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ENGL 112B

5 May 2015

Unit of Study: Shakespeare vs. Modern Day

Introduction to the Unit – “ Why should we continue to teach Shakespeare?”

When students hear Shakespeare’s name it’s as if a heavy cloud has descended on the classroom as numerous groans and protests begin. Although students claim that Shakespeare is yet another “dead white guy that we have to study”, his work is arguably some of the most memorable and timeless stories, which everyone has heard of. The reason why we should continue to teach William Shakespeare in class is that his pieces are classic, they’re vastly popular throughout the world, and despite the fact that these works are over 400 years old can still be relatable to readers and audiences today.

Shakespeare’s sonnets and plays are classic due to the fact that multiple generations have had to read his works, each breaking apart the words and trying to figure out their true meanings. These classic works such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet* and numerous others have become so popular that they have been converted into the world’s most popular languages and his plays are performed more often than any other playwright. The reason it seems his plays are performed so often is that his stories still ring true today since they deal with a variety of topics such as family, friendship, adolescence, loss, rivalry and of course love. What young adults might not realize is that while the text is older, there are young adults such as *Romeo and Juliet* who are dealing with their first loves, parents who don’t understand them, and the conflict they face

when their friend groups don't get along. It is these deeper meanings that can have students connecting and appreciating Shakespeare's various works, but are only discovered if the student is open minded and willing to dig a little bit deeper.

Explaining the Unit – Types of Shakespearian Plays

In order to have students fully understand Shakespeare they first need to understand his writing style and first and foremost the concept of drama itself. In theatre there are two types of plays, tragedies and comedies. These both have different qualities and guidelines they generally follow. Tragedies have a darker theme to them and generally deal with the fall of the protagonist and end with death and disaster. An example in Shakespeare is *Hamlet*, in which the protagonist Hamlet is trying to avenge his father's death by outing the murderer but havoc ensues and by the end most of the characters are dead. With comedies the outcomes are quite different in which they have happy endings. An example of a piece by Shakespeare is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which four young lovers fall victim to the mischievous fairies in the forest and have a night they will never forget. In comedy there is more than one type, the first being farce which deals with slapstick humor and over exaggeration. An example of this is *A Comedy of Errors* by Shakespeare in which the play revolves around constant mistaken identities and the confusion it causes. Another type is satire, which Shakespeare doesn't really use but is good to know about. In satire it takes current events at the time of its publication and turns it comedic in order to make a political or social statement. However, in Shakespeare's writing he focuses not only on comedies and tragedies, he also focuses on historical plays, and some claim that he was one of the first people to create this genre since it is neither comedic nor tragic.

Launching the Unit – Understanding Shakespeare’s Plays

In trying to get students to connect with Shakespeare’s work I want to make sure that my students fully understand what the script is saying. They need to have a better understanding of unfamiliar Shakespearian terms since it is not only written in a different time period, but Shakespeare was known for creating his own words when he couldn’t find the right ones to use. In order to have students comprehend the text I would like to have them keep a journal as notes and in the weeks leading up to the Shakespeare unit have a few Shakespearian terms as daily vocabulary so that by the time the lesson is being taught they can refer to their notes and have a more efficient time learning and comprehending. I would also like to use “fun” vocabulary worksheets like those provided by Mary B. Collins, in her lesson plans called “A Midsummer Night’s Dream: A Unit Plan”.

I also think that a fun activity to prepare them for the Shakespeare course would be to have them do a daily writing and try to come up with their own words to describe their thoughts just as Shakespeare had done all those years ago. When they create their new words they must also provide a definition as well as use it in a sentence. Of course with any project like this my greatest concern is that some won’t take the assignment seriously and create vulgar terms or terms that resemble vulgar terms.

My “Center Piece” Work – William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

For my main focus piece I have decided to choose *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare since I feel it strays from the commonly read Shakespeare, but is still highly popular. I believe this piece is one of the more enjoyable pieces to read and work with since it is a comedy instead of a tragedy, which most students are used to

reading in their Literature classes. This classic has so many connections that young adults can connect to such as young love, parent vs. child fights, a love that doesn't love you back, friendship as well as some trickery and of course comedic moments. When teaching this lesson I think it is very important to remember to keep the atmosphere studious but also fun because that is the overall theme of the play.

