



The English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition SONNET LESSON PLANS



Week 4: Unpacking the Sonnet's Center

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

- **What's On for Week 4 and Why?**

This week focuses completely on recitation. Activities will continue to deepen the students' work with the sonnets and build their confidence in presenting their sonnets in front of others.

- Students will:

- Complete a "backpack recitation," an exercise based on Royal Shakespeare Society's Director of Voice, Cicely Berry's displacement strategies.
- Recite their entire sonnet.
- Achieve a more authentic manner of delivery.
- Recite their couplets for each other.

- **Which Standards Are Highlighted?**

Common Core English Language Arts:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-12. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 10
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-12. 4 & 5

NCCAS National Theatre Education:

- NCCAS.NSTE.9-12.2 & 4

- **What Will You Need?**

- An open workspace (that can comfortably accommodate the whole class)
- Student backpacks (Each student should bring their backpack to class.)
- *Sonnet Scoring Rubric* (a copy for each student)
- *Judges' Evaluation Form* (a copy for each student)

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

Note: First collect homework from Week 3 (each student's final copy of their sonnet paraphrase).

1. Students complete a "backpack recitation" :
 - a. Students spread out throughout the workspace (with their backpack and a copy of their text).
 - b. Each student quickly empties the contents of their backpack.
 - c. While they thoughtfully and carefully return these contents to their backpack, they recite their complete sonnet. They may use their copy of the text for reference. (Note: Having the students focus on a physical activity while reciting their sonnet can help them achieve a more authentic manner of delivery.)
2. Once all students have completed this activity, they form a class circle and discuss their responses to this exercise together. Ask them: What did they notice about their presentations? Were their changes to their delivery? What do these differences indicate about how to present their selections?
3. Students stand in a line and simultaneously recite their sonnets.
4. Return to the class circle, where students (one at a time) recite their closing couplets for each other. Note: There is always a temptation for students to trail off at the end of the sonnet, which weakens the overall impact. Encourage them to make sure these last two lines count!
5. Pass out copies of the *Sonnet Scoring Rubric* and the *Judges' Evaluation Form*.



The English-Speaking Union
National Shakespeare Competition
SONNET LESSON PLANS



6. Provide students with the link to sonnet recitation videos on the English-Speaking Union's YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/englishspeakingunion>. Notes: This resource will be used in tonight's homework. Inform students to avoid watching any recitations of their own sonnets; they want to share their own work, not someone else's work.

- **How Did It Go?**

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

1. Did each student thoughtfully complete a clear, final paraphrase of their sonnet?
2. Based on their paraphrase, is it evident that the student has an accurate grasp of the sonnet's content?
3. Did each student participate in the "backpack recitation"?
4. Did each student participate in the class discussion about the "backpack recitation"?
5. Did the class as a whole come to conclusions about how this exercise affected their delivery?
6. Did each student have their sonnet completely memorized?

- **What's for Homework?**

Ask the students to complete the following assignments for next week:

1. Review the *Sonnet Scoring Rubric* and the *Judges' Evaluation Form*.
2. Prepare to recite their complete sonnet for each other next week.
3. Prepare to both give and receive positive, constructive feedback (based on the criteria on the *Judges' Evaluation Form*).
4. Watch several superior sonnet recitations from past ESU National Shakespeare Competition winners.