



Bridging Shakespeare with the Big Lebowski

A Unit Based on *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski*, by Adam Bertocci

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Rationale

Explanation

This unit plan began as a much broader one in which I wanted to attempt to teach mythology and classical literature through the filter of popular culture. The theory was that every work of fiction written today is in some way derivative, or at least referential, to older, greater works, and that, therefore, the average, pop-culture besotted person on the street actually has a much broader knowledge of the classics than they could ever be convinced to believe. We all may not be able to name names, and quote quotes, but we all know the basic stories by heart, and are familiar with the characters that shuffle through them over, and over again. What I wanted to do was use this osmotically derived familiarity as sort of a keystone for making works that students might see as irrelevant and incomprehensible a little less so. If this meant showing them that Romeo or Hamlet were *just like* their favorite sparkly vampires, than I was willing to make that sacrifice.

Thankfully, I didn't have to. While doing some "research" for my first draft of this unit (i.e. watching movies and reading internet forums) I rediscovered something which I thought had been lost forever to legal disputes: *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski*, by Adam Bertocci, and Shakespearean style rewrite of the 1998 Cohen Brother's film *The Big Lebowski*. It had apparently been published and was getting rave reviews from actual, real-life magazines. I immediately knew that I had to throw everything away and build my unit entirely around this play.

The reason for this (besides the fact that it's really, really good) is because it is, to my mind, the missing link between Shakespeare and modern media. It's Shakespearean poetry written with a modern audience in mind. Bertocci employs all of Shakespeare's forms and tropes with loving care and surprising accuracy, and in such a way that it almost seems as though it was his intention for the play to be used in an educational context. It's basically a *Whitman's* Sampler of Shakespeare.

In this short, accessible play we're presented with an array of case examples of prose, verse,

sonnets and soliloquies. The author not only references, but employs themes and archetypal characters from just about all of Shakespeare's works. Combine this with its informative and often hilarious glossary, we have what is essentially a guidebook to Shakespeare specifically designed to appeal to the adolescent reader, one which I think belongs in any Language Arts classroom.

Methodology

I begin the unit by having my students watch the film. This is done to not only contextualize the play for my students (I have no objective way of determining how well the play actually stands on its own), but also to simply ensure that they enjoy it as much as possible. It's a relatively long film, and its showing will dominate the first three days of the unit. I would like, however, to take at least ten minutes out of each of those days to engage my students in basic discussions about the play's themes, characters, plot, and language. This will be done to not only aid comprehension, but also to insure that the students understand the directors' purpose in employing these elements, and to draw their attention to those which will be focused upon in Bertocci's play, and which are themselves fairly Shakespearean.

The lessons over the following three weeks will be relatively uniform. Approximately twenty minutes of every lesson will be dedicated to reading the play out loud in class, the students each taking turns reading about ten to fifteen lines each. This will be done to insure that everyone is engaged in reading the play, and also so that I can assess their comprehension by the fluency with which they read their parts. The play includes an extensive glossary explaining many of the terms and literary references Bertocci employs and will be periodically referred to during the daily readings.

Every lesson contains a section called "Literary Reference of the Day". During these mini-lessons, students will be presented with a short poem, a snippet from a novel, or a few selected lines from one of Shakespeare's plays that are relevant to the day's reading. These will be read aloud in class, and their connection with the play will be explained and discussed. I did this for three reasons: (1) to expose my students to as much literature as possible over the course of the unit, (2) to further

contextualize and elucidate the themes contained within the play, and thus those contained in Shakespeare, (3) to further cement the relationship between this play, the film, and Shakespeare's actual works. It also, I think, acts as an interesting first-hand lesson on the extremely circuitous and interconnected nature of English literature.

Beyond literature, one of the primary focuses of this unit will be teaching my students the basic mechanics of Shakespeare. Students will be taught, shown, asked to identify, and eventually replicate the structure and purpose of prose, verse, couplets and sonnets. These will be covered in order of apparent difficulty and also to coincide with what I feel are exemplary instances of their use within the play.

