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Unit of Study

Shakespeare’s New Look

 I have chosen to focus on *Macbeth* by Gareth Hinds for my unit of study. Gareth Hinds version is a graphic novel of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. The language is only slightly different for an easier read. One reason why I chose this book is because Shakespeare has always been difficult for me read but this book made it easier. Once I started to read it, I was immediately intrigued. The pictures are beautiful and help to tell the story. I was reading the book and looking at the pictures then re-reading and looking again, putting it all in place. I immediately knew that students would love it. I think this book would be a great introduction to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. I plan on reading them in conjunction with one another.

Macbeth is the dark story of a man filled with ambition, power and guilt. Macbeth leads his troops into a battle which they win. On his way home, he runs into three witches who tell him he will be king. The current king promotes Macbeth for his service and loyalty. Macbeth thinks that what the witches has told him is coming true and he starts to envision himself as king. He tells his wife what the witches said and with his promotion she begins to imagine a new life for them both as king and queen and wants nothing more. When the King stays over at Macbeth’s home Lady Macbeth sees this as their opportunity and they kill the king but plant evidence to blame the king’s men. Macbeth immediately kills them. Neither Macbeth or Lady Macbeth are able to cope with the guilt. It consumes them both and tragedy ensues. Although this story was written over 400 years ago, it displays many Exeter Qualities for YA literature. I would say it is imaginative and well-structured plots going beyond simple chronologies to include time shifts and different perspectives. It has exciting plots that include secrecy, surprise, and tension brought about through narrative hooks and a fast pace. It has characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can use the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives. It is Lively, varied, and imaginative language that is grammatically correct while being neither patronizing and simplistic nor unnecessarily confusing through lexical density or complexity. It contains themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues. It has varied levels of sophistication that will lead to the continual development of reading skills. This version of *Macbeth* is recommended for grades 8 and up. I am structuring this unit plan for 8th grade.

INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIT

 To begin the unit I will first ask the students what they know of William Shakespeare. I will ask questions such as, Who has heard of William Shakespeare? Has anyone read a play by Shakespeare? Have you heard of Romeo and Juliet? What do you know about it? I will ask if they have seen any plays, or movies based on his plays, such as Ten Things I Hate About You, She’s The Man, or The Lion King. Following the discussion about what they know they will use the internet to find out things that they don’t know. Students will be given 10 minutes to learn something they didn’t know and report back to the class.

LAUNCHING THE UNIT

 After the discussion about Shakespeare we will then watch this short video introducing *Macbeth,* <https://youtu.be/rFtCYESosDw> This is a short animated summary of the play. This will give the students an idea of the story and what to expect with the reading. The video is fun and funny even though the play is dark and bloody. But I think it’s a fun way to get them interested and engaged. I will also give students a vocabulary list to review before we start reading the centerpiece work.

CENTERPIECE

*Macbeth* by Gareth Hinds

 We will begin reading Hinds graphic novel of *Macbeth* together as a class. We will read one or two pages at a time then discuss each page to so I am able to check for understanding. The students will write in a journal at the end of each days reading session and answer a prompt I will give them that goes along with the reading. I will have them answer questions, analyze the text, rewrite passages in their own words, speculate what will happen next, consider cause and effect, etc.. We will do a lot of pairing and sharing in this unit. I think The students will understand the text more the more they discuss it out loud as well as hear it from other students. We will then read one act from Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth* when we have finished Hinds adaptation. We will discuss the differences and similarities.

ACTIVITIES FOR EXTENDING THE UNIT

1. Rewrite!

 Students will be placed in groups of 3 to 4. They will be given scenes to chose from to rewrite, act out and record. Students will take the scene they chose and rewrite it in today’s language. They will be given time in class to prepare props and practice their lines. Then they will record their translation. I think it would be easier, especially for shy students, to record the scene rather than act in out live in class. This would also allow them to edit it if needed.

 2. Music Please

List of songs that could be paired with reading Macbeth:

"I Want it All" by Queen (Lady MacBeth deciding that being Thane of Cawdor isn't enough)

"My Lullaby" from The Lion King 2 (Lady MacBeth convincing MacBeth to commit the murder)

"I Just Can't Wait to be King" and "Be Prepared" from Lion King (the MacBeths looking forward to becoming royalty)

"Regicide" by Einherjer (the murder of the King)

"Framed" by Cheech and Chong (the guards getting framed for the murder)

"Bye Bye Beautiful" by Nightwish (the second meeting of the three witches. MacBeth's misunderstanding of their words, and his destiny)

"Slaughter of Innocence" by Malevolent Creation (the murder of the MacDuff household)

"I'm going Slightly Mad" by Queen (Lady MacBeth going crazy)

"Ghosts of Memory" by Tiger Army (MacBeth tortured with guilt)

"Crazy in the Head" by Calabrese (MacBeth's guilt and madness)

"Ghosts" by Michael Jackson (Banquo's ghost)

"Fade to Black" by Metallica (Lady MacBeth's suicide)

"Hunt of the Unnamed" by Twelve Step Rebels (MacDuff gathering rebels together to battle MacBeth - vengeane for his murdered loved ones)

"Blood of My Enemies" by Manowar (MacDuff and the others returning to exact vengeance upon MacBeth)

I could extend the unit by playing a song from the list above and have the class discuss how it relates to Macbeth.

3. Order in the Court!

Another activity that I could use to explore this unit further is a mock trial. Let’s pretend Macbeth was not killed and instead imprisoned and will be put on trial to determine his guilt or innocence. I would assign each student a character to play including a judge and jury as well as all the remaining living characters.

4. A Different Take

At the end of the unit I would assign reading *Lady Macbeth’s Daughter* by Lisa Klein.

“Albia has grown up with no knowledge of her mother of her father, the powerful Macbeth. Instead she knows the dark lure of the Wychelm Wood and the moors, where she's been raised by three strange sisters. It's only when the ambitious Macbeth seeks out the sisters to foretell his fate that Albia's life becomes tangled with the man who leaves nothing but bloodshed in his wake. She even falls in love with Fleance, Macbeth's rival for the throne. Yet when Albia learns that she has the second sight, she must decide whether to ignore the terrible future she foresees—or to change it. Will she be able to save the man she loves from her murderous father? And can she forgive her parents their wrongs, or must she destroy them to save Scotland from tyranny?”

CONCLUSION

This unit of study will bring Shakespeare alive to teens. The graphic novel along with the suggested activities will give old English a new feel. The story in full of depth and suspense which will keep the interest of teens. I think 8th graders will like the scary, dark side of this story. The activities provide scaffolding to help interpret the story and the complex language along with making this a fun and engaging unit. I believe this is a good way to introduce Shakespeare to middle schoolers and prepare them for high school English Language Arts classes.

Works Cited

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