

Comprehending Shakespeare: Shakespeare and the 21st Century

Object: Overcome the difficulties of Shakespearean language by looking at modern adaptations of Shakespeare's work. Help students to create their own original Shakespeare adaptation in a format more familiar to their generation.

Grade level: 9th-12th

Subject: English / Drama

Timeframe: 1-2 hours

Materials: Video: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged
[Worksheet: "Shakespeare's Soliloquies - Adapted"](#)

Introductory Hook: Begin the class by watching the Othello Rap from The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged.

Introduction: Begin the class with a discussion session. Why are people typically scared by the language of Shakespeare? Why does it seem uncomfortable or thick? The students should have several opinions about the topic. Take several answers and gently steer them toward a conclusion that Shakespeare's language is difficult to us because it is unfamiliar.

Part I: Making Shakespeare Your Homey

Begin by brainstorming language styles that are familiar to today's kids. These can include many different types, but the basic styles should include modern slang, rap, text messaging, poetry, heavy metal, ebonics, etc. Make a list that can be viewed by the whole class.

Hand out the worksheet: ["Shakespeare's Soliloquies - Adapted."](#) You may allow the students to talk in groups, but each student should hand in his own original adaptations. Encourage them to try two different styles from the list that they created.

Part II : Voluntary Sharing

After they have completed the assignment, encourage 3-5 kids to perform one of their adapted soliloquies for the class. If a music style is chosen, you may choose to have other students help create a rhythm under the performance.

Assessment:

Collect the worksheet. Assessment is based upon two criteria: (1) How well did they seem to comprehend the language (2) How well did they follow the spirit of the assignment.

Follow Up Activity:

Have your students do an art project based around one of their adaptations. Have them write the adaptation in the middle of the paper, then create original artwork framing the text. The artwork should incorporate themes from the soliloquy and from modern life.