The last week of the unit will be dominated by the "Lights, Camera, Shakespeare!" project. This project will have students (in groups of three or four) select a short scene from their favorite movie or television show and re-write it in Shakespearean form, just as Bertocci did with *The Big Lebowski*. During the last few days of the unit, students will perform these scenes in front of the class. This will be my final method of assessing their knowledge of the poetic forms taught throughout the unit.

Goals and Objectives

Goals:

The ultimate goal of this unit is to bridge the gap between modern media and Shakespeare. By using *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* as a bridge between the two, it is my hope that I will better prepare my students for reading and comprehending Shakespearean works. I believe that the unique accessibility of this play will help ease students into comprehension of not only formalized Elizabethan English, but also such poetic forms as verse, prose, and sonnets.

Objectives:

SWBAT...

Identify prose and verse (rhyming and blank).

State the dramatic purpose of verse and prose.

Identify couplets and sonnets.

State the dramatic purpose of couplets and sonnets.

Write a couplet which correctly adheres to structure and dramatic purpose of the form.

Write a “Shakespearean” interpretation of a selected scene from a popular film or television show which utilizes prose, verse, and a sonnet.

Perform a dramatic scene with fluency and enthusiasm.

Sunshine State Standards

LA.1112.1.5.1 - The student will adjust reading rate based on purpose, text difficulty, form, and style.

LA.1112.1.6.2 - Listen to, read, and discuss familiar and conceptually challenging text.

LA.1112.1.6.8 - Identify advanced word/phrase relationships and their meanings.

LA.1112.1.6.9 - Determine the correct meaning of words with multiple meanings in context.

LA.1112.1.6.10 - Determine meanings of words, pronunciation, parts of speech, etymologies, and alternate word choices by using a dictionary, thesaurus, and digital tools.

LA.1112.1.7.2 - Analyze the author's purpose and/or perspective in a variety of text and understand how they affect meaning.

LA.1112.1.7.3 - Determine the main idea or essential message in grade-level or higher texts through inferring, paraphrasing, summarizing, and identifying relevant details and facts.

LA.1112.1.7.5 - Analyze a variety of text structures (e.g., comparison/contrast, cause/effect, chronological order, argument/support, lists) and text features (main headings with subheadings) and explain their impact on meaning in text.

LA.1112.1.7.6 - Analyze and evaluate similar themes or topics by different authors across a variety of fiction and nonfiction selections.

LA.1112.1.7.7 - Compare and contrast elements in multiple texts.

LA.1112.2.1.1 - Analyze and compare historically and culturally significant works of literature, identifying the relationships among the major genres (e.g., poetry, fiction, nonfiction, short story, dramatic literature, essay) and the literary devices unique to each, and analyze how they support and enhance the theme and main ideas of the text.

LA.1112.2.1.2 - Analyze and compare a variety of traditional, classical, and contemporary literary works, and identify the literary elements of each (e.g., setting, plot, characterization, conflict).

LA.1112.2.1.3 - Analyze, compare, evaluate, and interpret poetry for the effects of various literary devices, graphics, structure, and theme to convey mood, meaning, and aesthetic qualities.

LA.1112.2.1.4 - Analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, providing textual evidence for the identified theme.

LA.1112.2.1.5 - Analyze and discuss characteristics of subgenres (e.g., satire, parody, allegory) that overlap or cut across the lines of genre classifications such as poetry, novel, drama, short story, essay or editorial.

LA.1112.2.1.7 - Analyze, interpret, and evaluate an author's use of descriptive language (e.g., tone,

irony, mood, imagery, pun, alliteration, onomatopoeia, allusion), figurative language (e.g., symbolism, metaphor, personification, hyperbole), common idioms, and mythological and literary allusions, and explain how they impact meaning in a variety of texts with an emphasis on how they evoke reader's emotions.

LA.1112.2.1.8 - Explain how ideas, values, and themes of a literary work often reflect the historical period in which it was written.

LA.1112.2.1.9 - Describe changes in the English language over time, and support these descriptions with examples from literary texts.

LA.1112.2.2.1 - Analyze and evaluate information from text features (e.g., transitional devices, table of contents, glossary, index, bold or italicized text, headings, charts and graphs, illustrations, subheadings).

