

LESSON TITLE: “Speak, I Charge You”: *Macbeth* On Your Feet, Not In Your Seat

GRADE LEVEL: Grades 9 - 12

TIME ALLOTMENT: Two 45 - 50-minute class periods

OVERVIEW:

This lesson explores the validity of a statement Ethan Hawke makes in the *Macbeth* episode of the PBS series ***Shakespeare Uncovered***: “There’s always a certain magic that happens when you start to say the lines [from a Shakespeare play] out loud that you can’t anticipate. It feels like a spell.” This leads us to an essential question: is there a difference between reading Shakespeare silently versus speaking his works aloud? Very often, students believe they will not enjoy Shakespeare’s plays because they won’t understand the language. This lesson will help students overcome this fear by having them engage with the language of *Macbeth* through performance and not by merely reading the play at their desks. By moving from their seats to their feet, students will understand that Shakespeare wrote plays to be *performed*.

In the Introductory Activity, students will experiment actively with lines from *Macbeth* in order to experience Shakespeare as language to be spoken and played. Students will then move on to the Learning Activities where they will explore video segments from ***Shakespeare Uncovered*** and will then stage scenes or parts of scenes from *Macbeth*. During this portion of the lesson, they will make all the decisions about staging, using only Shakespeare’s script and the handout “How to Stage a Scene” (<http://www.folger.edu/documents/How%20to%20Stage%20a%20Scene.pdf>) from the Folger Shakespeare Library. During the Culminating Activity, students will discuss Ethan Hawke’s “There’s always a certain magic...” statement and also reflect on their experiences during the performance of their scenes. Two Optional Activities provide students with opportunities to write and discuss the scenes they acted out during the lesson.

This lesson is designed to be used as part of a unit on *Macbeth*. The Introductory Activity could be used as a pre-reading exercise to introduce performance at the beginning of the unit.

SUBJECT MATTER

English/Language Arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Read complex texts carefully and closely since all of their staging decisions must emerge from what the text suggests;
- Understand characters' emotional and psychological states based not only on *what* they say, but on *how* they speak;
- Discover the differences between Shakespeare on the page and Shakespeare performed;
- Write about Shakespeare's play in specific and textually supported ways.

STANDARDS

NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts

<http://www.ncte.org/standards/ncte-ira>

- Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Grades 6 - 12 Reading: Literature

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/introduction-for-6-12>

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W>

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

MEDIA COMPONENTS

Video

Segment 1: “Exploring the Dagger Scene”

In this segment, Ethan Hawke seeks help from a fellow actor to gain a deep understanding of the “Dagger” speech in Act II, Scene i and models for the viewer an actor’s approach to understanding the text.

Segment 2: “The Language of Trauma”

In this segment, a forensic psychiatrist explains how the manner and style of one’s speech reflects extreme or traumatic experiences, a useful framework to discuss the form of characters’ speech and of how this might affect performance.

Segment 3: “Who is Your Lady Macbeth?” (Optional)

This segment focuses on the different ways Lady Macbeth can be and has been played, a notion of how Shakespeare’s plays offer interpretative choices for actors.

Websites

- **Folger Shakespeare Library**

<http://folger.edu/>

The website of the Folger Shakespeare Library, the world’s richest archive of manuscripts and Early Modern items, provides a variety of resources for students and teachers. The following documents from the site are used in this lesson:

- **“Objectives and Tactics”**

<http://www.folger.edu/documents/ObjectivesandTacticsHandout.pdf>

- **“How to Stage a Scene”**

<http://www.folger.edu/documents/How%20to%20Stage%20a%20Scene.pdf>

- **Shakespeare’s Words**

<http://www.shakespearewords.com>

This website, which is a companion to the book *Shakespeare’s Words*, provides a comprehensive Shakespeare glossary, synopses of all the plays, and links to the Penguin Complete Works.

MATERIALS

For the class:

- Computer, projection screen, and speakers (for class viewing of online video segments).

For each student:

- **Line Festival Handout**

This handout includes suggested lines from *Macbeth* for students to use in the Introductory Activity in this lesson.

- **Objectives and Tactics**

<http://www.folger.edu/documents/ObjectivesandTacticsHandout.pdf>

This handout provides definitions for “objectives” and “tactics,” two terms fundamental to an actor’s approach to a play.

- **How to Stage a Scene**

<http://www.folger.edu/documents/How%20to%20Stage%20a%20Scene.pdf>

This handout provides six broad guidelines that help teachers and students with little or no experience put any scene in a play on its feet. This handout is used during Learning Activity 2 in this lesson.

PREP FOR TEACHERS

To prepare for this lesson, view the *Macbeth* episode of ***Shakespeare Uncovered*** at www.pbs.org/shakespeare-uncovered. If you do not have time to screen the entire episode, please review the clips featured on the Video Segments Page as you prepare this lesson.

Download and print the “Line Festival” Handout for the Introductory Activity, and make enough copies for each student in your class.