One strategy I think would be initially very helpful for students, prior to reading the scrip, but also very time consuming would be to break down the script and go scene by scene and discuss what is happening so that everyone is on the same page and that the story becomes easier to understand. I think this would be helpful since there are numerous storylines going and various characters. I would ideally like to take apart the play and put together each of the three plot lines in their respective groups and see if it would be easier for the students to read and understand. I feel that one of the reasons this particular script turns students off is not only the language, but also the intertwining of the stories and how easily it is to get loss in the plot, especially when it comes time for the play within the play.

Expanding the Unit – Modern vs. Classical

I also think that in class discussions are a main part of fully understanding the text, and in Gustave Weltsek's article from the *English Journal*, *Using Process Drama to Deconstruct A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he talks about how his students were very vocal in their process of understanding the play. He talked about how students were asked to think of the characters situations and put themselves in their positions. I think it is important to have the students really analyze the characters so that the students can imagine the words and situations being spoken. He mentions that he tries to have

the students connect their lives with that of Hermia. He states, “Hermia runs away because her father disapproves of her love for Lysander. In our fictional world, based on their lives, the student participants encountered the same issue that Shakespeare had some 550 years earlier.” When students further examine the text they really can find connections and make their reading experience more enjoyable.

Once students have fully understood the text the next step would be to have them act out scenes in a modern setting. I know how incredibly difficult it is to have students volunteer to read aloud in class but I would like to try some of the methods used in Claudia Klein Felske’s article, *Beyond the Page: Students as Actor-Readers*, from the *English Journal*. In this article she talks about her experience of having a professional actor educator come in and have her students connect with Shakespeare on a new level. The educator, David Daniel had a group of students read the script of *Othello* line by line and try to figure out what was happening. After they understood the general context he had them get up and without rehearsing try and perform the scene they just read. Of course most students couldn’t fully remember the lines, but the ad-libbing of the context made for many laughs and made the students excited to try and learn the actual lines. Felske goes on to write that the action of slowly adding on to the text

I would like to have them each break off into groups and take on various scenes from the play but try to put it into a modern day setting, while still getting across the same intentions Shakespeare had.

In order to further examine this piece I’ve decided to make the assignments relatable to the teenager of the 21st century. Trish Tillman and the California Shakespeare Theatre’s, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream: A Teacher’s Guide* came up with a

template that acted as a webpage for social media in which students are asked to create a page for a character from the play. I would also like to experiment with the idea of having the students create fake twitter accounts as a character from the play and have them tweet as the character once or twice a day for a week. Previously in another class this assignment was given and was both fun and challenging, while the end results were both creative and hilarious. I think with these easily relatable assignments students would also be more willing to complete them since it deals with familiar territories and allows them to be expressive and creative in their own ways, while showing their comprehension of the text.

Expanding the Unit Continued – Suggested Reading

I also want students to realize that while the story is different, it isn't completely different from other works they've read such as *Romeo and Juliet* or the Manga series *Menga Shakespeare* by a British publishing company called Self Made Hero. *Menga Shakespeare* takes Shakespeare's classic works and turns them into the Japanese comic book style with the abridged story. Also students should know that there are other books that have a similar theme of fantasy, these include, but are not limited to:

- *Harry Potter Series* by J.K. Rowling:

This seven part series follows the life and adventures of a young wizard named Harry Potter and his friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger who are studying at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and their various quests to overthrow the Dark wizard Lord Voldemort. (<https://www.goodreads.com/series/45175-harry-potter>)

- *Grimm's Fairytales* by the Brother's Grimm

This collection of children's stories is known for their darker plots and whimsical tales.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grimms%27_Fairy_Tales)

- *The Darkest Part of the Forest* by Holly Black

Hazel lives with her brother, Ben, in the strange town of Fairfold where humans and fae exist side by side. The faeries' seemingly harmless magic attracts tourists, but Hazel knows how dangerous they can be, and she knows how to stop them. Or she did, once. As the world turns upside down, Hazel tries to remember her years pretending to be a knight. But swept up in new love, shifting loyalties, and the fresh sting of betrayal, will it be enough? (<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/20958632-the-darkest-part-of-the-forest>)