LA.1112.3.2.3 - Analyzing language techniques of professional authors (e.g., figurative language, denotation, connotation) to establish a personal style, demonstrating a command of language with conviction of expression.

LA.1112.3.3.3 - Creating precision and interest by elaborating ideas through supporting details (e.g., facts, statistics, expert opinions, anecdotes), a variety of sentence structures, creative language devices, and modifying word choices using resources and reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus) to select more effective and precise language;.

LA.1112.3.3.4 - Applying appropriate tools or strategies to evaluate and refine the draft (e.g., peer review, checklists, rubrics).

LA.1112.3.5.3 - Sharing with others, or submitting for publication.

LA.1112.4.1.1 - Write in a variety of expressive and reflective forms that uses a range of appropriate strategies and specific narrative techniques, employs literary devices, and sensory description.

LA.1112.4.1.2 - Incorporate figurative language, emotions, gestures, rhythm, dialogue, characterization, plot, and appropriate format.

LA.1112.5.2.1 - Demonstrate effective listening skills and behaviors for a variety of purposes, and demonstrate understanding by critically evaluating and analyzing oral presentations.

LA.1112.5.2.2 - Apply oral communication skills in interviews, formal presentations, and impromptu situations according to designed rubric criteria.

LA.1112.5.2.3 - Use research and visual aids to deliver oral presentations that inform, persuade, or entertain, and evaluates one's own and others' oral presentations according to designed rubric criteria.

LA.1112.5.2.4 - use appropriate eye contact, body movements, and voice register for audience engagement in formal and informal speaking situations.

Unit Outline

Day 1:

(10 Minutes) Students will be introduced to the unit: The film *The Big Lebowski* will be introduced, as well as the play, *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski*, and their correlation will be explained. The students will be told that, over the next four weeks, we will be using this play to study some of the themes, language, and poetic structure used in Shakespearean writing. For now, though, they should just relax and enjoy the movie.

(40 Minutes) The Students will watch *The Big Lebowski*.

Day 2:

(10 Minutes) Students will be caught up on what has happened so far in the movie. The film's themes, use of language, and characters may be briefly discussed.

(40 Minutes) Students will continue to watch *The Big Lebowski*.

Day 3:

(10 Minutes) Students will once again be caught up on what has happened so far in the film. The discussion started yesterday on the movie's themes, use of language, and characters may be continued.

(40 Minutes) Students will finish watching *The Big Lebowski*.

Day 4:

(5 Minutes) Literary Reference of the Day: "Fair Albion".

A short poetic excerpt from *Historia Regum Britanniae*, by Geoffery of Monmouth will be read and briefly discussed.

Note: *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* contains countless references to history, mythology, and literature. It would be impossible to explain and contextualize them all (although its glossary does a pretty good job). So, instead, one will be selected from the reading every day and presented to the class. These may take place at the beginning of class, or during the reading.

(10 Minutes) The difference in structure between Prose and Verse (Rhyming and Blank) will be introduced. Students will be asked to keep an eye out for these forms while reading the play in class, and attempt to determine in what context each form is typically used.

(20 Minutes) Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Prologue – Act I, Scene II).

Note: Students will read the play aloud in a “round-robin” style: each student will take turns reading about five lines (or until a logical break), and then the next student will read, and so on.

(5 Minutes) Students will be asked to verbally identify where and when verse and prose is used in the play, and by which characters. They will be asked to theorize on the reason for its use.

(10 Minutes) Students will be engaged in a review / more detailed lecture / discussion concerning Prose and Verse and what their respective use signifies within the context of the story. Students will be briefly introduced to the concept of Couplets and asked to keep an eye out for them while reading the play.

Day 5:

(10 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: “A World of Pain”

A few short excerpts from *Dante's Inferno* will be read and briefly discussed.

(5 Minutes): The structure of couplets will be briefly introduced. Students will be asked to keep track of when they are used in the reading, and attempt to determine why.

(25 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act I, Scene III – Act I, Scene V)

(10 Minutes): Students will be engaged in a review / more detailed lecture / discussion concerning the structure and dramatic use of couplets.

