



Teaching Shakespeare

Helping students appreciate
traditional literature by using
Modern Cultural Expressions

Lesson plans by Nina Silver

These lesson plans are based on work I did in the English classroom with Grades 11 and 12 in 2017 and 2018. They can be adapted to your teaching of any Shakespeare play, or any other classic literature for that matter.

Lesson Plan #1: Create a Public Service Announcement

People of _____, beware!

Produce a Public Service Announcement (PSA) typical of one that may have appeared in traditional or modern social media for the public during the times in which the play/novel _____ takes place. Decide with your group, or individually, what might be an important message to deliver to the town/city. What did the people of _____ need to be educated about? How would you convince them to change their behaviours? What imagery would they need to see to help convince them of your concerns? What kind of Slogan and additional text would you need to captivate their attention and persuade them? What will your music choice be? What additional informational text needs to be provided? Your PSA should take up at least $\frac{1}{2}$ of a standard newspaper front page, a full Instagram post with several images to scroll through, a short video, or a large billboard. You will have to decide what software program you want to create it in, and then how you want to present it to the class.

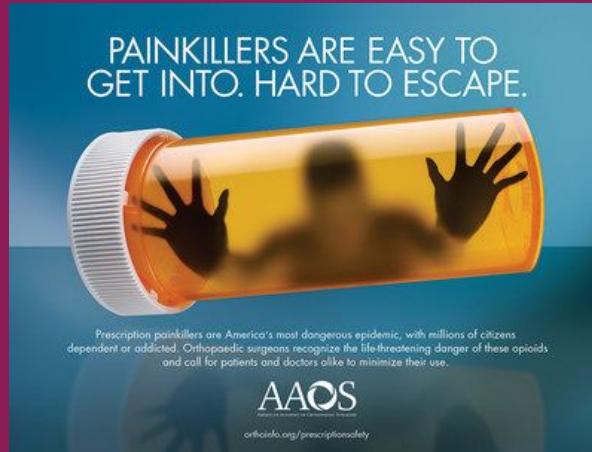
Metacognition Component

After you have produced your public service announcement, an oral presentation discussing the rationale for all of your production decisions will be expected. Be prepared to answer several questions that will be provided by the teacher to explain all of your decisions, production successes, and failures.

The teacher will need to show examples of the various kinds of modern cultural expressions they want the class to choose from, discuss the codes and conventions being used, and provide resources for how to best use these forms of communication:

Billboards -

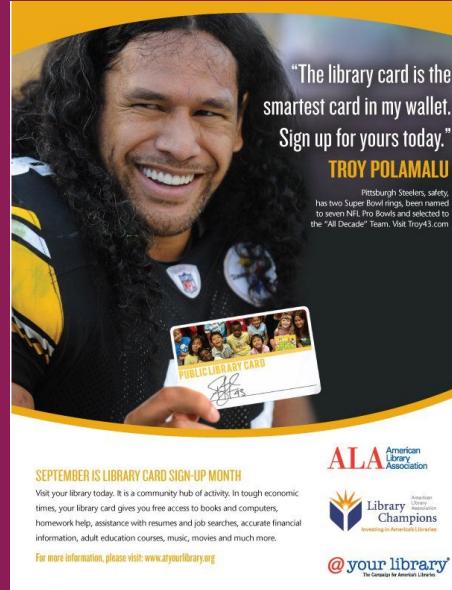
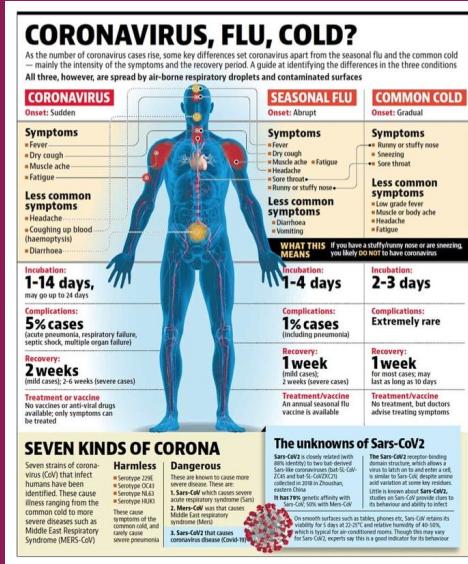
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/six-steps-to-making-a-great-billboard-ad-38479>