- *The Hunger Games Series* by Suzanne Collins

In a future world the reader is introduced to the main character named Katniss Everdeen. In this future world, every year two tributes from each district are thrown into an arena expected to fight to the death or get knocked out by other means. Only one can survive. (<https://www.goodreads.com/series/73758-the-hunger-games>)

- *Inkheart* by Cornelia Funke

Twelve-year-old Meggie learns that her father, who repairs and binds books for a living, can "read" fictional characters to life when one of those characters abducts them and tries to force him into service. Characters from books literally leap off the page in this engrossing fantasy. Meggie has had her father to herself since her mother went away when she was young. Mo taught her to read when she was five, and the two share a mutual love of books. He can "read" characters out of books. When she was three, he read aloud from a book called Inkheart and released characters into the real world. At

the same time, Meggie's mother disappeared into the story. This "story within a story" will delight not just fantasy fans, but all readers who like an exciting plot with larger-than-life characters.

(http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/28194.Inkheart?from_search=true&search_version=service)

- *Beautiful Creatures* by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl

Is falling in love the beginning . . . or the end? In Ethan Wate's hometown there lies the darkest of secrets . . . There is a girl. Slowly, she pulled the hood from her head . . . Green eyes, black hair. Lena Duchannes. There is a curse. On the Sixteenth Moon, the Sixteenth Year, the Book will take what it's been promised. And no one can stop it. In the end, there is a grave. Lena and Ethan become bound together by a deep, powerful love. But Lena is cursed and on her sixteenth birthday, her fate will be decided. Ethan never even saw it coming. (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/6304335-beautiful-creatures?from_search=true&search_version=service)

Conclusion- Final Thoughts

In conclusion to my lesson I would like to end with a modern twist of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and have my students watch the 2001 film *Get Over It*. This movie depicts high school students who are putting on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but what they fail to realize is that the play has also intertwined with their lives. This movie would not only have the play being performed but would also have normal high school situations that the students could connect further with. While I do understand it would be a stretch, I think it would be a nice "reward" for them to end the lesson with, due to the intense course load the lesson plan would be. With all of these techniques and

lessons I feel that I can change the initial reactions of students when learning about Shakespeare and have them realize that his works aren't obsolete and that they can still be relatable even in modern day.

Works Cited

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Tillman, Trish, ed. "A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Teacher's Guide." *Teacher's Guide* (2009): 1-48. *California Shakespeare Theatre*. California Shakespeare Theatre. Web. 28 Apr. 2015.

Weltsek, Gustave. "Using Process Drama to Deconstruct A Midsummer Night's Dream." *English Journal* Sept. 2005: 75-81. Print.

"Get Over It (film)." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 24 Apr. 2015.

shakesbook



is _____

Networks:

Sex:

Relationship status:

Political views:

Religious views:

▼ Friends

▼ Information

Contact info:

Email:

Current town:

Personal Info

Activities:

Interests:

Favorite music:

Favorite TV shows:

Favorite movies:

Favorite books:

Favorite _____:

▼ Wall







JUGGLE LETTER REVIEW GAME CLUE SHEET - *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

