	Abbreviation	Meaning
@TEOTD	At the end of the day	AML	All my love
143	I love you	AYEC	At your earliest convenience
2G2BT	Too good to be true	AYOR	At your own risk
404	I don't know	AYTMTB	And you are telling me this because
4EAE	Forever and ever	CR8	Create
B4	Before	CU	See you
B4N	Bye for now	CWYL	Chat with you later
BB	Be back	DIKU	Do I know you?
EMA	E-mail address	F2F	Face to face
ENUF	Enough	FC	Fingers Crossed
EOD	End of day	FYI	For your information
G2G	Got to go	H&K	Hugs and kisses
GB	Goodbye	H8	Hate
G9	Genius	HAND	Have a nice day

## Appendix D

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# Shakespeare in a Pocket

(Formerly known as A Poem in a Pocket)

<p>The Definition of <b>Coat of Arms</b> relating to the official symbols of a family, state, etc.</p>	<p>□: A Coat of Arms is a term relating to the official symbols of a family, state, etc.</p>	<p>Coats of Arms make use of figures of living creatures, trees, flowers, and inanimate objects, as symbolical signs to distinguish themselves in war, or denote the courage of their king or nation.</p>
<p>bravery and</p>		<p><b>Materials:</b> Ruler, Colored Pencils, Gel Pens, Scissors, Glue Stick, and a Library Pocket.</p> <p><b>Directions:</b> Using the Library Pocket Card, glue your Coat of Arms on the pocket. Make sure that you have colored and clearly included your name. Select a line from one of the Shakespeare's plays that we have read and discussed in class. Using the attached form, rewrite the line in a text-messaging format. Then using your book, make sure that you can analyze the line; identify the character that is speaking, and where the speech takes place.</p>

Line from Shakespeare: \_\_\_\_\_

Character who is speaking the lines: \_\_\_\_\_

What does the line mean? \_\_\_\_\_

Setting: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite the lines in a text message: \_\_\_\_\_

## Teacher Resources:

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Aageson, Colleen and Marcie Blumberg. Shakespeare for Kids his Life and Times, Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Inc., 1999.

This book brings creative activities that include the content areas of Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Art, and Technology.

Crystal, David. Think on my Words! Exploring Shakespeare's Language, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

This book looks inside the writing style, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and conversational style of Shakespeare's writings.

Doyle, John and Ray Lischnea. *Shakespeare for Dummies*, New York: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 1999.

This resource explains areas that one may have about the person and his plays. It demonstrates non-complexity for the novice.

Foster, Cass and Lynn G. Johnson. *Shakespeare To Teach or not to Teach*, Chandler, Arizona: Five Star Publications, 2004.

This resource demonstrates a more complex view of activities and lessons for the student.

The lessons could be used for the gifted student.

Harvey, Stephanie and Anne Goudvis. *Strategies that Work 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement*, Portland, Maine: 2007.

This book is in the second edition, the first one was essential in guiding me to increasing vocabulary for all of my students along with guiding reading comprehension.

Milner, Cork. *The Everything Shakespeare Book 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, United States: Adams Media, an F + W Publications Co., 2008.

This book is a great resource for educators. It includes famous quotes, background information on Shakespeare's life and times and other great information in teaching the plays.

Nelson, Pauline and Todd Daubert. *Starting with Shakespeare: Successfully Introducing Shakespeare to Children*, United States: Teacher Ideas Press, 2000.

This resource book enables the teacher to bring depth of activities aligned to areas of concentration of subject matter tied to across the curriculum.

Perfect, Kathy. A. *Poetry Lessons*, New York: Scholastic, 2005.

This book enables the teacher to have examples in understanding poetry, poetic elements, enhance comprehension, develop fluency, create imagery, and use figurative language in designing curriculum in relation to the sonnets.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*, New York: Signet Classics, 1998.

This story of love, death, and family will be one of the books of Shakespeare that I attend to use in my 6<sup>th</sup> grade class.

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, New York: Signet Classic, 1998.

This Shakespearean classic will be used along with the other romance in compare and contrast between the two from tragedy and comedy.