Day 6:

(10 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: “O Painted Lady” / “With toe-nails of verdant and forester's green”.

Of Face and Hair Deceits by Thomas Tuke, and Shakespeare's *Sonnet 63* will be read and briefly discussed.

(20 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act II, Scene I – Act II, Scene III)

(20 Minutes): Activity: Movie Quote Couplets. Students will be introduced to the activity and given the Movie Quote Couplets handout. They will be asked to think of a quote from a movie that is two sentences long or less, and re-write it as a couplet. Students will do the activity in groups of three or four, and should try to complete one couplet by the end of class.

Day 7:

(10 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: “The Fiery Fate of the Knave's Car”

Hymn to Apollo by John Keats will be read and briefly discussed.

(5 Minutes) The structure of Sonnets will be introduced, students will be asked to keep an eye out for one while reading the play and theorize the reasons for their use.

(20 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act II, Scene IV – Act III, Scene I)

(15 Minutes) Students will be engaged in a more detailed lecture/discussion on the sonnet's dramatic use within the play.

Day 8:

(20 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: "And women swimming nightly 'twixt the nymphs / Are punished by Oberon for sin"

The characters Titiana and Oberon from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be profiled and discussed and selected lines from Act II, Scene I will be read.

(20 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act III, Scene II – Act III, Scene IV)

(10 Minutes) Students will be engaged in an analytic discussion of the play focusing on the parallels between Maude/Titiana and Lebowski/Oberon.

Day 9:

(10 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: "O How I laugh! / Titter thus upon't!"

The recurring character of the Clown in Shakespeare's works will be profiled and discussed. The lines of the two Gravedigger's from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act V, Scene I) will be read.

(5 Minutes) The concept of a "comedy of errors" will be introduced and discussed, with brief references to the play of the same name by Shakespeare.

(20 Minutes) Students will watch *All The World's a Stooge* (1941), and discuss the concept of mistaken identity as the foundation for the comedy of errors.

(15 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act III, Scene V – Act IV, Scene II)

Day 10:

(10 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: "I'll live unpartner'd and unbother'd"

The Unequal Fetters, by Anne Kingsmill Finch will be read, and the roles of women and marriage in Shakespeare's time will be discussed.

(20 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act IV, Scene III – Act IV, Scene V)

(10 Minutes) Students will read an excerpt from *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* by Mary Astell.

(10 Minutes) Students will be engaged in a discussion about the roles of women in the 16th century, and how the character of Maude almost constantly subverts these roles.

Day 11:

(10 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: “Come lie with me under a greenwood tree”

Selected passages from Milton's *Paradise Lost* will be read and discussed.

(20 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act V, Scene I – Act V Scene II)

(20 Minutes) Students will be engaged in a lecture / discussion concerning the use of the Pastoral vs. the Wilderness in Shakespeare.

Day 12:

(10 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: “The rest is silence.”

Students will read *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* by Dylan Thomas.

(5 Minutes): The concept and form of the Soliloquy will be introduced, students will be asked to keep an eye out for them and pay careful attention when they are read.

(20 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act V, Scene III – Act V, Scene IV)

(15 Minutes) Students will discuss the use of soliloquy within the play. The “To be or not to be...” soliloquy from *Hamlet* will be read, and compared to that in the reading.

Day 13:

(10 Minutes): Literary Reference of the Day: “If we shadows have offended...”

Students will be engaged in a discussion about the use and role of the Chorus in Shakespeare's plays. Puck's speech at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be read and compared to that of the Chorus in *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski*.

(5 Minutes) The relationship between form and the emotions and mental stability of the speaker will be introduced. Students will be asked to pay careful attention to the form of Walter's eulogy.

(20 Minutes): Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Act V, Scene V – Epilogue)

(10 Minutes) Students will engage in an analytical discussion of Walter's eulogy focusing on where and why it quickly switches between verse and prose.

Day 14:

(15 Minutes) Students will read *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski* (Afterward)

(10 Minutes) The teacher will introduce and explain the “Lights Camera Shakespeare” project, and give students the handout.