Newspaper PSA's -

Suggestions for how to

Writing the Text



Instagram Posts -

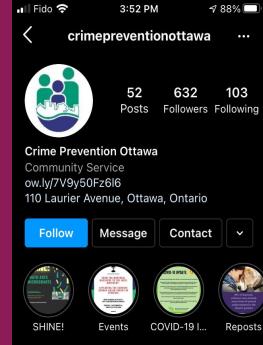
Discuss:

- ★ The use of emotional imagery
- ★ The importance of facts and statistics
- ★ The impact of colour and font styles
- ★ The importance of the text that accompanies the post

[MADD page](#)

[Crime Prevention Ottawa](#)

[Toronto Fire Fighters](#)



Videos - Which codes and conventions do you notice?

[https://www.govtech.com/education/news/how-to-create-the-perfect-public-service-a
nnouncement.html](https://www.govtech.com/education/news/how-to-create-the-perfect-public-service-announcement.html)

<https://www.cision.ca/resources/tip-sheets/psa-bestpractices/>

Love has no labels: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnDgZuGIhHs>

One in five: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNVFpkmZTQ4>

Discussing the statistics of sexual assault

The teacher will also need to brainstorm themes in the literature that could be addressed in the PSA's

EXAMPLES

Romeo and Juliet - talk to your children

Macbeth - avoid the witches

Othello - do not isolate others based on their differences

Hamlet - choose your rulers or your relationships wisely

The Tempest - don't be fooled by modern magic



Criteria for Media Production - using standard levels to assess

The PSA is highly persuasive and makes a strong connection to some theme, controversy, or social concern related to the play/novel _____.

1 2 3 4

Highly effective production techniques are used overall; including strong and related imagery, and the established conventions of the form.

1 2 3 4

Important rationale is provided in your public service announcement to explain why the public should be doing what you are instructing them to do

1 2 3 4



Criteria for Media Production - using standard levels to assess

The creation would strongly have appealed to the citizens of _____, in the year of
_____.

1 2 3 4

Proper English conventions are used throughout the media (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation).

1 2 3 4

Class time was used effectively.

1 2 3 4



Provide a checklist for students to use before finishing their production and prior to their presentation.

Discuss the following questions with your group. Write out answers and notes based on your discussion; and decide who will present your ideas and how.

DO NOT REPEAT THESE QUESTIONS IN YOUR PRESENTATION. SIMPLY USE THEM AS A GUIDELINE TO PREPARE WHAT AND HOW YOU ARE GOING TO PRESENT

- How did we decide on the topic we chose, and what was the main message we wanted to deliver?**
- What made us decide to use this medium for our P.S.A.?**
- What did we hope would be the most dramatic part of our P.S.A.?**
- Who was our intended audience? (Ages, nationality, gender, education etc.?)**
- What production techniques did we use to help with persuasion? (eg. close ups, thunder sounds, bloody font styles)**
Discuss them all.
- How did we use colour or special effects to help make our message more effective?**

Check list continued...

- Did we use any things in our message like humour, fear, realism, threats? If so, how?
- How does the imagery we used help with our message?
- Did we use any famous people to help with the cause? Who?
- What did we do with words? Active verbs? Descriptive adjectives?
- What are the many ways we made this P.S.A. suit the times, or relate directly to events and characters in the play/novel?
- How did we split up the work? Roles for everyone?

Check list continued...

- What did we learn about the process of media production from doing this project?**
- What kinds of limitations does the medium we used have when it comes to communication?**
- What would we do differently in our production next time?** Where did we make mistakes? What kinds of things went wrong beyond our control?
- What are we really pleased with in our production?**
- How does our production compare to the professional ones we have seen or heard?**

Criteria for Oral Presentation: - using standard levels to assess

You fully explained how your PSA relates to a central theme in the play/novel.

1 2 3 4

The rationale for your production choices was fully explained.