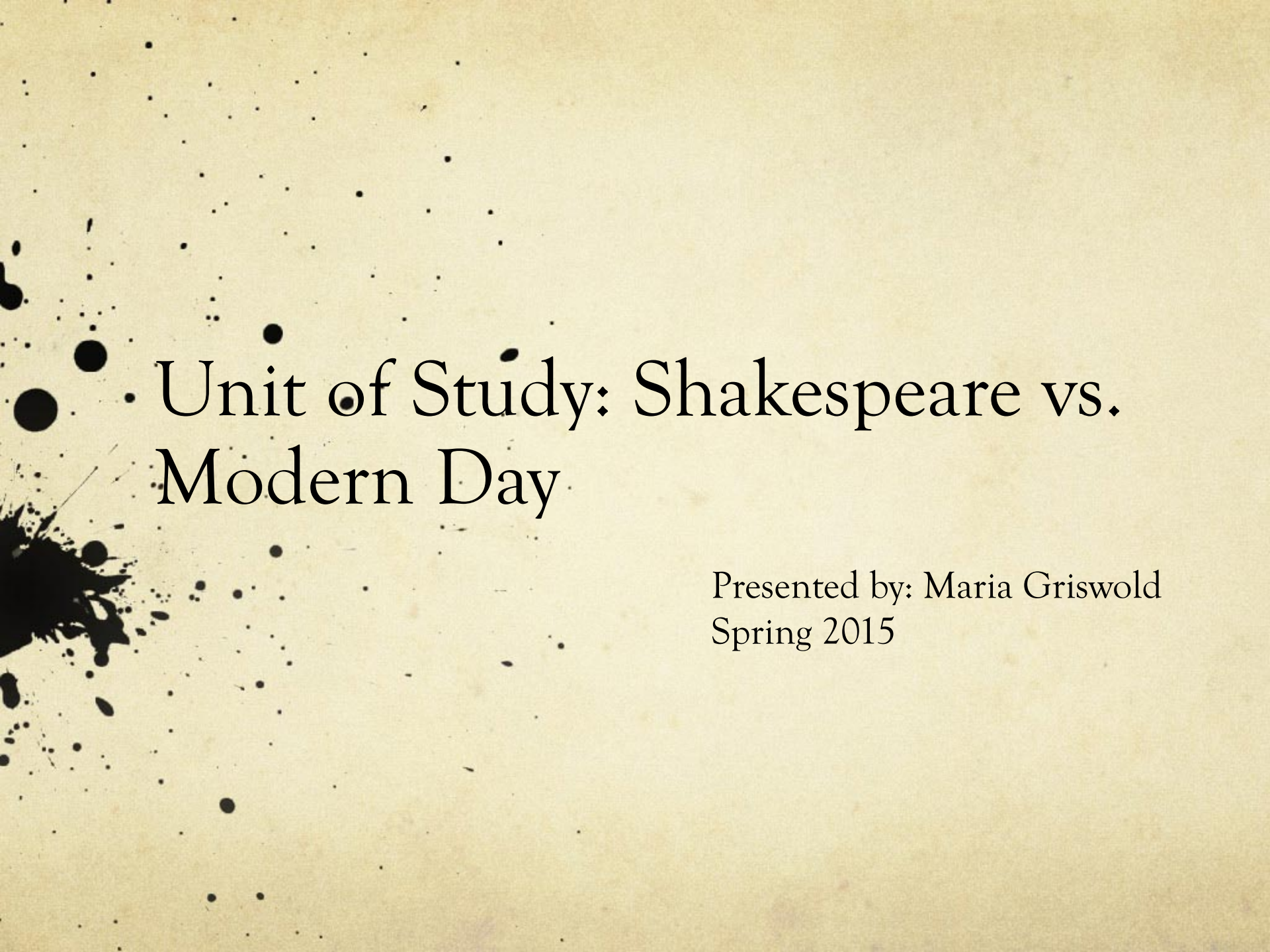
SCRAMBLED	WORD	CLUE
YPIATPOHL	HIPPOLYTA	Queen of the Amazons
ESEY	EYES	Oberon commands Puck to anoint Demetrius's --- as he sleeps
NNU	NUN	Hermia will have to live as one if she refuses to marry Demetrius
NEOBR	OBERON	King of the Fairies
ADYLESRN	LYSANDER	Hermia loves him
UDSIREMET	DEMETRIUS	Helena loves, but he is to marry Hermia
CTA	ACT	Play division
CPKU	PUCK	Robin Goodfellow
UFTL	FLUTE	Plays Thisby
ENCSE	SCENE	Act division
EHAELN	HELENA	Tells Hermia's plans to Demetrius
GPEOLURO	PROLOGUE	Bottom wants one written for the play
MAIHRE	HERMIA	Arranges to meet Lysander in the woods
DIWDGEN	WEDDING	Topic Theseus and Hippolyta discuss at play's start
UENIQC	QUINCE	Write 'Pyramus and Thisby'
EUTONG	TONGUE	'Tie up my love's ---, bring him silently'
SEUEG	EGEUS	Father of Hermia
UTSON	SNOUT	Plays Wall
UNTMGDJEE	JUDGEMENT	'Your eyes must look with his ----'
ATTIANI	TITANIA	Queen of the Fairies
EADMR	DREAM	A Midsummer Night's ---
SAS	ASS	Puck changes Bottom's head to that of an ---
GSTE	STAGE	Where plays are performed
LLWA	WALL	What P & T talked through
GUSN	SNUG	Plays Lion
SSEUTHE	THESEUS	Duke of Athens
RAKAEESPHE	SHAKESPEARE	Author
OTBMTO	BOTTOM	Wants to play all the roles
SDOOW	WOODS	Where Lysander & Hermia agree to meet

VOCABULARY WORD SEARCH - *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

All words in this list are associated with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with an emphasis on the vocabulary words chosen for study in the text. The words are placed backwards, forward, diagonally, up and down. The included words are listed below.