(25 Minutes) Students will be given time to pick their groups and begin brainstorming which film/television scene they'd like to use. Groups should have the first section of the handout completed by the end of class.

Homework: Each group must produce a transcript of their chosen scene by the next class.

Day 15:

(10 Minutes) Each group will meet with the teacher one-on-one and declare which movie / television scene they've chosen and give the teacher a copy of the a copy of the scene's transcript.

(40 Minutes) Students will be given time to work on their “Lights Camera Shakespeare” project. Students should focus on writing.

(0 Minutes) Groups will hand in their completed handout/worksheets.

Day 16:

Work Day:

(50 Minutes) Students will be given time to work on their “Lights Camera Shakespeare” project. Students should focus on writing, stage direction, and costumes.

(10 Minutes) Groups will meet with the teacher one-on-one to show their project's progression.

Day 17:

Work Day:

(50 Minutes) Students will be given time to work on their “Lights Camera Shakespeare” project. Students should focus on writing, stage direction, and costumes.

(10 Minutes) Groups will meet with the teacher one-on-one to show their project's progression.

Day 18:

“Amateur Shakespeare Hour”

This will be a work day, a rehearsal day, and a day for viewing amateur productions of Shakespeare (including *Two Gentlemen of Lebowski*). Groups may participate in the activity of their choice depending on their needs. Selected videos are listed in the appendix.

Day 19:

(50 Minutes) Groups will present their “Lights, Camera, Shakespeare” projects.

Day 20:

(50 Minutes) Groups will present their “Lights, Camera, Shakespeare” projects.

Appendix

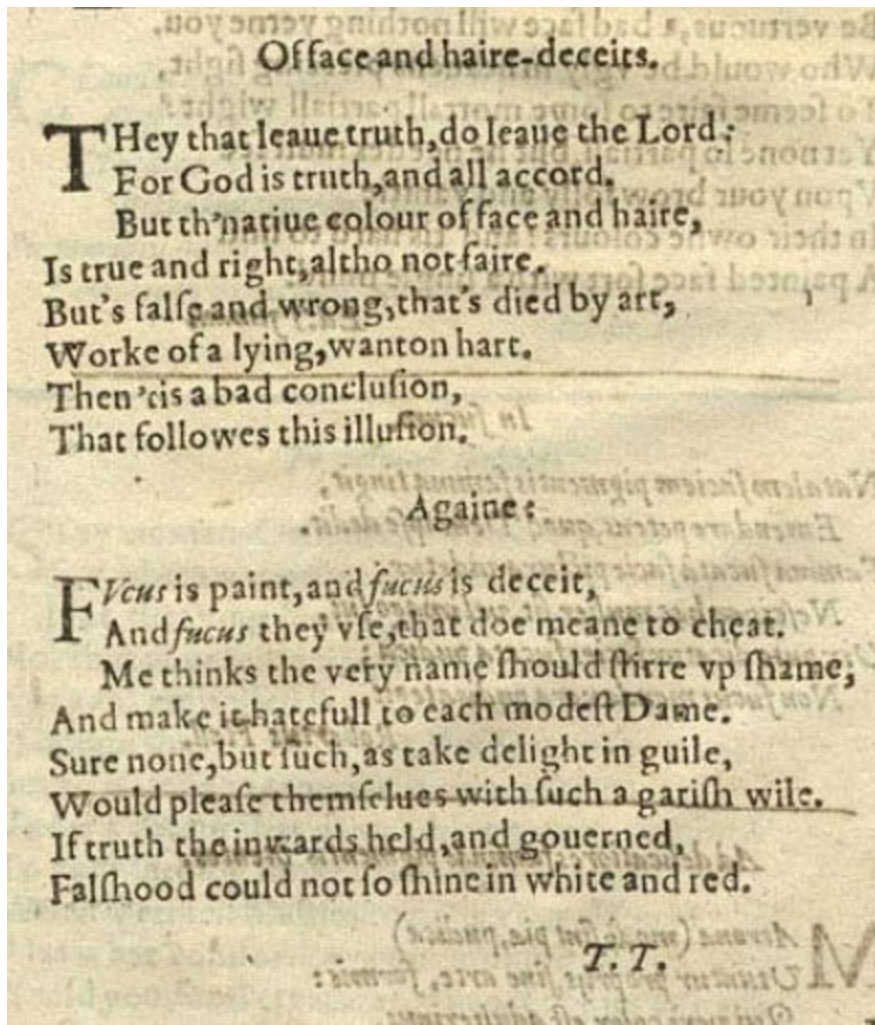
Day 4 - "Fair Albion"