Choose the scenes that you will have your students perform during Learning Activity 2 of this lesson. Six scenes are recommended below, but you may choose any scenes from the play to suit your students. To save time, consider casting them in the scenes you choose ahead of time. Feel free to stage only part of a scene, if you wish; the main focus of this lesson is what students do with the scene. (Recommended scenes follow below with links to the free Folger e-text of the play, which may be downloaded and printed). Print out copies of the scenes that will be performed by students if they do not have their own text of the play so that they may annotate their scripts with stage movement, notes, etc. Prepare copies of “Objectives and Tactics”

(<http://www.folger.edu/documents/ObjectivesandTacticsHandout.pdf>) and

“How to Stage A Scene”

(<http://www.folger.edu/documents/How%20to%20Stage%20a%20Scene.pdf>)

Handouts for each student ahead of time.

Scenes for Learning Activity (linked to the Folger Digital Text Versions)

Act I, Scene ii, “The Bloody Captain” (five speaking roles)

(<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=line-1.2.0>)

Act II, Scene iii, “Macduff Discovers Duncan Murdered” (eight speaking roles)

(<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=line-2.3.0>)

Act III, Scene iii, “The Murder of Banquo” (four speaking roles; Fleance has no lines)

(<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=line-3.3.0>)

Act III, Scene iv, “Banquo’s Ghost at the Banquet” (six to eight speaking roles)

(<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=line-3.4.0>)

Act IV, Scene i, “Macbeth Visits the Weird Sisters Once More” (eight speaking roles)

(<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=line-4.1.0>)

Act IV, Scene ii, “The Murder of Lady Macduff” (six speaking roles)

(<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=line-4.2.0>)

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to get into groups of four or five. Distribute the “Line Festival” Handout.
2. Have each group select four to six lines from the handout.
3. Next, distribute the “Objectives and Tactics” Handout (<http://www.folger.edu/documents/ObjectivesandTacticsHandout.pdf>). After a group has chosen its lines, have the group’s members collaborate to form an **objective** and a **tactic** for each line, using the handout as a reference. Here is some information to share with your students:
 - An **objective** is simply a task they wish to accomplish by saying the line. In the example in step 2, for instance, we might say that Macbeth’s sentence intends “to prevent his wife from making a bad mistake.” This, in other words, is what he wants to DO with his word; his **objective** expresses his **intention**.
 - A **tactic** is a strategy to help an actor achieve his or her objective. Macbeth might “threaten,” “warn,” or “beg” with his line of dialogue to “prevent his wife from making a bad mistake.” Allow students about 10 - 15 minutes to accomplish this.
4. Once students have their lines, objectives, and tactics worked out, hold a “Festival of Lines.” Each student must choose one line from the ones their group has chosen and perform it to the class while keeping in mind his or her objective and tactic. This should move quickly -- five minutes tops for the whole class -- so that no student is put on the spot for too long, but so that every student has a chance to say a line of Shakespeare with his/her specific objective and tactic in mind. This will work best if you have the class form a circle and then simply say their lines in turn.
5. After this is completed, do a quick check-in by having each student share one quick observation from the exercise by completing the following sentence, “I noticed . . .” All comments are valid, but be sure to underscore two key points:
 - 1) Many meanings are possible in a single line.
 - 2) Meaning emerges from *doing* Shakespeare and not by merely searching for hidden meaning during silent reading.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1

1. Let students know that you are now going to be showing a video segment from the PBS series *Shakespeare Uncovered*. Ask students to think about how the way an actor says the words in a scene affects the meaning of those words.
2. Play the video segment “Exploring the Dagger Scene” (Access the video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page.) After showing the segment, ask students to discuss how the way in which Richard Easton said the words of the Dagger speech affected the meaning of those words.
3. Give your students a minute or two to read the Dagger speech in Act II, Scene i, silently to themselves, starting with line 44.
4. After all students have read the speech, have them stand in a circle to read the speech aloud (starting with line 44), one speaker at a time. Change speakers every time the speech comes to a full stop (period, semi-colon, colon, question mark, or exclamation point). If you have more students than lines, have students read the speech aloud again, taking turns so that all students have a chance to read at least one line. To view the Dagger speech, go to: [Act II, Scene i, line 44](#) on the Folger’s Digital e-Text page, “Dagger” (<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=line-2.1.0>).
5. If desired, after all students have read at least one line aloud, have the class read the speech aloud one more time, with students reading several lines at a time.
6. Ask students to reflect on what they noticed when *speaking* parts of the speech, as well as *hearing* others read the speech aloud. How is this different from reading silently?

