

A Way With Words

How can drawing and pantomiming express the meaning of Shakespeare's unique words?

Grades 6-8 Lesson: A Way With Words or Say What?

Grade Band: 6-8

Arts Subject: Theater

Other Subject: English & Literature

SUMMARY

In this 6-8 lesson, students will collaborate in teams to draw and pantomime the meaning of Shakespeare's words and phrases. Students will be introduced to etymology, the study of words, and write a story using "The Bard's" words, lines, and phrases.

PREPARATION

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Identify words invented by William Shakespeare.
- Interpret the meaning of words through drawing.
- Identify words by interpreting drawings.
- Analyze the meaning of a line or phrase.
- Pantomime to communicate the meaning of a line or phrase.
- Interpret pantomime to identify a line or phrase.
- Write a short story using Shakespeare invented words, lines, and phrases.

Standards Alignment

National Core Arts Standards

[TH:Cr1.1.6.c](#) Explore a scripted or improvised character by imagining the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

[TH:Cr.1.1.7.c](#) Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character's inner thoughts and objectives in a drama/theatre work.

[TH:Cr1.1.8.c](#) Develop a scripted or improvised character by articulating the character's inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a drama/theatre work.

[TH:Pr6.1.6.a](#) Adapt a drama/theatre work and present it informally for an audience.

[TH:Pr6.1.7.a](#) Participate in rehearsals for a drama/theatre work that will be shared with an audience.

[TH:Pr6.1.8.a](#) Perform a rehearsed drama/theatre work for an audience.

Common Core State Standards

[ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

[ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4](#) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

[ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4](#) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

[ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5](#) Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

[ELA-LITERACY.L.7.5](#) Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

[ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5](#) Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Recommended Student Materials

Editable Documents: *Before sharing these resources with students, you must first save them to your Google account by opening them, and selecting “Make a copy” from the File menu. Check out [Sharing Tips](#) or [Instructional Benefits](#) when implementing Google Docs and Google Slides with students.*

- [Quick Draw Shakespeare](#)
- [A Word from “The Bard”](#)
- [Play It, Don’t Say It](#)
- [Shakespearean Lines](#)
- [Shakespearean Lines with Characters and Plays](#)
- [Shakespeare Sentence Exercises](#)
- [Shakespeare Phrase Sort](#)
- [Shakespeare Phrase Sort Answer Key](#)

Videos

- [1-2-3 Pantomime with Jamie Hipp](#)
- [Mime and Pantomime with Keith Berger and Sharon Diskin](#)

Websites

- [Merriam-Webster’s New Word List](#)

Teacher Background

Teachers should be familiar with Shakespeare’s work. Watch [1-2-3 Pantomime with Jamie Hipp](#) or [Mime and Pantomime with Keith Berger and Sharon Diskin](#) to review the basics of pantomime.

Student Prerequisites

Students should be familiar with Shakespeare’s plays.



Accessibility Notes

Modify handouts, text, and utilize assistive technologies as needed. Allow extra time for task completion.

INSTRUCTION

Engage

1. Engage students in a discussion about why words have power. Share that the study of words is called etymology. Tell students that words not only communicate concepts, facts and beliefs, but can affect behavior and relations between people and nations. They can move us to tears, or to laugh out loud. Consider the phrase; “them’s fightin’ words,” from Gullible’s Travels. Point out that fighting words are excluded from the protection of freedom of speech in the First Amendment. Solicit ideas from students about how powerful words can be. Other examples of powerful words to consider:

- Yes
- *We Can*
- *I love you*
- *Please*
- No
- *Free*

2. Put some new words from [Merriam-Webster’s New Word List](#) on the board and ask if anyone can define that word and use it in a sentence. You can use any of the words suggested below or choose from the list on their website.