The Goddess Diana to Brutus:

"Brutus! there lies beyond the Gallic bounds
An island which the western sea surrounds,
By giants once possessed, now few remain
To bar thy entrance, or obstruct thy reign.
To reach that happy shore thy sails employ
There fate decrees to raise a second Troy
And found an empire in thy royal line,
Which time shall ne'er destroy, nor bounds confine".

Historia Regum Britanniae by Geoffrey of Monmouth

Day 6 - "The Painted Lady" / "With toe-nails of verdant and forester's green"



Sonnet 63 by William Shakespeare

Against my love shall be, as I am now,
With Time's injurious hand crush'd and o'er-worn;
When hours have drain'd his blood and fill'd his brow
With lines and wrinkles; when his youthful morn
Hath travell'd on to age's steepy night,
And all those beauties whereof now he's king
Are vanishing or vanish'd out of sight,
Stealing away the treasure of his spring;
For such a time do I now fortify
Against confounding age's cruel knife,
That he shall never cut from memory
My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life:
His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green.

Day 7- “The Fiery Fate of the Knave's Car”

Hymn To Apollo by John Keats

GOD of the golden bow,
And of the golden lyre,
And of the golden hair,
And of the golden fire,
Charioteer
Of the patient year,
Where---where slept thine ire,
When like a blank idiot I put on thy wreath,
Thy laurel, thy glory,
The light of thy story,
Or was I a worm---too low crawling for death?
O Delphic Apollo!

The Thunderer grasp'd and grasp'd,
The Thunderer frown'd and frown'd;
The eagle's feathery mane
For wrath became stiffen'd---the sound
Of breeding thunder
Went drowsily under,
Muttering to be unbound.
O why didst thou pity, and beg for a worm?
Why touch thy soft lute
Till the thunder was mute,
Why was I not crush'd---such a pitiful germ?

O Delphic Apollo!

The Pleiades were up,
Watching the silent air;
The seeds and roots in Earth
Were swelling for summer fare;
The Ocean, its neighbour,
Was at his old labour,
When, who---who did dare
To tie for a moment, thy plant round his brow,
And grin and look proudly,
And blaspheme so loudly,
And live for that honour, to stoop to thee now?
O Delphic Apollo!

Day 8 - "And women swimming nightly 'twixt the nymphs / Are punished by Oberon for sin"

Selected lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act II, Scene I)

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence:

I have forsworn his bed and company.

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?

TITANIA

Then I must be thy lady: but I know

When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,

And in the shape of Corin sat all day,

Playing on pipes of corn and versing love

To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,

Come from the farthest Steppe of India?

But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,

Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

OBERON

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?
And make him with fair AEGle break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which falling in the land
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,

And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable:
The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Far in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which:
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

OBERON

Do you amend it then; it lies in you:
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

TITANIA

Set your heart at rest:

The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order:
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood,
When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following,--her womb then rich with my young squire,--
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON

How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON

Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

TITANIA

Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

Exit TITANIA with her train

Day 9 - "O How I laugh! / Titter thus upon't!"

All the World's a Stoooge (1941)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-0IEJZ-H6A>

Selected lines from *Hamlet* (Act V, Scene I), by William Shakespeare

A churchyard.

Enter two Clowns, with spades.

First Clown

Is she to be buried in Christian burial that
wilfully seeks her own salvation?

Second Clown

I tell thee she is: and therefore make her grave
straight: the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it
Christian burial.

First Clown

How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

Second Clown

Why, 'tis found so.

First Clown

It must be 'se offendendo;' it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches: it is, to act, to do, to perform: argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

Second Clown

Nay, but hear you, goodman delver,--

First Clown

Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good; if the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes,--mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

Second Clown

But is this law?

