

My Mercy is a Gamble

The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare

Jessica Wiebe

English 8



Unit Title: My Mercy is a Gamble: *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare

Name: Jessica Wiebe

Subject: English Language Arts

Grade: 8 (but could be used at different grades with modification)

Lessons: 17 Lessons

Time In Weeks: 4-4 ½

Introduction

This unit is based on the comedic play *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare. The themes accentuated in the play produce much discussion on topics and issues that are still prevalent today. The unit uses various reading and listening techniques, including oral reading for the students to hone their reading skills, observation of film clips that add life to the play, and representation through student performance. This unit includes lessons that are focused around specific scenes from each act of the play, but eliminates much of the play due to the unit's focus on specific themes.

Rationale

This unit's main point is to introduce the students to Shakespeare, assist them in the comprehension of old English language, and introduce them to the concepts of mercy and judgment. Although this play is traditionally taught at a third year university level, some of the concepts in this play are ones with which students are able to interact. These difficult topics are an excellent starting point for critical thinking, as

most students have preformed ideas about the themes of mercy, judgment, and lottery. Students, then, are given lessons that appear to be quite simple in format, but the discussion that will erupt from each of these lessons is the “hidden” curriculum that allows for critical thinking, change of attitude, and evaluation of both the play, the themes, and one’s own thinking. The point of this unit is not to read the whole play and study it as a whole, but to take pieces of the play that represent the whole, and to explore those themes in the light of the lines that Shakespeare composed. Near the end of the unit, a guest speaker is invited into the class to talk about his or her own experiences of prejudice, suffering, and mercy. The guest speaker forces students to accept and realize that the themes presented in the play are not “dead,” but rather that it is their responsibility to create a positive world for themselves and others to live in.

Relevant Ministry PLOs

A1 interact and collaborate in pairs and groups to

- support the learning of self and others
- explore experiences, ideas, and information
- understand the perspectives of others
- comprehend and respond to a variety of **texts**
- create a variety of **texts**

A2 express ideas and information in a variety of situations and **forms** to

- explore and respond

- recall and describe
 - narrate and explain
- persuade and support
- engage and entertain

A3 listen to comprehend, interpret, and **evaluate** ideas and information from a variety of **texts**, considering

- purpose
- messages
- **tone**
- **structure**
- effects and impact
- bias

A4 select and use a range of **strategies** to interact and collaborate with others in pairs and groups, including

- selecting methods for working together effectively
- listening actively
- contributing ideas and recognizing the ideas of others
- demonstrating awareness of diverse **points of view**
- reaching consensus or agreeing to differ

A5 select and use a range of **strategies** to prepare oral communications, including

- interpreting a task and setting a purpose
- considering audience
- generating ideas
- making connections among relevant knowledge and experiences
- planning and rehearsing presentations

A7 use listening **strategies** to understand, recall, and **analyse** a variety of **texts**, including

- connecting to prior knowledge
- making reasonable predictions
- identifying main points
- generating thoughtful questions
 - clarifying and confirming meaning

A9 speak and listen to interpret and **analyse** ideas and information from **texts**, by

- examining and comparing ideas and elements within and among **texts**
 - identifying perspectives
- identifying bias and contradictions

B1 read, both collaboratively and independently, to comprehend a variety of literary **texts**, including

- literature reflecting a variety of times, places, and perspectives
- literature reflecting a variety of prose **forms**
 - poetry in a variety of narrative and lyric **forms**
- significant works of Canadian literature (e.g., the study of plays, short stories, poetry, or novels)
- traditional **forms** from Aboriginal and other cultures
- student-generated material

B2 read, both collaboratively and independently, to comprehend a variety of **information** and persuasive **texts** with some complexity of ideas and **form**, such as

- articles and reports
- biographies and autobiographies
- textbooks, magazines, and newspapers
- print and electronic reference material
- advertising and promotional material
- opinion-based material
- student-generated material

