Three-Week Lesson Plan on
Shakespeare’s Macbeth

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Day 1

State Standard: Cite the evidence in the text that most strongly supports specific analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Objective: Students will learn to plan and present different sides of an argument with sufficient evidence for their claims. They will prepare for their final persuasive paper by learning the basic elements of an argument/debate and how to find evidence for their claim.

Activities:

• Have class members come prepared to class, having read “Trifles” on their own.
• As students walk into class, have them start a journal write: Is it okay to do something that is not always right? Can there ever be a reason for lying, or stealing, etc.?)?
• Split the class in half with random selection of students (numbering off into twos would suffice). Have them divide desks in half, facing each other into the center of the room. Half the class will defend the women characters’ actions in “Trifles,” and the other half will defend the men characters’ actions/claims. Give each group approximately 10-15 minutes to look over the text of “Trifles,” review the story, and write down the main defensive arguments they will use in debate.

Questions for them to ponder during the debate: (One team will answer these questions in favor of the women, and one team will answer them in favor of the men.)

1. Was Mrs. Wright justified in her actions?
2. Do you think that Mrs. Wright actually killed her husband? Why or why not?
3. Do you think Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters were justified in keeping the evidence from Mr. Henderson?
4. Did Mr. Wright deserve his end?

• Short Lecture: Teach students the “rules” of debate: One team presents their ideas and why they believe their side to be true; then the other side responds to the opposing team with their additional ideas. After that, other team members can join in the debate. You can use a soft ball to throw to a person when he/she has something to say, or call on people as they raise their hand.
• Class debate about “Trifles.”
• Journal Write: Have students record in their journals what they thought about the debate. What was their original view of the story? Which side was their team assigned? What was their final view of the story? Did it change; why or why not?
• Class Discussion: Let students share what they wrote in their journals about their experience with the debate. Bring the discussion together by relating the debate/argument with Macbeth.
- Are the characters in the play justified in their deeds?
- Is fate a justifiable reason for doing certain things? Is guilt or insanity? What about persuasion from outside sources?

• List the characters of Macbeth together as a class. Next to each character write what their relation is to Macbeth, or how they know Macbeth. This list will be beneficial to them when choosing their character for their persuasive essay. Introduce the persuasive essay. They will choose one character to “defend” in their essay. They can choose any character. They will defend that character in justifying their actions using textual evidence.
• Let the students see an example of how Macbeth might be justified because of the witches’ “prophecy” about him.
• Watch short video clip of the witches.

Assessments/Assignments: Write down a character they think would be interesting to “defend” in their final persuasive essay and why. Assign them to read Macbeth Act I, scenes 1-4 outside of class.

Day 2

State Standard: Read literature independently, proficiently, and fluently in grade 11, text complexity.

Objective: Students will better understand Shakespearean language and the basic story line of Macbeth by reading Shakespeare aloud in groups, writing it in their own words, acting it out, and discussing the history of language during Shakespeare’s time. They will demonstrate their commitment to understanding Shakespeare by writing down “tools” they will use as they read through Macbeth.

Activities:
• Disequilibrium: Come into the class talking in Shakespearean language in the voice of one of the witches in Macbeth (you can use exact dialogue from Macbeth or just talk similarly to how the witches would). Get them thinking about why it was easier for them to understand the language just from my acting.
• Split the class into four separate groups and have each read a different scene from Act I (with different readers for different characters). When they have read the scene, pick a scribe in the group to write down what has happened in the scene.
• Have the groups prepare a very short (less than 5-minute) acting-out presentation of their scene with dramatic elements to enhance meaning.
• Let them present the different scenes in order in front of the class.
• With the whole class, explain that Shakespeare is sometimes hard to understand because we don’t speak the way they did when Shakespeare wrote his plays. Acting out or putting things into our own words can sometimes help us understand meaning.
• Brief history lesson: Teach briefly the time period of Shakespeare – how he lived during the times when the King James Bible was written, so his language sounds similar. It takes practice to understand his language. Encourage them to read out loud for their out-of-class reading assignments and to not give up as they wade through the difficult language.
• Have them get back into their groups, discuss, and write down different tools that may be helpful when trying to understand Shakespeare.

Assessments/Assignments: Hand in their “tools” at the end of class with group member names at the top of paper. Assign them to read Act I, Scenes 5-7 for tomorrow.