First Clown

Ay, marry, is't; crowner's quest law.

Second Clown

Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

First Clown

Why, there thou say'st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient

gentleman but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers:
they hold up Adam's profession.

Second Clown

Was he a gentleman?

First Clown

He was the first that ever bore arms.

Second Clown

Why, he had none.

First Clown

What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the
Scripture? The Scripture says 'Adam digged:'
could he dig without arms? I'll put another
question to thee: if thou answerest me not to the
purpose, confess thyself--

Second Clown

Go to.

First Clown

What is he that builds stronger than either the
mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

Second Clown

The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a
thousand tenants.

First Clown

I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows
does well; but how does it well? it does well to
those that do in: now thou dost ill to say the
gallows is built stronger than the church: argal,
the gallows may do well to thee. To't again, come.

Second Clown

'Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or
a carpenter?'

First Clown

Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

Second Clown

Marry, now I can tell.

First Clown

To't.

Second Clown

Mass, I cannot tell.

Enter HAMLET and HORATIO, at a distance

First Clown

Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull
ass will not mend his pace with beating; and, when
you are asked this question next, say 'a
grave-maker: 'the houses that he makes last till
doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan: fetch me a
stoup of liquor.

Exit Second Clown

He digs and sings
In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, O, the time, for, ah, my behove,
O, methought, there was nothing meet.

Day 10 - "I'll live unpartner'd and unbother'd"

"The Unequal Fetters"

Anne Kingsmill Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661-1720)

Cou'd we stop the time that's flying

Or recall it when 'tis past

Put far off the day of Dying

Or make Youth for ever last

To Love wou'd then be worth our cost.

But since we must loose those Graces
Which at first your hearts have wonne
And you seek for new Faces
When our Spring of Life is done
It wou'd but urdge our ruine on

Free as Nature's first intention
Was to make us, I'll be found
Nor by subtle Man's invention
Yield to be in Fetters bound
By one that walks a freer round.

Mariage does but slightly tye Men
Whil'st close Pris'ners we remain
They the larger Slaves of Hymen
Still are begging Love again
At the full length of all their chain.

An excerpt from Part I of *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, by Mary Astell

The Incapacity, if there be any, is acquired not natural;¹ and none of their Follies are so necessary, but that they might avoid them if they pleas'd themselves. Some disadvantages indeed they labour under, and what these are we shall see by and by and endeavour to surmount; but Women need not take up with mean things, since (if they are not wanting to themselves) they are capable of the best. Neither God nor Nature have excluded them from being Ornaments to their Families² and useful in their Generation; there is therefore no reason they should be content to be Cyphers³ in the World, useless at the best, and in a little time a burden and nuisance to all about them. And 'tis very great pity that they who are so apt to over-rate themselves in smaller matters, shou'd, where it most concerns them to know, and stand upon their Value, be so insensible of their own worth.

The Cause therefore of the defects we labour under, is, if not wholly, yet at least in the first place, to be ascribed to the mistakes of our Education; which like an Error in the first Concoction,⁴ spreads its ill Influence through all our Lives.

The Soil is rich and would, if well cultivated, produce a noble Harvest, if then the Unskilful Managers not only permit, but encourage noxious Weeds, tho' we shall suffer by their Neglect, yet they ought not in justice to blame any but themselves, if they reap the Fruit of their own Folly.⁵ Women are from their very infancy debarred those Advantages with the want of which they are afterwards reproached, and nursed up in those Vices which will hereafter be upbraided⁶ to them. So partial are Men as to expect Brick where they afford no Straw; and so abundantly civil as to take care we shou'd make good that obliging Epithet of Ignorant, which out of an excess of good Manners, they are pleas'd to bestow on us!