- **Screenager** - *a teenager who knows a lot about the internet*
- **Meatspace** - *a physical reality as opposed to virtual reality*
- **Mondegreen** - *a mishearing or a misinterpretation of a phrase in a song or poem that gives it a new meaning. For example, “Scuse me while I kiss this guy” instead of “Scuse me while I kiss the sky.”*
- **Cardioprotective** - *serving to protect the heart*
- **Physiatry** - *physical medicine and rehabilitation*

3. Teach the students that new words are created all the time out of continual use.

Language is a living thing, words come into being and go out of fashion all of the time. Their meaning can also change over time. Some ways in which new words come into the language are new technology and industry, popular culture, new cultural experiences, world languages, lingo, attaching new meanings to old words, and borrowed or adapted words. Optional: You can provide dictionaries from different decades, if available, for students to search for words whose meanings have changed, were born, or went out of use.

4. Explain to students that many of the ordinary words and phrases we use today were invented by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare is credited with introducing some 2000

words to the English language through his poetry and plays like, *zany*, *lonely*, *critic*, and *fair play*. Discuss Shakespeare's words with students to check for understanding.

5. Recite the following lines and ask the class if they can finish the sentence:

- "To Be or _____"
- "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore _____"
- "Friends, Romans, countrymen, _____"

Now ask the class how many of them have seen or read Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, or Julius Caesar. These quotes, arguably some of the most famous quotes in the English language, are so embedded in our language and culture that many people who have never even seen or read Shakespeare's plays know them. For fun, suggest that students try this exercise with their friends and family.

Build

1. Tell students that Shakespeare not only invented many words but also put phrases into our language that we still use today. Examples of word combinations made famous by him are:

- "Too much of a good thing" - Rosalind, *As You Like It*
- "Good riddance" - Patroclus, *Troilus and Cressida*
- "In my mind's eye" - Hamlet, *Hamlet*

2. Write several Shakespeare phrases on the board and enlist a student volunteer to pantomime one of them for the class. Watch [1-2-3 Pantomime with Jamie Hipp](#) or [Mime and Pantomime with Keith Berger and Sharon Diskin](#) to review the basics of pantomime. Have the class guess the phrase that is being depicted. They may include:

- "Every inch a king" King Lear, *King Lear*
- "Not budge an inch" Christopher Sly, *Taming of the Shrew*
- "Wild-geese chase" Mercutio, *Romeo and Juliet*
- "Sweets to the sweet" Queen, *Hamlet*

Apply

1. Introduce students to the activities, [Quick Draw Shakespeare](#) and [Play It, Don't Say It](#).

Tell students they will draw or act out Shakespeare's invented words and phrases. Display or distribute the instructions to students. Review and model for the class how to play one or both of the games.

2. After the game, ask students to imagine our language without some of these words.

We use many of these words every day without much thought as if they have always been in existence. Ask students, *What if we didn't have the word "lonely?" How would we describe that condition?*

3. Distribute the [Shakespeare Sentence Exercises](#) to the students. Explain to the students that the italicized word in each sentence is attributed to Shakespeare. Have the students rewrite the sentences without Shakespeare's invented word, while keeping the meaning of the sentence the same. If possible, students should do this without adding more words to the sentence. Encourage the students to consider how Shakespeare must have felt. *Did he invent so many words because he was longing for precision in expression?*

Reflect

1. Assess students' knowledge of Shakespeare and his linguistic inventions. Have students respond to the following questions: *How did drawing the words and pantomiming the lines force the students to search for meaning? Why would someone be inspired to create words of their own? What words seemed ordinary or extraordinary? Why? How do you look at words differently now?*

Extend

1. Have students write a short story (500 and 800 words) using a sampling of Shakespeare's words, phrases, and lines meaningfully. Include a Shakespearean word, phrase, or line, an opening with an engaging "hook," and a body that twists and turns in surprising ways.

2. Play the [Shakespeare Phrase Sort](#) activity with students or have them play with their peers. Use the [Shakespeare Phrase Sort Answer Key](#) to check student's answers.

Credits

Original Writer, Mary Beth Bauernschub

Adaptation, Ann Reilly

Editor, JoDee Scissors