Day 3

State Standard: Analyze how complex characters, including those with conflicting motivations or divided loyalties, develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Objective: Analyze the character of Lady Macbeth and why she chooses to convince Macbeth to do what he does. Show their understanding of the complexity of characters by discussing the nature of Lady Macbeth and the theme of persuasion.

Activities:
- Journal Write as students come into class: How can peer pressure often convince us to do things we wouldn’t normally do?
- Discuss why Lady Macbeth is convincing Macbeth to kill Duncan and why he gives in.
  - What’s so convincing about a wife or a woman?
  - Would the same thing happen if it was the other way around? How would it be different or the same if it was a man convincing a woman?
  - What tactics does Lady Macbeth use when trying to persuade Macbeth? Are these tactics effective?
  - Do you think Macbeth is going to give in, based on evidence in the play so far?
- Discuss with a partner: Do we sometimes think too much about what others say? When things are just hear-say, why do we put so much weight on what we hear?
- Write individually: Write about a time when you acted on something you heard, but you later found out it was just a rumor. What consequences did it bring?
- Tell the students what you wrote and discuss as a class the consequences that can come from acting on rumors.
- Discuss what they think Macbeth’s consequences will be if he chooses to be persuaded by Lady Macbeth and the witches’ prophecy?

Assessments/Assignments: Turn in individual writing as they leave class. For Tomorrow: Draw the action of the play as a time line (the five most important events that have occurred so far, in their opinion). Read Act II, Scene 1-2.

Day 4

State Standard: Propel conversations forward by asking questions that test evidence and by sharing findings and that clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
Objective: Demonstrate understanding of how the theme of guilt is starting to play out in Macbeth by identifying specific symbols and signs that show guilt.

Activities:
- Class discussion on theme of guilt. Identify together some of the signs of guilt being shown in the play so far (blood, anger, fear, washing hands, denial, hallucinations, etc.) Write ideas on the board as they are presented, and find them in the book.

Questions to ponder during discussion:
- Do you think Macbeth feels guilty for killing?
- Do you think Lady Macbeth feels guilty for convincing Macbeth to kill?
- Does she use guilt to get Macbeth to kill in the first place? (Think about the fact that she says that she would tear a suckling child from her breast and bash its brains if she had so sworn.)

- Pair Share: Turn to partner and share the action of the play you drew outside of class. Discuss together how the things they have drawn have lead up to Macbeth’s actions (and guilt) so far in the play.
- Individual Work: Write down any questions you might have about what is going on in the play or words you don’t understand that seem to have great meaning in the play. (e.g. What is a Thane? What significance do the witches have in the play? Why does Macbeth hallucinate about a dagger falling on Duncan?) Write questions on sticky notes. When you have written your questions go up to the front of the room and stick your questions to the chalkboard. Then look at other’s questions. Write down (or take down from the board) any questions that you would like to try to figure out on your own.
- Answer/discuss a few questions that are possible to answer right in class. For other questions that require more study and thought, have students take them home to look up outside of class. Teacher can take some, too, if they are especially difficult. We will continue discussing the questions tomorrow in class.
- Individual work: Write about and choose character they want to “defend” in final persuasive paper.

Assessments/Assignments: Hand in their time line drawings. For tomorrow, read Act II, Scene 3-4. Turn in character choice tomorrow.

Day 5

State Standard: Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a drama.

Objective: Analyze Macbeth’s soliloquy to better understand Shakespeare’s use of language, drama, and theme-development.

Activities:
- Group activity: Soliloquy buster for Macbeth’s soliloquy (act II, Scene 1, end of scene). Stand in two equal lines, facing each other. Alternate reading from one line to another, switching sides each time they come to a punctuation mark.
• Group activity: Walk in a circle, reading out loud Macbeth’s soliloquy. Change directions every time they come to a punctuation mark.
• Class reflection: Have the students sit back into seats and discuss if they understood more or less from the soliloquy busters. How did this reading help them understand Macbeth’s feelings? Does the soliloquy work as a dialogue?
• Read out loud as a class again, but start out quiet and build volume until they are almost shouting by the end of the soliloquy.
• Group Discussion: Now how do you feel about the soliloquy? How did the crescendo volume change the way you felt or how Macbeth might have felt? How could this be a representation of Macbeth’s growing insanity as his guilt builds up more and more throughout the play? What figures of speech stood out more as the class implemented soliloquy busters?
• Small groups of four or five: Identify as many figures of speech as possible in the soliloquy, paying particular attention to imagery. Then on a piece of paper answer the questions: How do the figures of speech and imagery add meaning in this soliloquy? How do they represent Macbeth’s developing nature? (Gather the papers to check)
• Assign groups for final acting-out/movie project. Each will be given a different scene to either act out in front of the class or make a movie of. They will be done in different “styles” – country western, gangster, 60’s, hick, etc.
• Give students remainder of the class period to get together with groups and discuss if they want to make a movie or present in class, and what style they want to do their scene in.