LEARNING ACTIVITY 2

1. Let students know they are going to work on staging scenes from *Macbeth*. Tell students that as they prepare their scenes, they should think about not only *what* they are saying, but about *how* they are saying the lines. Ask students to think about what someone can learn about a character by *how* he/she talks and not just by *what* he/she says.
2. Play the video segment “The Language of Trauma.” (Access the video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page.) After playing the segment, ask students what someone can learn about a character not only by what he or she says, but by *how* he or she talks. Ask students to discuss how someone’s mood and state of mind can affect how they communicate.
3. *Optional:* If time allows, play the video segment “Who is Your Lady Macbeth?” (Access the video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page.) After you have screened this, ask students to discuss what type of Lady Macbeth they

- prefer. Remind them of how many different Lady Macbeths there have been and help them understand how the play supports many choices and interpretations.
4. Assemble students in groups to work on staging their scenes. Note: Students may use any scene in the play, but the scenes listed above in the Prep for Teachers section accommodate more students. Provide them with copies of the scene if they are unable to write in their books. To save time, assign groups to specific scenes and cast your students in the scenes. (See the Prep for Teachers section above for more details.)
 5. Go over the handout “How to Stage a Scene” (<http://www.folger.edu/documents/How%20to%20Stage%20a%20Scene.pdf>) with the class, and ask if there are any questions, noting that some of these questions will be answered when they start working.
 6. Give each group 20 - 30 minutes to work on staging the scene. Remind them to look up every word that they don't know either in a dictionary or in the recommended Shakespeare Glossary (www.shakespeareswords.com). If it's allowed, encourage students to download a dictionary app and to add the glossary to their home screens on their smart phones if they have them. Next, tell them that *they must justify all of their staging choices with evidence from the text*, and remind them of the work exhibited by Ethan Hawke and Richard Easton in the segment “Exploring the Dagger Scene”. If a theatre, an open space, or any other venues are available, encourage students to use them.
 7. Whenever they can, students should think in terms of **objectives** and **tactics** -- of what they want to DO with Shakespeare's language in order to communicate a clear story. Ask them not to overthink each line too much; rather, encourage them to experiment with different choices to see what works best and what seems best supported by the text. They will learn the play by playing the play!
 8. As students work, visit with each group to mark their progress. If they have questions for you, direct them to the text and pose questions for them to consider. Avoid directing them or giving them definitive answers.
 9. Once the groups have been able to prepare their scenes, gather the casts and establish the order of a scene festival -- i.e., the presentation of each group's scene. Either clear your classroom for this, or bring your class to various staging areas around school, if time and space allow.
 10. Ask students to establish the stage -- exits, entrances, and other necessary markers -- and have the rest of the class sit so that they surround the action on three sides (as Shakespeare's audiences would have at the Globe and at the Blackfriars Playhouse). Have each group perform its scene without interruption from start to finish. When the scene concludes, the players should take a bow to thunderous applause from their audience.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

1. After students have performed their scenes, have them circle up for a discussion about the lesson.
2. Ask the class to reflect upon and discuss Ethan Hawke’s claim, “There’s always a certain magic that happens when you start to say the lines [from a Shakespeare play] out loud that you can’t anticipate. It feels like a spell.” During the discussion, ask students to talk about their experiences listening to and acting out lines and scenes from *Macbeth*.
3. Give students a few minutes to write down and complete the following sentence on paper: “By performing my scene, I noticed . . .”
4. After all students have completed their sentences, ask for volunteers to share their reflections.
5. Ask students to share any additional thoughts they have about the lesson. As you facilitate this debrief, look for moments to highlight observations that connect performing with a deeper understanding of Shakespeare’s language and of complex texts.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

To build upon this lesson, conduct one or both of these Optional Activities with your students:

- **Program Note**

1. Have each student prepare a 300 - 500 word program note essay on the scene that his/her group performed. Feel free to have students work on this in class as a coached writing assignment where you assist them, or as a formal take-home essay.
2. Let students know the essay is designed to be read by people who are unfamiliar with the scene. Therefore, it’s important that the program note accomplish the following goals (which support the Common Core State Standards for writing):
 - a) Provide a concise summary of the scene as it relates to the larger narrative of the play as a whole.
 - b) Discuss the particular choices the cast made when staging the scene in terms of movement, acting choices, and intention; how did performing provide a means of research?
 - c) Cite specific examples from the text to support general statements about the scene and their discoveries.
3. Consider having them post their written work on a Google site, blog, or other forum for private or public viewing.

- **Shakespeare Talk Show**

- 1 Have each student appear as guests on a talk show where the teacher or a student volunteer is the host.
- 2 Ask each student to have a text of their scene handy since the talk show host will want to include everyone in his/her interview. Questions should help engage students in a textually-specific conversation of Shakespeare's play and the way that performance is an interpretative act of reading. Here are some suggested questions :
 - a) What does [a particular word] mean?
 - b) How does this scene fit into the larger play of *Macbeth*?
 - c) What in the text inspired you to bring Lady Macbeth in from the room above the action?
 - d) How did the choice to have Macduff whisper the line, "O horror, horror, horror!" (Folger Edition, 2.3.72) emerge from your understanding of the text?

If desired, the talk show host can ask members of the cast to re-mount the scene or a moment from the scene during the interview.