1 2 3 4

You fully discussed the pros and cons of the production experience (problems/successes/ learning that took place)

1 2 3 4

You spoke intelligently, you had a prepared script, you looked at your audience, and you spoke clearly and with energy.

1 2 3 4

Lesson Plan #2: Create an audio visual presentation that recreates a scene from the novel/play_____.

Choose a scene from the text that you would like to present using your voice and the visuals from some modern cultural form of expression. Be sure that the scene will last for at least 3 minutes and no longer than 10. **This is an individual project.**

There are various computer applications available to you as a student that you can use to create media projects. You are being asked to create a multi-media presentation of one short scene from Act ___ or Chapter ___.
_____.

You must choose an excerpt from the scene, paraphrase or translate all of the words into modern language, and record your voice, presenting the lines along with a set of complimentary visuals.(Some past examples will be shown to you in class)

Rationale and Requirements

The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of the text, and to make connections with modern cultural expressions. Again, you are to create a multi-media presentation of one short scene from Act __ (or 'Chapter __').

IMPORTANT--You must agree not to compare notes with OR work with any other member of this class when planning or producing your materials. We don't want any chance of repetition due to unoriginal thought or copied creations.

- All voice work must be your own
- At least 2 characters (played by you) must be having a conversation in the scene (no more than 4)
- The presentation must take up more than 3 minutes and less than 10



- Your voice must be clearly heard (even if you use some kind of effect to change the pitch, speed, tone, etc.)
- All words must be properly pronounced
- Each character should sound distinctly different than the others
- The meaning and intent of the speeches must not change from the original Shakespearean version
- Visuals, either animated, photographed, drawn, or moving, must be appropriate and clearly representative of the people, places and circumstances you are depicting



- There should be at least 6 visuals used in the production of the scene (think wide shots, close ups, etc.)
- Your script (if you have chosen the same conversation as another student) must not be the exact words used by anyone else (**translate it yourself**)
- Give your scene a creative title
- On presentation day there should be no complications with operating the computer application or opening the files in which you have created your production
- You should be prepared to drop off your multi-media work to the teacher after you have presented it to the class



Have a show and Tell Day

This is an opportunity for the students to be the teachers.

Have them show each other how to use various programs and features on their devices to create their multi-media productions.

Take them to a computer lab or bring tablets into the classroom for them to play with.

Ask for volunteers who are willing to teach others.

Metacognition

After your multi-media presentation has been seen by the class, you must also discuss and submit a short written personal opinion about the themes and the characters being presented; and you must evaluate your media text by answering the following questions:

What do you think this scene teaches us about the characters you have represented? How is this scene important to the overall play? Which themes are being addressed in this scene? How can you relate this scene or the people in it to your own life experience or to modern stories you have been exposed to? Why did you choose these popular culture forms of expression to adapt the text? What did you learn by creating this multi-media production? What were your successes and failures?



Exemplars from past productions created by students

- ★ *The Tempest* using Powerpoint, with animations and music
- ★ *Macbeth* using found imagery and symbolism from Popular culture
- ★ *Hamlet* re-purposing video from a popular TV cartoon called Bob's Burgers
- ★ *The Tempest* using *Machinima* - the student records portions of video games and replaces the audio with their own soundtrack

Criteria	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
All the voices you present are clearly heard	ORAL			
Your characters are distinctly played	ORAL			
The tone of the speeches are dramatic and in keeping with proper acting techniques	ORAL			
The translation of the lines you have chosen to present is accurate	LIT.			
You have provided a clear explanation of what the audience learns about these characters based on their words and behaviour	LIT.			



Criteria	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
You have submitted a well written short piece of writing discussing the importance of the scene, what is learned about characters and themes, relating it to your own life experience, and evaluating your production techniques	WRITING			
You have demonstrated competent skills with computer software applications to create an effective media product	MEDIA			
There are sufficient visuals for the audience to imagine the scene and they are adequately representative of the characters ,setting, and circumstance	MEDIA			
You have included additional and appropriate music or sound effects to enhance the effectiveness of the media production & the title of your production is creative and fitting	MEDIA			





Oral Presentation skills	/100
Literature Knowledge	/100
Writing skills	/100
Media production skills	/100

Find more here:

[AML Resources Slide Show](#)