Assessments/Assignments: Have students turn in character choice. For tomorrow, read Act III, Scene 1-2 and continue thinking about final project.

Day 6

State Standard: Conventions in writing and speaking: determine word meanings; determine or clarify meanings of unknown of multiple-meaning words, etc.

Objective: Write vocabulary they don’t understand in Macbeth. Use context clues to figure out the meaning if possible. Discuss the use of Knock-knock jokes and how we make meaning.

Activities:
• Individually, have students write down a few appropriate knock-knock jokes that they know.
• Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 to share a few of their knock-knock jokes. As a group, have them pick one or two of their favorites to share for the class.
• Call on each group to tell one or two of their group’s jokes. Discuss as a class where they think knock-knock jokes came from.
• Ask for a volunteer to read the porter’s speech with knock-knock jokes (Act II, Scene 3). Discuss as a class if they think the porter is telling knock-knock jokes, or what he means if he’s not telling knock-knock jokes.
  - How can we interpret the porter’s speech or jokes?
- Is this where knock-knock jokes came from? (From the time of Shakespeare)
- How, if this wasn’t intended to be funny, has this emerged into being something funny over time? (When you’re lonely and no one responds to your knocks, do you just start talking to yourself and making up jokes to make yourself laugh?)

- Have students pick out and write down five to ten words they did not understand from reading thus far. (Act I through the beginning of Act III)
- With a partner, have them pick two or three of those words to see if they can figure out the meaning based on the context of the passage. They can use similar techniques we used as a class to figure out the meaning of the porter’s knock-knock jokes. After they have looked at the context and made their best observations of the meaning, have them look the words up in a dictionary. They will write these definitions down and continue this exercise for the remainder of the week. On “Day 10,” they will hand in a list of 20 words and definitions they have found from their reading in Macbeth.
- The remainder of the class will be for groups to get together and discuss their final acting-out/movie project. The teacher will come around to each group and mark off if they have decided on their “style” and genre of acting out or making a movie.

Assessments/Assignments: For the remaining week, students will compose a list of words and definitions from their readings that they will turn in on Day 10. Students will know exactly what they are doing for the final project, and they will have written down contact information from their groups. For tomorrow, they will read Act III, Scenes 3-4.

Day 7

State Standard: Plan and deliver relevant and sufficient evidence in support of findings and claims that listeners can follow reasoning, adjusting to certain audiences.

Objective: Prepare for final paper by demonstrating a deeper understanding of different characters’ perspectives and how their actions can be debated, tried, and even justified.

Activities:
- Conduct a similar debate as “Trifles” on Day 1, except with the characters’ actions in Macbeth. Divide desks in half, having the two teams face each other. Have one half defend Macbeth’s actions and the other half defend the victims of Macbeth.
- Give each group about 10 minutes to gather their main arguments/evidence for their side and conduct debate in the same manner as first debate.
- Class discussion after the debate. We will look analyze the debate and ponder on these questions:
  - Was Macbeth justified in wanting Banquo and Fleance killed?
  - Was he reacting out of greed for the power he had, or was he persuaded to the point that he couldn’t help it?
  - Did he kill Banquo because he thought Banquo suspected he had killed Duncan? How does guilt affect our deeds? (Ponder the topic of lying and how that leads to another lie)
- Was it getting easier for Macbeth to kill those he was close to after killing Duncan? (The witches had prophesied that the seed of Banquo would rule for many generations.)
- Does insanity, persuasion, fate, or other forces influencing Macbeth justify his deeds? (think about gang members who are put into circumstances where their deeds are not always entirely self-driven)
- Why did Lady Macbeth convince her husband to kill Duncan? Is she to blame more than Macbeth for his murderous deeds?
- Why are the witches telling Macbeth all these prophesies? Do they know that it will lead to such bloody deeds?
  - Journal Write: Write down your thoughts on if you believe every person is accountable for their own choices or if outside forces have a major impact on people’s choices.
  - Pair Share: Turn to a classmate and share your thoughts of what you wrote. Tell each other who they are writing about in final persuasive paper (the character you will “defend,” even if they may seem like a bad character).