B5 before reading and viewing, select and use a range of **strategies** to anticipate content and construct meaning, including

- interpreting a task

- setting a purpose

- accessing prior knowledge

- making logical predictions

- generating guiding questions

B8 explain and support personal responses to **texts**, by

- making connections with prior knowledge and experiences

- describing reactions and emotions

- generating thoughtful questions

- developing opinions using evidence

C2 write purposeful **information texts** that express ideas and information to

- explore and respond

- record and describe

- **analyse** and explain

- persuade

- engage

C5 select and use a range of **strategies** to generate, develop, and organize ideas for writing and

representing, including

- making connections
- setting a purpose and considering audience
- gathering and summarizing ideas from personal interest, knowledge, and inquiry
- **analysing** writing samples or models
- setting class-generated criteria

C9 write and **represent** to interpret and **analyse** ideas and information from **texts**, by

- making and supporting judgments
- examining and comparing ideas and elements within and among **texts**
- identifying **points of view**
 - identifying bias and contradictions

My Own Learning Objectives:

Students will gain confidence in their writing abilities.

Students will create a sense of community in the classroom.

Students will become comfortable discussing difficult topics.

Students will think critically about their existing notions and opinions.

Students will encourage their fellow students in new adventures.

Students will become motivated to create a better world to live in.

Assessment: explanation and breakdown

The assessment categories are broken down into the three topics addressed in the Prescribed Learning Outcomes: oral language, written language, and reading. I put a large emphasis on discussion and in-class assignments because this unit is designed to be a discussion unit. Many of the topics addressed cannot be addressed without plenty of discussion. The second emphasis is on interpretation and understanding of Shakespearian language. Therefore, the performance is weighted quite heavily as well. The debate requires an understanding of the whole play, Although the last assignment appears to be a large assignment, in reality the students have done most of it throughout the rest of the unit, it is merely a test of understanding what they have learned, or using their notes to create something new. However, I guess that most students will not realize this and will find this assignment daunting and difficult, therefore I am taking a middle ground and giving the assignment some value, but not as much as the other two big assignments. The last two major assignments will be graded out of 10 percent each because they both require students to make inferences about themselves through reading, viewing, and listening. This is an important skill, but does not require as much academic work, and therefore is not weighted as heavily.

In-class assignments/Discussion 25%

Performance	20%
Letter to Antonio	10%
Response to Guest Speaker	10%
Debate	20%
Quotation/Explanation	15%

Unit Outline: *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare (note that all lessons are based on 75 minute blocks)

Lesson #	PLOs in Lesson	Instructional Objectives	Student Activities	Assessment Strategies	Materials
Lesson 1: Let me Introduce You...	A1 A2 A9	SWBAT identify 5 things they learned about Shakespeare or his time. SWBAT write personal responses to questions that will relate to the themes in the play.	Read and discuss the information about Shakespeare. Discuss and write responses to the questions.	Participation. Formative assessment, informal observation. Responses. Group work assessment.	Photocopies of "Times of Shakespeare." Questions
Lesson 2: Isn't it funny?	A3 A9 B2	(continuation with first objective from lesson 1) SWBAT identify the five elements of comedy.	Comparison of the types of comedy. Read the story of the Good Samaritan.	Formative assessment. Students write down the list of 5 comedic elements.	Shakespeare information sheet. Clips different types of comedy.
Lesson 3: How does this relate?	A3 B2	(continue with first objective from lesson 1) SWBAT retell the story of the	Read	Rubric created with the	Shakespeare information sheet. Bibles