One would be apt to think indeed, that Parents shou'd take all possible care of their Childrens Education, not only for their sakes, but even for their own. And tho' the Son convey the Name to Posterity, yet certainly a great Part of the Honour of their Families depends on their Daughters. 'Tis the kindness of Education that binds our duty fastest on us:⁷ For the being instrumental to the bringing us

into the World, is no matter of choice and therefore the less obliging: But to procure that we may live wisely and happily in it, and be capable of endless Joys hereafter, is a benefit we can never sufficiently acknowledge. To introduce poor Children into the World, and neglect to fence them against the temptations of it, and so leave them expos'd to temporal and eternal Miseries, is a wickedness, for which I want a Name; 'tis beneath Brutality; the Beasts are better natur'd for they take care of their offspring, till they are capable of caring for themselves. And if Mothers had a due regard to their Posterity, how Great soever they are, they wou'd not think themselves too Good to perform what Nature requires, nor thro' Pride and Delicacy remit the poor little one to the care of a Foster Parent. Or, if necessity inforce them to depute another to perform their Duty, they wou'd be as choice at least in the Manners and Inclinations, as they are in the complections of their Nurses, lest with their Milk they transfuse their Vices, and form in the Child such evil habits as will not easily be eradicated.⁸

Nature as bad as it is and as much as it is complain'd of, is so far improveable by the grace of GOD, upon our honest and hearty endeavours, that if we are not wanting to our selves, we may all in some, tho' not in an equal measure, be instruments of his Glory, Blessings to this World, and capable of eternal Blessedness in that to come. But if our Nature is spoil'd, instead of being improv'd at first; if from our Infancy we are nurs'd up in Ignorance and Vanity; are taught to be Proud and Petulant, Delicate and Fantastick,⁹ Humorous and Inconstant, 'tis not strange that the ill effects of this conduct appear in all the future Actions of our Lives. And seeing it is Ignorance, either habitual or actual,¹⁰ which is the cause of all sin, how are they like to escape this, who are bred up in that? That therefore Women are unprofitable to most, and a plague and dishonour to some Men is not much to be regretted on account of the Men, because 'tis the product of their own folly, in denying them the benefits of an ingenuous¹¹ and liberal Education, the most effectual means to direct them into, and to secure their progress in the way of Vertue.

Day 12 - "The rest is silence"

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night, by Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,

And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on that sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

“To Be or Not to Be” Soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.--Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

Day 13 - "If we shadows have offended"

“If We Shadows Have Offended” from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
if you pardon, we will mend:
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call;
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

Day 18 - “Amateur Shakespeare Hour”

Two Gentlemen of Lebowski: A Dramatic Interpretation

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRNLRCoPzbs>

Two Gentlemen of Lebowski. Act 2, Scene 2

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOwNJTnbaBM>

Two Gentlemen of Lebowski

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpD5Htxx2Ds&feature=related>

Two Gentlemen of Lebowski (Various)

<http://www.youtube.com/user/johnfactorial#p/u>

Sources of information for verse, prose, sonnets, and couplets.

<http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl339/verseprose.html>

<http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xSonnets.html>

“Lights, Camera, Shakespeare!”

Just as Adam Bertocci transformed *The Big Lebowski* into a Shakespearean play, so shall you! In this project, you and your group of 3-4 playwrights, will choose a scene from any film or television show you'd like and re-write it in Shakespearean form. You will then parcel out parts, don your costumes, and act out your scene before the class.

Rules:

1. Your scene must be written entirely in either prose or verse.
2. Your scene must contain at least two couplets and one sonnet.
3. Your scene must be at least two minutes long.
4. Write your scene with a 16th century audience in mind. This means minimal use of modern language and references to today's culture and technology.
5. Gather what props and costumes you can and act out your scene from memory.

When you have selected your group please fill out the following:

Chosen film / television show:

Short description of the chosen scene:

Head playwright:

Director:

Costume designer:

Producer (organizer):

Cast:

Completed the handout and presented the teacher with their chosen scene's original transcript on time.

/5

Worked on their presentations quietly and cooperatively in class.

/5

Presentation was at least 2 minutes long.

/10

Presentation was written entirely in verse or prose and contained at least two couplets and one sonnet.

/10

Chosen forms were correctly constructed and used in a way which displayed understanding of their dramatic intent.

/10

Cast members showed effort in remembering their lines and recited them with enthusiasm.

/10

Total points: /50