Assessments/Assignments: For tomorrow read Act III, Scenes 5-6. Rough draft due tomorrow.

Day 8

State Standard: Strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific task and context.

Objective: Show understanding of basic editing and grammar skills by editing a piece of work and turning it in.

Activities:
  - Editing Activity- hand out a jumbled passage from *Macbeth* to edit individually and then as a group.
  - Lecture: teach about basic editing skills (organization/order, word choice, and grammar). Demonstrate how peer review can be scary because we are throwing ourselves out into the open. Make sure they remember to not get too attached to their papers – it’s not personal. Have them always think of good things to say rather than bad.
  - Individual Work: Edit jumbled passage from *Macbeth* to edit.

Passage to jumble: (Jumble according to your students’ needs and abilities. It should not be impossible for them to fix.) : “To be thus is nothing; But to be safely thus: our fear in Banquo Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature reigns that which would be fear’d: ‘tis much he dares; And, to that dauntless temper of his mind, he hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour to act in safety. There is none but he whose being I do fear: and, inder him, my genius is rebuk’d; as, it is said, Mark Antony’s was by Caesar. He chid the sisters whom first they put the name of king upon me, and bade them speak to him; then, prophet-like, they hail’d him father to a line of kings: Upon my dead they plac’d a fruitless crown, And put a barren scepter in my gripe, thence to be wrench’d with an unlineal hand. No son of mine succeeding. If’t be so, for Banquo’s issues have I fil’d my mind; For them the gracious Duncan have I murder’d; Put rancours in the vessel
of my peace only for them; and mine eternal jewel given to the common enemy of man, to make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings! Rather than so, come, fate, into the list, And champion me to the utterance!"

- Get into groups and talk about different editing possibilities and ideas they came up with on their own.
- Class Discussion on peer review: Focus on ideas and flow for peer review. Tell them that if they notice grammatical errors then they can fix them, but their comments need to focus on their ideas and comments about their character they decided to defend. Their job is NOT to discredit their ideas. They are not arguing with their paper.
- Get into groups of three to peer review their rough draft persuasive papers. Their papers should be read and reviewed by the other two people in their groups so pace the groups. Should leave last 15 minutes of class for this activity. 5 minutes for each reading.

Assessments/Assignments: For tomorrow, read Act IV, Scenes 1-2.

Day 9

State Standard: Initiate and participate effectively in group discussion on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues being studied in class.

Objective: Demonstrate understanding of themes and symbols presented in Macbeth by participating in graded group discussions.

Activities:

- Reiterate what they wrote about from last class period – are Macbeth’s decisions his own fault or outside sources (witches, Lady Macbeth, possibly insanity, etc.)?
- Pair Share: To get them thinking out loud, have them discuss briefly their ideas.
- Fish bowl discussion about fate vs. agency- is Macbeth’s character the witches fault?
- Form a fishbowl with their chairs. Four chairs in the middle of the circle. Have four people fill the middle seats. Everyone must participate in the fish bowl to receive credit, but they must make at least one, well-established, intelligent comment before leaving the circle. After someone has spoken, a student can tap him/her on the shoulder to trade places and become a part of the fish bowl. Once in the middle, students cannot be tapped out until they have commented.
- Group discussion: Fate vs. Agency: Is Macbeth’s character the witches fault? Does Macbeth do all of his deadly deeds in the name of Fate or are some of his actions motivated by the fact that he wants to change fate?
- Individual work: Write what you have learned about today’s discussion. Did you change your mind about some things? Why? If you were planning on doing Macbeth for your final paper did the discussion give you good ideas about what you could write about? Did the discussion give you ideas for your paper even if you aren’t writing about Macbeth? (Turn in this piece of paper)

Assessments/Assignments: For Tomorrow finished reading Act IV.
Day 10

State Standard: Cite evidence in text that most strongly supports analysis.

Objective: Discuss the different characters and their development within the play as well as their role.

Activities:
- Oral Reading - Macduff.
- Journal Write: How would you feel if someone hurt you in such a way that you felt that nothing you could do for revenge would be hurtful enough to them to exact revenge? What is revenge? Is it ever good? Does it ever really help anything? What are the consequences of characters seeking revenge in Macbeth?
- Read out loud as a class Act IV, Scene 3 (starting at the part where Ross says “No mind that’s honest / But in it shares some woe; though the main part pertains to you alone” Read through end of the scene.)
- Class discussion: What does Macduff mean when he says “He has no children”? (Idea could be that the fact that Macbeth has no children means that Macduff feels that there cannot be ‘great revenge’)? What does Macduff plan to do now? Why did Macbeth have Macduff’s family killed?
- Divide students into groups of three or four to create character profiles – have them make a list of true/false statements and adjectives that describe each main character in Macbeth.
- Have them discuss what each of the lesser characters’ roles have been in the building up of the plot and Macbeth’s character/actions.