		Good Samaritan in colloquial language using 5 essential elements of the story.	Pick out elements Group partner work	students for performances.	Ideas of themes to do.
Lesson 4: It's all about the truth and lies	A3 B2	SWBAT differentiate between fact and fiction in statements.	Read/perform out loud Work individually or in groups to answer questions.	Completion	Act 1 Scene 1 in play. Character motivation worksheet.
Lesson 5: 10 things I hate about you	A2 B1	SWBAT find 8 quotes that suggest that Shylock hates Antonio.	Read/perform out loud Work in groups or as a class to find quotations.	Completion	Act 1 Scene 3 Worksheet
Lesson 6: Find me the themes	A3 B1	SWBAT select three themes that appear in the first act.	Forced similarities Brainstorming Judgment/ Mercy The Lottery?	Correct response answers	Act 1 Scene 2
Lesson 7: It's all the same.	A2 B2	SWBAT compare and contrast the story of the Good Samaritan and Act 1 of the <i>Merchant of Venice</i> .	What/ so what worksheet Group work/ class work Individual work	Supporting answers rubric, created with students.	Act 1 complete Worksheet Poster paper
Lesson 8: Free to choose who I love	A1 B1	SWBAT write their opinion in reference to the play, using three quotations.	Free write at the beginning of class Lottery (service) "What do you want in a husband or wife?" Paragraph writing	Discussion, subjective marking.	Act 2 Scene 1, 3.20-21, and 5
Lesson 9: Watch me translate	A5 A7 B1 C9	SWBAT describe a set of lines in colloquial language, highlighting 5 details of the lines. SWBAT perform their lines in front of their class. (NOTE: this will take several classes, and will be done in conjunction with act 3).	Performances Translation Group work	Correctness of translation, marked by rubric. Performances marked by rubric.	Act 2, scenes 6 and 9.

Lesson 10: Hath Not a Jew?	A9 B2	SWBAT justify Shylock's anger.	Listen to film speech Worksheet Practice performances	Correct response Justification (subjective)	Act 3 Scene 1 Worksheets performances
Lesson 11: "Just so you know, you've condemned me to death"	A1 B1	SWBAT compose a letter from Antonio to Bassanio regarding his impending death.	Watch film selections Write letters Brainstorm in class Observe performances (or allow them time to practice)	Rubric	Act 3 Scene 2 performances
Lesson 12: "I know what will happen"	A3 B1	SWBAT write a paragraph predicting what will happen in the next scene.	Read Observe performances	Performance rubric	Explain Act Scene 3, read scene 4 performances
Lesson 13: "I get what I deserve!" (This lesson will likely take 3 to 4 classes)	A1 B1 C2	SWBAT formulate debate notes arguing for or against the payment of a pound of flesh. SWBAT compare the symbol of the pound of flesh to a story in the Bible. (Burry my talent story)	Observe performances (if any left?) Spend 1/3 class reading, 1/3 doing debate notes, and 1/3 watching performances. If performances are done, do 1/2 and 1/2 Film (if appropriate)	Performance rubric	Performances Act 4
Lesson 14: "I am justified in my actions"	A1	SWBAT perform a courtroom scene.	Debate Group preparation for the debates	Debate marking rubric (oral presentation rubric)	Performances Debate notes Rubric Scene from movie?
Lesson 15: "I will keep my ring."	A4 B1 B5	SWBAT predict what will happen in the fifth act. SWBAT evaluate whether it is more important to keep a	10 minute free write on prediction Discussion in class Reading of act/scene Illustrate their choice.	Completion Justification (subjective) Rubric?	Act 5 Scene from film?

		promise or to show appreciation.			
Lesson 16: “There is no new idea in the world”	B1 B8 C5	SWBAT compare their life experiences to that of the guest speaker or film.	Journal writing Reflection upon experience Identification of themes that come up (and comparison to <i>Merchant</i>) Contemplate why teacher would have the speaker come in.	Subjective marking /10 Completion	Guest speaker or film
Lesson 17: “Let’s just Rap it up”	A9 C2	SWBAT identify a theme in the play and write 15 quotations (at least 2 from each act) that support this theme. SWBAT justify their choices of quotations.	Collaboration in groups Writing on board for first act	Accuracy of quotations: one mark for quotations, one for support, one for accuracy (for a total of 45 marks)	Play Poster Paper

Reflections: (To be done after each lesson)