



The English-Speaking Union
National Shakespeare Competition
SONNET LESSON PLANS



Week 2: Taking the Sonnet Out for a Walk

NOTE: This lesson will take 1 x 50 minute class period.

• **What's On for Week 2 and Why?**

This week students continue to research the sonnet and begin the physical work of putting the sonnet up on its feet. This type of close study helps each student explore the thought process/meaning behind the sonnet and start making their chosen sonnet their own.

- Students will:
 - Explore physically presenting their sonnets;
 - Recite the first four lines of their sonnets for each other;
 - Begin a paraphrase of their lines.

• **Which Standards Are Highlighted?**

Common Core English Language Arts:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12.1, 5, 6 & 10
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1 & 3
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-12. 3, 4 & 5

NCCAS National Theatre Education:

- NCCAS.NSTE.9-12.2

• **What Will You Need?**

- An open workspace (that can comfortably accommodate the whole class)
- A computer
- A projector

• **What Will You and Your Students Do?**

Note: First collect homework from Week 1 (each student's clean and annotated copy of their sonnet).

Warm Up:

1. Play a few warm-up games with the students (those which ideally warm-up up their bodies and voices and allow them to relax). Check online for theatre games and tongue twisters you can use.

Class Activity:

2. Students complete a "punctuation walk," an activity developed by the Royal Shakespeare Company's Voice Director, Cicely Berry:
 - a. Ask the students to spread out throughout the workspace (with a copy of their text in hand).
 - b. All at once, have them read their entire sonnet aloud while walking around the workspace.
 - c. At every mark of punctuation, they should stop, change directions, and then continue reading and walking.
 - d. Once all students are finished, bring them together in a circle and process the activity. Keep the students standing, so that their energy doesn't dissipate. Ask them: How many of them needed to frequently change direction? How many were able to walk in one direction for an extended amount of time? What happened to the pace of their reading and walking? What might these differences indicate about the frame of mind of the speaker in each sonnet?
3. Students recite their first four lines of their sonnet to each other.



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Notes: If the class is small enough, do the recitations one at a time with everyone standing in the same circle. If the class is larger, break the students up into smaller circles. During this first effort at memorization, be encouraging. Some students will be excited and ready to show their work. Others will be nervous, and some will have avoided the work. Always be clear, efficient, and supportive. Keep the recitations moving, and the students focused (especially if nervous laughter begins to bubble up). Prompt them as needed. At the conclusion of the recitations, let the students know that a level of risk-taking (which is different for each student) is important and worthwhile. Students who are unprepared will be aware that they have let themselves down and missed an important opportunity; comments in this situation generally are not necessary.

4. Demonstrate the process of paraphrasing a sonnet for the class:
 - a. Project first four lines of one of Shakespeare's sonnets (ex. Sonnet 91).
 - b. Paraphrase these first four lines (i.e. restating the meaning of the lines in different words).
 - c. Have the students offer input during the demonstration.
 - d. Tell them they will be doing a paraphrase of their sonnets for homework.

Note: Remind them to avoid the temptation to look for any online paraphrases for this first round; you want their initial work with paraphrasing the text to be their original and unique personal responses

- **How Did It Go?**

To assess this lesson plan in your classroom, ask yourself:

1. Did each student thoughtfully select and annotate a copy of their sonnet?
2. Do the annotations reveal that the student is heading in a productive direction?
3. Did each student participate in the physical exercises, especially the "punctuation walk"?
4. Did they as a class make connections between text and their movements in this exercise?
5. Did each student recite their first four lines to their peers?
6. Did they as a class participate in your demonstration of paraphrasing?

Note: It is very easy for students, especially those new to Shakespeare's language, to run into difficulties with the sonnets. Be supportive, and help them stay on track.

- **What's for Homework?**

Ask each student to complete the following assignments for next week:

1. Paraphrase their complete sonnet.
2. Memorize the next four lines. (By next week, they should have lines 1-8 memorized.)