

Introduction to Line Understanding

There are ways to crack the code, decipher the puzzle, unpack the meaning

Supplies needed:

Poster of text
Dictionaries

Blank poster paper
Lexicons

Scripts
Pencils

Students will demystify Shakespeare text by

- understanding it as one of many literacies
- practicing tools to decipher individual words
- paraphrasing Shakespeare text into their own words

Literacy: One word can have many meanings

We often use the word literacy to mean the ability to read and write. But actually it is more complex. There are many different literacies.

Every field has its own way of talking about what it does.

Ask students for an example of a sport or hobby that they like to do, i.e. skating, football, sewing.

Pull out (by writing down or discussing) the important words to know, words that people in that world need to know, i.e. deck, safety, whip stitch.

Find the words that have different meanings in different contexts.

Context: Words mean more in context

How do you know if a word is a noun or verb (record, order,...?) -A/The; To

Look at the context of the entire scene.

What is the story?

Who are the characters?

What do they want?

Now that we know what the words generally mean, we can find more detail.

It is not enough to generally know what a word means. You have to be specific.

TOOLS TO HELP FIND MEANING

Grammar: Parts of speech help us understand the context and meaning

Start by reviewing the parts of speech. These are the main four found in the Lexicons

- Noun (Subst.)
- Verb
- Adjective
- Adverb

Looking up words

- Start by underlining all of the words that are unclear, or may have a different meaning in Shakespeare
- Determine the correct part of speech
- Search for the citation of your play, act and scene
- Find the definition located above the citation
- *Not every instance of a word's use is quoted in the lexicon, sometimes you have to decide on your own.*

Lexicons

There are many helpful dictionaries, glossaries and guides when studying Shakespeare. The Schmidt lexicons include all of the words in Shakespeare and give multiple meanings of the words, organized by parts of speech.

Quotes plays directly

- Play, Act, Scene, line
- Rom. (for Macbeth- *Mcb.*)

The quote is found under the appropriate definition, sometimes in a large group of other quotes.

Some things to know

A dash followed by an "s" (---s) indicates the plural form of the word

An initial letter represents the whole word (*I should have told your grace's t.*)

Paraphrase

Put the Shakespeare text into words that you would use personally.

Keep the sense of the text and the clarity of the images.

Don't overly embellish.

Table Work

This is the opportunity for the director to be sure that everyone shares the same understanding of their scene work.

There are a few different ways to look at text during table work.

What I mean= the general sense of the line

What I say= as precise a paraphrase as possible

What I want= what my character needs to get

What I'm doing= what tactic do you use to get what you want

Romeo and Juliet Prologue

Plot

- Why did Shakespeare write a prologue?
- What do you know about the theatre?
 - Get audience attention
 - Help people who do not read
 - Elizabethans go to “hear” a play, not “see” a play
- What are some key themes in Romeo and Juliet?

Form

- What do you notice about the form of the prologue?
- Note the couplet

Content

- What does it say?
- Which words look strange?
- Which words look familiar?
- Do familiar words seem to make sense in this context?

Page	Word	Notes
38	Ancient	Come from a long time ago
64	Attend	
202	Civil	Infer meaning from all definitions Relating to the community, citizens of a state Decent, well-mannered, polite
242	Continuance	Prologue not cited, infer the meaning
306	Dignity	(3)
391-2	Fair	Many definitions, often used in sonnets
404	Fatal	Instrument of fate, deadly
501	Grudge	Inveterate hatred
557	Household	(3) More than your house
663	Loins	
753	Mutiny	Discord, strife, contention
759-760	Naught	Prologue cited, means nothing
825	Overthrows	Ruin, perdition, death
864	Piteous	Exciting compassion
1115	Star-crossed	Not favored by the stars unfortunate
1250	Traffic	