Assessments/Assignments: For tomorrow, read Act V, Scene 1-4

Day 11

State Standard: Synthesize information presented visually or multimodally with other information presented orally, noting all discrepancies between the data that emerge as a result.

Objective: Understand and become more excited over Shakespeare by watching the action on film.

Activities:
- Video Clip of most of Act 5 of Macbeth.
- Class discussion: How does seeing it acted out help in understanding Shakespeare? (Explain that Shakespeare was written to be acted out and not to be read.) What did they notice was different or similar from the movie and the book?
- Different video clip of the part of Act 5 (a different interpretation).
- Class discussion: Which film did they like better and why? Explain how different interpretations enhance certain things more than others. This can relate to their own projects, how they may be emphasizing certain parts of their scene more than others might. The different styles they are acting out in also make a difference in interpretation.
• Meet with final project groups to do more work on projects. (Note: projects should already be planned on what they are doing – acting or movie – with the style they are doing it in. They will be working towards a final product)
• Teacher will call students to her desk individually during this time to talk about their persuasive paper – what character they are defending, what questions they have, how it’s coming along, etc.

Assessments/Assignments: For tomorrow, read Act V, Scenes 5-8

Day 12

State Standard: Analyze in detail the development and refinement of theme or central idea in a text, including how it emerges and how it is shaped and refined by specific details.

Objective: Analyze the development of our theme, guilt, and the role it plays in Macbeth.

Activities:
• Discussion on Lady Macbeth – why does she commit suicide? Tie in theme of guilt/insanity. Is this why she and Macbeth did what they did? (Some say you have to out of your right mind in order to kill yourself, and sometimes to kill someone else as well.)
• Finish Act 5 video
• Individual work: Write in response to this question: Why would anyone, including Lady Macbeth, commit suicide?
• Group share: Discuss in groups what they discovered from their writing.
• Class discussion: Share as a whole class what groups discussed about and how we can prevent such things from happening.
• Short Lecture: Explain how most of Shakespeare’s tragedies include a character with a “tragic flaw.” Obviously, there is something flawed about Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. What are their tragic flaws? Discuss as a class this question.

Assessments/Assignments: Persuasive papers due tomorrow. Be prepared to share with classmates your main arguments in the paper.

Day 13

State Standard: Write arguments which they introduce precise claim, distinguish from alternate views or opposing claims, and provide an organization that establishes clear relationships among the claim, reasons, and evidence.

Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of character’s different views and perspectives by presenting their persuasive papers to the class.
Activities:
- Before students come in, put signs up in the four corners of the room, labeled: Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, Macduff, and Other.
- Divide class into groups of four, and have them share their main points from their paper. After each member has shared their points, let them have a respectful debate/discussion of the different points made.
- Have students stand up and walk to the corner of the room that fits the character they wrote about in their persuasive paper. If it was someone other than Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, or Macduff, they will go to “Other.” I will point to someone and let them share why they chose a certain character and what their main arguments were in their paper.
- Ask them to go to the character in the room they believed was most to blame for the bloody acts throughout the play. Let them share their reasons.
- Ask them to go to the character they liked the most.
- Ask them to go to the character they despised the most.
- Ask them to go to the character that was most important in the play.
- Class discussion: Tie up the play and their experience with their papers, how their stand points changed throughout the unit, etc.
- The remainder of class will be for students to meet with groups and discuss their final projects.

Assessments/Assignments: Persuasive papers due at the beginning of class

Day 14

State Standard: Make strategic use of digital media elements and visual displays of data to enhance understanding.

Objective: Students will present their projects of acting or making a movie of one of the scenes from Macbeth.

Activities: This day will be dedicated to presenting half of the student’s projects.

Assessments/Assignments: Final acting out projects due.

Day 15

State Standard: Plan and deliver evidence to particular audiences.

Objective: Students will present their projects of acting or making a movie of one of the scenes from Macbeth.

Activities: This day will be dedicated to presenting the other half of the student’s projects.

Assessments/Assignments: Final acting out projects due.