

**Subject area/course:** English/Language Arts

**Grade level/band:** 9-12

**Task source:** Center for Collaborative Education (CCE); Task Author: Jon Olkovikas

## Romeo and Juliet: Transposed

### TEACHER'S GUIDE

#### A. Task overview:

In this task students will answer the following essential question: How can you make *Romeo and Juliet*'s theme and characters relevant to a modern audience? After reading *Romeo and Juliet* and studying various performances, the students will select a key scene to transpose for a performance.

#### B. Aligned standards:

##### 1. Primary Common Core State Standards

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4](#) Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1b](#) Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1](#) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

##### 2. Secondary Common Core State Standards

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5](#) Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

##### 3. Critical abilities

**Communication in Many Forms:** Use oral and written communication skills to learn, evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

**Interpersonal Interaction and Collaboration:** Develop a range of interpersonal skills, including the ability to work with others, to participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations.



#### 4. Other standards

*New Hampshire Competencies:*

- **ELA 4:** Effectively write informative texts to examine and convey complex ideas for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- **ELA 8:** Speak purposefully and effectively – strategically making decisions about content, language use, and discourse style.

*New Hampshire Work Study Competencies*

- **Communication:** I can use various media to interpret, question, and express knowledge, information, ideas, feelings, and reasoning to create mutual understanding.

#### C. Time/schedule requirements:

The final transposition assessment takes about a week and a half to two weeks to complete, as students need time to plan their scripts and rehearse. It's important to set deadlines for the students during this time so they have their scripts prepared on time to maximize their time to memorize lines, get costumes, stage the scene, and rehearse.

#### D. Materials/resources:

- *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare
- Pyramus and Thisbe
- West Side Story
- High School Musical
- Laz Buhrman's *Romeo and Juliet*
- Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*

#### E. Prior knowledge:

None listed.

#### F. Connection to curriculum:

None listed.

#### G. Teacher instructions:

In this task:

- Students will work with reciprocal teaching groups to strengthen comprehension of scenes.
- There will be important passages related to character development and theme that students will focus on using a variety of comprehension and analysis strategies.
- Students will practice transposition by rewriting scenes, not included in the final performance assessment, for a modern setting.
- Performances will be viewed and analyzed for transposition (i.e., the balcony scenes in Zeffirelli's version, West Side Story, and High School musical).

- Performances will be practiced as students will prepare performances throughout the reading.

Over the course of the unit, the focus will be on how to make Shakespeare relative to modern audiences. While it's important to aid students with comprehension, it's also important to have them begin to make meaning for themselves. Most comprehension issues will focus on whole class reading at the beginning of the play to establish a base level of understanding of the play then, as the class progresses through the play, to gradually allow students more and more responsibility for comprehension. This is achieved by establishing supporting reciprocal teaching groups and aiding students in identifying and analyzing key speeches.

Embedded with the comprehension of the play are formative experiences designed to encourage students to understand how the play applies to the modern world. The first experience is with the party scene as the students will rewrite in narrative form a retelling in a modern setting with modern characters. Next is a film study of the balcony scene where students will compare Shakespeare's text with the Buhrmann version and the high school musical version, focusing on how it is changed to fit the different characters. Lastly, students will perform a version of the Mercutio/Tybalt fight scene in the style of a kung fu movie with a bad voice over.

This performance task aspect of this unit blends with the previous unit. Before this unit, the students focused on presentation skills so a dramatic performance becomes a natural progression of the speaking skills. To help them understand performance, there are several opportunities to perform. First, we create a tableaux of the opening fight scene, highlighting facial expression and staging. The students perform Romeo and Juliet's first meeting, and Mercutio and Tybalt's fight scene.

The final transposition assessment takes about a week and a half to two weeks to complete as students need time to plan their scripts and rehearse. It's important to set deadlines for the students during this time so they have their scripts prepared on time to maximize their time to memorize lines, get costumes, stage the scene, and rehearse. In the past, students have recreated the opening scene in a Star Wars style battle, and the Juliet/Nurse/Lady Capulet scene as an all-male cast arraignment a mafia wedding, Mercutio/Tybalt as a gang war.

Students are also responsible for an individual artist's statement, which explains how the transposition reflects the characters and themes of the original play. Students should submit evidence of using the writing process when submitting the final artist's statement.

#### **H. Student support:**

- All student directions will be provided in writing and will be read orally.
- The student directions and rubric may be modified to simplify language.



- Additional time may be allotted.
- Extended time and additional supports and tools may be provided.

**I. Extensions or variations:**

None listed.

**J. Scoring:**

Student work can be scored using the Romeo and Juliet Project Rubric.