## **Student Resources:**

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Burdett, Lois. *A Child's Portrait of Shakespeare For Kids*, Canada: Firefly Books. Ltd., 2004.

This book demonstrates how Shakespeare can be fun for an elementary student who is just introduced to Shakespeare.

Burdett, Lois. *A Midsummer's Night's Dream For Kids*, Canada: Firefly Books, Ltd., 2008.

This book brings this classic play of *A Midsummer's Night Dream* to the students in an engaging manner, along with great ideas for the classroom teacher.

Burdett, Lois. *Romeo and Juliet For Kids*, Canada: Firefly Books, Ltd., 2008.

This book brings the classic play of *Romeo and Juliet* to the students in an engaging manner, along with great ideas for the classroom teacher.

Chrisp, Peter. *Welcome to the Globe*, New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2000.

This resource is designed to introduce readers about Shakespeare, for the proficient reader that is below a sixth grade reader.

Kaston, David Scott and Monica Kaston. *Poets for Young People*, New York: Scholastic Inc., 2000.

This book gives examples of famous sections of Shakespeare's writings, which could be used in a response to literature writing.

Mannis, Celeste Davidson. *Who was William Shakespeare?* United States: Gossett and Dunlap, 2006.

This book, which is written in children in mind, gives a summary of this famous person and his impact.

Schmidt, Gary D. *The Wednesday Wars*, New York: Clarion Books, 2007.

This book is a great example of an author that intertwines Shakespeare during the tumultuous late 60s'. I plan to use this novel for my literary circle unit in Language Arts. The timeless wisdom of Shakespeare's words within the plays, are shared throughout this novel that are tied to the cultural uproar and adolescences of that period.

Stanley, Diane and Peter Vennema. *Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare*, China: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992.

This book introduces the student Shakespeare and his plays. This book enables the student to know more about Shakespeare.

Williams, Marcia. *Tales-From Shakespeare: Seven Plays*, China: Candlewick Press, 1998.

The seven plays of Shakespeare that is illustrated for elementary and middle school students in a whimsical manner that brings the classics in friendlier manner to the student.

Websites for Students and Teachers:

[http://www.cin.org/themes/romeo\\_juliet.html](http://www.cin.org/themes/romeo_juliet.html)

This website is a great resource for teachers that are working with *Romeo and Juliet*. This website focuses on language. (accessed July 9, 2009).

<http://leasttern.com/Shakespeare/Midsummer/dreamhome.htm>

A study guide on *Midsummer Nights Dream* resource guide that can be adapted to middle and elementary school students. (accessed July 9, 2009).

<http://www.calshakes.org/v-4/home.html>

California Shakespeare Theater that is located in Orinda, California. This website is designed to help guide teachers o curriculum development in relationship to comprehension, activities, and language. (accessed July 9, 2009).

<http://www.folger.edu/index.cfm>

The Folger Shakespeare Library is designed for the teacher as well as the students. The activities and lessons range from elementary to high school students. (accessed July 19, 2009).

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/>

This website enables the teacher to bring Shakespeare into the classroom through the web. The ideas and activities will stimulate the student to investigate and bring connection of Shakespearean plays to everyday life. (accessed July 29, 2009)

Text Messaging Articles on the Internet:

Bernet, Brenda. "Texting Shakespeare Bard's language poses challenges for teachers". (July 2009),  
[http://www.amarillo.com/stories/073009/new\\_news1.shtmlZero-Thumb](http://www.amarillo.com/stories/073009/new_news1.shtmlZero-Thumb). (accessed July 29, 2009).

Great article on how to navigating Shakespeare with a student, and gives an example on how to write a scene in text messaging.

Carvin, Andy. " Should School Teach SMS Text Messaging", (October, 2006) [http://www.pbs.org/teachers/learning.now/2006/10/do\\_students\\_need\\_to\\_learn\\_text.html](http://www.pbs.org/teachers/learning.now/2006/10/do_students_need_to_learn_text.html). (accessed July 29, 2009).

This article focuses on the good and bad of using text messaging in the classroom.

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