D Z G G B T Y H B N C Q P Y B Y G B R B Z B F W
H T J M E R F A J M H R J R M M Y O F C O P P E
D P K C D S S R I T H F A N W R L R N W H S T Q
F I L C H E D R E B U K E L O A T H E N M I T Y
E U S R P U T L E T E S I T V I N R N C R Q N R
D N W C O H B A N V R N N N A D S E F P O U R K
V B A R R A D E R U E O T B D R O A S L Y U P D
J I H M I E C E O C M N J W E R H T U Z O U N S
K S S M O R T C H O E U U S I G E E A S R U Z T
G N A A O R S I R C R S U E G S U D U G R T T D
G N A F G I E P O E A O N N U P T I E M E E E J
F Z R V D E N D J N I O I O B V C Q L L A R P T
B E H G E L K R Q C B Y R R C J G P P E U T R T
P V T J P R T T A H R O A B L K D A F J D Y I C
C B M D S X Y D T R M I L B K R H H R K G X K C
G S K Z Y H U S A A D J S Z D C X E H K S W K R
H B R Q N A V T N N J S M E R O P M E T X E L J

ABJURE	CONSECATED	FRET	RECOUNT
AMIALE	DISCOURSE	KINDRED	REVENUE
AMOROUS	DISCRETION	KNAVERY	RHEUMATIC
AUDACIOUS	DOTAGE	LOATH	SHROUD
BASE	DULCET	MIRTH	SPRITE
BEGUILED	ENAMORED	PERFORCE	SPURN
BOWER	ENMITY	PERJURED	TARRYING
BRAKE	ENTWIST	PERSUASION	UPBRAID
BROACHED	EXTEMPORE	PROMONTORY	VALOR
CHAPLET	FILCHED	PURGE	VISAGE
CHINK	FLOUT	REBUKE	WANE

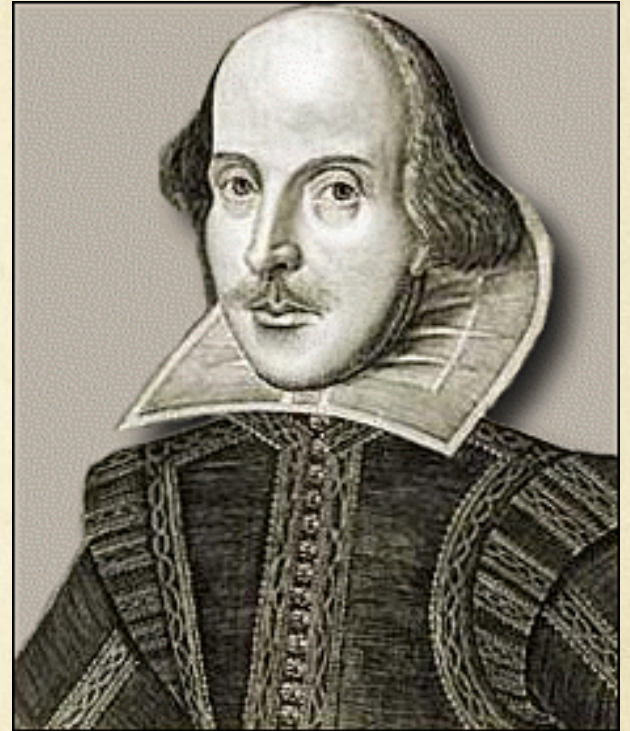
The background is a light beige or cream color, resembling aged paper. It is decorated with numerous small black dots and larger, more dramatic black ink splatters. A prominent, dark, irregular ink blot is located on the left side, with several smaller splatters radiating from it. The overall aesthetic is that of a vintage or artistic presentation.

Unit of Study: Shakespeare vs. Modern Day

Presented by: Maria Griswold
Spring 2015

Why Still Teach Shakespeare?

- Classic
- Popularity
- The stories still ring true today



Types of Shakespearian Plays

- Comedy
- Tragedy
- Historical



Launching the Unit

- Understanding unfamiliar Shakespearian terms
- Breaking apart the script
- In class discussions

Launching the Unit Continued

JUGGLE LETTER REVIEW GAME CLUE SHEET - *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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H T J M E R F A J M H R J R M M Y O F C O P P E
D P K C D S S R I T H F A N W R L R N W H S T Q
F I L C H E D R E B U K E L O A T H E N M I T Y
E U S R P U T L E T E S I T V I N R N C R Q N R
D N W C O H B A N V R N N N A D S E F P O U R K
V B A R R A D E R U E O T B D R O A S L Y U P D
J I H M I E C E O C M N J W E R H T U Z O U N S
K S S M O R T C H O E U U S I G E E A S R U Z T
G N A A O R S I R C R S U E G S U D U G R T T D
G N A F G I E P O E A O N N U P T I E M E E E J
F Z R V D E N D J N I O I O B V C Q L L A R P T
B E H G E L K R Q C B Y R R C J G P P E U T R T
P V T J P R T T A H R O A B L K D A F J D Y I C
C B M D S X Y D T R M I L B K R H H R K G X K C
G S K Z Y H U S A A D J S Z D C X E H K S W K R
H B R Q N A V T N N J S M E R O P M E T X E L J

ABJURE	CONSECATED	FRET	RECOUNT
AMIALE	DISCOURSE	KINDRED	REVENUE
AMOROUS	DISCRETION	KNAVERY	RHEUMATIC
AUDACIOUS	DOTAGE	LOATH	SHROUD
BASE	DULCET	MIRTH	SPRITE
BEGUILED	ENAMORED	PERFORCE	SPURN
BOWER	ENMITY	PERJURED	TARRYING
BRAKE	ENTWIST	PERSUASION	UPBRAID
BROCHED	EXTEMPORE	PROMONTORY	VALOR
CHAPLET	FILCHED	PURGE	VISAGE
CHINK	FLOUT	REBUKE	WANE

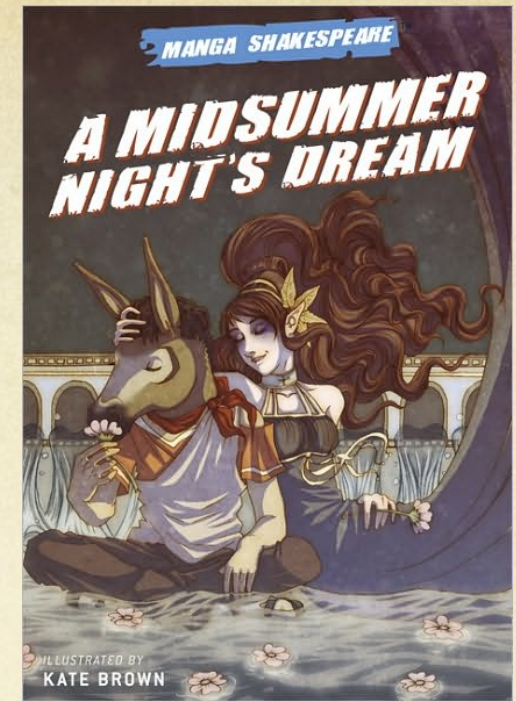
A Midsummer Night's Dream

- Popular, but not as common
- More enjoyable to read vs. a tragedy
- Multiple roles for students to read



Expanding the Unit

- Compare it to works they already know as well as other modern works
 - i.e. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Menga Shakespeare*



- Connect students to the characters
- Students act out scenes in a modern setting
- Suggested Readings



Modern Connections

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is _____

Networks:

Sex:

Relationship status:

Political views:

Religious views:

▼ Friends

▼ Information

Contact info:

Email:

Current town:

Personal info

Activities:

Interests:

Favorite music:

Favorite TV shows:

Favorite movies:

Favorite books:

Favorite _____:

▼ Wax

<https://youtu.be/-vT8M7qsdj0>